



Buddhism

Malcolm David Eckel

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Founded on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, the faith taught by Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha, or Awakened One) spread rapidly across Asia and then across the globe, becoming one of the world's largest and most influential religions. *Buddhism* combines lavish colorful photography and an authoritative text to provide a sweeping survey of this rich and varied religious tradition.

Eckel begins with an engaging portrait of the Buddha (who predated Jesus by 500 years), an Indian prince's son who embarked on an epic journey of enlightenment and discovered a way of overcoming suffering. The authors trace the flowering of Buddhist schools in his wake, from the major groups (Mahayana, Theravada, Tantric) to the minor (such as the Pure Land sect in Japan). With helpful sidebars, boxed features, and numerous illustrations, they explain Tantric Mandalas (sacred circles), the Sutras (holy writings), the sacred landscape, celestial beings in some Buddhist mythology, the path to Nirvana, and much more. They also discuss Buddhist temples, forms of worship and meditation, the cycle of rebirth, and roles and relationships in the Buddhist community (including Theravada, Buddhism's stress on the importance of becoming a monk for at least part of life). A helpful map reveals the course of Buddhism's expansion throughout Asia. As a belief system, as an influential way of seeing the world, as a unifying thread of Asian cultures, Buddhism remains vitally important. This lucid, eye-pleasing introduction explains and celebrates this major world religion, bringing to life the full variety of Buddhist tradition.

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