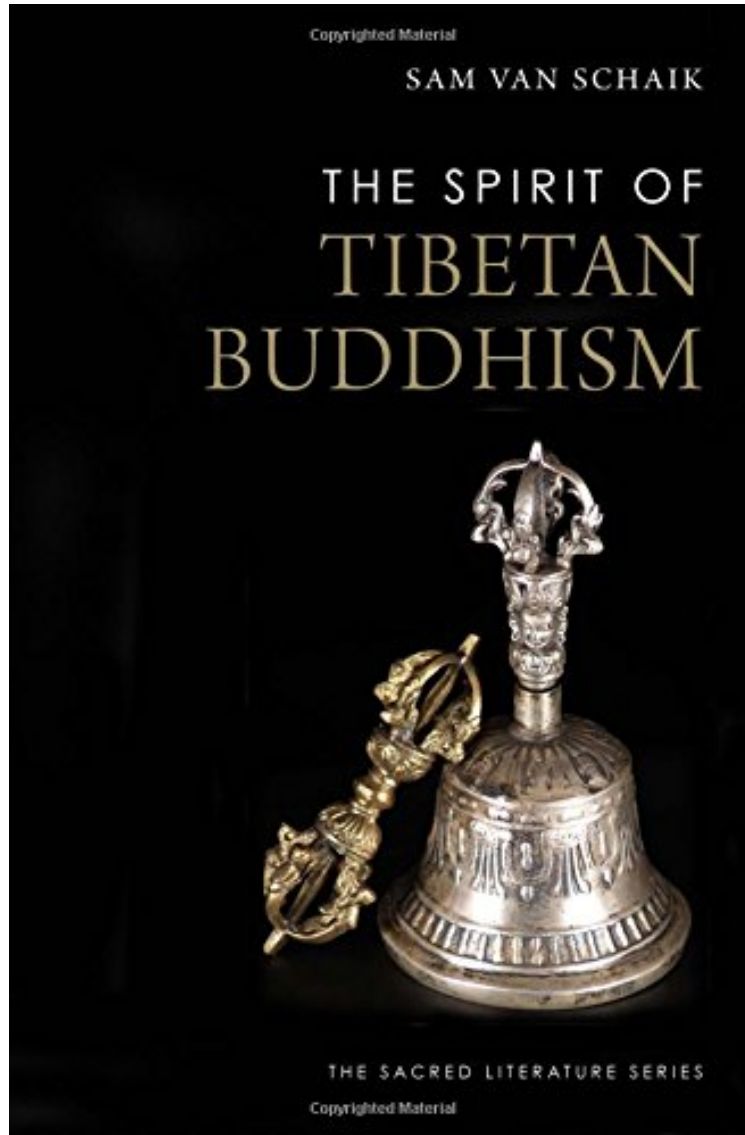


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## The Spirit of Tibetan Buddhism

*Sam van Schaik*

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**Sam van Schaik : The Spirit of Tibetan Buddhism** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Spirit of Tibetan Buddhism:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A fresh, fascinating and authoritative intro.By applewoodHaving enjoyed van Schaik's other books I was curious how he'd present an introduction to Tibetan Buddhism, and I'm not surprised to find it is very fine indeed. Sam's other books have covered a wide range of topics - from the Longchen Nyingtig of Jigme Lingpa, to the ancient buried Tibetan Zen manuscripts of the Dunhuang Caves, and a most excellent

overview of Tibet's cultural history - always done with a balance of scholarship and practical understanding. Here he brings this same clear and unassuming approach to a concise and very readable overview of a vast and complex subject (spanning almost 1,300 years). What is unique is how he does this in both a logical and chronological way (from the simple to the complex, and from the basic roots of monastic ethical practices to the refined, exalted life example of a 19th century scholar/mystic saint), with each chapter combining both an introduction to the subject with the historical and philosophical context, as well as a selection of newly translated source material (relying principally on the scholarly writings and liturgical practices of the Sakya school - 12th century Sonam Tsemo, 15th century Gorampa Sonam Senge and 19th century Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo for chapters 4-8). Overall the book is a handsome publication (Yale University Press - Sacred Literature Series) with the main body of the text accompanied by a helpful introductory chapter, plus end notes and extensive bibliography. These are the chapters; 1 - An Introduction to the Practice of Tibetan Buddhism 2 - A Code of Ethics: the Ten Virtues 3 - How to Live: Atisha's Advice 4 - Training the Mind: Parting from the Four Attachments 5 - The Nature of Things: Distinguishing the View 6 - The Path: Introduction to the Tantras 7 - Prayer: Liturgy of the Sixteen Elders 8 - The Life of a Master: Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo This selection of topics and original translations is broad and culturally specific enough to give both a real taste of the distinctive flavor of the Tibetan traditions as well as the philosophical and spiritual significance of the teachings. And the fact that it is short and reads easily would make it a great introduction for a wide range of people including a friend or family member of someone who is into the tradition, someone interested in Buddhism wondering what it's all about for themselves, someone already involved in a specific school of the Tibetan tradition but wanting a more objective overview, or a basic college level class on Buddhism, Asian Spirituality or comparative religion. Although van Schaik is wonderfully skilled in translating and synthesizing these teachings the translated source material here has a distinctly other worldly flavor - not fantastical, idealized, and romanticized like the early 20th century French explorer Alexandra David Neel's presentation - but plain, innocent, and isolated seeming, reminding me a lot of the present Dalai Lama's first book "Opening the Wisdom Eye", which was a no frills, no hype outline of the Buddhist path. It was accurate but dry, and in stark contrast to the more polished PR machine of current Tibetan Buddhist publications, but it was also an authentic taste of the tradition from the inside. This book combines this authentic glimpse inside with an outsider's perspective, it is by no means a comprehensive survey, but it does effectively convey the spirit of the religion. Highly recommended.

A leading writer and researcher on Tibet, Sam van Schaik offers an accessible and authoritative introduction to Tibetan Buddhism by examining its key texts, from its origins in the eighth century to teachings practiced across the world today. In addition to demonstrating its richness and historical importance, van Schaik's fresh translations of and introductions to each text provide a comprehensive overview of Tibetan Buddhism's most popular teachings and concepts including rebirth, compassion, mindfulness, tantric deities, and the graduated path and discusses how each is put into practice. The book unfolds chronologically, conveying a sense of this thousand-year-old tradition's progress and evolution. Under the spiritual leadership of the Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism has an estimated ten to twenty million adherents worldwide. Written for those new to the topic, but also useful to seasoned Buddhist practitioners and students, this much-needed anthological introduction provides the deepest understanding of the key writings currently available.

Van Schaik unfolds a fascinating history . . . the whole work offers the reader a deep sense of the historical progress and evolution of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition over more than a millennium. Wendy C. Hamblet, *Metapsychology*