

# Practice between the profession of architecture and its margins

## Changing interpretations of architectural modernity

### Indian temple architecture and modernity: practices, knowledge production, methodologies

*Megha Chand Inglis and Crispin Branfoot*

*Modernity is easy to inhabit but difficult to define. If modernity is to be a definable, delimited concept, we must identify some people or practices or concepts as nonmodern.<sup>1</sup>*

What is the relationship between modernity and the Indian temple? To introduce readers of **arq** to the complexities, questions, and problems concerning Indian temple architecture and modernity, we begin by examining two moments of encounter in the architectural history of the temple in modern India.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1830s, the colonial-modern gaze was beginning to contend with living temple-building practices within a growing cultural arena of antiquarian interest, tied to the birth of architectural history as a modern discipline in India. Nearly two centuries later in the early 2000s, architectural historians and professionals once again turned their attention to contemporary temple builders trained in familial networks, within a new cultural arena transformed by economic liberalisation, religious

nationalism, and growing patronage from transnational religious organisations. Both moments, seen together, provide valuable glimpses into how lineages of European thought continue to reverberate across colonial and postcolonial architectural history writing.

In the 1830s *shilpi* Ramjibhai Ladharam, a member of a community of Gujarati temple builders, was busy constructing a set of new Jain temple complexes that transformed the ancient pilgrimage site of Shatrunjaya near



1 'Motisah Tuk from the northwest in Satrunjaya', Edmund David Lyon, photographic print from glass plate negative, 1869.

Palitana in western India.

Patronised by wealthy merchant families from nearby Ahmedabad, this work drew from an older 'classical' western Indian temple vocabulary and, equally, developed radical innovations in response to shifting notions of space and their patrons' devotional obligations [1].<sup>3</sup> A visitor to the site in this period was James Fergusson, the Scottish architectural historian and critic, who is widely accepted to have written the first comprehensive modern architectural history of India, following his extensive travels between 1829 and 1842.<sup>4</sup> In his influential *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* he wrote:

*Fortunately, too, these modern examples by no means disgrace the age in which they are built. Their sculptures are inferior and some of their details are deficient in meaning and expression; but on the whole, they are equal, or nearly so to the average examples of the earlier ages. It is this that makes Palitana one of the most interesting places that can be named for the philosophical student of architectural art, inasmuch as he can there see the various processes by which cathedrals were produced in the Middle Ages, carried on a larger scale than almost anywhere else, and in a more natural manner. It is by watching the methods still followed in designing buildings in that remote locality that we became aware how it is that the uncultivated Hindu can rise in architecture to a degree of originality and perfection which has not been attained in Europe since the Middle Ages, but which might easily be recovered by following the same processes.*<sup>5</sup>

Many scholars have drawn attention to the imperial and racialised codes active in Fergusson's prodigious body of scholarship, which contrasted the progress of Western civilisation with the stasis or decline of the 'East'. 'The Indian story is that of backward decline', he wrote.<sup>6</sup> Yet he had undoubted admiration for living building practices in India, which seemed to exemplify mediaeval European building practice with designers and craftsmen working together on site. Fergusson was dismissive of buildings constructed in the 'West' after the fifteenth century, which he condemned as 'false styles' in contrast to Gothic, the last 'true style'. He felt that there was much to learn from past and present



2 Sanatan Hindu Mandir, Wembley, London, completed 2010. © The Author.

builders in India in recovering a manner of working lost in the 'West' following the Renaissance separation of architect from builder. Yet however remarkable he thought those temple builders were, the orientalist lens through which he saw them tended to see these nineteenth-century temples at Shatrunjaya and at other sites that he visited in the degenerate shadow of older 'classical' examples.

Such attitudes towards modern temple builders and their outputs remain largely intact within architectural discourse, as both architects and scholars struggle how to evaluate – or even acknowledge the existence of – the descendants of the same community of builders in the contemporary professional imagination. The tendency of architectural historians, professional architects, and critics is to see contemporary producers of sacred architecture as 'non-modern'.<sup>7</sup> They are considered neither on a par with professional architects trained in modernist traditions nor with their historic predecessors. Built into the temporalities that this categorisation of the 'non-modern' speaks of are certain ideas of progress which are oriented towards modernist futures. While postcolonial and subaltern studies have shown how the 'non-modern' has tremendous potential to undo the conceptual boundaries and temporal horizons of colonial-modern notions of modernity, attitudes within the discipline of architecture towards modern temple builders do not do justice to

emergent temporalities, lifeworlds, and inhabited practices. It has recently been acknowledged that most architects with modernist training have struggled to comprehend this landscape of patronage and procurement.<sup>8</sup> It is precisely this untranslatability that offers a fertile ground for thinking about radical possibilities of the architectural 'non-modern'. How might we think of cross-categorical translations that do not take the universal, institutionally-trained 'architect' for granted?

### The profession and its margins

Since the 1980s, the descendants of the same community of builders working at Shatrunjaya in the 1830s, and other families from western India, have been designing and producing hand- and machine-carved, monumental stone temples in both India and the global diaspora, from the United States to Singapore, for communities of Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs [2].<sup>9</sup> *Shilpi* Ramjibhai Ladharam's great-great-grandson is the Ahmedabad-based contemporary 'temple architect' Chandrakant B. Sompura, designer of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir or 'Neasden temple' in north London (1992–5) as well as many temples across India and beyond.<sup>10</sup> As the Neasden temple illustrates [1], built with Bulgarian limestone and Italian marble shipped to India for hand-carving before being shipped to London for assembly, the design and rich sculpted ornament of many of these temples consciously evoke the 'classical era' (tenth to thirteenth century) of western Indian sacred architecture.



3 Laxmi Vinayakar temple (or Nutan Bhawan) within the Chhattarpur Temple complex (Shri Adya Katyayani Shakti Pitham, 1974 on), Chhattarpur, Delhi.

These familial builders complicate the ‘colonial modern’ through both the acceptance of the divine and also of the heterotemporality of the now. They open up wider questions about the architecture profession’s discomfort with practitioners on its margins. They also suggest that these two intersecting domains are more porous than they are assumed to be. The continuation of orientalist and ‘othering’ vocabulary used by architectural professionals is evident in the description of modern temples designed by traditionally trained builders as ‘unmodern’, ‘anachronistic’, ‘pastiche’, ‘kitsch’, ‘superficial’, or ‘pale imitations of ancient architecture’. The extraordinary temple complex at Chhattarpur in south Delhi, for example, has been described as ‘pastiche par excellence’ [3].<sup>11</sup> When they are acknowledged as innovative, they continue to remain trapped in a relation of negation: as ‘endogenous’, ‘traditional’, and ‘counter-modern’.

By contrast, the sacred spaces designed by professional architects in modernist languages, involving contemporary technologies, invariably invite accolades for

being ‘creative’, ‘imaginative’, and ‘innovative’. Such architects’ critical distance from ‘traditional’ temple builders is portrayed as the very mark that qualifies them as modern, working towards the prerogatives of social and developmental change. What is this imagination of architectural modernity if not a practice of power? There is a sense in which the past is seen as a discrete entity and not folded into the present. Ultimately those trained in the modernist tradition of the secular cultural horizons of the profession, legible and visible to the English-speaking Euro-American sphere of architecture, its dominant codes and cultural circuits, are seen as the key protagonists of India’s architectural modernity.<sup>12</sup> The colonial and post-independence attempt to separate religion from the public, rather than the private, sphere has played out in the birth of the profession, architectural training, and architectural history in India. Thus, many contemporary Indian architects with institutional training remain uncomfortable with the idea of divine presence in the design and procurement process, and this is demonstrated by the relative lack of attention

paid to contemporary temple building traditions, precisely because they are religious.

Meanwhile historians of temple architecture have placed higher aesthetic value on the ancient and the monumental, to the detriment of temples built in recent centuries, a legacy of colonial-era scholarship that has cast a long shadow over the direction of subsequent studies. During much of the twentieth century, art historical scholarship, in its taste for the antique, has primarily addressed the earliest and mediaeval monuments, many of which had fallen out of use and thus could be accommodated within the disciplines of history and archaeology. They tended to neglect the study of temples built in the seventeenth century and later, which are often still in active worship. This has resulted in a wealth of impressive scholarship on the temple architecture of a single mediaeval dynasty, site, or even an individual temple built between the fifth and sixteenth centuries. But temples built after the early eighteenth century in South Asia have either been explicitly characterised as ‘degenerate’ or simply ignored. An element of this scholarly lacuna is

the presumption that, with the gradual expansion of British colonial authority over much of South Asia from the 1750s on, the powerful royal patrons that could command the resources to construct monumental temples had gone.

Yet many of the new patrons of temples in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were from newly wealthy merchant classes, such as the Hindu and Jain patrons of new temples in Gujarat, in both Ahmedabad or the pilgrimage site of Shatrunjaya mentioned above or the Nakarattar (or Nattukkottai Chettiar) business community in south India.<sup>13</sup> The expansion of mercantile and labour networks to cities across colonial India led to the construction of southern *Dravida* or north Indian *Nagara* temples being built outside their 'home' regions.<sup>14</sup> This is evident in the building of temples dedicated to Tamil deities with the

characteristically south Indian pyramidal gateway (*gopuram*) of *Dravida* temples built at north Indian pilgrimage sites, such as Vrindavan in the 1840s or Pushkar in the 1990s [4]. Or the construction of a white marble Jain temple with a curvilinear *Nagara* tower (*shikhara*) 'more familiar in north India' on the streets of the southern city of Chennai (Madras). Between 1933 and the 1990s, members of the wealthy Birla family of Marwari industrialists were the patrons of around forty new temples across north and central India in places where their business interests were located. The art deco-inspired Lakshmi-Narayana temple built from 1933–9 in the recently completed city of New Delhi was among the earliest – one of the few temples ever mentioned in studies of modern Indian architecture – as well as others in many Indian cities built between the 1950s and 1990s [5].<sup>15</sup>

### Diasporas

Temples are now an increasingly familiar presence in the urban landscapes of contemporary Europe and North America. But there remains a need to examine the social, material, and historical trajectories of temple building in the global diaspora of communities from different regions of South Asia. Temples were built from at least the early nineteenth century in British (and some French) colonial territories in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the Indian Ocean islands of Réunion and Mauritius, the Caribbean, East and South Africa, and in Burma, Malaya, and Fiji. They accompanied Hindus, Jains, and others who migrated as merchants, soldiers or – following the abolition of slavery in the 1830s – as indentured labourers working on sugarcane, tea, or rubber plantations up to the 1920s.<sup>16</sup> More recent migrations since independence in 1947 to Britain and elsewhere in Europe, and to Canada and the United States, have been as a result of economic opportunity as well as political events, such as the expulsion of Indians – many of whom were Hindus and Jains originally from Gujarat – from East Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, or the diaspora of Tamils following the onset of the civil war in Sri Lanka in 1983.

Initially, these diasporic communities worshipped at home, in makeshift temporary shrines in domestic settings and in converted buildings [6], but as they became more settled, so increasing numbers of purpose-built temples have been constructed. The choice of *Nagara* or *Dravida* temple design provides an insight into the conscious selection of architectural vocabularies by diasporic communities for new spaces of worship in order to forge new community identities. The construction of wholly new temples following design practices familiar in South Asia often persists alongside the continued use of converted buildings. These temples emerged from local contexts and contingencies in the diaspora, while remaining tied to the geographic roots of the communities in South Asia. Thus, *Nagara* temples translated to diasporic contexts, have been built for migrant communities originally from Gujarat, Rajasthan, and the Gangetic plain in northern India. This includes the recent



4 New Rangji temple, Pushkar, Rajasthan, late twentieth century.

proliferation of purpose-built temples built by members of the Swaminarayan Hindu community in both India and the transnational diaspora since the 1970s. The temple in Neasden, mentioned above, was the first such building in Europe that drew on historic temple traditions of India through a collaboration of temple practitioners and other professionals in the diaspora. Temples built for south Indian communities – whether as migrant plantation labourers to Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century or for the highly skilled professional migrants to late twentieth-century America – have been built in the *Dravida* tradition. Modern religious movements, such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON, commonly known as the ‘Hare Krishna’ movement), which traces its roots to sixteenth-century Bengal, have also sponsored the construction of new temples since the late 1960s in India as well as in cities across the world. Furthermore, any study of modern and contemporary temples needs to address not only the monumental buildings but also the significance of the ephemeral structures and minor shrines, and their patron communities that proliferate in South Asia’s urban centres and rural environments [7, 8].<sup>17</sup>

Only in the past two decades has there been significant interest in the temples built in the nineteenth century and later, among scholars from a range of disciplines. Historians and anthropologists of religion have conducted sophisticated analyses of modern temples and their worshipping communities in India and the diaspora.<sup>18</sup> But such studies may lose sight of the temples as built environments and are often less concerned with establishing detailed histories of construction, the analysis of design and space, and building processes and modes of knowing. Some architects and architectural historians have begun to examine the wealth of temples built in the past two centuries, but many questions and issues remain to be examined from the perspective of architectural history and knowledge production.<sup>19</sup> As suggested above, the design of temples in the contemporary global diaspora invite consideration of the adoption or adaption of historic traditions in new settings, such as the conscious evocation of ‘India’ in



5 Birla Mandir (Lakshmi Narayan Temple), Jaipur, Rajasthan, completed 1988.



6 Leicester Jain Centre, built in 1863 and converted in 1988.

the construction of temples formally identifiable with similar temples in South Asia itself. Temples in the diaspora may also serve as community centres in a manner not required in South Asia, or are designed in a more ‘ecumenical’ fashion to accommodate and meet the devotional needs of worshippers from multiple Hindu sectarian or regional traditions.<sup>20</sup>

#### Beyond the old binaries

Until recently, there has been little scholarship on those trained in temple building, whether from within family lineages or self-taught, between the nineteenth century and the present.<sup>21</sup> There is a need to research not only a wide range of devotional spaces, but to also consider the tools, methods and archives through which historians can chart new histories of architectural modernity from the vantages and lifeworlds of

these protagonists. It is imperative to see these practitioners not in a single evolutionary hereditary line but in situated and discursive relations, creatively negotiating a variety of patrons, texts, temporalities, contexts, and technologies. These emergent histories need to include diverse vantage points and knowledges, both engaging with and modifying global categories as well as post-enlightenment ways of knowing. The old binaries of ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’, ‘west’ and ‘non-west’ are no longer tenable in scholarship, yet they are also real, lived, categories through which many familial building constituencies imagine and represent themselves in the present. This plays out in many ways, such as in lived relations with *vastushastras*, systems of architectural codes that are deployed both for architectural practice within familial realms as well as for self-identification within

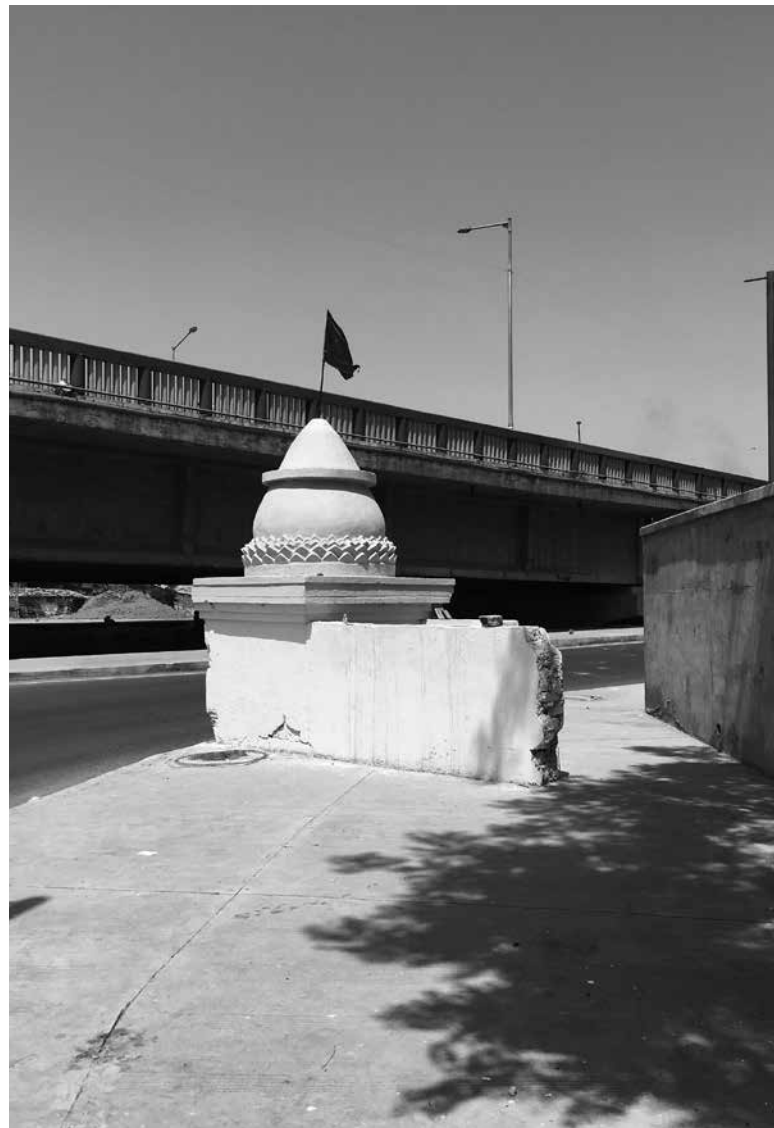
ideas of nationhood.<sup>22</sup> There is thus a need to rethink a more inclusive idea of the ‘modern’ that does not privilege universal modernist notions of both architecture and the architect.

This issue of **arq** seeks to expand the boundaries of what and who we consider modern by paying critical attention to those producers who transcend the boundaries of the nation state, capital, modern history, and the category of the architect, which have largely been considered beyond the purview of scholarly and architectural inquiry.<sup>23</sup> We ask how histories of Indian temple architecture can be brought in critical relation to the practice and performance of modernity.<sup>24</sup> We frame the notion of modernity by paying attention not only to the genealogies of modern European thought that practices on the ground might be indebted to, but also their polycentric, polysemic, and translated configurations in encounter with older and other building relations, in the constitution of the present. The emergent histories look towards intersectional and interdisciplinary methodologies encompassing evidence which is archival (both institutional and informal), ethnographic, fieldwork-based, textual, spatial and visual, committed to foregrounding diverse inhabitations, knowledges, and worldviews.

### A practice-based focus

The papers gathered in this volume, including the ‘review’ and ‘insight’ sections, are written by architectural practitioners, architectural historians, historians of modern south Asia, and architectural conservationists, many of whom have undergone professional training and practical experience as architects both in India and abroad. The analytic thread that connects these contributions is their practice-based focus in relation to the imagination and production of sacred architecture in contemporary contexts. More pertinently their location at the very junctures of so-called expert and non-expert knowledge, state and non-state actors and at the seams of seemingly different religious communities is a critical frame that brings these papers together.

Swati Chattopadhyay’s contribution highlights an inability to see the ephemeral as the bearer of significance in the contemporary



7 Minor roadside shrine, Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

annual festival of Durgapuja in Calcutta (Kolkata). While challenging architects and scholars to move beyond the valorisation of the modernist at the expense of those at the margins, she elsewhere demands an ability to describe and theorise the visual culture of the marginalised as something that resides beyond the visible structure of the state and the market.<sup>25</sup> In her study of Durgapuja, she demonstrates how the increasing secularisation of the festival has involved occupying public areas of the city without leaving a permanent trace in the urban landscape, a mode of architectural operation not considered the proper subject of history.

Deborah Sutton’s contribution also engages with urban sacred landscapes, examining the lives of two very different religious sites. Sutton reveals contestation and complex stakeholders in the urban

fabric at the sacred site of Kalkaji in the heart of Delhi. The absence of a singular authority and curatorial hand yields an architectural and material assemblage of palimpsest that is very different to the rigid, monolithic, spatial, and curatorial ordering of newer sacred landscapes such as Delhi’s Akshardham temple complex. The marginalisation of what she terms ‘disobedient’ religious landscapes, such as Kalkaji, within new orders of nationalist Hindutva politics, authority, and monumental architecture serves as a reminder of the shifting aesthetic and cultural values that have shaped – and are shaping – Delhi’s new public urban landscapes.

Both Crispin Branfoot and Megha Chand Inglis are concerned with interactions and transculturations between notions of antiquity, architectural history, and lived relations of practitioners.



8 Minor shrine outside western entrance to twelfth-century Jagannatha temple, Puri, Odisha.

They ask how European scholarship was affected by input from temple builders and conversely how these builders working on the ground incorporated colonial antiquarianism into their own building cultures.

Branfoot's article draws attention to the largely overlooked instrumentality of contemporary practitioners in the production of 'Dravidian' architectural history in the 1910s. He examines the early research conducted by the French scholar Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil in his examination of the history of Tamil temple architecture. Many temples were substantially rebuilt from the 1890s to the 1930s under the patronage of the wealthy Nattukkottai Chettiar community at a time of religious revival and growing Tamil cultural nationalism. The prodigious activity by contemporary Tamil temple builders (*sthapatis*) enabled Jouveau-

Dubreuil to understand the architectural tradition in collaboration with practitioners, some of whose descendants continue to design temples in South Asia and across the world today.

Chand Inglis explores lived relations within the familial archive of the descendants of Amritlal Mulshakar Trivedi, a prominent family of temple builders in contemporary Ahmedabad. She provides glimpses of how colonial epistemologies are repurposed and transformed through the use of modern architectural treatises and related material practices. For example, she demonstrates how – between the 1930s and 1950s – temple builders in Rajasthan accepted and contested British conceptions of 'conservation' of building fabric recommended by influential British architects in their capacity as advisors to religious trusts, while

operationalising their own theories of renovation.<sup>26</sup> Chand Inglis questions the notion of the archive as a material repository of knowledge and demonstrates how it plays out differently in paying attention to the performance of verbal and bodily acts. Her contribution highlights the radical potential of these builders' architectural and archival practices, which challenge given notions of history, archive, religion, design, and technology. In turn, these challenge inherited perspectives of modernity received through the colonial gaze.

Adam Hardy foregrounds his understanding and practice of the notion of *Svayambhu* (self-emergence), and why this might sit in tension with accepted notions of innovation and architectural practice. His paper exemplifies one of the most complex cross-cultural processes of designing temples within the framework of pre-existing architectural languages and living practitioners of India. He asks how someone might learn to design in a tradition normatively understood as the preserve of familial knowledge systems, and in doing-so draws our attention to complex questions of authority, identity, and 'Western' expertise. His contribution complicates assumptions that privilege familial lineages as sole holders of architectural design knowledge, while also being deeply indebted to these very constituencies for their building know-how.

In the concluding contribution, Oriel Prizeman probes how digital platforms for contested methods of conservation might posit new channels of authorship, attuning us to ongoing lived operations on site, and how they might guide us better in documenting cultural heritage. Confronting her own expertise as a conservation architect, Prizeman's engagement with living protagonists raises questions about the many modes through which architects engage with and negotiate with non-architects to create shared domains of expertise.

Some of these contemporary temple projects are deeply controversial. Politicised religion, environmentally contentious temple building projects and labour exploitation along the lines of caste, all pose ethical problems while evaluating both patrons and designers. Such issues make this scholarly field uncomfortable, difficult, and imperative. A

compelling illustration of the critical potential that the examination of contemporary Hindu architecture holds is demonstrated by Kavita Singh's study of the monumental Akshardham complex in New Delhi completed in 2005.<sup>27</sup> In response to the receipt of a commission to design the new temple-memorial complex, Singh shows that the Sompuras proposed various designs for Akshardham, drawing from the Mughal, Rajput, and even the Dravida heritage of India's temple building traditions. But while the Sompura temple architects had a more syncretic, open-ended vision of the monument that embraced different South Asian historic building traditions, the patrons themselves were concerned with more purist notions of culture, defining Hindu identity as devoid of hybridity. As a result, Akshardham was built in a selective style of western Indian temple architecture, one that pre-dated the arrival of new forms of Islamic architecture in north India from the twelfth century. She notes how Akshardham's concern with a 'national' frame is reiterated through a series of physical and symbolic condensations of 'India' within the whole complex, with formal references not only to India's ancient Hindu and Buddhist past but even to the twelfth-century Angkor Wat.<sup>28</sup> Now in Cambodia in Southeast Asia, this was one of the largest temples ever built during an expansive period for Hinduism beyond India. Indeed Southeast Asia was considered to be part of 'Greater India' in the nationalist pre-independence period.<sup>29</sup> This study thus demonstrates that in the relationship between architectural practice, design processes, and varying conceptions of nationhood, the temple architects' own conceptions can be seen as both entangled with, and autonomous, in relation to politicised religious modernity. Even though the majority of constituents of the temple are aligned with Hindutva ideology, as argued by Singh, not all constituents can be subsumed by the same.

### Innovation, collaboration, and research

Articles in this issue of *arq* indicate potential avenues for further research by architects and architectural historians directed towards the study of the relations



9 Construction of the Shiva shrine at the Sanatan Hindu Mandir, Wembley, London, 2011.

between the Indian temple and modernity. Given the limited volume of systematic, critical scholarly studies of the temples built in South Asia and the diaspora from the nineteenth century to the present, even preliminary surveys of the locations, building histories, plans, and other basic architectural information for temples in specific regions or countries across the world would be helpful.<sup>30</sup> This would enable the historical lineages of temples built in the regions of India and their connections with the global diaspora to be better understood. The temple architects themselves are now working globally. New temples in North America or Europe are being designed and constructed in collaboration with mobile architects from familial lineages, such as the Sompuras of Gujarat or south Indian *sthapatis*. This mobility demands their collaboration with professional architects and engineers in the diaspora on whom they rely for gaining local authority approvals and for integrating the design and production of ancillary spaces. The relationship between local building labour, and mobile craftsmen from India also deserves attention for it highlights the expansive, transnational, and transcultural nature of the temple building enterprise through the frame of labour networks and collaborative building practices [9]. Within India, some labour networks transcend religious boundaries: temple architects

designing Hindu and Jain temples routinely work with prolific stone carvers from Muslim communities. The diversity of temple types that transcend the historic northern *Nagara* and southern *Dravida* invite further examination: are they designed by self-taught builders responding to regional traditions of design within South Asia or the diaspora? Or by modernist architects trained in professionally accredited schools of architecture? In considering aspects of architectural design, production, and the world views that gave rise to them, some seemingly traditional temples may be innovative, for it is not only modernist urban studio-based architects of temples who may be radical. In sum, the architectural and historical study of the Indian temple in South Asia and the global diaspora offers rich potential for further collaborative and interdisciplinary research.

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## Notes

1. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 1.
2. The beginnings of the ‘modern’ era for this issue are located in the colonial encounter and for the sake of convenience encompass the nineteenth century to the present.
3. See the preface of Prabhashankar O. Sompura, *Pratimakala Nidhi: Album of Hindu Iconography* (Ahmedabad: Balwantrao Prabhashankar Sompura & Brothers, 1976), where P. O. Sompura writes about his great grandfather’s patronage and works at Shatrunjaya. Pramod Chandra briefly discusses the encounter between Ramji Ladharam and James Fergusson in Pramod Chandra, ‘The Study of Indian Temple Architecture’, in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*, ed. by Pramod Chandra (New Delhi, India: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 1–39 (p. 33). For an account of the architectural innovations of the builders at Shatrunjaya, see Hawon Ku Kim, *Re-Formation of Identity: The Nineteenth-Century Jain Pilgrimage Site of Shatrunjaya, Gujarat* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2007) and Hawon Ku, ‘Temples And Patrons: The Nineteenth-Century Temple Of Motisāh At Śatrūñjaya’, *International Journal of Jaina Studies*, 7:2 (2011), 1–22.
4. Fergusson has been extensively discussed, both as a pioneering Victorian historian of world architecture, as well as for his influential contribution to the study of India’s architecture. See Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 256–67; Robert Elwall, ‘James Fergusson (1808–1886): A Pioneering Architectural Historian’, *RSA Journal*, 139:5418 (1991), 393–404; Monica Juneja, *Architecture in Medieval India: Forms, Contexts, Histories* (Delhi, India: Permanent Black, 2001); Tapatī Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York, NY and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 3–27; Peter Kohane, ‘From Scotland to India: The Sources of James Fergusson’s Theory of Architecture’s “True Styles”’, *ABE: Journal of Architecture Beyond Europe* (2019), 14–15.
5. James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1876), p. 228.
6. Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, p. 36.
7. Rahul Mehrotra, ‘Counter Modernism: Resurfacing of the Ancient’ in *Architecture in India since 1990* (Mumbai: Pictor, 2011), pp. 251–301. Scriver and Srivastava reproduce this trope in Peter Scriver and Amit Srivastava, ‘Towards the “Non-Modern”’: Architecture and Global India since 1990’, in *India: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2015), pp. 311–39.
8. Scriver and Srivastava, ‘Towards the “Non-Modern”’, p. 318.
9. This community has been active throughout the twentieth century as demonstrated by Chand Inglis’s contribution to this volume, but it is only in the late 1980s that the scale and number of temple projects increased exponentially for Hindu, Jain, Sikh, and Buddhist diaspora communities.
10. <<http://www.sompuracb.com/architectures.html>> [accessed 7 February 2022] lists over 120 temple projects planned by him between the 1980s and 2010.
11. See A. G. Krishna Menon, ‘Contemporary Patterns in Religious Architecture’, *Architecture+Design*, 14:6 (November to December) (1997), 23–9 (p. 27); V. Ganapathi Sthapati (1927–2011), the prominent late twentieth-century temple architect from Tamilnadu, was involved in some aspects of this temple complex alongside the Delhi-based architect H. Rai Malik.
12. Other key texts that reinforce this paradigm are Jon T. Lang, Madhavi Desai, Miki Desai, *Architecture and Independence: The Search for Identity: India 1880 to 1980* (Delhi and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997); Vikram Bhatt and Peter Scriver, *After the Masters: Contemporary Indian Masters* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 1990).
13. See Branfoot’s contribution to this volume.
14. Up until around the sixteenth century, temples were mostly built in India in two classical languages of architecture, the northern *Nagara* and the southern *Dravida*, characterised by their differing superstructures above the main sanctum. The *Nagara* with a curvilinear superstructure (*shikhara*) has been the most popular across north and central India. *Dravida* temples in southern India have stepped pyramidal towers but are most readily identified by the soaring rectangular, barrel-vaulted gateways (*gopuram*) that became a dominant feature from the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries, sometimes covered with brightly painted multi-armed deities.
15. Anne Hardgrove, *Community and Public Culture: The Marwaris in Calcutta* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 69–80. We have not yet been able to consult Agata Swierzowska, Marta Kudelska, Dorota Kamińska-Jones, *The Temple Road Towards a Great India: Birla Mandirs as a Strategy for Reconstructing Nation and Tradition* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2019).
16. See Paul Mikula, Brian Kearney, Rodney Harber, *Traditional Hindu Temples in South Africa* (Durban, South Africa: Hindu Temple Publications, 1982) for the temples in one of these diaspora contexts. Communities from India had circulated around the Indian Ocean to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia long before the nineteenth century. See *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange*, ed. by Pierre-Yves Manguin, A. Mani, Geoff Wade (Singapore and New Delhi: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; Manohar India, 2011).
17. Borayin Larios and Raphaël Voix, ‘Introduction. Wayside Shrines: Everyday Religion in Urban India’, *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal (SAMAJ)*, 18 (2018).
18. Examples include Raymond Brady Williams, *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Joanne Punzo Waghorne, *Diaspora of the Gods: Modern Hindu Temples in an Urban Middle-Class World* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Corinne G. Dempsey, *The Goddess Lives in Upstate New York: Breaking Convention and Making Home at a North American Hindu Temple* (Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006); Christiane Brosius, *India’s New Middle Class: Urban Forms of Leisure, Consumption and Prosperity* (Delhi, India: Routledge India, 2010); Pierre-Yves Trouillet, ‘Overseas Temples and Tamil Migratory Space’, *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, 6 (2012). Sam Parker’s research has fruitfully

- engaged with contemporary temple construction in south India from the perspective of both anthropology and art history: Samuel K. Parker, 'Ritual as a Mode of Production: Ethnoarchaeology as Mode of Production in Hindu Temple Arts', *South Asian Studies*, 26:1 (2010), 31–57; Samuel K. Parker, 'Contemporary Temple Construction in South India: The Srirangam Rajagopuram', *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 21 (1992), 110–23; Samuel K. Parker, 'Shapes of Identity and Time: A "Royal" Temple in Contemporary South India', in *Traditional Arts of South Asia: Continuity in Contemporary Practice and Patronage*, ed. by Crispin Branfoot (London: Saffron Press, 2015), pp. 168–93.
19. George Michell, *Late Temple Architecture in India – Fifth to Nineteenth Centuries: Continuities, Revivals, Appropriations, and Innovations* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2015); Madhuri Desai, *Banaras Reconstructed: Architecture and Sacred Space in a Hindu Holy City* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2017); Lawrence A. Babb, John Cort, Michael Meister, *Desert Temples: Sacred Centers of Rajasthan in Historical, Art-Historical, and Social Context* (Jaipur, India: Rawat Publications, 2008). The many articles in *The Contemporary Hindu Temple: Fragments for a History*, ed. by Annapurna Garimella, Shriya Sridharan, A. Srivathsan (Mumbai, India: Marg Foundation, 2019) are exemplary in demonstrating the rich potential for research on the Indian temple and modernity.
  20. See, for example, Joanna Waghorne, 'The Hindu Gods in a Split-Level World: The Sri Siva-Vishnu Temple in Suburban Washington D.C.', in *Gods of the City*, ed. by Robert Orsi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 103–30; Bindi Shah, Claire Dwyer, David Gilbert, 'Landscapes of Diasporic Religious Belonging in the Edge-City: The Jain Temple at Potters Bar, Outer London', *South Asian Diaspora*, 4:1 (March 2012), 77–94.
  21. Megha Chand Inglis, 'Stories from a CNC Factory in Ahmedabad', *Dearq*, 27 (2020), 20–35; Megha Chand Inglis: 'Companions of Stone': *Building and Technological Lifeworlds of the Sompura Temple-Architects of Western India* (Routledge, forthcoming); chapters by Cynthia Packert, Rabindra J. Vasavada, Adam Hardy in *Swaminarayan Hinduism: Tradition, Adaptation and Identity*, ed. by Raymond Brady Williams and Yogi Trivedi (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2015); Rabindra J. Vasavada, 'Sompura: Traditional Master Builders of Western India', in *Authenticity in Architectural Heritage Conservation: Discourses, Opinions, Experiences in Europe, South and East Asia*, ed. by Katharina Weiler and Niels Gutschow (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 115–25.
  22. *Vastu-vidya* or *-shastra* is the body of knowledge on architecture dating to the first millennium CE that was transmitted orally, through embodied practice and as written texts with regional variation across South Asia. In south India, one of the earliest publications of these texts, transcribed from palm-leaf manuscripts collected in the princely state of Travancore (now southern Kerala), is *The Mayamata of Mayamuni*, ed. by Ta. Gaṇapatiśāstrī (Trivandrum: Govt. Press, 1919). In the western Indian context, the first published *shastric* texts date to the 1930s.
  23. The papers in this Special Issue are a selection from papers presented at a symposium 'Indian Temple Architecture and Modernity' held in 2018 as a collaboration between the Welsh School of Architecture and SOAS, University of London funded by the Leverhulme Trust. Tamara Sears, Libbie Mills, Madhuri Desai, Hawon Ku, Shahed Saleem and Samuel K. Parker also made valuable contributions to this event.
  24. Contemporary Islamic architecture is, by contrast, better examined than Hindu or Jain. From an architectural practice and production-based perspective, not only do similar questions reverberate but also empirical evidence shows shared material ground: for example, Azra Aksamija, *Mosque Manifesto: Propositions for Spaces of Coexistence* (Berlin: Revolver Publishing, 2015); Ergün Erkoçu and Cihan Buğdaci, *The Mosque: Political, Architectural and Social Transformations* (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: NAI Publishers, 2009); Renate Holod and Hasan-Uddin Khan, *The Mosque and the Modern World: Architects, Patrons and Designs since the 1950s* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997); Kishwar Rizvi, *The Transnational Mosque: Architecture and Historical Memory in the Contemporary Middle East* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Shahed Saleem, *The British Mosque: An Architectural and Social History* (Swindon: Historic England, 2018); *Architecture of the Contemporary Mosque*, ed. by Ismail Serageldin and James Steele (London: Academy Editions, 1996).
  25. Swati Chattopadhyay, 'The Optical Field', in *Unlearning the City: Infrastructure in a New Optical Field* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 39–62.
  26. For contested theories of 'conservation' in colonial India, see also Deborah Sutton, 'Devotion, Antiquity, and Colonial Custody of the Hindu Temple in British India', *Modern Asian Studies*, 47:1 (2013), 135–66; Indra Sengupta, 'Sacred Space and the Making of Monuments in Colonial Orissa in the Early Twentieth Century', in *Archaeology and Text: The Temple in South Asia*, ed. by Himanshu Prabha Ray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 168–90.
  27. Kavita Singh, 'Temple of Eternal Return: The Swaminarayan Akshardham Complex in Delhi', *Artibus Asiae*, 70:1 (2010), 47–76.
  28. Singh, 'Temple of Eternal Return', p. 53.
  29. Susan Bayly, 'Imagining "Greater India": French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic Mode', *Modern Asian Studies*, 38:3 (2004), 703–44.
  30. For example, 187 Hindu temples are listed in Emma Tomalin and Jasjit Singh, *A Survey of Hindu Buildings in England Project Number 7078* (Historic England, 2018) (accessed 16 February 2022).

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#### Competing interests

The authors declare none.