

M.A. DHAKY (ed. SNEHAL SHAH):

Footprints of Viśvakarmā: Studies in Indian Sculpture and Architecture. xvi, 456 pp. New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2018. £75. ISBN 978 93 5311 050 5.

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The outstanding authority of Indian temple architecture, but also an expert on Hindu iconography, Jain religion and art, Indian botany, and above all, Sanskrit sources of aesthetics, architecture and art, M.A. Dhaky was one of the foremost Indian scholars of his generation. Before his death in July 2016 at the age of 89, Dhaky had published more than 300 research articles in English, Hindi and Gujarati, many appearing in volumes of collected essays and obscure journals. Snehal Shah, practising architect, architectural historian, and editor of the present volume, has selected and introduced nine of Dhaky's most significant contributions, presenting them in a handsomely produced volume illustrated with an abundance of new photographs, specially commissioned explanatory figures and building plans, as well as maps locating the historical sites mentioned in the texts.

As may be expected from such a prolific and wide-ranging scholar, the articles span a broad array of topics, from sculptural motifs, like *bhūtas*, Nandis and *vyālas*, to architectural details, such as *pranālas* and *pīthikās*. Broader subjects include a consideration of the stylistic evolution of Chola and Rāṣṭrakūṭa carvings, a survey of the Māru-Gurjara temple style, and a glimpse of the cosmic symbolism explicated in the *Vāstusāstra* of Viśvakarman.

The first article in the volume focuses on *bhūtas* or *bhūtanāyakas*, the pot-bellied imps which appear on basements, balustrades, cornices and towers of Hindu shrines, especially those dedicated to Śiva. Dhaky classifies these diverse and often amusing creatures according to iconographic categories given in the Āgamas and other pertinent Sanskrit sources. Dhaky's passion for Chola sculpture, as represented in granite wall carvings on Tamil Nadu temples, finds full expression in the next article. Here, Dhaky traces the genesis of the Chola sculptural style from the periods of the Pallava, Pāṇḍya and Muttaraiyar rulers up to its mature phase under Vijayālaya and Āditya in the ninth century, and then Rājarāja I at the turn of the eleventh century. Śiva temples in Karnataka dating from the sixth to eighth centuries were often provided with imposing sandstone Nandi images accommodated in free-standing pavilions. Dhaky draws attention to the astonishing naturalism of these magnificent bulls fashioned by local artists, such as those in Mahakuta and Pattadakal (plates on pp. 142–3). The article that follows considers the stylistic features of figural carvings in the cave temples at Ellora in Maharashtra during the sixth century. In spite of the uncertainty of historical circumstances and architectural influences at this time, Dhaky distinguishes between features derived from northern and southern Indian artistic traditions.

A much broader territory, ranging from southern India to Nepal, Sri Lanka, Java and Vietnam, is encompassed in Dhaky's comprehensive study of a detail of religious architecture that is rarely noticed. This is the spout or *pranāla* that conveys libations from sanctuary interiors. Created out of stone with remarkable imagination, such spouts often take the form of open-mouthed *makaras*, with bulging eyes and crocodile-like snouts, as well as *bhūtas*, grotesque monsters, and even benign *nāga* deities bearing water-pots. Other spouts with elegantly curved profiles emerging from *makaras* and terminating in lotus blossoms are a special feature of later temple architecture. The example at Tanjavur is suspended over a square stone basin with lion

legs, to collect the libations (Plate 41), while those in Kerala are often carried on tiny seated figures.

In the following article, Dhaky proceeds to another overlooked detail of northern Indian art, the imaginary creatures known as *vyālas*. Usually conceived with leonine bodies and ferocious heads, rearing up with paws held outwards, *vyālas* occupy wall recesses, flanking and magically protecting icons of gods and goddesses. Dhaky classifies different types of *vyālas* mentioned in prescriptive texts like the *Aparājitaprichhā* and *Samarāṅgana Sūtradhāra*, showing how Sanskrit sources attempted to chart the whole range of fantastic animal combinations. Another detail of temple architecture that Dhaky examines are the plinths, or *pīṭhikās*, for Śiva *liṅgas*, in Javanese monuments, where they assume especially ornate forms, adorned with *makaras* and *bhūtas*.

The most substantial article in the volume is Dhaky's study of the Māru and Gujara temple styles in Rajasthan and Gujarat, which he views as the genesis and fusion of two separate regional traditions. Dhaky surveys the different phases by which this synthesis was achieved within the historical and social context of the sixth century, referring to relevant texts and their terminology. He then progresses to a meticulous examination of the temple plans, elevations and basement details until he arrives at the definition of the idiom that was to dominate temple building in western India up until the tenth–eleventh centuries. In fact, this style continued without major interruption into the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries, especially under Jaina patronage. While Dhaky does not consider this final stylistic phase, he examines verses in the eleventh-century *Vāstuśāstra* of Viśvakarman. While much of this text is concerned with the placement of sacred icons, Dhaky reveals the fundamental dual concept of Prāsāda as Universal Being and Cosmos uniting Creator and Creation.

The volume concludes with biography of Dhaky; a complete bibliography of his published works in English, Gujarati and Hindi; reviews by others of his various articles; and a list of his awards and achievements. Snehal Shah must be saluted for compiling such a thorough and dedicated tribute.

George Michell

DEBORAH KLIMBURG-SALTER and LINDA LOJDA (eds):
South Asian Archaeology and Art. Changing Forms and Cultural Identity: Religious and Secular Iconographies, Vol. 1. Papers from the 20th Conference of the European Association for South Asian Archaeology and Art held in Vienna from 4th to 9th of July 2010.
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The volume reviewed here contains 18 peer-reviewed papers presented at the twentieth conference of the European Association for South Asian Archaeology and Art (EASAA) that was held in Vienna in 2010. The papers focus on the art and architecture of South Asia in the historic period, and are organized into six distinct sections arranged by geo-cultural regions.