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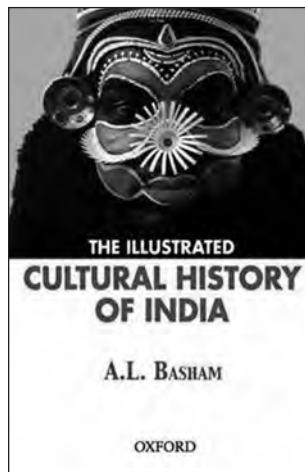
THE ILLUSTRATED CULTURAL HISTORY OF INDIA

A.L. BASHAM, EDITOR

NEW DELHI: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2007

304 PAGES, ISBN: 978-0195691924, SOFTCOVER

Reviewed by Bruce Robinson



This volume is an adaptation of A. L. Basham's 1975 collection of articles entitled *A Cultural History of India*, which succeeded in capturing the state of scholarship at the time of its publication. That volume and the present illustrated version boast contributions from a plethora of respected scholars and authorities from the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth nations on aspects of South Asian history and culture. Names such as Romila Thapar and Percival Spear, who wrote volumes one and two of the old Pelican

History of India, jump from the table of contents. Of course, Basham himself wrote the book that introduced many of us to the field of Indology—*The Wonder that Was India*. While the 1975 volume was well received and served as a basic reader for years thereafter, this adaptation, comprised of recycled articles, often shows its age, demonstrating that subsequent scholarship has changed interpretation. Within these pages exists a great deal of expert information, but the volume generally leaves the reader with an understanding of South Asian society and history as understood by the field some thirty years ago.

The book is divided into three parts. The first and longest section, entitled "The Ancient Heritage," consists of nine articles that explore the archaeological record, early history, the evolution of religious systems (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism), classical philosophy and literature, as well as discussions of architecture and music. Parts two and three are each only half as long. "The Age of Muslim Dominance" contains five articles that cover Muslim architecture, the evolution of Hindu devotionalism and Islamic Sufism, an introduction to Sikhism, and a brief survey of medieval miniature painting. The final part, "Challenge and Response—The Coming of the West," consists of four articles led by an attempt by Percival Spear to identify Mughal and British contributions to the modern state of India. The remaining three articles consist of an analysis of Hindu religious and social reform movements under colonial rule, a brief history of the Nationalist Movement, and an analysis of the evolution of vernacular literature.

Within the pages of this collection, readers can find numerous articles that stand the test of time and demonstrate their author's contin-

ued firm grasp of their material. Romila Thapar is still an adept guide through Ashokan India and the Gupta Age. She demonstrates her mastery of these confused years while discussing important issues such as land tenure, state revenue systems, and alienation. Her emphasis on the importance of guilds for the creation of non-state wealth and power is important. A. N. Upadhye's introduction to the Jain religion is clear and concise, as is Hew McLeod's equally brief introduction to Sikhism. The piece by J. T. F. Jordens on "Medieval Hindu Devotionalism" that describes the spread of *bhakti* is excellent because of its subcontinental coverage. Too often Bengal, Maharashtra, and the Hindi-speaking areas are considered separately. Still, this piece suffers from a total lack of documentation.

Footnotes are used haphazardly throughout this volume and in fewer than a quarter of the articles. H. F. Owen's article on the Indian Nationalist Movement is solidly documented, divides the action into three stages, and analyzes the contributions of the "moderates" and the "extremists."

Unfortunately, the footnotes demonstrate that the author has incorporated scholarship available only up until 1973, proving that his conclusions may be some years out of date. Were this not the case, the piece could be very effectively used as an introductory assignment in a survey course. The same is true for J. T. F. Jordens' article on "Hindu Religious and Social Reform in British India," which, like his first contribution, contains no documentation. The article does, however, survey religious and social reform activity across the subcontinent, arranged in three chronological periods, and makes a very solid introduction.

More disturbing is material presented under the imprimatur of A. L. Basham's name where controversy and new conclusions have

ON THE MARGINS OF ASIA: DIVERSITY IN ASIAN STATES

Edited by Charles Keyes



This collection of ten articles from the *Journal of Asian Studies* focuses upon ethnic diversity in Asia. The articles are grouped under five main headings: Premodern Roots of Modern Ethnicity, On Understanding Human Diversity in Asia, Migrant Minorities and Ethnic Pluralism,

States and the Politics of Ethnic Minorities, and Ethnic Conflict and Ethnonationalism. The editor's introduction, "The 'Other' Asian Peoples of Asia," sets the stage for the articles to follow.

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arisen in the last thirty years or so. B. B. Lal, the former Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, describes the Indus Valley Civilization using noticeably out-of-date information. (In addition, his many measurements are recorded in meters, which I doubt the “general” American reader will happily tolerate.) He identifies only the two original cities, Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, whereas archeologists have now identified five major cities (see Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*, 1998). His discussions of the script and the causes of the decline hold up all right. But T. Burrow, in describing “The Early Aryans,” still speculates about an “invasion” from beyond South Asian borders and describes attacks by Aryan marauders set on burning down the Dasa’s cities. I believe current scholarship calls all these assumptions into question, and some would even take offense at these antiquated assertions.

The publisher claims that the addition of “complementary visuals” will help “capture the interest of younger readers.” This seems to be the only rationale for reissuing Basham’s 1975 material. Yet the selection of “visuals” appears quite random. Some are pen and ink drawings of cultural artifacts, and others are black and white reproductions of statuary or architectural buildings and elements. They are scattered throughout the text, and some of the line drawings are positioned so as to interfere with the type. Martin Briggs has offered a very solid article on “Muslim Architecture in India” that could have been substantially more instructive if it had a set of pictures to support the text. In short, the part of the title that promises an illustrated history contributes little to the success of this strange publishing venture. ■

BRUCE ROBINSON worked for the National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Education Programs for more than a dozen years, where he paid special attention to the development of world history, the non-West, and foreign language education. He holds a PhD in the history of South Asia, and taught and held various administrative posts at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. His publications dealt with indigenous resistance to colonial rule in South Asia.

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