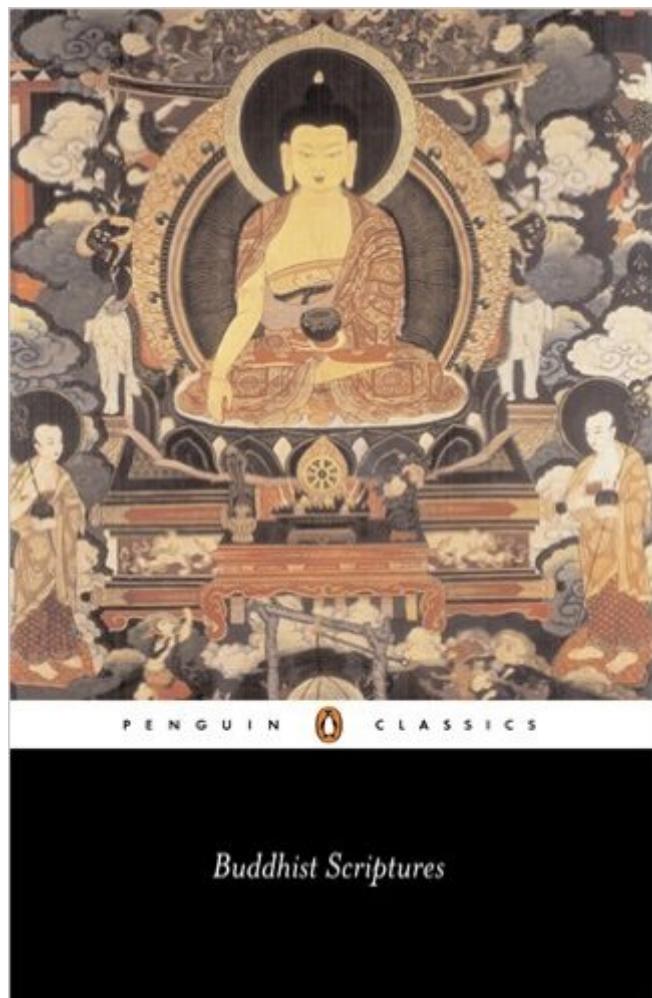


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Buddhist Scriptures (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

While Buddhism has no central text comparable to the Bible or Koran, there is a powerful body of scripture from across Asia that encompasses the dharma, or the teachings of the Buddha. In this rich anthology, eminent scholar Donald S. Lopez, Jr. brings together works from a broad historical and geographical range, and from such languages as Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese. There are tales of the Buddha's past lives, a discussion of qualities and qualifications for a monk, and an exploration of the many meanings of enlightenment. Together they provide a vivid picture of the Buddha and of the vast and profound nature of the Buddhist tradition. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

This was a very good collection of scriptures, and my own personal sort of "Buddhist Bible" - but there is one slight problem with it; it only contains scriptures from certain sects; it has none of the major (come to think of it, I do not believe any at all) texts from the Theravada sect. It does not even have the Dhammapada, one of the most important Buddhist scriptures out there. If you have an interest in any sort of buddhism, this is an excellent book. But remember that it is not the only

perspective out there.

It has been almost five decades since the Penguin Classics series last launched an anthology of Buddhist texts onto the market, during which time interest in the religion throughout the English-speaking world has grown to more than justify a new anthology well over twice the size of the original. That first volume was largely the work of E. Conze, working from Sanskrit, with heterogeneous scraps of translation from other languages, provided by E. M. Hare, David Snellgrove, Trevor Leggett and D. T. Suzuki, mixed in here and there. In this new work the editor has made less of a personal contribution through translation, but has done a far superior job of orchestrating a much more balanced whole and equipping it with a reflective and highly readable introduction, which in itself provides a succinct commentary (pp. xiv-xviii) on the history of such anthologies over the years--including in its final paragraph some delightfully (and justifiably) acerbic comments on the codswallop that in all too recent times past was excerpted to represent his own area, Tibetan Buddhism. The generous list of books for further reading on pp. xlii-xlix also deserves commendation. Inevitably the need to include translations reflecting the current state of Buddhist textual studies has all but wiped out the contribution of United Kingdom-based scholars to the enterprise, though for example the translations of K. R. Norman represent a standard of work unlikely to be matched elsewhere for some time to come, and so still find a place amongst a much longer roster of translations mostly carried out specifically for this anthology and largely undertaken on the other side of the Atlantic. One or two sacrifices have clearly been made in order to find room for such a wealth of materials, notably the exclusion of any of the finding lists cross-referencing the contents by language or by contributor that formed such a useful feature of the editor's earlier anthologies for Princeton University Press, but by and large there is very little here to complain about. That is not the same, however, as declaring this anthology perfect. Such an ambitious enterprise is bound to entail errors, though mostly (one hopes) errors of the trivial sort that can be readily corrected in future printings. [...] [...] drawing attention to these lapses is by no means intended to discourage any would-be purchaser: at under ten pounds a copy, one certainly gets a remarkable quantity of good, accurate translation and up-to-date introductory remarks for one's money. No one at all interested in Buddhism should hesitate for a second to make the investment.

T. H. BARRETT

Great volume, lots of sutras from the Theravada beginnings up to late Mahayana texts all arranged with helpful introductions. One glaring flaw though: The author decided to leave no separate guide

as to which sutra is which. Most books like this will have it in the table of contents or even have a separate table in the beginning or an appendix at the end of the book to guide the reader. For this one though you just have to flip through pages until you find the sutra you're looking for. It's kind of absurd really. So instead of a table that says the name(s) of the sutras contained within he just made up his own cute little titles. For example: If you're looking for the text he included from "The Questions of Milinda (Milindapanha)" you'll just have to guess and flip around until you find out he put it under a section with his own fun little title "One Buddha Per Universe". Or let's say you want to read the selection from the "Gandavyuha sutra" you'll flip around blindly until you stumble upon "Maya, Mother of The Buddha". Good luck.

I rarely take the time to write reviews on books; however in this case, due to the difficulty of finding good books on the topic of Buddhism, I hope for this to be useful. I have been interested in Buddhism for many years now and I have read a fair few texts. This book is the best overview of Buddhism I have come across. In my experience, books on Buddhism in the 'West' tend to be either shallow self-help books, or confusing because they are implicitly written from the perspective of a particular school or tradition (without making that clear). This work stands out since it succeeds in giving an overview over the many (and highly diverse) schools and traditions. Sure, not every school is covered but at the very least it makes sure you understand that there are very different schools, which a Westerner won't automatically understand if he just reads, for example, a book by the Dalai Lama (whose books, I want to add, are excellent as well, but obviously written from a Gelug Tibetan viewpoint). In addition, Dr Lopez' work is exemplary in the way it adds context to the concise and well-digestible chapters. Again, for a Westerner who isn't an expert on the topic, it is nigh impossible to read an authentic Buddhist text and understand the meaning without knowledgeable commentary; in fact, even for Buddhist scholars that can be hard which is why there is a large body of commentaries, sometimes, over the course of the centuries, even commentaries upon commentaries, in Buddhist literature. The only (minor) criticism I would make is that for some texts, the translators have really put a lot of annotations and editors' notes in, which unfortunately make the texts seem slightly littered. However, in fairness this is only true for a very few of the many texts. Otherwise, I can only repeat that this is by far the best book on Buddhism that I have come across.

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