



The Lotus and the Lion: Buddhism and the British Empire

Jeffrey Franklin

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Buddhism is indisputably gaining prominence in the West, as is evidenced by the growth of Buddhist practice within many traditions and keen interest in meditation and mindfulness. In *The Lotus and the Lion*, J. Jeffrey Franklin traces the historical and cultural origins of Western Buddhism, showing that the British Empire was a primary engine for curiosity about and then engagement with the Buddhisms that the British encountered in India and elsewhere in Asia. As a result, Victorian and Edwardian England witnessed the emergence of comparative religious scholarship with a focus on Buddhism, the appearance of Buddhist characters and concepts in literary works, the publication of hundreds of articles on Buddhism in popular and intellectual periodicals, and the dawning of syncretic religions that incorporated elements derived from Buddhism.

In this fascinating book, Franklin analyzes responses to and constructions of Buddhism by popular novelists and poets, early scholars of religion, inventors of new religions, social theorists and philosophers, and a host of social and religious commentators. Examining the work of figures ranging from Rudyard Kipling and D. H. Lawrence to H. P. Blavatsky, Thomas Henry Huxley, and F. Max Müller, Franklin provides insight into cultural upheavals that continue to reverberate into our own time. Those include the violent intermixing of cultures brought about by imperialism and colonial occupation, the trauma and self-reflection that occur when a Christian culture comes face-to-face with another religion, and the debate between spiritualism and materialism. *The Lotus and the Lion* demonstrates that the nineteenth-century encounter with Buddhism subtly but profoundly changed Western civilization forever.

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