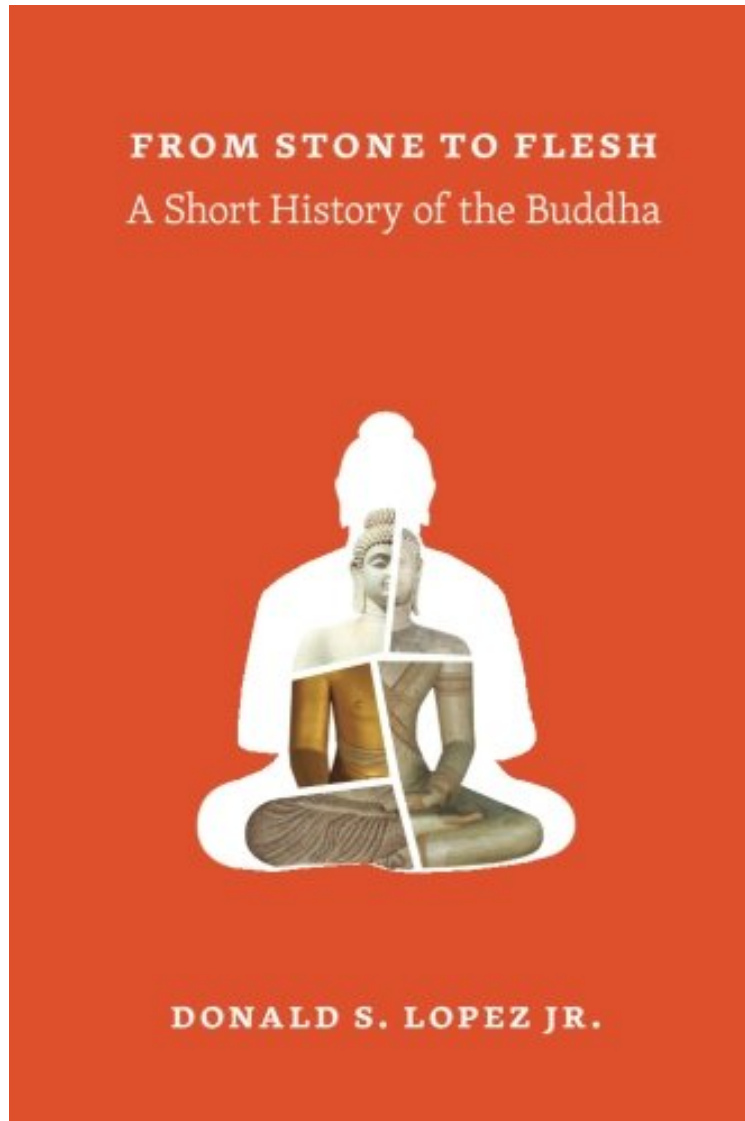


[Free read ebook] From Stone to Flesh: A Short History of the Buddha (Buddhism and Modernity)

From Stone to Flesh: A Short History of the Buddha (Buddhism and Modernity)

Donald S. Lopez Jr.

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#2800882 in Books Donald S Lopez Jr 2016-11-03 2013-04-11Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .90 x 6.00l, .0 #File Name: 022633323X304 pagesFrom Stone to Flesh A Short History of the Buddha Buddhism and Modernity | File size: 54.Mb

Donald S. Lopez Jr. : From Stone to Flesh: A Short History of the Buddha (Buddhism and Modernity) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised From Stone to Flesh: A Short History of the Buddha (Buddhism and Modernity):

21 of 22 people found the following review helpful. The Western Encounter with the BuddhaBy Robin FriedmanMany

people in the United States and the West, myself included, have been inspired by and learned a great deal from Buddhism. At one time, information about Buddhism may have been difficult to find, but those now interested have the opportunity to learn to virtually any degree of depth they wish to pursue. In his new book, "From Stone to Flesh: A Short History of the Buddha" (2013), Donald Lopez presents a short history of the different ways Buddhism has been perceived in the West for the past two millennia. A prolific author on Buddhism, Lopez is the Arthur Link Distinguished University Professor of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies at the University of Michigan. His writings combine a thorough understanding of and commitment to his subject with the careful detachment of a scholar. Lopez begins his story with some early Christian texts, including "Barlaam and Josaphat, a thinly-veiled tale based on the life of the Buddha. Barlaam and Ioasaph (Loeb Classical Library) But the continuous account of the West and Buddhism begins with Marco Polo and his account of his visit to Ceylon in about 1292. From the point forward, a series of travelers, adventurers, missionaries, and colonialists visited Buddhist lands and wrote of their impressions. Lopez' history has a clear turning point to modern views of the Buddha. In 1844, Eugene Burnouf, a French scholar adept in many Eastern languages, including Sanskrit, began translating many key Buddhist sutras and published a long Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism -- the first of what Burnouf planned as a multi-volume project. Burnouf saw Buddhism as a way of life and the Buddha as a teacher of ethics and peace more than the founder of a religion. Burnouf downplayed the miraculous elements in Buddhism and its texts. In short, Lopez argues, Burnouf established the view of Buddhism that has since become prevalent in the West. Burnouf is little read today because his ideas on Buddhism have become almost commonplace. Lopez and another scholar, Katia Buffetrille, published in 2010 a translation of Burnouf's massive Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism." Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism (Buddhism and Modernity) Burnouf's work, together with that of other scholars, comes at the conclusion of Lopez' account. In the earlier chapters of his book, Lopez marks out a substantially different Western portrayal of Buddhism and the Buddha. The story takes several different tracks. Before the 18th Century, knowledge of Buddhism came from travelers to places such as Tibet, Ceylon, Japan, China, Burma. There was difficulty in tracking names, terminology, and practice to the single figure that today is recognized as the Buddha. Those encountering Buddhism were also unclear about whether the Buddha was a god, a mythological creation, or perhaps even a planet. There were thoughts of two Buddhas, one early, one late. Some viewed the Buddha as of African descent. Others conflated him with the war god Thor. More important was the views of early travellers on the nature of Buddha. The tendency, particularly among the missionaries, was to demonize the Buddha and his followers as victims of superstition and as idol worshippers. These views were based in part on the visitors' own religious preconceptions and on their encounters with Buddhist sites and Buddhists. Few of the travellers became skilled in local languages and fewer still had any access to Buddhist texts. In chapters called "The Idol", "The Myth", and "The Man", Lopez documents encounters with Buddhism prior to the beginning of the 19th Century. The situation began to change almost by chance, through the work of employees of the British East India Company who had the leisure and the curiosity to learn about India. Buddhism originated in India but largely disappeared there and spread throughout Asia. Lopez discusses the lives and works of many travellers who have been largely forgotten. The book quotes heavily from original sources written in a variety of European languages which makes for slow reading. Much of the material is fascinating. For example, discusses one Ippolito Desideri, a Jesuit who travelled to Tibet. Desideri learned Tibetan and gained familiarity with difficult doctrines of Tibetan Buddhism. In 1717, he wrote a work in Tibetan verse in which he examined and criticized the Buddhist teaching of emptiness. Lopez offers a nuanced understanding of his sources which bears development. He leaves it to the reader to decide the extent to which Burnouf, the founder of the Western view of Buddhism, is the hero of the story. Burnouf understood the texts well but never travelled outside Europe and never met a Buddhist. His account misses the local, supernatural character of much Buddhism as it had been practiced. Burnouf's predecessors saw the details but not the underlying ideas. They saw Buddhism through the eyes of Christianity and their own supernaturalism while Burnouf saw Buddhism with his perspective of Western secular Enlightenment. His view of Buddhism, quoted extensively in this book, will be familiar to any modern reader who has seriously engaged with the subject. Lopez rightly points out that the modern view suffers from its own enlightenment biases and from attendant historical inaccuracies, albeit different in character from earlier Western understandings of Buddhism. Lopez offers a challenging, informative history of Buddhism as it has come to the West. The book will be of value to readers with a serious interest in Buddhism. Robin Friedman 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great historical work on the "West's" perceptions of the Buddha By Al K. Mickel Great book. So interesting that I read it entire within a week after it arrived. 0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Joan Stark this is a great book

We have come to admire Buddhism for being profound but accessible, as much a lifestyle as a religion. The credit for creating Buddhism goes to the Buddha, a figure widely respected across the Western world for his philosophical insight, his teachings of nonviolence, and his practice of meditation. But who was this Buddha, and how did he become the Buddha we know and love today?

Donald S. Lopez Jr. has written the most gripping intellectual detective story I have read in years. Was the Buddha a man or a god? Europeans starting with Marco Polo could only wonder at first. His statues were everywhere, under scores of different names. But so were the statues of demons and dragons, gods and goddesses a huge and bewildering pantheon. Was he not just another face in that crowd? He was not, but only the ancient texts could reveal this, and no European knew how to read the languages they were written in. Until, slowly, the Europeans began to learn, and little by little the stone statue began to speak, began to take on flesh, a birthplace, a life span, a history. An extraordinary story, indispensable not just for the study of Buddhism but also for a more general appreciation of the unfinished and ongoing encounter of West and East.