

TIZIANA LORENZETTI



Understanding the Hindu Temple

History, Symbols and Forms

This book aims to explain the multiple symbolic meanings encompassed by and in the Hindu temple. Distinct chapters are dedicated to: (1) the multi-level relationship between the temple, the cosmos and the body of the primordial being; (2) the antecedents of Indian sacred monuments; (3) the basic structure of the Hindu temple and the main temple typologies; (4) the sculptural elements, both anthropomorphic and symbolic; (5) the political, economic, and social role played by the temple in Indian society. Lastly, the volume provides a useful glossary of key architectonic terms.

This multi-faceted subject-matter is made accessible in the light of its recognisable affinities with Western religio-philosophical traditions.

The volume, therefore, offers to the reader, particularly to students of Indian art, a useful teaching tool to understand and to interpret the development of the great sacred Hindu monuments, transforming a highly complex matter into a clear and updated treatise.

Dr. Tiziana Lorenzetti obtained a Ph.D in Indian History of Art from the University of Genoa (Italy) and a post-doctoral degree from the National Museum Institute of History of Art in New Delhi. She has taught at Sapienza University of Rome and was a Research Associate at the University of Manchester. She has written two books and several essays on Indian art.



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The Hindu temple encompasses multiple symbolic meanings with various levels of interpretation. This book aims to explain this complex web of symbolism which has inspired and justified the building of the Hindu temple, from the beginnings through its development to the most complex forms.

A comprehensive treatment of the diverse aspects of sacred Hindu architecture is provided in terms of religious and philosophical principles, textual heritage, mythological references and the various iconographic traditions embodied in the Hindu sanctuaries.

Distinct chapters are dedicated to the following topics:

1. The multi-level relationship between the temple, the cosmos and the body of the primordial being
2. The antecedents of Indian sacred monuments—timber and rock-cut structures
3. The basic structure of the Hindu temple and the main temple typologies
4. Sculptural elements of the temple, both anthropomorphic and symbolic
5. The historical, political, economic, and social role played by the temple in Indian society from its medieval origins to modern times

Lastly, the book provides a glossary of key architectonic terms and a thematic bibliography.

This multi-faceted subject-matter is also treated in the perspective of a historical comparison of differences and similarities with some fundamental examples from Western traditions and practices of constructing the sacred. As a matter of fact, references to the Graeco-Latin *templum*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Plato's *Republic* and similarities in Christian theology are underlined.

The book is therefore of particular interest both to scholars and to non-specialist readers from a Western cultural background, in so far as a highly complex fabric of religious, philosophical, and symbolic concepts has been converted into a clear and enjoyable reading where all the elements find their coherent place and consistent explanation.

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