

poem, might not only refer to the protecting features of the spider's web at the cave on Mount Thawr in which Muḥammad and Abū Bakr were hiding from the Quraish clan, but also to the weaver's sword used to open a shed and to ensure the density of the fabric. Therefore, the sword could refer to the weaver's ability to produce a fabric that is as fine and shiny as a spider's web. A white lampas weave with a pattern of spiders producing beautiful floral elements and banners with an Arabic inscription is preserved in the collection of the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg (Switzerland) (inv. no. 197). It indicates that the comparison between fineness of the spider's web and the weaver's woven fabric entered not only into Arabic poetry but also into the actual patterns of textiles. Despite these small oversights, this volume is a significant contribution to textile scholarship, highlighting the importance of the textile medium within the greater humanities, and indicating possible future research directions.

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ALLCHIN, RAYMOND and NORMAN HAMMOND (revised and updated by WARWICK BALL with NORMAN HAMMOND):

The Archaeology of Afghanistan from Earliest Times to the Timurid Period. xxxiii, 711 pp. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019.

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Shortly after the publication of the first edition (1978) of this book the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Their withdrawal in 1989 was followed by a bitter civil war that the American invasion of 2001 did little to alleviate. The past 40 years have in fact been a time when one would have thought it impossible to carry out sustained fieldwork or the kind of excavations that would result in substantial publications.

Yet surprisingly, as noted by Warwick Ball in his introduction to this second edition, an immense amount of material has in fact come to light during this period. This comes partially from the final publication reports of excavations or fieldwork conducted much earlier, but also from spectacular discoveries such as the 22,000 gold artefacts from Tila Tepe (transliteration from Dari to Russian and Russian to English results in the incorrect, but unfortunately more common, Tillya Tepe). These were thought lost after Taliban looting of the Museum, but subsequently recovered from the vault of the Central Bank of Afghanistan where they had been placed for safekeeping, and subsequently displayed internationally in a touring exhibition. Encouragingly, Afghan teams have been heavily involved in many of the most recent excavation campaigns.

My own expertise is in the Islamic field, which, with good reason, takes little more than a third of the volume. I shall concentrate on that, although I am sure that the balanced coverage of multiple authors with remarkably enhanced illustrative material, much of it supplied by the new editor, Warwick Ball, is also representative of the pre-Islamic material. There are many excellent new photographs of little-known and hard to reach monuments, among them the Sar-i Pul mausoleums and the wooden mihrab of Charkh. Many or even most of these have of course been scanned from slides; more colour correction of these would often have helped.

The first Islamic monument mentioned is the Noh Gunbad mosque at Balkh. The definitive publication of this (Lanfranco Suardo (ed.), *The Nine Domes of the Universe: The Ancient Noh Gunbad Mosque*, Kabul, New York and Bergamo, 2016) seems to have come too late to be mentioned in the bibliography, but it carries additional new information including the fact that the original building was fronted by a courtyard. I would be inclined to accept Melikian-Chirvani's opinion that the Chahyryar Adle's linkage of the building to a particular patron and date (794–5) is purely speculative, and that only on stylistic grounds can one date the building. Its remarkable similarity to Samarra stucco makes a date earlier than the ninth century extremely unlikely (Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani, "The nine domes of the universe", in *The Nine Domes of the Universe*, 72).

The date of the minaret of Mas'ud III is given (p. 478) as his regnal years (1099–1115), but the recent discovery of the unfinished state of the minaret makes it clear that 1115 is correct (Bernard O'Kane, "Carved brick: the westward spread of an Indian technique in Ghaznavid and Later Islamic architecture", in Robert Hillenbrand (ed.), *Architecture of the Iranian World*, Edinburgh, 2020). The authors note that this building, along with the minaret of Bahramshah, have both been interpreted as victory towers (as has the minaret of Jam). I find this unlikely, and in fact an aerial photograph that has recently come to light presents the clearest evidence to date for the presence of a large courtyard building, almost certainly a mosque, adjacent to the minaret of Mas'ud III (see Viola Allegranzi, *Les inscriptions persanes de Ghazni, Afghanistan: Nouvelles sources pour l'étude de l'histoire culturelle et de la tradition épigraphique ghaznavides (Ve–VIe/XIe–XIIIe siècles)*, PhD thesis, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris 3, 2017, Pl. XIV.4). The investigation of the surroundings of the minaret of Jam by David Thomas and his team (p. 517) has also revealed a courtyard building adjacent to the minaret, again with the great probability of it being its associated mosque.

The Baba Hatim mausoleum (p. 478) is listed as a Ghaznavid building, following Melikian-Chirvani's rather than Janine Sourdél-Thomine's dating, the latter's work is omitted from the bibliography: "Le mausolée dit de Baba Hatim en Afghanistan", *Revue des Études Islamiques* 39 (1971), 293–320. The presence of imitation brickwork in plaster in the interior makes a Ghurid date more likely. The building illustrated in Fig. 7.31 (at Shahr-i Gholghola, Bamiyan) is labelled a mosque. Although it has a plan of four *ayvans* around a courtyard, the diminutive scale and mostly square rooms at the corners may suggest a rare early madrasa instead.

Reference is made (p. 591) to a ruined mausoleum standing near the Shrine of Ali at Mazar-i Sharif. From its description it seems to refer to what was the Uzbek mausoleum of Kistan Qara Sultan, which has been non-extant for around 80 years (see Bernard O'Kane, "The Uzbek architecture of Afghanistan", *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* 8, 2000, 125–8. The nearby funerary mosque and mausoleum of 'Abd al-Mu'min Khan at Balkh (dated 1596) is mentioned in connection with the 1460 date of death of Khwaja Parsa, opposite whose raised open tomb it was built. However, there is absolutely no reason to ascribe any Timurid agency in the surviving building. Apart from the inscription on the facade with the name of the founder and its date, features such as the limited palette of the exterior tile mosaic, the oversized border of the dado, the use of clearly decorative interior squinch-net tracery (*pace* the authors' reference to its similarity to the Gur-i Mir, which it in no way resembles), its unfinished state (it was designed to have four external *ayvans* – 'Abd al-Mu'min reigned for but one year) and its plan's lack of correspondence to the description of the earlier Timurid building on the site (which mentions rooms adjoining the main dome chamber), make it clear that it is an Uzbek building in its entirety (O'Kane, "Uzbek architecture", 130–43).

These quibbles should not detract from what is an excellent overview of the vast panorama of the archaeology of Afghanistan. The current unsettled state of the country makes it a difficult one in which to pursue archaeological research, and looting continues to rob artefacts of their vital archaeological context. One recent interesting addition to the bibliography is Agnès Meyer, *Concurrence, coopération et collaboration en archéologie : l'exemple du Séistan, 1908–1984*, PhD thesis, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne – Paris I, 2017. Let us hope that in another forty years there will also be such an abundance of new material as to engender a further edition.

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SOUTH ASIA

EMILIE AUSSANT and GERARD COLAS (eds):

Les scolastiques indiennes. Genèses, développements, interactions. (Études thématiques 32.) 326 pp. Paris: École française d’Extrême Orient, 2020. €40. ISBN 978 2 85539 270 7.
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Under the aegis of the École française d’Extrême Orient, Émilie Aussant and Gérard Colas edited in 2020 a remarkable volume of collected essays by several leading scholars of South Asian studies (N. Balbir, P. Granoff and P. Olivelle, to name just a few), focusing mostly on the pre-colonial Sanskritic cultures of the subcontinent. Its title admirably reflects the multi-faceted purpose of this enterprise: “Les scolastiques indiennes. Genèses, développements, interactions”.

After the theoretically rich introduction by the editors, the book contains 13 articles, organized in four elegantly christened sections: 1) “De la pratique scholastique à l’émergence de scholastiques” (4 essays); 2) “Apories, crises, échanges” (4 essays); 3) “Écarts” (2 essays); 4) “Des discours et des pratiques” (3 essays). The volume is rounded off by an accurate bibliography, a carefully penned index, a section of abstracts in both French and English as well as a section of short author biographies, also in both languages. The proudly bilingual nature of the volume is also attested by the presence of six essays in French, including, of course, the introduction. In this respect, I hope not to over-interpret the intention of the editors by highlighting their laudable choice to preserve and foster the multilingual nature of contemporary scholarship against the potentially impoverishing hegemony of the English language. The editorial care, the accurate layout, the choice of font and paper have all contributed to the production of an all-round high-quality publication, which is a synesthetic pleasure to page through.

The introductory essay traces several epistemological attitudes in Indian studies towards textualized South Asian scholarly disciplines and learned practices. For instance, what one might call an “emic approach” takes seriously the Sanskrit concept of *śāstra* (knowledge system or, simply, branch of knowledge) and organizes research along the lines drawn by the traditional framework. This method is beset with issues such as lack of historicity and an essentializing tendency, but it does minimize the dangers of superimposing Western concepts onto the South Asian archive. By contrast, close to the other end of the spectrum, what we might call