

Historical Dictionary of Jainism

By Kristi L. Wiley. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2004, pp. 287, ISBN 0-8108-5051-6

Kristi Wiley's book closes a vast gap in English language publishing on Jainism in providing short explanations of key concepts, texts, ceremonies, places, organisations, and biographies of important historical personalities of the Jain tradition in an easily accessible format. In European languages, only Jozef Deleu's *Die Mythologie des Jainismus* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1978) in German language offers a similar format, though being of more limited scope. The Historical Dictionary of Jainism is Volume 53 of the popular Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies and Movements series edited by Jon Woronoff following the common format of the series. It contains a pronunciation guide, a list of the Svetambara and Digambara scriptures (including some of the lost scriptures), an introductory essay, a map of major sites, dictionary entries in alphabetical order, and an extensive thematically structured bibliography. Seven appendices offer additional information on the *gunasthanas*, the *pratimas*, Jain festivals, and the signs ('cognizances') and the birth and *nirvana* sites and the *yaksas/yaksis* that are conventionally associated with the twenty-four *tirthankaras*. The book will be particularly popular amongst university students. It is also a useful resource for researchers studying Jainism as a living religion, and of course for anyone who is interested in learning more about one of the least studied of the great religious traditions of the world. The only drawback is a consequence of the rigid format of the series: There are no links between individual dictionary entries and the bibliography. The sources of information are therefore not clearly traceable for those who wish to know more about a particular subject. The need for selection of entries inevitably forced compromises upon the author. The missing index makes it very difficult to find, for example, the note on *Jain Spirit* on p. 252 at first glance, since it is not, like *The Jain* and *The Jain Digest*, listed under 'Associations of Jains in the Diaspora' but in the Introduction to the Bibliography which also points to the Centre for Jain Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

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