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Continuity and Transformation in the Technological Traditions of Bengal Terracotta Temple Art

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ABSTRACT

The terracotta temples of Bengal mark a distinct phase in the evolution of early modern Indian architecture, one that represents the fusion of indigenous architectural knowledge, local craftsmanship and technological innovation. While classical Indian temple architecture adhered to canonical principles of iconography and iconometry, the terracotta temples of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Bengal demonstrate a gradual adaptation of these norms to changing social, religious and material contexts. In this paper I discuss the continuity and change of technological traditions in Bengal's terracotta temples through the endurance of architectural knowledge, the role of the hereditary Sutradhar community and the relationship between temple architecture and other visual traditions. The Sutradhars are said to have preserved and transmitted architectural knowledge, incorporating regional artistic practices and elements of Indo-Islamic architecture. The study further highlights the intimate relationship of terracotta ornamentation with other media such as patachitra, wood carving, ritual chariots and Battala prints, pointing towards a common visual and technological culture. The paper concludes that the terracotta temples of Bengal are not a rupture with canonical traditions, but a vernacular creative reinterpretation that negotiated continuity and

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innovation to produce a unique regional architectural language.

Introduction

West Bengal's cultural heritage is characterised by an extraordinary diversity in art forms and terracotta temple architecture is one of the prominent features of the heritage. One of the oldest and most enduring forms of artistic expression in the region, terracotta art is deeply embedded in the vernacular traditions of Bengal and reflects the socio-cultural life of its communities. Clay has been one of the basic artistic materials since prehistoric times. It is abundant, and it is very plastic and easy to manipulate. The easy availability of alluvial clay in Bengal led to the flourishing of a rich terracotta tradition, particularly in rural areas, with local craftsmen using this natural resource to create items for both practical and artistic use. The earliest terracotta craft was mainly utilitarian, consisting of storage jars, cooking vessels, ritual objects and household implements. In these early works, the formal artistic conventions were less important and were more influenced by functional requirements and practical knowledge passed down in hereditary craft traditions. However, as time went on, terracotta slowly developed beyond its utilitarian origins. Artisans began to integrate decorative patterns, symbolic imagery and narrative compositions into their work, turning ordinary objects into vehicles of cultural identity and collective memory. This development of a utilitarian craft into an artistic medium is an important phase in the evolution of Bengal's terracotta tradition. Improvements in clay preparation, modelling, moulding, carving and firing techniques improved the structural durability and aesthetic potential of terracotta objects. Thus, the medium expanded beyond domestic and ritual uses to be an important medium of artistic and architectural expression. This development in technology and art reached its peak in the highly decorated terracotta temples of Bengal with sculptural panels depicting religious tales, social life, mythological subjects and cultural practices of the time. The development of the terracotta tradition in Bengal shows a gradual but profound transformation from a utilitarian craft to a refined vernacular art and architectural ornamentation, reflecting the continuity of indigenous craftsmanship and the creative adaptation of local artistic traditions.

The long-term Muslim political dominance in Bengal witnessed a remarkable chapter in the region's cultural and architectural history with the flourishing of temple construction. The political climate did not deter temple construction, which continued to thrive, especially with the support of regional Hindu rulers and affluent local elites, resulting in a unique architectural style that persisted even into the colonial era. The spread of terracotta temples in the rural areas of Bengal suggests that art was not limited to the royal courts or urban centres but was part of the local communities. The wide geographical and social distribution is due to a democratisation of artistic practice, with temple construction and decoration becoming collective

cultural efforts supported by local patronage, hereditary craftspeople and community involvement instead of exclusive manifestations of royal power. Artistic production has always been a mirror of the evolution of social structures, of cultural values and historical changes. Artistic traditions have always reflected changing human experiences, from the symbolic imagery of prehistoric cave paintings and the religiously inspired art of the mediaeval period to the more secular and realistic expressions of the modern era. Terracotta has a significant place in this larger historical trajectory as one of the earliest and most accessible artistic media. Archaeological evidence from the Indus Valley Civilisation points to the ancient origins of clay-based craftsmanship, which was widely employed in the production of utilitarian and ritual objects for various social classes.

In Bengal the tradition attained its highest artistic expression in the sculptural terracotta plaques that decorate the façades of temples. These plaques can be roughly divided into decorative and narrative types and both are important to the visual and cultural character of temple architecture. The imagery of these plaques is inspired by a wide variety of sources including the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, the Purāṇas, devotional literature, regional folklore and everyday life scenes rather than following a strict iconographic programme. Thus the terracotta panels are not merely architectural embellishments but visual documents of Bengal's social and cultural history, preserving representations of contemporary dress, occupations, rituals, festivals, gender relations, musical practices, warfare and moral values. Bengal's terracotta temple art is therefore an invaluable archive of vernacular life, and provides vital insights into the cultural imagination and lived experiences of early modern Bengali society.

Canonical Knowledge Systems and Temple Technology

The principles of iconography and iconometry formed the very basis of classical Indian temple architecture, operating as the critical technological paradigms governing sacred representation and architectural design. These canonical principles governed not only the visual identity of deities but also site selection, proportional systems, spatial organization and architectural forms, producing a standardised architectural language that influenced temple construction throughout much of the Indian subcontinent. Changes in politics and culture after the twelfth century modified patronage and religious practices but did not obliterate these architectural traditions. Michell (1983) has noted that śāstric knowledge continued to inform temple building in various regions, particularly the Deccan. In a similar vein, the documentation of hereditary palm-leaf architectural manuscripts in Odisha by Nirmal Kumar Basu demonstrates the continued transmission of iconographic and architectural knowledge through written treatises as well as hereditary craft traditions. These manuscripts were passed down in artisan families, and include detailed prescriptions of divine forms,

gestures, attributes and ritual symbolism, highlighting the continuity of a common visual and technological tradition from one generation to the next (Basu & Basu, 2015). Within this broader architectural tradition, the terracotta temples of Bengal are a distinct local variant, not a departure from the classical norm. These temples made of baked brick and terracotta evolved in response to the environmental conditions of the Bengal delta. The absence of stone and the existence of alluvial clay in the Bengal delta encouraged the growth of brick-based architecture (Thakur, 2022; Sarkar, 2022). The malleability of clay was exploited by craftsmen to produce elaborate terracotta reliefs illustrating mythological stories, religious themes, historical episodes and scenes from daily life. These richly ornamented facades turned temple walls into visual archives documenting religious beliefs, social organization and cultural life of pre-modern Bengal (Karmakar, 2021; Santra et al., 2021). The terracotta temples of Kalna are an important example of this local architectural style. Their construction was predominantly funded by zamindars and other elite patrons, who built temples as much for religious merit 'puṇya' as to demonstrate their wealth, social prestige and political power (Sarkar, 2022). Therefore, these temples were also sacred places, artistic accomplishments and representations of patronage. Using inherited architectural principles, locally available materials, regional craftsmanship and developing aesthetic traditions, Bengal's terracotta temples illustrate the dynamic continuity of Indian architectural knowledge in the evolution of a distinctive regional architectural language.

Transformation of Technological Traditions in Bengal

The remarkable development of terracotta temple architecture in Bengal between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries occurred under evolving political, economic, religious and social conditions. It was a significant period in the development of regional temple architecture, when the rigid observance of classical architectural and iconographic canons was gradually replaced by a more flexible and context-sensitive artistic practice. But such a transformation must not be understood as a decline or a retreat of the traditional architectural knowledge. Rather, this is a demonstration of the fluidity of Indian architectural traditions through the reworking of inherited śāstric principles to accommodate regional materials, local patronage, artisanal practices and shifting aesthetic tastes. The theoretical basis for temple construction in the classical Indian temple tradition was iconography (*pratimā-lakṣaṇa*) and iconometry (*tāla-māna*). These principles governed not only the identification and representation of deities but also the choice of sacred sites, proportional systems, spatial planning, architectural typologies, and ritual prescriptions through to the twelfth century or thereabouts. Thus temple architecture was conceived of as a total system in which sculpture, architecture, ritual and cosmology were integrally related according to the prescriptions of the architectural treatises (*śilpaśāstras* and *vāstuśāstras*). The survival of this canonical tradition in regions

like the Deccan until the late mediaeval period indicates the long continuity of such śāstric knowledge systems and not their abrupt disappearance (Michell, 1983). This architectural knowledge has survived, as evident from the finding of palm-leaf architectural manuscripts in Odisha by Nirmal Kumar Basu in the early twentieth century. These manuscripts are preserved within hereditary artisan families as prized family heirlooms. They contain elaborate iconographic instructions concerning divine postures, gestures, attributes, vehicles (vāhanas), measurements, and ritual symbolism. Their continued use suggests that textual knowledge was embedded within vernacular craft traditions that ensured the transmission of a stable visual and symbolic vocabulary across generations outside of elite scholastic institutions (Basu & Basu, 2015).

In one important respect then, the situation in Bengal during the height of terracotta temple building was quite different. By the seventeenth century the rigidity of the canonical prescriptions had become far less rigid. But this development was not a break with earlier traditions, but a gradual transformation of the artistic practice. The builders of the Bengali temples did not simply reproduce the formulae of the śāstras; they adapted the inherited principles selectively to the local circumstances. The resulting artistic language preserved its conceptual relationship with the classical tradition, but allowed more room for artistic freedom in iconography, architectural ornamentation and composition.

While the formal iconometric rules were relaxed, Bengali temple sculpture displays remarkable stylistic continuity with earlier eastern Indian artistic traditions (Ghosh, 2012; Roy, 1998). This continuity was achieved in inherited visual memory, long-established workshop practices, hereditary modes of craftsmanship, and transmission of regional artistic conventions, rather than through literal dependence upon textual prescriptions. Their survival indicates that artistic knowledge was still being transmitted in practice-based learning processes in artisan communities, where technical expertise was learned and taught across generations.

One of the most powerful factors in this continuity was the Sutradhars, the hereditary class of architects, sculptors and builders responsible for the design and decoration of Bengal's temples. They accumulated practical knowledge, technical skills, and knowledge of regional artistic traditions, which allowed them to reinterpret classical architectural ideas in ways that responded to contemporary patronage and local building conditions. The Sutradhars were not simply executors of prescribed forms; they became creative agents whose innovations were to determine the distinctive visual identity of Bengal's terracotta temples (McCutchion, 1972; Michell, 1983). At the same time, Bengal's architectural lexicon expanded through a constant negotiation with Indo-Islamic architectural traditions. In the political environment of the Sultanate of Bengal and later Mughal administration, protracted artistic exchanges between Islamic and Hindu

building practices took place. Thus, elements like multi-foil arches, cusped openings, recessed niches, ornamental surface articulation, geometric motifs, floral arabesques and intricate decorative patterns were gradually added to the vocabulary of temple architecture. These elements were not passively copied but were selectively assimilated into local temple formations, thus enriching the regional architectural idiom and preserving its essentially Hindu spatial and symbolic structure. The result was a special synthesis in which local architectural traditions incorporated outside influences without losing their cultural identity. Equally important is the intermedial relationship of terracotta temple sculpture and other contemporary visual traditions of Bengal. The thematic repertoire, narrative strategies, compositional methods and decorative conventions on temple façades have striking similarities with patas and patachitras, wood carving, ivory carving, wooden and brass ritual chariots (rathas), manuscript illustration and later Battala prints. These correspondences demonstrate that temple decoration was a part of a much larger ecosystem of artisanal production, wherein motifs, iconographic formulas, narrative sequences, and stylistic conventions were freely exchanged between different artistic media (Basu & Basu, 2015; Sanyal, 2015).

This network of shared visual culture is most evident in the close relationship between temple architecture and ritual chariots. Ceremonial *rathas* often emulate the structural types of Pancharatna, Navaratna and other temples, thus converting permanent sacred architecture into portable ritual monuments for annual religious festivals. These architectural parallels indicate the conceptual continuity between sacred space and ritual performance, and demonstrate that architecture was not only perceived as a static structure, but as an active participant in religious practice.

A good example of this relationship can be found in the case of Banakati Rathtala where the brass ceremonial chariot has close architectural and decorative similarities to the Pancharatna temple in the vicinity. Common design principles circulated across different artistic media are suggested by similar ornamental programmes, structural arrangements and sculptural details (Santra, 1998; Ray, 1974). Such examples point to the permeability of the boundaries of art in Bengal's visual culture, and the close integration of religious architecture with ritual objects, community festivals and local devotional practices. Hence, to understand the flourishing of Bengal's terracotta temples, it is crucial to contextualise them in the broader socio-cultural context of regional patronage, hereditary craftsmanship, intercultural exchange, and changing devotional practices. The emergence of this regional style does not mean the decline of canonical architectural traditions, but their successful adaptation to changing historical realities. Although classical śāstric principles continued to provide an underlying conceptual framework, their practical application was increasingly mediated through local artistic conventions and inherited workshop traditions, as well as the creative agency of artisan communities.The terracotta temples of Bengal are therefore neither a repudiation

of classical Indian architecture nor a purely vernacular departure from it. Instead, they represent a fluid process of cultural negotiation whereby inherited architectural knowledge, regional artistic traditions, Indo-Islamic influences and artisanal innovation came together to create a distinctive visual language. This synthesis allowed Bengal's temple architecture to be firmly rooted in the larger Indian architectural tradition but at the same time to express the specific historical, social and cultural identity of the region (Roy, 1999; Michell, 1983).

The Sutradhar Community and the Transmission of Technical Knowledge

The changing temple architecture of Bengal has been closely linked to the contribution of the Sutradhar community, which has transmitted architectural knowledge through apprenticeship and family traditions rather than solely through written treatises. They asserted their collective identity and their respected position in the artisanal hierarchy of Bengal by situating their occupation within a sacred cosmology that traced the lineage of the Sutradhars to Vishwakarma, the divine architect (Basu & Basu, 2015; Ghosh, 2012). Historical evidence from inscriptions, material remains and architectural practices points to the existence of organised hereditary artisan groups involved in temple building from the early historical to the late mediaeval period. Architectural production was based on specialised labour, collaborative workshops and intergenerational transmission of skills (Ray, 1974; Roy, 1998). The Sutradhars were the chief architects, carpenters and sculptors in the temple construction, but they often collaborated with other artisan groups, showing occupational specialisation within an integrated workshop system (Santra, 1998). Temple projects were usually supervised by master craftsmen who would come up with a variety of architectural plans according to the wealth and artistic preferences of the patron, which indicates a negotiated, contractual relationship between patrons and artisans. The repetition of similar stylistic traits and compositional patterns across temples in different areas also points towards the mobility of artisan groups and circulation of common design traditions (Roy, 1999; Basu & Basu, 2015).

The technical knowledge of the Sutradhars allowed them to transfer the canonical architectural ideas to the environmental conditions, available materials and changing artistic preferences of Bengal, ensuring continuity through living craft traditions rather than through strict adherence to textual prescriptions (McCutchion, 1972; Michell, 1983). Their skills ranged from specialised brick making, terracotta panel making, sculptural modelling, kiln firing, and building construction, to decorative planning. Wooden moulds were frequently used for making standardised plaques which were then carved or modelled, and large narrative compositions were built up using modular techniques where long clay panels were segmented before firing and meticulously reassembled within the architectural context (Ghosh, 2012; Ray,

1974; Roy, 1998). These methods show an advanced knowledge of material behaviour, structural coordination and efficient production. The lack of advanced glazing technologies and the limited use of organic surface treatments also suggest reliance on empirical craft knowledge developed over generations (Santra, 1998). The combination of engineering precision and artistic expression found its most refined expression in monuments such as the Pratapeswar Temple where high plinths, elaborate facades and intricately coordinated terracotta ornamentation mark the maturity of Bengal's regional architectural tradition (Choudhuri, 2019; Learning and Creativity, n.d.). The terracotta temples of Bengal collectively stand as lasting proof of the potency of technical innovation, collaborative craftsmanship and cultural continuity, with the Sutradhar community being at the heart of the making of one of the most distinctive traditions in Indian architectural history (Basu & Basu, 2015; Roy, 1999).

Intermedial Exchanges and Technological Networks

The technical processes in the construction of temples and the production of terracottas in Bengal speak of the remarkable material knowledge and engineering skill of its craftsmen. The alluvial clay abundant in the region was naturally suitable for modelling but required careful preparation by adding sand, silt, ash and organic materials to improve plasticity, workability and durability after firing (Basu & Basu, 2015). With this versatile material the artisans developed a range of architectural and sculptural forms, encouraging experimentation and the emergence of a distinctive regional artistic language (Ghosh, 2012). Temple construction demonstrated advanced technical planning, with deep foundations, often nine or ten feet, to support heavy superstructures. The bases were generally built of laterite stone with the upper parts built in brick masonry, which was then finished with lime plaster to create a smooth surface to which terracotta plaques could be attached (Michell, 1983; Santra, 1998). Clay for sculptural work was carefully purified, kneaded and conditioned before being shaped by moulds for repetitive decorative units or modelled by hand for more intricate compositions. The firing methods were similarly elaborate, with terracotta pieces placed in layered kilns containing combustible materials such as rice husk, wood, and dried leaves to allow for uniform heat distribution. The controlled firing at temperatures of c. 900-950oC minimised cracking and warping, revealing a refined empirical understanding of the behaviour of materials acquired through generations of craft practice (Ray, 1974; Roy, 1998).

Bengal's terracotta temples were also part of a wider network of related artistic traditions that facilitated the sharing of motifs, techniques, and aesthetic ideals among different forms of craft. The iconography and decorative programmes of temple ornamentation show close affinities with contemporary patachitra painting, wood carving, brasswork, ritual chariots and Battala prints, thus suggesting that temple art

belonged to an integrated visual culture rather than an isolated architectural tradition (Basu & Basu, 2015; Sanyal, 2015). These intermedial connections allowed for the movement of artistic knowledge between various artisan communities, allowing for ongoing innovation while ensuring stylistic coherence across various media. Thus Bengal's terracotta temples are not only remarkable achievements of architecture and craftsmanship, but also the culmination of a lively local artistic tradition where mastery of material, traditional knowledge and collective imagination came together to create a unique cultural identity.

Temple Architecture and Ritual Chariots: A Case of Technological Continuity

The terracotta temples of Bengal were not only places of worship but also repositories of social, cultural and historical memory. Their elaborately carved terracotta panels depict a wide range of day-to-day activities like agriculture, trade, hunting, music, dance, festivals, war, domestic life and interaction between different social groups, besides episodes from Hindu epics and stories from the Puranas. These images are a link between elite religious ideology and popular culture and are useful for understanding the lived experiences, occupations, customs, dress, and social practices of late mediaeval Bengal that are often missing from contemporaneous textual sources (Ray, 1974; Roy, 1998). Thus, the temple decoration serves as a visual document from which the historians and art historians can reconstruct the socio-economic conditions, cultural ethos and the daily life of the society of Bengal. The intermingling of sacred stories with secular themes also points to the inclusive nature of temple art, where religious devotion was combined with the recording of contemporary life, making temples lasting records of the cultural heritage of the region.

The close relationship of temple architecture and ritual chariots (*rathas*) illustrates the continuity of Bengal's architectural tradition, where the transfer of architectural knowledge is evident across different forms of sacred craftsmanship. The layout and ornamentation of Pancharatna and Navaratna temples are often mirrored in the wooden and brass chariots that are used in ceremonies. Thus, the architectural principles and artisan skills used to construct permanent temples are also applied to the design of mobile ritual structures. A case in point is the brass chariot at Banakati Rathtala, whose architectural layout, ornamental motifs and decorative organisation are very similar to the neighbouring Pancharatna temple, reflecting common workshop practices and interlinked craft traditions (Santra, 1998; Ray, 1974). This correspondence is more than stylistic mimicry; it signifies the exchange of technical knowledge between artisan communities and the flexibility of temple architecture within ritual spaces. The continuity implies the integrated nature of Bengal's sacred landscape, where architecture, ritual performance, craftsmanship and community participation combined to preserve and transmit religious and cultural traditions across generations.

Discussion

The evidence presented in this study argues that terracotta temple architecture of Bengal is best understood not as a break with India's canonical architectural traditions, but rather as an adaptive continuation of them. While many temples are not strictly following the prescriptions of the śāstras, this seeming flexibility is rather a sign of a change in the ways of transmitting architectural knowledge than a decline in technical know-how. Hereditary artisan communities, notably the Sutradhars, maintained and refined architectural principles not only through written treatises but also through apprenticeship, oral instruction, and practical experience. By reworking existing forms to meet the needs of the environment, the materials at hand, and the changing patronage of Bengal, they were able to develop a distinctive regional style without departing from the basic principles of Indian temple architecture. At the same time, contacts with Indo-Islamic architecture brought in new structural elements, decorative vocabularies and construction techniques, which were selectively adopted into existing traditions. The circulation of artistic ideas between temple architecture, ritual chariots (rathas), folk paintings, wood carvings, metalwork and popular print traditions further demonstrates that architectural innovation evolved within an interconnected web of artisanal production. Continuity and innovation were not opposing forces but rather worked in tandem so that Bengal's temple architecture could evolve while its cultural and technological foundations remained intact.

The construction of Bengal's terracotta temples suggests an advanced body of indigenous scientific knowledge, acquired over centuries of empirical observation, experimentation and cumulative craft practice. These artisans had a developed knowledge of the composition of soils, preparation of clays, moisture control, structural stability and thermal behaviour, despite the absence of formal scientific institutions. The subtle modification of alluvial clay by addition of sand, ash, silt or organic matter to improve the plasticity and durability shows a sophisticated knowledge of material properties gained through repeated trials and practical experience (Santra, 1998; Choudhuri, 2019). Likewise, the building of kilns and firing methods required exact control of fuel, air flow, temperature and firing cycles. The temperature was generally maintained between 900-950 degrees centigrade to avoid cracking and to ensure structural integrity. Technical knowledge of this sort was passed on orally and by direct demonstration, emphasising the key importance of learning through practice for the preservation of complex craft traditions. The production process also demanded high cognitive and organisational skills. Moulds, modular plaques and pre-formed bricks required careful planning, sequencing, measurement and spatial coordination. Large sculptural compositions were often composed of a number of separate units which were individually marked, fired separately and then carefully reassembled on the temple walls, demonstrating sophisticated systems of standardisation, collaborative labour and problem-solving. These workshop practices developed not only

manual dexterity but also analytical thinking, visual planning, precision and aesthetic judgement. Thus, Sutradhar workshop was a full-fledged educational institution where technical expertise, intellectual reasoning, artistic creativity and collective knowledge were combined and transmitted across generations, which ensured the long-term continuity and resilience of Bengal's remarkable terracotta architectural tradition (Basu & Basu, 2015).

Conclusion

The study of Bengal's terracotta temples indicates that their architectural and technological traditions developed as a dynamic tension of innovation and continuity rather than a break with classical Indian architectural traditions. While the canonical principles of the *śāstras* continued to provide the conceptual framework for temple planning, iconography and proportion, their implementation was creatively adapted to the geographical environment of Bengal, available materials and changing socio-cultural conditions. This transformation was pivotal in the role of hereditary knowledge preserved by the Sutradhar community. They preserved architectural knowledge through apprenticeship, oral transmission and collective workshop practices, while simultaneously responding to new artistic influences including Indo-Islamic architectural forms and regional visual traditions. The close relationship among the architecture of the temples, ritual chariots, folk painting, wood carving, and other craft traditions further demonstrates that technological and artistic knowledge circulated through multiple media, resulting in a lively, interconnected regional culture of craftsmanship.

The technical achievements found in Bengal's terracotta temples also testify to the remarkable scientific and material knowledge of traditional craftsmen. Their deep knowledge of the properties of alluvial clay, the systematic modification of its composition by natural additives, the building of stable foundations, and the exact regulation of kiln temperatures, are the result of a rich empirical knowledge of the properties of materials accumulated over generations of observation and experimentation. The production process, from the preparation of the clay and the making of the moulds to the construction of the modular panels, their firing and installation, required careful planning, technical precision and collaborative organisation. These processes demonstrate that temple building was not only an art but also a complex technological enterprise based on indigenous systems of knowledge. The workshop tradition was a pedagogical institution that simultaneously transmitted technical expertise, aesthetic judgement and practical problem-solving, thus securing the continuity and slow refinement of architectural practice.

Ultimately, the terracotta temples of Bengal should be read as a lasting testimony to a living tradition of architecture in which canonical knowledge, vernacular craftsmanship, technological ingenuity and regional

creativity were successfully amalgamated. They are not only monuments of religious devotion, they are also storehouses of indigenous scientific knowledge, artistic excellence and collective cultural memory. Their rich architectural vocabulary and technical sophistication negate the notion that pre-modern craftsmanship was merely repetitive or derivative, instead pointing to a tradition of adaptation, experimentation and innovation. Bengal's terracotta temples thus occupy a unique place in the history of architecture in South Asia, providing important insights into the multifaceted relations between technology, material culture, artisan communities, and the changing processes through which architectural knowledge was preserved, altered, and transmitted across generations.

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