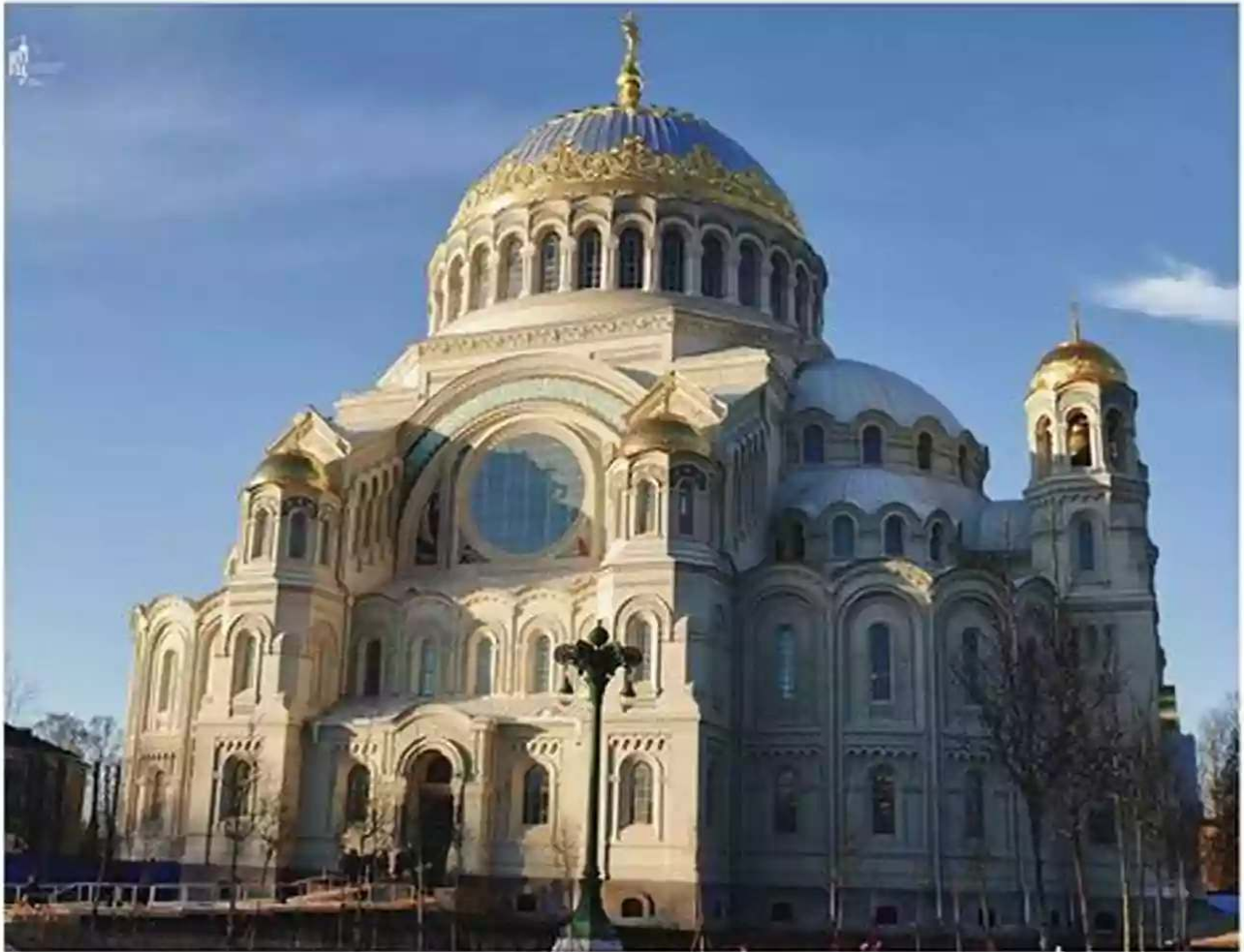


An Introduction To Eastern Christianity

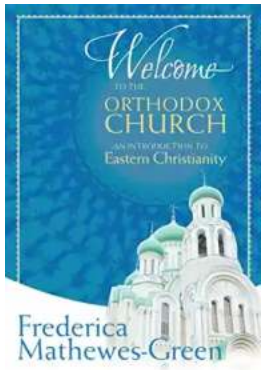


Eastern Christianity, also known as Eastern Orthodox Christianity, is one of the major branches of Christianity. With deep historical roots, it is an essential part of the spiritual and cultural heritage of many nations in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.

Origins and Development

The roots of Eastern Christianity can be traced back to the early days of Christianity itself. After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the apostles

and their disciples spread the Christian faith across various regions, resulting in the formation of different Christian communities.



Welcome to the Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Eastern Christianity

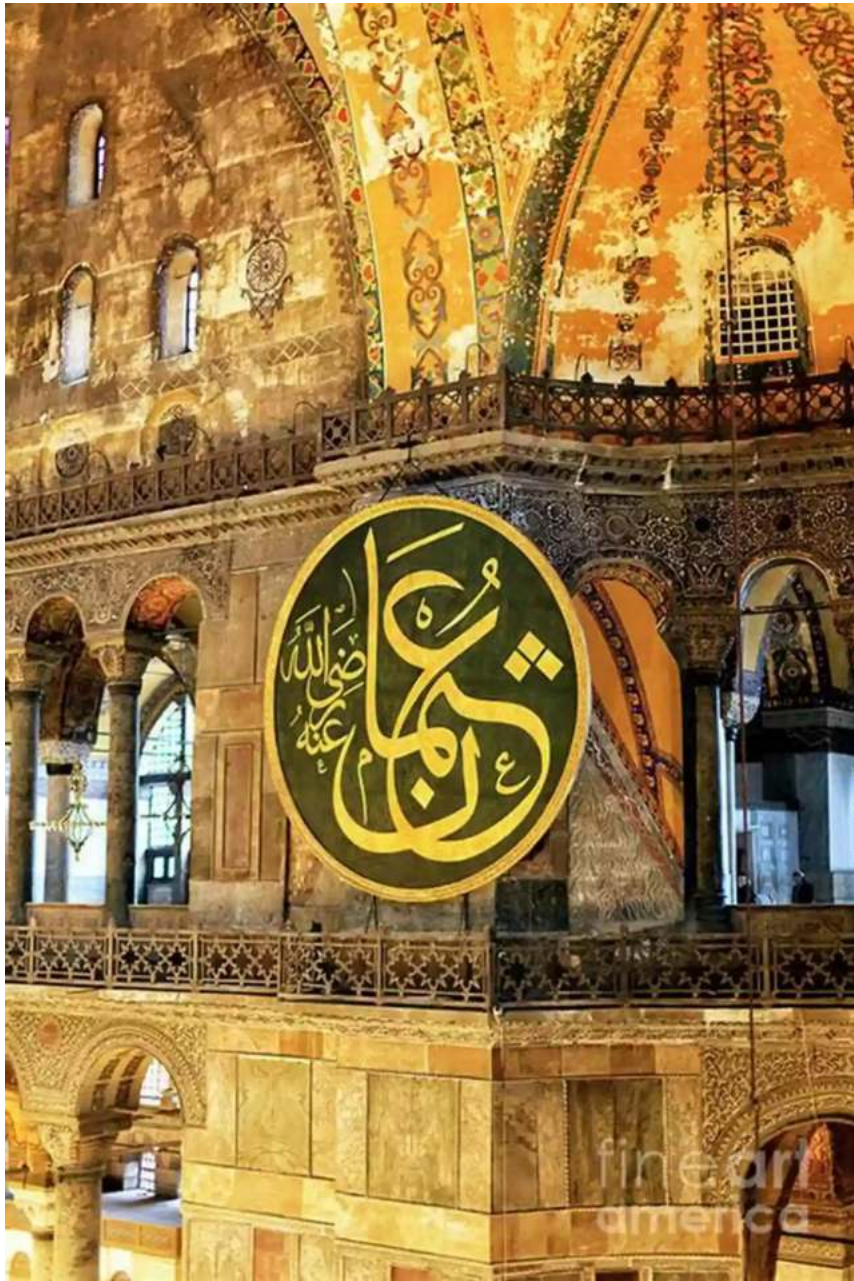
by Frederica Mathewes-Green (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

- Language : English
- File size : 3191 KB
- Text-to-Speech : Enabled
- Screen Reader : Supported
- Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
- Word Wise : Enabled
- Print length : 386 pages
- Lending : Enabled



As the influence of Roman culture grew, the cultural and theological differences between the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire became more pronounced. This eventually led to the Great Schism of 1054, which divided Christianity into the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.



Despite this separation, Eastern Christianity continued to flourish and evolve, with centers such as Constantinople (now Istanbul) playing a significant role in its development. Byzantine Christianity, as it is commonly known, integrated elements of Greek philosophy and Roman imperial culture into its religious practices and theology.

Beliefs and Practices

Eastern Christianity shares many core beliefs with other branches of Christianity, such as the belief in the Holy Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. However, it also has distinct characteristics that shape its identity.

Eastern Christians emphasize the mystical and contemplative aspects of worship, with a particular focus on the mystery of the Eucharist. Liturgical services are often rich in symbolism, incorporating elements such as incense, iconography, and chant. The clergy, including priests and bishops, play a central role in leading these services and guiding the spiritual lives of the faithful.



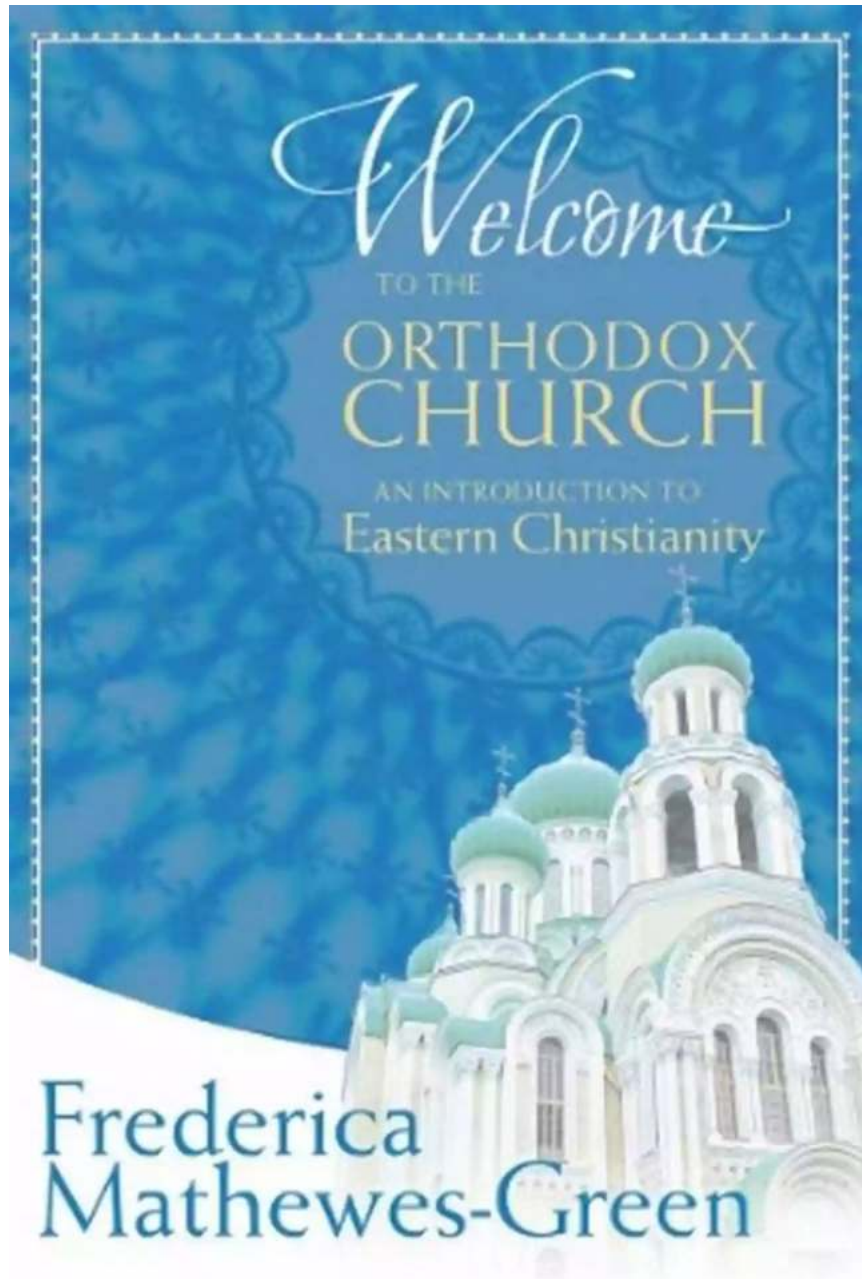
Furthermore, the veneration of icons is an integral part of Eastern Christian spirituality. Icons are sacred images that depict Christ, the Virgin Mary, saints, and angels. They are seen as windows to the spiritual realm and aids to prayer and meditation.

The approach to theology in Eastern Christianity is characterized by a deep appreciation for mystery and paradox. It seeks to explore the divine truths through the language of symbolism and the lived experience of the faithful. This tradition is often referred to as "apophatic theology" or "negative theology."

Branches of Eastern Christianity

Eastern Christianity encompasses several distinct branches, each with its own traditions and practices. The largest and most well-known branch is the Eastern Orthodox Church, which is further divided into national or regional autocephalous (self-governing) churches. Some of the prominent autocephalous churches include the Russian Orthodox Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Another important branch is the Oriental Orthodox Church, which includes churches such as the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, the Armenian Apostolic Church, and the Syriac Orthodox Church. Although they share many similarities with Eastern Orthodoxy, the Oriental Orthodox churches have been separate since the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD due to theological differences.

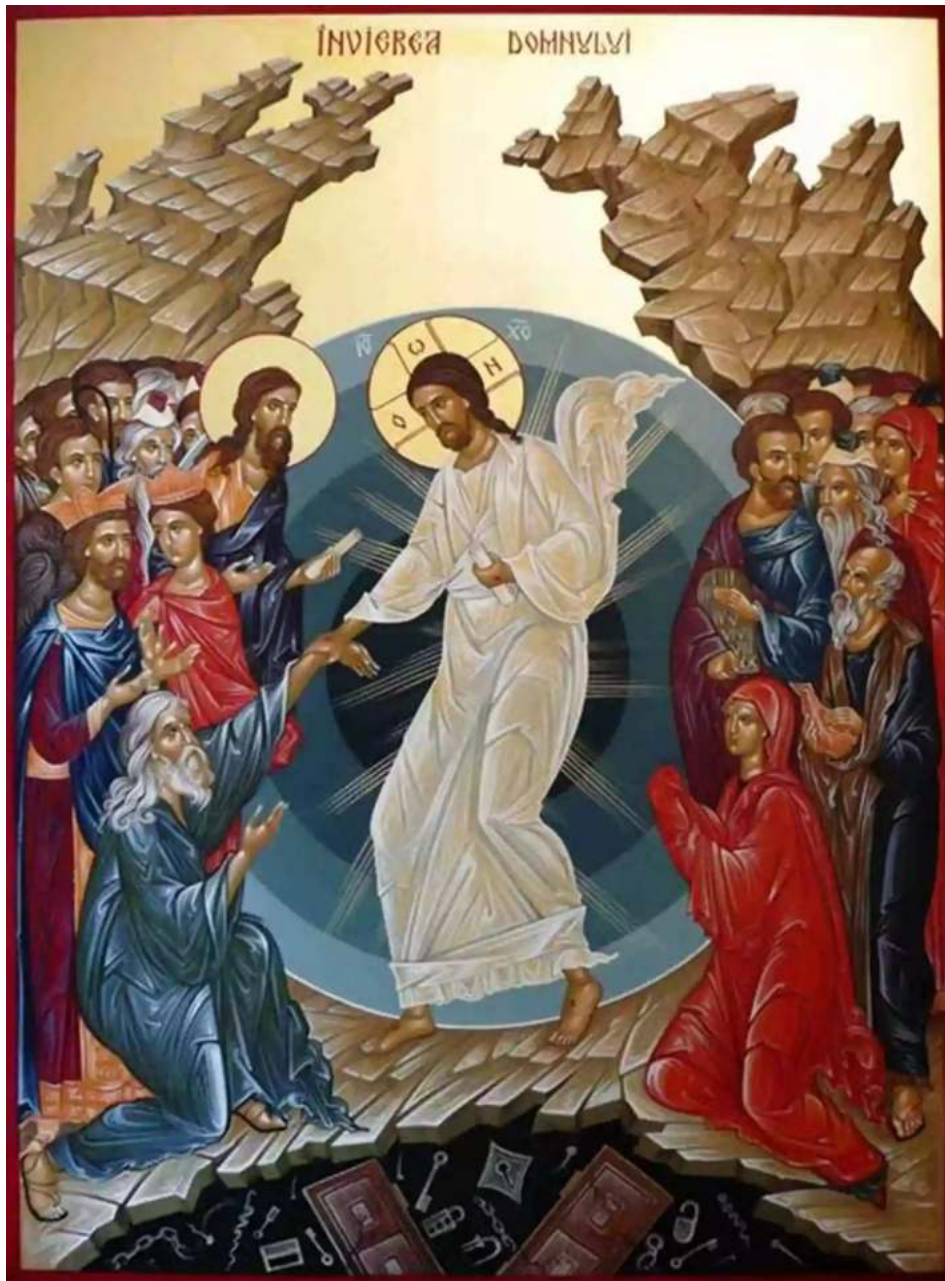


Additionally, there are smaller Eastern Catholic Churches, which are in communion with the Bishop of Rome (the Pope) but preserve their Eastern liturgical traditions. These churches retain the richness of Eastern spirituality while being in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

The Influence of Eastern Christianity

Eastern Christianity has had a profound impact on the culture, art, and spirituality of the regions where it has thrived. The beautiful Eastern Christian cathedrals, adorned with intricate iconography and ornate mosaics, are a testament to the artistic and architectural achievements inspired by the faith.

The spiritual teachings of Eastern Christianity have also influenced renowned Christian mystics throughout history. Figures such as St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, and the Russian Orthodox mystic St. Seraphim of Sarov drew inspiration from the rich contemplative tradition of the East.



Moreover, Eastern Christianity has played a significant role in shaping the religious and cultural identity of entire nations. It has contributed to the formation of distinct cultural practices, literature, and religious festivities that continue to be celebrated to this day.

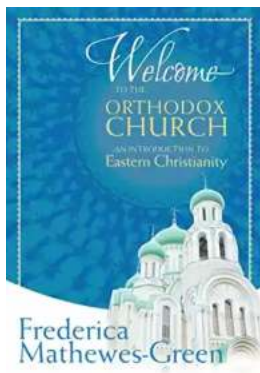
Want to learn more about Eastern Christianity?

[Click here for a comprehensive guide!](#)

Eastern Christianity, with its rich history, unique spirituality, and diverse branches, is a fascinating part of the Christian tradition. Its ancient traditions continue to inspire and guide millions of people around the world.

References:

1. Smith, T. (2008). *The Orthodox Church: An to Eastern Christianity*. Penguin.
2. Meyendorff, J. (1989). *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. Fordham University Press.
3. Ware, K. (1993). *The Orthodox Church*. Penguin.



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There are other introductory books about Orthodoxy. This one comprehensively covers the history, theology, and practice without talking over your head.

Mathewes- Green takes the original approach of bringing you into a typical church for a series of visits. That is how Christians learned the faith for most of history, by coming into a community and keeping their eyes and ears open.

Designed primarily for newcomers to come to understand Orthodoxy and Orthodox Christians, this guide to the faith is also a non-threatening and accessible to people already "in the pews." Inviting rather than argumentative, this is a book Orthodox Christians will be giving to their friends.

"Plenty of books deal with Christian theology in weighty and abstruse ways, but few apply the theology so wholly to the everyday lived realities of life, and in such easily accessible prose, as does *Welcome to the Orthodox Church*. Take warning, though: if you do read this thoughtful, passionate book, you run the risk of having to take the claims of Orthodox Christianity very seriously indeed." —Philip Jenkins, Baylor University

"How do you introduce (Eastern) Orthodoxy? Frederica suggests we treat it as a large, and muchloved, family house. She takes us round it, showing us all the rooms and what goes on in them. . . . There is lots of information, and she deals directly with problems to be encountered. This is a wonderful book." —The Very Revd Archpriest Andrew Louth, Durham University, author of *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*

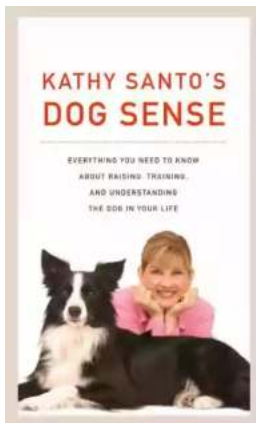
"With exhilarating clarity, Frederica Mathewes-Green introduces the profound mystery at the heart of the Orthodox Christian faith, which is also our common inheritance: it is a way of life to be encountered and performed; it is not reducible to a range of propositions to be considered. With great charm and with characteristic wit and humor, she prepares the way for those who arrive at an Orthodox church for services, letting them know what to expect, what to watch for, how to lean in—letting them know how best to open their hearts to this worship that is both ancient and ever new." —Scott Cairns

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oasis for those who have embraced it. This just may be the Church you have been looking for and didn't even know it existed." —John Maddex, CEO Ancient Faith Ministries

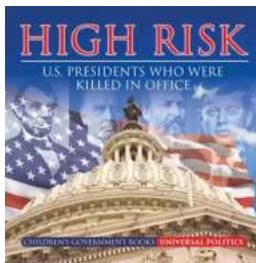
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"This excellent book is most valuable because it is more like a friend than a book. It's the voice you hope to hear beside you in church, murmuring explanations and encouragement as you make your journey. I highly recommend it." — Rev. Dr. Christopher Metropulos, Executive Director, Orthodox Christian Network, MyOCN.net



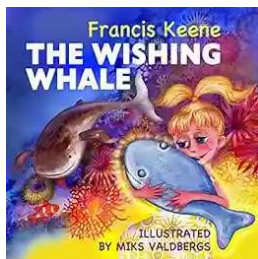
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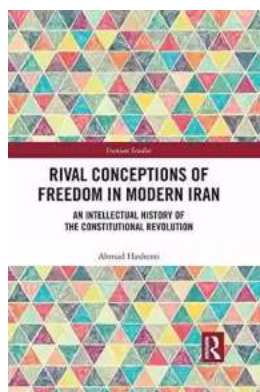
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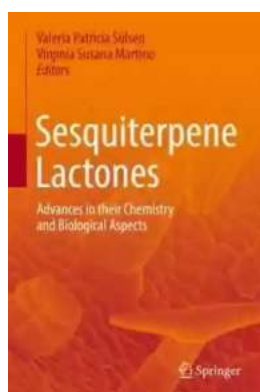
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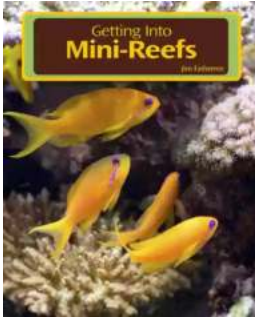
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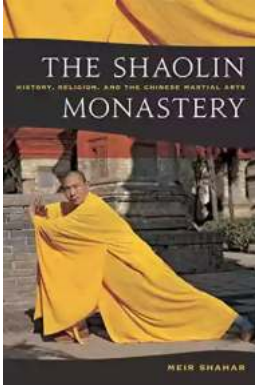
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