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Buddhism in Chinese History

Arthur F. Wright

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Arthur F. Wright : Buddhism in Chinese History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Buddhism in Chinese History:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Required Reading at Hong Kong UniversityBy Bernard KwanThis is one of the books on the required reading list for our course at Hong Kong University on Chinese Buddhism and I would like to strongly recommend this book as a very good short introduction to the topic. The course I am taking has the distinction of being taught in both English and Chinese with reams of reading in both languages. Having read the book and much of the supplementary reading, I have to say how well this book has held up in light of the latest findings with regards to its broad arguments especially for the early chapters, despite having been written in 1959. The chapter setting out the background for early Buddhism is especially good at setting out the background of the Han Dynasty and the role of Confucianism and Taoism.The other strength of the book is that the style is elegant and punchy (perhaps because they were originally designed as lectures) as opposed to the bland uniform academic analysis that characterizes so many books nowadays and the over proliferation of footnotes. Reading some of the modern papers makes my head spin with the hundreds of names of monks and monasteries and references, such that the key arguments and trends are sometimes lost in the detail. I do miss the days when style was just as important as content and I value this as a teaching tool in improving my own writing.On the flip side, for a modern reader, there are references to thinkers and historians who are no longer in vogue, such as Toynbee, Satre and Maspero, and he makes pointed comparisons to the role of Christianity in Rome, but if you have an acquaintance with their work and of Roman history, these references are very illuminating and helps one look at the history from another aspect.I have to

agree that the part on Modern China is dated, but that is the danger of most books which deal with modern China and really if we are looking at Chinese Buddhism the key developments happened much much earlier so this is not a big loss. There are so many books now that seek to explain the megatrends of China that date in one or two years. This book has at least stood the test of half a century.1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. KnowledgeBy NotAKnockThis book is pretty cheap for all of the knowledge it gives. I love learning, and knowledge is priceless. This book is great.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Two to three star book.By Will JeromThis is a two to three star book, in my opinion. No insult to the authors intellect, I am sure he knows a great deal about Buddhism. The title should have been An Overview of Intellectual Development, including Buddhism, in Chinese History. The author aims at overarching theoretical and intellectual themes in Chinese history and Buddhism, and not a really satisfying history. If you want details, persons, schools, sects, ideas of Buddhism in China do not read this book. It wont give you much. I began the book with warm enthusiasm, delighted to learn something about ancient China, but ended with the feeling of just a dry, theoretical overview that pointed out a few minor points about Buddhism. The authors intent was theoretical and general, not Buddhism, historical detail, and specificity. So for rich details and content look elsewhere.

A small pocket book that chronicles the effect of Buddhism on the History of China.