



Desert Temples: Sacred Centers of Rajasthan in Historical, Art-Historical, and Social Contexts

Lawrence A. Babb, John E. Cort, Michael W. Meister

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The essays in this book represent the fruits of an interdisciplinary study of four temples in Rajasthan, India, jointly conducted by Lawrence A. Babb (anthropology), John E. Cort (religious studies), and Michael W. Meister (art history). The temples were chosen because they are quite ancient yet are also vibrantly functioning today. The results of the authors' research dramatically vindicate the idea that when disciplines are combined, the result is greater than the sum of the parts. The book shows that a functioning temple is many things at once. More than a mere physical structure, a temple is a center of economic activity, a focal point for political power, and a confluence of social relationships of every conceivable sort. It is also an object of aesthetic contemplation and judgment. And perhaps above all, a temple is a locus of sacred power that evokes deeply felt responses in those who worship there. *Desert Temples* weaves these many threads together in a volume unique in the extent to which it stresses the holistic approach to the study of India's sacred centers.

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