



Kantaji Temple
HerStory Foundation
Sayeef Mahmud



 The Asia Foundation



Mira was excited to tell Nahian about her weekend. "You won't believe it! Baba, Ma and I went to Dinajpur and visited Kantaji temple. It is a temple made of burnt earth with pictures from floor to ceiling. The temple is like a picture book you can read!"

"A building like a book? That's like something from the future!" said Nahian.

"It's actually from a very long time ago. The temple is close to 300 years old," replied Mira,

very matter of factly.



"You see Nahian, the Kantaji temple was built three hundred years ago for the Hindu God of Love, Krishna."

"Ooooo! The God of Love!" Nahian teased Mira.

"Silly Nahian! There are many stories about Krishna. He was a prince and a great warrior. The Maharaja of Dinajpur wanted to tell the stories on the temple walls using terracotta tiles! Every inch of the three storied temple is

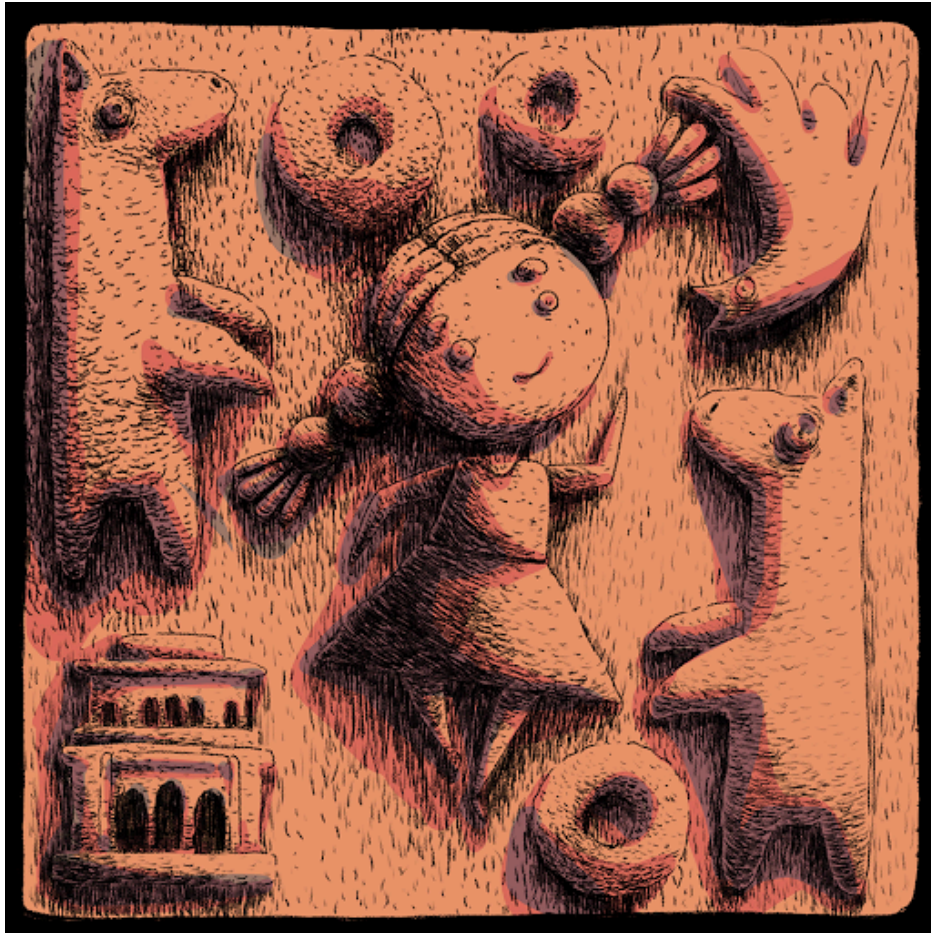
covered with images. There are also stories of princes, queens, beasts, ogres and angels.”



"The crafts people would mold each tile by hand from soft clay and then burn it in a kiln to make it hard. The potters of Bengal were famous for this terracotta style."

"Why did they not just carve the figures out of rocks?" asked Nahian.

"Since we live in a delta, there are hardly any rocks, so terracotta became a popular building material."



"The terracotta artists mixed legends with the news of the time to create stories that had everything from dance parties to dragons. Not everyone could read in those days, so temples became like big graphic novels that anyone could understand and learn from," said Mira.

"That's fantastic! Even our friend Sara from China can read the temple stories!" Nahian was excited.



"There were once nine spires on top of the temple, but they were destroyed in an earthquake," continued Mira, "Today, the temple is a heritage site and people are very careful to protect it and make sure that the stories live on forever."

"Mira, I learned so much from this. I think I want to be an archaeologist and learn to read buildings and understand how people lived a long time ago," Nahian said.

“That’s a great idea! And I will be an architect and learn about the past to build a better future! We are a dream team!” replied Mira.



Note

The Kantaji Temple, or Kantanagar Temple, is a Hindu temple located in the northwestern part of Bangladesh. It is one of the finest examples of terracotta architecture and storytelling.

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Original Story

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