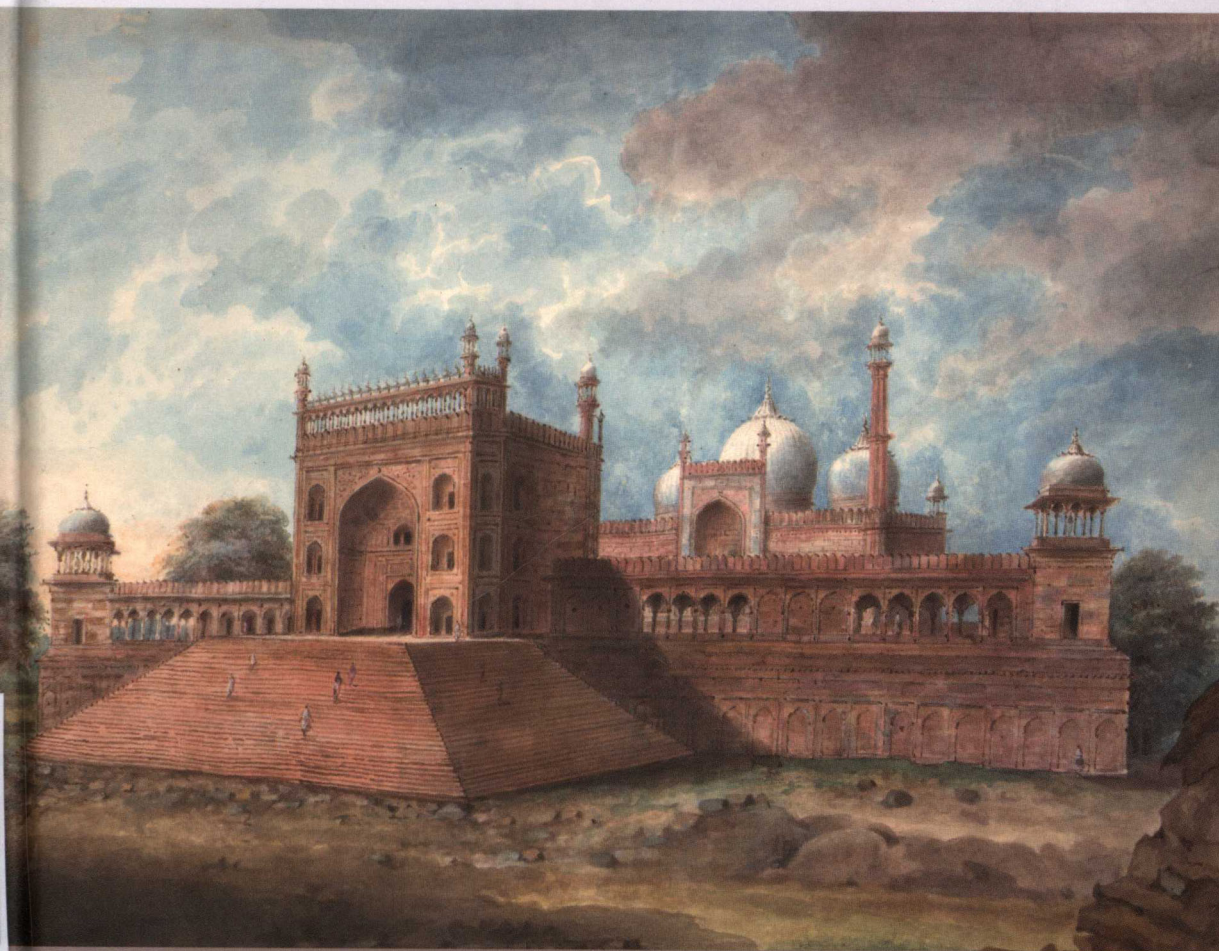


Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories

Imperial Legacies, Architecture, and Modernity

Edited by **Mrinalini Rajagopalan and Madhuri Desai**



Studies in Architecture

Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories

Imperial Legacies, Architecture, and Modernity

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ASHGATE

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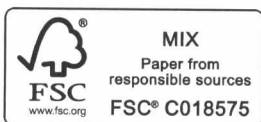
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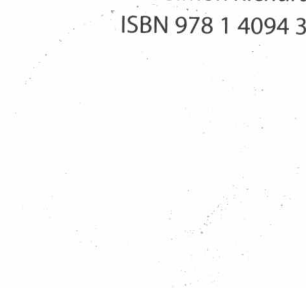
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List of Illustrations

Cover

Watercolor of the Jama Masjid at Delhi, by Sita Ram, from *Views by Seeta Ram from Gheen to Delhi Volume VI*. The image was produced for Lord Moira (afterwards the Marquess of Hastings and Governor-General of Bengal), between 1814 and 15. © British Library Board, Shelfmark Add.Or.4809.

Introduction Architectural Modernities of Imperial Pasts and Nationalist Presents

I.1 The India Gate under construction. 1930. Image courtesy of Robert Byron Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

I.2 The India Gate under construction. 1930. Image courtesy of Robert Byron Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

I.3 The India Gate under construction. 1930. Image courtesy of Robert Byron Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

1 Making Indian Modern Architects

1.1 Laxmi Vilas palace, Vadodora, a building in the "Indo-Saracenic" style by architect Charles Mant, completed 1890. This building was a family palace for the Gaekwad of Baroda. Source: Wikicommons public domain

1.2 "Market Terrace, Bulandshahr, 1878." From F.S. Growse, *Bulandshahr: or Sketches of an Indian District; Social, Historical and Architectural* (Benares: Medical Hall Press, 1884): n.p. This is the first urban improvement Growse had constructed in the town, completed in 1879

1.3 Plan, section, and elevation of a house in Lahore, dated November 11, 1893; draftsman unknown. Source: Municipal Committee Lahore, old record room

2 In Search of the Sacred and Antique in Colonial India

2.1 Ramtek, *Narasimha Temple*, ca. fifth century C.E. Photo by author

2.2 Sita Ram, *Humayun's Tomb*, 1815. Watercolor. © British Library Board (Shelfmark Add. Or. 4822)

2.3 Sita Ram, *Patna Bazaar*, 1814. Watercolor. © British Library Board (Shelfmark Add. Or. 4700)

2.4 Sita Ram, *Riverfront at Banaras*, 1814. Watercolor. © British Library Board (Shelfmark Add. Or. 4719)

3 From Colonial Memorial to National Monument: The Case of the Kashmiri Gate, Delhi

3.1 "Position and Armament of the British Batteries Before Delhi." From the *Illustrated London News*, October 10, 1857

3.2 "Royal Panorama: Leicester Square. A Description of a View of the City of Delhi, with an action between Her Majesty's Troops and the Revolted Sepoys," 1858. Image courtesy of Yale Center for British Art, Friends of British Art Fund

3.3 Detail of the "Royal Panorama" showing the road leading to the Kashmiri Gate but not the gate itself. Image courtesy of Yale Center for British Art, Friends of British Art Fund

3.4 "The Storming of Delhi. The Cashmere Gate." From the *Illustrated London News*, November 28, 1857

3.5 Felice Beato, "View of the Ruins of the Kashmir Gate, Delhi, India," between 1858 and 1860. Image courtesy of Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal

3.6 Engraving of the monument designed by John Henry Foley to Brigadier-General Nicholson in Lismore Cathedral. From the *Illustrated London News*, May 10, 1862

4 Comparative Alterities: Native Encounters and the National Museum

4.1 The glass entrance screen to the Musée Quai Branly complex from Rue Quai

Branly. The screen frames a picturesque arrangement of landscape and architecture and dulls sounds from the adjacent roadway. Photo courtesy of Aleksandra Duric

4.2 the museum is adjacent to the site of the 1889 exposition Universelle. The MQB frames views of the Eiffel tower as part of the site's compositional strategy. the curving white form contains the entrance hall. Photo by author

4.3 The hall for the permanent exhibition becomes a bridge for part of its length, with the opening below providing access to both parts of the elaborate public gardens that surround the building. The boxes protruding from the exhibition hall contain more intimate galleries for the permanent collection. Photo by author

4.4 The administrative offices of the MQB are clad in a vertical wall of planting that extends the adjacent garden onto the architectural form. Photo by author

4.5 The National Museum of the American Indian is designed as cliff-like extension of the landscape that surrounds it. Visitors pass through a symbolic landscape containing spirit rocks, a waterfall, and foliage zones that represent four landscapes in the Americas. Photo by author

4.6 Inside the first part of the permanent exhibition entitled "Our Peoples," tribal communities display "self-told stories" of their history using artifacts selected from the Heye collection. A separate narrative about the violence of the colonial encounter is communicated through displays of guns, bibles, and (for the precolonial period) stylized arrangements of gold artifacts. Photo by author

4.7 The Mitsitam cafe is designed as an extension of the museum experience. The food-service area is organized around five ethnographic groups of indigenous people.

Labels describe aspects of the menu items and their preparation. Photo by author

4.8 The Cultural Resources Facility in Suitland, Maryland, houses the massive Heye collection. Items are stored in a climate-controlled environment. Objects may be borrowed and used by tribal communities in the ceremonial areas incorporated into the design of the building. Photo by author

5 The Black Atlantic and Georgian London

5.1 William Hogarth, *Marriage A-la-Mode: 4, The Toilette*, ca. 1743. © National Gallery, London/ Art Resource, New York

5.2 Nineteenth-century photograph of Bristol. Reproduced by permission of Bristol's Museums, Galleries and Archives (Reference: P2309)

5.3 Robert Adam, The British Coffee House, Cockspur Street, London. From *Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam, Esquires*, 1778. Reproduced by permission of Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University in the City of New York

5.4 Coffee pot and cover, Christian's Factory, Liverpool, England, porcelain, accession #1976–142. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, gift of Mrs. Owen L. Coon

5.5 John Thomas Smith, Drawing of Joseph Johnson. From *Vagabondiana; Or, Anecdotes of Mendicant Wanderers through the Streets of London, with Portraits of the Most Remarkable Drawn from the Life*, 1817. © British Library Board (Shelfmark: 1486. gg.10)

5.6 Detail from John Rocque's *A Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster and Borough of Southwark*, 1746. Reproduced by

permission of Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University in the City of New York

5.7 Robert Adam, "Lady Home's Staircase," ca. 1775. Reproduced by permission of Sir John Soane's Museum, London (Adam drawings, vol. 14: 116)

6 Almost, But Not Quite: Architecture and the Reconstruction of Space in the Territory of Hawaii

6.1 Edward York and Philip Sawyer, Federal Building (U.S. Post Office, Custom House, and Court House), Honolulu, 1922. Photo by author

6.2 Allied Architects (C.W. Dickey, Hart Wood, Robert Miller, and Rothwell Kangeter & Lester), Honolulu Hale, Honolulu, 1929. Photo by author

6.3 Thomas Baker, C.J. Wall, and Isaac Moore, 'Iolani Palace, Honolulu, 1879–1882. Photo by author

6.4 Whitney Warren and Charles Wetmore, Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Waikiki, 1927. Photo by author

7 Redefining the Dual City: Changing Ideas of Plural Citizenship in Colonial/ Postcolonial Singapore

7.1 Town plan of Singapore showing its grid system. Drawing by author based on G.D. Coleman's survey plan of 1836, from Hancock 1986: 39

7.2 Monthly muster at the Bras Basah Jail. Source: Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection

7.3 Comparative study of early-nineteenth-century urban fabric, showing European and non-European settlement patterns. Drawing by author based on the Town Plan by J.T. Jackson, 1843, IOR: X/3349/2

7.4 "Mortar Mill, Government House, Singapore." Source: McNair 1899, plate xvii: facing 101

7.5 Typical HDB apartments. Photo by author

7.6 Singapore's Chinatown, as seen against the city skyline. Photo by author

8 Beyond Racialized Representation: Architectural *Linguae Francæ* and Urban Histories in the *Kampung* Houses and Shophouses of Melaka and Singapore

8.1 *Kampung* house and shophouse variations. Top and middle row: various single-story *kampung* house models and variations in the Malay plan. Bottom row: shophouses and townhouses and two models of two-story *kampung* houses. Drawings by author

8.2 Malay *kampung* houses, examples from Kampung Morten, Melaka. Left (a): traditional vernacular Rumah Serambi Melaka. Right (b): modern vernacular Rumah Limas in Kampung Morten, Melaka. Photos by author

8.3 a) and b) Malay *kampung* houses. Rumah Limas models in masonry from Katong, Singapore. Drawings by author

8.4 Two-story *kampung* house models found in Singapore and Melaka. Top row (a, b): "Compound Houses," left, from Geylang, Singapore; right, from Kampung Hulu ward, Melaka. Bottom row (c, d): left, Rumah Gudang (1893, since demolished) of Bugis merchant "Dayeng Desarwa," Jalan Klapa, Kampung Gelam town, designed by architects Kassim and Siang Hock, Singapore; right, two-story Melaka Rumah Serambi owned by a Chinese family in multiethnic Kampung Tengkeria Pantai, Melaka. Photos and drawings by author

8.5 Early shophouses. Left (a): a row of dwellings (c. 1840s, since demolished)

owned by a female Melaka Malay merchant Hajjah Fatimah, Java Road, Kampung Rochor ward, Kampung Gelam town, Singapore. Right (b): No. 8 Heeren Street (Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock), Kampung Belanda, late 1700s, restoration completed 2005 by the Heritage of Malaysia Trust, Melaka. Photo and drawing by author

8.6 Turn-of-the-century, ornate shophouses. Left (a): a block of nine units (1900, since demolished) and a townhouse built by female Malay merchants "Hadjee Katijah" and "Hadjee Fatimah," Sumbawa Road, Kampung Rochor ward, Kampung Gelam town, Singapore. Right (b): Chinese clan association building (1928), Jonker Street (Jalan Hang Jebat), Kampung Belanda, Melaka. Photo and drawings by author

8.7 Townhouses. Left: residence of Haji Omar, Bugis merchant, Java Road in Kampung Rochor ward (1911, since demolished), Kampung Gelam town, Singapore. Right: Tun Tan Cheng Lock residence (right foreground), an eighteenth-century Dutch townhouse renovated in the late nineteenth century with Chinese construction and ornamental details, Heeren Street (Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock), Kampung Belanda, Melaka. Photo and drawing by author

8.8 Melaka morphological and toponymic changes. Map by author

8.9 Chinatown-ification in Melaka. Performance stage (left) and Chinese gateway erected in 2000 as part of the Jonker Walk weekly night market. Photograph taken in 2005 by author

8.10 Singapore morphological and toponymic changes. Map by author

9 Between Typologies and Representation: The *Tong Lau* and the Discourse of the "Chinese House" in Colonial Hong Kong

9.1 a), b) and c) Existing *tong lau* in Hong Kong. Photos by author

9.2 Taipingshan district, 1880s. Notice the more spacious European houses located at the Midlevel in the background. Source: CO1069/444 1869–1900, The National Archives of the U.K.: Public Records Office

9.3 Drawings showing typical configurations of Chinese houses in Victoria, 1882. Source: Chadwick, CO882/4/15, 1882, The National Archives of the U.K.: Public Records Office

9.4 View of Queens Road, Victoria, 1890s. Source: LC-USZ62-120618, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

9.5 Façade design of the Chinese house proposed to be erected on Queens Road by Paul Chater. Source: CO129/179/13355 1877, The National Archives of the U.K.: Public Records Office

9.6 A map showing the proposed demarcation line that separates the Chinese and European residential districts, 1879. Source: CO129/228/18826, The National Archives of the U.K.: Public Records Office

9.7 a) and b) Example of an improved tenement layout proposed by the Public Works Department, 1908. Source: CO129/348/29048 1908, The National Archives of the U.K.: Public Records Office

10 Postcolonial Shanghai: An Urban Discourse of Prosperity and Futurity

10.1 Former headquarters of the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank. Photo by author, March 2007

10.2 Tudoresque buildings in the centre of Thames Town. Photo by author, March 2007

10.3 Historic neo-Tudor housing in Shanghai. Photo by author, March 2007

10.4 As spaces of aspiration, Thames Town settings resemble those of older Anglo-American suburbs. Photo by author, March 2007

10.5 Statue in Thames Town of a middle-class Chinese couple planting a tree. Photo by author, March 2007

Notes on Contributors

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This book occupies an intellectual space in the interstices of colonial and postcolonial studies on the one hand and theories of nationalism and globalization on the other. More specifically, it addresses built space as a constituent that has shaped the contours of the colonial project and nationalist imaginaries. As we bring this volume to print, we acknowledge our debt to the numerous scholars whose work has shaped our thinking on this subject. First, our thanks go to the contributors to this volume. The wide variety of topics and locales that they deal with has strengthened our premise and enriched its narratives. We would also like to acknowledge the support that our editor, Valerie Rose, has extended through every stage of publication. Our thanks also to the staff at Ashgate, especially Sarah Horsley, Emma Gallon and Kevin Selmes, for their efforts with bringing the manuscript to press. David Moffat, our copy editor, has been extremely helpful and patient and this volume has benefitted greatly from his meticulous editing.

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Foreword

The history of architecture and urbanism in the global South during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has emerged as a major arena for research in the past two decades. When I attempted to teach a course on the subject in the early 1990s, there were only a few good books mainly dealing with the practices of various regimes of colonialism in North Africa and South Asia that had been published. The work of scholars like Anthony D. King, Thomas Metcalf, Paul Rabinow and Gwendolyn Wright focused on the introduction of the colonial apparatus to the colonized parts of empires with attention to the resulting built forms. These studies paved the way for works like my own *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (Aldershot, 1992), which attempted to relate the practices of the colonial project and the urban forms it generated to independence struggles, the rise of nationalism, and identity construction in the post-independence era. Such ideas were carried further—in different directions and on different scales and with case studies from various parts of the world—by scholars like Abidin Kusno, Jennifer Robinson, Vikramaditya Prakash, and Lawrence Vale.

Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories, is an elegant volume put together by Mrinalini Rajagopalan and Madhuri Desai, two colleagues who represent the best of the Berkeley tradition in urban history. The book is not only a continuation of this strand of scholarship, but it is also a project that establishes a new direction in the study of the history of architecture and urbanism of past colonized societies. The contributions to the volume illustrate this new direction quite well. Some show that the demise of colonialism did not signal the end of particular practices inherited from both the colonial paradigm of social control and the aesthetics that represented it. Others illustrate how the legacy of colonialism left specific institutions and structures in place that continued to dominate nationalist discussion in the newly independent states of the global South, and hence persistently shape their resultant built environments.

Another important contribution that the volume as a whole makes is manifested in its approach to the study of modernism and modernity in its various sites. The

book illustrates how the prevalence of a certain consciousness connected with imagining the self and constructing subjectivity, which developed in the global South during the era of independence, has formed new connections with an imagined and constructed past to serve the interest of postcolonial regimes. In so doing, the volume establishes a deeper dialectical connection between colonialism and nationalism, requiring us to rethink both concepts.

The book also engages with the ideas of difference and how these ideas, which relate to both the acknowledgment and the denial of difference, were two sides of the same coin, operating equally in both the metropole and the colonized periphery. Of course, the post-independence era also witnessed the rise of a considerable minority population from the formerly colonized peoples of the global South in the heart of post imperial nations. Their presence was simply an extension of the circulation of capital, commodities, and people in the new era of globalization. Several contributions to this volume clearly illustrate how architecture and urbanism were often the arena in which issues of difference were contested and/or resolved.

Finally, perhaps the most significant contribution that this volume makes is its attempt to formulate "frames" both as defined lenses and conceptual crutches through which the ideas of the "colonial" and the "national" can be interrogated. In the process, it also demonstrates how modernity at the crux of the colonial-nationalist continuum will remain a contingent and transient experience and how the architecture and urban forms it generates will continue to be contested and unstable.

Nezar AlSayyad

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vii	
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xiii	
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xv	
<i>Foreword</i>	xvii	
Introduction: Architectural Modernities of Imperial Pasts and Nationalist Presents		
<i>Mrinalini Rajagopalan and Madhuri Desai</i>	1	
SECTION 1 COLONIAL TAXONOMIES AND THE NATION'S EPISTEME		
1	Making Indian Modern Architects	27
	<i>William Glover</i>	
2	In Search of the Sacred and Antique in Colonial India	47
	<i>Madhuri Desai</i>	
3	From Colonial Memorial to National Monument: The Case of the Kashmiri Gate, Delhi	73
	<i>Mrinalini Rajagopalan</i>	
SECTION 2 IMPERIAL DESIGNS AND THE NATION'S FRAGMENTS		
4	Comparative Alterities: Native Encounters and the National Museum	105
	<i>C. Greig Crysler</i>	
5	The Black Atlantic and Georgian London	137
	<i>Richard W. Hayes</i>	
6	Almost, But Not Quite: Architecture and the Reconstruction of Space in the Territory of Hawaii	161
	<i>Kelema Lee Moses</i>	