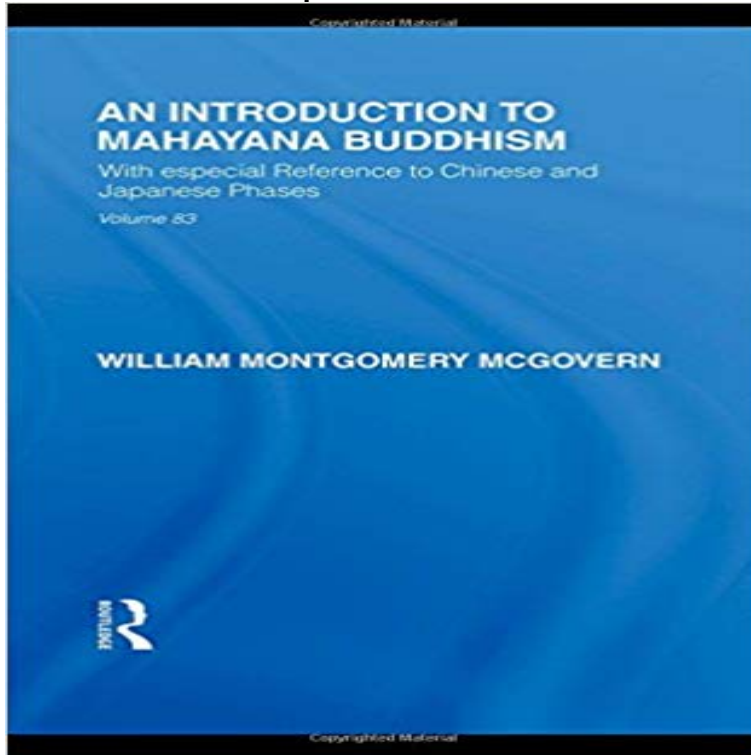


An Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism: With especial Reference to Chinese and Japanese Phases



William Montgomery McGovern's *Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism* was one of the first books on Mahayana Buddhism written for a Western audience. It predates influential English language overviews of Buddhism by D. T. Suzuki, A. Watts, and W. Rahula. The author was born in New York City in 1897 and spent his latter teenage years (1914-1917) training at the Nishi Hongwanji Mahayana Buddhist monastery in Kyoto, Japan. He founded the Mahayana Association at age eighteen and edited and published the journal *Mahayanist* while completing his studies at the monastery. *Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism* was written as part of a thesis which secured him his Buddhist degree and an honorary ordination as a Buddhist priest. Intended as a simplified and introductory text for a lay audience, the book reflects the unique perspective of a Westerner trained in Japan at a time when Mahayana Buddhism was little known in the West. Referencing Buddhist literature, it gives a short history of Buddhism and the divergence of schools of Buddhist philosophy, introduces the four noble truths, the philosophy of Karma, the nature of Buddhahood, reincarnation and the road to nirvana, Buddhist cosmology, and psychological and philosophical elements of Buddhist teachings. Although the divisions of non Mahayana Buddhist sects and philosophy described may be considered dated, *Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism* remains significant for its historical value in presenting Eastern religious and philosophical thought to Westerners at a pivotal time in history.

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