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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beyond postcolonialism: New directions for the history of nonwestern architecture

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Abstract
Overturning assumptions that nonwestern architecture has been static over time, new scholarship focused on colonial and postcolonial architecture and urbanism and on nonwestern modernism has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the history of architecture. Much more, however, remains to be done. Comparative studies of colonialism, especially between empires, attention to innovation outside Europe and the English-speaking world and more consideration of memory and migration are among the most exciting possible new directions.
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1. Introduction

The notorious frontispiece of the 1905 edition of *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, written by the two Banister Fletchers, father and son, and entitled "The Tree of Architecture," illustrated various style of European architecture emerging out of a trunk labeled "Greek" and "Roman", while Peruvian, Mexican, Egyptian, Assyrian, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese architecture were shown as stunted branches (Fletcher 1905). Sub-Saharan Africa did not even merit inclusion. Although until the 1980s survey books continued to follow this line of thought, grouping such nonwestern examples as were included early in the text, today few remain convinced of the appropriateness of this approach (Janson, 1962). Not only has scholarship on the rest of the world mushroomed, but the key issue is no longer defining the essential core of a particular pre-modern corpus. Instead the dynamism it has exhibited over time, acquired not least through outside influence, is now increasingly widely recognized and equally valued (James-Chakraborty, 2014; McKean, 2007). This shift has opened up an entirely new field of inquiry, that of the emphatically non-traditional architecture of the places that the Fletchers presumed incapable of change. Two generations of scholarship have made clear the importance of colonial and postcolonial buildings, as well modern ones erected in areas outside Europe that were never colonized, to the history of nineteenth and twentieth century architecture in particular. While assessing the portion of that

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considerable achievement published in English, this study also suggests new directions for such scholarship. In particular it advocates a comparative study of imperialism that would stretch beyond chronicling European colonization of the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries to encompass earlier and also nonwestern empires. More comprehensive challenges to the presumption that innovation moves from the core to the periphery rather than emerging at the edges of political and economic systems are also needed, as are explorations of the contribution that the study of memory might make to an understanding of nonwestern modernism. Finally, we should also be considering the way in which migrants are transforming the metropolitan centers of the so-called "west."

2. Historiography

For more than a generation, the history of colonial and postcolonial architecture and urbanism has been one of the most dynamic sub-disciplines of architectural history. The literature on the rest of the history of Latin American, African, and Asian architecture has also been growing, albeit at a slower pace. For many years the proportion of papers given on these subjects at the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) annual conferences held in North America has been impressively high; papers on it are so frequent as to be routinely scheduled to conflict with one another. Despite its name, the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE) has in fact focused most of its attention on the topic since shortly after its founding in 1988; by the time its second conference, held in Brussels in 2012, the situation was little different at the European Architectural History Network (EAHN) than at SAH, although more papers were on Africa than on Asia. Moreover this body of scholarship has been unusually distinguished; the SAH, for instance, has since the 1980s bestowed an increasingly high proportion of its awards for books and articles to work on these topics.

Nor has the field been static. Like all historical writing, no matter how great its claim to objectivity, architectural history responds to present conditions, in its case above all to shifts in contemporary architectural style and taste as well as in the composition of the community of architectural historians. Furthermore, as a relatively new subset of that community, those who address the history of colonial and postcolonial environments as well as other nonwestern modernisms, have been quick to engage new scholarly approaches. Thus the books published in the 1980s on India's colonial architecture (Evenson, 1989; King, 1984; Metcalf, 1989) saw it through the lens of postmodern classicism, renewed interest in local traditions, and the writings of Edward Said, Michel Foucault, and Eric Hobsbawm (Foucault, 1977; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Said, 1977). More recently, an updated focus on style has accompanied explorations of the relationship between modern architecture, once understood to be emancipatory and international, with both colonialism and nationalism. Outstanding examples of this approach have focused on Turkey and Brazil (Bozdogan, 2001; Deckker, 2001). The mainstream is no longer devoted, however, exclusively to questions of style and symbolism. Instead landmark studies published in the first decade of the twentieth-century explored space, more often at the scale of the city than individual buildings. Scholars influenced by Stuart Hall and Henri Lefebvre described the way in which struggles over the control and use of specific places within the city captured larger truths about the way in which power was deployed within colonial societies (Hall, 1980; Lefebvre, 1991). And contemporary political events, above all 9/11 and the subsequent invasion of Iraq, brought to the fore the Middle East's considerable modernist heritage, especially when written by scholars prone to challenge the new respectability of empire.

There was an explicit tension at the heart of much of the literature written in the 1980s, which was when colonial architecture in Africa and Asia first became the subject of sustained inquiry. On the one hand, these buildings beguiled because they retained an impressive amount of handcrafted detail. That they were also more obviously exotic in both setting and style than metropolitan examples of similar styles only enhanced their appeal. At the height of postmodernism's challenge to modernism, it looked as if a return to historicist architecture enriched with ornament was inevitable, and yet there was something slightly dull about simply repeating Georgian certainties à la Quinlan Terry. Thus Lutyens's work in New Delhi awakened more admiration than did the details of his only slightly more conventionally classical country houses, while his overtly imperial contributions to the center of London were largely ignored (Irving, 1981). Yet the work of Said and Foucault in particular, suggested that the romantic engagement with style suffused with the haze of nostalgia that characterized the first popular surveys of the subject obscured the often very ugly realities of colonialism and its legacy (Morris, 1983). The attention Said and Foucault focused on the relationship between architecture and power made it difficult to continue to hide power relations, especially when they were expressed spatially, behind the discussion of pretty surfaces. Recent work on Europe pointed as well toward the conclusion that architecture was inherently political (Lane, 1968; Vidler, 1990). The earliest scholarship analyzing the relationship between colonial authority and built form, such as Thomas Metcalf's *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*, focused on stylistic labels and the exterior surfaces of buildings. It made clear that the substitution of the Indo-Saracenic style, in many ways a transposition of the Gothic Revival into Indian conditions, for the classical styles the British had heretofore employed in India was not a sign of respect for indigenous tradition but a shrewd if unsuccessful effort to solidify political power (Metcalf, 1989). More specifically rooted in the particularities of architecture was Mark Crinson's perceptive *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture* (Crinson, 1996). Crinson's discussion of the interface between indigenous and imported ways of building set the stage for the emergence of technology transfer as a key theme in the discussion of nonwestern modernism, although much remains to be done (Cody, 2003).

As the enthusiasm for postmodernism gradually faded at the end of the last century, historians turned their attention from the sixteenth through nineteenth century colonial architecture that served as potential sources for new postmodern buildings to the history of nonwestern modernism. What postmodernists had condemned as homogenous

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