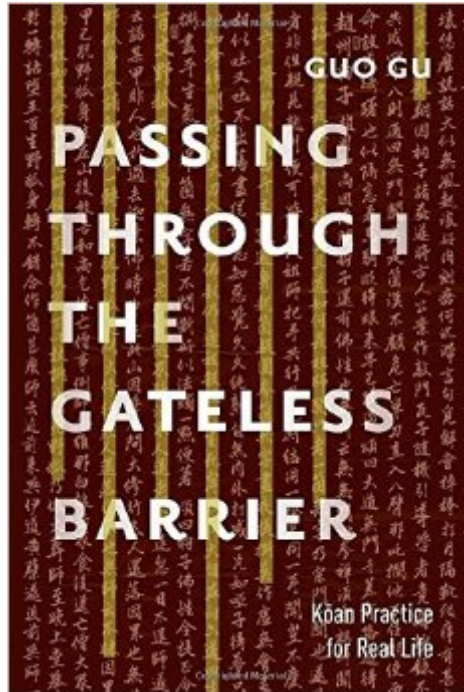


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Passing Through The Gateless Barrier: Koan Practice For Real Life



Synopsis

The classic thirteenth-century collection of Zen koans with one of the most accessible commentaries to date, from a Chinese Zen teacher. Gateways to awakening surround us at every moment of our lives. The whole purpose of kÅ•an (gongâ™an, in Chinese) practice is to keep us from missing these myriad opportunities by leading us to certain gates that have traditionally been effective for people to access that marvelous awakening. The forty-eight kÅ•ans of the Gateless Barrier (Chinese: Wumenguan; Japanese: Mumonkan) have been waking people up for well over eight hundred years. Chan teacher Guo Gu provides here a fresh translation of the classic text, along with the first English commentary by a teacher of the Chinese tradition from which it originated. He shows that the kÅ•ans in this text are not mere stories from a distant past, but are rather pointers to the places in our lives where we get stuckâ”and that each sticking point, when examined, can become a gateless barrier through which we can enter into profound wisdom.

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Customer Reviews

A wonderful book based on a series of talks over a 4year period. Guo Gu is the founder and leading Teacher of Tallahassee Chan Center in Tallahassee, Florida where I have been his student for the past 7 years. My practice method (Huatou) comes from these talks specifically with the question "Who is the master". If you ever wanted to dig deeper into a distinctly Chan/Zen practice, this is the book for you. Guo Gu is a very thorough teacher and his guidance is very deep and penetrating. This is not a Buddhism 101 book or method. This is a book for serious practitioners .However,

everyone can gain some level of personal insight even if you are new to the practice.

Here is a new entry into books on ancient practices, the koan (Zen, Japanese) or gongxi'an (Chan, Chinese), the study of short sayings from past masters that test and eventually dissolve the intellectual, and hopefully result in awakening and enlightenment. The competition is tough for offshoots from The Gateless Gate and the Blue Cliff Records, two very famous ancient texts. So what does this book on the Gateless Gate add? It has the advantage of covering the traditional explanation by Wumen and then adding a modern western teacher's advice, that of Guo Gu, who currently resides in Florida. The introduction is essential for those not familiar with the gongxi'an/koan. The history and development of the gongxi'an is briefly explained. More importantly the technique for working with it is discussed. It's clear that it may be a great academic exercise to read through the 48 cases included, but in the end one must be selected for special attention over a protracted period of time. At that point, according to the author, the guidance of a teacher is necessary. Reading through the 48 cases will seem daunting. The very first gongxi'an makes that clear: A monk asked Zhaozhou, "Does a dog have Buddha-nature or not?" Zhaozhou said, "Wu!" At first you might think an understanding of Buddhism might help and it may, but not much. The answer isn't in the teachings, nor will intellectual pondering bring it. Nor the help of Wumen's Comment, nor even modern Guo Gu's Comment, but at least the comments will point you in the right direction. Still, it feels a little bit like pounding your head against the wall, and maybe that's it, that's the point. There is a caveat: Should those of us without a teacher or following a different tradition skip the book? I think not. Perhaps the gain will be less or less rapid, but the opportunity for a breakthrough is still there. Nevertheless, this may not be the best place for a beginning Buddhist, but then who is to even judge that?

Feeling lost in a long list of Pali jargons and esoteric or academic direct translations? This is it for you. A long time ago, Chan (Zen) sounded like a bunch of riddles to me, but the Guo Gu's commentary brings the old text to life in today's language and helped me reflect and contemplate. If you are looking for fresh ways to look at your life, this is the book you need to read. A Must Read! Highly Recommends!

This is fun stuff!

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