HINDU ART AND VISUAL CULTURE IN THE AGE OF EMPIRES AND ENCOUNTER

Crispin Branfoot

Mounted on his celestial eagle Garuḍa, the dark-skinned Kṛṣṇa spins his fearsome discus as he swoops down upon Indra, the Vedic lord of the gods upon his white-skinned, four-tusked elephant Airāvata (Fig. 1). Kṛṣṇa sits with two companions, one holding the uprooted magical Pārijāta tree, their brightly-colored clothes billowing behind them amidst the swirling dark blue thunderclouds within which Śiva, Brahmā, and other deities survey the divine combat. This painting of a scene from the *Harivaṃśa* was made in the 1590s, but for Akbar, the Mughal ruler of one of the great Islamic empires of early modern Eurasia, rather than for a Hindu patron. The enlightened, curious Akbar had formed a court studio of largely Hindu artists from the 1560s who were commissioned in the 1590s to produce several illustrated Persian translations of the Sanskrit epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Drawing upon Persian, European and Indian sources, the court arts of the Mughals would have a profound impact upon the character and vitality of Hindu visual culture in the early modern age of empires and cosmopolitan encounter.

[figure 7.1 Kṛṣṇa's theft of the Pārijāta tree, episode from the *Harivaṃśa*. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, Mughal, 1590s (V&A IS.5-1970). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.]

In the early years of the sixteenth century, a stone image of the young Kṛṣṇa named Śrīnāthjī, holding up Mount Govardhan to protect his fellow villagers from the wrath of Indra was miraculously discovered in the land of Braj around Mathura. This was one of many 'self-manifest' (*svayambhū*) images of Kṛṣṇa found in this period and installed in new temples by the leaders of devotional Hindu sects in the land associated with Kṛṣṇa's early life. In 1669 Śrīnāthjī moved from Braj during the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and settled in

Nathdwara in southern Rajasthan where his temple remains one of the important sites of pilgrimage for followers of Vallabha's Puṣṭimārg ('Way of Grace'). With patronage from the Rajput rulers of nearby Udaipur, music, painting, poetry and festivals came together to enrich the devotional lives of the followers of the Puṣṭimārg, one of the many sects that emerged in this period.

Further south in 1509 an inscription was erected at the imperial capital at Vijayanagara recording the conquests of Kṛṣṇadevarāya (r. 1509-29), his donations to the great southern pilgrimage temples and, on the occasion of his coronation festival (*paṭṭābhiṣeka*), his construction of a new *maṇḍapa* (columned hall) before the temple of Virūpākṣa, the state-deity of the Empire. The 350-year period from the coronation of Kṛṣṇadevarāya to the Vijayanagara throne in 1509 through to the dissolution of the Mughal empire in 1858 was a religiously and politically dynamic era for the cultural history of Hinduism. Art and visual culture had important roles to play in the transformation of medieval Hindu traditions in the age of empire and encounter, and the forging of new identities that established the foundations of modern Hindu art. The legacy of a thousand years of temple construction remained evident in the landscape, old temples being renovated or abandoned, new temples building upon past traditions or creating novel forms in response to regional and sectarian identities. In variety, volume, and magnificence of expression, the numerous traditions of painting for court, village and temple that flourished in this period served to express the aesthetic richness of courtly aesthetics, religious devotion, sectarian identity, and political ambition.

ART AND EMPIRE IN THE SOUTH

The great Vijayanagara emperor Kṛṣṇadevarāya returned to the Tamil country in 1516-17 once again visiting the great temple centers, including Tirupati, Srikalahasti, Tiruvannamalai and Chidambaram, following the victorious conclusion of the war against the

Gajapatis of Orissa, leaving a legacy of both endowments and architectural additions to some temples in the north of the Tamil country. During the reigns of Kṛṣṇadevarāya and his successor Acyutadevarāya (r. 1530-42), the Vijayanagara empire dominated much of southern India. Military conquests and the patronage of temples and other religious institutions helped to integrate this culturally, environmentally, and linguistically diverse kingdom within the increasingly complex and cosmopolitan era. Though recent research has highlighted the religious diversity of Vijayanagara, challenging older conceptions of the empire as a Hindu bastion against the Islamic north, royal patronage was focused on a variety of Hindu institutions. As a result, the sixteenth century in south India witnessed an efflorescence of artistic and intellectual culture.

In the fifteenth century, little was built within the empire, except at the capital; only in the early to mid-sixteenth century did temple construction pick up, and then on a massive scale. The artistic source for the design and planning of the many temples built in this period was not in the vicinity of the metropolitan capital in the northern Deccan, but largely from one region of the diverse empire: the Tamil country. The temples built in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries at Vijayanagara continued a local, Deccani mode of design. The construction of the Rāmacandra temple built under the patronage of Devarāya I (reigned *circa* 1406–22) marked a new departure in the capital. The increasing significance of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in south India—the capital itself was identified with Kiṣkindhā, the mythical kingdom of Sugrīva and Vāli—and of Rāma himself to royal ideology is evident in the dedication. But the temple is also architecturally significant both in planning—the temple was set in a walled complex with multiple shrines, halls, and aligned gateways—and design, for it was based on the Tamil Drāviḍa tradition of architecture. Over the course of the fifteenth century, and especially in the early sixteenth century, coinciding with the establishment of the third dynasty of Vijayanagara kings, there was a transformation in scale, design, and

elaboration of imperial temple construction at the capital. Additions were made to both the Virūpākṣa and Viṭṭhala temples, followed by the establishment of five monumental new Vaiṣṇava temples (Fig. 7.2). The adoption of the Tamil Drāviḍa language of architecture and the Tamil mode of temple planning—with concentric walled enclosures entered through *gopura*s and containing many detached columned halls for use during festivals (*utsavamaṇḍapa*), architecturally defined processional routes, and festival tanks (*teppakulam*)—all emphasize the break with past architectural traditions and the creation of a new imperial language of temple architecture in the early sixteenth century at the capital. The subsequent dissemination of this imperial language of temple architecture transcended the geographical, ethnic, and linguistic diversity across the wide and disparate empire in the sixteenth century. The long-term legacy of this architectural change should not be under-estimated for, with the exception of the southwest coast, all temples constructed for south Indian communities within and beyond South Asia in later centuries are of this Tamil-derived design.

[fig. 7.2 Bhaktavatsala temple, Tirukkalukkundram, Tamilnadu, mostly sixteenth-seventeenth centuries. Photo by author.]

It is clear that the Tamil Drāviḍa language of architecture was transmitted beyond the Tamil region and adopted by the rulers of Vijayanagara in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, but the reason why is less certain. It has been suggested that the adoption of a Tamil mode of architecture was a conscious decision by of the Vijayanagara rulers, who sought to visually emulate the power and prestige of the former Chola empire that had dominated South India for several centuries (Michell 1994). However, if Vijayanagara emulated a Tamil model of imperial temple culture, then it was likely the Pandyas, rather than the Cholas, who served as Vijayanagara's role models. During the fourteenth century, the Pandyas' concentrated and strategic donative activity at specific sacred sites in newly

conquered areas, especially Chidambaram and Srirangam, was in marked contrast to the comparative absence of such actions by Chola monarchs (Orr 2007).

But a further reason for the adoption of the Tamil mode of architecture across the empire may have had less to do with any political associations and more to do with the increasing prominence of Vaiṣṇavism across the South, especially Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavism, during the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Veṅkaṭeśvara at Tirupati is among the most important Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇava pilgrimage sites, and though established by the tenth century, the temple gained the pre-eminence it maintains to this day under the patronage of Kṛṣṇadeva and Acyutadeva, both great devotees of Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavism. It would be misleading to suggest that Vaiṣṇavism at Vijayanagara and across the empire was equated with Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavism, for other Vaiṣṇava sects, such as the Mādhva *sampradāya*, were also prominent in this period. But Śrīvaiṣṇavism was the most popular tradition from the late fifteenth century. Furthermore, temples for deities of other non-Tamil sects, including Kṛṣṇa from Udayagiri and Viṭṭhala from Pandarpur—and indeed Śaiva temples—were built in the Tamil-derived language of architecture at the capital.

In Kanara, the southwest coastal strip between Goa and Mangalore, large numbers of Hindu and Jain temples were built in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. Temple construction in this region flourished as a result of its ports' importance to inland, coastal, and Indian Ocean trade. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a greater variety of communities, especially merchants and traders, were the patrons of temples and their rituals in southern India. The involvement of Muslim and Jain merchants in the patronage of architecture is well-known from many periods, but Hindu merchant patrons are less well documented until the sixteenth century at a time of increasing global trade and exchange. Temples thus began to flourish not only as sacred sites often under royal patronage, but as the location of, and focus for, burgeoning economic activity.

Most temples in this region of high monsoon rainfall were built in a distinctive regional tradition of architecture with steep, pitched roofs in stone that imitated earlier, wooden construction. The increasing use of stone, rather than the ephemeral and more readily available wood, is one of the few clear signs of change following the Vijayanagara conquest of Kanara in the 1340s and the region's growing prosperity. Keralan temples do not have stone roofs; they are a distinctively Kanaran tradition of the Vijayanagara period. The regional style of architecture transcends the religious diversity of the southwest coast from Goa through to Kerala, for temples—Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Jain—and mosques, and even churches and palaces to some degree are all built with one or more steep, pitched roofs (Fig. 7.3). This architectural design is shared with the religious architecture of wider 'Monsoon Asia', including the Buddhist temples of Sri Lanka and the mosques of insular Southeast Asia. Together with the similar design, a further shared element is the use of materials: minimal use of stone for the foundations, base and door-frames, laterite for the walls, and hardwoods (jackfruit, teak) for the superstructure and roof. Though some stone quarries are present, it is laterite that is the most readily available material for construction, a building material used along the coast from Goa to Kerala since at least the fifth century. While stone survives over long periods, laterite and wood deteriorate in the hot, wet climate and need periodic replacement and renovation. It is for this reason that many temples in Kerala are of relatively recent date, from the fifteenth century and later, even if the epigraphic evidence of land grants suggests an earlier structure on the site. Very high-quality hardwood sculptures have nevertheless survived from early modern Kerala, both as temple imagery and elaborate headwear for the region's forms of dance-drama (*Kathakaḷi, Muṭiyettu*) enacting epic performances or invoking the presence of fierce goddesses.

[fig. 7.3 Khetapai Narāyaṇa temple, Bhatkal, Karnataka (Kanara), 1540s. Photo by author.]

BUILDING TEMPLES IN MUGHAL INDIA

Prior to the thirteenth century, the majority of sub-Himalayan Hindu temples had been built in two languages of design, broadly associated with northern and southern India: the *Nāgara* and *Drāviḍa*. Political complexity and religious diversity may partly explain the myriad new forms of Hindu temple design in early modern South Asia, alongside growing sectarianism and formation of regional identities, in language, literature, and visual culture. The spread of Mughal authority and imperial patronage were important factors in explaining the varied character of Hindu temples in this period, as well as the architectural dialogue with other building types and traditions, especially mosques, tombs, and palaces.

Continuity of tradition as well as conscious architectural historicism or archaism may explain the seeming conservatism of some temples built in the sixteenth century and later. In 1652 a huge new temple dedicated to Jagdīśa (Viṣṇu) was built for Jagat Singh (r. 1628-52) in a prominent, central location on a hillock alongside the palace in Udaipur, the Mewari capital in southern Rajasthan since 1567. It was built in a seemingly archaic manner with a tall *śekhari* tower, a richly sculpted exterior with numerous images of deities, and a five-fold plan (*pañcāyātana*) with four smaller shrines on the platform. The design appears to evoke the pre-Islamic medieval temples of northwest India built in the eleventh-twelfth centuries by the Solankis or Chandellas. But the choice of temple design may have served more context-specific purposes in establishing Sisodia identity against both other Rajput dynasties and the Mughals. The Sisodia rulers of Mewar maintained their resistance to the expansionist Mughal Empire until 1615, longer than other Rajput courts. Emulation of Mughal practices as well as an acute consciousness and pride in their own lineage influenced their artistic patronage in the seventeenth century as both Rajputs and Hindus. New temples such as the Jagdīśa aimed to highlight the Sisodias' own glorious past through the conscious visual invocation of the fifteenth-century architecture of the former capital at Chittor during a great era when the

military supremacy of former kings resisted the expansion of the sultanates of Malwa and Gujarat.

An alternative approach to temple design that suggests an even closer dialogue with Mughal culture was expressed by the Sisodias' fellow Rajputs, the Kacchvāhas, who were close allies of the Mughals from 1562. As both a Hindu king and a loyal Mughal noble, Rāja Mān Singh's (r. 1589-1614) patronage of architecture emulated Akbar's policy. In his capital at Amber, a monumental temple was completed in the early 1600s as a memorial to his recently deceased eldest son. For a 'home audience', the Jagat Śiromaṇi (Viṣṇu) temple was built in a familiar *Nāgara* design, not dissimilar to the Jagdīśa temple, with rich figural sculpture on the exterior. But the very large, spacious vaulted interior is a characteristically innovative feature for temples of his reign that suggests a dialogue with contemporary Mughal—and Islamic—architecture; aspects of the ornament further this connection. Mān Singh's other great temple, the monumental Govindadeva completed by the 1590s at the pilgrimage site of Vrindavan, was the largest built in north India since the thirteenth century. The design with pointed arches, heavy brackets, and the absence of significant images of deities on the exterior together with the use of red sandstone suggests that this Hindu temple appropriated and adapted the architectural forms of buildings at Akbar's capital at nearby Fatehpur Sikri built from 1569-85, which drew upon Indic designs themselves. Though the original octagonal *garbhagṛha* and towering superstructure were either unfinished or later damaged, this monumental temple with a spacious, domed, and vaulted interior develops rather than imitates Mughal design (Asher 1995; Case 1996).

Few major temples were built in north India during the sultanate period and it is only under Mughal authority that construction resumes in a grand manner, sometimes with imperial support. In Rajasthan, new temples were joined by a new building type, the *catrī*, an appropriation by Rajput rulers of the Indo-Islamic practice of constructing permanent stone

structures to memorialize the dead. Their forms often approximated temples, as at Mandore near Jodhpur, but might also incorporate an 'Islamic' dome (Fig. 7.4). By the seventeenth century, commissioning a *catrī* was an important act of Rajput kingship, as well as for new, self-appointed royal communities such as the Sikhs and Marathas (Belli Bose 2015). As in other areas of cultural expression, the visual arts cannot be neatly categorized by religion; 'Hindu' identity was not monolithically evident in architecture or painting but was context-specific. The assimilation of domes, pointed arches and larger congregational spaces into early modern temple design was the result of the spread of new building types and religious practices following the spread and inculturation of Islam in north and western India. By the eighteenth century, architectural style was not sectarian but was a shared regional language of design motifs, a common visual vocabulary of surface decoration used for temples, mosques, palaces and *gurudwara*s across north India. Visual identity might be sought, not through individual elements or stylistic components, but in the manner in which they were combined and displayed (Asher 2000: 138). It was in the layout and ritual functions, rather than design, that religious identity was explored in architecture.

[fig. 7.4 Memorial temples (*Catri*s) for the Jodha Rathore rulers at Mandore near Jodhpur, Rajasthan, sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. Photo by author.]

SACRED ARCHITECTURE AND RITUAL DYNAMICS

Sacred architecture establishes the conditions for religious ritual by framing topography and shaping space; architecture and ritual are mutually reinforcing, so changes in one impact upon the other. In sixteenth-century north India, several Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*s (sect, order) with Rāma or Kṛṣṇa as their devotional focus developed new forms of devotional practice toward the personal embodiment of these gods on earth. Though a site of pilgrimage before the sixteenth century—and with rich archaeological evidence for Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain communities from the earliest centuries CE—the region of Braj identified

with Kṛṣṇa's early life received a boost in popularity through the rise of devotional Hinduism (*bhakti*) in northern India. Sectarian leaders including Caitanya, Vallabha, Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa and their followers are credited by tradition with identifying the specific sites where Kṛṣṇa performed various miraculous deeds, such as lifting the mountain Govardhana to protect the cow-herders from the storm sent by the angry god Indra or defeating the demon Kāliya. By multiplying the number of places identified with Kṛṣṇa, Braj came to be wholly imbued with the deity's presence, a sacred landscape demarcated by new religious architecture, including the Govindadeva temple at Vrindavan. Congregational worship, singing and dancing gradually became more common devotional practices with an impact upon temple design. Puṣṭimārg temples and those used by some other devotional groups from the seventeenth century are modelled upon the north Indian courtyard house (*haveli*) and perhaps Mughal imperial audience halls. The positive valuation that Vallabha placed upon the householder rather than the ascetic resulted in temples that enabled larger congregations to take *darśan* of more accessible deities at once whose physical comfort was ensured through daily and seasonal cycles of rituals and festival.

In Bengal, the devotional focus of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism founded by Caitanya (1486-1533) was the adolescent Kṛṣṇa's divine love-play (*līlā*) with Rādhā. Temples became the locations for ecstatic song and dance evoking the deities' *līlā.* A distinctive new form of temple developed in the seventeenth century under Malla dynastic patronage in response both to the rise of this devotional movement and political circumstances (Fig. 7.5). Built in brick with two storeys, a curved eave and multiple towers, the *Ratna* temples are a distinctive regional form of temple in early modern Bengal. The lower storey is modelled on the congregational mosques of sultanate-period Bengal (1338-1576), built in brick with the curved *bangla* roof deriving from thatched domestic architecture, in order to emphasize continuity with the past sultanate authority in Bengal, who had supported Hindu poets and

culture, rather than contemporary Mughal rule. The tower of the upper storey is more closely modelled on the earlier *Nāgara* tradition but with openings on four sides so that the divine images were more visible and accessible to congregations in the courtyard below. The changing nature of ritual practice is also evident in the distribution of terracotta ornament: instead of the earlier practice of placing figural imagery facing each direction inviting clockwise circumambulation, *Ratna* temples are ornamented on only the east and south. Accompanied by oration and performance, the devotional congregation would view the narrative panels on the most important south face of the temple from the central focus of their devotion, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, outward to the surrounding selection of myths from Kṛṣṇa's biography in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Ghosh 2004).

[fig. 7.5 *Ratna* temples, Bishnupur, West Bengal, seventeenth century. Photo by author.]

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many temples further south, particularly in the Tamil region are of vast scale, dominating the urban fabric, the largest with two to four (or seven in the exceptional case of the Raṅganātha temple at Srirangam) high-walled enclosures entered through aligned series of pyramidal gateways (*gopuram*). A deep-rooted tradition of moving deities on procession in and around Tamil temples may be traced to the seventh-eighth century, but it was in the tenth to thirteenth centuries that more substantive evidence from both literature and inscriptions indicate that processions had become an important feature of both religious and royal ritual. Processional ritual is an important element in explaining the expansion and elaboration of temple-cities with numerous large concentric walled enclosures, many shrines, long corridors, and water-filled tanks. This is evident from the growing number, scale, and elaboration of buildings specifically designed for use during periodic rituals in Tamil temples, especially detached columned halls for the temporary display of deities. These vary enormously in scale, from small four-columned

pavilions to the monumental 1000-column halls at Chidambaram, Madurai and Srirangam. The importance of festival ritual to understanding the layout of the Tamil temple is stressed by the construction of multiple specialized *utsavamaṇḍapa*s for particular festivals, such as *vasanta* (spring) or *adhyayanotsavam* (festival of recitation) in Vaiṣṇava temples, rather than having just one for all celebrations.

Temples in the South built in the sixteenth century and later continued to include sculpted images of deities within shrines, external wall niches or covering *gopuram* towers; portable copper-alloy images continued to be commissioned for processions. From the sixteenth century, large sculpted images often over two meters high attached to the columns of corridors and *maṇḍapa*s are a notable innovation in south India's temples (Fig. 7.6). While many of these artistically-ambitious sculptures are of deities familiar from earlier periods, others suggest the changing social and political conditions of the early modern south India: several temples in the far south of the Tamil region have large images of the 'gypsy fortune-teller' from the *Kuṟavañci* dance-drama, for example. Life-size donor-portraits are another striking element of sixteenth-seventeenth century temples, a southern sculptural counterpart to the increasing prevalence of portraiture in the Hindu court arts of northern India from the seventeenth century.

[fig. 7.6 Column sculptures of Viṣṇu as Nārasiṁha killing Hiraṇyakaśipu. Nampirāyar temple, Tirukkurunkudi, Tamilnadu, early seventeenth century. Photo by author.]

Processions periodically venture beyond the temple walls, especially during the most important festivals. The most visible and prominent are the chariot processions, usually held on the penultimate day of a major festival. The street directly outside the outermost enclosure wall is usually designated as the "Car Street" along which the *tērotsavam* (chariot-festival) takes place, and this route can usually be identified by the comparatively wider streets.

Circumambulatory processions redefine the limits of the sacred zone but only became prevalent from the sixteenth century, prior to which linear processions were more common. All the major temples at Vijayanagara either significantly expanded or built from scratch in the early sixteenth century include long straight processional streets extending several hundred meters beyond the main axial entrance. Though the geographic limitations of the rocky site may have had an impact, the presence of a platform at one side near the temple gateway for the preparation of the tall *ratha* and *maṇḍapa*s at the end of the street suggest that these are designed for linear chariot processions. The classic south Indian temple town centered on a shrine with concentric walls and four processional streets seems to be a feature only from the seventeenth century.

Many of south India's great temple-cities attained their fullest elaboration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the great building period in southern India. While some of these organic cities developed around a single major Hindu temple, such as Madurai and Chidambaram, inviting comparisons with *maṇḍala*s as the conceptual plan, others had several temple nodes within the urban fabric; Kanchipuram and Kumbakonam are good examples. Many cities across Asia such as those in southern India are considered cosmic cities, the divine or heavenly order being recreated in architectural or urban form on earth. Few Indian cities were completed in a short period and planned rather than organic. The new Hindu capital city of Jaipur in north India enables the consideration of how religion and ritual was not only important for temple architecture but also for urban planning and design.

Built from the 1720s during a period of declining Mughal authority following the death of Aurangzeb in 1708, Jaipur was founded by the Kacchvāha Rajput ruler *Sawāī* Jai Singh II (r. 1699-1744). Unlike other Hindu Rajput cities such as Kumbalgarh or Gwalior, Jaipur was not built on a fortified hilltop but on the plain five miles south of the earlier capital at Amber. Though militarily exposed, this city was built just north of the Mughal imperial

route east-west between Agra and Ajmer (Sachdev and Tillotson 2002). The city was planned on an ordered symmetrical three-by-three grid with eight gates and streets wide enough for major royal processions. The careful cosmic alignment is evident from the Chand Pol (Moon Gate) on the west and the Surya Pol (Sun Gate) directly east; a Surya temple on the hill above the east gate was added in 1736. At the center of the city was the *mahārāja*'s palace rather than a temple as in southern India. The central palace building, the Chandra Mahal, was built with the auspicious and paradigmatic seven storeys considered appropriate for *kṣatriya* kings. Directly north on axis with this palace is the city's chief temple modelled on a Mughal public audience hall. The deity here is Govindadeva, the form of Kṛṣṇa installed by Jai Singh's ancestor Mān Singh in Vrindavan, who left Braj in 1669 and, after various travels, arrived in Jaipur and was declared the true ruler of the state by Jai Singh fifty years later. Jaipur is thus often considered to be a 'Hindu' city and given the number of temples—more than anywhere else in north India except Varanasi, according to local tradition—this would seem true. However, few are visually prominent and are hidden away in open courtyards behind the street façade. The inconspicuous nature of Jaipur's religious buildings may have better served the aims of the personally pious Jai Singh in order to create an economically dynamic non-sectarian state (Asher 2001: 77).

PILGRIMAGE, SACRED GEOGRAPHY, AND RENOVATION

Many Hindus consider the power of deities to be more accessible and more efficacious at certain locations; it is these places that define the sacred geography that Hindus journey to on pilgrimage. The earliest clear references to pilgrimage in the Hindu tradition come from the *Mahābhārata*, which traces a clockwise route around India enumerating many of the important pilgrimage sites and the benefits accrued there with a concentration on *tīrtha*s, literally a ford or crossing place, in the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Himalayas. While some pilgrimage destinations are of only regional importance, others are of pan-Indian

significance among which Varanasi (Kashi, Benares) is pre-eminent. Mentioned as an important *tīrtha* in the *Mahābhārata*, Varanasi was by the eleventh century regarded as the 'Mecca of India' by Alberuni. It may thus seem surprising that no temple dating to before the sixteenth century remains in the city; the vast majority of temples at this ancient pilgrimage center date to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the Maratha queen Ahilyābāī's new Viśvanātha (Vishweshwur) temple built around 1781 (Desai 2017: 83). This is notably smaller than the adjacent mosque constructed during Aurangzeb's reign from earlier temple material, yet the temple could easily have been huge and visible if she wished, given the monumental scale of another of her commissions, the Viṣṇupad temple in Gaya (Asher 2000: 125).

This is a pattern found across South Asia: many of the most sacred sites of pilgrimage have temples that date no earlier than the sixteenth century, even when literary or epigraphic evidence suggests much greater antiquity. The *Mahābhārata*'s pilgrimage route starts from Pushkar in Rajasthan, a major site of pilgrimage today for its temple unusually dedicated to Brahmā together with many other temples built along the sacred lake. Most are comparatively recent: the present Brahmā temple was built in the early 1800s. Other important pilgrimage temples across India were also rebuilt in the late eighteenth-nineteenth centuries. Far to the north in the Himalayas, the Badrinārāyaṇa temple at Badrinath visited by today's pilgrims was built from the early 1800s leaving no substantial trace of an earlier structure. Far to the south, the Rāmaliṅgeśvara temple at Rameshvaram has long been an important pan-Indian pilgrimage site, for Rāma himself established two Śiva *liṅga*s here following the defeat of Rāvaṇa on Lanka. In spite of this venerable antiquity and sacred association, the temple in its current form dates largely to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The spread of Islamic authority and 'Muslim iconoclasm' across India from the thirteenth century is the oft-cited singular explanation for the perceived disappearance of the

fabric of ancient Hindu temples and the catalyst for their rebuilding in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries. In north India, the Mughal emperors Babūr and Aurangzeb are sometimes considered to be particularly responsible for the destruction of temples. The architectural and historical record indicates that a range of responses to Hindu temples was evident following the acquisition of new territory by victorious rulers from the thirteenth century and later (Eaton and Wagoner 2014: 66-69). Temples might be simply ignored unless they were politically significant. Others could continue to receive patronage and state protection by the new political authority as before; the Govindadeva temple at Vrindavan, discussed above, received Mughal support into the 1660s for example. Desecration would render a temple inactive or the structural integrity of the temple could be maintained but its function might be transformed by adding or removing ritually critical components. Or a structure could be torn down and made into something new. Some temples were indeed destroyed in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries but the historical circumstances when this occurred suggest this was a targeted action with varied motives rather than a general policy. The destruction of the Viśvanātha temple in Benares in 1669 and the Keśavadeva temple in Mathura in 1670 on Aurangzeb's orders, for example, was in part a response to Rajput and Brahman support for the Marathas (Eaton 2000).

The authority of Hindu rulers was, from approximately the sixth century CE onward, often linked to a state deity housed in a royal temple. One consequence of this royal-divine association was that politically significant temples and their state deities were vulnerable to desecration. Political motivation as well as religious iconoclasm may explain the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century destruction of Hindu temples by the Portuguese in their conquest of Goa and the kingdom of Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka. In Goa, churches were built on the sites of destroyed temples; other deities fled inland and were rehoused in huge temples built in a distinctive Goan style in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The major

Hindu temples of northern Sri Lanka visited today by pilgrims were all rebuilt from the late nineteenth century and little trace of their earlier fabric remains.

Foundations shift, vegetation penetrates walls and natural calamities, such as earthquakes or floods, damage old temples. Hindus themselves rebuild temples and hence the violent agency of iconoclastic invaders is unnecessary to explain the absence of ancient fabric from India's most sacred sites. The rebuilding and expansion of temples over an extended period emphasizes the importance of place; while the site is unchanging and fixed, the religious architecture upon it was not. The sacred significance of certain sites has risen and fallen, and it is the periodic construction and renovation that can reveal the changing status. Temple construction proceeded alongside literary composition; many new *mahātmya*s and *sthalapurāṇa*s were written from the sixteenth century contemporary with the construction and renovation of the sacred landscape.

PAINTING AND DEVOTION

Although there are deep-rooted traditions of painting in South Asia, few examples of Hindu painting survive before 1500; most extant paintings from before this date were illustrated manuscripts of Buddhist and Jain subject matter, and those produced at the sultanate courts. From 1500 onward, Hindu visual culture is increasingly saturated with a wide array of traditions of painting on paper and palm-leaf, on cloth or walls and ceilings. Some pictorial traditions were shared across wide areas, such as the Rajput court paintings of Rajasthan, central India, and the Pahari region of the Himalayan foothills. Other types of painting from the sixteenth to nineteenth century were more regionally distinct, such as the wall paintings of Kerala's temples and palaces or those that developed in and around a single important temple, such as at Puri in Orissa (now Odisha).

From 1600 to 1800 the many Rajput courts of Rajasthan, central India, and the Pahari region in the Himalayan foothills shared an elite culture that patronized the production and

consumption of painting illustrating Hindu subjects. Painters and patrons at these courts gradually developed local styles after 1600 from within a shared visual language and common romantic and devotional Hindu subject matter. The early Rajput style of the sixteenth century drew upon an earlier tradition of illustrated manuscripts in western India, known primarily from the large numbers of fifteenth-century Jain paintings on paper. The best-known exemplar of this vibrant new tradition of Hindu painting from north India are the dispersed paintings illustrating the youthful exploits of Kṛṣṇa among the cowherders of Braj from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. The horizontal *pothi* format for the paper, deriving from the earlier use of palm-leaf, together with the expressive linear quality of the figures, the bold blocks of color with red, yellow, or green backgrounds, and emphasis on visual narration in place of extensive written captions for the 200 or more surviving *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* illustrations make them an important precursor to later Rajput paintings.

The establishment of the Mughal court studio under Akbar in the 1560s not only offered patronage to Hindu painters in north India working within this tradition of Kṛṣṇa devotion and romantic book illustration but was also an important stimulus to the Rajput court elite's commitment to paintings. Rajput painting has often been understood in contrast to Mughal, in terms of subject matter, style, and antecedents. But recent scholarship has demonstrated the deeply connected character of the Rajput and Mughal elites, their painters and their court cultures. Hindu subject matter was not the sole preserve of the Rajput courts, as the paintings of the *Harivaṃśa* and *Mahābhārata* at Akbar's court in the 1590s illustrate.

Alongside the construction of the Jagdīśa temple in the 1650s, Jagat Singh's reign in Mewar is also characterized by the production of a huge illustrated *Rāmāyaṇa* led by his chief court artists, the Muslim Sahibdin. In spite of its distinguished literary history, the earliest extensive surviving illustrated *Rāmāyaṇa* was produced at Akbar's court: two imperial manuscripts dated 1588 and 1594 are followed by two further commissions by

Mughal nobles in the 1590s. Jagat Singh may have seen these manuscripts during his attendance at Jahangir's court from 1615. The increasing emphasis placed by the Mughals on their family history and Timurid inheritance in the court paintings of the 1580s-1620s may have been the stimulus for Jagat Singh's own genealogical artistic patronage. The production of an illustrated *Sūryavaṁśa* in 1645, that traced the Sisodias' line of descent to Sūrya and indeed Rāma, was followed by the most ambitious artistic project at any Rajput court to date, an illustration of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s seven books. Rather than illustrating only a selection of events, this ambitious project resulted in over 400 painted folios (Fig. 7.7). The deliberate avoidance of aspects of Mughal style of painting was indicative not only of Mewari conservatism and pride in their past but also as a conscious act of resistance to Mughal authority. Rāvaṇa is depicted as the Mughal emperor seated in a *jharokha* window in this manuscript, for example (Losty 2008: 18).

[fig. 7.7 Rāma and Rāvaṇa look on as various demons seek to prevent Hanuman from returning the mountain back to the Himalayas. From the *Yuddakhanda* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, Mewar, 1650s. Source: The British Library Board, Add. MS 15297(1), f.155r).]

The prevalence of certain subject matter is indicative of the popularity of certain deities or *sampradāya*s, and evidence for religious change. In the Pahari region, a continuous history of painting has been established from the early seventeenth century among the many small courts of this mountainous region. In contrast to Rajasthani courts, the popularity of Śiva and Devi in the hills is evident not only in temple dedications but also in the prevalence of paintings of these deities. An isolated example of sixteenth century manuscript illustration from the hills is the celebrated Simla *Devī Mahātmya* dated between 1552 and 1581 in a style similar to the early Rajput style of the plains. Before this manuscript was discovered in 1977, Pahari painting was considered to have begun with the "Tantric Devī" series of seventy or

more paintings of numerous forms of the goddess as a cosmic force from Basohli dated 1660-70 (Lyons 1992; McInerney 1999). Illustrations of the goddess in Pahari painting largely disappear after this date and while many magnificent paintings of Śiva were produced in the late seventeenth century, the spread of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* is evident from the increasing dominance of paintings of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and other Kṛṣṇa-related romantic texts from the late seventeenth through to the nineteenth century.

Rajput court paintings in the long eighteenth century were primarily illustrations to religious and romantic texts. The narrative potential of the *Rāmāyaṇa* continued to be pursued by court artists, such as the Pahari 'Shangri' *Rāmāyaṇa* of the late seventeenth century or the huge paintings illustrating Tulsidas' *Rāmcaritmānas* produced at the Jodhpur court in the 1770s. The *Mahābhārata*, its epic counterpart, was by contrast of limited interest to artists until the nineteenth century. But the most popular devotional texts to be illustrated were addressed to Kṛṣṇa (Fig. 7.8). His *līlās* in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* were a very popular subject for illustration: Viṣṇu's descent as Kṛṣṇa to save the earth from the wicked king Kaṁśa, his birth to Devakī and Vasudeva, his youth in Gokula with his foster-parents, the cowherd Nanda and his wife Yaśoda in which he gradually revealed his divinity, followed by his adolescence in Braj, playing the flute among the cow-herders, and dancing with the women. His love for Rādhā, one of the *gopī*s, is the subject of the twelfth-century *Gītā Govinda*. Other paintings were closely connected with the *nāyika-bheda* classification of the love between the ideal courtly hero (*nāyaka*) and heroine (*nāyika*) in the Sanskrit *Rasamañjari* by Bhanudatta (c.1500) and Keśavdas' *Rasikpriyā* written in Braj in 1591 for the Rāja of Orchcha. The close connection between poetry, painting and music is further evident from paintings of the months of the year (*bārah-māsā*, "twelve months") and their festivals and rituals, the outer landscape being connected with inner romantic and erotic moods, and sets of 36 paintings depicting musical modes (*rāgamāla*) that would evoke a

mood (eroticism, heroism, tranquility, devotion, loneliness) and a time of day, or occasionally a season such as the monsoon. For example, poems set to Vasanta *rāgini* and sung to celebrate the advent of spring were often illustrated by Kṛṣṇa's divine-play with the *gopī*s.

[fig. 7.8 Radha and Krishna walking in a grove from *Rasikpriya* series. Opaque watercolour on paper, Kangra, ca. 1820-1825 (V&A IM.156-1914). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.]

The *nāyaka* and his lover might be depicted as Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā (or occasionally Śiva and Devī) in illustrated literature, such as the Braj *Rasikpriyā,* even if this text may not be specifically characterized as 'religious' or 'Hindu'. Or the Rajput ruler himself might be depicted as the courtly hero or indeed the deity (Glynn 2018). Portraying living rulers in the guise of deities has a long history in South Asian sculpture and in eighteenth-century painting Rajputs were similarly portrayed in the guise of deities. The conflation of Kṛṣṇa with Rajasthan's rulers was a common trope, kings becoming manifestations of the deity's heroic, erotic power (Aitken 2010: 249). In the Himalayan foothills, portraits of Sidh Sen of Mandi (r. 1684-1727) depict him both worshipping Śiva and as a manifestation of the deity. An important factor in explaining the presence of the subject in two-dimensional paintings in Rajasthan is the rising importance of the Puṣṭimārg from the seventeenth century. This Vaiṣṇava devotional tradition endowed paintings, as well as the more usual sculptures, with divine presence. At the most important temple at Nathdwara in southern Rajasthan and in other Puṣṭimārg shrines, the focus of worship in the elaborate liturgy of eight daily *jhānkī*s ("exhibitions") and twenty-four annual festivals is on large, *piccavai*s, cloth hangings measuring up to three meters square with additional block-printing, brocade or embroidery, and with their iconography determined by their ritual use (Skelton 1973; Ambalal 1987). Viṭṭalnath, the son of Vallabha, sought royal patronage in the seventeenth century and the emphasis placed on Kṛṣṇa's identity as a prince may have been in a bid to draw in the

region's elite (Aitken 2010: 247-52). Many Rajput rulers and their subjects became the followers of the *Puṣṭimārga* in the eighteenth century. Among these were the mahāraos of Kotah in southern Rajasthan where large portraits of rulers were understood to embody the living presence of the royal ancestor. Paintings at this court thus adopted ritual roles and functions normally reserved in Hinduism for sculpted images that embodied the divine presence of a deity (Taylor 1997).

The close association of deities and sovereignty continues to be evident in the painting and sculpture of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries across South Asia. Representing kings or other elite figures in three-dimensional sculpture rather than painting remains unusual in Indian art after the thirteenth century. Contemporary with the prevalence of ruler-portraits in Rajasthani and Pahari painting are the sculpted portraits of Malla-period (1482-1769) cities of the Kathmandu Valley. Tall stone pillars crowned with gilt metal images of the late Malla kings, sometimes accompanied by their families, kneel in permanent devotion towards their tutelary goddess Taleju (Durgā). Located in an upper-level shrine within her temple, inaccessible or indeed visible from the ground, a small window enables the king's portrait to exchange *darśana* with his favored goddess. The earliest surviving example of the king Pratapamalla in Kathmandu dates to 1670 and was followed by ones in nearby Patan and Bhaktapur. Many rulers in this period held sovereignty on behalf of a particular named deity, acting as regent on earth for a divine lord. In Mewar, the *rana*s of Udaipur ruled on behalf of Eklingjī (Śiva) a short distance north of the city; in Jaipur, the *mahārāja*s were the regents of Govindadeva (Kṛṣṇa); in Madurai far to the south, the Nayakas ruled on behalf of the city's patron goddess Mīnākṣi. Paintings of the state-deity as well as those showing the ruler with the deity served to emphasize this relationship.

Until the sixteenth century, murals were the dominant mode of painting across India. Though some survive in Rajasthani palaces, such as at Bundi and Kota, richer and more

distinctive traditions of wall and ceiling painting are evident in the temples and palaces of southern India. In 1750 Mārtāṇḍa Varma, the south Indian ruler of Travancore (r. 1728/9-58), made over the state to the reclining form of Viṣṇu in the Padmanābha temple in Trivandrum and declared himself the deity's servant. Alongside the extensive renovations of the temple in Trivandrum and the expansion of the city itself, a new palace was constructed at the earlier capital now renamed Padmanabhapuram after the state-deity. The close connection between ruler-devotee and deity is evident from the mural paintings of Padmanābha, reclining on the multi-headed snake Ananta with his right hand over a white *liṅga*, in the private bed-chamber of the king, surrounded by the other deities of the realm (Heston 1988). Kerala has a distinctive regional tradition of large-scale mural paintings on the walls of both temples and palaces depicting dense, crowded narratives of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, or iconic images of deities such as Naṭarāja. Kerala's paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may be the most direct descendant of the earliest pre-eleventh century pictorial traditions of South Asia. This is suggested by the limited color palette and the shaded modelling of figures, as well as depiction of the shallow, densely crowded space with multiple spatial planes implied by the numerous overlapping figures but with no background.

The neighboring Tamil region and southern Deccan also developed a distinct mural painting tradition in this period that animated the walls and ceilings of both temples and palaces. Narrative paintings in temples might depict the *Rāmāyaṇa* or *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, hagiographies of regional saints or *ācārya*s, or the topography of a series of pilgrimage sites. The most extensive surviving body of paintings within a south Indian palace before the nineteenth century are in Ramnad, dating to the early eighteenth-century (Fig. 7.9). The Setupati ("guardian of the setu", the causeway to the great temple at Rameshvaram) is depicted in these wall-paintings as heroic king and devoted servant of God, as well as a ruler enjoying the pleasures of courtly life—all aspects of early modern royal ideology in South

India. Among the many paintings of sacred topography, narratives of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and deities, Raghunātha Setupati (r. 1710-25) is depicted in battle against his Tanjavur Maratha rival and receiving Dutch envoys. In an upper private chamber, the Setupati is repeatedly depicted in scenes of royal courtly pleasure: he eats sumptuous meals, enjoys music and dancing, makes love, and swims with several women in a lotus-filled pond. The homology between king and god alluded to in contemporary literature is made explicit with the Setupati depicted as the god of erotic love Kāma firing feathered arrows at his female counterpart, the goddess Rati, opposite; both deities are commonly paired in contemporary temple sculpture. In a further royal-divine homology, the Setupati is depicted as the adolescent Kṛṣṇa sitting in a tree taunting the *gopī*s below and playing the flute at the center of a circular *rasamaṇḍala* ring of dancers. This is an unusual manifestation of Kṛṣṇa in southern India, more familiar in court paintings from Rajasthan, suggesting the widely inter-connected worlds of eighteenth-century Hindu elites. Contemporary royal portraiture in eighteenth-century Rajasthani painting similarly often shows the Hindu ruler enjoying the pleasures of the court. In a like manner, the paintings at Ramnad may be interpreted as depicting the enactment of the ideals of Setupati kingship.

[**fig. 7.9 Raghunatha Setupati, wall painting in the Ramalinga Vilas, Ramnad, Tamilnadu, early eighteenth century. Photo by author**.]

In comparison with the widespread visual culture of Rajput court painting in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some genres of popular, devotional Hindu painting developed at individual temples outside the courts. Paintings of particular temples and their deities have been a long-standing element of Hindu pilgrimage practice. Together with votive terracottas, miniature temples or small metal images, paintings from pilgrimage sites may have served as evidence for the completed journey that maintains a tangible connection with the sacred charisma of the site, or indeed as advertisements at home for the spiritual merits of

travel to the shrine. In Puri in Orissa, a caste of hereditary painters (*citrakāra*s) are involved in the ritual cycle of the Jagannātha temple built in the eleventh century. Jagannātha ("Lord of the World") has been considered a form of Kṛṣṇa since the thirteenth century and is worshipped in this temple alongside his brother Balabhadrā (Balarāma) and sister Subhadrā, all unusually made of wood. Their iconography in Puri is distinctive, with huge heads with bold staring eyes, joined directly to short bodies with no legs. Painted substitutes for the three-dimensional images of the Jagannātha trio are created while the wooden icons are periodically repainted or replaced. The *citrakāra*s have also made souvenir paintings (*paṭacitra*, "picture cloth") for pilgrims depicting the three deities in bold colors and strong lines, sometimes within a schematic temple, or the wider pilgrimage site with subsidiary temples (Fig. 7.10). The establishment of the painting tradition at the temple is disputed. But the acquisition of Orissan *paṭacitra*s from as early as the 1780s by western museums together with one sent to Bhaktapur in Nepal in 1670 suggests the deep roots of this local tradition (Guy 1991; Fischer and Pathy 2001). The collection of Orissan paintings in the late eighteenth century highlights another important feature of the period under review: the expansion of European colonialism in the period from 1500 to 1857 shaped the understanding not only of Hinduism but also the collection, interpretation, and production of Hindu art and visual culture.

[fig. 7.10 Jagannātha triad and temple at Puri. Painting on cloth, Orissa, late nineteenth century (1880,0.301). © The Trustees of the British Museum.]

COLONIALISM AND HINDU VISUAL CULTURE

In 1534, at around the same time that Vallabha and Caitanya were rediscovering the mythic landscape of Braj, a Portuguese botanist visited one of the oldest Hindu cave-temples of western India on the island of Elephanta, a name for the site stemming from the large stone elephant encountered by the first Europeans. Earlier visitors had damaged many of the

monumental sculptures of Śiva following the arrival of the Portuguese on the western Indian coast from the early 1500s. But Garcia da Orta considered this 'pagoda' to be the best of all the ancient cave temples in the region: "Certainly it is a sight well worth seeing and it would appear that the devil has used all his powers and knowledge to deceive the *gentios* into his worship" (qtd. in Biederman 2013: 3). Such differing reactions to the many Hindu temples and sculpture created over the past thousand years were common to the newly-arrived Portuguese, as much as longer-established Muslim communities or later, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, members of the British East India Company.

The first book to focus on Hindu art and iconography in a European language was published in 1810. Major Edward Moor's encyclopedic *The Hindu Pantheon* was one part of the broader European Enlightenment classification of religions, myths, and deities. Moor (1771-1848) served in the East India Company's army in western and southern India from 1783 to 1805. His pioneering publication discussed both the myths and ritual practices of Hinduism and outlined the mythology and iconography of the major deities. What is striking in *The Hindu Pantheon* is the illustration of Hindu sculptures, ritual objects and paintings from his own collection, now in the British Museum, and that of his contemporaries Lord Valentia, Charles 'Hindoo' Stuart and the East India Company's Museum. The initial encounter with Hinduism by Westerners was primarily visual and aural. Visitors to India were both fascinated and often appalled by the temples and their deities, the ancient monuments, and contemporary rituals such as the public festival processions, *satī*, or 'hook-swinging'. The European encounter with Indian art before the eighteenth century resulted in little understanding of the objects and practices, feeding established stereotypes of monsters and the 'primitive'. Following the gradual translation and interpretation of some of the foundational Sanskrit literature, notably the *Bhagavad Gītā* in 1785, this visual understanding of Hinduism followed a different path to the textualization of the Hindu past, leading to the

many studies of Hindu art, iconography and ethnography of the past century. Within the wider study of the Hindu tradition, Moor's pioneering *The Hindu Pantheon* emphasized the importance of studying Hinduism through its objects and rituals, and not only its texts. The role of missionaries as the collectors of many Hindu ritual objects dating to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including material formerly confined to the realm of ethnography—painted portable 'god boxes' and *kalamkāri* cloth-paintings from South India, ephemeral pilgrimage paintings and early prints of Hindu deities, narrative scroll paintings—is also central to our understanding of recent Hindu visual culture. Such material, which only survives in any significant quantity from the late eighteenth century, may offer evidence of folk or popular practices.

The European Enlightenment interest in and classification of contemporary Hindu iconography is also evident in the production between the 1770s and 1830s in southern India of scroll paintings and illustrated albums of deities, temples, and processions by Indian artists, collected by and often made for European patrons and thus termed 'Company' paintings (Dallapiccola 2010). New forms of Hindu painting also emerged in the nineteenth century, such as the Kalighat paintings made between the 1830s and 1920s by rural artists migrating to urban, colonial Calcutta, alongside the continuity of many forms of popular, 'folk' paintings. Though the *Bhagavad Gītā* is today among the most famous Hindu scriptures, its great appeal is relatively recent. The iconography of Kṛṣṇa instructing Arjuna on the battlefield at Kurukṣetra, the pair in a chariot, or the theophany of Kṛṣṇa revealing his majestic, cosmic form to Arjuna, are rare before the late eighteenth century and only became widespread from the later nineteenth century in mass-reproduced 'god posters'. This was the result of the transformation of the *Gītā*'s popularity by the reformers of the nineteenth century Hindu renaissance, especially the Ramakrishna Mission, and the stimulus it provided

to the later development of the nationalist movement for independence. Before this, it was the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* that had appealed to artists, not the *Gītā*.

Temples continued to be constructed in many parts of India during the expansion of British authority from the late eighteenth century, whether in the colonial cities—Calcutta's Kalighat temple was built in 1809, for example—or in old established pilgrimage centers. If the sixteenth century was the moment when the Tamil conception of the temple with soaring *gopura*s became a widely South Indian architectural form, then the nineteenth century was the age of its global dissemination as South Indian communities migrated across South Asia and overseas. The largest temple at Vrindavan today, dedicated to Raṅganātha (Rangji), was constructed in the 1840s, its tall *gopura*s, two expansive walled enclosures, and lavish festival processions all distinguishing it from its North Indian neighbors. Even before the migration of large numbers of Indians as indentured laborers in the later nineteenth century following the abolition of slavery within the British empire, Hindus had settled and built new temples in imperial territories outside India. In Singapore and Penang in British colonial Southeast Asia, the earliest temples were constructed in the 1820s and '30s, for example, soon after the cities' foundations.

Visual culture continued to be important to the self-definition of Hindu reform movements from the early nineteenth century. While Rammohun Roy and the Brahmo Samāj in Bengal denounced the use of images and temple rituals, other *sampradāya*s fostered the continued production and consumption of Hindu art. Formed at the cusp of the colonial period in Gujarat, Swāmīnarāyan Hinduism has subsequently become from the late twentieth century one of the fastest-growing transnational religions (Williams and Trivedi 2015). Its establishment can be traced to the leadership and teachings of Sahajanand Swami (died 1830), who received devotion and honors as Swāmīnarāyan as a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Being and the highest reality (*Puruṣottam*). The construction of six new temples in

Gujarat from 1822 was central to the establishment of this new Vaiṣṇava religious movement. In their layout, design, and iconography, these temples, like the religious movement itself, faced towards both the past and future change. From the later nineteenth century, the impact of colonial art education, new technologies of photography and mass reproduction, changing aesthetic tastes and patronage, and growing nationalist consciousness would all impact Hindu visual culture and contributed to the foundations of modern Indian art.

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