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**Michael Meister, Temples of the Indus: Studies in the Hindu  
Architecture of Ancient Pakistan. Reviewed by J. Mark Kenoyer.**

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may or may not be realized in a particular place and time. That there exists scriptural backing for “mad” behaviors is unquestionable—as there also exists scriptural backing for social conformity, moral uprightness, and sanity. For the historian, the interesting question here is: why, when the “mad” role model has always been available, did a movement of mad yogins arise at this particular place and time but not others? While clarification of canonical sources is legitimate and necessary, it should not be confused with *explanations* of specific religious phenomena.

To be fair to the author, these historical questions are difficult ones for which there exists a dearth of reliable evidence, as he himself acknowledges. “[T]hese attempts at situating Tsangnyön historically,” he writes, “could be carried out much more exhaustively than I have been able to do in this book” (pp. xi-xii). It would of course be unfair to take the author to task for not writing a book he had no intention of writing. Still, we need to take care that the difficulty of obtaining historical information not tempt us to substitute scriptural exegesis simply because it is available.

With this reservation registered, all in all Larsson’s book offers valuable information on an immensely important player in Tibet’s pre-Ganden-Potrang religious culture, with promise for future scholarship. The volume should be seen as a fruitful beginning for a longer-term project. Among the issues it would be interesting to see addressed in the future would be:

- (1) The specific historical conditions that made Tibetan culture receptive to the idea of a mad yogin during that period.
- (2) The contribution of indigenous Tibetan culture to the model of the mad yogin. Larsson mentions, for example, native Tibetan “trickster” figures such as Akhu Tönpa. This would be worth following up on, as it promises interesting and specific information about local Tibetan culture and serves as an antidote to the very natural temptation to interpret every action of a Tibetan Buddhist as motivated solely by “Buddhism.”
- (3) More about Tsangnyön’s textual production—undoubtedly his most lasting legacy to Tibetan Buddhist culture. Not only did he write the best-known work of Tibetan literature but he also organized the technical means and human labor necessary to ensure an unprecedented distribution and afterlife for that work, as well as for others. It is in this regard that Larsson calls Tsangnyön “a pivotal figure in Tibet’s transition from a manuscript culture to a block-print culture” (p. 230).

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## TEMPLES OF THE INDUS: STUDIES IN THE HINDU ARCHITECTURE OF ANCIENT PAKISTAN

BY MICHAEL MEISTER

Leiden: Brill, 2010. 85 pp. +149 plates. \$132. ISBN 978 9004 18617 0.

REVIEWED BY J. MARK KENOYER

This excellent and well-illustrated book represents a major contribution to the Salt-Range Temple Project, a long-term study of Hindu temples of the Salt Range in northern Pakistan, by Michael Meister, one of the leading scholars of temple architecture of the northern subcontinent. This study provides a detailed description of temple architecture along with a critical examination of the many theories proposed by earlier scholars regarding their relation to architectural traditions in other regions of the northern subcontinent, such as Kashmir. These temples provide a record of distinctive regional styles of temple architecture dating from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The author concludes that these temples “represent the earliest surviving Hindu monuments in South Asia’s northwest and offer important insight into the processes of temple formation that led to the development and dissemination of Nagara temple architecture across Northern and Central India in the sixth and seventh centuries” (p. 34).

After the independence and partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, the study of temple architecture continued in India, but only a few Pakistani scholars continued this type of research in Pakistan. The author is one of the few international scholars who have worked in both countries, and the research and interpretations that he provides in this book represent a major contribution to the field of temple architectural analysis as a whole. In addition to a descriptive art-historical and architectural approach, the author was able to analyze the chronological changes in temple construction through targeted excavations of specific temples. The excavations were carried out by faculty and students of Peshawar University under the aegis of the Pakistan Heritage Society led by Dr. Abdur Rehman and Dr. Farid Khan. In the five chapters of this book, he systematically covers the historical background for the discovery and early research on the Salt Range temples, as well as revisions to terminology and interpretations. The text is accompanied by 149 figures with maps, line drawings, and black and white photographs.

Chapter One provides a summary of the earliest studies

on the Salt Range Temples by early colonial scholars. The main point of this chapter is to outline the origins of some early insights as well as misconceptions of linkages between the temples of the Salt Range and other regions of India, particularly Kashmir.

In Chapter Two, the author provides an overview of the major sites and their chronology, along with a summary discussion of the regional character of Nagara architectural traditions, which he has called the 'Gandhara Nagara.' As one of the scholars who helped to establish definitive terminology for Indian (Hindu, Jain and Buddhist) temple architecture, the author emphasizes the importance of using precise terminology for specific features of the temples. Fortunately for the reader, he has tried to explain the major terms and avoids too much jargon in his writing. Nevertheless, the reader must be willing to learn a new vocabulary in order to appreciate the important arguments and interpretations. A full glossary of Sanskrit based architectural terms is provided at the end of the book for readers who need to have a refresher course in architectural terminology. This chapter provides detailed summaries of each major temple and fortified site along the west bank of the upper Indus River as well as in the Salt Range of the Punjab. A summary of his arguments and the chronology of each temple is presented in table form (pp. 36-38) so that the reader can clearly follow and evaluate his interpretations. While most architectural studies are limited to observation of the finished form of the structure, this study goes into the chronological process of construction and remodeling that can only be studied through careful excavation.

Chapter Three provides the reader with a summary of the results of excavations at one of the major fortified temple sites of Kafirkot, dating from the early 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, with subsequent reconstructions in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The discovery of multiple phases of construction and remodeling using limestone and *kanjur* as well as wooden components demonstrates the continuous process of architectural development throughout the long life of these temples. Coins found in the excavations provide clues regarding the chronology of these remodeling events beginning in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and continuing up through the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Fragmentary sculptures and cult images also give evidence for the complex iconography and religious traditions that were present in the various temple complexes.

Chapter Four focuses on the 10<sup>th</sup> century architectural traditions of the Salt Range in comparison with temples in other regions. The main point is that while there are similarities to styles in other regions, the local architects developed their own interpretations that mark their temples as "eclectic and original" (p. 61). The first discussion focuses on the ruins of a red brick temple called Pattan Minara, located at the edge of the Cholistan desert. A second topic in this chapter is the relationship of temples at Malot and Shiv-Ganga with architectural styles that can be compared to forms seen in Kashmir and other regions of central India.

A final topic is a temple at Mari-Indus (Temple C) that is also dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Without a clearer understanding of the political interactions between these regions during this time period, it is difficult to contextualize what these subtle patterns of architecture could mean. However, the final chapter of the book provides a discussion on archaeology and ethnography that may help the reader come to a better understanding of the previous discussions. The author summarizes his collaborative research in Rajasthan, where there are 8<sup>th</sup> century Jain temples that have been reconstructed at various times in history and most recently from the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the present. He tries to contextualize the multiple changes in architecture at Kafirkot and other sites in Pakistan with reference to the observations seen in the archaeological and living Jain temples. He also introduces the idea that has been further developed by other scholars, that many of the architectural features of the Gandhara school can be seen in later Sultanate period architecture and mosques. The final section of the book is a story about Raja Saiful taken from the folklore in the vicinity of the site of Amb at the southern edge of the Salt Range. Even though it is increasingly difficult to excavate and gain a more accurate understanding of the archaeology of this region, the past continues to play an important role in the legends and folklore of the region.

This book on temple architecture in Pakistan is important for its presentation of multiple perspectives and unique insights on a topic that is generally overlooked in the modern media. It is critical that a new generation of local and international scholars continue to expand on the foundation of research established by the author and his colleagues in Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan. Archaeological sites such as the temples in the Salt Range provide a unique perspective to the history of South Asia and can be an important mechanism for bringing together scholars from the many countries that share a common heritage and common academic interests, but are now divided by international borders.

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