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Warangal Fort and Temple Architecture
Kakatiya Masterpiece
by
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Introduction

Warangal is the largest city of Warangal district in Telangana state of India, which has also comprised Hanamakonda and Kazipet cities. It is also an industrial and cultural centre of the state. It is about 120 km in distance, which is located to the northeastern part of Hyderabad. The second fastest growing city in Telangana after Hyderabad is Warangal. After captivating forty-two Gram panchayats, Warangal's population has exceeded one million. This place basically consists of an agricultural community, cultivating rice, red chillies, cotton and tobacco in large extent. It is also famous for its granite mines, which are exported to many other states. Warangal has also preserved the art and architecture of the medieval period in the form of impressive forts, scenic lakes, enormous stone-gateways, exotic wildlife and striking temples. This city has adapted modern conveniences but not on the cost of its legacy. The lakes and greenery add the magnificent charm to this historical site. In concise the various architectural masterpieces of this city are the major attractions for the tourists and a delight for touring it.

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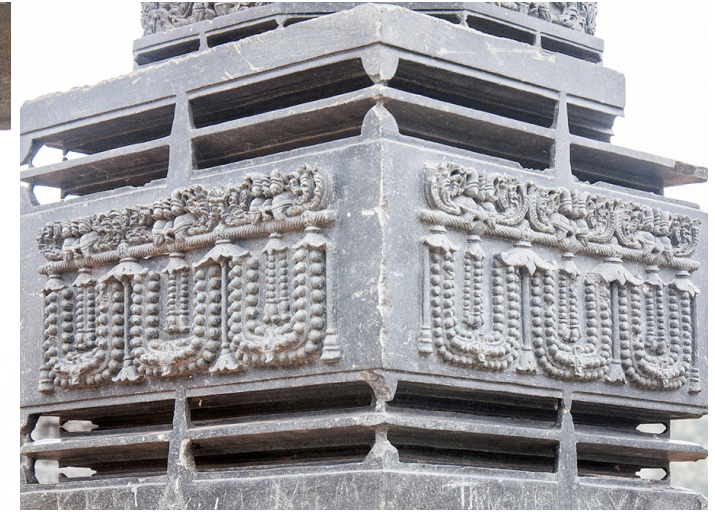NID Campus, Bengaluru

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History

Warangal was the capital of glorious Hindu Shaivite Kakatiya dynasty, which ruled this region from 11th to 14th centaury A.D. They were the Telugu rulers who ruled over a large region of land that included Golconda region. Kakatiyas derived their name from their family deity, Goddess Kakati or Durga. They were the most creative genius in the field of architecture, literature and engineering techniques, which hold their grandeur in the form of ruins that lie scattered in clad in striking solemnity, today.

Some of the evidence gathered from the inscriptions on Warangal has proposed that 'Kakatipura' is the alternative name for Warangal before 12th centaury, from which the Kakatiya dynasty might have got its name. This city finds its name mentioned in the travel diaries of Marco Polo, the famed Italian traveler, who speaks about Warangal that reflect the cultural and administrative excellence during the time of Kakatiyas. The rulers of Kakatiya dynasty were the great warriors who ruled this region for about 200 years. They were the patrons of the arts and have left the heritage of their times in their ancient capital and its surroundings. These Kakatiya kings were the great builders during which the Chalukyan style of architecture reached its zenith of its glory.

Prola Raja of the Kakatiya dynasty was believed to have been discovered Warangal in 12th centaury AD. It is also identified as Worakalli, the capital of the Adeva Rajas of Tuluva Andhra in 8th century. In ancient times Warangal was also known as Omtikonda / Ekasilanagaram / Orugallu in Tamil, while 'oru' stood for 'one' and 'gallu' as 'stone', due to the presence of the gigantic hillock that is evidently carved out of single stone. It is believed that Prola Raja was behind the construction of this beautiful picturesque city. Ganapati Deva who was the successor of Prola Raja ruled for 60 years (1200-1262) and made great patron for arts and continued the tradition of scholarly achievements and prospered, as the most noticeable renowned structures like Warangal fort and the temples were built in his time. Later, Rudradeva the commander-in-chief of Ganapati Deva held the temporary charge of the kingdom for his master. He was later rewarded with the large tract of land for his heroism and loyalty from Ganapathi Deva at Palampet, which is 60km to north of Warangal. Rudradeva, the first sovereign ruler constructed the magnificent thousand-pillar temple in his time. After the ruling of Ganapathi deva, his daughter Rudrama Devi took in-charge of the territory and completed the construction, which were started during the reign of his father Ganapathi Deva. Later Prataparudra II succeeded his grandmother Rudrama Devi and ruled for fifty years. During his time he divided the kingdom into 75 Nayakships, which (Warangal) was later conquered by Tughlaqs of Delhi ultimately. The invading army of Tughlaqs plundered the land of priceless art treasures due to which Warangal lost its glory after the reign of Kakatiyas.

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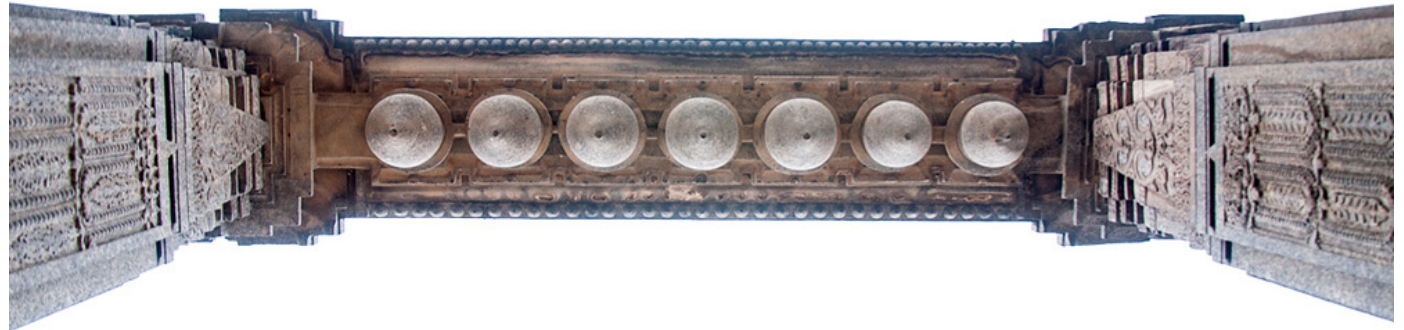NID Campus, Bengaluru

Warangal Fort

Warangal fort is one of the outstanding attractions that one can enjoy at Warangal. It is considered as one of the best example of South Indian architecture. This fort is located at five kilometers to south of Warangal and two kilometers away from Warangal railway station. Warangal fort was constructed during the period of Kakatiyas in 13th century. King Ganapati Deva commissioned the building of fort and its completion was looked after his daughter Rudrama Devi. This showcases the pride and power of the famous Telugu dynasty. The Warangal fort was their bastion and they shifted here from the neighboring region 'Hanamakonda' which was their earlier capital. This fort has witnessed the several battles of ancient times.

The architecture of this fort is amazing and the work on the granite stone is stunning. The fort has 45 towers and some pillars, which have scattered all over 19km and a temple of Mother Earth called 'Swayambhudevi Alayam' which is in the middle of the fort is renowned for its sculptures. Warangal fort was a huge construction with three different circular strongholds, surrounded by a moat. Four paths of decorative stone gateways are built for this fort. These gateways are about 30 feet in height and still standing as a carved masterpiece. These entrances / gateways are called as 'Kirti Torana' (the gateways of glory) of Kakatiyas, which are built in similar to the style of Sanchi sculptures. These gateways are also known as 'Hamsa Torana' and they are permanently set according to the prime points that lead to the center where a huge Shiva temple (Swayambhu Gudi) once existed. Every gateway of this fort is made of four pillars, which are carved out of a single rock. These gateways are surrounded by the three-layered fortified walls, which are built for the purpose of defense. The first layered wall is of mud and its height is 20 feet high and several kilometers in circumference, encircling the fort. The second wall of the fort is made of massive granite blocks laid without mortar. The third wall remains in its remnants today. The architectural beauty of the fort reflects amazingly carved sculptures in black basalt on ornamental doorways, repetitive patterns, motifs depicting animal forms like vibrant lions, elephants, graceful swans with swirling tail features and etc. Nandi sculpture is another great piece of work found in the fort as the elephants.

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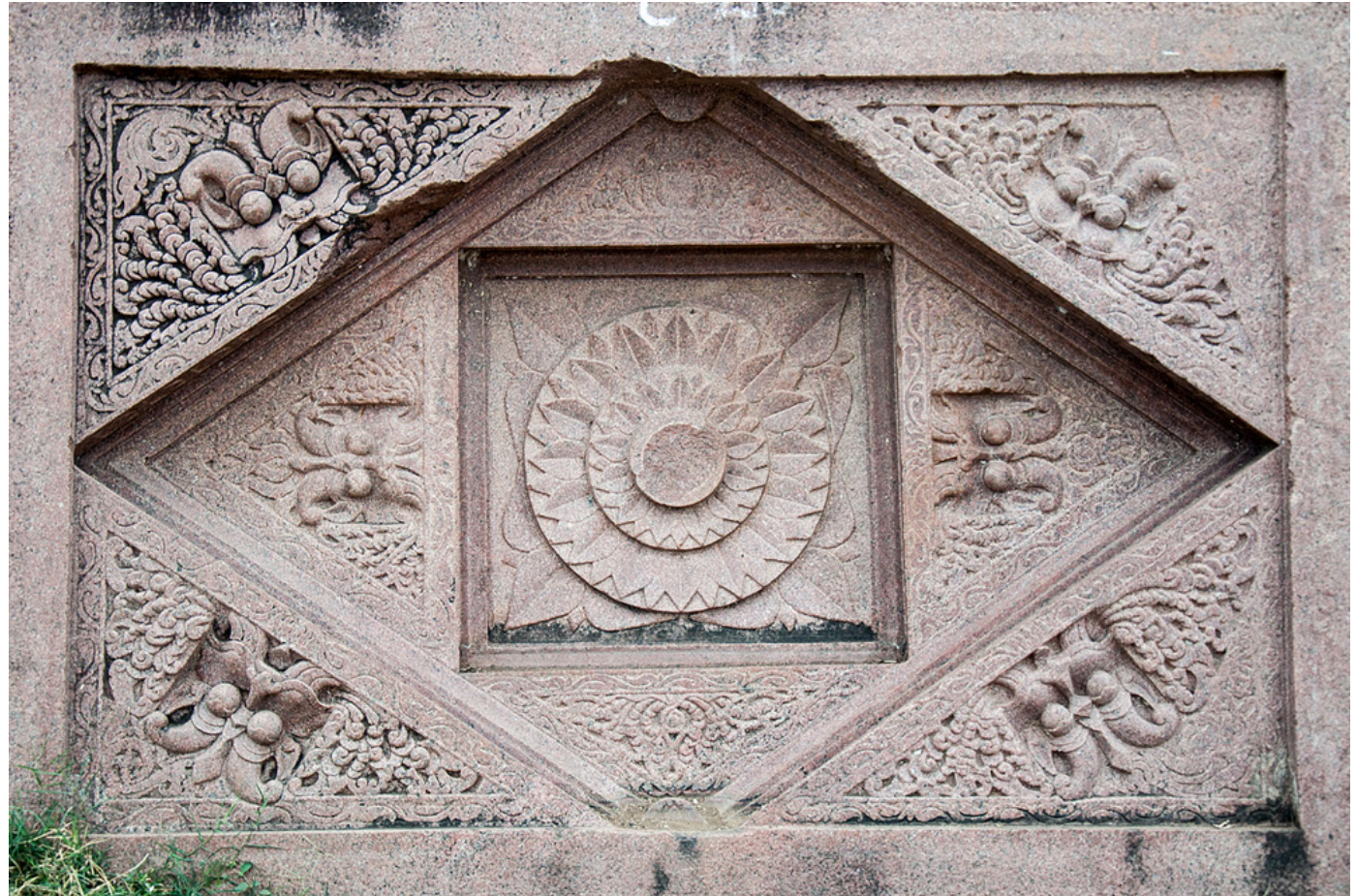NID Campus, Bengaluru

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The Thousand Pillar Temple

The famous Thousand-pillar temple is one of the best examples of Kakatiya architecture. It was built by Rudra Deva, at the slopes of Hanamakonda hill and it was dedicated to the Lord Shiva (Rudradeva), Lord Vishnu(Vasudeva) and Lord Sun(Suryadeva) in 1163 AD. This temple has the star shaped base and triple shrined (Trikutalaya). Though Shaivisam (devotion to lord Shiva) continued to be the religion of masses of kakatiya dynasty still intellectuals preferred the revival of Vedic rituals. They sought to reconcile the Vaishnavites (followers of lord Vishnu) and the Shaivites (followers of lord Shiva) through the worship of Harihara (combination of lord Vishnu and lord Shiva).This temple is known as Veyisthambala Gudi (thousand pillar temple) in local. As Rudra Deva built this, the temple is named after him as 'Sri Rudreswara swamy temple' with the presiding deity 'Rudreswara'. This temple is built in the style of Chalukyan temple architecture. The decorations and the complexes of temple built during the time of Kakatiyas have a distinct style and technology exposing the impact of Kakatiya sculptor. One thousand, as the name indicates, these many pillars carved of various dimensions, which are perfect in symmetry and style. The exquisite icons, elephants, etc are also found in this ancient Dravidian temple. The structure of 6 feet monolithic black basalt Nandi is also placed at the entrance of the temple as the holy bull of Lord Shiva and the rock cut elephants are placed on either side of the main shrine. The temple also has amazingly carved doorways, ceilings with rich inscriptions. These pillars of the temple are of black stone are three-quarter reliefs carved intricately in geometric designs through which the finest hairbreadth can only be inserted into the holes of the delicately carved stone bangle.

This temple is constructed by using an unique technique called sandbox technique for strengthening the foundation. In this technique a deep pit is dug and filled with sand and covered with huge rock beams. On this rock platform the huge columns were raised and then the main structuring was made. This invention of technique of Kakatiya sculptors is immortal. The skill of Kakatiya sculptors is also evident in the skillful craftsmanship and flawless ivory carving technique in their art.

These creations of Trikutalaya temple and Kirthi Torana entrance gateways constructed by Kakatiyas are the most typical examples in the aspect of form and design.The Kakatiya temples and gateways are the outstanding examples of architectural, sculptural and structural inventiveness of Kakatiya sculptors. This architecture has the unique components that are not seen elsewhere. They demonstrate both the creative masterpiece and stand as a special example for the continuity of evolved cultural traits and the transformation through interchange of cultural values for many years of Indian art history.

Warangal is undoubtedly with the rich past from which the art lovers and the people interested in architecture, history and ancient monuments can gain the knowledge from in and around Warangal fort. But today such architectural marvel, which Kakatiyas built few centuries ago, is only a pale shadow of it. The fort has shattered down into ruins but the remnants of the fort still displays the valuable insight of the past civilization. And in Trikutalaya temple though the two precious Panchaloha (five metal alloys) idols of Lord Vishnu and Lord Surya are mislaid but still the architectural beauty of the temple lingers and draws the attention of the tourists towards itself.

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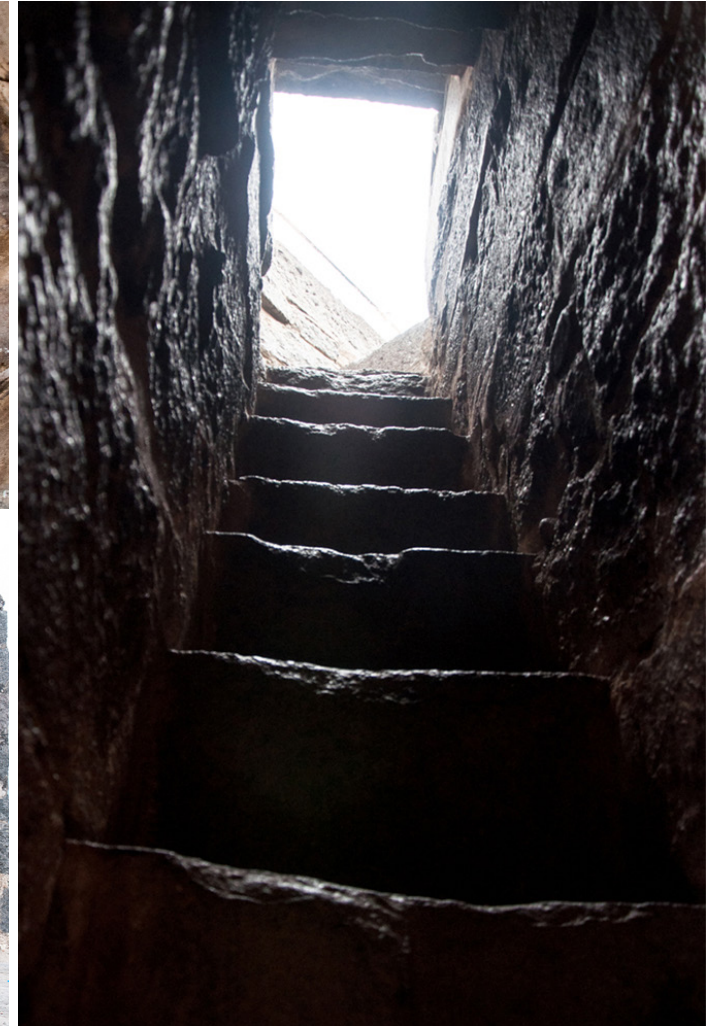by
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