

These problems aside, this book is a valuable contribution to the field of early Buddhist meditation studies, and should open up many avenues of debate for those invested in understanding the complex world of early Buddhist practice.

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SUSAN VERMA MISHRA and HIMANSHU PRABHA RAY:

The Archaeology of Sacred Spaces: The Temple in Western India, 2nd century BCE–8th century CE.

(Archaeology and Religion in South Asia.) 283 pp. Abingdon: Routledge, 2017. ISBN 978 1 138 67920 7.

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The western Indian state of Gujarat has a distinctive history with a strong Jain presence (p. 184), an important role in literature such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Skanda Purana* (p. 199) and a long coastline that has provided a strong maritime influence. Yet studies of the region's history have often "served as a mere adjunct to those in the rest of the country" (p. 161). Ray's work in other regions of India has broken down unilinear, pan-South Asian models (e.g. H.P. Ray, *Monastery and Guild*, Delhi, 1986) and this volume traces the trajectory of Gujarat's religious development on its own terms. The book aims to map the temporal and chronological development of the Hindu, Jain and Buddhist religions from the second century BCE to eighth century CE. The volume and diversity of historical, archaeological and art-historical material summarized by Ray and Mishra is admirable. The first chapter outlines monumental religious remains, the second archaeological and other evidence of settlement, and the third, sculptures. These chapters summarize previous scholarship and will prove invaluable to anyone studying the history of Gujarat, particularly due to the inclusion of scholarly resources such as tables of sculptures (pp. 114–24).

Unfortunately, the utility of the opening chapters is affected by significant shortcomings in the presentation of data. The discussion of rock-cut caves on pp. 24–35 will serve as an example of these inaccuracies. The Bahrot caves are not located in Saurashtra but close to Sanjan in South Gujarat (p. 24) and have possibly been confused with another group of caves at Ranpar in the north-eastern foothills of the Barda hills. The caves in Nakhtrana taluka (Desalpar near Gunthli) are located in Kachchh, not South Gujarat (p. 34, personal communication with Ken Ishikawa). Caves at Barda and Bawa Pyara in the Barda hills at Ghumli (Ranpar) and at Bawa Pyara (Junagadh) are dated to the Mauryan period on the basis of scholarship from the 1960s and 70s and this unexpected date requires justification (p. 24). On occasion, the tone of the book is questionable, and it could have been edited more closely. For example, conclusions regarding the long-term history of trade at Shamlaji drawn from a "booklet available at the site" (p. 88); and the postulation that Arabs were responsible for the decline of the importance of Valabhi as a sacred site without date, citation or any corroborating evidence (p. 178). Finally, the use of maps is unsatisfactory: several more maps should have been included with a depiction of the division of Gujarat into three geographical areas particularly required. Those maps that are included are missing information and on occasion use several symbols to represent

the same place, leaving the reader unsure of the true location (p. 142). In fairness, such deficiencies in mapping are a common occurrence in academic publishing.

At times, methodological shortcomings render the interpretation of evidence inadequate to fulfil the book's aims. One example is the under use of working definitions for terms and concepts. At the heart of the book's interpretive framework lies the spatial and temporal division of a large body of data. Yet the division of Gujarat's history into three geographical areas and three time periods lacks justification, and the dividing criteria remain unknown. Are these divisions arbitrary or based on patterns in the data? Similarly, the concept of sacred space is not adequately defined, and although concepts such as demarcation and creation are mentioned, the reader is left unable to understand the authors' use of this nebulous concept. For example, the discussion of movement and perception in relation to the Ashokan edict at Junagadh is insightful, but how does this edict constitute the "demarcation of sacred space by royalty" (p. 26)? Is sacred space solely religious? Does perception, activity or architecture demarcate sacred space? Of course, all of these concepts are relevant, but a working definition would be useful to place the book's arguments about religious development on a firm footing. When a definition is provided, long after the chapter presenting archaeological evidence of sacred spaces across Gujarat (p. 102), it is too vague to be applied to the data presented.

Archaeological data is underused in historical interpretations of this period and the authors should be commended for getting to grips with the intricacies of this large body of scholarship. However, their arguments would benefit from a little more critical engagement with the evidence. The chapter on settlement aims to define sites on the basis of economic activities (p. 59). Whilst this approach is interesting and can offer insights, its limitations should be acknowledged. The site definitions are reductive, reliant on the projection of modern activities on to the past (p. 64) or the assumption that excavating a small area of a site can define its entire function (p. 73). Archaeological dates are accepted at face value too often, without considering the publication's age, methodology or level of precision (e.g. p. 28). Such considerations are particularly important as comparative chronology lies at the heart of the book's conclusions.

Chapter 4 compares religious activity at individual sites and across regions of Gujarat through time and makes an admirable attempt to identify nuanced trajectories of development and avoid unsubstantiated generalization. The categories chosen to compare religious activity at individual sites are excellent: multiple affiliation, religious abandonment and survival being three examples. Whether the mixture of sculptures, epigraphy, literary sources and archaeology can support such a finely-honed comparative framework is debatable and the problems and uncertainty inherent in the approach could have been addressed. In particular, some acknowledgement of the difficulty of using archaeology to determine when or if occupation of a site by a particular religious group ceased is warranted (p. 174).

Attempts to engage with broader historical arguments are slightly tarnished by these chronological frailties. An excellent historiographical outline of the relationship between Puranic Hinduism and tribal integration ends with the interesting argument that: "rather than creating new centres of pilgrimage or temples, the brahmanas, with the aid of the puranas, recognised and accepted the importance of certain sites" (p. 197).

Yet earlier critical engagement with site chronologies and function, or even a restatement of the chronological evidence here, would make the argument that brahmana interest focused on pre-existing sites more convincing. Other interesting conclusions such as the "continuity of the Vedic rights and rituals" (p. 225) well into the first millennium also rest on chronology and would benefit from greater

methodological engagement. Despite these shortcomings, the book's approach and ambition deserve praise: the use of archaeological evidence to interrogate historical narratives in specific contexts offers a promising avenue for understanding the transition from early historic to medieval South Asia.

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ROBERT ELGOOD:

Rajput Arms and Armour: The Rathores and Their Armoury at Jodhpur Fort.

2 volumes. 1,024 pp. New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2017. £200.

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The author of these magnificently produced volumes has already established himself as an indefatigable cataloguer and interpreter of Rajput armoury, as may be judged from his previous survey of the Jaipur royal collection (reviewed in *BSOAS* 79/2, 442–3). On this occasion Elgood turns his attention to the arms and armour in the Mehrangarh Museum. While the sheer size and weight of these volumes precludes their use as a practical guide for visitors to Jodhpur Fort, they testify to the author's long-standing fascination with Rajput military history. Furthermore they demonstrate his intimate knowledge of the functions, manufacturing techniques and decorative designs of some 393 weapons in what must be one of the most comprehensive assemblages of arms in India.

In his opening chapter Elgood situates the Jodhpur collection within the broad context of Rajput history and martial culture, in particular that of the Mewar kingdom. The author explains the role of weapons in the courtly rituals of the Rathores, as well as in the religious rituals and festivals of the region. He points out the courage of the Mewar soldiers, who would rather have died in battle than surrender their arms. The following chapters outline the practice of commissioning and buying arms to equip the army, even though some were reserved for ceremonial use by the maharaja. Elgood notes that steel blades in India were highly valued, and not until the eighteenth century did they come to be embellished with gold and silver inlays, a technique known as damascening. From here Elgood reviews the production of arms and martial costumes under the Rajputs, the Mughals and Sikhs, drawing on contemporary historical sources, including reports by European military officers. He continues with a discussion of arms collecting, which became popular at Indian courts in the nineteenth century, including those in Rajasthan, before concluding with the inventory records of the Jodhpur silekhana (armoury).

From these general considerations Elgood proceeds to a typological catalogue of swords, distinguishing the different categories of khandas, talwars, teghs, bughdas and kirichs, as well as Persian shamsir blades, and even swords with European or European-type blades, known accordingly as firangis, some engraved with the names of their foreign manufacturers. Analysing the blades and hilts of individual weapons, the author identifies those of Mughal origin, several of which are portrayed in contemporary miniatures. While the earliest swords in Jodhpur date back to the beginning of the seventeenth century, a larger number are assigned to the reigns of Maharaja Ajit Singh, Abhay Singh and Bakht Singh in the following