

ÉDITH PARLIER-RENAULT:

Temples de l'Inde méridionale (vi^e–viii^e siècles): La mise en scène des mythes.

413 pp. Paris: Presses Universitaires de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006. €45. ISBN 978 2 84050 464 1.

This serviceably printed but profusely illustrated book will be of considerable interest for students of Indian art since it is the first to present a comprehensive survey of the Hindu iconography of southern India under three important early lines of rulers: the Pallavas of Tamil Nadu, the Chalukyas of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, and the Rashtrakutas of Maharashtra. While other scholars, including the present reviewer, have studied the temples erected by these dynasties from an architectural point of view, Parlier-Renault is the first to concentrate exclusively on the sculptural art of these monuments, both rock-cut and structural. Spanning a period from the late sixth to the early ninth centuries, these carvings present a broad spectrum of Hindu divinities. It is this diverse pantheon that forms the principal focus of the volume under review here. The author's descriptions of these sculpted images are complemented by a thorough photographic coverage, as well as by plans giving the precise architectural locations of the different carvings.

In her opening chapter Parlier-Renault prepares her readers by considering ancient literary references to Hindu iconography. Here she summarizes the sculptural "programmes" that these texts advocate for the arrangement of images on the outer walls and inner sanctums of temples. The following three chapters are devoted to three preliminary phases of Hindu sculptural art: notably, those on the fourth–fifth-century monuments of central India, especially those at Bhitargaon and Deogarh; on cave-temples from the sixth and early seventh centuries at Elephanta, Ellora and Badami in the Deccan; and on the seventh-century shrines at Mamallapuram and other rock-cut sites in the Tamil zone. If the descriptions here are somewhat cursory this is because the author wishes to devote more attention to the major ensembles of the eighth century: in particular, the carvings on the temples at Kanchipuram and Mamallapuram erected under Narasimhavarman II Pallava; the temples at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal built by Vijayaditya and Vikramaditya II Chalukya; and the cave-temples and the colossal Kailasanatha monolith at Ellora sponsored by two successive Rashtrakuta monarchs, Dantidurga and Krishna I. The author devotes a lengthy chapter to each of these groups of monuments, giving their relevant historical backgrounds and exploring the artistic influences that contributed to the development of their distinctive sculptural styles.

While a number of carvings from Mamallapuram, Badami and Ellora are of considerable renown, having often been treated in surveys of Indian art and in specialized monographs, no scholar has ever attempted such a complete coverage of the sculptural art of these sites. Not only does the author offer identifications for each of the many panels with which these monuments are embellished, she also takes trouble to analyse the common features of the various iconographic forms, as well as the spatial distribution of the icons across temple facades and around temple courtyards. Thus, for instance, in her chapter on Kanchipuram she comments on the general iconographic programme of early Pallava art, pointing out the prominent role of icons that portray dancing Shiva, as well as those that depict multi-headed Ravana shaking Shiva's mountain home, Kailasa.

Parlier-Renault's willingness to investigate these and other sculptural representations of the various regions and periods of southern Indian art may be singled out perhaps as the most innovative aspect of the volume as a whole. By focusing on both successive and simultaneous art traditions the author is also in a good position to discriminate between local traditions and external influences. Thus, for example, in her discussion of the carvings on the Pattadakal temples she draws attention to sculptural themes intrinsic to the Deccan, such as Shiva spearing the demon Andhaka, and Vishnu appearing in his boar incarnation as Varaha. These images, she argues, are to be distinguished from mythological topics that derive from the Tamil art of the Pallavas, such as Shiva in dancing posture, or the same god appearing miraculously out of the flaming linga. She brings to a close this particular section with a summary of iconographic forms common to both Chalukya and Pallava art. Elsewhere, as in her account of the Pattadakal carvings, the author draws attention to what she describes as "conflict" and "reconciliation", by pointing out the matching and mingling of iconographic traditions linked with opposing cults of Shiva and Vishnu.

While Parlier-Renault may not be the first to offer insights into the iconographic fundamentals of Pallava, Chalukya and Rashtrakuta art, her analytical discussions go a lot further than those of previous scholars. Her conclusions should be of considerable interest to historians of religion since it is these visual manifestations of popular belief that underpin any understanding of the evolution of Hinduism during these centuries. Nor are these the only art historical problems to be tackled by the author. In her account of the multitude of carvings on the Ellora Kailasatha she offers an overall chronology for the carvings, suggesting a span of some 70 years, from the 750s to the 820s. However, like others before her, she points out that the architecture and sculpture of this colossal monument are profoundly indebted to those at Pattadakal.

One limitation of Parlier-Renault's approach that needs to be acknowledged here is that nowhere is there any consideration of the lively narrative friezes and accessory figural themes that adorn basements and beams, column shafts and brackets, doorways and ceiling panels. This is to be regretted since some of these monuments, especially those at Pattadakal, are extremely richly endowed with this type of accessory imagery. This shortcoming, however, in no way detracts from the overall value of her study, which is to be recommended as by far the most detailed introduction to the subject. The volume concludes with an extensive, up-to-date bibliography and an iconographic glossary, but there is no index.

George Michell

MARTIN GAENZLE and JÖRG GENGNAGEL (eds):

Visualizing Space in Banaras: Images, Maps, and the Practice of Representation.

358 pp. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006. €48. ISBN 3 447 05187 6.

NIELS GUTSCHOW:

Banaras, The Sacred Landscape of Vārāṇasī.

498 pp. Stuttgart: Edition Axel Menges, 2006. £89. ISBN 393668104X.

As one of the holiest sites of Hindu India, Banaras (Kashi, Varanasi) has a prestigious history dating back to ancient times. While the city's religious