

dismemberment of the Georgian state. He was assassinated in the centre of Tbilisi in 2007. Reisner warns: “Despite the existence of an independent state, Georgian society is in serious danger of becoming ‘pathologic’, if it does not succeed in developing a universally binding normative order . . . State building has been concurrent with the process of nation building. The needs of the latter have in many ways complicated the coherence of the former” (p. 170).

Hille reworks one aspect of her 2003 doctoral dissertation, an expanded version of which was published in 2010. Her conclusion (that any of the proposals to include Abkhazia and South Ossetia within a (con)federal or common state with Georgia are further from realization following Russia’s 2008 recognition of their independence) surely needs strengthening – any such chance is non-existent. The conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia ante-dated (and did not follow) Georgia’s independence (p. 199).

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been members of the Council of Europe since January 2001 and are thus required to observe the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, Article 10 of which is concerned with freedom of speech. Versteegh discusses infringements of Article 10 and expresses surprise “that so few individuals lodge complaints at the Court of Justice” (p. 228). This, again, raises questions about the level of commitment to European democratic values in these two states. It is a pity that Georgia was not included in the presentation.

This leaves the two sloppy contributions by Companjen. The second especially reads like hastily written lecture notes. There are so many questionable but unquestioned assertions that one cannot possibly address them all in such a short review, and so I mention just one. Only the Upper K’odor Valley remained outside Abkhazian control after the war with Georgia (1992–93), but this was retaken in the August 2008 hostilities. Contrary to what is stated on pp. 188 and 190, the same did not apply to the Gal Region, and, if Companjen thinks that “Abkhazian infrastructure has not been damaged” (p. 190), she should pay a visit to the capital and the Gulripsh and Ochamchira Regions to see for herself the severity of the damage inflicted, damage which is still visible largely thanks to the years of sanctions imposed on Abkhazia by *inter alia* Yeltsin’s Russia, something which is often ignored by those who erroneously see Abkhazians as Moscow’s puppets.

All in all, and *pace* Ronald Suny, author of the back-cover encomium, this is most certainly not a good place for anyone interested in becoming acquainted with Caucasian affairs to start.

George Hewitt

SOUTH ASIA

HELEN PHILON (ed.) (with photographs by Clare Arni):

Silent Splendour: Palaces of the Deccan, 14th–19th Centuries.

148 pp. Mumbai: Marg Publications on behalf of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, 2010. \$68. ISBN 978 81 85026 96 1.

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Silent Splendour: Palaces of the Deccan, edited by Helen Philon, is a welcome contribution to a burgeoning field of research, addressing specialists and non-specialists

alike, and especially valuable as the first monograph ever devoted to palatial architecture in India's central plateau. The only prior comprehensive survey of Deccani palaces was a chapter in George Michell and Mark Zebrowski, *The New Cambridge History of India, I:7. Architecture and Art of the Deccan Sultanates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). A previous Marg volume also provided some glimpses: George Michell (ed.), *Splendour of the Deccan* (Mumbai, 1986). To these should be added individual case studies, most of which – apart from a chapter in Ghulam Yazdani, *Bidar: its History and Monuments* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947) – have appeared in recent years.

This new, beautifully illustrated Marg volume presents original research by several senior and junior scholars, accompanied by specially commissioned photographs, plans and maps. The core seven chapters are arranged in a loosely chronological progression through the main dynastic centres, from the palace complexes at Gulbarga under the Bahmanis in the fourteenth century to the mansions of the Nizams in Hyderabad in the colonial era. These are preceded by a concise but informative introduction and a chapter on fortifications, while two additional chapters discuss hydraulic works and architectural decoration.

The Deccan's sophisticated traditions of water management and their symbolic overtones are very much in focus throughout the book. Along with palace complexes from the major dynastic centres, suburban estates and gardens are considered, some for the first time. Another prominent theme, explicitly advocated by Alison Mackenzie Shah in her chapter on the Nizam palaces but hinted at in various sections of the volume, is the cosmopolitan nature of Islamic patronage in the Deccan. This was not a mere outcome of the Deccan's position at the crossroads of intercontinental trade routes, but stemmed from the necessity for local Muslim polities to achieve and maintain a status of prestige, both locally and internationally. While this is acknowledged in the book, the choice to focus exclusively on the Deccani sultanates and leave out the neighbouring kingdom of Vijayanagara as well as Maratha and Peshwa patronage (the latter two considered in Michell and Zebrowski's survey), is somewhat regrettable. To the editor's credit, it must be noted that the format of the book and the commendable decision to include a wealth of previously unpublished images and drawings probably made this choice of focus virtually inevitable. However, as a result, the volume implicitly perpetuates the illusion of separate (if not opposing) "Hindu" and "Muslim" realms in South Asia; yet the purported duality is nowhere more clearly belied than in the Deccan, with its almost bewildering variety of sectarian affiliations and "syncretisms", some of which are duly indexed in the book; not to mention a shared court culture that transcended the boundaries of religious identity (see Phillip B. Wagoner, "'Sultan among Hindu Kings': dress, titles, and the Islamicization of Hindu culture at Vijayanagara", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55/4, 1996, pp. 851–80).

Similarly, the choice to have the narrative begin with the Deccan's "independence" from the Tughluq Empire of North India, thereby severing Deccani sultanate culture from its roots, comes at a cost. A case in point is the reuse of materials "from a splendidly ornate Late Chalukya temple, with images of Hindu deities on the lintels" in the southern entrance to the fourteenth-century Bahmani fort at Gulbarga (see Klaus Rötzer's chapter on fortifications: p. 30 and fig. 7 on p. 31). Such a reuse may well have more subtle reasons than the suggested intention not to alienate the local population: a progression from entranceways containing a profusion of figural sculpture to areas characterized by increasingly subdued decoration, sometimes culminating in aniconism, would seem to be a recurrent feature of areas reserved for royal use as early as the thirteenth century in the sultanate architecture of present-day Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh: see Finbarr B. Flood, "Remaking monuments",

Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter (Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 137–259. When the Tughluqs (not considered in this volume) expanded their frontier to the south, incorporating the Deccan, they were heirs to this tradition: witness their careful refashioning of the political-religious centre of Warangal, where the temple’s four gateways continued to perform their role as symbolic markers of the four directions: see Phillip B. Wagoner and John Henry Rice, “From Delhi to the Deccan: newly discovered Tughluq monuments at Warangal-Sultānpur and the beginnings of Indo-Islamic architecture in Southern India”, *Artibus Asiae* 61/1 (2001), pp. 77–117.

References to the wider Islamic world are also mostly episodic; but the great diversity in approaches to land management and urban development witnessed in the Deccan would possibly appear less unusual if historicized within international trends. However, these are relatively minor points, and the book remains a substantial contribution to the specialized field of Deccani studies, and additionally makes – or raises – points of wider relevance to the fields of Islamic as well as South Asian art and history. The Safavid specialist will find here a basis from which to consider the architectural and urban developments that accompanied each shift in allegiance to Twelver Shiism on the part of Deccani sultans; while the Mughal scholar will benefit from multiple suggestions for comparative inquiry. The book fully achieves its aim of presenting the splendour of Deccan palaces for the benefit of “scholars, general readers, and travellers alike” (as claimed in George Michell’s background note). Indeed many of these sites are as impressive as the Taj Mahal, and it is to be hoped that the book will also encourage local authorities to adopt less destructive practices of “restoration” than has been the case in recent years. As Deccani studies expand, it is hoped that the splendour of these palaces will eventually speak once more. For those willing to hear, *Silent Splendour* makes a case for the relevance of the Deccan to our knowledge of Islamic art and world history.

Laura E. Parodi

FRANCE BHATTACHARYA:

Les intellectuels Bengalis et l’impérialisme britannique/Bengali intellectuals and British imperialism.

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France Bhattacharya is a scholar of extraordinary range. Her many publications – which have shown no sign of abating since her retirement from INALCO in Paris – include translations of her late husband Lokenath Bhattacharya’s avant-garde novel *Gaṅgābatarāṇ* (*La Descente du Gange*), Bankim Chandra Chatterji’s classic novel *Ānandamāth*, and *La Victoire de Manasā*, a wonderfully lucid translation in flowing verse of Vipradāsa’s *Manasāvijaya*, a masterpiece of late fifteenth-century *maṅgal-kābya* (Institut Français de Pondichéry/École Française d’Extrême-Orient, Collection Indologie 105, 2007). She has also published many scholarly articles, and it is to historical and cultural analysis, rather than translation, to which she turns in this ambitious new study of three luminaries of the nineteenth-century