



## **Temples and Urban Experience in Premodern South Asia: Monuments for the City**

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How did premodern individuals experience temples in South Asia? What meanings and associations did temples bring to their minds? In what contexts did they encounter temple buildings? Responses to these questions are, of course, multiple and varied, and dependent upon the specificities of individual cases. Scholarship has predominantly focused on South Asian temples as buildings to house and honor gods, as monuments to glorify the kings and dynasties in whose territories they were built, or as works of architecture representing particular stylistic trends. While these interpretive frameworks are all worthy of our attention, other types of meaning and experience have not been as fully explored. In this paper, Katherine Kasdorf expands the focus of inquiry to consider temples not only as distinct buildings but also as integral parts of cities. Taking as a case study the 12th–13th-century Hoysala temples in southern Karnataka, she explores a range of ways in which individuals were likely to experience the buildings in their premodern urban contexts. On the one hand, temples were one of many types of structures and spaces encountered in a city, and were perhaps not as central to residents' lives as they have been to art historical scholarship. On the other hand, as prominent buildings within their urban settings, temples would have contributed significantly to someone's visual experience of a place, regardless of that individual's participation in temple activities. To this end, we might conceptualize temples as urban monuments, bringing distinction to their cities through their visual impact.