

development, demonstrating John Burton-Page's commanding knowledge of the subject.

This expertise is similarly evident in his accounts of thirty-two key sites for the study of Indo-Islamic architecture, based on thorough research into available written sources and direct acquaintance with the monuments in the field, for which there is no substitute. Many of these sites across northern, western and eastern India and the Deccan, such as Delhi, Ahmadabad and Bijapur, are well known and studied. But many sites included here have rarely been visited by scholars and have not to date been thoroughly studied: examples include Maner in Bihar, the hill-fort at Narnala or the tombs at Thalner, both in Maharashtra. Since writing these encyclopaedia entries, some of these sites have been subject to sustained study – Nagaur in Rajasthan or Vijayanagara (Hampi) in Karnataka are good examples – but the accounts still include valuable data and interpretation for scholars interested in Indo-Islamic architecture. Architectural histories rarely offer sustained accounts of the history and monuments at a single site that you might wish to read whilst there. Guidebooks, by contrast, rarely have critically academic accounts of just those aspects of sites. There remains a need for publications on the sites and monuments of South Asia that are academically informed but accessible and engaging – not merely descriptive – to interested visitors on the ground.

The bibliographies that were originally included with each entry have been compiled into a single one, and the editor has updated this with some of the key publications from the past two decades that have been published since John Burton-Page wrote his accounts. Footnotes would have been helpful, particularly for the references to architectural inscriptions. Few of the original encyclopaedia entries were illustrated. Michell has compensated for this by including in a separate section sixty-three monochrome illustrations – sadly not John Burton-Page's own – of key monuments, though these are not referenced in the text. It is unfortunate that these could not be placed alongside the text to aid the reader's comprehension of Burton-Page's discussion. The omission of maps, plans, sections and other drawings are another reason for the reader to consult this book alongside other accessible publications in this field. The cost of this book will not make it as widely read as it deserves to be, but Michell is to be credited with gathering together these valuable articles on an important aspect of South Asian art into a more accessible form. In sum, this book is a useful addition to more recent literature on the Islamic architecture of South Asia, and as an introductory reference to the subject for students, and to the major sites that demand further research by interested scholars.

Crispin Branfoot

CRISPIN BRANFOOT:

Gods on the Move: Architecture and Ritual in the South Indian Temple. xvi, 272 pp. London: The Society for South Asian Studies, The British Academy, 2007. £30. ISBN 978 0 9553924 1 2.
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The "late" period of religious architecture and art of South India, especially of Tamilnadu, has until recently been a much neglected subject. While there is no shortage of studies on Pallava and Chola temples and sculptures (sixth–thirteenth centuries), for example, the Vijayanagara and Nāyaka eras (fourteenth–seventeenth centuries) have not attracted serious attention from art historians. The appearance of

this volume signals a major change in focus, since it is for the most part concerned with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As the author argues, it was only from the middle of the sixteenth century, once Tamilnadu had achieved autonomy from the Vijayanagara emperors who had dominated the region from the end of the fourteenth century, that artistic production once again resumed on a major scale. The revival of temple building in the second half of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may be judged from the large number of splendidly appointed and grandiosely scaled religious monuments that date from this time. Though this period was marked by political instability there was nonetheless a sustained investment in Hindu architecture, sculpture and the related arts on the part of the Nāyaka rulers of the Gingee, Tanjavur (Tanjore) and Madurai kingdoms, as well as their successors. The temples that were substantially expanded or newly founded by these figures are the principal focus of the work under review here. Illustrated by a generous selection of photographs and measured architectural plans, many of which are published here for the first time, the author's discussions constitute a welcome contribution to the subject that should be of particular interest for scholars, students and even travellers to Tamilnadu.

After outlining the relationship of temple building and royal authority in Tamilnadu in the years prior to the invasion of the region by the Delhi sultans at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Branfoot proceeds to describe the subsequent revival of artistic patronage. Here, however, he notes that the Vijayanagara period in Tamilnadu was not particularly fruitful in this regard, with the exception of the Pandya kings in the extreme south of Tamilnadu during the fifteenth century. The situation changes markedly once local governors had attained a certain measure of autonomy from Vijayanagara. This chronological pattern is clear from the author's analysis of the building phases of particular religious monuments, such as the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara temple in the middle of Madurai and the Skanda temple in Tirupparankundram, both of which reached their final form after the mid-sixteenth century.

In the next chapter Branfoot turns his attention to the towered gateways of temples, known in local terminology as *gopuras*. Here he describes the different configurations of walled compounds that are entered through sequences of *gopuras*, noting that these gateways are not always axially aligned with the sanctuaries within. The discussion is much aided by schematic plans of the most important religious monuments. Of particular interest here is the author's consideration of temple towns, such as those that incorporate streets and dwellings, like the Ranganātha temple on Srirangam Island in the Kaveri river. From this overview of the urban context of the Nāyaka temple Branfoot proceeds to an investigation of the features of the *vimāna*, or focal sanctuary of the religious monument. Here, he meticulously describes the essential "aedicular" language of the Drāviḍa style, tracing the stylistic evolution of basement mouldings, columnar forms, niche types and parapet elements. The value of this chapter is the clear definition that Branfoot is able to offer for the Tamilnadu style during the Nāyaka era. His analysis demonstrates that building practice was only partly influenced by theoretical prescriptions. From the *vimāna* the author proceeds to a consideration of temple dynamics, as expressed in the colonnaded corridors along which images were paraded and the various types of halls, especially the ornate *kalyāna maṇḍapas* in which marriage ceremonies of the god and goddess were annually celebrated, and the *vasanta maṇḍapas* intended for rites commemorating the beginning of the spring season. The author concludes this chapter with a description of the *teppakuḷams*, or great tanks of the Nāyaka religious complex, in which the gods were floated so that they may be ritually "cooled". The author is, however, mistaken, in describing

the Mahāmakam tank at Kumbakonam as an irregular octagon (p. 163); in reality, it is four-sided.

Branfoot next turns to the sculptural component of the Nāyaka temple. Here he notes that the emphasis on niche carvings that characterizes the art of earlier periods now shifts to carvings on the columns that line the central aisles of corridors and *maṇḍapas*. The author traces the “liberation” of figural and animal sculptures from the confines of the column shaft, until it reaches a climax in huge, virtually three-dimensional compositions, such as those at Madurai, Tenkasi and Krishnapuram. The iconographic classification of Nāyaka plastic art that he presents here is without doubt the most comprehensive that has yet been attempted. Readers will appreciate the author’s useful distinction between fierce deities and epic heroes of all types, and more benign personalities, such as Manmatha and Rati, the divinities associated with erotic love, and figures drawn from *Kuṟuvañci*, the popular Tamil dance drama. The author’s discussion of temple sculpture continues with a chapter on royal portraiture, which he considers to be one of the most original aspects of Nāyaka art. Here Branfoot shows how sculpted effigies of particular rulers, many of whom can be identified with some certainty, are strategically positioned within the temple so as to “greet” deities as they are paraded through the monument. These carvings invariably depict kings with their hands held together in attitudes of adoration, thereby permitting historical figures “permanently” to interact with temple gods.

In his conclusion the author observes that the Tamilnadu temple style survives to the present day, and has even spread beyond South India, as evidenced by recently constructed Hindu monuments in Singapore, Durban, Hawaii, London and elsewhere. A glossary, bibliography and index are appended.

George Michell

PRITI KUMAR MITRA:

The Dissent of Nazrul Islam: Poetry and History.

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The Dissent of Nazrul Islam makes a significant contribution to the exploration of the history of ideas in South Asia. Mitra unravels the play of ideas in colonial India that inspired and influenced the dissenters while also explicating the concept of dissent. He locates Nazrul Islam as a product within the rubric of these ideas to trace his emergence as a poet, a thinker and a human being. In the introduction Mitra emphasizes the omission of Nazrul from historical studies which necessitated this study. Within the framework of dissent in South Asia he systematically draws out the particularities of Nazrul’s dissent. Mitra writes: “As a rebel he dissented against a number of orthodoxies – political, religious, social and literary – operative in the country. Marking the highest point of nationalist discontent, Nazrul, in his comprehensive rebellion against all orthodoxies, appears to represent a complex microcosm of the entire tradition”. In the three core chapters Mitra focuses on Nazrul’s dissent against the British colonial government in India, the Gandhian non-violent means of nationalist struggle, Islamic fundamentalism and Hindu cultural chauvinism, as well as the hegemony of Rabindranath Tagore in the world of Bengali literature. The painstaking research undertaken over several years answers many questions, just