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Rethinking Place in South Asian and Islamic Art, 1500-Present

Edited by Deborah S. Hutton
and Rebecca M. Brown

Rethinking Place in South Asian and Islamic Art, 1500–Present

“The volume is singular in its engagement with place as a new paradigm for understanding art in South Asia. Cutting across from the medieval to the contemporary, and an extensive geography beyond South Asia to the Islamic world, it profoundly addresses pressing concerns of our times: ecology, democracy, religion and nationalism.”

Parul Dave Mukherji, *Jawaharlal Nehru University*

“An exciting and provocative volume of essays investigating how the concept of place affects the ways objects are seen and used, the ways they move and change, and the ways they are defined by their patrons and institutions. A good read that stimulates interdisciplinary ways of understanding works of art.”

Sheila Blair, *Boston College*

Place plays a fundamental role in the structuring of the discipline of Art History. And yet, place also limits the questions art historians can ask and impairs analysis of objects and locations in the interstices of established, ossified categories. The chapters in this interdisciplinary volume investigate place in all of its dynamism and complexity: several call into question traditional constructions regarding place in Art History, while others explore the fundamental role that place plays in lived experience. The particular nexus for this collection lies at the intersection and overlap of two major subfields in the history of art: South Asia and the Islamic world, both of which are seemingly geographically determined, yet at the same time uncategorizable as place with their ever-shifting and contested borders. The eleven chapters brought together here move from the early modern through to the contemporary, and span particular monuments and locations ranging from Asia and Europe to Africa and the Americas. The chapters take on the question of place as it operates in more obvious settings, such as architectural monuments and exhibitionary contexts, while also probing the way place operates when objects move or when the very place they exist in transforms dramatically. This volume engages place through the movement of objects, the evocation of senses, desires, and memories and the on-going project of articulating the parameters of place and location.

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in honor of their generous mentorship and uncountable
contributions to the field of Art History



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Acknowledgments

This volume explores the role of place in South Asian and Islamic art and as such takes us – the writers and the readers – on virtual visits to sundry locales throughout the world. The introduction, through the memoirs of the Mughal emperor Babur, sets us off, propelling us from Samarqand to Kabul to the plains of north India. The individual chapters transport us deeper into the Indian subcontinent, as aspects of Delhi, Udaipur, Mumbai, Goa, Hyderabad, and Madras are explored through the lens of art and architecture. Other chapters take us still farther afield: to Sri Lanka, Turkey, Germany, and Spain, as well as New York and Hawai‘i. And, yet, as rich as this list is, one more place must be added to it: Minneapolis–St. Paul, Minnesota, USA. Though no chapter directly addresses Minnesota, its presence is infused throughout every aspect of this volume; in many ways, Minnesota provides the “home base” from where our travels are launched.

From roughly the 1990s onwards, The University of Minnesota, its campus straddling the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, has provided a profoundly vibrant, supportive, and innovative place to study South Asian and Islamic art. This intellectually rich and collegial environment has been carefully nurtured by Frederick M. Asher and Catherine B. Asher, Professors of Art History at Minnesota. To them, we dedicate this book.

All of the volume’s contributors studied with the Ashers at the University of Minnesota, and their influence, support, and guidance can be found in each of these chapters. Much as we would walk across the Mississippi River, moving from St. Paul to Minneapolis and back again multiple times each day to get to the other side of campus, we learned from Rick and Cathy that it was natural to traverse the disciplinary and geographic boundaries that often mark academia, to look at something “from the other side,” as it were. They taught us the importance of questioning established truths and looking at art beyond the established canon. Through their own scholarly work, they also demonstrated to us the importance of on-the-ground research, whether in archives, at architectural sites, in textile workshops, in museum collections, or in artists’ studios, as the foundation on which to construct innovative approaches to the material. The extent to which each of us learned those valuable lessons is apparent in the eleven chapters included here, not one of which looks at what might be considered “canonical” artworks in the fields of South Asian and Islamic art history. Instead, the chapters investigate objects, monuments, and artworks that push the boundaries of these academic fields and provide new perspectives on a particular time or place. The chapters take a range of methodological approaches,

some firmly within the discipline of art history, others quite interdisciplinary, but all grounded in primary source research. In the aggregate, they demonstrate a breadth and range fed by the Ashers in seminar discussions, conversations shared in offices and over the dining table and intense, seemingly instantaneous email exchanges across continents.

The Ashers' intellectual openness extends to their sense of scholarly community – from them, we learned the importance of working together, of listening and learning from our peers, of being supportive colleagues and active members of our disciplines. They taught us these things by example – through their own inclusivity, collegiality, mentorship, and service to the field. Thus, when we decided it was time to honor their careers, we knew we would have no problem finding people eager to join us in celebrating Cathy and Rick.

On February 15, 2014, we gathered together for a symposium entitled *The Bodhi Tree and the Orchid* at the University of Chicago, where both Rick and Cathy had studied. This volume grows out of that event, but the event itself was much more, from the twenty-two presenters and panel chairs to the discussions over coffee and the toasts during the celebratory dinner. Geri Malandra and Janice Leoshko set the tone for the day with their wonderful reflections on Cathy and Rick's careers; Radha Dalal, Aditi Chandra, Sinem A. Casale, Riyaz Latif, and Hawon Ku presented outstanding, thought-provoking papers that contributed enormously to the intellectual richness of the day; Tamara Sears, Risha Lee, D. Fairchild Ruggles, and Molly Aitken provided expert moderation. The University of Chicago's Department of Art History graciously provided the superb venue as well as advice on caterers and logistics; our thanks go to Christine Mehring, Joyce Kuechler, Matthew O'Connell, and Meekyung Ruth MacMurdle, as well as the staff at the International House where we celebrated after the event. The University of Minnesota's Department of Art History, Catherine Becker, Cynthia Packert, Dipti Khera, Gale Berninghausen, and Sarita Heer generously helped support the planning and execution of the event. Colleagues who couldn't attend in person sent notes of support that were read during the day, expanding the scope of the event beyond its physical location in Chicago. Alice and Tom Asher, along with Tom's wife, Dana, and their two children, traveled to Chicago to join us for the day, adding to the festive and familial atmosphere. A hearty thanks to everyone listed earlier as well as to all the other symposium attendees and dinner guests, for their engagement with our scholarly papers but also, and perhaps more importantly, for joining us in celebrating and toasting the Ashers.

We view this book, not as a mere record of the symposium, but as a continuation and expansion of the spirit of all that the Ashers have encouraged and supported over the years. This volume has taken on a life of its own, one that builds on the scholarly and collegial energy of that day to embrace the idea of place as a central thematic underlying the study of South Asian and Islamic art history at Minnesota. For their assistance putting together this volume and its chapters, we give our deepest thanks to Margaret Michniewicz, who expertly and carefully shepherded the project at Ashgate, to the anonymous reviewers for their insightful and helpful feedback, and to Nicole Berlin, for her careful editorial eye. And, finally, we would like to thank our fellow authors – Deepali Dewan, Alisa Eimen, Nina Ergin, Atreyee Gupta, Jennifer Joffee, Venugopal Maddipati, Marsha G. Olson, Sugata Ray, and Jennifer Roberson – for responding to our comments and producing final products that fit so well within this

unifying framework, one that enables us to honor the Ashers while also, we hope, continuing to challenge the boundaries of our field of inquiry, shifting perspectives and rethinking place. Indeed, the entire process, from symposium to volume and beyond, has enabled all of us to celebrate the place that gave us our intellectual grounding as we traversed rivers, never alone and always, as Babur did, with a supportive group of fellow travelers.



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Introduction

In and out of place: engagements in South Asian and Islamic art history

Deborah S. Hutton and Rebecca M. Brown

Within a day's ride from Kabul it is possible to reach a place where snow never falls. But within two hours one can go where the snows never melt – except in the rare summer so severe that all snow disappears.¹

These careful words from the memoir of the Mughal ruler Babur (r. 1526–30) evoke the tactile experience of the landscape around Kabul: one can almost feel the cold air of the snowy mountainside and see the distant white peaks from the dusty city. In these few words, Babur puts his readers on a horse in Kabul, ready to go places and to return. To be, in other words, in and out of place.

This volume brings together chapters that explore themes relating to place, emplacement, and location, exploring the senses, desires, and needs associated with particular places; navigating the way mobile objects and ideas move between places; and probing the machinations of producing new constellations of places in dialogue with the old, the diverse, and the distant. In addition to raising these questions directly, the chapters in the aggregate bring to the fore the problems associated with the geographic and cultural divisions of contemporary scholarship – the work contained within these pages includes discussions of spaces and objects produced in Spain, Sri Lanka, Hawai'i, Germany, India, Turkey, Morocco, and Iran, written by scholars trained in the art and architectural history of both the Islamic world and South Asia. Yet, those two categories, as large as they are, seem inadequate to the wide variety of material housed in this collection. In this way, the volume troubles our neat scholarly emplacements, challenging these boundaries with chapters that address modern architecture, Indian temples of the seventeenth century, ivory statues of Mary, participatory art in Mumbai, and the use of photography as a tool of cosmopolitan identity construction. Each of these chapters engages place through the movement of objects, the evocation of senses, desires, and memories and the on-going project of articulating the parameters of place and location.

In this project, the volume joins a wide range of scholarship that seeks out interstitial and overlooked places and relations between distant locations, from studies of the visual culture of locations of intersection – the Afghanistan–Pakistan–India region, for example² – to works that acknowledge the complexities of global movements beyond the rubric of “diaspora.”³ The contested project of world art history has voiced the challenge of seeking out historical moments of exchange, intersection, and movement heretofore hidden by our geographic and temporal disciplinary specialisms.⁴ At the same time, the inheritors of postcolonial theory and histories have pushed beyond

2 *Deborah S. Hutton and Rebecca M. Brown*

the dualisms often embedded in those approaches to offer a richer, multinodal and dynamic approach to transnational and transregional flows of art and power that reach back into history as well as address the complexities of the contemporary.

The multiple understandings of place that emerge from the chapters in this volume engage with concerns Babur might have recognized in his early modern milieu. Travel and movement help to define places as distinct from one another, whether the impetus for that travel is a religious pilgrimage, elite empire-building, or later iterations of tourism or laborers shifting location to find employment.⁵ A relation to past visits to particular places – whether that means one’s own return or a first visit to a place extensively imagined – undergirds some of the chapters in this volume, where memory of sensorial encounters, from bad smells to sweet tastes or rough textures informs the relation to particular places, often at particular moments. Anthropologist Tim Ingold’s theorization of landscape illuminates a crucial aspect of place that many of this volume’s authors share:

For a place in the landscape is not “cut out” from the whole, either on the plane of ideas or on that of material substance. Rather, each place embodies the whole at a particular nexus within it, and in this respect is different from every other. A place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there – to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience. And these, in turn, depend on the kinds of activities in which its inhabitants engage. It is from this relational context of people’s engagement with the world, in the business of dwelling, that each place draws its unique significance. Thus whereas with space, meanings are attached to the world, with the landscape they are gathered from it.⁶

Place has a nexus or a center, but in Ingold’s conception, and that shared by many in this volume, that center (whether an art object, a building, a city, a view, an experience) interconnects with and constitutes a larger whole. Furthermore, place’s relationality and contingency undergird the pieces in this volume, all of which situate place within particular relations of power, moments in time, and historical memory. These elements are evident in the early modern chronicle that Babur offers of his engagements with the world.

Babur’s triangulation of Kabul, placing it at a distance from snow-covered peaks, uses material – snow – and evokes senses – the height (and smell, perhaps) of a horse, the cool air of winter and the heat of summer, the feeling of travel and movement. He defines place through sight and distance but also through material, experience, and seasonal change. Art history has long led disciplines in engaging with questions of materiality, as the qualities of wood might centrally shape any object made with that particular medium,⁷ and the availability of a particular clay, bone, or textile material drives art production, trade, and value.⁸ This volume engages this strand of art history with a chapter on ivory and a chapter on clay and trash; it extends the concern of material to that of the environment – the materialities of land and water – and to that of the senses – the sounds, smells, and tactilities of places and objects.⁹

Babur’s seasonal description also situates Kabul in an ever-changing landscape, through which one must move in order to fully appreciate the place in relation to other locations, other times of the year. Objects, people, and ideas move from place to place,

but in doing so, they also define and redefine the places they arrive in, travel through, and come from. Often unexpected intersections of objects, ideas, and people emerge in some of these places – perhaps most poignantly in museum installations, but also in new emplacements of intersecting needs, as in the religious institutions of minority Islamic communities in Europe, or the diverse audiences who traveled through Ottoman caravanserais. The exceptional heat of certain summers, then, melts the snow on distant peaks, redefining the place of Kabul for travelers and residents on horseback.

We invoke Babur here, in the introduction of this volume, because of his travels, his prose, and his position as a poetic interlocutor of the early modern world, one that echoes from his sixteenth-century moment to today. None of the chapters here address the Mughal past directly, but they all engage with an aspect of early modern explorations of self, the senses, or the world, marking continuities with the questions Babur raises. The chapters in this volume speak to multiple facets of his memoiric narrative, as he moves across geographies, from the mountainous landscape of his Afghan home to the deserts of India, remarking on the customs, objects, people, and places he encounters along the way. He moves, the objects he carries with him change, and the landscapes also transform, often under his direction (Figure 0.1).

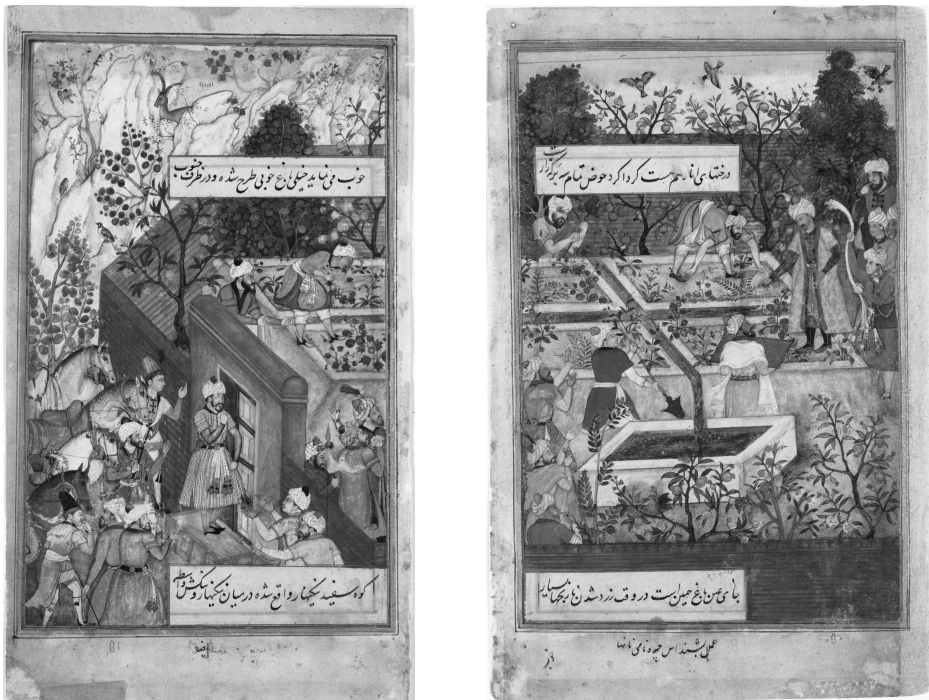


Figure 0.1 Bishndas, *Babur Supervises the Laying out of the Garden of Fidelity in Kabul*, from a *Baburnama* manuscript, c. 1590, opaque watercolor on paper, each page: 26.6 cm x 16.8 cm

Source: Image courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IM.276A-1913 (left) and IM.276-1913 (right).

Babur refigures himself as a modern, global actor while he also reshapes the materials, experiences, and objects around him to feel “in place” even when “out of place.” One of the additional attractions of the *Baburnama* is the way in which it occupies multiple literary genres: it is both memoir and travel account. Travel writing, what William Dalrymple calls “one of the world’s oldest and most universal forms of literature,”¹⁰ has a long-standing, symbiotic relationship with art history, as well as with the study of South Asia and the Islamic world. Descriptions of landscapes traversed, monuments visited, ceremonies witnessed, urban environments explored, and the dress of the people encountered, comprise much of the writers’ content. In turn, those accounts become evidence for later historians wishing to reconstruct the shape of the visual and physical environment. The chronicles of the fourteenth-century Moroccan traveler, Ibn Battuta, who crossed 75,000 miles of “Dar al-Islam” – from North Africa to Indonesia – continue to provide invaluable insights to today’s students and scholars, for example.¹¹ The usefulness of such accounts stems not solely from the information they contain. It also arises from the inherently comparative aspect of such texts: the authors are encountering new things and new ways of being in the world and comparing them with their own experiences, thereby providing insights into multiple cultures. Through these texts, we see how conceptions of place are far from static and instead shift and flow based on the position of the observer. Such accounts also remind us that people always have moved – whether by desire, by need, or by force – feeling out-of-place, observing difference, and bringing objects and ideas into new locations, new constellations of places near and far.

Each of the three parts of this book comprises chapters that address a particular aspect of “place” unpacked in Babur’s memoir as well. Part 1 “Experiencing place” involves the sensorial, temporal, and ephemeral aspects of place-making; Part 2 “Shifting place” focuses on the movement of people, objects, and ideas in global flows spurred by commerce, politics, or religion; Part 3 “Defining place” engages with institutional nodes that produce particular visions of place, whether educational institutions, museums, or courts. Experiencing, shifting, and defining serve as loose emplacements themselves, within which the chapters jostle and contest the frames of our discipline, in the spirit of Babur’s expansive and endlessly inquisitive prose.

Experiencing place

We suffered from three things in Hindustan. One was the heat, another the biting wind, and the third the dust. The bathhouse was a refuge from all three. Of course, a bathhouse has no dust or wind, and in the hot weather it is so cool that one almost feels chill. One chamber of the bath, the one in which the warm-water reservoir was, was finished completely in stone. The dado was of white stone; otherwise the floor and ceiling were of red stone from Bayana.¹²

A particular place, as Babur notes, might offer relief from the broader environment and serve as a goal of travel or pilgrimage. The chapters gathered under the broad rubric of “experiencing place” all explore different ways in which place might threaten or challenge our movements or our very lives, and also how our bodily and sensory experiences construct and articulate particular places – the bathhouse, the kitchen, the temple, the city, the home. Thus Nina Ergin’s chapter leads us into the tastes

and smells of the Ottoman *imaret*, or soup kitchen, part of many mosque complexes across the empire. In Ergin's hands, taste, smell, and particular foods repopulate the now dusty spaces of these large structures, and she deftly demonstrates how these elements of place-making also establish the Ottoman court and the religious institution as legitimate and powerful. The architectural form thus comes to life, and contemporary scholars can, even if only from a distance, engage with the larger complex of interwoven sensory experiences that visitors to the *imaret* might have tasted and felt.

While Ergin's *imarets* and caravanserais dot the Ottoman landscape, creating a series of interrelated places, Jennifer Joffee's study of the Sisodia rulers' Amba Mata Temple in Rajasthan, India shifts our focus from Ergin's empire-wide sensory experiences to a deployment of place meant for only a small number of people in a particular locale. The Amba Mata does not attract pilgrims from afar or proclaim its imperial patron in grand gestures. Instead, visitors to the temple must recognize the way local deities resonate with grander, imperial iconographies – the local community thus lives with and experiences the integral relation between their local deity and dynastic power, bringing these two together in narrative and worship practice. Like the local stone used to build Babur's bathhouse, the local here takes primacy, but this experience of place can also be used to establish and support a wider politics.

The qualities of local experience support these politico-sacral maneuvers in Joffee's piece. In Venugopal Maddipati's chapter, rather than a sacred temple, the localized source of power and contention is the Yamuna (or Jumna) River that runs through Delhi, providing a geographical and environmental core for the city – one that few Delhi residents ever visit or even see. Maddipati examines Atul Bhalla's and Asim Waqif's engagements with the river – immersing, drinking, living on and documenting the Yamuna, its banks, and its former route to bring its presence to the fore, acknowledging its multifaceted role in creating places and shaping the experience of the city. Flooding, polluting, dividing, providing – the river does all of these things while actively participating in the political life of the city. The experience of the river as alien and yet central to the city enables these artists to offer a complex relation of experience and place.

The Yamuna's positive, life-giving potential runs up against its polluted, destructive potential in Maddipati's work; likewise, Atreyee Gupta explores the domestic and intimate spaces of the Dharavi slum in Mumbai, a place of similarly contradictory experiences of domestic home life, from violence to hope. Gupta's entry point for place-making in Dharavi is a collaborative, participatory art workshop that culminated in an exhibition called *Ghar Pe/At Home*. The work in the exhibition engaged with the hopes and experiences of the local residents, presenting experiences of domestic violence alongside hopes for the future of the settlement itself. In that sense, *Ghar Pe* offered the women who participated a place of retreat from Babur's dust and heat into the cool precincts of the bathhouse, where they might reflect more clearly on the lives they lead and the futures they might envision. Just as the *imarets* draw together diverse places into an Ottoman sensorial world, and just as the Amba Mata Temple mobilizes local narrative to engage with a larger imperial power, the art in *Ghar Pe* too links the localized, community-based, participatory art to the globalizing world of the art fair and the biennial. These localized experiences of place then reconfigure what that global might mean, challenging us to consider the flows of experience, place, and sense from the most intimate to the wider frame of the world.

Shifting place

In the month of Sha‘ban [January 1505] when the sun was in the sign of Aquarius we rode out of Kabul for Hindustan. Stopping six times overnight on the Badam Chashma and Jagdalak road, we came to Adinapur. I had never seen a hot climate or any of Hindustan before. When we reached Nangarhar, a new world came into view – different plants, different trees, different animals and birds, different tribes and people, different manners and customs. It was astonishing, truly astonishing.¹³

This passage begins Babur’s account of his first excursion into the Indian subcontinent. As he shifted place, “a new world came into view,” one with a completely distinct visual environment. Babur often marveled at what he encountered in this “truly astonishing” new landscape; at other times, he turned a critical eye, even lamenting at one point:

Hindustan is a place of little charm. There is no beauty in its people, no graceful social intercourse, no poetic talent or understanding, no etiquette, nobility, or manliness. The arts and crafts have no harmony or symmetry. There are no good horses, meat, grapes, melons, or other fruit. There is no ice, cold water, good food or bread in the markets. There are no baths and no madrasas. There are no candles, torches, or candlesticks.¹⁴

Of course, implicit in the earlier remarks is a comparison with his beloved Samarqand, with its green meadows and gardens, lofty Timurid architecture, *sahibi* grapes, and plentiful bakeries – for not only do people move, memories and viewpoints do as well.¹⁵ As Babur traveled through Hindustan, he carried with him – like all travelers do – his own beliefs about what was customary, refreshing, delicious, and beautiful.

But Babur brought with him not just expectations; he also transported actual plants and objects, things to make this new place feel more like home. Seeing Central Asian melons and grapes successfully grown in India made him “particularly happy.”¹⁶ At the same time, he also sent fruit from India back to Samarqand, noting in his memoirs, for example, which types of oranges could best survive the long journey.¹⁷ In this activity, Babur is not exceptional. Whether through royal decree, trade, theft, looting, gifting, or collecting, objects often end up far from where they originate.

As people and objects travel, imagery (religious, royal, or decorative) also spreads, eventually becoming incorporated into local visual vocabularies, just as Babur’s Central Asian melons and grapes eventually became part of Hindustan’s fauna. When objects and images shift place in these ways, their meanings, status, and functions shift as well, once again highlighting the dynamic nature of place. In the same manner that travelers’ accounts do, these transplanted objects and images invite comparison between their places of origin and their new locations. Likewise, they serve as evidence of the interconnectedness of people, places, and ideas.

At times, objects’ movements are carefully managed, as in museum loans or diplomatic exchanges. In other cases, objects and images shift place in less controlled ways – through trade, the migration of people, and the spread of ideas and religious beliefs. Marsha G. Olson’s chapter, “Mary on the moon,” addresses one such example through a close reading of ivory statuettes of the Virgin Mary made in southern India

and Sri Lanka between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. When the Portuguese came to South Asia, they brought with them their Catholic faith, with an emphasis on the worship of certain forms of Mary. Statuettes of these forms were needed for devotion, teaching, and conversion. By focusing on ivory images carved in South Asia by local artists, Olson traces the subtle shifting of style and meaning that took place alongside the spread of iconography. Many of the objects she considers ultimately traveled to Brazil or other parts of the Portuguese empire, where they reside in museums. As these mobile statues shifted locations, they helped draw people into a worldwide Catholic community. In this way, the ivory statuettes index the global flow of imagery and objects and their concomitant belief structures.

“Shifting place” evokes the movement of things from one locale to another; it also connotes the changing nature of a single place or the changing status of an object within a given place. Often these shifts are interconnected: Babur’s astonishment at the wealth of new plants he encountered in India contributed to his enthusiastic reshaping of the landscape through gardens that combined memories of his home with elements of this “new world.” Such shifts within a place, which may occur gradually over time or at a fixed moment by design, often lead to contestation, debate, and negotiation, or to the development of a whole new set of meanings.

Jennifer Roberson examines the twentieth-century histories of three mosques in Cordoba, Spain: the Great Mosque of Cordoba, a mosque built during the Franco era, and a mosque housed in an abandoned convent. She focuses her analysis on the controversies and debates surrounding these places and the changing motivations that fueled them, as the political climate in Spain shifted drastically from the Franco era to the beginning of the twenty-first century. In essence, Roberson’s chapter speaks directly to the issue of geography – of place – in Islamic art. A key part of what contemporary scholars would classify as the Islamic world between the seventh and fourteenth centuries, the Andalusia region of Spain is today firmly part of a secular/Christian European realm. Spain’s relationship to its Islamic past is complex, vacillating through cycles of tension and acceptance: what happens to mosques, both old and new, during such shifts? As Roberson’s chapter explores, these religious structures often change function and symbolic meaning, even becoming the center of heated debates rooted in questions of local, national, and global identity.

Alisa Eimen also considers mosques in Europe vis-à-vis questions of identity and historical memory by examining new mosque construction being carried out by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at (community) in Germany. In recent years, Germany has experienced a marked increase in mosque construction by members of the Islamic diaspora, leading to debates among legislators, the general populace, worshippers, and architects about the increasing visibility of mosque architecture. Despite a rich and complicated history, the mosque’s most persistent and visible symbols continue to be the dome and minaret, which is true in the Ahmadiyya mosques as well. Eimen examines the discourse surrounding these two architectural elements in order to explore how meaning is constructed through visual context and ritual practice, as well as historical and personal memory. By considering how new émigrés reformulate their visual environments in order to feel less out of place, how the shifting landscape of Germany brings forth certain debates, and how iconic architectural elements activate imagined and remembered spaces in the psychologies of the viewer, Eimen addresses the sundry meanings of “shifting place.” People shift, art forms shift, and places themselves shift in ways that engender complicated, sometimes contradictory reactions.

Taken together, the three chapters featured in this part highlight both the fluidity and the robustness of place. Not only do objects and people migrate, perceptions of place and of objects' status within a given space shift dramatically depending upon one's point of view. Yet, the centrality of location to the ways in which we make sense of the world never wanes. A statue of the Virgin Mary based on Portuguese models carved by South Indian artists and now preserved at a museum in Brazil, the status of mosques in a city that was once the capital of the Umayyad dynasty and now is part of a Catholic European country, and the meaning of the dome and minaret forms in structures newly built for a minority diasporic community in Germany: all call into question the typical geographical boundaries marking the disciplines of Islamic and South Asian art while at the same time underscoring the ways in which visual culture is grounded in place.

Defining place

In 914 [1508–9], I had constructed a charbagh garden called Bagh-i-Wafa on a rise to the south of the Adinapur fortress. It overlooks the river, which flows between the fortress and the garden. It yields many oranges, citrons, and pomegranates. [In 1524], the year I defeated Pahar Khan and conquered Lahore and Divalpur, I had a banana tree brought and planted. It thrived. The year before that, sugarcane had been planted, some of which was being sent to Badakhshan and Bukhara. The ground is high, with constant running water, and the weather is mild in winter. In the middle of the garden is a small hill from which a one-mill stream always flows through the garden. The *charchaman* in the middle of the garden is a ten-by-ten pool surrounded by orange trees and some pomegranate trees. All around the pool is a clover meadow. The best place in the garden is there. When the oranges turn yellow it is a beautiful sight – really handsomely laid out.¹⁸

One of the things for which Babur is most remembered is his establishment of *charbaghs*, or four-part gardens, at various locales throughout his empire. Garden construction, as both a metaphorical and literal act of land control, displayed his power. The gardens also created pleasing and recognizable places for the emperor and his compatriots; the Persianate four-part garden plan provided a familiar structure in sometimes unfamiliar landscapes.¹⁹ At the same time, by planting new and different types of specimens, such as the banana tree and sugar cane mentioned earlier, Babur melded physical elements of the territories he was conquering into the older form. Over time, the plants grew, some flourishing more than others, making the garden a dynamic as well as clearly defined place. In these ways, the space acted as microcosm of the Mughal Empire itself. In essence, by laying out these gardens, Babur was curating: he was carefully situating a diverse array of chosen objects within a recognizable structure governed by certain conventions and carrying specific associations, in order to convey a message.

Like Babur's gardens, the places – museum, court, and college – discussed in the part “Defining place” are all institutional ones. And like his *charbaghs*, these spaces are both highly structured and dynamic. They are central to constructions of power, but in constant need of defining, of tending. The four chapters featured here all examine moments of creation or change within these institutional spaces, when, through the calculated use of new technologies or deliberate visual choices (through careful

tending), the definitions of a particular institution transformed, producing a newly defined place.

Two of the chapters focus on the idea of curation, on bringing together disparate elements in a deliberate way in order to define place. Sugata Ray figures American philanthropist Doris Duke's Shangri La (built in the 1930s) – now a museum of Islamic art and once her house in Hawai'i – as “an archive-museum produced through interplay between architectural arrangements and objects housed in that space.” Ray examines the specific design and display choices made by Duke and her advisors as they placed her collection of Persian, Moroccan, and Indian objects into newly built architectural ensembles, and he situates these choices within the larger history of twentieth-century displays of Islamic art in the West. In this regard, Ray is participating in current scholarly discourses that have shifted from viewing archives as merely repositories of documents and objects to seeing them as complex and dynamic objects of study themselves. Through his reading of the space of Shangri La, Ray brings attention to the ways in which perceptions of authenticity, permanence, and value are central to the authority of the archive-museum.

Likewise, Rebecca M. Brown considers US museum spaces and the specific strategies used to display South Asian art within those spaces. If, however, Ray's subject (Shangri La) is laden with a constructed aura of historical permanence, Brown's objects of study embrace multilayered and shifting temporalities. In her chapter, Brown considers several exhibitions from the US Festival of India (1985–86) that highlighted a particular medium – terracotta, clay, and even trash – and that focused on the process of transforming the raw material into its final product. Brown argues that the emphasis on transformation – from potters' demonstrations in the gallery to the decay of objects in cases and the reuse of discarded ceramic as mosaic surface – participates in the particular historical conjunction of the Cold War, Reaganite 1980s. Among many other things, the decade saw ethnographic and art museums challenge curatorial norms, borrowing from one another and from performance art. Here, the focus is on the dynamic aspects of museum spaces and how, just as Babur's gardens acted as microcosms of the Mughal Empire, exhibitions can both embody and respond to the larger cultural and political zeitgeist.

The other two chapters in this part examine the effects of a new technology – photography – on older institutional spaces. Just as the importation of a new type of plant into the garden brings both risks (will it survive in the new climate? will it spread too quickly, weakening the existing plants?) and rewards (delicious fruit, visual diversity), in the nineteenth century, photography was both threatening and full of potential.²⁰ Deborah S. Hutton's chapter, “A thoroughly modern major,” looks at the ways in which photography operated within an Indo-Islamic courtly setting. Focusing on the courtly culture of the princely state of Hyderabad – which, Hutton argues, in the late nineteenth century, coalesced around the qualities of cosmopolitanism, hospitality, and sportsmanship – the chapter explores the role photography played in articulating one's status within that space. Hutton's analysis centers on the Nizam of Hyderabad's charismatic aide-de-camp, Sir Afsur ud-Dowlah, and his sustained patronage of, and appearance in, images produced by the well-known Indian photographer Raja Deen Dayal. By exploring the relationship between modern visuality and traditional courtly culture, Hutton draws attention to the ways in which the medium of photography reshaped the visual construction of identity, in a manner that benefited some more than others.

In her chapter, “Useful but dangerous,” Deepali Dewan addresses head on the ambivalence surrounding the incorporation of photography within existing institutional structures. Making use of an extensive archive of writings by Dr. Alexander Hunter, the founder and first superintendent of the Madras School of Art, Dewan examines the interrelation between photography and drawing during the early decades of the school’s history. Although the Madras School of Art was the first colonial art school in India to pursue photographic instruction, Hunter, as his writings reveal, harbored a deep suspicion about the new technology. While acknowledging the speed and accuracy with which it captures detail, he called photographic images “feeble” and “dangerous” in comparison to drawings, which he considered a superior method of art education. By probing the place of photography within older, established institutional structures, both Dewan and Hutton push past the view of photography as separate and distinct from South Asia’s older visual traditions while still acknowledging the shifts and disruptions accompanying its arrival.

All four chapters in this part address the malleability, on the one hand, and permanence, on the other, of institutional spaces. These are places whose borders are carefully guarded and yet remain constructively porous. Like a walled garden, their boundaries are well defined, but they are open – to the sky, to visitors, to change.

Conclusion

Late in the evening we left the Tarabkhana and went to Muzaffar Mirza’s newly established winter quarters. There Yusuf Ali Kükäldash, high as a kite, got up and danced, which he did well and with much elegance. In those quarters the conviviality really waxed warm. Muzaffar Mirza gave me a sword belt, a lambskin jacket, and a gray thoroughbred horse. Janak recited in Turkish. Muzaffar Mirza’s slave Kätä Mah and Kichik Mah were also there, and in the midst of the drunkenness they did some obscene impertinences. The party went on quite animated until late, when the gathering broke up. That night I stayed over.²¹

Place, as both physical entity and imagined idea, centers much of lived experience. Places define identities, histories, and structures of power; shape actions and emotional responses; and hold memories – both good and bad, fresh and forgotten. In the earlier quote, Babur remembers Muzaffar Mirza’s winter quarters as a place where “conviviality . . . waxed warm.” Those present at Muzaffar Mirza’s late-night party consumed drink, danced, recited poetry, and exchanged gifts. The multisensory event, held within a newly constructed space, also involved travel and the forging of bonds through shared pleasurable experiences. In other words, a fun time was had by all. We find it particularly appropriate to frame this volume in a celebratory mode, through the exemplar of Babur’s party.

Exploring Islamic and South Asian art through the central thematic of place enables connections across period, locale, and culture, bringing disparate nodes into dialogue without minimizing the import of geography. Looking at the way in which architecture or photography, for example, function within a given place at a particular moment of time – whether it is contemporary Cordoba, nineteenth-century Hyderabad, or eighteenth-century Columbo – draws attention to visual culture’s role in the construction and contestation of identity and history. Considering examples of art purposefully situated in a particular space, whether that space is the muddy banks