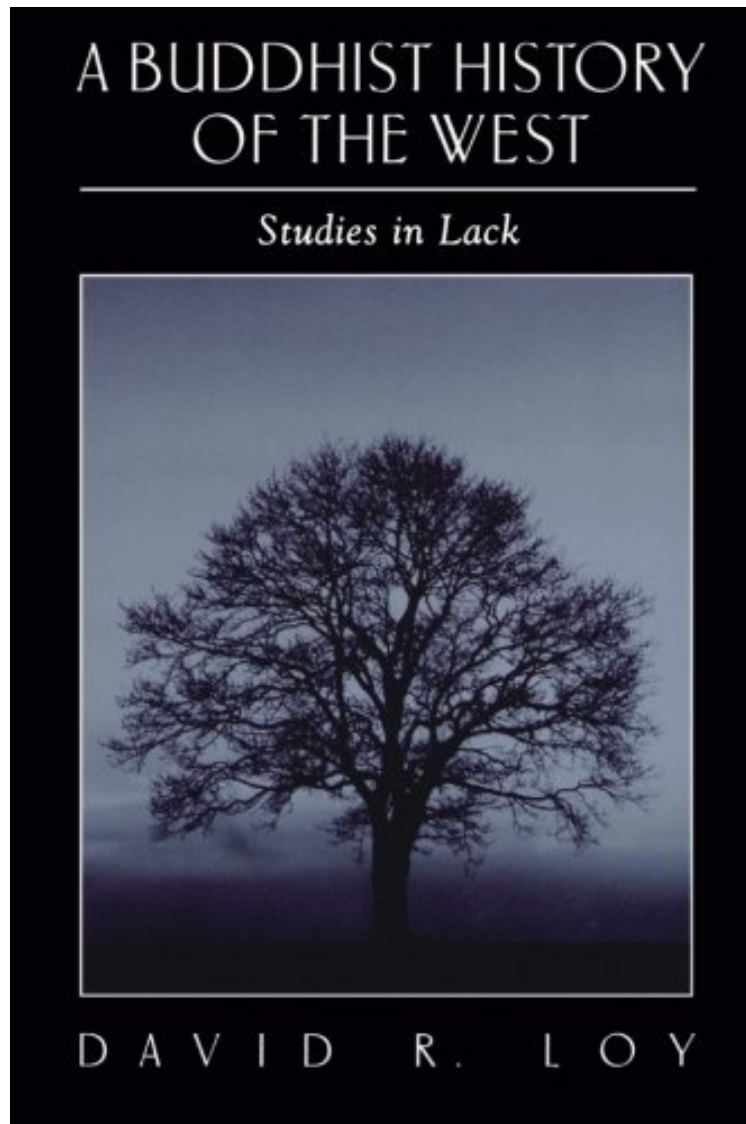


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## A Buddhist History of the West (Suny Series in Religious Studies)

*David R. Loy*

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**David R. Loy : A Buddhist History of the West (Suny Series in Religious Studies)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Buddhist History of the West (Suny Series in Religious Studies):

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A unique and relevant analysis of Western cultureBy

Geerlof Western bookstores have an almost infinite choice of books on Western history and on religion and spirituality. Loys book *A Buddhist History of the West* is one of the rare books dealing with both, in applying a Buddhist lens on the history of the West. In the introduction of the book the author introduces his Buddhist perspective. As a Buddhist he claims the most important point of religion is not its prescription how to qualify for a blissful afterlife, but its emphasis on personal transformation to minimize the dukkha (Buddhist concept of suffering, frustration, unhappiness in the broadest sense) in our lives by deconstructing and reconstructing the delusive sense of self, the ultimate source of dukkha. It's the letting go of ourselves into no-thing-ness that will transform us from a sense-of-lack into a serenity that is imperturbable, because there is nothing to be perturbed. But the Western World is dominated by the concept of the ego-self. In Loys' view it's an empty sense-of-self that is experienced but not addressed as a sense of lack in Western culture. In reaction the sense-of-self becomes preoccupied with trying to make its ego-self, self-existing. Loy describes how the history of the West brought the ego-self to the forefront in its attempt to resolve lack. The book describes the Papal Reformation as a starting point that led to a bifurcation into the sacred and the secular sphere in our world. The author explains how the Renaissance induced the pursuit for individualistic salvations of lack. The pursuit of fame and money and romantic love are the three ultimate symbols of this salvation in the Western world. All are secular responses but paradoxically religious in that they are motivated by the spiritual desire to ground oneself and become real. Further on in the book Loy addressed the institutional efforts of the collective ego to self-manifestation, conjuring in what he calls the Religion of the Market. From a lack perspective the economic system of the West has institutionalized greed. Its militarism institutionalized ill will and its corporate media institutionalized delusion. Loys' analysis of our Western history from a Buddhist perspective is flawless and delivers a new framework for interpreting the behavior of the westerner on an individual and institutional level. The close reader familiar with Western culture will conclude Western culture and society is facing some major crisis. Loy remains in his book implicit on this point as to possible solutions. He advocates the individual path of the Buddha. But he does not answer the dilemma how self-transformation could ignite social change.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A great book about "great books" and the tradition of western thoughts  
By John D. Smith  
A very thought-provoking and meticulous book with many, many insights that seem obvious after reading. It crystalizes a lot of gut feelings into much more coherent views. Thanks, David R. Loy!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. European history with religion emphasis  
By Leo Coale  
One of the most scholarly books I have seen on economics, philosophy, and history - and am well read on such. Not really a Buddhist history per se.

A Buddhist interpretation of Western history that shows civilization shaped by the self's desire for groundedness. Buddhism teaches that to become happy, greed, ill-will, and delusion must be transformed into their positive counterparts: generosity, compassion, and wisdom. The history of the West, like all histories, has been plagued by the consequences of greed, ill-will, and delusion. *A Buddhist History of the West* investigates how individuals have tried to ground themselves to make themselves feel more real. To be self-conscious is to experience ungroundedness as a sense of lack, but what is lacking has been understood differently in different historical periods. Author David R. Loy examines how the understanding of lack changes at historical junctures and shows how those junctures were so crucial in the development of the West. A polymath's tour through intellectual and social history, David Loy's Buddhist retelling goes far in revealing the historically conditioned limitations of many dominant Western terms, metaphors, and assumptions. By reinterpreting greed, ill will, and delusion as structural rather than personal problems, Loy offers a compassionate account of ways that we make ourselves unhappy and a trenchant critique of market capitalism's manipulation of these habits of mind. *The Journal of Asian Studies* his study of European history from what he calls the perspective of lack reveals astonishing yet previously barely highlighted insights into European thought. Loys' book is filled with observations and indictments of common myths that are not only provocative in nature but sure to challenge many of the presuppositions that the proponents of the so-called Western World hold dear. *Philosophy East West* This book expands the dialog, enlarges the vocabulary, takes instruction from other cultural traditions, and throws light on our own Occidental problems. I like its clarity in a territory that is of critical importance and is intrinsically difficult. The book has to do with ways of coming to a better understanding of civilization, history, politics, and our own human psyches, and how it is that certain sets of problems war and exploitation among them keep arising. David Loy is opening up new territory that is of great value. He is a very exciting thinker. Gary Snyder, author of *The Gary Snyder Reader: Prose, Poetry, and Translations, 1952-1998*

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About the Author David R. Loy is Professor in the Faculty of International Studies at Bunkyo University, Japan. He is the author of Lack and Transcendence: The Problem of Death and Life in Psychotherapy, Existentialism, and Buddhism and Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy.