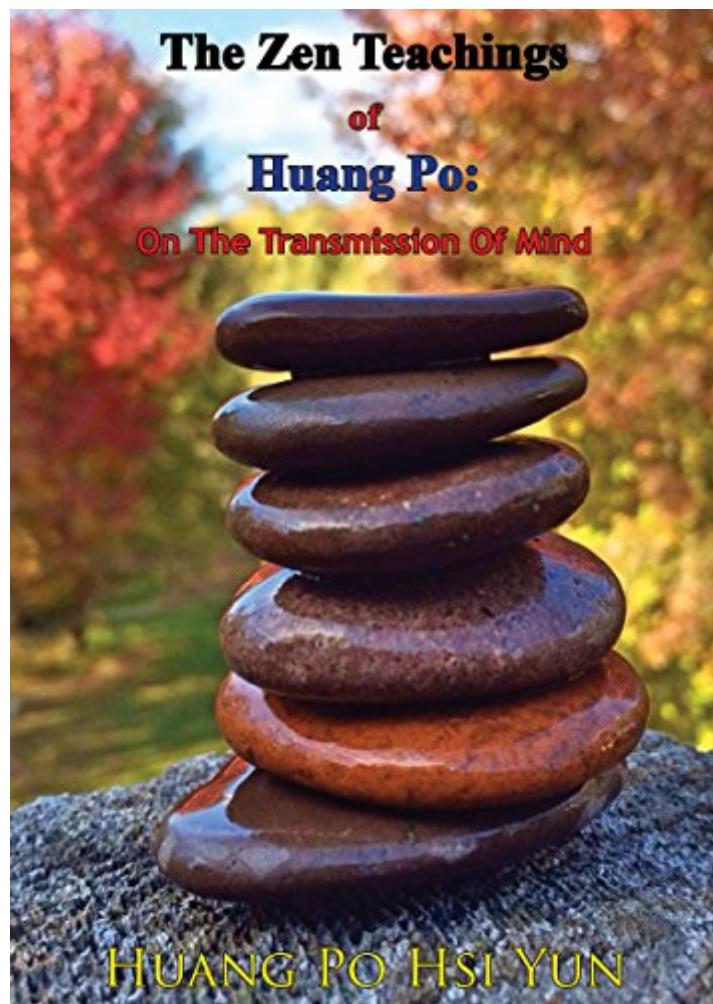


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The Zen Teachings Of Huang Po: On The Transmission Of Mind



Synopsis

This Historical text from the direct teaching of the Zen master, Huang Po, allows the Western reader to gain an understanding of Zen from the original source, one of the key works in its teachings; it also offers deepening and often startling insights into the rich treasures of Eastern thought. Huang Po, also known as Hsi Yun, is believed to have died as late as 850 A.D. He is regarded in a sense as the founder of the great Lin Chi sect. He lived below the Vulture Peak on Mount Huang Po, in the district of Kao An. Like most Zen masters, Huang Po taught in parables which were delivered as sermons, anecdotes, and dialogues. These have been collected here to present the teachings of the Master himself. He compares the mind to the sun travelling through the sky, sending forth light uncontaminated by the finest particle of dust. For those who have discovered the nature of Reality, he says, there is nothing old or new, concepts become meaningless and reason leads to error. Nowhere is the use of paradox in Zen illustrated better than in the teachings of Huang Po, who shows how the experience of intuitive knowledge which reveals to a man what he really is, cannot be communicated by words. With the help of these paradoxes, beautifully and simply presented in this collection, Huang Po could set his disciples on the right path. It is in this fashion that the Zen master leads his listener into the truth, often by a single phrase designed to destroy his particular demon of ignorance. Many of the dialogues recorded in The Zen Teaching of Huang Po took place in public assembly, generally with hundreds of the Master's followers in attendance. This text is remarkable for its purity of thought and speech. John Blofeld's translation reflects his deep understanding of Zen and gives it a crystal clear presentation. In addition, there are an introduction and explanatory notes that make this original and revered text even more valuable to the contemporary reader.

Book Information

File Size: 1152 KB

Print Length: 138 pages

Publisher: Pickle Partners Publishing (March 28, 2016)

Publication Date: March 28, 2016

Language: English

ASIN: B01E81KJRK

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #144,391 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #21
in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Religion > Buddhism #29 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Buddhism > Sacred Writings #54 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Eastern > Buddhism > History

Customer Reviews

There seems to be unanimous agreement that this deceptively compact text repays careful digestion, a mine of wisdom compressed within its pages -for those prepared to dig it out. Huang Po's discourses (and the Wan Ling record) remain some the most lucid expositions of Zen. They were delivered when the Zen tradition was still fresh. Huang po's 'sermons' were addressed to practising Buddhists. They presuppose that you are 'looking' into the meaning hinted at - the 'MIND' - which is neither 'yours' nor 'mine' - and in that sense 'VOID' - yetembraces everything in the phenomenal universe. Zen is sometimes regarded as an 'obscure' doctrine, but Huang P'o sermons have a refreshing sense of focus. Skirting the boundaries of what is virtually indescribable, he necessarily ends up uttering paradoxes - sometimes paradox -within-paradox, within paradox - and yet, in such a way that it actually brings focus, 'jiggling' the mind out of its habitual tendency to cling to dualities and contraries. In short, it resumes its inherent condition. We don't 'do' it - 'IT' does itself. All we have to do - is to get out of the way. Thus, Huang P'o's 'direct pointing to the Mind.' This is Zen as it was originally taught, before all the wrangling about 'fixed koans' and answers - or getting stuck with 'just sitting.' Huang P'o speaks with unshakeable conviction that we can AWAKEN RIGHT NOW - if we look into what he is saying. He doesn't want to tie anyone up. It has to be 'your own thing' - nobody else can do it for you. This is squeaky clean Dharma!P.S Besides the Huang-Po material, Blofeld also translated Hui-hai's 'Treatise on Entering the Gate to Sudden Enlightenment.' Between them, these two Zen 'sermons' represent some of most lucid expositions of Zen - ever set down in writing. They possess astonishing focus and compression, without a wasted word.

Huang Po (d. 850) is perhaps one of Zen Buddhism's most brilliant Zen masters. This translation by John Blofeld of Huang Po's dialogues brings to light Zen Buddhism's most esoteric theme which concerns Buddha Mind. Different than the Western concept of Mind, Huang Po reveals the transcendent nature of Buddha Mind which traditional Zen Buddhists believe is the source of all things. This book is a must for anyone wishing to put their foot into the waters of Zen Buddhism. It is

a classic in every since of the word. It always seems to say more than print is capable of expressing

If you want Chan (Zen) teachings, this book is what you need. I read it several times, then supplemented it with Bodhidharma's teachings as one reviewer suggested. However, upon reading Red Pine's Zen Teachings of Bodhidharma I immediately returned it and bought another copy of Huang Po as a backup. I did not have a problem with Bodhidharma's teachings as much as I simply felt that Huang Po explained the One Mind in a way that resonated clearer with me. Both Bodhidharma and Huang Po taught naught but the One Mind, so neither will lead you astray. I gave away all of my other Zen books when I read Huang Po. Reading a dozen Zen books will not bring me any closer to "attaining" enlightenment, just as boiling the ocean is not necessary in order to make a cup of tea. My only complaint is that this book is not available in hardcover.

The teachings of Huang Po bear re-reading many, many times. So compressed and dense is this work that it is impossible to absorb the full import of Huang Po's insights at first pass. I've read it at least a dozen times and continue to discover new insights. This is one of three books I'd want on a desert island. Don't be put off by its compression. This book was translated by John Blofield in the 1950s and appears to remain the only English translation. I'd love to know what happened to Blofield, who apparently was living in Thailand at the time he translated the work.

This was the first Zen text that I had ever seen. I had read the Tao Te Ching, and the Teachings of the Buddha. I was familiar with the life of Padmasampavha, and the wisdom of Confucious. Nothing came close to imparting the understanding that I achieved while reading the Zen teaching of Huang Po. Beginning with the translator's introduction, the clarity and simpleness that is Zen transmission speaks from every page. The Tathagata said "I truly attained nothing from complete, unexcelled enlightenment". Huang Po achieved nothing around 830, c.e., and his words, along with (of course) much meditation, can help anyone else do the same.

Although I never considered myself a student of Zen Buddhism until I read this book along with Red Pine's Zen Teachings of Bodhidharma, I do now. Having been a student of Advaita Vedanta for years, I have crossed over. Originally I was drawn to Huang Po because of studying the Dr. David Hawkins's books who I highly respect. On the Map of Consciousness he devised, he calibrated Huang Po in the 900's which is extremely high on a scale ranging from 1-1000. Only the World Teachers like Buddha, Christ, Krishna, Zoroaster etc. calibrated higher. Although Zen has much in

common with the nondualistic teachings of Advaita, the Teachings are, well, Zen! I can not begin to recommend this book highly enough for students ready to pierce the unadulterated Truth beyond words that comes with the tacit Understanding of One Mind or Universal Mind. Lying beyond the concepts of intellect, the wordless Transmission of Mind to Mind comes through the text of this book and teachings. Make no mistake, these are the highest teachings that have the Grace and Power to take the student beyond him/herself into Self or that Primordial Awareness of One Mind. Truly a Dharma Jewel in its undivided Shining Brilliance. I love it!

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