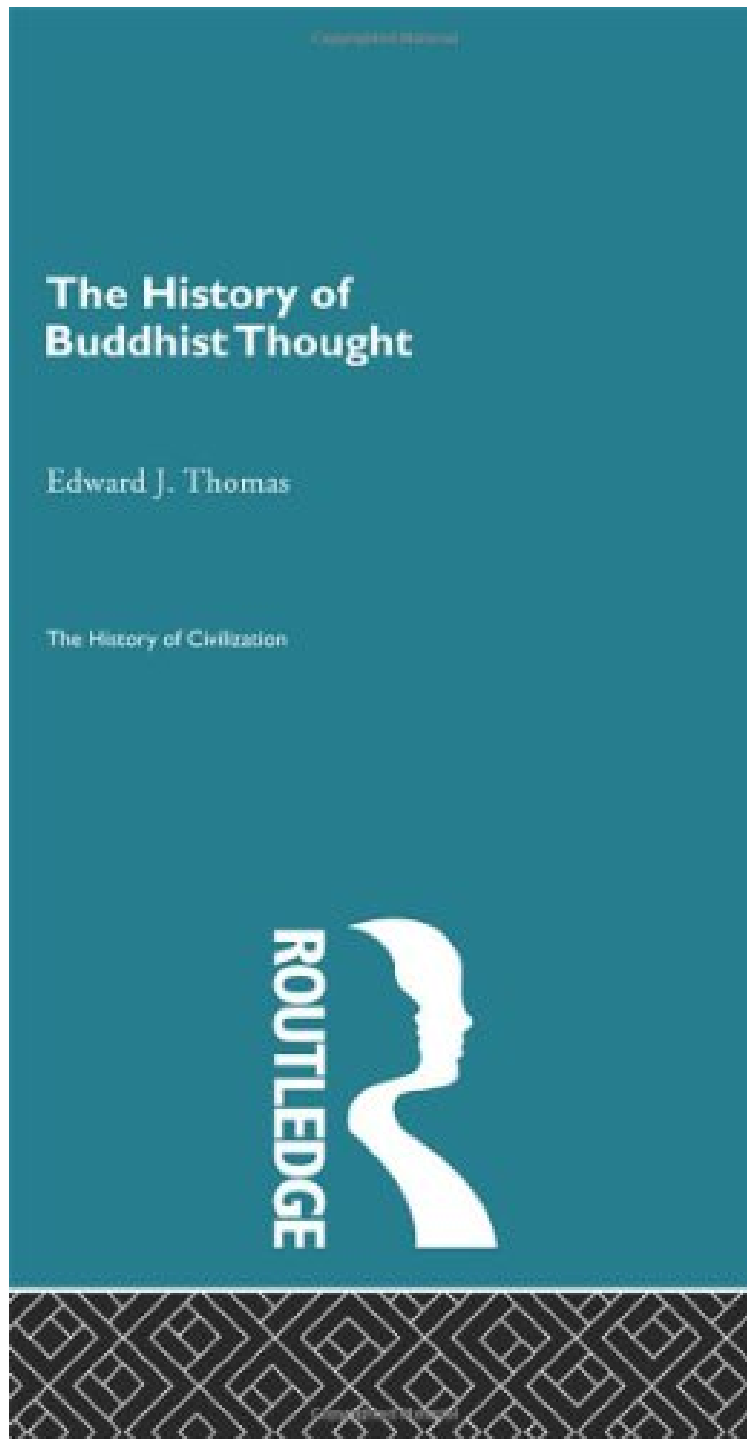


[DOWNLOAD] The History of Buddhist Thought (History of Civilization)

The History of Buddhist Thought (History of Civilization)

Edward J Thomas

*audiobook / *ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC*



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#18871095 in Books 1997-03-20Original language:English 9.21 x 6.14 x .01, .1 #File Name:
0415155924332 pages | File size: 75.Mb

Edward J Thomas : The History of Buddhist Thought (History of Civilization) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The History of Buddhist Thought (History of Civilization)*:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A balanced, academic view on the history of buddhist thought
A balanced and unbiased history of the evolution of buddhist thought. The book should appeal to scholars and individuals who are interested to know the background and context in which buddhist thought arose. An excellent piece of reseach.
9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Originally cutting edge, now very dated survey
By Craig Shoemake
This is my second review of an Edward J. Thomas (1869-1958) book, and I'll say again a few things about the man's background. The author of a number of Indological works, Thomas was a British librarian living in India chiefly remembered today for the present work and his biography of the Buddha. As will be apparent to anyone reading these books, Thomas was a brilliant and erudite man, widely read, with a formidable command of the source texts and languages (Pali certainly and, I believe, Sanskrit as well). That these two books are still cited in discussions of Buddhist intellectual history is a tribute to their having been, at least at the time of their authorship, cutting edge scholarship, not to mention still capable of yielding nuggets of insight and a wealth of information.
HISTORY follows the standard format for surveys of Buddhist philosophy in India. Chapters one, two, six and seven sketch a lot of the pre-Buddhist material--Brahmanism, the Upanishads, yoga, etc. One interesting point Thomas makes, and which is confirmed by my other reading, is that "The original centre of brahmin culture was far from the cradle of Buddhism. ...[T]here are indications to show that the East, and Magadha especially, were long considered unfit for the habitation of brahmins." In other words, the Buddha taught in a backwater, and this fact, coupled with other passages (87, 90-1), indicates pretty decisively that the central thesis of the Upanishads (the atman-Brahman equivalence) was unknown to the Buddha. This is important as it is often implied by Hindus that the Buddha was a Hindu and that he falls in line with the Upanishadic tradition (cf. Eknath Easwaran's Dhammapada translation, 26) --a hard theory to sustain if what Thomas is saying is true. (I believe it is.)
Thomas is quite effective when discussing the history of ideas and when speculating about what may (or may not) be different strata of teaching ("primitive" vs. later, e.g.). Clearly, his knowledge of the sources was thorough and he had a discriminating intellect. However, one should not look to him for doctrinal or philosophical insights, as he tends to run into problems when discussing some of the more challenging teachings of early Buddhism. These are principally covered in chapters four, five, eight, nine and ten--"Early Doctrine," "Causation," "The Soul," "Karma," "Release and Nirvana." Thomas' definition of atta (93) is really quite good, though he does not reflect much on what anatta means. (Though he does offer a good rebuttal to those who try to insert the notion of soul into Buddhist thought--101.) When tackling Dependent Arising and nirvana, he wades full into the scholarly debates of the day, and these sections can be quite interesting and vexing, all at the same time. Interesting because we are made privy to the early Western, academic speculations regarding this exotic animal called "Buddhist thought," and vexing because so often the scholars sound like the proverbial blind men with the elephant. Consider on pages 77ff where Thomas reviews scholarly theorizing concerning dependent arising. Not only are many of the conclusions little better than shots in the dark (the chain is a "cosmic emanation," the product of Sankhya influence, etc), we once again can see that book knowledge, decoupled from actual practice, is of little use in this arena. The discussion of nirvana (123ff and 130ff) is predictably sterile, sounding like a conference of food pundits sitting around a table with menus in hand, arguing about what the foods taste like, while never bothering to actually order a dish and find out. I inevitably have to scratch my head when reading this kind of material.
Chapter eleven presents a solid discussion of the Buddha as he is viewed in the early texts, and is followed by a more strictly chronological discussion of developments in Abhidhamma (ch. 12), the conception of the Buddha (la the early Mahayana--ch. 13), an in depth examination of the Lotus Sutra (ch. 14), the idea of the bodhisattva (chs. 15 16), and the Madhyamika and Yogacara schools (chs. 17 18). The last chapter, "Buddhism and Modern Thought," is a less helpful piece tacked on almost as an afterthought that begins with a startlingly dubious assertion: "The spread of Buddhism into other countries does not properly form a part of the history of Buddhist thought, except in so far as the mingling of cultures may have produced new schools. Theoretically there was no development" (249). With this one statement the whole history of Ch'an (Zen), not to mention the Tantric schools of India and especially Tibet (the so-called Vajrayana) are dismissed, the specific reasons in the latter case made clear: "Tibetan Buddhism, except for some historical and grammatical works, has been little but a development of the less worthy elements introduced from India along with superstitions of its own" (249-50). The early scholarly contempt for all things Tantric is strongly in evidence, to say the least! Lastly, the scholarly state of affairs at the time of the book's writing is made abundantly clear when Thomas writes "Mahayana has never made any impression on the West either as religion or philosophy. Presented by the early investigators as a tissue of absurdities or niaiseries, it is still commonly looked upon as nihilism or subjectivism. Now it is beginning to be recognized as more than this, but a full exposition of its metaphysical theories still awaits the complete publication of its authoritative texts and commentaries" (256). My, how far we've come in sixty years! I hope these last tidbits won't scare off potential readers. Clearly, the book has its failings, but it

can be a worthy addition to the reading list of those trying to shore up their history of Buddhism. Just be sure its not your only read in this category. Try to supplement it with others, such as Kalupahana's BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS, Paul Williams' BUDDHIST THOUGHT, and Warder's INDIAN BUDDHISM.9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Thorough background on how Buddhist thinking evolvedBy Midwest Book ReviewUse Edward Thomas' History Of Buddhist Thought as a primer of scholarly information on the history and development of Buddhist teachings and thoughts: this originally appeared in 1951 but its thorough background on how Buddhist thinking evolved keeps it relevant to new audiences.

Originally published between 1920-70,The History of Civilization was a landmark in early twentieth century publishing. It was published at a formative time within the social sciences, and during a period of decisive historical discovery. The aim of the general editor, C.K. Ogden, was to summarize the most up-to-date findings and theories of historians, anthropologists, archaeologists and sociologists. This reprinted material is available as a set or in the following groupings, or as individual volumes: * Prehistory and Historical Ethnography Set of 12: 0-415-15611-4: GBP800.00 * Greek Civilization Set of 7: 0-415-15612-2: GBP450.00 * Roman Civilization Set of 6: 0-415-15613-0: GBP400.00 * Eastern Civilizations Set of 10: 0-415-15614-9: GBP650.00 * Judaeo-Christian Civilization Set of 4: 0-415-15615-7: GBP250.00 * European Civilization Set of 11: 0-415-15616-5: GBP700.00