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Readings Of The Platform Sutra (Columbia Readings Of Buddhist Literature)



Synopsis

The Platform Sutra comprises a wide range of important Chan/Zen Buddhist teachings. Purported to contain the autobiography and sermons of Huineng (638–713), the legendary Sixth Patriarch of Chan, the sutra has been popular among monastics and the educated elite for centuries. The first study of its kind in English, this volume offers essays that introduce the history and ideas of the sutra to a general audience and interpret its practices. Leading specialists on Buddhism discuss the text's historical background and its vaunted legacy in Chinese culture. Incorporating recent scholarship and theory, chapters include an overview of Chinese Buddhism, the crucial role of the Platform Sutra in the Chan tradition, and the dynamics of Huineng's biography. They probe the sutra's key philosophical arguments, its paradoxical teachings about transmission, and its position on ordination and other institutions. The book includes a character glossary and extensive bibliography, with helpful references for students, general readers, and specialists throughout. The editors and contributors are among the most respected scholars in the study of Buddhism, and they assess the place of the Platform Sutra in the broader context of Chinese thought, opening the text to all readers interested in Asian culture, literature, spirituality, and religion.

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Customer Reviews

The Platform Sutra is a seminal Zen text, despite the fact that the principal figure isn't even the Buddha. I'm taking a course on the sutra at the College of Zen Buddhist Studies, and so I was extremely excited when Columbia University Press sent me a copy of a brand new title about the scripture - "Readings of the Platform Sutra" - to read and review. Edited by Morten Schlutter and

Stephen F. Teiser, "Readings of the Platform Sutra" engages the Sixth Ancestor's landmark scripture from nearly every imaginable angle - historical, autobiographical, doctrinal, and soteriological. The book explores the history of the sutra, providing vital context regarding Shenhui, the Sixth Ancestor's alleged Dharma heir, and Shenxui, the leader of so-called "Northern Chan," a school accused of being gradualist and dualistic. Without a doubt, the book enhanced my understanding of, and thus my engagement with, the sutra. "Readings" contains some of my favorite Chan scholars: Morten Schlutter, Wendi Adamek, and of course, Peter N. Gregory. Gregory's essay, "The Platform Sutra as the Sudden Teaching," is my favorite. In it, Gregory elucidates some of the most puzzling passages on nonduality in the Platform Sutra. For instance, he clarifies Huineng's often misunderstood stance on thought. It was attachment to dualistic thought that he rejected, not thinking in and of itself, for thinking, like all other dharmas, is a manifestation of the Absolute. Huineng's solution was non-thought, the complete non-separation of meditative concentration and wisdom. To him, concentration was the essence of the Absolute, and wisdom its function. They are, like a flame and its light, inseparable - nondual.

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