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A Study of the Development of Yongjia Xuanjue's Biographies: With a Focus on Their Relationship to the Concept of School (*zong* 宗) in Chinese Buddhism

Yi-hsun Huang

Assistant Professor, Department of Buddhist Studies

Fo Guang University

Abstract

In the Chan tradition, Yongjia Xuanjue 永嘉玄覺 (665–713) is well-known as a disciple of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng 慧能 (638–713). Also, authorship of the famous Chan work, *Song of Enlightenment* (*Zhengdao ge* 證道歌) is attributed to him. However, Zhipan 志磐 (d.u., Song dynasty), a historian of the Tiantai 天台 school, claims that Xuanjue is a disciple of the Tiantai school. The attribution of *Song of Enlightenment* to Xuanjue has also been critically questioned by Tiantai monks and modern scholars.

The controversy of Xuanjue's sectarian identity is related to the divergent accounts contained in Xuanjue's biographies dating from the Tang to the Song dynasties. As it will be shown in this article, Xuanjue's biographies compiled in different time periods also reflect the development of the concept of "school" (*zong* 宗) in Chinese Buddhist history. By examining Xuanjue's biographies chronologically, the author does not try to argue which biographies are more accurate or determine Xuanjue's proper sectarian identity. Rather, it is more important to understand the historical meanings behind the discrepancies of these biographical materials.

Keywords:

Yongjia Xuanjue, *Zhengdao ge* (*Song of Enlightenment*), Chan, Tiantai, *Fozu tongji* (*Chronological Record of the Buddha and Patriarchs*)

永嘉玄覺傳記之研究 —兼談其傳記中之宗派思想

黃繹勳

佛光大學佛教學系助理教授

摘要

本論文以永嘉玄覺（665–713）之多種傳記為資料分析之基礎，而永嘉玄覺自從在《祖堂集》和《景德傳燈錄》中被列為六祖慧能（638–713）的法嗣之後，玄覺被後世認為是禪宗禪師似乎是既定的事實。但是，南宋《佛祖統紀》亦列玄覺為唐代天台宗弟子。這些玄覺傳記分歧的內容，具體呈現了漢傳佛教從唐代至宋代宗派思想的演變情況。

筆者將永嘉玄覺的傳記依成書的時間順序，重新加以考辨玄覺於各文獻中的定位和意義，本文之主要目的，實不在於爭議玄覺之宗派傳承為禪宗或天台宗，而是在於顯示現代學者若能更清楚各文獻成書立場的話，就能跨越宗派界限，以更寬闊的視野，探討玄覺多樣傳記資料的意義，進而啟發我們要運用和研究過去漢傳佛教史傳資料時，需要注意的一些考量點。

關鍵字: 永嘉玄覺、《證道歌》、禪宗、天台、《佛祖統紀》

Introduction

The earliest account of Yongjia Xuanjue's 永嘉玄覺 (665–713) life is found in the preface of the *Yongjia ji* 永嘉集. The *Yongjia ji* was compiled after Xuanjue's death by his contemporary Wei Jing 魏靜¹ (d.u.), who was a Prefect (*cishi* 刺史) in the prefecture of Qinzhou 慶州 (T 2013, 387b18–c15). Then, 240 years after Wei Jing's preface, a complete biography appears in a Chan text, the *Zutang ji* 祖堂集 (compiled in 952). The big chronological gap between these two biographies is probably due to the An Lushan 安祿山 rebellion (755–763), wars, and Buddhist persecutions — especially the Huichang 會昌 persecution (841–846) in the Tang and the Five dynasties. Of the biographies compiled in the Song dynasty, only those found in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (compiled in 988) and *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (compiled in 1004) will be discussed in this article.²

Since both the *Zutang ji* and *Jingde chuandeng lu* list Xuanjue as a disciple of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng 慧能 (638–713), it has become popularly accepted as fact that Xuanjue belongs to the Chan school. However, Zhipan 志磐 (d.u., Southern Song dynasty), a historian of the Tiantai school, also claims that Xuanjue is a disciple of the Tiantai school. The attribution of *Song of Enlightenment* (*Zhengdao ge* 證道歌) to Xuanjue has also been critically questioned by Tiantai monks and modern scholars.

The controversy regarding Xuanjue's sectarian identity is related to the differences in content among Xuanjue's various biographies, which date from the Tang to Song dynasties. Scholars have not yet critically examined Xuanjue's biographies.³ The present article attempts to investigate Xuanjue's biographies chronologically in order to discover the meaning of these differences. As will be shown in this article, the period in which each biography was compiled reflects the development of the concept of “school” (*zong* 宗) as it was understood in Chinese Buddhist history.

1 The compiler's name provided in the preface of *Yongjia ji* is “魏靜” (T 2013, 387b20), while it is written as “魏靖” in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* (T 2061, 758b16) and *Jingde chuandeng lu* (T 2176, 241b14). Furthermore, Tang historical annals such as *Jiutang shu* 舊唐書 and *Tanghuiyao* 唐會要 use the latter, “魏靖.” As a result, it is possible that the compiler of the *Yongjia ji* is “魏靖.” However, because the evidence provided by these sources is indirect, the author follows the Ming version of the *Yongjia ji* in the Taishō, which records his name as “魏靜.”

2 The author has done a comparison of Xuanjue's biographies compiled in different periods and determined that the biographies after the Song are based on the *Yongjia ji*, *Song gaoseng zhuan* and *Jingde chuandeng lu*.

3 Walter Liebenthal's study presents pertinent biographical material from Xuanjue's different biographies in his “Yung-chia cheng-tao-ko 永嘉證道歌,” in *Monumenta Serica* (6:1–39). Japanese scholars Kajitani Sōnin 梶谷宗忍 and Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山 also present a general summary of Xuanjue's life in their *Shinjinmei*, *Shōdoka*, *Jūgyūzu*, *Zazengi* 信心銘、證道歌、十牛圖、坐禪儀 (1974, 192–205).

Wei Jing's Preface to the *Yongjia Ji*

In his preface to the *Yongjia ji*, Wei Jing explains that he had previously hosted Xuanjue as part of his official duties. Soon after that, Wei Jing moved to the capital to serve in a new official post. By the time he returned from the capital, Xuanjue had passed away. Wei Jing then set to work compiling the *Yongjia ji*, an anthology consisting of ten works written by Xuanjue (T 2013, 387c8–15).

Wei Jing wrote the preface for the *Yongjia ji*, which contains the earliest information about Xuanjue's life:

大師俗姓戴氏，永嘉人也。少挺生知，學不加思。
幼則遊心三藏，長則通志大乘。三業精勤，偏弘禪觀。
境智俱寂，定慧雙融。(T 2013, 387b26–29)

The Master was from Yongjia and his family name was Dai. He was very intelligent, learning quickly and without difficulty. He studied the Tripiṭaka when he was young and mastered Mahāyāna as he grew up. He devoted himself to perfecting the three modes of activities and preferred to teach meditation practice. The Master's state of realization and wisdom were both tranquil. His meditation power and wisdom supplemented each other.

Wei Jing's account reveals some important information. First, Xuanjue is not obviously affiliated with any school. Although Xuanjue preferred to teach meditation practice, Wei Jing does not specify whether his expertise was in Chan or Tiantai meditation. Second, there is no description of Xuanjue's encounter with the Sixth Patriarch. Finally, the *Song of Enlightenment* is not mentioned in the preface, nor is it contained in the *Yongjia ji*. This becomes the most important piece of evidence used by both Tiantai masters and modern scholars to argue that Xuanjue is not the author of *Song of Enlightenment*.⁴

The characteristics of Xuanjue's earliest biographical account correspond to the early development of Chinese Buddhist schools. In the early Tang, the so-called Chinese Buddhist "schools" had not yet come into existence. It is only during the second half of the Tang dynasty (sometime after 750) that Chinese Buddhist schools appeared, complete with the elements of founders, lineages, orthodox transmissions of doctrine, and large numbers of followers.⁵ The short biography of Xuanjue written by Wei Jing soon after Xuanjue's death in 713 is consistent with this non-sectarian characteristic.

4 Walter Liebenthal states that it seems impossible that the *Yongjia ji* and the *Song of Enlightenment* are written by the same author. See Liebenthal (1953, 356–358) and Yang Hongfei 楊鴻飛 (1965, 59–72)

5 Weinstein (1987, 482–487).

Zutang Ji

The next version of Xuanjue's biography appears 240 years later, in the *Zutang ji*, a collection of biographies of "Chan" masters. Xuanjue's biography is entitled "The Monk Who Achieved Enlightenment Overnight" (*yisu jue heshang* 一宿覺和尚)⁶ and contains the famous story about Xuanjue's encounter with the Sixth Patriarch of the Chan school:

其弟僧年當三十一，迤邐往到始興縣曹溪山，
恰遇大師上堂，持錫而上，繞禪床三匝而立。

Xuanjue was 31 *sui* when he traveled to Mount Caoxi in Shixing County.⁷ When he arrived, the Sixth Patriarch had already ascended the Dharma Hall. He approached [Huineng] while still holding his staff, circled the meditation platform three times, and then remained standing.

六祖問：「夫沙門者，具三千威儀，八萬細行，行行無虧，名曰沙門。
大德從何方而來，生大我慢？」
對曰：「生死事大，無常迅速。」
六祖曰：「何不體取無生，達本無速乎？」
對曰：「體本無生，達即無速。」

The Sixth Patriarch asked, "Monks have many rules of deportment and courtesy; only when they are followed may one be called a monk. Where are you from? Why are you so arrogant?" Xuanjue replied, "The matter of life and death is important and impermanence occurs at a fast speed." The Patriarch asked, "Then, why can't you experience no-birth and attain no-speed?" Xuanjue answered, "Experiencing is originally without birth; attaining is without speed."

祖曰：「子甚得無生之意。」
對曰：「無生豈有意耶？」

- 6 There are three possible translations for this title. First, it could be "The Monk Who Stayed Overnight" as the scholar Yang Hongfei argues in his "Eika shōdoka no nendai yobi sono sakusha ichikōsatsu" (1965, 62). The Tang philologist Huilin 慧琳 in his *Yiqiejing yinyi* 一切經音義 also provides the pronunciation of "覺" as "jiao" and explains its meaning as "wake up after sleeping (*wu* 寤)" (T54, 317c22 and 360a20). Second, it could also be understood as "The Monk Who Achieved Enlightenment Overnight." Third, the most literal translation for this title is "The Monk Jue Who Stayed Overnight." However, since it is the *Zutang ji* compiler's purpose to show that Xuanjue became enlightened or awakened after staying one night at Huineng's temple, the author chooses to translate it as "The Monk Who Achieved Enlightenment Overnight."
- 7 Xuanjue died at the age of 48. "*niandang sanshiyi* 年當三十一" is therefore more likely to be his age rather than his ordination years.

祖曰：「無意誰能分別？」
對曰：「分別亦非意。」
祖曰：「如是！如是！」

The Patriarch said, "You understand the meaning of no-birth quite well."

Yongjia replied, "How could no-birth have a meaning?"

The Patriarch asked, "Who is the one making the distinction that it does not have a meaning?"

Yongjia replied, "Making distinctions isn't it either."

The Patriarch said, "So indeed! So indeed!"

于時大眾千有餘人，皆大愕然。師卻去東廊下掛錫，具威儀，便上禮謝，默然擊目而出，便去僧堂參眾，卻上來辭。

祖曰：「大德從何方來？返太速乎？」

對曰：「本自非動，豈有速也？」

祖曰：「誰知非動？」

對曰：「仁者自生分別。」

祖師一跳下來，撫背曰：「善哉！善哉！有手執干戈。小留一宿。」

來朝辭祖師，禪師領眾送其僧。其僧行十步來，振錫三下曰：

「自從一見曹溪後，了知生死不相干。」⁸

At this time, there were over a thousand people in the Dharma hall. They were shocked by this conversation. Xuanjue then went to hang his staff in the east hall, following a rule of courtesy. He bowed to the Buddha gratefully and regarded the Buddha silently. After paying respect to the monks in the Sangha hall, he took leave.

The Patriarch asked, "Where are you from? Why do you want to go back so quickly?"

Xuanjue replied, "There is in fact no moving. How can you say it is too quick?"

The Patriarch then asked, "Who is the person that knows that there is no moving?"

Xuanjue answered, "It was you who had the thought of moving first." The Patriarch patted Xuanjue on the back and said, "Very good! Very good! You are quite adept. Would you care to lodge here tonight?"

The next morning, Xuanjue came to say goodbye to the Patriarch. Xuanjue shook his staff three times and said, "Encountering Caoxi, I realize that life and death are not relevant."

Based on this fascinating story of Xuanjue staying overnight in the Sixth Patriarch's temple, the author of the *Zutang ji* biography claims that Xuanjue was the Sixth Patriarch's "disciple" (*fasi* 法嗣). In order to convince his readers, its author ends this encounter with Xuanjue's words, "Encountering Caoxi 曹溪, I realize that life and death are not relevant." However, this sentence is problematic. Modern scholars have traced back the origin of the term "Caoxi"

8 The *Zutang ji* (2007, 186–189)

and determined that this term did not appear until 744–749, at least 30 years after Huineng's death.⁹ Since Xuanjue and Huineng both died in 713, it is impossible that Xuanjue could have said the sentence himself.

The *Zutang ji* was compiled during the Five dynasties, after the Tiantai, Huayan, and Chan schools had made their appearance in the second half of the Tang dynasty. The Chan school was especially interested in constructing a lineage to prove an unbroken line from the Buddha, through Bodhidharma to the Sixth Patriarch Huineng and his prosperous descendants. This intention is seen in the *Zutang ji* with the claim that Xuanjue was the Sixth Patriarch's disciple in the story of Xuanjue staying in the Sixth Patriarch's temple for one night.

As may be seen in extant Chan literature, the image of Xuanjue as a Chan master originated during the late Tang or the Five dynasties. Another piece of supporting evidence is that Xuanjue's collection was recorded as the *Xuanjue yongjia ji* 玄覺永嘉集 in both the bibliographical section (*yiwenzhi* 藝文志) of the *Xintang shu* 新唐書 and in Yongming Yanshou's 永明延壽 (904–975) *Zongjing lu* 宗鏡錄 in the Five dynasties.¹⁰ It was not until later that “*yisujue*” 一宿覺 and “*chanzong*” 禪宗 were added to its title. The bibliographical section of the *Songshi* 宋史 (*Songshi*, v. 250) lists the text as *Yongjia yisujue chanzong yongjia ji* 永嘉一宿覺禪宗集. In the Taishō canon, the text is entitled *Chanzong yongjia ji* 禪宗永嘉集, and is based on a Ming version held in Zōjō ji 增上寺 (T 2013, 387b, fn. 5).¹¹

However, the lack of historical truth does not mean that this account has no value. Chan scholar John McRae in his *Seeing Through Zen* reminds us, “it's not true, and therefore it's more important” and “lineage assertions are as wrong as they are strong.”¹² The importance we learn from Xuanjue's biography in the *Zutang ji* is that in the Five dynasties, its author's intention to identify Xuanjue as Huineng's disciple and include Xuanjue into the Chan lineage is very strong.

Song Gaoseng Zhuan

The next biography of Xuanjue is found in the *Song gaoseng zhuan*. It is entitled “Tang wenzhou longxingsi xuanjue zhuan 唐溫州龍興寺玄覺傳” (Biography of Xuanjue of Longxing Temple, Wenzhou, Tang dynasty) and included in the Chapter of Meditators (*xichan pian* 習禪篇).

9 John McRae (2004, 234). This term also appears in the *Song of Enlightenment* (T 2014, 396b17) and Kajitani's *Shinjinmei, Shōdoka, Jūgyūzu, Zazengi* (1998, 73–76).

10 *The Xin tangshu*, v. 59; *the Zongjing lu* (T 2016, 480a18); Sengoku Keishō's 仙石景章 (1988, 189–194).

11 Its title remains as *Yongjia ji* in the other Chinese Buddhist Canons such as the Yongle nanzang 永樂南藏, no. 1556; Yongle beizang 永樂北藏, v. 168, no. 1667; Jiaying zang 嘉興藏, no. 1579.

12 See McRae (2003, xix).

釋玄覺.....與東陽策禪師肩隨遊方詢道，謁韶陽能禪師而得旨焉。或曰覺振錫遶庵答對，語在別錄。至若神秀門庭遐征問法，然終得心于曹溪耳。
(T 2061, 758a9–b21)

Master Xuanjue . . . traveled with Chan master Dongyang Ce in search of the *Dao*. He achieved enlightenment after meeting Chan master Shaoyang Huineng. It is said in other records that holding his staff, Xuanjue walked around Huineng's monastery and had a conversation with him. Xuanjue had also gone to Shenxiu's monastery seeking the Dharma, but finally obtained mind to mind transmission from Caoxi.

The *Song gaoseng zhuan* is commonly known as a non-sectarian collection of the biographies of Buddhist monks. However, it is noteworthy that Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001), the compiler of *Song gaoseng zhuan*, did not compose all of the biographies himself. He drew heavily on earlier sources, such as monks' funerary inscriptions or biographies from other collections.¹³ This means that some biographies in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* may indeed contain sectarian information, depending on the source materials. As a result, in addition to the account of Xuanjue's meeting with Huineng, Xuanjue's biography in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* exhibits an interesting sense of competition between Shenxiu 神秀 (605–706) and Huineng.

The author of Xuanjue's biography in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* particularly states that Xuanjue had previously gone to Shenxiu's temple to inquire about the Dharma, but obtained enlightenment only after visiting Caoxi Huineng. The author of this biography not only tells us that Xuanjue was Huineng's disciple, but also uses Xuanjue's case to prove that Huineng's teaching was superior to that of Shenxiu. Xuanjue's biography in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* was probably compiled at a time when the southern school of Chan was trying to establish the orthodoxy of Huineng over Shenxiu's Northern school after the 734 Great Dharma Assembly (*wuzhe dahui* 無遮大會) of Huatai 滑台 (Dumoulin 2005, 155). This might be the reason why its author presents the account of Xuanjue's visit to Shenxiu — an event not seen in any of Xuanjue's earlier biographies.

Jingde Chuandeng Lu

Daoyuan 道原 (d.u., Song dynasty), the author of *Jingde chuandeng lu* (1004), following the story of the “The Monk Who Achieved Enlightenment Overnight,” lists Xuanjue as a disciple of Huineng, who has other 42 disciples.¹⁴ Xuanjue's biography in that work is translated below:

13 See Zanning's preface (T 2061, 709c22–25) and John Kieschnick (1998, 13).

14 Although we can also see that Daoyuan includes the biographies of Zhiyi and Huisi in the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, he does not place them in the Chan lineage as he did with Xuanjue. Daoyuan simply lists them in the 27th fascicle of the *Jingde chuandeng lu* as two examples

溫州永嘉玄覺禪師者，……遍探三藏，精天台止觀圓妙法門，於四威儀中常冥禪觀。後因左谿朗禪師激勵，與東陽策禪師同詣曹谿。……祖歎曰：「善哉！善哉！少留一宿。」時謂一宿覺矣。……著《證道歌》一首，及禪宗悟修圓旨，自淺之深，慶州刺史魏靖緝而序之成十篇，目為《永嘉集》並盛行于世。(T 2176, 241a27–b15)

Xuanjue . . . studied the entire Tripiṭaka and attained mastery in the Tiantai perfect practices of calming and contemplation. He was able to maintain a state of contemplation in all of the four departments. Later, due to the encouragement of meditation master Zuoxi Xuanlang, Xuanjue travelled with Chan master Dongyang Ce to visit Caoxi. . . . The Patriarch praised him saying, “Very good! Very good! Would you care to lodge here tonight?” Thus he became known as “The Monk Who Achieved Enlightenment Overnight.” . . . He wrote the *Song of Enlightenment* and works containing principles of Chan practice from the shallow to the profound. Wei Jing, the Prefect of the prefecture Qinzhou, compiled Xuanjue's ten works into the *Yongjia ji*, for which he also composed a preface.

This Song dynasty biography contains new and interesting information about Xuanjue. First, it is not difficult to notice that the number of Huineng's disciples in the *Jingde chuandeng lu* has increased more than fourfold from the number given in the *Platform Sūtra*, which states that there were ten disciples (T 2007, 343b1–3). Second, the *Jingde chuandeng lu* biography states that Xuanjue mastered Tiantai practices of calming and contemplation (*zhiguan* 止觀). Xuanjue is also said to have gone to see the Sixth Patriarch because of Tiantai master Zuoxi Xuanlang's 左谿玄朗 (673–754) encouragement. Third, the *Song of Enlightenment* is attributed to Xuanjue for the first time.

The new description of Xuanjue's Tiantai involvement is significant. Xuanjue did indeed have a friendship with Xuanlang. The letters that they exchanged are included in the ninth chapter of *Yongjia ji*. Additionally, some Tiantai concepts may be found in Xuanjue's works.¹⁵ However, the *Jingde chuandeng lu* biography paints a new picture of Xuanjue's sectarian identity. Xuanjue is described as an expert of Tiantai meditation practices, linking him with the Tiantai tradition. Xuanlang's recommendation that Xuanjue seek the Sixth Patriarch also implies that Xuanjue was not satisfied with the Tiantai school. Huineng's sanctioning of Xuanjue's understanding, combined with Xuanjue's authorship of the *Song of Enlightenment* indicate that some type of conversion to the Chan school has taken place.

By the Song dynasty, Xuanjue had become a figure of interest to Chan and Tiantai, probably on the basis of the account of his enlightenment during his visit with Huineng and

among people who are adept in the practice of meditation (*chanmen dazhe* 禪門達者) (T 2076, 429c13–16).

- 15 Modern scholars have found some important Tiantai doctrines in the *Yongjia ji*, such as “three contemplations in one mind” (*sanguan yixin* 三觀一心), “ten gates of contemplation on the mind” (*guanxin shimen* 觀心十門) and “three noble truths” (*sandi* 三諦). See Washizaka Sōen 鷲阪宗演 (1975, 53–68) and Sengoku Keishō (1979, 176–177).

the popularity of the *Song of Enlightenment*, which was attributed to him. In response to the *Jingde chuandeng lu*'s portrayal of Xuanjue as a Chan monk, Zhipan, the compiler of the famous Song Tiantai chronological record *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 (*Chronological Record of the Buddha and Patriarchs*) lists Xuanjue as a Tiantai meditation monk:

七祖天宮大禪師
左溪玄朗禪師
永嘉真覺禪師 (T 2035, 251c3–5)

The Seventh Patriarch Great Meditation Master Tiangong
Meditation Master Zuoxi Xuanlang
Meditation Master Yongjia Zhenjue

Zhipan pairs Xuanlang and Xuanjue as peer students under the Seventh Patriarch Tiangong Huiwei 天宮慧威 (634–713) in the “Lineage Chart of the Buddhas and Patriarchs” (*Fozu shixi biao* 佛祖世繫表) of the Tiantai school. In several other passages Zhipan claims Xuanjue as a branch successor of the Tiantai Seventh Patriarch Tiangong (*tiangong pangchu shijia* 天宮旁出家) (T 2035, 201a9, 250a9, and 251c3–5).

Zhipan appends Xuanjue's biography after listing him as a branch successor of the Tiantai Seventh Patriarch Tiangong. However, after comparing its content, the author finds that except for one sentence, the biography is based on Xuanjue's biography from the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, including the famous story of his overnight enlightenment under Huineng. Zhipan omits only the sentence that Xuanjue “wrote the *Song of Enlightenment*.” Zhipan explains that the wording and themes in the *Song of Enlightenment* are inconsistent and absurd (*cizhi guaili* 辭旨乖戾), which implies that its meaning and rhetoric are not in accordance with Tiantai doctrines (T 2035, 202b1–18 and 202c9–10). This shows Zhipan's struggle in that he could not ignore the well-known Chan story about Xuanjue and Huineng, but at the same time strived to include Xuanjue in Tiantai lineage.

Zhipan's counterattack to the *Jingde chuandeng lu* on Xuanjue's school affiliation is an example of the competitive atmosphere among Buddhist schools in the Song. Scholars of Chinese Buddhism have stated that the Chan school was one of the dominant traditions in the Song. In response to the challenge of Chan school's genealogical construction, Tiantai historians also began compiling universal histories of Buddhism presented from a Tiantai perspective.¹⁶ The contradictory sectarian identities of Xuanjue in the Chan text *Jingde chuandeng* and the Tiantai chronological record *Fozu tongji* can be seen as direct evidence of the competition between the Chan and Tiantai schools in the Song dynasty.

16 See Peter Gregory (1999, 9–11) and Koichi Shinohara (1999, 524–525).

Conclusion

The differences in the various biographies of Xuanjue over the period beginning in the Tang and ending in the Song reflect the development of the concept of school (*zong*) in the history of Chinese Buddhism. In the early Tang, the short biography of Xuanjue written by Wei Jing after Xuanjue's death exhibits a non-sectarian characteristic. Following the development of schools, the image of Xuanjue as a Chan master began to appear in the Five dynasties and the Song. The sectarian identity of Xuanjue is further complicated when interesting new elements are added to his biographies reflecting both the competition between Northern and Southern Chan in the late Tang, and then the rivalry between Chan and Tiantai in the Song dynasty.

From Xuanjue's biographies, we learn that the sectarian identity of Buddhist monks is often retrospective, due to the compilers' sectarian point of view. Thus, while dealing with a monk's biographies, the comparison of biographies from different sectarian records is a necessary step in order to see the development and discrepancies exhibited in each biography.¹⁷

In examining Xuanjue's biographies chronologically, the author has not attempted to show which biography is the most accurate or determine Xuanjue's proper sectarian identity. These biographical sources themselves have become part of the history of Chinese Buddhism and can provide valuable information to Buddhist historians when the historical meaning behind their discrepancies is examined.

17 A similar case is the biographies of Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904–975). Albert Welter did a critical review of Yanshou's biographies from Chan and Pure Land documents in his *The Meaning of Myriad Good Deeds* (1993). Welter later presented an article to discuss Yanshou's sectarian identity: "Yung-ming Yen-Shou: Ch'an Master, Pure Land Master, or What?" in the Third Chung-Hwa International Conference on Buddhism in Taipei (1997).

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