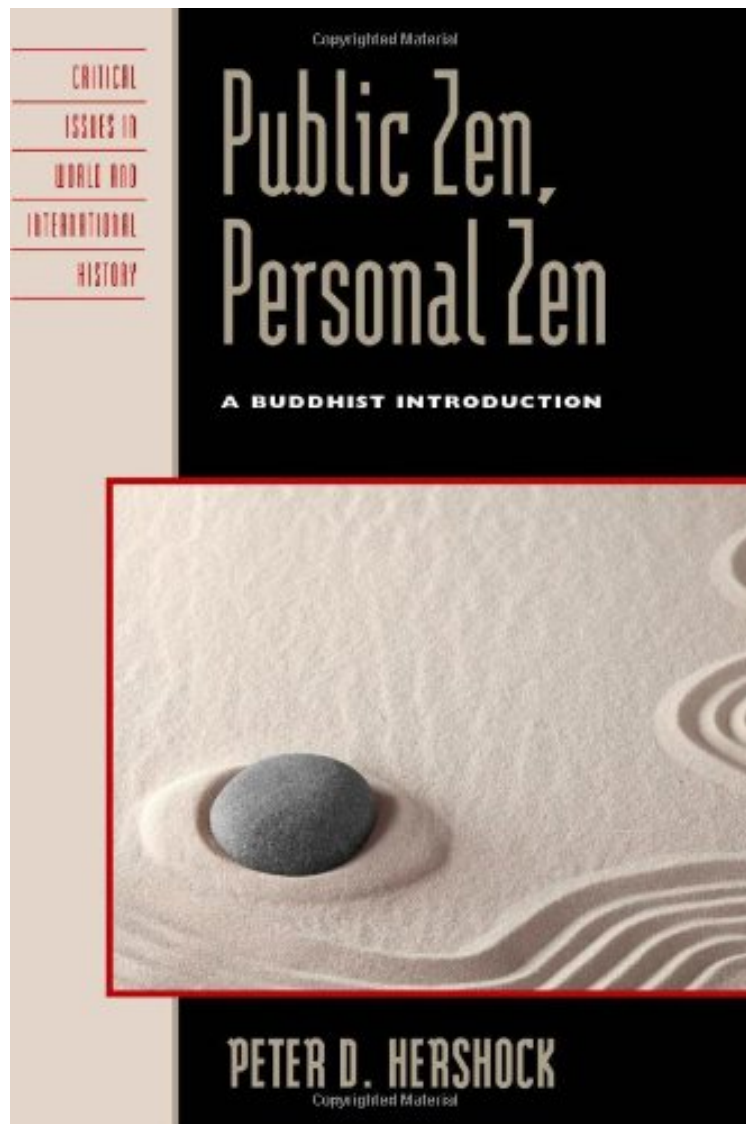


[Free pdf] Public Zen, Personal Zen: A Buddhist Introduction (Critical Issues in World and International History)

Public Zen, Personal Zen: A Buddhist Introduction (Critical Issues in World and International History)

Peter D. Hershock

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Peter D. Hershock : Public Zen, Personal Zen: A Buddhist Introduction (Critical Issues in World and International History) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Public Zen, Personal Zen: A Buddhist Introduction (Critical Issues in World and International History):

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Peter Hershock works hard to explain a complicated subject. ...By

Richard L. Wright Peter Herschok works hard to explain a complicated subject. Once a person gets used to his writing style, the reading/understanding works well.

Among Buddhist traditions, Zen has been remarkably successful in garnering and sustaining interest outside the Buddhist homelands of Asia, and Zen is now part of the global cultural lexicon. This deeply informed book explores the history of this enduring Japanese tradition from its beginnings as a form of Buddhist thought and practice imported from China to its reinvention in medieval Japan as a force for religious, political, and cultural change to its role in Japan's embrace of modernity. Going deeper, it also explores Zen through the experiences and teachings of key individuals who shaped Zen as a tradition committed to the embodiment of enlightenment by all. By bringing together Zen's institutional and personal dimensions, Peter D. Herschok offers readers a nuanced yet accessible introduction to Zen as well as distinctive insights into issues that remain relevant today, including the creative tensions between globalization and localization, the interplay of politics and religion, and the possibilities for integrating social transformation with personal liberation. Including an introduction to the basic teachings and practices of Buddhism and an account of their spread across Asia, *Public Zen, Personal Zen* deftly blends historical detail with the felt experiences of Zen practitioners grappling with the meaning of human suffering, personal freedom, and the integration of social and spiritual progress.

The history of Zen Buddhism is intricate, involving transmissions and exchanges of political, economic, and religious institutions among countries of South and East Asia. Herschok presents a succinct but immensely illuminating overview of Zen from two different viewpoints: its public or institutional history and its personal or practiced history. Through its public aspect, Herschok carefully traces the development of Zen as a religious institution entangled in the political and social history of Japan, revealing its rise and fall to the modern day through the Rinzai, Soto, and Obaku sects. Through its personal side, he analyzes how Zen has been practiced by laypeople, clergy, and the ruling classes throughout its history, emphasizing the transformative and emancipatory disciplines that morally determine how its adherents engage and change the world. He does not shy from the darker elements of Zen's history, such as how some Zen masters defended Japan's participation in WWII. By doing so, he exposes the unavoidable deep connections between religion and the political, social, and economic institutions with which it coexists. Herschok has written a powerful portrait of Zen Buddhism that has much to offer not only to the uninitiated but also to those familiar with the history and practice of this religion. (Publishers Weekly, Starred) Zen Buddhism has long been understood as a path 'beyond words and letters,' which transmits its truth directly from heart-mind to heart-mind. Ironically, this most iconoclastic tradition has produced a vast literature, now including this excellent contribution by Herschok. Dividing his book into three parts, the author systematically recounts the complex origins of and persistent changes to Japanese Zen across time and through its peripatetic migrations. Part 1 covers the basic tenets of Buddhism from its beginnings in India through its emergence in 12th- and 13th-century Japan. Herschok reveals a symbiotic relationship between early Japanese Buddhism and the developing state that was to characterize institutional Zen well into the 20th century. Part 2 examines the evolution of the Rinzai (emphasis on koan practice) and Soto (emphasis on sitting meditation) schools of Zen Buddhism in response to changing Japanese culture, economics, and politics. In the third part, Herschok focuses on personal practice, ritual, and communal discipline through sketches of the lives of four very different masters: Dogen, Ikkyu, Hakuin, and Ryokan. VERDICT A well-written and accessible academic history recommended for practitioners and students of Zen. Most readers might be surprised by the practices support of Japanese modernization and even military imperialism leading up to World War II. (Library Journal) In this illuminating narrative of Chan/Zen history, Peter Herschok provides an exemplary balance, which is frequently missing, by bridging the gap between the 'outsider/objective' and 'insider/subjective' approaches to Zen tradition. This is not an easy line to navigate, and one that most scholars fear to tread. Herschok succeeds admirably, thus showing that there is room within scholarship for an integrated or holistic approach to religious ideas. While there are a number of good introductory works on Japanese religions and a few on Japanese Buddhism, there are surprisingly few texts dealing exclusively with Chan/Zen as a whole and precisely none that deal with both the historical/social and doctrinal/practice elements of this complex tradition. This book fills an important niche. (James Mark Shields, Bucknell University) Books on Zen Buddhism generally aim to accomplish one of two goals: either to be a scholarly, historical study of the development of the tradition or a pragmatic study that explains the ramifications of the Zen life for value questions we face today. Rarely does a book accomplish both goals, but this one does. Readers will be indebted to Peter Herschok for his care in treating the tradition in a balanced, scholarly manner while going beyond that scholarship to explain why Zen maintains its importance for engaging the personal and global problems of our times. A masterwork both informative and enlightening. (Thomas P. Kasulis, Ohio State University) This superb book is a welcome follow-up to the author's *Chan Buddhism* and an enriching complement to Thomas Kasulis's *Zen Action, Zen Person*. Of special value here are the connections drawn between the history of Zen and its contemporary developments, as well as between personal and social practices and ideas. As in his previous writings, what gives Peter Herschok's comprehensive understanding of the Buddhist tradition an especially keen edge is his ongoing experiential

engagement with the practice of meditation and his emphasis on engaged activity in the actual world. (Graham Parkes, Professor of Philosophy, University College Cork)About the AuthorPeter D. Hershock is director of the Asian Studies Development Program at the East-West Center in Honolulu. A noted expert on Buddhism, he has written about the philosophical and historical dimensions of Buddhist practice in *Chan Buddhism and Liberating Intimacy: Enlightenment and Social Virtuosity in Chan Buddhism*. He has also made use of Buddhist thought to address contemporary issues in *Reinventing the Wheel: A Buddhist Response to the Information Age*, *Buddhism in the Public Sphere: Reorienting Global Interdependence*, and *Valuing Diversity: Buddhist Reflection on Realizing a More Equitable Global Future*.