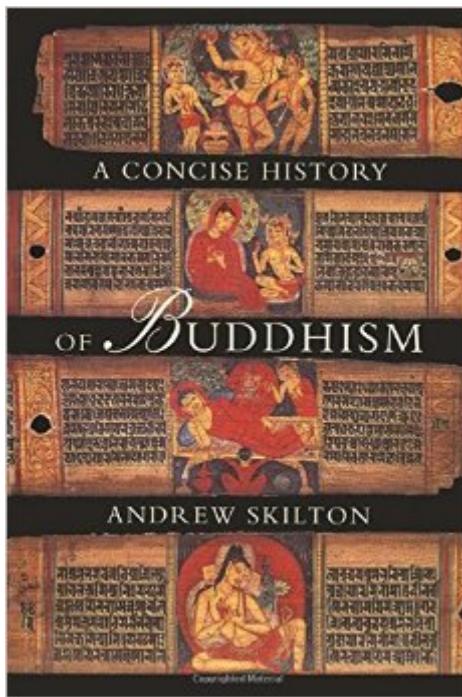


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A Concise History Of Buddhism



Synopsis

An ideal introduction to the history of Buddhism. Andrew Skilton - a writer on and practitioner of Buddhism - explains the development of the basic concepts of Buddhism during its 2,500 years of history and describes its varied developments in India, Buddhism's homeland, as well as its spread across Asia, from Mongolia to Sri Lanka and from Japan to the Middle East. A fascinating insight into the historical progress of one of the world's great religions."..an excellent synopsis of current scholarship..." Alan Sponberg, Professor of Asian Philosophy and Religion, University of Montana

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Customer Reviews

Although Buddhism has only recently begun to enter Western popular consciousness, its founder, Siddhartha Gautama, lived nearly five hundred years before Christ, and the religion has a rich and complex history in Asia spanning from that time up to the present. Like any religion that is living, yet ancient, Buddhism through the centuries has displayed certain continuities as well as what author Andrew Skilton calls a "bewildering diversity." On the highest level, Skilton's "A Concise History of Buddhism" divides this diversity into two parts: Buddhism within India and beyond it. The bulk of the main text is devoted to the first part, which makes some sense, as India was the birthplace of Buddhism as well as the site of many of its later major developments. The first several chapters include an extremely brief sketch of Indian religion before the Buddha, then the story of the Buddha's life, and a description of some of his main teachings (such as the Four Noble Truths). The

trouble with these early chapters is that they are not written in a manner that will be inviting to readers who have never studied Buddhism, yet they are likely to be too basic for intermediate students. Skilton clearly needs these chapters to establish the base on which the rest of Buddhist history will build, but he never fully integrates the bare-bones philosophical outline with what follows. The book gains strength as it begins to explore Buddhism after the Buddha. It surveys the development of the early sangha (Buddhist community) and discusses the increasingly vast array of sects, sub-sects, and schools of thought, as well as the major texts they prized. It continues through the emergence of the Mahayana schools, up to "the end of Buddhism in India" around the 13th century.

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