

George Michell

George Michell is a world authority on South Asian architecture, and amongst the most distinguished architectural scholars produced by the University of Melbourne. He was born in Australia and received a Bachelor of Architecture degree from this university in 1968. He then turned his attention to India and obtained his PhD in 1974 from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for his dissertation on Early Chalukya temple architecture. In 1976 he played a pivotal role in the 'Arts of Islam' exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London. During the 1970s he directed courses on Asian architecture at the Architectural Association, London, as well as co-editing *Art and Archaeology Research Papers (AARP)*, a journal specialising in architecture and art of the Islamic and Indian worlds. In 1978 he edited *Architecture of the Islamic World: its History and Social Meaning* (republished in 1995).

Michell's personal research has mainly concentrated on the Deccan, Bengal, Gujarat, and more recently Southern India. The projects have varied from surveys of town planning and Islamic buildings to detailed studies of temple architecture and sculpture. With Dr John Fritz he forged a fertile relationship with the Archaeology Department of the Government of Karnataka, and for more than twenty years in the 1980s and 1990s they co-directed a reconnaissance of the medieval Hindu ruins of Hampi-Vijayanagara, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This project attracted numerous volunteer architecture and archaeology students and young professionals, including a number from Melbourne. His research has been supported by grants from the British Academy, London, the JDR3rd Fund, New York, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Smithsonian Institution, Washington.

In 1988-89 he was visiting Rockefeller Research Fellow at the Arthur M Sackler Gallery of Asian Art in Washington. He has lectured at universities and museums throughout the USA, Europe, India and Australia. He has also acted as a guest curator for *In the Image of Man: 5,000 Years of Indian Art*, Hayward Gallery, London, 1982, and *Living Wood: Sculptural Traditions of Southern India*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1992. He received the Nadoja award (Honorary Doctor of Letters), from Kannada University, Hampi, Karnataka, in 1999.

Michell's many publications include *Brick Temples of Bengal; Where Kings and Gods Meet*; *The Penguin Guide to the Monuments of India*, volume 1; *City of Victory - Vijayanagara*; *The Vijayanagara Courtly Style*; *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture - South India - Dravidadesa*; *Palaces of Rajasthan*; *Elephanta*; and *Kashgar - Oasis City on China's Old Silk Road*. Many of his fifty or so books and major exhibition catalogues are the result of collaborations with other eminent scholars from India, the USA, Europe and Australia. This collaborative skill was noted by Dr Burton Stein, the celebrated American historian of South Asia, in his preface to *The Royal Centre at Vijayanagara Preliminary Report* of 1984. Michell continues to inspire scholars from India and elsewhere in publishing within his areas of archaeological and architectural research.

Although based principally in London, Michell has maintained his links with this University. In 1984 he and his colleague Dr John Fritz were Eleanor Edna Norris Research Fellows in the Faculty of Architecture, and the outcome of this was the first report on the royal centre at Vijayanagara. He has been for many years a professorial fellow of the Faculty, has frequently lectured in Melbourne. A number of Melbournians have joined his work in India as volunteers. In 2009 he again lectured in Melbourne in connection with the exhibition 'Ancient Hampi: the Hindu Kingdom Brought to Life', mounted at the Immigration Museum in Flinders Street, having previously toured in

Singapore, Shanghai and Europe. His overall contribution has been erudite and specialised, but at the same time he has drawn students and the public into his research activities, and he has maintained a fruitful relationship with this university throughout his career.