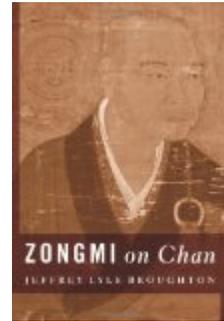


Jeffrey L. Broughton. *Zongmi on Chan*. Translations from the Asian Classics Series. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. xv + 348 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-14392-9.

Reviewed by Alan Fox (University of Delaware)

Published on H-Buddhism (November, 2009)

Commissioned by Dan Lusthaus



## Zongmi's Chan Preface

It is hard to believe that it has taken this long for someone to publish a translation of Zongmi's *Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* (禪源諸卷集都序), or *Chan Preface*, as most scholars have called this text. Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密 (780-841) is a very important figure in the history of Chinese and East Asian Buddhism, and the text in question could easily serve as a textbook for a college course on Buddhism, though I do not think the current translation capitalizes on the pedagogical potential of the text. What Jeffrey L. Broughton describes as the *Prolegomenon* is understood to be a preface to a comprehensive collection of texts and other materials compiled by Zongmi that were intended to be representative of the entire spectrum of Buddhist thought at the time. Only the *Prolegomenon* exists today, and it is not clear if the rest of the work was ever completed. In addition to the *Chan Prolegomenon*, Broughton also provides translations of several other relevant works, including a letter written by Zongmi to one of his disciples attempting to convince him of the superiority of Heze Chan (荷澤禪) over Hongzhou Chan (洪州禪), and the so-called *Chan Notes*, "an untitled set of reports on seven Chan houses that is embedded in the third fascicle of [Zongmi's] enormous thirteen-fascicle subcommentary on the *Perfect Awakening Sutra*" (p. 9).

Zongmi's importance can be seen in a number of ways. Philosophically, he offered what was clearly a synthesis of theory (義, *yi*) and practice (修, *xiu*), and in doing so he reconciled the ostensibly anti-textual and iconoclastic Chan traditions with the Sutras and classical Buddhist practice. As Broughton says, "the career

and writings of the Tang dynasty Chan master Guifeng Zongmi serve to undermine the foundational assumptions of this commonly accepted model of the separateness of Zen mind and canonical word.... In fact, [according to Zongmi] the teachings serve as *precedents that legitimize* the Chan realizations" (p. 2). He also played a role in the overall sinicization of Buddhism, relying heavily on the *Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith's* (大乘起信論, *Dasheng Qixin Lun*) revisioning of Indian Buddhist concepts, such as *tathāgatagarbha* and *vijñaptimātra*, which reintroduced the idea of a fundamental absolute into a characteristically Chinese form of Buddhist tradition. Specifically the idea of one mind with two aspects played a prominent role in Zongmi's reconciliation of polarities.

Practically, Zongmi's importance has to do with his proposed solution to the controversy over "sudden" vs. "gradual" enlightenment. As opposed to other models, and again relying on the *Qixin Lun*, he championed the idea of immediate awakening followed by gradual practice. That is, the immediate awakening is the arising of the thought of Buddhahood, which must be followed by diligent practice in order to eliminate habitual and karmic residues of egotistic and egocentric behavior. Zongmi offered wonderful metaphors to describe the different permutations of sudden and gradual awakening and practice.

Zongmi is also important historically. The *Chan Prolegomenon* contains a detailed description and analysis of

the many schools of Chan Buddhism of which Zongmi was aware. What is interesting is the proclaimed ecumenism of the text, which suggests that all forms of Chan are authentic and valid for certain grades of student. But Zongmi was not nearly as ecumenical as he seemed to claim, as for instance when he called his opponents “stupid ones” and various other places where he clearly pejoratively polemicized some of the traditions, especially the *Hongzhou* tradition, which appears to have been his own *Heze* school’s main rival (pp. 90-91). Also, interestingly, he was not modest—as he said: “I sometimes think how fortunate I am to be a 38th generation successor of Śākyamuni” (p. 178).

Broughton’s translation is a major reworking of his PhD dissertation. It makes a number of very significant contributions to the scholarship on Zongmi, especially when he tracks the continuing influence of Zongmi on Chan Buddhism past the point when most scholars see his influence as dying out. We have known for a long time about his influence on Korean Zen through the work of Chinul (知訥), but Broughton identifies the presence of a Tangut tradition of Chan Buddhism in which, Broughton says, “we have nothing less than the *literary remains of a hitherto unknown non-Han regional variant of the Chan tradition*,” which was “directly traceable to Guifeng Chan” (p. 50).

Of more general importance is the fact that we now have available in English a work of extremely broad scope that touches on so many important areas of Buddhism. The discussion in the text is not limited to Chan, but encompasses the full spectrum of both Chinese and Indian traditions and lineages. The introduction is extremely thorough in discussing the historical background of the texts and their importance.

There are some problems with the book as I see it. One glaring omission is any significant discussion of the influences of the Huayan 華嚴 tradition on Zongmi, who is generally taken to be the fifth patriarch of Huayan. There is only minimal mention of Huayan, even though Broughton acknowledges its priority for Zongmi. I think it is clear that this influence is more important than Broughton makes it out to be. For instance, Zongmi frequently referred to Chengguan (澄觀), his predecessor in the Huayan lineage. In addition, Zongmi’s part/whole analysis was influenced by Huayan, as seen on pages 10 and 24. Broughton does discuss the Japanese Kegon tradition, but does not identify it as the Japanese form of Huayan. He also goes into Kegon again at length on page

60 without identifying Kegon and Huayan.

A particularly unhelpful omission in the book is the absence of any in-line Chinese characters, though a glossary, arranged by pinyin, is at the end of the book. This is an archaic inconvenience that modern publishing capabilities should render obsolete. Additionally, Broughton frequently introduces Sanskrit terms without providing the pinyin equivalent that would allow one to look up the Chinese terms that actually appear in the text. There are also gaps in the bibliography. Among the most notable absences are the work of Robert Gimello and Whalen Lai, pioneers in the field.

Although Broughton clarifies Zongmi’s ostensible willingness to legitimize all forms of Chan, there is little reference to Zongmi’s broader ecumenism, such as his inclusion of Confucianism in his categorization of traditions, or *panjiao* (判教). In fact, Broughton never mentions *panjiao*, which played a prominent role in Chinese Buddhist scholarship’s efforts to make sense of Indian Buddhism in Chinese forms. The whole *Chan Preface* can be seen as an exercise in that regard, and on page 33 Broughton mentions that Zongmi engaged in taxonomizing, but does not link it to the historical issues surrounding *panjiao*.

There are also a number of idiosyncratic renderings in Broughton’s translation. This sometimes reveals new insights, but also leads to some confusion and lack of clarity, especially given the lack of Chinese characters. For example, Broughton translates “*shen*” (神) or “spirit” as “divine.”

Finally, the structure of the translation is often confusing and unhelpful. In particular, the summaries preceding each section of text are too long and therefore largely redundant. They also feature a confused use of person—the summary is ostensibly written by Broughton, and on page 94 he uses the third person to refer to Zongmi, but on page 104 he uses the first person to refer to Zongmi. I found myself skipping the summaries. There is also a complicated and confusing, and apparently arbitrary, use of italics, fonts, sizes, etc., as for example on page 89.

Overall, the book makes a major contribution, and my concerns do not diminish its value. It will be very appropriate for a graduate or advanced undergraduate course on Buddhism, and for scholars generally who have not been exposed to Zongmi and the important role he played in the sinicization of Buddhism.

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**Citation:** Alan Fox. Review of Broughton, Jeffrey L., *Zongmi on Chan*. H-Buddhism, H-Net Reviews. November, 2009.

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