



A Thousand Lives Away

BUDDHISM IN CONTEMPORARY BURMA

WINSTON L. KING

A THOUSAND LIVES AWAY

WINSTON L. KING

With a Preface by
EDWARD CONZE

Burmese Buddhism is an ancient, multifaceted religion set in a traditional, isolated culture now attempting to adapt itself to today's world. Winston King presents in this book a detailed and informed picture of Buddhism; through his eyes, Western readers gain some understanding of how it is seen by its practitioners.

Burmese Buddhism is a combination of a variety of elements: traditional orthodoxy; the austere, moralistic, Nirvana-seeking Buddhism of the Pali texts which have been made familiar by the efforts of a generation of Buddhist scholars; and the nat-permeated popular and actual Buddhism of practice. Mr. King is the first to demonstrate that these heterogeneous components form one organic whole. He maintains that this unity is thoroughly Buddhist in quality, and is an integral relationship of concentric and ascending levels among its various aspects.

Within contemporary Buddhism the concept of world change rather than world permanence is being given prime importance. As a consequence, the traditional cosmology is being modified and other new tensions are resulting from the impact of Christianity, modern science, and European social ideals.

Continued on back flap

Jacket: Walter Ritchie

Photo: Norman Lewis

Winston L. King

A THOUSAND LIVES AWAY

Buddhism in Contemporary Burma

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, Massachusetts

1964

- methods of meditation, 202 ff.
 mindfulness, 182; in meditation, 207 ff.
 miraculous powers, of Buddha and saints, 159 ff.
 missionary efforts, in Buddhism, 75, 77 ff.
 Mt. Meru, 88 ff., 104, 109 f., 136
 mysticism, 32 f.
- Nagarjuna, 24
 nats (spirits), 50 ff., 58, 60 f., 65 f., 92, 174
 nationalism and Buddhism, 73
 negation in Buddhism, Chapter I *passim*
 Nibbana, 22, 23, 30, 33, 61, 68 ff., 81, 102 n., 116 n., 144, 172, 181, 189, 208, 213; of the Buddha, 153, 178 f., 190; in this life, 183
nirodha-samapatti (trance), 192, 201
 Noble Eightfold path, 186 ff., 191, 216
 no-soul doctrine (see *anatta*)
 Nu, U, 64 ff., 73, 102 n., 130
- orthodoxy, in Buddhism, 53 ff.
 omniscience, of Buddha, 119, 135, 165 ff.
- Pacceka Buddha, 171
 pagoda religion, 48 ff., 59, 71 f., 214
 Pali Canon, 43, 53 f., 84, 133, 170, 173
panna (insight, wisdom), 194
 parapsychology, 124
 personal individuality, 37 f.
petas (ghosts) 91 f.
 planes of existence, 62, 87 ff., 107, 113 (table), 146
 "positive" elements, in Buddhism, 28 f.; in Western tradition, 33 ff.
- questions not tending to edification, 16
- realization of truth, 25
 rebirth, 62 f., 101, 129
 relic veneration, 64 f., 102 n.
 religious experience and scientific experiment, 139 ff.
- resurgence of Buddhism, 74 ff.
 revelation of Buddha, 170 ff.
 Rhys-Davids, T. W., 42, 43, *quoted* 44, 145 n.
 ritualism, 12
- samsara*, 96 (space-time order), as unimprovable, 21 f., 116
samadhi (concentration-stage), 188, 194, 211
 Sangha (order of monks), 55, 58 f., 63 ff., 70, 77
 saving power of Buddha, 153 f.
 science, non-materiality of modern, 123 ff.
 science, and Buddhism, 107, 109 ff., Chapter IV *passim*, 212 f.; and Kamma, 126 ff.
 scientific (experimental) nature of Buddhist truth, 117 ff., 130 ff., 139 ff.
 Shwe Zan Aung, *quoted*, 25 f.
sila (morality-stage), 182, 187 f., 210
 social consequences of meditation, 217 ff.
 soul doctrine, 14
 Story, Francis, *quoted*, 26 f., 31
 "supernormal" (versus supernatural), 151 f.
 subjects of meditation, 206 f., 221
 super-science, 119, 133 ff., 144
- Tao, 24
 theism, rejected by Buddhism, 15, 19 ff., 177
- universal monarch, 82
vipassana, type of meditation, 182, 190, 194 ff., 199 ff., 211 f.
- World Buddhist Fellowship, 78 f.
- Yoga, 205
- Zen, 24, 26

Continued from front flap

In its uneven and often ingenious way, Buddhism is trying to meet the contemporary world on its own terms by demonstrating its completely scientific character.

With regard to the place of Buddha in Buddhism the following question arises: Is the Buddha mere man, savior, or God? Despite the orthodox Theravada Buddhist insistence upon the strictly human quality of the Buddha, the author believes that in actual practice a considerable degree of personal veneration, sense of presence, and a saviorhood creep in.

A hitherto largely latent struggle between monks and laymen now tends to manifest itself. It involves the "fundamentalism" of the monks, the semi-magical practices of the lay *gaings* (secret societies), secular social reformism, and the new meditational techniques now being practiced by laymen. The new meditational development stresses the direct (or "dry-visioned") way to Nirvanic peace in this life, as contrasted to the more intricate and traditional way of trance-states. Especially geared as it is to the needs of those who have no abstruse meditative skills, the new meditation is widely popular.

In an appendix the author gives an account of his own brief meditational experience in the International Meditation Center in Rangoon.

Winston L. King is Professor of the History of Religions, Vanderbilt University, and the author of several books on Buddhism.

Front: *The Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon*

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, Massachusetts