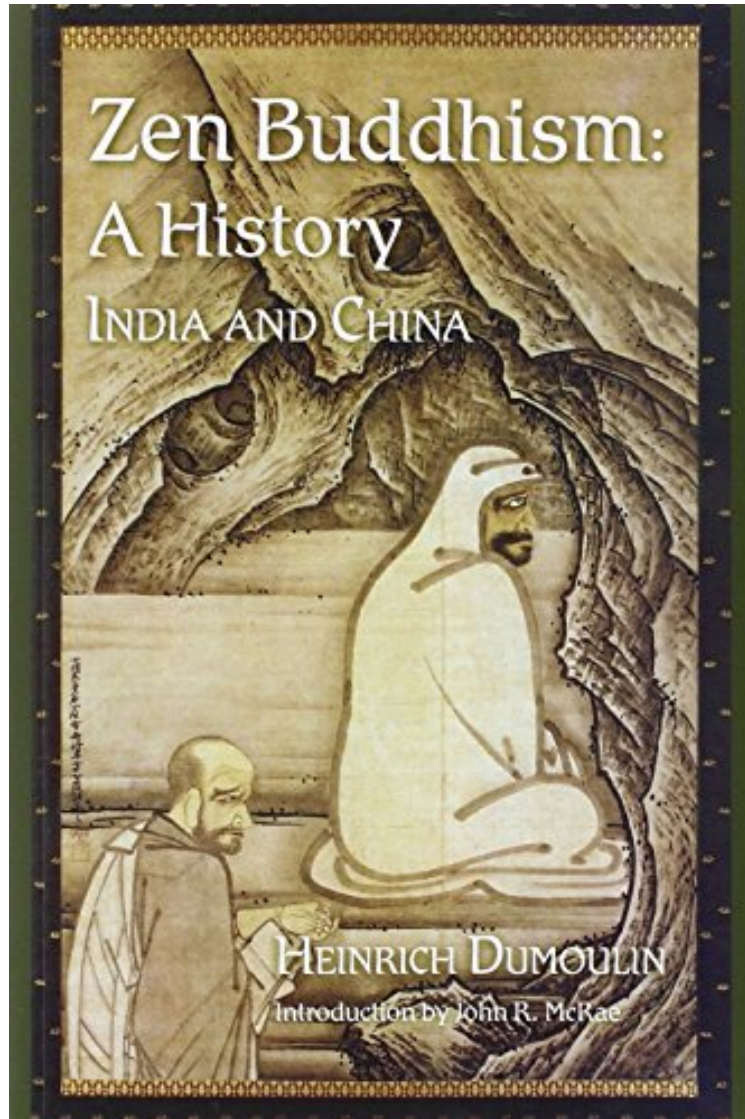


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Zen Buddhism: A History, India China (Volume 1)

Heinrich Dumoulin

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Heinrich Dumoulin : Zen Buddhism: A History, India China (Volume 1) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Zen Buddhism: A History, India China (Volume 1):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great in its time; dated now. By Brian from Seattle When I first read this book several years ago, I would have given it 5 stars. In fact, I would have called it magisterial. Father Dumoulin's knowledge of the subject was truly impressive and this two volume set remains the most comprehensive history of Ch'an/Zen ever written in the English language. Unfortunately, the work has not aged well. First of all, Dumoulin used the Wade-Giles system to romanize Chinese names. Pinyin is the standard these days and the differences can be

confusing. So confusing to me personally that I nowadays refuse to read anything that uses Wade-Giles. Secondly, much research has been done since Dumoulin's work was first written decades ago. Nowadays, scholars realize that Ch'an monks didn't so much record their history as invent it. Dumoulin, for example, fell for the "string-of-pearls" version of Chan beginnings that overstates the role of the first six patriarchs in the development of Ch'an. Dumoulin's view of Ch'an's origins just isn't the current view. I'm waiting for someone to produce an up-to-date history of Zen/Ch'an that captures all the recent research and tells the story as beautifully as Dumoulin once did.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An essential reference for all Zen students/practitioners

By Ted Biringer

This book along with its companion volume (*Zen Buddhism, Volume 2: A History - Japan*), also by Heinrich Dumoulin, is a unique offering among the many fine books of Zen. As the only extensive single-set history of Zen Buddhism available it is an essential reference for all Zen students, teachers, and practitioners. It also has plenty to offer students of Buddhism of all traditions, especially those of Mahayana.

Zen Buddhism, Volume : A History - India and China, begins by offering an extensive examination of the rise and development of Buddhism in India. Starting with an introduction to the pre-Buddhist spiritual traditions, including discussions of the major ideas informing the various philosophies, literature, and practices of those traditions. After furnishing the reader with a solid grasp of the cultural and spiritual landscape of the India of Shakyamuni's (the historical Buddha) time, Heinrich Dumoulin examines the life of the Buddha. Though brief, he gives a well-rounded explanation of the various facts, as well as the theories and legends surrounding both the historical and mythological significance of the birth, quest, enlightenment, teachings, and death of the Buddha (after teaching for nearly 50 years!). Next, Dumoulin traces the developments of the major schools of Buddhism arising in the wake of the Buddha's death. He provides readers with solid insight of these schools by highlighting their various points of contention, and unique interpretations of the Buddha's teachings.

Heinrich Dumoulin also examines the development of the major sutras (scriptures) and shastras (treatises) offering the reader not only an outline of the main ideas informing this literature, but also highlighting how the various Buddhist schools related to and were influenced by it--focusing, of course, primarily on Ch'an (Zen). By providing both, historical as well as legendary (or traditional) information each of the Indian Zen "ancestors", Dumoulin allows readers to "see through" the traditional accounts, without losing sight of the "mythic" elements that served to distinguish Ch'an from other Buddhist schools. The book then presents an overview of the transmission of Buddhism to China through the Indian Buddhist master, Bodhidharma, the semi-legendary founder of Ch'an (Zen) in China. Dumoulin again offers both historical and traditional accounts of how the teaching slowly took root and over several generations of development and adaptation with Confucian and Taoist elements of Native China.

Next Heinrich Dumoulin describes how Ch'an (Zen) finally came into its "own" distinctive, and specifically "Chinese" flavor with the teachings of the revered Sixth ancestor of China, Huineng. Extensively covering the great masters of Ch'an history, Dumoulin describes how the various "schools" came to be identified through a number of factors including the "styles" of great master, the development of specific techniques or doctrines, emphasis on particular aspects of the path, etc. Finally, this book explains how later generations of Ch'an teachers, students, and practitioners came to collect, and systemize the teachings of the "Seven schools and Five houses" of Zen in efforts to preserve, maintain, and transmit the teachings of Buddhism in light of the uniquely vivid, liberating, humorous, and powerful tradition Ch'an.

While this book, in offering such an extensive overview, does not go into great depth, it does deliver the goods. Even though some of the material is not up-to-date with recent scholarship, all in all, most of the "out dated" content is of minor significance. With all the trimmings, front and back matter of quality scholarship (notes, detailed index, glossary, etc) this two-volume history of Zen offers plenty of unique material that will be welcomed by Zen students for many generations to come.

27 of 29 people found the following review helpful. a wonderful introduction to the history of Zen

By Wyote

Basically the book is just what it claims to be: a history of Zen Buddhism in China (it says "India" because it discusses the precursors to Zen in the Mahayana tradition and yoga). It is perfect for students interested in the topic. I've heard from a few people (and the preface of the book admits it as well) that this book is somewhat dated because scholarship in this field has ballooned in the past decade or two. However, there is no equivalent introduction to all of Zen history. Thus, if you plan to study Zen history in depth, this is still the best place to start and you can move on to more recent books covering more specific movements and time periods. On the other hand, if you're not going to study in depth, then the new developments are not so radical as to render this unhelpful. Within ten years a better, up to date history of Zen is bound to come out. If you can wait... On the other hand, I believe that a background in Chinese religion would be helpful, since Dumoulin really doesn't provide the background that a student needs in that area. But he does refer to them--Taoism and other strands of Chinese Buddhism--enough that perhaps he ought to have given a bit of introduction to them. He does give an interesting coverage of Neo-Confucianism, although not in much depth and only discussing their relationship to Zen. I was glad I had some familiarity with Taoism, but I found myself wishing I'd had more familiarity with Chinese Buddhism. For that reason, if you are a beginning student, I'd strongly recommend some other books first. If you're new to Zen, start with "An Introduction to Zen Buddhism" by D. T. Suzuki. If you don't know much about Taoism, I recommend Livia Kohn's "Daoism and Chinese Culture." If you don't know much about Chinese Buddhism, I recommend "Buddhism in China" by Kenneth Ch'en. I think, at that point, if you want to get into the history of Zen Buddhism in greater depth, then you'll be ready to get a lot out of

Dumoulin's fine book. Of course, if the history of Zen really is the ONLY thing you're interested in, not how it interacted with Taoism or other kinds of Chinese Buddhism, then go ahead and just jump straight into this one.

Unparalleled in scope and detail, this classic history of Zen covers all important ideas and developments in the tradition from its beginnings in India through the Sung period in China.

From the Publisher Upon its initial publication in 1988, the English translation of Heinrich Dumoulin's *Zen Buddhism: A History, India and China*, instantly became an indispensable resource for both specialists and the audience of general readers interested in Zen Buddhism. A number of laudable features ensured the book's immediate success. First, especially in tandem with the second volume in the set treating Zen in Japan, the book's coverage was rewardingly comprehensive. For the first time English readers could trace the history of the school from its earliest conceptual and practical beginnings in India, through its formation and evolution as an innovative religious movement in China, and on to its efflorescence in Japan. The comprehensive nature of Dumoulin's coverage derived from his own intellectual vision, his determination to address all aspects of his chosen subject matter, from beginning to end.

About the Author Heinrich Dumoulin was one of the world's foremost Zen scholars. He was the first director of the Nanzan Institute of Religion and Culture in Japan. He died in 1995 at the age of 90. John R. McRae is Associate Professor of East Asian Buddhism in the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University. He is also the author of *Seeing Through Zen*.

Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Zen Buddhism traces its origins directly back to Sakyamuni, the founder of the Buddhist religion. One finds the figure of Buddha at the very core of the spiritual tradition that Zen boasts as its own. To claim, however, that the history of Zen really begins with Sakyamuni is a point that will require further explanation. It does not entail any claim regarding the historicity of the person of the Buddha or the factual reality of the line of succession that leads back to him. These two claims are in no sense comparable.