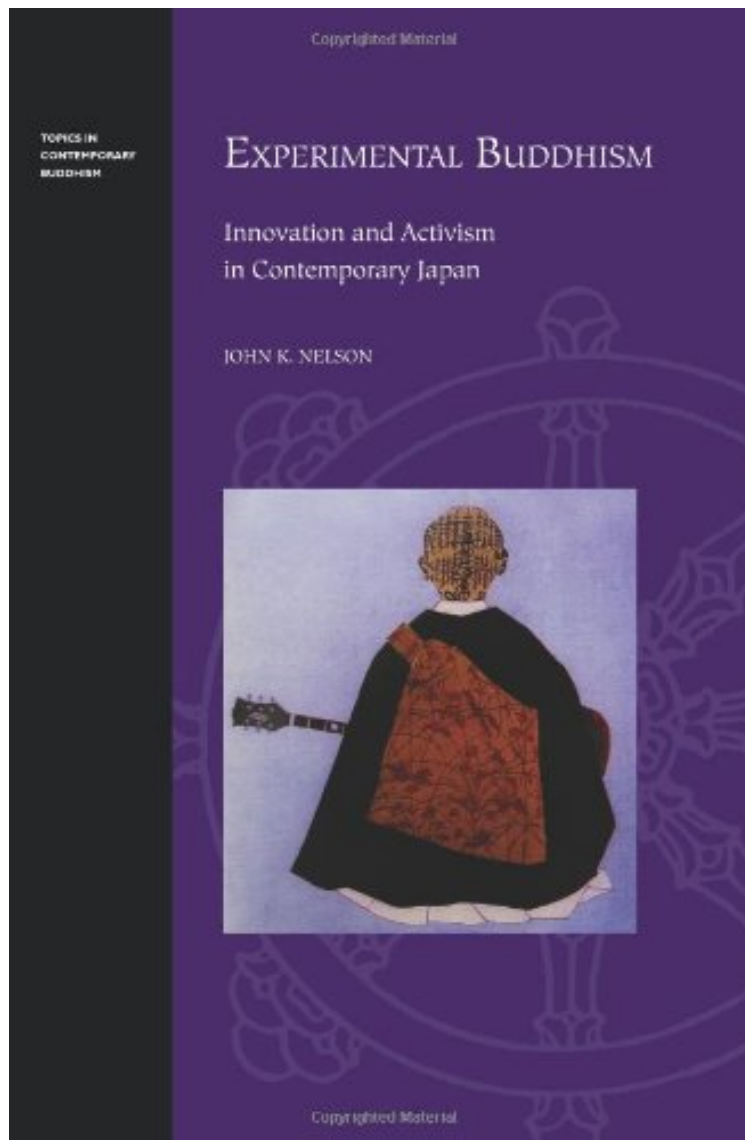


(Pdf free) Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan (Topics in Contemporary Buddhism)

## Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan (Topics in Contemporary Buddhism)

*John K. Nelson*

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**John K. Nelson : Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan (Topics in Contemporary Buddhism)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan (Topics in Contemporary Buddhism):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Academic discussion of reformers in several Buddhist orders in Japan  
By Sitting in Seattle  
As a Buddhist practitioner who also is a researcher, I found this book to be interesting. However it is likely to appeal to a rather narrow, largely academic audience. The book is based on primarily ethnographic and interview research with Buddhist priests in Japan who are experimenting with innovations in their parishes. It discusses -- for instance -- variations on funeral services such as priests ordered online, teaching meditation classes to foreigners, and other such practices that attempt to reform some of Buddhism's image in Japan. It's important to know that it is largely descriptive of a relatively self-selected sample (those who agreed to be interviewed), includes several different Buddhist orders (pure land and others, not just Zen), and focuses on practical "business" aspects instead of the spiritual dimensions. It presents these from a completely academic perspective. (I seem to recall that the author mentions along the way that he is not a Buddhist practitioner.) It also focuses extremely heavily on the funereal aspects of Buddhism in Japan (Buddhism is associated mostly with funerals), and relatively little with other aspects such as meditation. That seems to be completely appropriate for the culture, just something to be aware of. As a work of ethnography and description of what is happening with temples attempting to stay relevant in Japan, I found it to be quite interesting. However, I think anyone looking for more than that -- for example, looking for spiritual insight, looking for ideas about potential Buddhist reform in other cultures besides Japan, or looking for a work for non-academic audiences -- may not find what they're seeking. On the other hand, if you're interested in academic Buddhism, ethnography, and Japan, you'll find it quite readable and thought provoking.  
0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
By E. L. PORTAL  
Good book

Based on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research, it is one of the first studies to give readers a sense of what is happening on the front lines as a growing number of Buddhist priests try to reboot their roles and traditions to gain greater significance in Japanese society. The book profiles innovative as well as controversial responses to the challenges facing Buddhist priests. From traditional activities (conducting memorial rituals; supporting residences for the elderly and infirm; providing relief for victims of natural disasters) to more creative ones (collaborating in suicide prevention efforts; holding symposia and concerts on temple precincts; speaking out against nuclear power following Japan's 2011 earthquake; opening cafes, storefront temples, and pubs; even staging fashion shows with priests on the runway), more progressive members of Japan's Buddhist clergy are trying to navigate a path leading towards renewed relevance in society. An additional challenge is to avoid alienating older patrons while trying to attract younger ones vital to the future of their temples. The work's central theme of experimental Buddhism provides a fresh perspective to understand how priests and other individuals employ Buddhist traditions in selective and pragmatic ways. Using these inventive approaches during a time of crisis and transition for Japanese temple Buddhism, priests and practitioners from all denominations seek solutions that not only can revitalize their religious traditions but also influence society and their fellow citizens in positive ways.

Experimental Buddhism fills an important need in the study of contemporary Japanese Buddhism . . . The text would make a fine addition to both undergraduate and graduate courses in contemporary Asian studies or cultural Buddhism. Nelson writes in an engaging and accessible manner, and students will find great pleasure in reading the pages of his book.-- "Pacific Affairs"  
This book is the product of a tremendous effort, making use of many interviews and extensive research into the background of Japanese Buddhism and its many individual branches.-- "Eastern Buddhist"  
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About the Author  
John K. Nelson is professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of San Francisco.