

The Persian text is lightly edited and vigorously translated by Thackston, as is to be expected from the doyen of translators of pre-modern Persian. It is a fresh translation founded on the Persian text of the Calcutta edition, drawing carefully on occasion from a number of manuscripts. In addition to the text and translation, the book has an introduction, maps, index, bibliography, glossary and very helpful notes. The translator manages to catch Abu'l-Fazl's frustrating willingness to combine arcane Persian, as in his fawning introduction and attempt to situate Akbar within a horoscope and Adamic framework, with really quite simple and plodding annals of battles and court events, presumably taken from the archives by Abu'l-Fazl's assistants. The translation is first class and Thackston is to be congratulated on catching the shifting registers that so often obfuscate more than illuminate Abu'l-Fazl. At the same time, Thackston barely situates the *Akbarnama* itself, satisfying himself with an introduction of only ten pages. This is unfortunate, as Thackston has an ability to find the telling orientation of Abu'l-Fazl's larger project, as, for example, in his very brief excursus (pp. xiv–xv) on the importance of mystifying language such as *shinasa'i* ("knowingness"). But the introduction and notes are embedded more within a philology than a historiography. Is it really helpful for our understanding of the sixteenth century to see Abu'l-Fazl's worldview as "secular" (p. xi) or his adversary Bada'uni as "uncompromisingly orthodox" (p. xvii)? But students and scholars alike will welcome Thackston's fluent and accessible translation of the first portion of this important work.

The translation of this most Persianate of Indic works appears in the Murty Classical Library of India, which wishes to provide a classical foundation of translations to illustrate the breadth and depth of Indian civilization. It is wonderful to see Persian recognized as a classical Indic language, and it is hoped that the remaining two-thirds of the *Akbarnama* will subsequently be published in the series. The book is produced to very high standards, with an evocative and clear Persian typeface designed by Titus Nemeth. It is highly recommended for courses on premodern South Asia or the Persianate cosmopolis of the early modern period.

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LAURA E. PARODI (ed.):

*The Visual World of Muslim India: The Art, Culture and Society of the Deccan in the Early Modern Era.*

xxxii, 366 pp. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014. £68. ISBN 978 1 84885 746 9.

NAVINA NAJAT HAIDAR and MARIKA SARDAR (eds):

*Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy.*

xi, 384 pp. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015. \$65. ISBN 978 1 58839 566 5.

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These interdisciplinary and edited volumes – the first a collection of papers originally presented at a 2008 academic conference and the second an exhibition catalogue also with multiple authors – share the same basic goal: to advance scholarly knowledge and overall awareness of the history and courtly cultures of India's Deccan

kingdoms during the early modern period (roughly the fifteenth to early eighteenth centuries, with concentration on the sixteenth and seventeenth), and to underscore the production of Deccani visual arts as distinctive from those of the generally much better-known history of Indian art during the Mughal era. Likewise, the basic issues the two books raise and explore are complimentary: the formulation and development of the Deccan's artistic styles and cultural identities, the relationships among artists and patrons, and the interaction of the Deccan sultanates with Safavid Iran, Mughal India and Europe. Not surprisingly, the publications feature research by many of the same experts in archaeology, art history, anthropology and cognate fields, including a half dozen who also contributed to the proceedings of another 2008 symposium (Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar (eds), *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323–1687*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011). Both the 2014 and 2015 publications even begin with a foreword and an opening chapter, respectively, by the eminent historian Richard Eaton. From there, however, the approach differs: the articles in the Parodi book are arranged in four, imaginatively titled and seemingly overlapping, thematic groupings, while the essays and entries in the Haidar and Sardar catalogue (itself with an effusive sub-title) follow the same sequence of Deccan geography and chronology as the actual exhibition installation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, designed for the general public.

Notwithstanding its broad themes, the content of the 2014 volume is limited, and the majority of its thirteen contributions focus on individual sites, monuments, city and building types, and illustrated manuscripts. The location and origin of the specific works under discussion range across the entire Deccan, however, with emphasis on those created in the major kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda. Of particular note is the study of a large building in Gulbarga once thought to be a mosque and here convincingly reinterpreted as a Bahmani ceremonial hall (ch. 5), the analysis of the meaning and making of a Qutb Shah manuscript (ch. 8), and the presentation of a previously unpublished Sufi romance attributed to Hyderabad (ch. 12). Subjects with either pan-regional or international relevance include a succinct discussion of circular cities (ch. 1), a compelling look at the Eurasian origin and symbolism of animal reliefs on various Deccani buildings (ch. 7), and two fascinating accounts of European artists in Bijapur (ch. 9 and 10). An article re-examining the quintessential art of Bidri ware, particularly hookahs (ch. 11), constitutes the volume's one nod to the Deccan's rich history of three-dimensional objects and techniques. Progress throughout these and other essays, especially for the non-Deccan specialist, is greatly aided by the use of pithy (and sometimes very clever) subheadings, by excellent maps, plans and diagrams, and by many colour reproductions (which, however, are frequently on too small a scale to make out easily the details described in the text).

Given the close correlation of subject matter and the overlap of contributors, it is no surprise that various of the monuments and works of art discussed at length or cited in chapter notes in the 2014 symposium proceedings also appear in the 2015 exhibition publication, sometimes in larger reproductions. Thus, a famous album painting of the Mughal emperor Jahangir shooting the head of Malik 'Ambar, the Ethiopian-born leader of Ahmadnagar mentioned regularly in the Parodi volume and searchable through the index, is featured as catalogue number 21. Other examples include two portraits of the Bijapur sultan Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (2014 volume, fig. nos 9.5 and 10.5; 2015 exhibition, cat. nos 33 and 46) and the illustrated Sufi manuscript from Hyderabad (2014 volume, ch. 12; 2015 exhibition, cat. no. 173). Such recurrence helps to signal the importance and impact of particular works of art, an asset for anyone new to Deccan studies. More to the

point is that the catalogue's arrangement, interspersing 16 section essays with over 200 object entries, facilitates efforts to grasp both the complex flow of the Deccan's kingdoms and dynasties, as well as their relations to Mughal India and Europe, and the extensive corpus of artists, patrons and works of art through which the region's visual heritage is here charted. And because this publication accompanies a museum exhibition (even if it is much too hefty to have been carried around the show), it represents the full panoply of Deccan court production, with an impressive range of portable objects such as coins, arms and armour, metal ware (including pieces decorated with silver and gold and others with relief inscriptions, plus many different examples of Bidri ware), stonework, standards ('*alams*'), architectural decorations, lacquered penboxes and other containers, carved ivories, carpets, textiles and clothing (with special attention paid to the cloth called *kalamkari*), pendants and other jewellery made of precious stones, and stunning cut diamonds, as well as bound manuscripts, album leaves, paintings, drawings, decoupage and works on marbled paper ('*abri*'). Meanwhile, the built environment and architectural history of the Deccan receives its due here in the section essays, documented with copious views of sites and monuments specially photographed for the occasion.

Both publications are very handsomely produced, and both contain all the appropriate scholarly apparatus to make them valuable as reference works. Each also contains a listing of Deccan rulers and dynasties, although some specific reign dates differ, which will oblige non-specialist researchers (such as this reviewer) to consult a third source. This minor anomaly aside, the two works fulfil their common goal of furthering scholarly research on and increasing general interest in Deccani studies. Thus the subject generally characterized as a sub-field certainly seems to be moving out of the margins and into the mainstream of Indian art history.

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JEAN DELOCHE:

*Contribution to the History of the Wheeled Vehicle in India.*

(Collection Indologie 126.) 145 pp. Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry / École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2014. ISBN 978 81 8470 201 9.

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The recently (re)published monograph by Jean Deloche complements his earlier research on various aspects of daily life in ancient India. A revised translation of the 1983 French original, this is an exhaustive study of all animal-drawn vehicles used on the subcontinent from the protohistoric period to the present. Deloche's thorough method, which characterizes all his work, is reflected in the broad range of material under study, including rock and miniature paintings, miniature models, stone reliefs, and early accounts by European travellers, for example Rudyard Kipling's *Beast and Man in India* (London, 1891) and Pierre Sonnerat's *Voyage aux Indes Orientales et à la Chine* (Paris, 1781), to name just two. The study is generously illustrated with line drawings and 84 photographs.

Part I discusses present-day country carts, categorizing them according to the size and build of the wheels (solid, with radial spokes or with paired cross-bars; and with a massive or a thin felloe) and according to the type of axles, supports and the body. It is interesting to see that archaic, solid-wheel carts, sometimes with stone wheels,