



The Ascendancy of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia

Prapod Assavavirulhakarn

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This wide-ranging account of early Buddhism in Southeast Asia overthrows dominant theories among both Western and Asian Scholars. The author argues that Pali-based Buddhism was brought from India and Sri Lanka by merchants, monks, and pilgrims by the fourth century. Several schools flourished alongside Brahmanism, Mahayanism, and local spirit beliefs--in coexistence rather than conflict. There was no "conversion" to Theravada in the eleventh century as the school was already well established. Prapod draws on a broad range of source material including inscriptions, texts, archaeology, iconography, architecture, and anthropology from India, Sri Lanka, China, and the region itself. He highlights the lived tradition of religious practice rather than scriptural sources.



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