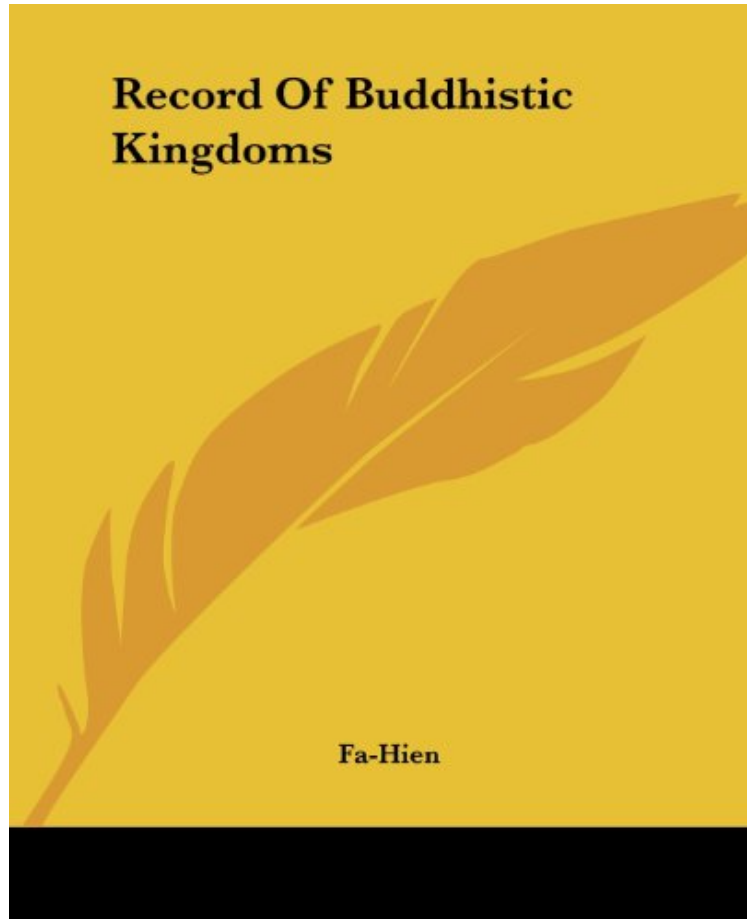


Record Of Buddhistic Kingdoms

Fa-Hien

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condition.Thanks.regards,michael.24 of 24 people found the following review helpful. Slow going, but very interestingBy absent_minded_profThis book is a travelogue, compiled by a medieval Chinese monk named Fa-Hien, who travelled through Central Asia and India, and ultimately to Sri Lanka, in about the years 399 to 414 A.D. I only know this from reading the back of the book, but evidently it's one of the principal sources of information today, for people who want to learn about ancient/medieval Indian Buddhism.The author's journey took him through the outlying regions of Tibet, and then through what today is Afghanistan, Pakistan, northern India, and Sri Lanka. Throughout the narrative, he tells stories about local variations on Buddhist practice, such as festivals, rituals, folklore about legendary visits by the Buddha, and the like. This is what you should read this book for. There are a lot of names and terms to cope with, so be prepared for that. You may want to make a policy of reading through this book one chapter at a time, fairly quickly, just to get the gist of some of the legends. Then you can always go back later to fill in your knowledge of all the exotic names, if you want.Three side notes to be aware of... When Fa-Hien travels through Khotan, in China, you may want to know that he was among a group of people descended from the pre-historic Indo-Europeans. These people were known as the Tocharians, if you want to do any research on them online. Their words for father and mother, for example, were the very Indo-European "pacer" and "macer," which we can see are almost identical to the Latin "pater" and "mater." Tapestries and old paintings show us that some of the Tocharians were born with red hair -- in China! Also, it's very interesting to read an account of travelling in Peshawar, which we hear about every day on the news these days, from a time two full centuries before Islam even existed! In Fa-Hien's time, Peshawar was Buddhist, and had some of the most magnificent Buddhist shrines in all of the Indian subcontinental region. He writes about some legends behind the shrines, and about the practices of the local monks. Finally, for another somewhat familiar point of reference, watch for what Fa-Hien has to say about Gandhara. Gandhara is a region in northern Pakistan that was once heavily settled and influenced by soldiers of Alexander the Great, about seven hundred years before Fa-Hien passed through. Even today, ancient Gandharan artwork is renowned for combining Buddhist and Greek elements... Actually, the footnotes in this section are a better source of information about Gandhara than what Fa-Hien says, but hey, it's all in there.To provide context for this book, it is good to ask what was happening in the rest of the world, at this period. Well, the Roman Empire had only recently (in 380 A.D.) made Christianity its official religion. So, plenty of people who were alive at this time could remember when Rome was still pagan... St. Augustine wrote his blockbuster, smash hit bestseller "The City of God" in 411 A.D. The Roman legions in Great Britain were called home to Rome during this time, in 410 A.D., to help defend Rome against Visigothic invasions. Great Britain, therefore, was basically entirely Celtic. England was not "England" yet in any sense, because the Angles and Saxons didn't even begin invading it until (this is the date given in the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle") 449 A.D. Similarly, France would never have been called "France" at this time, because the tribe it is named after, the Franks, didn't invade it until 418 A.D. In America, this period was right around the beginning of the Mississippi Valley culture.At any rate, I only gave this book four stars because it's kind of slow going, with all the funny names. But it's very worth it. Two thumbs up!

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