Robert Ousterhout  
**A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia**  

Even before its final publication in this monograph, Robert Ousterhout’s Çanlı Kilise survey had generated a renaissance of Cappadocian research on domestic architecture comparable to the attention the region received in the 1900s. Orientalist scholars, including Gertrude Bell, the founder of modern Iraq, had branded Cappadocia’s rock-cut architecture with primitive asceticism, a persistent mythologeing amicable to modernist aesthetics. 2 The Çanlı Kilise survey began to dero-  

 fittings and prevents a productive dialogue with vernacular studies or settlement archaeology.  

The book is divided into two parts, the church and the settlement, suggest-  

ing a misleading equality in priorities. If we follow the survey’s conceptual se-  

quence, we learn that the masonry church formed the initial subject. Appreci-  

ating the significance of urban context and its historiographic underrepresenta-  

tion, Ousterhout expanded his scope to include a complex array of spaces carved out of hard volcanic tuff. Before turning to the settlement, we must consider the monograph’s jewel in part one. The Church of Çanlı Kilise was founded in the early eleventh century over the site of a rock-cut complex, possibly by a military official whose name partially sur-  

vives on a loose cornice block. The naos was expanded with a double west narthex in the mid-to-late eleventh century, and a north parekklesion was added in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.  

Ousterhout’s analysis of the church balances description and interpretation in a masterful synthesis. A slight difference between stylobate and superstruc-  

ture, for example, gives evidence for design change. Most thought provoking are discrepancies between the upper arcade and the interior structure as well as variations in the decorative use of brick or stone, depending on visibility. The radial orientation of the apse win-  

dows (similar to Kosmosoteira, Pherai) illustrates the perspectival logic that underlies some (but not all) of the choices made by anonymous Byzantine architects. In contrast to the exterior, the interior surfaces are unmodulated and flat, receiving fresco scenes mismatched with the architectural frame. Ousterhout explores the most minute diagnostic details—mortar widths imitating a Con-  

stantinopolitan recessed-brick technique; putlog holes marking construction scaffold-  

ing after the building was abandoned).  

Part two investigates an urban organism that spreads along a curving kilometer. Rock-cut rather than stone-  

built, the settlement is organized around
court yard complexes comprised of diverse rooms, corridors, and tunnels. Some of the spaces have vaulted and apsidal articulations that distinguish them as churches, giving basis to earlier identifications with monasteries. Approximately half of this section is devoted to the chapels of the settlement, which form a small part of the total surface area. Unlike the interpretation of religious space, conclusions on the residential architecture “are no more than working hypotheses” (141). Nevertheless, they encapsulate current debates on the Byzantine oikos, domestic chapels, urban palaces, monastic planning, and the paradoxical interdependence between built and cave architecture. Ousterhout succeeds in “the challenging of mental habits” (181), but his revisionist accomplishment is too tightly confined by the monastic question and a preoccupation with palatial forms. He locks himself inside an assumption of grandeur: “These were clearly not peasant homes, for they were equipped with well-defined formal or ceremonial spaces” (182). By filling the architecture with “people of some social standing” (182), Ousterhout avoids issues pertinent to the discussion of premodern rural society (such as sustenance, labor, feudalism, and climate). This presumed class distinction is of critical methodological importance. It provides Ousterhout justification to circumvent the intellectual armature developed by theorists of vernacular domestic form, such as Amos Rapoport, Christopher Alexander, and Paul Oliver.

Excluding a salvage excavation in the north narthex and the collection of surface finds, the Çanlı Kilise project was predominantly an architectural survey. Utilizing advanced electronic instruments, thousands of points were collected to produce new architectural data. Unfortunately, the low production standards of the volume overshadow the technical achievement of the survey. Inexplicably, most plans are drawn in varying nonstandard scales, lack north arrows, and are often rotated in arbitrary inclinations, making it difficult to match text and drawing (see, for example, 80–81, figs. 70, 79). Cardinal inconsistencies, vague descriptions of aspect, and unspecified contour elevations lead to interpretive obstacles, such as in ascertaining alignment (and potential meaning) between chapels below and cemeteries above, or in reconstructing relationships across residential units. One simply wishes that the CAD data was available in an accompanying CD-ROM or website so that the reader could freely analyze the evidence and execute further digital queries on orientation, aspect, slope, visibility, size, density, topography, movement, and artifact location.

Committed so deeply to the logic of art and architecture, A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia fulfills its objectives but also highlights the limitations of formal analysis. The Beaux-Arts notion that architectural form encapsulates social function underlies the operative principles of this study. Formal readability may be evident in highly specialized monuments, as in the case of liturgical ritual and ecclesiastical planning, but it breaks down in the realm of daily life. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, middle-class society codified its domestic sphere with specialized rooms according to binomial hierarchies of public/private, served/serving, and male/female. Rural medieval houses, however, were typically multiuse spaces defying even the simplest hall-parlor typology. Usage changed through the day, night, seasons, and years, accommodating humans and livestock. Thus, Ousterhout’s assignment of rooms into formal, utilitarian, storage, refugee, or religious categories is questionable. This brings us back to the initial question of monastery versus settlement or, more generally, whether sacred and profane realms can be distinguished architecturally. Unless we build our projects (for example, Neolithic archaeology near Cappadocia) on more rigorous archaeological hypotheses, the monastic disagreement between Ousterhout and Lyn Rodley may never be fully settled, especially when mixed usage is proposed.4 The skeptic (or the Marxist) would rightly argue that monastic issues have derailed more substantive questions of production, consumption, kinship, trade, and cybernetics.

Ultimately, Ousterhout fails to engage the discipline of settlement archaeology that possesses a tool kit appropriate to the investigation of social organization within the landscape. Like other Cappadocian scholars, Ousterhout offers no comparison with subterranean architecture outside central Turkey from contemporary Greece, Sicily, or southern Italy. Missing from this study are considerations of settlement patterns in the Mediterranean and the Near East, the debates of nucleation and incastellamento, and the question of monocultures raised by Georges Tchalenko in Syria.5 Yet, despite its archaeological shortcomings, A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia makes an invaluable contribution to our knowledge of Byzantine architecture.

Domestic architecture has always offered a wonderful litmus test for gauging theoretical innovation. By dwelling in the margins of the monumental canon, the study of houses has challenged traditional notions of architectural agency and influence. In a review article for JSAH, Alice T. Friedman celebrated recent theoretical shifts in domestic history.6 Indeed, the work of Gwendolyn Wright, Dell Upton, John Michael Vlach, Eva Blau, and Nancy Stieber has completely transformed how we write the history of houses by incorporating theory and new methods. Yet, the study of Byzantine material culture seems little affected by these shifts. John H. Rosser heralded the need for change as early as 1979, urging Byzantinists to adopt techniques developed by prehistorians and medieval archaeologists.7 A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia has its share of innovation, but it is typical of an architectural history that privileges masonry styles, plan typology, and decoration over social processes, geography, and ecology. This book represents the best of Byzantine architectural history, but it also reveals the discipline’s resistance to archaeology and the social sciences.

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Alka Patel
Building Communities in Gujarat: Architecture and Society during the Twelfth through Fourteenth Centuries

What are the implications of the repeated appearance of a common architectural style across commonly held categories of use and community affiliation? In Building Communities in Gujarat, Alka Patel investigates this question by tracing the widespread adoption of the Maru-Gurjara architectural style of northwestern India from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries. Patel examines the transformations of this style as it is deployed for both Indic buildings, that is to say Hindu and Jain temples, and Islamic ritual spaces. She also explores the possible motivations behind reuse of building materials from ruined Indic structures in the construction of new Muslim ritual spaces in the fourteenth century. Why does such reuse begin at this moment, and must interpretations of such supposedly iconoclastic activities always be understood in political terms? Through the examination of architectural texts, epigraphic evidence, and the exceedingly thorough analysis of the ritual spaces in question, Patel argues for a reconsideration of the fraught, overly broad, and simplified categorizations implied by terms like “Hindu” and “Muslim” or “religious” and “secular.”

In chapter 1, “The Contours of Examination,” Patel elucidates the historiography of such broad categorizations and her objections to the application of this terminology to the Islamic buildings considered in her study. While the tombs and mosques examined here fulfilled Islamic ritual functions, Patel questions whether, given the shared aesthetic of these buildings and their Indic counterparts, ritual function is sufficient ground on which to designate these structures as exclusively Islamic. Rather, she contends that the inclusion of almost all Indian buildings designed for Islamic ritual purposes within the rubric of Islamic architectural history can be traced to the formation of Islamic studies, in which the delineation of an intellectual territory resulted in such buildings taking on the status of “foreign impositions upon the subcontinent's landscape” (9). Patel similarly challenges the categories of religious and secular, tracing such classifications to the needs of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial bureaucracy and, with it, the designation of religion “as a practice separable from the rest of existence,” a distinction that she suggests differed from nonmodern notions of spirituality (19). In challenging the historiographical mapping of the categories of Hindu and Muslim onto monuments and events in the medieval past, Patel instead argues for the recognition of multiple axes of belonging and a spectrum of possibilities between the near binary of religious and secular.

The second chapter, “Integrating the Buildings and Communities of Gujarat and Western India,” delves further into the notion of multiple and perhaps fluid axes of belonging introduced in the previous chapter. In considering a broad inscriptive record, Patel notes that in Gujarat of the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, two epigraphic traditions—the Perso-Arabic, with its more ornamental associations, and the Sanskrit, with its tradition of recording a diversity of transactions—coexisted. In her examination of these inscriptions, Patel discusses moments where a multitude of Muslim identities might be expressed with only occasional examples of what she deems to be largely rhetorical gestures, such as the disparaging of idolaters. Much of Patel’s investigation of this material focuses on how sociolinguistic communities are simultaneously defined and transcended. For example, a thirteenth-century bilingual inscription on the headstone of a shāikha at Pełlad records the endowment of Nur al-Din Firuz for the maintenance of the mosque. The Sanskrit version of this inscription, which seems to call on both Muslim and non-Muslims alike to assist in the upkeep of the mosque (72–75), supports Patel’s unfolding argument for notions of community that are only partly informed by religious distinctions.

Having explored inscriptive evidence of the fluid nature of communities in medieval Gujarat, Patel turns her attention to the Maru-Gurjara style of architecture. One criticism of this otherwise extraordinary and erudite study might be that the discussion of the actual sites begins in earnest only toward the second half of the book. By this point, the reader is hungry for Patel’s explication of this architectural style and its reach. In chapter three, “The Maru-Gurjara Style as a Source for the Islamic Ritual Buildings in Western India,” Patel traces the emergence of the Maru-Gurjara style from its inception in the