

the author's conclusion that the illustrations impart to the Great Mongol *Shahnama* "an extra freight of Mongol history" (p. 367).

It is suggested that artistic production in Ilkhanid Iran should be checked for the influence of Chinese art. Pointing out many landscape and natural elements inspired by Chinese models, the author emphasizes their thoroughly different application for the creation of a certain mood, for instance, or a symbolic mark. Looking for the adaptation of visual elements of European art comes as rather a surprise. Whether, for instance, certain gestures or poses are inspired by European works of art is difficult to establish because they are used in a completely different context. One can see, however, why the artists may have been inclined to make use of such inspirations.

Finally the author turns to the problem of "orphan leaves", now in albums like H. 2153 in the Topkapı Palace Museum or the Diez Albums in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. He discusses 11 miniatures which, very probably, may once have belonged to the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, and thereby extends the inquiry he started with a contribution in J. Gonnella, F. Weis and C. Rauch (eds), *The Diez Albums: Contexts and Contents* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017, 441–68).

The analysis of the preserved illustrations of the manuscript is complemented by four appendices put together by colleagues. Manijeh Bayani identified the text around the miniatures. This is not only helpful in following the context of a miniature, but even more importantly, it makes visible when the picture was placed on a leaf that was not originally illustrated. The appendix also includes information about unillustrated leaves and inscriptions on miniatures now part of H. 2153. Appendix 2, by Christine van Ruymbeke, examines the calligraphy and decoration of the rubrics and captions. Here too, discrepancies between these and the verses of the poem are pointed out. A contribution by Hoa Perrigüey examines the physical structure of the folios from the Great Mongol *Shahnama* in their original state, including an analysis of the colours. As far as the later treatment of the folios is concerned the list of split leaves is of particular interest. Appendix 4 contains Helen Loveday's paper analysis, which takes the leaf with the miniature showing "Rustam slaying Shagad" as its example.

With a new approach to the pictures, and its systematic and detailed realization of varying aspects, the author provides us with a better understanding of each recognized illustration of the Great Mongol *Shahnama*. Through the enormous scope of this work, the reader is provided with comprehensive information on the Great Mongol *Shahnama* and thereby with a perfect starting point for further research.

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## **Salma Samar Damluji and Viola Bertini: *Hassan Fathy: Earth & Utopia***

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This book is among the most recent volumes on the work of award-winning Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy (1900–1989). It can be considered an edited volume with



contributions by Damluji, mostly contemporaneous with Fathy, more recent contributions by Bertini, and posthumous contributions by Fathy. The book's content is structured in two parts. The first covers Fathy's theoretical conceptions, research works, and the discourse upon which his practice was based. The second features several of Fathy's design works, as well as design guidelines and construction ideas he developed. The volume is rich in illustrations of Fathy's buildings, design drawings, and paintings, and includes notes, a bibliography of published and unpublished texts by Fathy, and an index.

A major argument, which recurs in several chapters, is that relating to Fathy's main legacy: the architect sought traditional architecture that communicated Arab cultural identity, and he succeeded in creating "a school of thought in Islamic and Arab architecture" (p. 15). Bertini argues that the traditional Nubian house constituted an "archetypal reference" for Fathy's model of the Arab house (p. 68), although she acknowledges that vernacular architecture in several Arab cities served as a reference too. The process by which Fathy developed his architectural language, according to Bertini, involved the "transposition" (p. 71) of elements from their original context and "re-contextualization" and "re-assembly" of these elements (p. 249) to form "a new lexicon" (p. 71). Bertini, however, does not address the extent to which Fathy's architectural language was new, nor did she engage the influences of Western theoretical and built works on Fathy's ideas, which had been established in James Steele's *Architecture for People: The Complete Works of Hassan Fathy* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1997) and Leila el-Wakil's edited volume *Hassan Fathy: An Architectural Life* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2018; published in French in 2013). Bertini rightly argues that Fathy's "process of synthesis and abstraction" ignored the specific local context, producing "generic" Arab houses (p. 278). These have principal elements such as the courtyard, *qa'a* (reception hall), *majaz* (bent entry), *iwān* (hall with walls on three sides only), and *malqaf* (wind catcher), building techniques such as vaults and domes, and complementary elements such as *mashrabiyyahs* (latticework screens) and *claustras* (pierced walls). For Bertini, in Fathy's architecture "geometry acted as the expedient" (p. 246); Fathy would then add the climatic role, legitimizing geometry and establishing his definition of architecture as "the product of the interaction between environment and mankind" (p. 278).

Another important argument in the book is that Fathy devoted much of his life to solving the problem of housing for the poor in rural areas, finding the solution in mud-brick architecture. In this context, Bertini argues that Fathy had "an idealized vision of the country" (p. 210), which contributed to the failure of his New Gourna (1945–47) village project. For Bertini, the "acontextual functions" (p. 208) that Fathy included in the project involved the reinvention of the physical, social, and economic structures of the settlement, which was another reason the project was unsuccessful. Here Bertini misses connecting such functions with the programmes of Western models that influenced Fathy's project, which Nicholas Warner and el-Wakil had highlighted in *Hassan Fathy: An Architectural Life*. Reflecting Fathy's own view and his frustration with government bureaucracy, Damluji partly attributes New Gourna's failure to the system with its consumerist approach to development, which was inconsistent with Fathy's ideas, and the disconnect between the goals government officials had for the project and the reality, interests, and needs of the residents.

Both Damluji and Bertini argue that Fathy's village designs can be considered urban designs. The authors connected that with the influence of Greek architect and urban planner Constantinos Doxiadis (1913–75). Bertini argues that the period Fathy spent working with Doxiadis (1957–61) had a strong role in forming Fathy's later career. According to her, that included his theoretical work on the city and design projects such as New Baris (1965) in which Fathy used Doxiadis's *Ekeistics* or "the science of human settlements" (p. 103). For Bertini, both Fathy and Doxiadis shared focus on the cultural context and

national conception, which in Fathy's case was a pan-Arab identity. However, Bertini rightly argues that the two followed different methods. While Doxiadis adopted mass construction, prefabrication, repetition, and generalization, Fathy adopted self-construction and individuality. And while Doxiadis's design process was deductive, Fathy's was inductive.

*Hassan Fathy: Earth & Utopia* provides exhaustive coverage of Fathy's work. However, the book narrates and describes more than it analyses or critiques, with Bertini's contributions being more analytical and critical than the other parts. The book has some repetition, such as in Damluji's and Bertini's chapters on New Gourna and among several of Fathy's texts, and a few sections stray away from focusing on Fathy, for example Rifat Chadirji's perspective on Doxiadis's work in Iraq. The book lacks a concluding chapter, which could have summed up important arguments, showed where Fathy's school of thought in Islamic and Arab architecture is today, or provided a direction for future research on the topic. Still, that Damluji worked with Fathy at an early stage of her career and some of Fathy's writings that the volume documents are published in English for the first time add value to this work. Furthermore, the diverse textual materials the book compiles, including interviews with Fathy, master builders that worked with him, and inhabitants of his projects, reports and letters by Fathy and, particularly, Fathy's *Al-Mashrabiyyah* and *Land of Utopia* stories differentiate the book from other volumes on the topic and shed light into different sides of Fathy's life, works, and ideas. Minor shortcomings aside, *Hassan Fathy: Earth & Utopia* is a valuable resource for students who wish to learn about Fathy's extensive work or scholars seeking to expand on this area of research.

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## **T. Richard Blurton: *India: A History in Objects***

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This wonderful book joins the British Museum's growing series of highly illustrated and accessible introductions to the cultural history of the world written by the museum's curators that includes *China: A History in Objects* (2017), *The Islamic World: A History in Objects* (2020) and *Southeast Asia: A History in Objects* (2023). Richard Blurton's recent book in this series demonstrates South Asia's rich cultural vitality over the past three millennia to magnificent effect, with over 500 illustrations of landscapes and monuments, rituals and festivals as well as a wide range of objects now in the museum's possession that have been collected over the past 250 years.

The book is arranged chronologically into six sections – Prehistory and early history; Early empires and developing religions; Dynasties and the rise of devotion; Deccan sultans, Mughal emperors and Rajput kings; Europeans and the British in India; and Colonial India, independence and modernity – with an introduction to each period followed by two-page spreads on a particular theme, type of object, or region. The object-focus is a very