

Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies

<http://journals.cambridge.org/BSO>

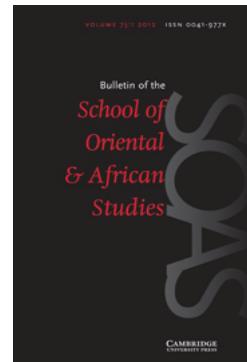
Additional services for **Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies:**

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



Jennifer Howes: *Illustrating India: The Early Colonial Investigations of Colin Mackenzie (1784–1821)*. xiv, 269 pp. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010. £75. ISBN 978 0 19 806441 1.

Crispin Branfoot

Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies / Volume 75 / Issue 01 / February 2012, pp 179 - 181

DOI: 10.1017/S0041977X11001042, Published online: 22 February 2012

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0041977X11001042

How to cite this article:

Crispin Branfoot (2012). Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 75, pp 179-181 doi:10.1017/S0041977X11001042

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

As the reader is taken towards the present day, Rose does not flinch from a close examination of the fissures or fault-lines that bedevil modern Zoroastrianism, prominent among which is the question of conversion. In her penultimate chapter, Rose sets out the consequences of a strictly endogamous doctrine: "Numerically the self-destruct button has been pressed, in that the number of deaths exceeds the number of births".

None the less, in a return to the personal voice of her introduction, Rose explains why there is still such optimism amongst her fellow-Zoroastrians, noting that the communities that survive in Iran "act as an axial link between the past development of the religion and its modern expressions and components".

In her last chapter, Rose returns to Zarathustra himself, as a prophet, icon, myth and man. It is in these passages that the three voices of the book most elegantly fuse into one. The appendixes are useful, in particular the textual and historical timelines as well as the tables outlining the five *Gathas* and the priestly *Yasna*.

Sarah Stewart

SOUTH ASIA

JENNIFER HOWES:

Illustrating India: The Early Colonial Investigations of Colin Mackenzie (1784–1821).

xiv, 269 pp. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010. £75.

ISBN 978 0 19 806441 1.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X11001042

In his pioneering *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (1876, 1910) James Fergusson wrote that Colin Mackenzie, whose long career in India culminated in his appointment as the first Surveyor General, "drew everything he found of any architectural importance, and was the most industrious and successful collector of drawings and manuscripts that India has ever known; but he could not write. The few essays he wrote are meagre in the extreme, and nine-tenths of his knowledge perished with him". The vast collection of manuscripts and other material gathered by Mackenzie and his many assistants, especially during the surveys of the Deccan in southern India in the 1790s and 1800s, have been described as "a monument to this day of a kind of historical energy and interest that disappeared almost as soon as the concerns of colonial conquest gave way to the preoccupations of colonial rule" (Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, Princeton, 2001, p. 82). But the great mass of over 1,700 drawings and paintings in the British Library were largely ignored from the mid-nineteenth century, in spite of Fergusson's admiration of Mackenzie's work, until they were catalogued by Mildred Archer in the 1960s. Howes' *Illustrating India* is a valuable contribution to the burgeoning scholarly interest in Mackenzie's collection, relating the pictorial records amassed during his long career to other manuscripts, maps, letters and published sources.

Mackenzie came to India in 1783, serving in the Madras Army as an engineer and surveyor. He professed to know no Indian languages and was no Orientalist, yet assembled a mass of documentation on India's history, ethnography, religion and antiquities, especially in the South. His two largest projects were the Survey

of the Nizam of Hyderabad's Dominions (1792–99) and the Mysore Survey (1799–1810) in the Deccan following the British victory in the Mysore wars. *Illustrating India*'s six chapters examine each of these surveys, the connections Mackenzie made with other early scholars, the ethnographic drawings of Deccan occupations, trade and costume, the local histories and drawings of south India's temples, and his detailed study of the well-visited site of Mamallapuram. The book concludes with the final phases of Mackenzie's career from 1810–21 in both south and north India, and Java.

The main strength of this book is its presentation of a substantial body of visual evidence for the early colonial encounter with India: the book is well-illustrated throughout with over 100 monochrome maps, sketches and paintings, and a central insert with 40 colour plates. Only a fraction of these have been published before and Howes makes a valuable contribution to our awareness of this archive and the understanding of these illustrations' production and content. The book discusses the primary visual archive in the British Library; a smaller collection of Mackenzie material reported to be in the Asiatic Library, Kolkata is not included.

The production of knowledge has been a major theme in recent historiography of colonial India. Howes' study adds to our knowledge of Mackenzie himself, from letters in the National Library of Scotland, and his relationships with other scholars, including Francis Whyte Ellis and Thomas Strange. Mackenzie's important collaboration with local assistants, especially the three Kavali brothers, is rightly noted, but this book also discusses the evidence for the many draughtsmen and copyists employed in producing the sketches and, often much later, the "fair copies" of these that survive in the British Library.

The survey and representation of temples and south India's antiquities was a key element of Mackenzie's surveys, and he was keen for his studies to be more widely known. He was the first European to visit and document many temples and historic sites in southern India, providing useful documentation on their form, detail and meaning a century before the more sustained, thorough studies by art historians and archaeologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among these are the Hoysala temples at Halebid and Amritpur, and the city of Vijayanagara in Karnataka, and the Mallikarjuna temple at Srisailam in Andhra. The Mackenzie material highlights the different modes of representing space, especially architecture, from the picturesque landscapes, to maps and plans, measured elevations and sculptural details. These are contrasted with native representations of sacred space that emphasize local myths and iconographies.

The author's immersion in the Mackenzie archive provides additional details to our understanding of the visual material. She identifies the temple in a much-reproduced painting of the survey team at work as the Hoysala-period Kedaresvara temple at Nagalapuram, largely on the basis of the background landscape. The detailed chapter on Mackenzie's periodic survey and documentation of Mamallapuram notes the changed names and identification for some of the seventh and eighth-century monuments. She over-stresses the importance of this material, however interesting and unnoticed by existing scholarship on the site, and would have benefitted from reading Michael Rabe's *The Great Penance at Mamallapuram* (Chennai, 2001). Her discussion of the Hindu narrative reliefs at Amritpur would similarly have been enhanced with reference to Kirsti Evans' *Epic Narratives in the Hoysala Temples* (Leiden, 1997). In her discussion of Mackenzie's exploration of the Buddhist stupa at Amaravati, among the first to be excavated in South Asia, she corrects the date of his first visit to February 1798, not 1797. Mackenzie was one of the first scholars to study Jainism from his survey of its material remains: it was this that motivated his exploration of

Amaravati, whose Buddhist nature was then largely unknown. The importance of Jainism to Mackenzie is evident from the huge monolithic image of Gomatesvara on a hill that features behind him in Thomas Hickey's portrait of 1816, but Howes correctly identifies the site as Karkala and not the better-known Sravana Belgola. Some odd judgements and a degree of repetition between chapters, that more careful editing might have noted, do little to mar the importance of this book to those interested in the early colonial investigation of South Asia's history, ethnography, religions and antiquities, and the prominence of its visual record.

Crispin Branfoot

AVRIL A. POWELL:

Scottish Orientalists and India: The Muir Brothers, Religion, Education and Empire.

(*Worlds of the East India Company.*) xvi, 318 pp. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2010. ISBN 978 1 84383 579 0.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X11001054

At a time when questions regarding the distinctiveness of Scottishness are once again a preoccupation in post-devolution Britain and pre-independence Scotland, Powell's *Scottish Orientalists and India* proves to be a timely reflection on the ultimately tenous relationship between national identity and the life of ideas. The specifically Scottish character of elements of British imperialism is one of the many questions that guide this meticulous and beautifully paced study of the scholarly and administrative careers of the brothers Dr John and Sir William Muir in the north-west province of nineteenth-century colonial India. Powell opens her account with a reflection on the degree to which the Scottishness of her subjects may have shaped their respective attitudes and contributions to the Company and Empire, and she does so by way of a broader assessment of, and challenge to the apparent scholarly consensus that has appeared in recent years concerning the possibility of identifying a specifically Scottish contribution both to "empire" and to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Of particular concern is the suggestion, represented at the extreme by the work of Michael Fry, that there was a determinative relationship between intellectual ideas considered characteristically Scottish and the seemingly "liberal benevolence" of colonial Scots towards the governance of colonized populations. Powell is quite rightly sceptical of such claims and sets about demonstrating how questions of influence are always more complex than a straightforward "cause-and-effect" or single-origin narrative can account for. She does so by tracking the ways in which, over the course of their education and subsequent careers, both in Scotland and India, numerous influences, people, and cultures intersected to shape the lives and attitudes of her two fraternal protagonists. In her understated way she makes the keen observation that "the question of national identity was frequently blurred by tendencies to move without comment between markers of Scottishness, Englishness and Britishness, often more rhetorical than meaningful ... rhetoric on Scottishness often proved far stronger than any real differences, and over long careers in India many new influences entered the psychological melting pot to inflect attitudes in ways probably not always conscious to an individual at the time" (p. 10). It is this nuanced appreciation of the ways a life is made and shaped and in turn shapes others that grounds Powell's methodological framework and enables her to draw a subtle and