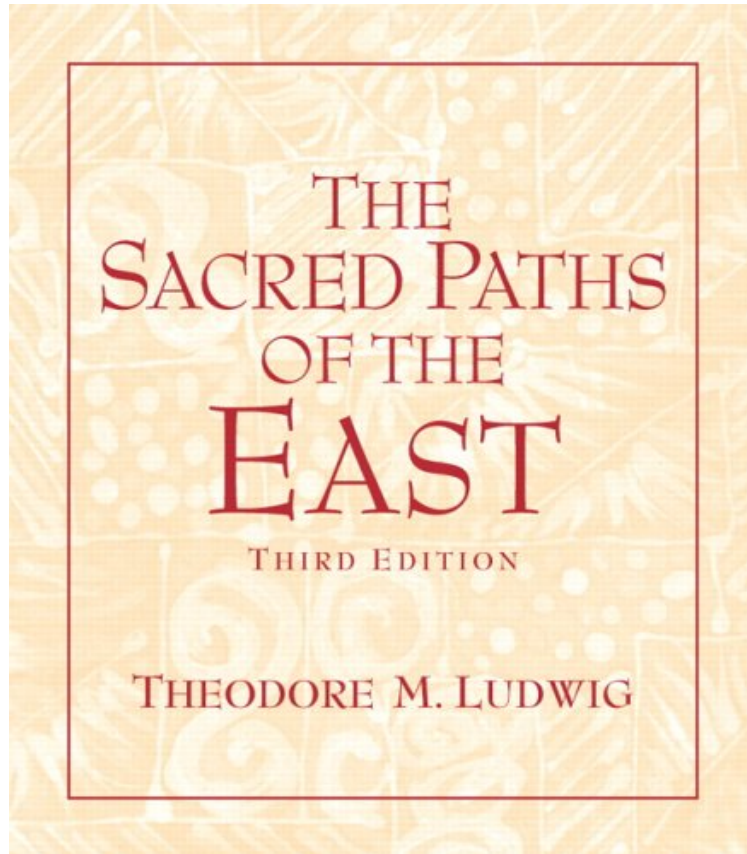


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## The Sacred Paths of the East (3rd Edition)

*Theodore M. Ludwig*

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**Theodore M. Ludwig : The Sacred Paths of the East (3rd Edition)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Sacred Paths of the East (3rd Edition):

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This book combines study of the dynamic historical development of each religious tradition with a comparative thematic structure. In this way, the book helps readers to explore each of the major religions as a unique and integral

system of meaning and life. At the same time, readers are encouraged to discover and explore the nature of religious experience by comparing basic themes and issues common to all religions. Covering the religions arising from India, China, and Japan, this book introduces the key dimensions of religious experience, outlining the basic human concerns that give rise to religious experience, such as origin and identity, ultimate reality, human nature, and the good life. For anyone interested in exploring the origins and development of the diverse religions of the world.

From the Publisher Excerpted and revised from *The Sacred Paths: Understanding the Religions of the World*, this book introduces readers to the religions of the East by combining an historical, descriptive approach with a thematic, comparative approach. It looks at each religion as an historically unique system, and explores the meaning of religious experience by focusing on major themes and issues comparatively. The book contains two main parts: Religions arising from India (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism), and the religions from China and Japan (Confucianism, Daoism [Taoism], Shinto, and Mahayana Buddhism). From the Back Cover This unique book allows readers to examine each of the world's major religions as a unique system of meaning, and at the same time, it lets them explore the inner nature of sacred experience by comparing basic themes and issues common to all religions and pertinent to their own personal lives. It begins with a discussion of the basic human questions and concerns relating to religion—e.g., origin and identity, ultimate reality, human nature, and the good life—and then uses these essential concepts to help describe the beliefs, practices, and historical development of each religion. Chapter topics include religions arising from India, and the religions of China and Japan. Also covered are basic gender issues; and the role of women in major world religions. For individuals interested in religious studies, theology, and philosophy, and anyone looking to draw more personal meaning from the inner experiences found in different religions. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Preface to the Second Edition This study of the religions of the East incorporates material from a larger volume on the whole range of and thematic approaches facilitates comparison among the religious traditions, highlighting the world's religious traditions, *The Sacred Paths: Understanding the Religions of the World*, third edition (Prentice Hall, 2001). The new edition has been revised to bring material up-to-date and to provide the reader with greater clarity in the discussions of complex historical and theoretical material. Designed for those who want to concentrate on the religious traditions that have shaped the Eastern world, this volume focuses on two main groupings: religions arising from India, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism; and religious traditions of China and Japan, especially those known as Confucianism, Daoism, Shinto, and Mahayana Buddhism. To serve the needs of people who are beginning their study of the world's religions, the basic approach in this volume is focused on the goal of understanding. And understanding begins with a sense of what a particular religion means for the people who practice it and live by it. It is important to realize that each religious tradition is a living and growing organism stretched out over time, and thus we pay attention to historical and cultural developments. But we also attempt to go beyond historical information and let readers find themselves in the place of the people who live by each religion—viewing the world through their sacred stories, their worldview, their rituals, and their notion of the good life. The procedure used in this volume, then, combines the necessary discussion of historical matters with a thematic approach based on general issues that arise out of human experience—questions about personal identity, human existence and wholeness, and the right way to live. Since the reader can identify with such issues from personal experience, windows are opened toward an understanding of the meaning and guidance people find in their particular religious traditions. Further, this combination of historical and thematic approaches facilitates comparison among the religious traditions, highlighting the main motifs and concerns of that general dimension of human life we call religious experience. Since this is a basic introduction for people who are beginning their exploration of the world's religious paths, the major focus is not on academic questions and theories about religion, nor on technical information about all the movements and historical developments that make up each religious tradition. Such theories and developments are important, of course, and this volume attempts to make readers aware of them in a beginning way. It is important that readers get the sense that each religious tradition is a highly complex living organism, with various movements arising at different points in history. Yet it is helpful for the beginning student to recognize first of all the general mainstream of each religious tradition in constructing an overall picture of the religious world of the East. The excitement and challenge of this venture will carry over, it is hoped, into a continuing engagement with understanding the complex religious traditions of the world and with the various issues raised in the academic study of these traditions. It is particularly important that readers have some encounter with the sacred texts and scriptures of each particular religious tradition yet the comprehension and appreciation of such sacred texts is notoriously difficult for an outsider. This volume incorporates extensive quotations from the sacred texts of each tradition, providing interpretation so the reader can see the significance of these texts and comprehend what they mean for people of that religious tradition. It will be helpful, of course, if this volume is supplemented with an additional collection of sacred texts, when that is feasible. The inclusion of material on artistic expression in the different religious traditions helps the reader see that each religion or culture has its own unique aesthetic sense. Thus it is important, for understanding each tradition, to pay attention to the special artistic expressions growing out of that religious experience. Also, this volume gives particular attention to the role of women in each tradition. Greater awareness of women's experiences

and leadership roles has made possible many new understandings and insights in all the religious traditions. Among the study features in this volume, the discussion questions for each chapter have been revised and expanded. These questions are designed to promote review of the material as well as further reflection on the character of each religious tradition. Other study features include maps, timelines, and a glossary of key terms. The suggestions for further reading for each religious tradition have incorporated many important books that have been published in the last few years. Many have helped along the way in the development of this book and toward the completion of this second edition. And so I thank all those students and colleagues who have made so many helpful suggestions concerning ways in which this text can become a more helpful means for understanding the religious paths of the East.