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978-0-521-25484-7 - A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives

Richard M. Eaton

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## A Social History of the Deccan, 1300–1761

In this fascinating study, Richard Eaton recounts the history of southern India's Deccan plateau from the early fourteenth century to the rise of European colonialism in the eighteenth. He does so, vividly, by narrating the lives of eight Indians who lived at different times during this period, and whose careers illustrate particular social processes of the region's history. In the first chapter, for example, the author recounts the tragic life of maharaja Pratapa Rudra in order to describe the demise of regional kingdoms and the rise of interregional sultanates. In the second, the life of a Sufi shaikh is used to explore the intersection of Muslim piety, holy-man charisma, and state authority. The book's other characters include a long-distance merchant, a general, a slave, a poet, a bandit, and a female commander-regent.

Woven together into a rich narrative tapestry, the stories of these eight figures shed light not only on important social processes of the Deccan plateau across four centuries, but also on the complex relations between peoples and states of north India and those to the south of the Narmada River. This study of one of the least understood parts of South Asia is a long-awaited and much-needed book by one of the most highly regarded scholars in the field.

RICHARD M. EATON is one of the premier scholars of precolonial India. His many publications include *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760* (1993), *India's Islamic Traditions, 711–1750* (2003) and *Temple Desecration and Muslim States in Medieval India* (2004).

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RICHARD M. EATON

*University of Arizona*



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*For my sister and brother-in-law*

BETH AND ROSCOE SWARTZ

*Celebrating fifty years of marriage*

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Most of the volume's color illustrations were made from photographs I took while touring the Deccan in June and July 2001. Despite the trip's several mishaps,<sup>1</sup> that monsoon journey was immeasurably enriched by the generosity of the many knowledgeable colleagues I was fortunate to meet along the way. I wish to thank Anne Feldhaus for going many miles out of her own way to take the photographs for Plates 4 and 5. For permission to reproduce the other illustrations in this volume, I wish to thank the Victoria and Albert Museum (London), the Chester Beatty Library (Dublin), and the American Council for Southern Asian Art (Ann Arbor). Finally, I thank Lois Kain for preparing the volume's six maps.

<sup>1</sup> These include dropping my camera in the Arabian Sea at Janjira, getting suspended mid-air in Raigarh's cable car because of a power outage, and being stranded in Bidar owing to lack of funds.