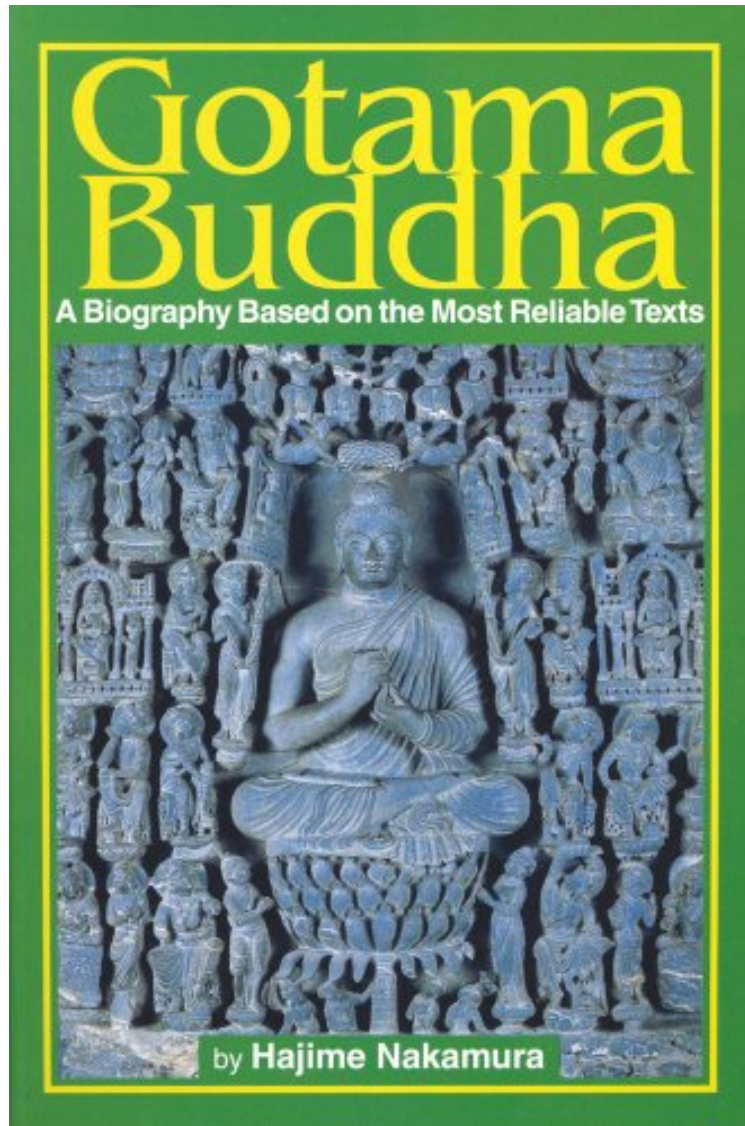


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Gotama Buddha: A Biography Based on the Most Reliable Texts, Vol. 1

Hajime Nakamura

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Hajime Nakamura : Gotama Buddha: A Biography Based on the Most Reliable Texts, Vol. 1 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Gotama Buddha: A Biography Based on the Most Reliable Texts, Vol. 1:

21 of 21 people found the following review helpful. The definitive scholarly piece on the life of the Buddha. By EdVolume one of two. While reading this book, you will quickly become aware of how Nakamura is in a completely

different league than anyone else who has attempted to write on this topic. His mastery of seemingly every language he has bent his mind to is legendary. When approaching a topic spread about Sanskrit, Pali and Chinese, this skill comes in very handy. The strength of this book comes from Nakamura's careful examination of a variety of primary sources in their original language. His purpose here is to parse out what probably happened in the life of the Buddha and what is egregious myth. He carefully cites his texts, states what they contain and then juxtaposes this with other texts (often times written later) to demonstrate how first-hand accounts of the Buddha were turned into outlandish superstition. When he cannot say anything definitive, he gives his reasons for why a certain bit of information cannot be known to such a degree. By utilizing these scholarly methods, Nakamura strips away the myth from the man revealing a far more human (and thus far more relatable) image of the Buddha. By carefully dissecting the myths behind the life of the Buddha, a different character emerges from this process that makes other contemporary renderings of the Buddha seem rather trite in comparison. I would say that this is -the- definitive piece on the Buddha if the book were not so pedantic and probably un-approachable to most. I guess what I'm saying is that you had better be pretty motivated to get into the material or you will end up putting the book down out of boredom. I can assure you though that if you get through it, you will be thankful that you did. I should also note that the footnotes are extraordinarily useful as Nakamura carefully cited his sources. This makes for a great place to begin future study, especially for getting familiar with the original Pali cannon.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. best buddha bio bible By nagarjunathis is the best biography of the buddha that i have encountered so far. along with volume II it is a complete work that stands as the most comprehensive, interesting, inspiring, and readable book on the buddha's life and teaching. it is written from the perspective of the buddha as a historical man, not a myth or a god, and the author always tries to get to the historical reality of his life. this is a very refreshing approach and, contrary to what some may believe, i think this does a great service to the buddha and his teaching. to deny the buddha his human reality is to undermine the entire philosophy that he taught. it is for this reason that the hindus spread the lie that the buddha was an incarnation of visnu, knowing that this would subtly undermine the whole philosophy of buddhism. i have not enjoyed any other biographies of the buddha as i do this one. there is something about it that stands out, the profound respect of the author for the buddha leaps off every page. i think one could use this as a kind of buddha bible, in terms of it being incredibly inspiring for a practicing buddhist. there is only one complaint i have, which is the few instances where the author adds his own interpretation of the teachings, an interpretation that may not necessarily be that of the buddha himself. the main example which comes to mind is the section on the anattalakkhana sutta, infamous for its peculiar teaching. the author interprets it as a negation of all that is not self, implying that there is a true self to be discerned beyond all that is not self. there are certain scholars of critical buddhism like matsumoto shiro and hakamaya noriaki who would be strongly opposed to such an interpretation, favoring the view that the buddha was, in fact, teaching that there is no true self to be found at all, and that the anattalakkhana sutta teaches insubstantiality 'all the way', negating every possibility of clinging to a notion of self. that being said, one can easily overlook the author's bias and it does not spoil my reading of the book as a whole.

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. A well-written and simple book on Buddha's life By kartik2001@hotmail.com This book deserves an award for its clarity and scholarly presentation of the life-history of the Buddha, while being readable even by the lay-person. The author is a well-known researcher of Eastern philosophical traditions.

In Gotama Buddha, Professor Hajime Nakamura embarks on a search for the details of the historical Buddha's life. He conducts an exhaustive analysis of both the oldest, most reliable texts and later biographies of the Buddha that contain mythological material. Carefully sifting these texts to separate facts from embellishments, he constructs a biography that begins with the Indian historical context at the time of Buddha's Birth and takes the reader through all the stages of his life. Professor Nakamura also compares the oldest Buddhist texts with the earliest Jain and Hindu writings and finds surprising similarities that elucidate the significance of the historical Buddha. Archeological discoveries and factual elements from Buddhist art support Professor Nakamura's fascinating story. This is the first of two volumes; The second will be printed at a later date.

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