

example of the consolidation of a space for women's religious authority is the way in which the image of Fatima al-Zahra has come to be manipulated in Iran. Traditionally, Fatimah was always a 'reserved obedient and domestic' figure but in contemporary Iran she is a 'proactive self-confident figure'. The key agent of this redefinition was the Iranian Islamist thinker, Ali Shariati, who died in 1977. The outcome has been a considerable development of this model and the emergence of major women Shii scholars.

The third section explores the impact of female religious authority on Muslim women. Some use their authority to reinterpret texts, to reorganise gendered space and to argue for new roles for Muslim women. We are shown, for instance, how two Egyptian women preachers pass on Islamic teachings which can empower women against either family attempts to control their lives or the demands of custom. We are shown, too, the impact of feminist readings of the Quran by Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud and the impact of the preaching and leadership of the latter both in the USA and South Africa. Muslim women, however, do not just adopt positions moving in a feminist direction; they are just as likely to use their authority to support traditional understandings of gender roles and orthodox senses of piety. An examination of the positions amongst Indonesian women's religious leadership clearly sets out this division.

Hilary Kalmbach and Masooda Bano, who are post-doctoral research fellows at Oxford, are to be congratulated on producing an outstanding book. Indeed, it is one of those rare books which opens up a whole new subject; it is a landmark in the field. The issue of women's religious scholarship is presented to us in rich and wide-ranging scholarship. The articles are invariably respectful of historical and social context; nuance tends to be embraced rather than ignored. Moreover, the whole work is extremely well-planned, so as to make its main arguments readily accessible. Much work must have gone into its editing. The outcome is essential reading for all those interested both in issues of authority in the contemporary Muslim world and in the new spaces opening up for Muslim women. But for its hefty cover price it would make an excellent basis for a graduate class. Brill should offer it in paperback form as soon as possible. FRobinson@rhul.ac.uk

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ARTS OF MUGHAL INDIA: STUDIES IN HONOUR OF ROBERT SKELTON. Edited by ROSEMARY CRILL. pp. 308. Ahmedabad, Mapin in association with the Victorian and Albert Museum, London, 2004.
doi:10.1017/S1356186312000636

Tempus fugit – it seems only yesterday that I was given a copy of "Arts of Mughal India", honouring Robert Skelton's scholarly achievement and generous fostering of younger talent. Yet since then every year has seen further evidence of the flourishing field of study that Robert has done so much to make fruitful: the 2009 "Garden and Cosmos" show of Jodhpur court painting; the 2010 SOAS / NPG conference and book on the Indian Portrait from 1560 to 1860; the marvellous 2011 exhibition at the Rietberg Museum, Zurich of masters and schools of Indian painting from early medieval to early modern, with its accompanying double tome of text; the Chester Beatty, Dublin remarkable show of Muraqqa' albums; and more recently, Willie Dalrymple's 2012 Asia House, New York exhibition of the Delhi school of painting in the later Mughal period . . . not to mention the proliferating publications on the regional arts of the Deccan and Bengal.

While Robert's career was very much in-house, his intellectual interests spanned a wide horizon – he joined the Victoria and Albert Museum aged 21 under Bill Archer in 1950, became Assistant Keeper in 1960, published on Indian Miniatures in 1961, began research field-trips to India in 1962, then became Keeper of the Department in 1978. During the Festival of India in 1982 he organized and produced the V&A exhibition, conference and book “Indian Heritage – Court life and arts under Mughal Rule”. He retired in 1988 and was decorated with the OBE the following year. In his very productive retirement, he has helped found and run both INTACH and Asia House London, from which he retired in 2008. In collaboration with Mildred Archer, he brought out the catalogue of the Powis Castle collection of Indian material from the collection of Lord Clive, refurbished and re-presented in a brilliant pastiche of Mughal style by Alec Cobbe for the National Trust in 1987 and he published “Gems and Jewels of Mughal India” with Pedro Carvalho. Robert's large house in south London continues to house a remarkably rich library and archive of visual material relating to India, and also to host visiting scholars and – now more rarely – to reverberate to the sound of amateur chamber music.

Robert Skelton's “chela” at the V&A, Rosemary Crill, editor of this festschrift, is well known in her own right as a leading expert in Indian textiles and contributes here an essay on a C17th Deccani “qalam-kari” painted floor textile reflecting trade relations in South and East Asia. Her fellow editor Susan Stronge writes on the short career of Robert Hughes, amateur artist and factor of the East India Company in Ajmer, Agra and Patna from 1616 to 1623 who produced a word-list of Persian as used in India, as an aid to trade. Andrew Topsfield, co-editor, presents a fascinating account of the named portraits of “kalavant” court singers and instrumental musicians in Udaipur over the fifty years from 1680 to 1730, which allows an exceptional insight into the career of these low-status providers of court entertainment.

Figures 1 to V reproduce objects that were acquired for the V&A at Robert's initiative – including the iconic Shah Jahan 1657 wine cup, one of the Museum's great acquisitions during this period. The first three articles are memoirs of Robert by colleagues and friends, all stressing his intellectual integrity, acute connoisseurship, skill in epigraphy and personal generosity. There follows a bibliography of a selection of Robert's writings – from 1956 till 2000.

The essays cover a range of topics – from the influence of Timurid and Safavid court painting on Indo-Islamic art of the book, to the European imports into Gujerat and Goa and the role of missionaries, to Indian exports to Iran and Europe, the role of the textile trade, Armenian go-betweens, philology, music and, at the end, a fine large reproduction, spread over four pages, of Mazhar 'Ali's topographic panorama of Delhi from the Red Fort, shortly before so much was destroyed in 1857.

The editors have assembled a star cast for this festschrift celebrating their mentor's varied field of interest – though for reasons of space and focus giving no more than a passing mention of his important contribution to the growing subject of pre-Mughal Sultanate Indo-Muslim art. It is a handsomely produced and well-illustrated book, designed in India and printed in Singapore, with a good range of articles covering the period from 1562 to 1846, a tribute to a generous scholar and mentor, a fine linguist, musician and raveler. The book also raises more general questions of the accidents of survival of material and intellectual culture, its state of preservation, as well as the dispersal, accessibility and reproduction of this heritage. It is also a welcome, and alas increasingly difficult, example of interdependence and collaboration between curators of public collections, private collectors, art-dealers, professional academics and private scholars and benefactors. bruce_aziz@hotmail.com

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