built environment, modern viewers can more fully appreciate the ways in which scaled relationships structured space for the Incas and imbued it with meaning. Myths record how the deity Viracocha, before creating the world, carved a reduced-scale model of it out of stone. Such godly acts were mirrored in the actions of emperors, who utilized clay models to visualize and assess the built environments of newly conquered territories and redistribute conquered peoples. Spanish conquerors were greeted by emissaries of the Inca emperor bearing “earthware fortresses,” or architectural models, signifying the actual built structures that stretched throughout the Inca Empire. Other marvels, such as the famous Sayhuite Stone—an enormous carved boulder teeming with figures, animals, structures, and channels—represent a reduced-scale landscape that showcased the Incas’ hydraulic and agricultural achievements. The stone sat at the apex of the site of Sayhuite, where, according to Hamilton, it encapsulated not only the surrounding topography but also its ecosystem of mountains, glaciers, natural springs, and inhabitants.

Even Cuzco itself, as described by Garcilaso de la Vega in his 1609 Comentarios reales de los Incas, was laid out in a scaled relationship to the larger Inca Empire. Pedestrians walking through the city, Hamilton explains, “could come to know the shape and structure of the vast empire, its farthest reaches, places they may never experience firsthand” (191). Cuzco, the most important city in the empire, was—quite curiously, Hamilton emphasizes—associated with the concept of reduced scale rather than enlarged scale, as if through this scalar reduction the city’s potency might be concentrated and intensified. Further, Hamilton adds, settlements throughout the empire replicated Cuzco at a reduced scale, creating a complex hierarchy of scaled relationships throughout the landscape.

At Machu Picchu, by contrast, massive masonry walls at times imitate rugged bedrock and replicate, through closely fitted joints and fine craftsmanship, nature at its own scale. Such walls served as a transition from the countryside to the built environment and the imperial estate of the emperor Pachacuti. At Cuper Bajo, another royal estate, polygonal sandstone blocks, each measuring only a few centimeters wide, were used to construct a 13-meter-long reduced-scale terrace wall. The Cuper Bajo wall is both large and reduced scale, Hamilton asserts, and counters assumptions that reduced scale equates to smallness. Nevertheless, both walls—whether commensurate as at Machu Picchu or conceived in reduced scale as at Cuper Bajo—served to signal entrance into the emperor’s realm. Moreover, these walls were always in dialogue with other objects, from conopas to figurines and even textiles. All of these artifacts likewise utilized scalar references and relationships to forge links connecting the natural landscape with the built environment, the estates of emperors, the homes and agricultural lands of Inca subjects, and the people that moved within and between these spaces. Emphasis was not on scalar disjunction, according to Hamilton, but on the materialization of continuities, intersections, and collective relationships.

Hamilton’s book is an innovative and compelling contribution to the ongoing process of recovering intellectual traditions that were, as he laments, devastated by the Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire. To use his words, he has not only liberated Inca scale from engagement with “Euro-American epistemological and ontological preconceptions” (241) but also situated it as a powerful vehicle through which connections among places, nature, the cosmos, animals, and people were structured and given social, ritual, and political meaning. Hamilton reminds us, too, that Inca scaled relationships operated in a nonverbal realm, in a society without a common language or a script tradition. Yet the scaled relationships were “immediately and universally intelligible” (242).

Through his unique, aesthetically compelling, and erudite presentation, Hamilton makes Inca scale more accessible and intelligible to modern audiences. His sophisticated study reveals the webs of meaning that scale inspired and sustained for the Incas. Perhaps just as important, it presents these webs of meaning in a way that allows them to be put into conversation with other cultures at other times and in other places around the globe.

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Nachiket Chanchani
Mountain Temples and Temple Mountains: Architecture, Religion, and Nature in the Central Himalayas
Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019, 288 pp., 5 maps, 80 color and 26 b/w illus. $70 (cloth), ISBN 9780295744513

When scholars think of architecture in the Himalayas, what most readily come to mind are the Buddhist monasteries or wooden “pagoda-like” shrines of Tibet, Nepal, and the western Himalayas. Older stone temples are rarely considered, and the central Himalayas are often completely ignored. Unlike the adjacent kingdoms of Kashmir and Chamba or the Kathmandu Valley, the central Himalayas suffer from poor infrastructure that restricts travel, as well as a paucity of textual sources that could contextualize material culture. This is in contrast to the region’s vast traditions of pilgrimage, which have been of great interest to anthropologists and scholars of religion. What makes Nachiket Chanchani’s new book Mountain Temples and Temple Mountains such a monumental achievement, however, is not merely the fact that it brings to light a remarkable range of unknown monuments but also that it so convincingly asserts their centrality within the broader history of temple architecture on the Indian subcontinent.

At the heart of Chanchani’s book is the argument that the emergence of the central Himalayas as a crucial sacred landscape and “enduring abode of the gods” (173) was the result of dynamic interactions between the mountains and the plains of northern and central India. Using lively and often poetic prose, Chanchani demonstrates how the grand yet challenging topography did not segregate the region but rather fostered the formation of new settlements, encouraged travel, and reinforced an enduring sense of sacrality. Patrons and religious communities capitalized on both the transregional idealization of the Himalayas and the specificities of local landscapes in order to transform the region systematically into a pan-Indic pilgrimage zone.

Throughout the book, Chanchani combines rigorous fieldwork and close visual analysis with theoretical sophistication. He draws upon phenomenological approaches to landscape and poststructuralist approaches to premodern material, as
represented in publications by Robert Harrist and Wei-Cheng Lin, while also making a case for the continuing relevance of style as a crucial tool in cases where dates and original provenance remain obscure. The book is also indebted to the work of Michael Meister, who was the first to demonstrate the transmission of northern Indian temple architecture to the Himalayas in the eighth century, in his similarly titled essay “Mountain Temples and Temple-Mountains: Masrur.” However, Chanchani goes far beyond this initial foray to uncover the processes by which the region was semiotically reshaped through the introduction of new architectural forms over many centuries.

To contextualize this history, he draws upon an impressive array of sources, including inscriptions, courtly literature, religious treatises, medieval Chinese pilgrims’ accounts, European travel memoirs, and archaeological reports.

The book is organized through a chronological progression. Chapter 1, “Headed to the Himalayas,” goes back to antiquity and covers the period from King Asoka, who reigned from 268 to 232 BCE, to the emergence of new localized clans during the era of the Kušāṇa in the second and third centuries CE. Chanchani traces the origins of the idea of the mountain as both a heavenly abode and the source of sacred rivers to the urbanization of the Ganges-Yamuna Doab and the formation of epics, such as the Mahābhārata, in the mid-first millennium BCE. The textual emergence of new discourses of mountain pilgrimage may have encouraged travel and artistic exchange. The subsequent rise of the Kuśāṇa fostered not only increases in trade and mobility but also new experiments in Brahmanic imagery. Much of this early material was inherently ephemeral. It is thus fitting that the chapter’s introduction and conclusion are framed by the ritual performance of the āśvamedha yajña (horse sacrifice), indexed by the fortuitous remains of three brick altars, built by the king Śīlabarman, in the third century CE. As the āśvamedha yajña was the ultimate rite that linked political authority to territorial control, this serves as a useful device for drawing attention to the mechanisms that both conceptualized and actualized the extents of the region’s sacred landscape.

The second chapter moves forward in time to the imperial Guptas, from the fifth to seventh centuries. Drawing extensively on the poetry of Kālidāsa, Chanchani ties the evolving idea of the Himalayas as a heavenly abode in courtly literature to the emergence of the Hindu temple as a distinctive architectural form at well-known sites. He points to the metonymic nature of the rusticated surfaces of the Pārvatī temple at Nachna and the pose of the colossal Varāha at Udayagiri as evoking Viṣṇu’s epithet of “mountain dwelling.” From there he follows the ways in which Himalayan temples at places such as Lakhamandal and Palethi drew directly from the building structures and technologies encountered farther south, first in brick and then in stone. These, he argues, provide evidence for the importation of both building practices and expressions of power, as well as for the increasing presence of cosmopolitan Brahmanic sacred centers along the southern fringe of the central Himalayas.

Chapter 3 examines the creation of a major pilgrimage center (tīrtha) in the Jageshwar valley through concurrent political and religious developments: the rise of new regional principalities and the expansion of Pāṣuṇata Śaivism. Here, Chanchani emphasizes the geological uniqueness of the forested valley. Looking to the fields of paleobotany and environmental history, he establishes both the inherent auspiciousness of the tīrtha as determined by the quirks of its river and the crucial role that the management of the landscape played in the construction of sacrality. For specialists, Jageshwar is of particular importance to an understanding of the larger pan-Indic expansion of Pāṣuṇata religious networks during the seventh and eighth centuries. In the chapter’s final section, Chanchani offers an engaging discussion of a remarkable metal sculpture of unknown origin, a depiction of a lamp bearer (ca. 850–1100), that brings questions of style, iconography, and architectural context into dialogue with larger histories regarding the mobility of artifans, patrons, and kings.

The fourth chapter moves forward in time to Pandukeshwar and Badrinath in the ninth and tenth centuries. In addressing Badrinath, Chanchani continues to emphasize the role of religious networks, in this case more mainstream Śaiva lineages, which, at least in later centuries, claimed association with Śaṅkara. By contrast, he curiously avoids engaging with the Viṣṇu ritual context of Pandukeshwar, choosing instead to focus primarily on architectural forms. It is true that Pandukeshwar, as one of a handful of Indian sites where northern Nāga and southern Drāvīḍa traditions stand side by side, lends itself well to a morphological study. Chanchani’s rereading of the Yogabadar temple as a Drāvīḍa alpa-vimāna is particularly ingenious, as is his examination of the role played by architects and miniature shrines in the transmission of architectural knowledge. He returns to the question of Viṣṇuvism with his final examples, which, together with Pandukeshwar, suggest connections between the formation of new local kingdoms and cultural diversification.

Taking as its point of departure the Gujjar Deva temple at Dwārahāt, chapter 5 examines the Himalayas’ specific relationship with Gujarat in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as seen through the importation of the Māru-Gurjara style. That the builders possessed deep knowledge of this distinctive architectural form can be seen in the treatment of temple elevations, plans, ornamental friezes, sīkharās (towers), and spatial sensibilities. In order to construct a cohesive narrative for both the mechanics and the intentions underlying this transmission, Chanchani investigates the mobility of architects, stonecutters, merchants, patrons, and Śaiva religious preceptors, and suggests that these temples were part of an effort to transform the central Himalayas into another “northern Gujarat,” a familiar place for migrant communities. While his analysis is convincing, it is worth noting that the Māru-Gurjara style may have moved through indirect paths of transmission, as its proliferation was not limited to the Himalayas. In fact, the turn of the first millennium saw the spread of Māru-Gurjara elements across northern and central India, with particular force at sites such as Suḥānīya and Khajuraho that were connected with the imperial ambitions of new regional kingdoms.

The book’s concluding chapter outlines the afterlives of the region, taking the reader from the thirteenth century to the present. Throughout, the discussion remains tightly focused on the close connections between the central Himalayas and the subcontinent.

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Çemberlitas Hamami in Istanbul traces the history of an Ottoman public bath (hamam) across nearly five centuries, beginning with its construction in 1583 and continuing into the present. In this innovative and wide-ranging work, Nina Macaraig addresses not only this specific building still in operation today but also topics as diverse as public bath construction from the Roman period onward, the function and use of public baths in the Ottoman Empire, and social life in Istanbul over the centuries. The last of these topics is treated throughout the book in chronological fashion, from the social functions of urban charitable foundations in the early modern period to eighteenth-century social unrest, nineteenth-century modernization efforts, twentieth-century urban renewal, and, finally, twenty-first-century concerns such as heritage preservation, digital platforms, and tourist mind-sets. Throughout, Macaraig writes in an accessible, engaging manner, and her erudition on all topics related to the bath is impressive.

Çemberlitas Hamami is located on the Divan Yolu, the main thoroughfare between Hagia Sophia and the covered bazaar in Istanbul, and shares the name of its neighborhood: Çemberlitas (the Column with Rings), the Turkish name given to the Column of Constantine located there. The hamam was built as part of a large charitable foundation sponsored by Nurbanu Sultan, the mother of the Ottoman sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95) and wife of Selim II (r. 1566–74). The bath’s main purpose was to generate revenue to maintain the mosque complex in Üsküdar, now known as the Atik Valide Camii (Old Queen Mother’s Mosque), which was the heart of the queen mother’s foundation. Çemberlitas Hamami still functions today, unlike the three other hamams elsewhere in the city that were once part of the endowment but have since been reduced to storage facilities or industrial workshops.

Macaraig’s book is organized chronologically as a life story or memoir, each chapter opening with a playful summary written in the language of an early modern Ottoman biographical account. While these summaries are entertaining, the book’s overall structure is the more important contribution. Unlike most art and architectural historical accounts, which focus on construction phases or initial periods of use, Macaraig’s study carries the monument’s story into the present, considering changes in use, physical appearance, and meaning over time. While this hamam (as the author admits) is not the most important or famous of its kind, its resilience over the centuries affords a unique opportunity for an investigation of the bathing and social experiences of everyday Ottomans (22–23). In her introduction, Macaraig expends much energy in defending her use of a biographical memoir format to examine an inanimate monument, but the book attests to the value of such an approach. The emphasis throughout on the ways in which the hamam has been experienced by its clients, founders, employees, and owners sets this book apart from other studies of Ottoman architecture. Despite Macaraig’s inclusion of detailed accounts of the building’s appearance over the centuries, it is clear that her primary interest lies in the experiences that architecture creates for its users.

The book’s first chapter, “Ancestry,” describes the life of Nurbanu Sultan, emphasizing her disputed origins in Venetian-controlled Corfu, her political acumen, and her extraordinary wealth and power. Nurbanu Sultan was the first bearer of the title valide sultan (queen mother), which appears to have been invented specifically for her. Macaraig next turns her attention to Sinan, chief imperial Ottoman architect for more than forty years, who supervised the imperial corps of architects during the years of Çemberlitas Hamami’s construction. After careful consideration of Sinan’s possible role in the project, and despite the design’s similarity to his oeuvre from this period, Macaraig concludes that the building was the work of his apprentice, Sedefkâr Mehmed Ağa (she creates some confusion by titling this section “The Architect: Sinan”). The rest of the chapter is devoted to a careful discussion of the history of public baths and the lineage of Çemberlitas Hamami, from “ancient Greek baths to Roman thermae, Byzantine baths, early Arab-Islamic, Perso-Islamic, Seljuk, and finally Ottoman hamams” (32).

Chapter 2, on Çemberlitas Hamami’s “family,” analyzes the Atik Valide endowment. Macaraig considers the endowment alongside other charitable foundations that