traditions as the volume's central feature – regrettably without substantiating this claim by comparing the epigraphic tradition and practices in Islamicate societies with those in other historical contexts. Especially in light of the fascinating case studies that follow it would have been helpful either to develop a more focused overarching conceptualization for the volume as a whole or to highlight those numerous argumentative and methodological strands shared by various articles in the volume.

One broader trend that the volume does show very convincingly is how far the field of studying inscriptions in Arabic script has come in terms of bringing text-driven philological approaches and object-driven art-historical approaches into conversation. For too long inscriptions have been dealt with as "deboned" texts (to take Tamer el-Leithy's term) as has been done with manuscripts – texts that were separated from their material context and that were transmediated to print or digital editions. In contrast, the case studies in this volume beautifully show how text and materiality can be masterfully combined to trace local peculiarities and individual idiosyncrasies, but also long-term developments and trans-regional exchanges. This volume is overall a pleasure to read and is highly recommended for students of epigraphy and Islamicate history in general.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X23000927

Ankur Barua: *Exploring Hindu Philosophy*

(Series in Global Philosophy.) Sheffield, UK and Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2023. ISBN 978 1 80050 269 7.

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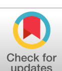
Hinduism is tremendously varied in its internal diversity, because the term refers to a host of traditions that developed and found practice across the Indian subcontinent and over the course of more than two millennia. To specify an array of materials to be studied under the broad title of "Hindu Philosophy", and in a manner sufficiently narrow that it can fit into a short introductory book, is therefore no simple matter. Nevertheless, Ankur Barua, in this elegant volume of deceptively simple presentation, represents Hindu thought in a manner that sympathetically covers the subject with admirable range and yet is ideally suited for students.

Barua begins with a simple but significant proposition: to "… convey one key point to you [the reader]: while the patterns of arguments and counterarguments in Hindu styles of reasoning occasionally become quite rarefied, such patterns do 'touch base' with some of our basic experiences, ideas, and thoughts" (p. ix). This "key point" in turn suggests that Barua will engage fully his double experience, which was nurtured in two intellectual contexts: a department of philosophy and a faculty of divinity (p. x). He is interested in the analytical sophistication of Indian philosophy, but only while also remaining sensitive to its religious dimension, to the capacity for careful thought to further what Hindu thought can offer to a "philosophy of life" (p. 5). There can be no denying, as Barua

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X23000915 Published online by Cambridge University Press



himself indicates (pp. 3–7; *passim*), that such an approach will invite the view that "Hindu philosophy" is much the former at the cost of the rigour of the latter. So much is folly, however, as Barua rightly suggests, for Hindu thought demands a widened view of philosophy rather than a reflexive ghettoization of the same to a particular category of religion for its supposed lack of precision or objectivity. Thus this book, which "may initially seem to be a parochial inquiry into *Hindu* philosophy", can be "repositioned as a critical contribution to contemporary conversations about the concept of *philosophy* across European and Indian intellectual landscapes" (p. 3).

Scholars who have read deeply in Indian philosophical traditions will find Barua's "explorations" to be only slightly idiosyncratic, deeply coherent, and admirably ranging across many of the views of most of the major Brahminical traditions of analytic reflection of India's premodernity. A heavy dose of the realist Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools does much to shape the initial chapters of the book, with a slight emphasis on forms of Vedāntic speculation emerging more prominently in the later chapters. I was happy also to see mention in several places of some of the "sectarian" traditions, for example the Śaiva Siddhānta (pp. 70–71) and the non-dual Śaiva traditions occasionally referred to under the moniker of "Kashmiri Shaivism" (pp. 118–9), for these and similar philosophical schools have often been left out of published surveys of Indian thought.

Barua offers no comprehensive survey of Hindu Philosophy, however, and this is a strength of the book. For he instead endeavours substantially to explore a particular pattern of questions – human questions begging philosophical enquiry – which as I understand them are arranged as follows. First, chapter 1 (pp. 21–46) examines the nature of the world of phenomena (the *prameya*s) with a principal eye on the categories of existents (*padārtha*s) primarily as articulated in Praśastapāda's *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha*, while chapter 2 (pp. 47–71) reflects on the means of knowing the same (the *pramāṇa*s). Having thus examined what the world might be and how we might know it to be thus, Barua turns in chapter 3 (pp. 73–97) to "Therapies for liberation", in other words to what it is that one can *do* given one's place in the world. Here, he explores Hindu views of the nature of the divine, ranging from a ubiquitous Brahman to a rather more monadic Īśvara. Chapter 4 (pp. 99–124) then considers how the world of finite entities may hook up with an infinite and transcendent divine, suggesting not only a host of philosophical problems in fashioning such a connection but paving the way too for an understanding of one's condition of living in the world given what can transcend it. Finally, chapter 5 (pp. 125–49) considers various models of morality in light of the theological and philosophical concerns established in the previous chapters. The conclusion (pp. 151–63) ties together these interlaced concerns by examining "… (1) the relation between descriptive accounts and revisionary accounts of what exists, (2) the role of cognition in revealing or constructing the world, and (3) the relation between philosophy and emancipation" (p. 154), though one feels Barua offers a slight repetition in the conclusion of his discussion of Hindu views of perception, examined already in chapter 2.

The strength of the book lies with Barua's deftness of philosophical analysis. He moves seamlessly between and across various philosophical concerns, representing accurately, clearly, and without oversimplification the subtly different positions of a host of schools as they address a range of related concerns such as the nature of language, the functioning of perception, the proper order of logic and inferential reasoning, the nature of objective reality, and questions of ethics and morality. That Hindu philosophers set these matters in relation to soteriological concerns is properly explained and justified, illustrating that subtle philosophical argument can emerge even in the context of thinking done by philosophers who simultaneously hold deep theological commitments. One does miss from these pages the presence of the philosophical positions of Hindu philosophy's principal opponents, the Buddhists with whom Hindu philosophers perennially argued, though

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given the scope and size of this book, Barua's focus on Hindu schools is readily justified. Another concern is that using this book for teaching will require one to help students historically to order the various thinkers and schools that Barua examines. So much may be managed without too much difficulty, however, and those who take this book to the classroom are likely to find that Barua's thoughtful engagement with Hindu philosophical ideas will enrich, deepen, and enliven their discussion – and both their students' and their own appreciation – of Hindu philosophy.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X23000915

Albert Welter: *A Tale of Two Stūpas: Diverging Paths in the Revival of Buddhism in Hangzhou China*

viii, 228 pp. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022. ISBN 978 0 19 760663 6.

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For the past three decades Albert Welter has been publishing well-wrought monographs exploring the Buddhism of the early Song dynasty, with a predominant focus on the publications of monks working in the region of Hangzhou, an important regional capital of the tenth century that was to become the capital of the Southern Song state during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and a city made famous in Europe too from the late thirteenth century thanks to its celebrated visitor, the Venetian Marco Polo. So rich are the sources on this region that the Italian and his travel account pass entirely without mention, though the works of one visiting Japanese Buddhist, Eisai 栄西 (1141–1215), are drawn upon to emphasize the way in which Hangzhou had constituted itself as a central religious magnet, drawing pilgrims through its carefully constructed sanctity from across the entire East Asian Buddhist world. As a one-time student of the outstanding contemporary bibliographer and researcher into the Chinese roots of Zen, Ishii Shūdō 石井修道, Albert Welter makes full use of the surviving texts of the tradition, but in the first instance the focus here as indicated in the title is on the material culture made manifest in the built environment of the era, and of the fate of that material culture today. Even so, he demonstrates how textuality is intimately involved in the creation of the structures that he describes.

Thus, it is impossible to dissociate the history of the Yongming Stūpa 永明塔, the subject of his first substantive chapter, from the written hagiography of the founding father of Hangzhou Buddhism in the Song, the Chan master Yanshou 延壽 (904–975). The thriving cult of his relics as promoted under the Ming even, it is argued, induced the successors of the pioneering Catholic missionary Matteo Ricci to condone a similar cult of their own (pp. 56–7). The relics are gone, and the stupa was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (though no mention is made of what happened under the Taiping rebel occupation in the 1860s), but a modern cult now based around a statue of Yanshou is documented here in a new setting, with photographs dating to 2016 and 2018. Even

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