



The Scientific Buddha: His Short and Happy Life

(The Terry Lectures Series)

Donald S. Lopez

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This book tells the story of the Scientific Buddha, "born" in Europe in the 1800s but commonly confused with the Buddha born in India 2,500 years ago. The Scientific Buddha was sent into battle against Christian missionaries, who were proclaiming across Asia that Buddhism was a form of superstition. He proved the missionaries wrong, teaching a dharma that was in harmony with modern science. And his influence continues. Today his teaching of "mindfulness" is heralded as the cure for all manner of maladies, from depression to high blood pressure.

In this potent critique, a well-known chronicler of the West's encounter with Buddhism demonstrates how the Scientific Buddha's teachings deviate in crucial ways from those of the far older Buddha of ancient India. Donald Lopez shows that the Western focus on the Scientific Buddha threatens to bleach Buddhism of its vibrancy, complexity, and power, even as the superficial focus on "mindfulness" turns Buddhism into merely the latest self-help movement. The Scientific Buddha has served his purpose, Lopez argues. It is now time for him to pass into nirvana. This is not to say, however, that the teachings of the ancient Buddha must be dismissed as mere cultural artifacts. They continue to present a potent challenge, even to our modern world.



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