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RESEARCH ARTICLE

STYLE OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE DURING CHOLA PERIOD

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Abstract

The Chola period, which spanned from the 9th to the 13th century in South India, was characterized by a distinctive style of art and architecture. Chola art was marked by its intricate stone carvings on temples, showcasing elaborate sculptures of deities and mythical creatures. The architecture featured towering Dravidian-style temples with intricately sculpted gopurams (entrance towers) and mandapams (pillared halls). This period exemplified a profound fusion of artistic expression and religious devotion, leaving a lasting legacy in South Indian art and architecture. In the art of portraiture, the Cholas outperformed the Pallavas. The best portraits can be found on the walls of Nageswarasamy temples. In Kalahasti temple, there are portraits of Cholamadevi and Kulothunga-III. They are excellent examples of Chola art. Paintings flourished, and figures were painted with realism. The Chola painters skill can be seen in their paintings. Paintings in the Big Temple are excellent examples. Scenes from Periyapuram are beautifully depicted, and the Kailasanathar temple in Kanchipuram and the Vishnu temple in Malaiyadipatti both house fine examples of Chola paintings. During the Chola period, Rajaraja-I and Rajendra made greater contributions to the development of the art of painting. Chola temples had a beautiful shikara stone at the top. It had intricate and meticulously carved carvings. It's amazing how these structures, weighing hundreds of tones, are placed without the use of cranes. During their reign, the Cholas built temples in Nageshwara, Brihadeshwara, Airavatesvara, and Chidambaram. Other kingdoms in South India and Sri Lanka adopted their style. Chola art is famous for its bronze sculpting. These exquisite bronze sculptures are considered the finest in the world.

Keywords: The Chola Dynasty, Monumental architecture, Art and Architecture Features, Dravidian Architecture, Chola Sculpture, Nataraja sculpture, Dancing woman accompanied by musician.

Introduction

The Chola Dynasty was a prominent South Indian Tamil dynasty that ruled primarily in Tamil Nadu region of India from 9th to 13th centuries, India. Under the Cholas, Tamil Nadu reached new heights of excellence in art, religion, and literature particularly during the period of RajarajaChola and his son RajendraChola. **Monumental architecture** in the form of majestic temples and sculpture in stone and bronze reached a level of finesse never before seen in India.

Art and Architecture – Features

The period of the imperial Cholas (c. 850 CE - 1250 CE) in South India was one of continuous improvement and refinement of Chola art and architecture.

Dravidian Architecture

The Chola dynasty is closely associated with the development of Dravidian architecture. This style is characterized by its pyramid-shaped towers (gopurams), pillared halls, and intricate carvings.

The Cholas built their temples in the style of the Pallava dynasty, which was influenced by the Amaravati School of architecture.

The Chola kings constructed numerous temples throughout their kingdom, like Central and Northern Tamil Nadu, and at times the entire state of Tamil Nadu, as well as adjoining parts of modern Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

In addition to temples, the Cholas constructed hospitals, public utility buildings, and palaces. Many such structures are mentioned in inscriptions and in contemporary accounts.

The golden palace allegedly built by Aditya Karikala for his father Sundara Chola is an example of such a structure.

Chola Sculpture

- Stone and metal sculptures abound in Chola temples. They depict Chola period socio-religious ideas. The **Nataraja sculpture at Chithambaram** is famous not only for its beauty, but also for its spiritual significance.
- In Vaishnava temples, there is a Vishnu idol. In sculptural representations of Alvars, a spiritual calmness is depicted. The Cholas used sculptures to decorate the walls, pillars, and roofs.
- During the Chola period, realism dominated sculpture. Scenes from the Ramayanam Mahabharatam, Puranas, and the lives of the 63 Nayanmars are sculpted in narrative panels on temple walls.

Chola's Contribution to Fine Arts Portraits

- In the art of portraiture, the Cholas outperformed the Pallavas. The best portraits can be found on the walls of Koranganatha and Nageswarasamy temples.
- In Kalahasti temple, there are portraits of Cholamadevi and Kulothunga-III. They are excellent examples of Chola portraiture.

Painting

Paintings flourished, and figures were painted with realism. The Chola painters' skill can be seen in their paintings. Paintings in the Big Temple are excellent examples.

Scenes from Periyapuram are beautifully depicted, and the Kailasanathar temple in Kanchipuram and the Vishnu temple in Malaiyadipatti both house fine examples of Chola paintings.

During the Chola period, Rajaraja-I and Rajendra made greater contributions to the development of the art of painting.

Music

The art of music flourished during the Chola period. In music, twenty-three panns were used. The seven music alphabets were used: sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, da,

and ni. In every temple, Alwar and Nayanmar hymns were sung.

Nambiandar nambi and Nathamuni made significant contributions to the advancement of music.

Music has inspired the creation of books. In the Brahadeeswarar temple, several musicians were appointed. Drums, udukkai, veena, and flute were well-known musical instruments.

Sagadakkottigal assembled a band of musicians. Endowments have been established to promote music. The kings rewarded musicians. Temples and mutts provided vocal and instrumental music instruction.

Dance

The Chola kings supported the art of dance. During the Chola period, two types of dances were performed: Bharatanatyam and Kathakali. Lord Nataraja can be seen dancing at the Natarajar temple in Chidamparam and the Sarangapani temple in Kumbakonam. Rajaraja I assigned 400 dancing girls to the Tanjore Big Temple.

There were two dance directors in charge of coordinating these dancing girls. Dance dramas were also performed on stages during festival times. Chola kings established endowments to promote the art of dancing. Dance dramas were also performed on stages during festival times. Chola kings established endowments to promote the art of dancing.

Drama

Drama was promoted by the Cholas. Drama was linked to music and dance. Dramas were performed on a variety of stages and theatres. During the festival, two dramas were performed: Rajarajeswara natakam and Rajarajavijayam. The Chola kings rewarded drama actors with honours. One type of drama is Koothu. Ariyakuthu, Chakki koothu, and Santhi koothu are all mentioned in the inscriptions.

The Cholas' cultural glory is reflected in Chola literature. Chola kings constructed hundreds of temples. The Cholas' cultural monuments include the Tanjore temple Brahadeeswarar (Big Temple) and the Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple.

Cholas as builders of Temples

Innumerable temples were built and patronised by the Cholas. The royal temples of Thanjavur, Gangaikonda Chozhapuram, and Darasuram are the repositories of dancing woman accompanied by musician, Brihadishvarar temple architecture, sculpture, paintings, and Chola arts iconography. The temples became a focal point for social, economic, cultural, and political activities. Architecturally, the Chola temples are simple and modest in the early stages. **Sepulchral temples** (pallip-padai) were also built where the kings were buried.

Temple Architecture During The Cholas Brihadeesvarar Temple

The Grand Temple of Thanjavur, also known as Rajarajisvaram and Brihadishvarar Temple, is a magnificent example of Chola architecture, painting, sculpture, and iconography. Rajaraja's polity was greatly legitimized by this temple. The sanctum, which has a 190-foot vimana, is topped with an 80-ton stone. The figures of Lakshmi, Vishnu, Ardhanarisvara, and Bikshadana, a mendicant form of Siva, on the outer walls of the sanctum are notable. The fresco paintings and miniature sculptures of scenes from puranas and epics in the temple walls reveal the Chola rulers' religious ideology. Dancing girls, musicians, and music masters were chosen from various settlements across Tamil Nadu and attached to this temple. Singers

had been assigned to recite the bhakti hymns in the temple grounds.

Gangaikonda Chozhapuram

In commemoration of his victory in North India, Rajendra I built Gangaikonda Chozhapuram on the model of Brihadisvarar temple in Thanjavur. He constructed the Chola-gangam irrigation tank near the capital of Jalastambha (water-pillar). It became the coronation centre, which became a Chola landmark.

The sculptures of Ardhanariswarar, Durga, Vishnu, Surya, Chandesa, and Anugrahamurty are the best pieces of the idols of gods placed in the niches of the sanctum's outer wall.

Darasuram Temple

Darasuram Temple, built by Rajaraja II (1146–1172), is yet another significant Chola contribution to temple architecture.

In the form of miniatures, incidents from the Periyapuram are depicted on the temple's garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) wall.

Features of Chola Architecture

The dvarapalas, or guardian figures, at the entrance to the mandapa, or hall, which began in the Palava period, became a distinctive feature of Chola Temples.

After a transition from the Pallava Period's rock cut structures, the Dravidian Style was fully developed. In comparison to the colossal buildings of the Imperial Cholas, the early Chola temples on the banks of the Kaveri River were smaller and made of brick.

The Imperial Chola temples are adorned with exquisite, well-composed sculptures and frescoes. The Siva Temple of Tanjore, the largest and tallest of all Indian temples, was built during the Chola period. Among the sculptures at the temple, Ganas are the most memorable figures created in Chola temples.

Significance of Chola Architecture

Chola temples had a beautiful shikara stone at the top. It had intricate and meticulously carved carvings. It's amazing how these structures, weighing hundreds of tonnes, are placed without the use of cranes. During their reign, the Cholas built temples in Nageshwara, Brihadeshwara, Airavatesvara, and Chidambaram. Other kingdoms in South India and Sri Lanka adopted their style.

Conclusion

Until the arrival of the Cholas, the art was supported by the common people and the community. During the reign of the Chola Kings, however, the Kings themselves guided and advanced large donations for the construction of grand temples. The sophistication of art in these temple structures reflected the atmosphere of the imperial court. As time passed, the size and grandeur of the temples began to trump the earlier emphasis on art. It can be seen that the Chola temples built in the latter half of the period were vast structures proclaiming the majesty and power of the deity while also depicting the majesty of the rulers who built them.

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