

# Word, Image, Performance: The World of Artists in Early Mediaeval Western Deccan

This article bears on the artists and their practices at the early mediaeval temple complexes at Bādāmi, Aihōḷe, and Paṭṭadakal in the Western Deccan. It seeks to understand the roles of architects, sculptors, composers, performers, preceptors, and patrons as revealed in the voices and works of the artists themselves, which is often quite different from the way normative texts present these. The emphasis is on the experiential workspace: How did artists perceive themselves and their contributions? What clues have they left behind about their identities, aspirations, creative environment, working methods, and motivations for artistic expression? How were they organised in relation to each other and their patrons? This essay also bridges imagined boundaries between visual and performance art histories by exploring inter-relationships between the two in the early mediaeval Deccan to establish the importance of an approach wherein interpretations of static monuments are peopled by exploring artistic agency.

*Keywords:* artists; architects; performers; temples; early mediaeval Deccan; western Cālukyas; Bādāmi; Aihōḷe; Paṭṭadakal.