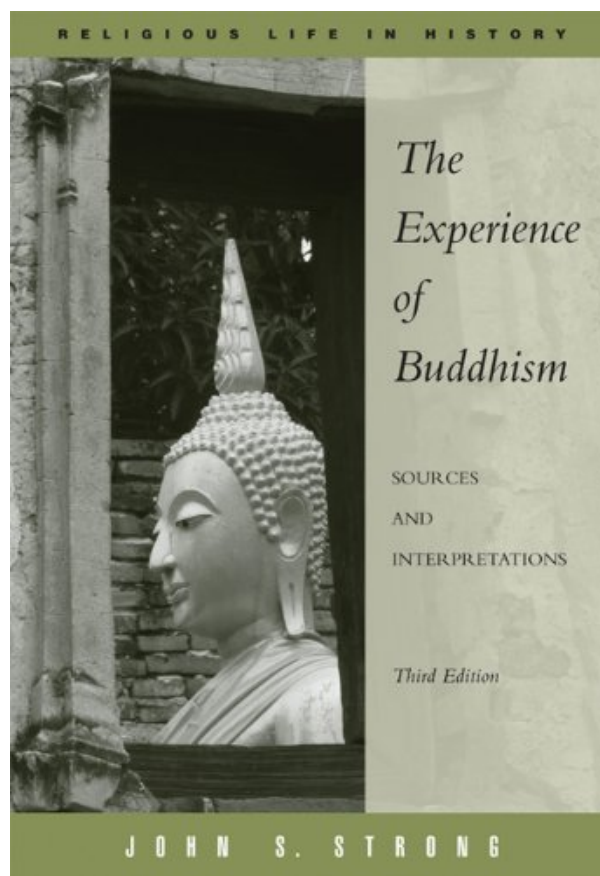
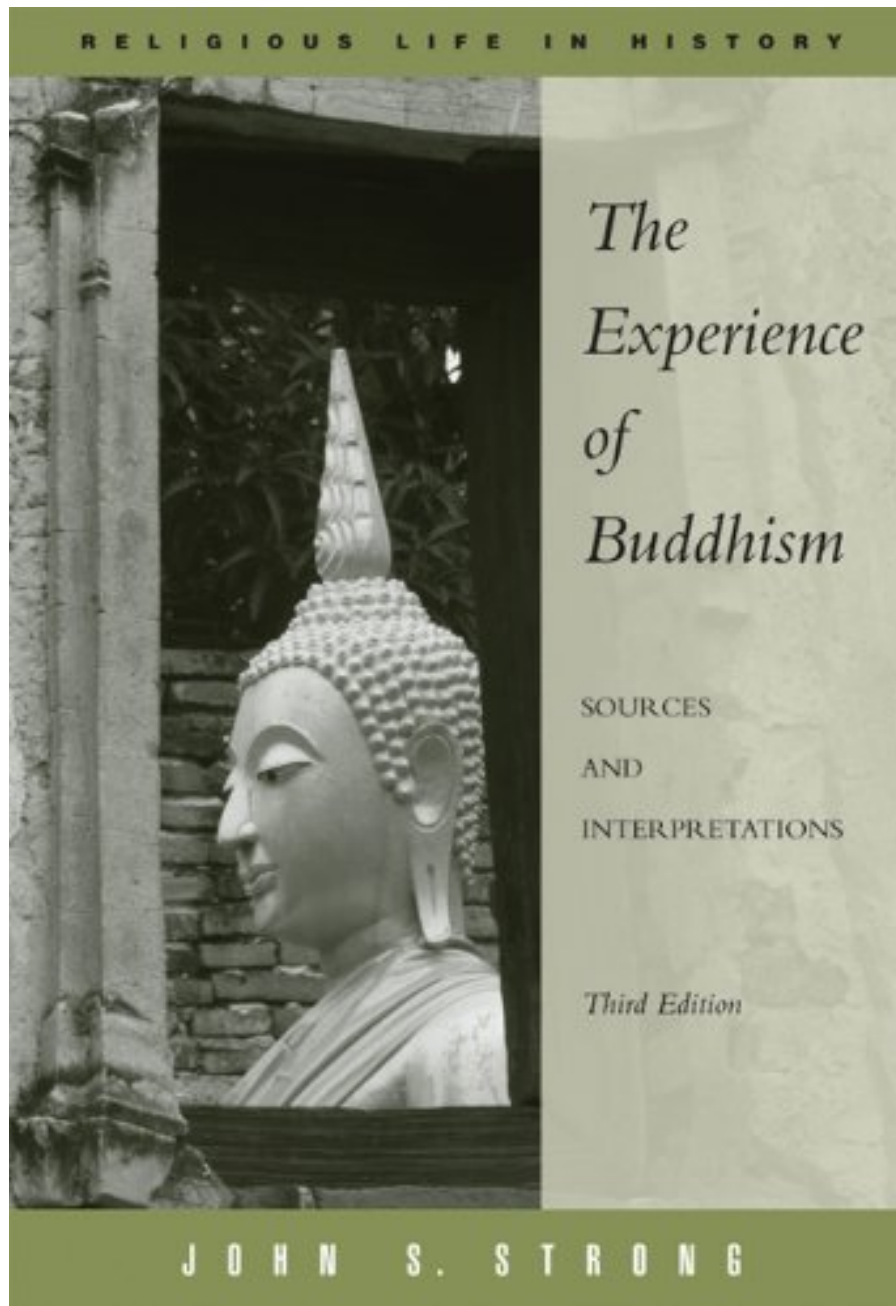


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SOURCES AND INTERPRETATIONS
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Oliver Freiberger, University of Texas, Austin: "Frankly, I would be having a hard time trying to think of ways to improve the book. It is an excellent collection that I have used in several classes. The selection and length of the passages, as well as Strong's short but excellent commentaries are just fine as they are".

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About the Author

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Part of the "Religious Life in History Series," this comprehensive anthology provides translations of texts illustrative of Buddhist philosophy and doctrine as well as descriptive, concrete accounts of Buddhist practices, rituals, and experiences. Author John Strong gives careful consideration to many key aspects of the religion in a wide range of geographic and cultural arenas, from Asia to the United States, and gives students a sense of Buddhism's historical evolution in each area. In addition, this new edition of THE EXPERIENCE OF BUDDHISM uniquely offers students a list of pertinent bibliographic suggestions after each reading, giving them the opportunity to both enhance their understanding of the material and streamline their research and paper-writing process.

- Sales Rank: #353322 in Books
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- Dimensions: 9.26" h x .64" w x 6.51" l, 1.23 pounds
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- 432 pages

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The Absolute Best Mid-Level Buddhist Studies Text

By Jason N. Mical

John Strong's "The Experience of Buddhism" obviously borrows heavily in idea and form from Stephen Beyer's 1970s text "The Buddhist Experience," and it's been updated a bit to include new texts on developing trends in Buddhist thought. "TEOB" is a collection of primary texts with commentaries, some dating back to the early CE, some from the 1200s and 1300s, and some from modern times. This allows the reader to get an

even and fair sample of Buddhist thought from the Mahayana, Theravada, and Vajriyana (Tibetan) schools, although Tibetan is less emphasized here than it is elsewhere (which makes sense, since it's a much smaller school in the Buddhist world, despite its overrepresentation in American pop culture).

Readers will be able to pick up on many important Buddhist concepts, including the basics (Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, etc) and more advanced ideas, like the differences in cosmology between T and M Buddhism (the Arhat and the Bodhisattva, for example). Beware, though: this is Buddhism as it has historically been practiced, and is still practiced in Asian cultures today. It is NOT the feel-good, distilled tripe that passes for Buddhism on the spirituality shelf, next to the books on Wicca and similar religions. There are graphic descriptions of acolytes being beaten, abused, and even killed by monks. It touches on some of the wars that have erupted over Buddhism, not only in Tibet, but the bloody civil war that has torn Sri Lanka (Ceylon) apart. Those looking to reaffirm preconceptions about a perfect religion that allows the practitioner to do "whatever" will want to look elsewhere - this is Buddhism as it IS, as it is PRACTICED, and as it HAS BEEN HISTORICALLY. It's a great study tool, and imperative for anyone seriously considering calling himself or herself a Buddhist (and, some would argue, to do so is contrary to the Buddha's teachings anyway). That isn't to say that Buddhism is painted as a horrible religion - quite the contrary - but neither is it sugar-coated, because it CAN be a difficult pill to swallow.

Although Strong's book touches with far greater depth on Buddhist ideas than many others, it doesn't delve as deep as others into some of the theological debates that have taken place over the last 2500 years. It's one step above an "introductory" text, and to go any deeper, you would have to dig out some serious college-level textbooks. Thankfully, this is still accessible to readers of almost any level, although "TEOB" presupposes at least some experience with Buddhist thought. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in historical Buddhism, a deeper exploration of Buddhist cosmology, or the practice of Buddhism today.

Final Grade: A

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Primary source Buddhism

By Kieran Burke

If you want to read yourself out of Buddhism this is a great book for you. I gave it five stars because it does not get much better than this in terms of scholarship and readability. The book takes the reader on a journey through the history of Buddhism with primary sources, commentary and suggested reading for further study. I completed this book with the sensation that I could leave the subject with a clean slate and move on to some other topic having been given a great overview and detailed analysis of the history of Buddhism.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Outstanding coverage of a huge subject

By Curriculum Vitae

A wonderful read, I would recommend this book to anyone wanting to achieve a deeper understanding of the teachings of the Buddha and the dissemination of that teaching in the years after his death. Although it is a textbook it is not cumbersome or difficult to read.

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