late eighth century, when the more sculptural and ornamented Mahā-Maru style of Rājasthān merged with the plainer surfaces associated with Mahā-Gurjara style of Gujarāt and southeastern Sindhi, through the height of this architectural idiom in the eleventh century. By closely comparing the appearance of specific motifs and modular units in both temples, mosques, tombs, and wherever still preserved, civic and residential structures, Patel charts not only the changes in this style, but the ways in which the Maru-Gurjara craftsmen deployed various elements of this style for both ritual and secular spaces.

Patel acknowledges that certain elements of the Maru-Gurjara style were applied within specific contexts. For example, the Sēkhārt form of superstructure employed for temples was omitted in mosques and tombs, with a domical Phañīna used instead (91). Although the ornamented surfaces associated with the Mahā-Maru style eventually dominated temple architecture in the region, Patel points to the ninth-century temple known as the Hariścandra-ni Corī at Sāmājī in Gujarāt (92). This temple in the Maru-Gurjara idiom eschews the more ornamental tendencies of this style. Instead, with plain surfaces on the exterior and interior of its rānggamāṇḍapa, the Hariścandra-ni Corī illustrates the continuation of Mahā-Gurjara elements within the fused Maru-Gurjara style. Thus, by tracing the origins and evolution of the Maru-Gurjara style, Patel demonstrates how the later developing of Islamic worship discussed in chapters four and five can be understood as growing out of this style. Rather than heralding a sharp break with previous building practices brought about by the advent of Islam in this region, the mosques and tombs examined in this study are, in fact, examples of the fluidity and adaptability of the Maru-Gurjara style.

Chapter four, “The Maru-Gurjara Style in Buildings of Islamic Worship,” examines structures from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, and chapter five, “Islamic Ritual Buildings of Gujarāt and its Vicinity of the Fourteenth Century,” continues this thread by examining the political linkages with Delhi that resulted in a building boom in the Gujarāt region. In the latter chapter, Patel also introduces her reinterpretation of the practice of reusing materials from Hindu and Jain temples in the construction of Islamic ritual structures. Commonly such reuse, especially the removal of remains from temples with dynastic associations, is described as desecration designed to trump the triumph of Islam over conquered dynasties. Patel counters this claim in several ways. First, she suggests that dynastic association with specific temples, such as the Cauḷukyā dynasty’s patronage of Śaiva temples, was by no means exclusive. Second, several Cauḷukyā rulers, starting with Mularāja I in the tenth century, also patronized Jain shrines (158). Patel offers a more pragmatic explanation for reuse: given the seismic instability of much of Gujarāt, perhaps building materials were selected from previously seismically damaged temples. Patel further questions the theory of “thoughtless destruction” of temples by pointing to a thirteenth-century ceiling removed from a nearby temple and installed in the jāmī’ masjīd in Ḍhambhāt during the fourteenth century (161). The tremendous care required to remove an elaborate stone ceiling so that its interlocking components might be reassembled elsewhere refutes the claims of propagandistic desecration and mutilation of these temples. Patel also rightly argues for a reexamination of a scholarly mentality that equates preservation with a static and unchanging historical monument. Rather, use and maintenance at a site of worship can be a form of preservation designed to prevent deterioration. Indeed, my own findings in the second-century enlargement of the Amarāvati stupa in Andhra Pradesh, while admittedly a rather different example of the reuse of building materials, also point toward a more expansive understanding of concepts like renovation and preservation.

Patel’s reconsideration of the reuse of Hindu and Jain materials in Islamic ritual buildings from fourteenth-century Gujarāt comprises only a brief section of this thorough, elegant, and well-illustrated study of the permutations of the Maru-Gurjara style; however, within the context of her earlier elucidation of multiple axes of belonging, the assumption that the reuse of building materials results from political and religious motivations must be reassessed. Patel’s careful exploration of the deployment of the Maru-Gurjara style demands that other established categorizations, such as “religious” and “secular,” “Hindu” and “Muslim,” or even generalized terminology such as “North India,” continue to be reexamined and challenged. Moreover, the success of Patel’s project, with its underlying assumption that tracing the deployment of an architectural idiom can yield broader cultural and social information, argues for the necessity of including careful formal analysis within any investigation of the meaning and function of South Asian architecture and imagery.

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Tracy E. Cooper
Palladio’s Venice: Architecture and Society in a Renaissance Republic

Palladio’s relationship with Venice is a difficult topic with complex implications for the understanding of the Vicentine architect’s work and career. Tracy Cooper’s book Palladio’s Venice takes up the challenge and makes a fine contribution by depicting the intricate social networks that enabled, and more often aggravated, Palladio’s work in the lagoon. In doing so, Cooper’s text opens new questions that further complicate our understanding of Palladio’s uneasy relationship with Venice.

In spite of Palladio’s efforts to establish himself as an architect in Venice, he only managed to receive his first serious Venetian commissions in the late 1550s, by which time he had reached the age of fifty and was a well-established architect.
in the Veneto. Even in the 1570s, the last decade of Palladio’s life when he was recognized as the leading architect of the Serenissima, his projects were often marred by the complexities of Venetian politics. Cooper avoids a litany of names of procuratori, caiari, procuratori, savi del Consiglio, della Terraferma, and ai ordini, but ultimately a book about building in cinquecento Venice has to address the politics, social structures, and intrigues that impinged on Palladio’s designs. Palladio’s Venice is neither about Palladio nor the part of his biography pertaining to Venice; rather it treats the architect’s life and work as reflections of their social context. The book is also not about Palladio’s design theory or the intellectual insights that motivated it. Cooper’s analyses of Palladio’s designs are important contributions, but she treats the designs as the products of the social milieu and political forces. Considering the amount of energy Palladio had to devote to politics to achieve anything at all in Venice, the focus of the book could not have been otherwise.

Cooper has organized her book according to individual projects; chapters are dedicated to well-known works (such as the Redentore or San Giorgio Maggiore), others to lesser known works, and some to the discussion of dubious attributions (such as the Zitelle). Each section contains an extensive discussion of the respective project with an emphasis on social influences, including the events after the architect’s death that, in many cases, had a decisive impact on the completion of the work. Chapters are further grouped into megachapters according to the type of patron (patriarchs, state, religious orders, and so on), which gives the final shape to the book. This approach makes it clear from the beginning that the author’s interests concentrate primarily on the social and political aspects of Palladio’s activity. (A different ordering of the material—for instance, chronological—may have yielded a different perspective, with the distinctiveness of the architect less subsumed in the collective.) Chapters about individual works are conceived as systematic surveys of current scholarship on the history of those buildings, an approach likely to make the book useful to scholars. In addition, Cooper’s text includes an extensive bibliography and a number of informative charts in the appendix.

The chapters about Palladio’s major works—San Giorgio Maggiore, Redentore, Convento della Carità, and the façades of San Pietro in Castello and San Francesco della Vigna—are likely to attract the greatest attention. They are very thoroughly researched, and since only the last work was completed in Palladio’s lifetime, Cooper’s emphasis on social history shows how these buildings acquired their present form. In the case of San Giorgio Maggiore, Cooper generally agrees with Andrea Guerra’s recent work on the history of that church but departs from Guerra’s concept of Palladianism. In the case of the Redentore, Cooper rejects the older interpretation by Staale Sinding-Larsen in favor of the more recent observations by Deborah Howard (232, 340 n. 206). When it comes the Convento della Carità, Cooper follows the standard interpretation, which locates the inspiration for this design in Bramante’s Roman works.

Palladio lived long enough to see only one of his church façades completed, San Francesco della Vigna. It is characteristic of the Venetian Republic that all decisions had to be extensively negotiated from the beginning and renegotiated over time, and although he left models and drawings, once the architect was no longer present, his intentions did not have the authority of an executed building. Cooper describes a context in which Palladio’s successors had substantial freedom to alter his original designs. Outside Venice as well, Palladio’s unfinished works were often completed with substantial alterations after he died; the Villa Rotonda is a particularly prominent example.

Considering Cooper’s success in showing the complexities and impact of Venetian politics on design decisions, the reader is left to wonder how much of Palladio there is in Venice at all. For instance, the idea of a church façade with a temple portico (such as that ultimately built by Palladio in Maser) has been suggested as a possible original intention for San Giorgio Maggiore. (There also exists a long scholarly tradition, initiated by James Ackerman, that seems to the façade of the Redentore a relief representation of a portico, although Cooper expresses doubts about the validity of this interpretation [249, 344 n. 269]). One wonders what Venice would look like now had Palladio been given the chance to exercise an impact equivalent to the one he made on Vicenza—in other words, if it were possible today to admire, while standing in the portico of San Giorgio Maggiore, the serene Palladian façade of the Doge’s Palace according to the architect’s proposal from 1577.

Cooper’s book is likely to play an important role in our understanding of Palladio’s Venetian works in the decades to come. I hope it will encourage scholars interested in Palladio’s design theory to consider his Venetian works, a necessary correction to the traditional focus on the Four Books, the villa, and the works in Vicenza.

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Notes
1. Andrea Guerra, “Palladio’s Plan for the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore and its Successive Vicissitudes,” JSAH 61 (2003), 276–95. Much of Guerra’s discussion pertains to the possibility that Palladio envisaged a portico in front of the church. Cooper concludes, “if [Palladio] had considered a porticoed design, . . . it was ultimately rejected” (144). But she disagrees with Guerra more generally on the concept of Palladianism; see Cooper, Palladio’s Venier, 126 n. 212.
3. James Ackerman, Palladio (Harmondsworth, 1977), 143–44.