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Peter N. Gregory

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Peter N. Gregory : Sudden and Gradual (Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sudden and Gradual (Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought):

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful. A thorough and useful studyBy HakuyuThis book deserves more than the grudging review granted to date. It may not be everyones cup of tea, especially if seduced by simplistic accounts of 'pop Zen.' Make no mistake about it, the topic which forms the central focus of this book - viz. the tension between the claims made in the name of 'sudden enlightenment' - and the 'gradualist' elements which, ironically, seem to be required in other respects - to make practical sense of it, will engage anyone who takes Zen practice seriously. This problem engaged the attention of Tsung-mi, an eminent Chinese Ch'an Buddhist who lived in the formative years of the Ch'an/Zen tradition, when the ideas at stake were current and needed to be resolved. In a sense, those of us engaged with Zen in the West are in an analogous position, such issues therefore being much more than 'dead history.' Peter Gregory edited the material provided by a number of contributors - and gave us the chapter dealing with Tsung-mi. In my view, this was the strongest chapter of the whole book and would have made it worth buying, anyway. As it is, the other chapters have much to offer - and, all in all, this book repays careful reading. I list the chapter headings for reference. It gives you a better idea of what's in store. I don't propose to review all the material, but note the

chapters that struck me as significant. The Sudden and Gradual Debates The Mirror of the Mind. Paul Demieville. Sudden Illumination or Simultaneous Comprehension: Remarks on Chinese and Tibetan Terminology. @ R.A. Stein. Purifying Gold. @ The Metaphor of Effort and Intuition in Buddhist Thought and Practice. @ Luis O. Gomez. Sudden and Gradual Enlightenment in Chinese Buddhism. Tao-sheng's Theory of Sudden Enlightenment Re-examined. - Whalen Lai. Sudden and Gradual Intimately Conjoined. @ Chih-i's T'ien-tai and Gradual Intimately Conjoined. @ Chih-i's T'ien-tai view. - Neal Donner. Shen-hui and the Teaching of Sudden Enlightenment in Early Ch'an Buddhism. @ - John R. MacRae. Sudden Enlightenment Followed by Gradual Cultivation. @ Tsung-mi's Analysis of Mind. - Peter N. Gregory. The 'Short-cut' Approach of Kan-hu @ Meditation. @ The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism. - Robert E. Buswell Jr. Analogies in the Cultural Sphere The Sudden and Gradual in Chinese Poetry Criticism: An Examination of the Ch'an Poetry Analogy. - Richard John Lynn. Tung Ch'i-chang's "Southern and Northern Schools" in the History and Theory of Painting. - James Cahill. The chapter John MacRae gave us dealing with Shen-hui, makes rather much of the allegedly 'polemical' use Shen-hui made of sudden enlightenment. While Shen-hui certainly proselytised, I'm not so sure that he was motivated by 'polemical' ideas. I would question the degree of competitiveness involved between the 'Southern' and 'Northern' Ch'an schools - and, in a certain sense, John's other writings, focusing on the Northern school, seem to weaken the sense of division. Peter Gregory's chapter remains my favourite piece. @ Less prone to dwell on the polemical side of things, he endeavours to explore the practical issues at stake. @ Tsung-mi was an admirable figure and Peter Gregory has made a sterling job of reproducing the intricacies of Tsung-mi's 'Ch'an Chart.' Neal Donner's article is well worth reading. @ It might be noted that - in the early days, the Ch'an and T'ien-tai schools were closely connected. @ T'ien-tai monks are listed in the Chuang Teng Lu (a Ch'an history) - as a collateral lineage. Robert Buswell's article concentrates on Ta-hui's 'kan-hua' (or hua-tou) technique. Surprisingly, perhaps, given the cliched references to Ta-hui as an opponent of 'silent illumination' (the more lifeless equivalents of which he certainly criticised), Buswell hints that the final effects or fruit of 'kan-hua' meditation may actually boil down to a kind of silent illumination' - all the same. Implicitly, ideas to this effect are found in the teachings of Hsu-yun, the most eminent Ch'an master of the 20th c. All the material in this text is worth reading, including the chapters relating to the influence of Ch'an upon the arts. The Chinese sources are noted thoroughly, complete with the Chinese script.

This collection of essays examines the historical basis of the debate over sudden versus gradual approaches to enlightenment in Chinese Buddhism, seeing it as part of a recurrent polarity in Chinese history and thought.