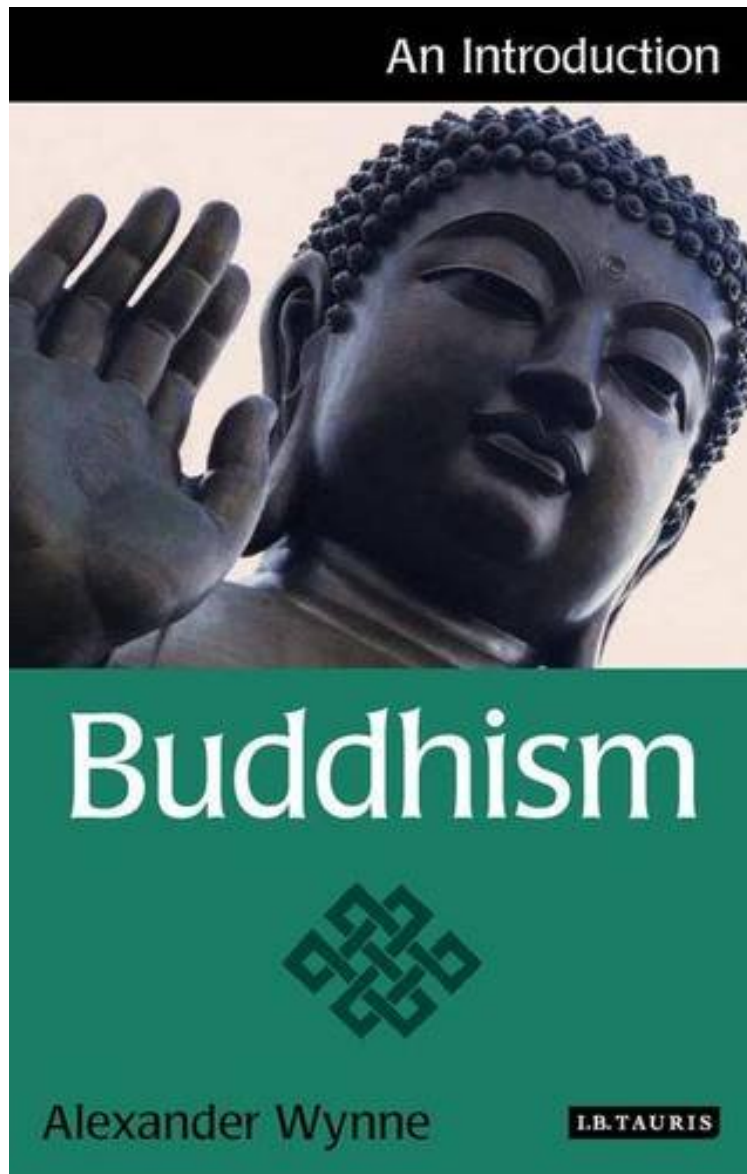


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Buddhism: An Introduction (Introductions to Religion)

Alexander Wynne

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Buddhism is often characterised as one of the most complex and enigmatic of all the world's religions. Although the Buddha himself was not a philosopher in the sense that that term is often understood, a Buddhist philosophy nevertheless emerged from the Buddha's teachings that was astonishingly rich, profound and elusive. Buddhism, which for six millennia has been an integral part of South and East Asian society and civilization, is now increasingly popular in the West, where its teachings about liberation of the self from the cycle of existence have proved attractive to people from a wide variety of backgrounds. In this new and comprehensive textbook, Alexander Wynne shows that the story of Buddhism as a global system of belief begins with the life of the Buddha in northern India in the fifth century BCE. He discusses the many new advances that have been made in recent years with regard to Buddhist origins, and traces the ways that formative Indian doctrines helped shape the features of later Asian Buddhism. Carefully outlining the major Buddhist traditions, Wynne examines in turn the major Mahayana traditions of China, including the Ch'an and Pure Land schools, as well as recent trends in Theravada Buddhism, especially in Sri Lanka and Thailand, and the Tantric Buddhism of Tibet. Finally, he turns to the role of Buddhism in the modern world, and explores how the western encounter with Buddhism has both affected and been affected by it, especially in the fields of cognitive science and modern psychology.

'I.B.Tauris' recent An Introduction series to the major world religions and belief systems are among the most useful and well written for students up to undergraduate level.' The Bookseller 'An engaging introductory survey of Buddhism that is alert to scholarly debates and that includes a thought-provoking account of meditation in early Buddhism.' B Peter Harvey, Emeritus Professor of Buddhist Studies, University of Sunderland, and author of An Introduction to Buddhism (1990) and An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics (2000) 'More than just an introduction, this book provides a stimulating engagement with the intellectual history of Buddhism from its origins down to its encounter with the contemporary West. Wynne does a remarkably good job of joining up the dots without getting sidetracked by irrelevant details. I recommend his book to anyone looking for a more thoughtful introduction to the Buddhist tradition than are many of those currently available.' Damien Keown, Professor of Buddhist Ethics, Goldsmiths, University of London 'Most introductions to Buddhism list the earliest teachings and practices, outline a few major doctrinal developments, and maybe add a thumbnail sketch of how Buddhism spread across the globe. They find little space for more than a catalogue of factual information. Alexander Wynne has managed to select the salient facts, but also to go far further. His book is valuable and original because he analyses the historical context of the developments he is describing, providing rich insights which situate Buddhism within world history. Wynne's book is a remarkable achievement.' Richard F Gombrich, Boden Professor of Sanskrit Emeritus, University of Oxford, and Director, Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies About the Author Alexander Wynne, a former student of Richard Gombrich, is currently Lecturer in Buddhist Studies at Mahidol University, Thailand, and a translator for the prestigious Clay Sanskrit Library. He is the author of two previous books: The Origin of Buddhist Meditation (2007), and The Book of Liberation I: A New Edition and Translation of the Moksha Section of the Mahabharata's Santiparvan (2009, forthcoming).