

In all, Huifeng's study performs a valuable function by significantly nuancing our understanding of Buddhist emptiness, and should therefore be of great use to scholars specializing in Buddhist studies, and more broadly in religious studies, intellectual history, or textual hermeneutics.

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CATHERINE B. ASHER:

*Delhi's Qutb Complex: The Minar, Mosque and Mehrauli.*

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This generously illustrated volume makes a welcome contribution to the scholarship on the Delhi Sultanate, the medieval monuments of Delhi, and the military, religious and architectural relations between northern India and the wider Islamic world. While the Qutb Minar and its adjacent mosque are acknowledged as the first great Muslim architectural complex in India, the history of the complex through the centuries, together with the surrounding settlement of Mehrauli, has not previously been chartered in a comprehensive manner. This narrative, spanning more than 900 years, may be considered Asher's chief contribution, and to this end she has drawn on a wide range of official chronicles and saintly hagiographies, as well as epigraphic and archaeological reports.

Asher's approach is essentially chronological. She begins her narrative with Qutb al-Din Aibak, commander of the Ghurid army, who established the Qutb Minar at the very end of the twelfth century. At that time, and indeed until just a few years ago, this was the tallest such tower in the entire Islamic world. Asher explores the political motivations for Aibak's hugely ambitious project and the purpose of its inscriptions, few of which could actually be read from below. She also refers to the minarets in Afghanistan, from where the Ghurids hailed, that served as models for the Minar's characteristic multi-stage, tapering shaft, with its projecting circular and pointed flanges. But Asher also discusses the contributions of Indian craftsmen to the arched façade and colonnades of the adjacent mosque, especially under Aibak and a later ruler, Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish, who is buried in an elaborately decorated tomb to the rear of the prayer hall. While Iltutmish is generally credited with setting up the iron column in the middle of the mosque courtyard, which he had removed from a Gupta-period site in central India, confirming data for this act of pillage and its incentive are lacking.

Asher next considers the Mongol threat to northern India in the mid-thirteenth century, and the subsequent expansion of the Qutb complex under the Tughluq sultans who made Delhi capital of an all-India empire. Ala al-Din Tughluq was responsible for extending the mosque and adding a finely finished entrance gate. While the markets and civic buildings that must have surrounded the complex at this time have disappeared, the tombs of several saintly figures whose careers underpinned those of the Tughluq sultans can still be seen. A later Tughluq ruler, Firuz Shah, repaired and heightened the Minar in 1369. An inscription recording his contribution mentions Vishvakarma, the divine architect of Indian legend, suggesting this sultan was concerned to express respect for his Hindu subjects. Timur's raid on Delhi in 1398 shattered the Tughluq polity, and it was only under the Lodi sultans in the fifteenth century that the complex once again attracted attention. Asher directs the reader's attention to the doorway leading to the staircase within the Minar added by Sikandar Lodi. That the Minar played a significant role in Indian Muslim religious architecture during these

years is evident from the mosques erected at different sites across the country provided with corner buttresses that replicated at a smaller scale its tapering, multi-flanged shaft.

Asher pays particular attention to the Qutb complex and Mehrauli after the Mughals had established themselves at Delhi in the mid-sixteenth century. With the construction of tombs of courtly figures, revered or disgraced, the complex became a prestigious funerary site, while Mehrauli was esteemed as a theological centre, since here were located the residences of saintly teachers, both long dead and still alive. Aurangzeb ordered the renovation of the dargah of Bakhtiyar Kaki, an earlier saint whose grave had become a major pilgrimage destination. Patronage of this saint's dargah escalated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when several later Mughal emperors were interred here. At the same time other graves, a sarai and a number of small mosques sprung up around the complex, and even a pleasure garden with water channels and fountains, like the one depicted in a contemporary watercolour reproduced in this volume. The Jain temple in Mehrauli that enjoys popularity today seems also to have been founded at this time. The British who were now in control of Delhi also took an interest in Mehrauli, and the Resident, Sir Thomas Metcalfe, had an estate here with a purpose-built, Mughal style garden, guesthouse and lookout pavilion.

Asher concludes her narrative with a summary of twentieth-century constructional activities, including an Anglican church and a Mughal-style public library in Mehrauli, and the various campaigns of restoration and maintenance undertaken by the archaeological authorities in the vicinity. In 1993, the "Qutb Minar and its Monuments" were inscribed on UNESCO's prestigious World Heritage List; four years later an Archaeological Park was established nearby. However, the Qutb Complex has not been immune to contemporary Hindu-centric attitudes, which tend to emphasize the destruction of the temples that provided the materials for the original mosque. But, as the author points out, it is India's two premier Muslim monuments, the Taj Mahal and the Qutb, which today attract the largest number of visitors in the entire country.

While readers will appreciate the broad range of illustrations assembled by the author, not all these are of the highest quality. What this reviewer found lacking is a specially prepared map of Mehrauli locating all the monuments mentioned in the text. What also would have been helpful is a plan of the mosque of the Qutb complex indicating the different phases of its expansion, like that provided by J.A. Page in his small 1927 guidebook, to which readers are recommended. The volume is provided with sufficient notes, a comprehensive bibliography and an index.

**George Michell**

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CENTRAL ASIA

ANNE BURCHARDI:

*Catalogue of Tibetan Maṇḍalas and other Images. Texts, Initiation Cards and Prayer Flags in the Royal Library and the National Museum, Copenhagen.*

(Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts, Xylographs, etc., in Danish Collections, 6.3.) xv, 304 pp. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, Det Kongelige Bibliothek 2016. ISBN 978 87 7694 172 7.

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While it is common for glossy printed catalogues to accompany exhibitions of Tibetan artefacts, catalogues describing the inventories of museums and libraries are few in the field of Tibetan studies. There is a big difference between the