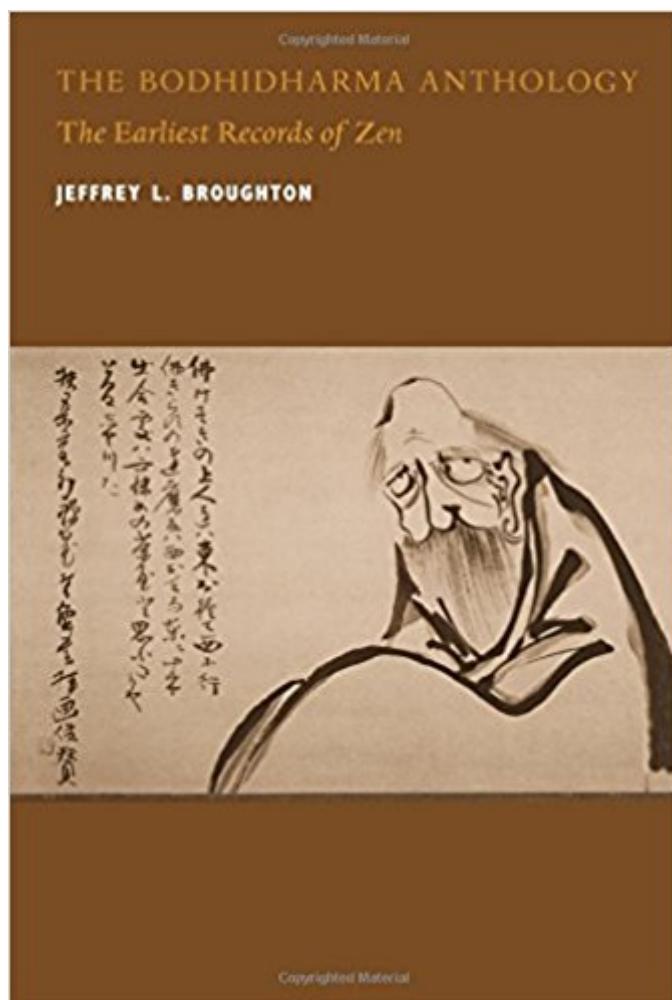


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The Bodhidharma Anthology: The Earliest Records Of Zen (Philip E. Lilienthal Book)



Synopsis

In the early part of this century, the discovery of a walled-up cave in northwest China led to the retrieval of a lost early Ch'an (Zen) literature of the T'ang dynasty (618-907). One of the recovered Zen texts was a seven-piece collection, the Bodhidharma Anthology. Of the numerous texts attributed to Bodhidharma, this anthology is the only one generally believed to contain authentic Bodhidharma material. Jeffrey L. Broughton provides a reliable annotated translation of the Bodhidharma Anthology along with a detailed study of its nature, content, and background. His work is especially important for its rendering of the three Records, which contain some of the earliest Zen dialogues and constitute the real beginnings of Zen literature. The vivid dialogues and sayings of Master Yuan, a long-forgotten member of the Bodhidharma circle, are the hallmark of the Records. Master Yuan consistently criticizes reliance on the Dharma, on teachers, on meditative practice, and on scripture, all of which lead to self-deception and confusion, he says. According to Master Yuan, if one has spirit and does not seek anything, including the teachings of Buddhism, then one will attain the quietude of liberation. The boldness in Yuan's utterances prefigures much of the full-blown Zen tradition we recognize today. Broughton utilizes a Tibetan translation of the Bodhidharma Anthology as an informative gloss on the Chinese original. Placing the anthology within the context of the Tun-huang Zen manuscripts as a whole, he proposes a new approach to the study of Zen, one that concentrates on literary history, a genealogy of texts rather than the usual genealogy of masters.

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Customer Reviews

His name comes up in mentions of Zen's misty past, but without any writings or authentication, modern authors have often referred to Bodhidharma as semilegendary. In 1935, D.T. Suzuki had rummaged through a number of newly discovered Zen texts dating back over a thousand years, but not until recently did scholars agree that some may contain the words of Bodhidharma himself. Now Jeffrey Broughton has brushed off the dust for the English reading world. In question-and-answer style anticipating later Zen classics like the Lin-Chi Lu (Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi), Bodhidharma fields questions from his students on dharma, the mind, and reality. Vintage Zen iconoclasm permeates every line as dharmas are dispensed with and scriptures shot down. A rock painted with a Buddhist image is still just a rock. Just so, reality is just reality. A previously unknown student of Bodhidharma, one Master Yuan, shows himself to be a worthy adept, equal to the more well-known Hui-kuo, who also appears. The actual Bodhidharma texts are quite brief, with the bulk of this work consisting of Broughton's scholarly introduction, commentary, appendices, and translations of related finds. --Brian Bruya

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Chinese --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Currently, there exists only two book-length English language translations of Bodhidharma's teachings: The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma translated by Red Pine (see my review on) and Broughton's The Bodhidharma Anthology. I would recommend the former for those who wish to go directly to the core of Bodhidharma's teaching unencumbered by expanded commentaries, copious notes, footnotes, citations, and appendices. Those readers who are interested in the lineage and history of the material may not be daunted by Broughton's densely written scholastic approach, or find the effort worth the struggle. Broughton relies heavily on codicology and chronological stratification to support the authenticity of the retrieved T'ang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.) source material and numerous texts attributed to Bodhidharma. The codicological criteria include: analysis of paper used in the original copies, manuscript forms, handwriting, and recto texts. Not everyone who might be interested in exploring the teaching will demand such academic rigor. Nevertheless, both volumes are valuable for understanding Zen (C'han) as taught by Bodhidharma, the first Zen Patriarch in China. The reader who wants a comprehensive, detailed examination of the teaching will be satisfied with Broughton's translation. Those looking for a concise introduction will be better served by Red Pine, at least initially. And a sidebar: Although the monks of Shaolin Monastery

claimed, centuries after his death, that Bodhidharma was the founder of the martial art Kung-fu, there is no such evidence to be found in the early records. Rather, the records indicate that the Shaolin Abbot banished him from the monastery for his critical evaluation of the monks and he lived in a cave about a mile away where he practiced a type of meditation metaphorically referred to as "wall gazing." While some of the resident monks may have approached him to learn this meditation, one may wonder if the monastery misappropriated or co-opted his name in order to elevate the status of their previously established martial arts tradition. This may have also served as a rationale for circumventing the Buddhist prohibition against violence. Self-serving myth? For further elaboration see *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion and the Chinese Martial Arts* and/or *The Shaolin Grandmasters' Text* (both available on).

I do appreciate Broughton's description of the texts related to Bodhidharma from the Dunhuang library, and if he'd stuck to that he would have been fine. But when he goes into analysis of *What They Mean* he reveals an embarrassing ignorance of Buddhism and comes to some weird conclusions.

Anyone practicing zen seriously should be familiar with this teaching...it belong in every Buddhist library is a most-used. Read it~

Great book on Zen Buddhism. It is one of the earliest texts in the lineage of Zen beginnings as I do love the Eastern way of thinking and view on life. The Buddhist concept of emptiness is really emphasized here reinforced by non-dualistic thinking, which means taking a non-judgmental stance on one's perception or view on life. It is not taking too much for granted as terrible consequences followed, as the Bodhidharma described as spending a time infinitely in life and death as opposed to being free. The book is along the lines of a teaching and sermon as there are sections with a particular concept. It all revolves on Buddhist thought, but Zen is a lot more direct and specific, also more direct. That's why I like to read more on traditional Zen texts moreso than Buddhist thought. The translation was excellent, there are plenty of footnotes as there are bold words highlighted for major concepts and definitions. It was difficult to read at first, but it got easier over time. It's definitely a book that needs to be taken time with or familiarity of Zen, or else the reader will be swamped by Eastern Zen. Fantastic book, great product.

This scholarly work on the teachings of Bodhidharma sets a new standard. Not only does Broughton

provide clear translations, but the volume of informative commentary has made this text my number one Bodhidharma resource. Broughton provides quality with quantity here, explaining unusual phrases from the ancient texts at page bottoms, and endnoting items requiring more thorough treatment. (The endnotes are generally both useful and quite insightful. My only "wish" is that the endnotes could be footnotes instead. This way, the reader could have simultaneous access to both the root text and Broughton's research. As it is, you have to flip back and forth a bit. This is a really minor quibble though, as footnoting everything would have the drawback of making the root text harder to read on its own - mostly by making the pages too "busy.") This is not a book on "pop Zen

Greaaaat service! Thank you, I'm impressed!

I live in the Buddhist hell of Too Many Zen Books. This nicely accompanies all my other ones, and clearly stands out in its own right.

Thorough and enlightening. Brilliant insights! Where has Prof. Broughton been all of these years?

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