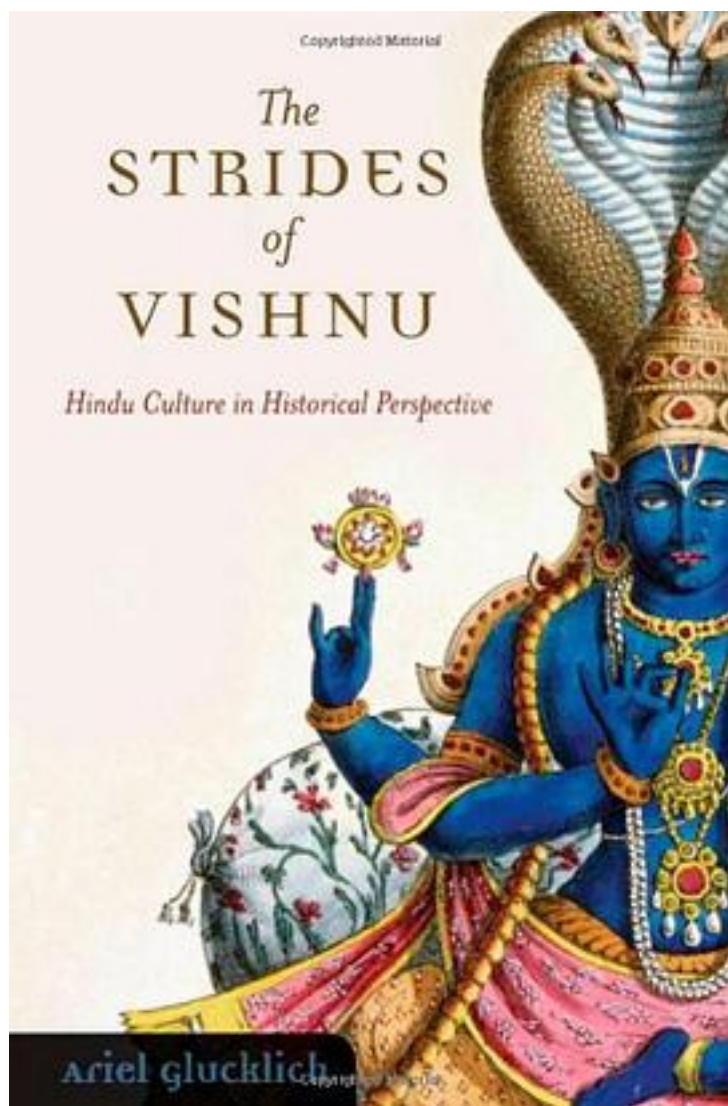


The Strides of Vishnu



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Most books about Hinduism begin by noting the immense size and complexity of the subject. Hinduism is vast and diverse, they say. Or it doesn't exist at all - Hinduism is merely a convenient (and foreign) term that masks a plurality of traditions. In either case, readers are discouraged by the sense that they are getting only a tiny sample or a shallow overview of something huge and impossible to understand. This book is designed to be accessible and comprehensive in a way that other introductions are not, maintaining an appealing narrative and holding the reader's interest in the unfolding sequence of ideas through time and place. Each of the 13 chapters combines historical material with key religious and philosophical ideas, supported by substantial quotations from scriptures and other texts. The overarching organizational principle is a historical narrative largely grounded in archaeological information. Historic places and persons are fleshed out as actors in a narrative about the relation of the sacred to ordinary existence as it is mediated through arts, sciences, rituals, and philosophical ideas. Although many books purport to introduce the Hindu tradition, this is the only one with a broad historical focus that emphasizes archaeological as well as textual evidence. It will nicely complement Vasuda Narayanan's forthcoming introduction, which takes the opposite approach of focusing on the lived experience of Hindu believers.

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