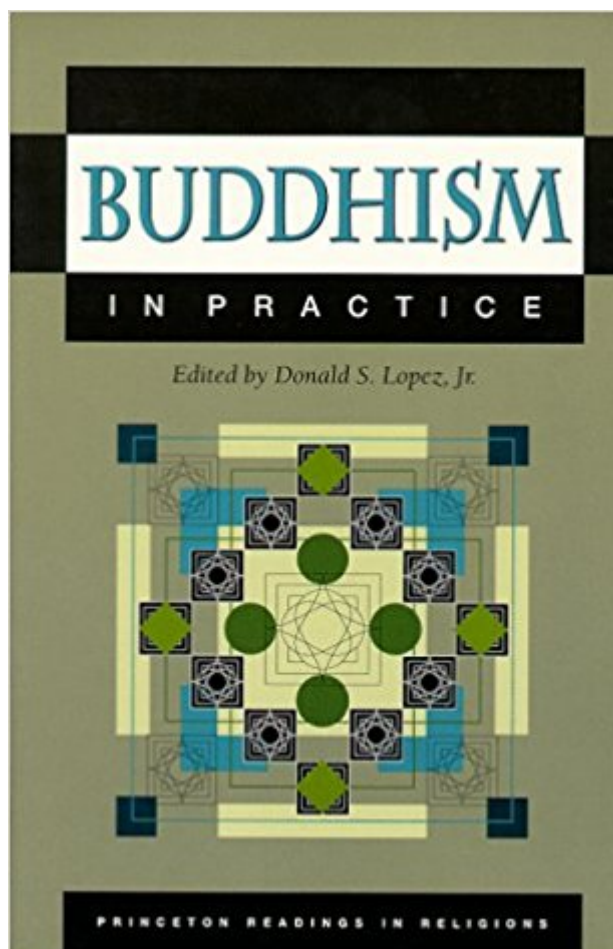


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Buddhism In Practice



Synopsis

This anthology illustrates the vast scope of Buddhist practice in Asia, past and present, by presenting a selection of forty-eight translated texts including hagiographies, monastic rules, pilgrimage songs, apocryphal sutras, and didactic tales from India, China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Burma. Most of these pieces have never before been translated into a Western language, and each is preceded by a substantial introduction by its translator. Together they are designed to do nothing less than reshape the way in which Buddhism is understood. These unusual sources provide the reader with a sense of the remarkable diversity of the practices of persons who over the course of 2,500 years have been identified, by themselves or by others, as Buddhists. In this rich variety there are often contradictions, such that the practices of one Buddhist community might seem strange or unfamiliar to another. At the same time, however, there is evidence here of many continuities among the practices of Buddhist cultures widely separated by both history and topography. From "A Hymn of Praise to the Buddha's Good Qualities" through "On Becoming a Buddhist Wizard" to "Death-Bed Testimonials of the Pure Land Faithful," the selections here are an ideal introduction to Buddhism and a source of new insights for scholars.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Buddhism in Practice . . . constitute[s] a benchmark of where Buddhist studies has been, and where it is going. By endeavoring to break the circularity of the knowledge process, by which we

recognize as 'Buddhist' only what we already think of as Buddhist, Lopez has opened a new course for a self-reflexive Buddhology."--The Journal of Asian Studies

"These selections consistently reveal new vistas on the Buddhist landscape or illuminate old views from new angles."--John S. Strong, Bates College

This book came right on time, and arrived in perfect condition. It was one of the requirements for a class on Buddhism, and for those purposes it was great, but for someone simply wanting to read a book on Buddhism I would recommend one of Lopez's other works on the subject.

For those who are curious about the difference between the original (1995, 1998) and abridged (2007) versions, the following chapters are omitted from the latter (page numbers in brackets):

Buddha: 8. The Whole Universe as a Sutra by Luis O. Gomez (107-112) 10. The Great Bliss Queen by Anne C. Klein (139-150) 11. Story of Simhala, the Caravan Leader by Todd T. Lewis (151-169) Dharma: 14. A Mahayana Liturgy by Luis O. Gomez (183-196) 17. Buddhism and the State in Early Japan by William E. Deal (216-227) 19. The Matsumoto Debate by George J. Tanabe, Jr. (241-248) 22. A Heretical Chinese Buddhist Text by Jamie Hubbard (272-283) 29. A Summary of the Seven Books of the Abhidhamma by Donald K. Swearer (336-342) 32. Āryadeva and Candrakīrti on Self and Selfishness by Karen Lang (380-398) 34. Saramati's Entering into the Great Vehicle by Ronald M. Davidson (402-411) Sangha: 41. The Chinese Life of Nāgārjuna by Roger Corless (525-531) 45. The Illustrated Biography of Ippen by Dennis Hirota (563-577) 46. Account of the Buddhist Thaumaturge Baozhi by Alan J. Berkowitz (578-585)

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This book lives up to its title in that it is an excellent introduction to the ways Buddhism is actually practiced. However, readers looking for an introduction to Buddhist philosophy should start somewhere else. Lopez seems to take for granted that readers know about the basic precepts of Buddhism, and spends his time in this book expounding on how different sects put those precepts

into practice. If someone reads this before developing a familiarity with the beautiful philosophical side of Buddhism, he or she runs the risk of coming away disillusioned and thinking that Buddhism is too steeped in religiosity and obsession with ritual to have much philosophical merit.

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