This chapter offers a precise analysis of the early Zen literature known as chuandenglu (records of the transmission of the lamp), which sets the Zen tradition up into family-like lineages transmitting the dharma from one master to another through lines of teaching heritage. Welter shows how this literary genre helps give rise to the classical divisions of Chinese Chan Buddhism into the “five houses,” although each text examined displays under careful scrutiny the preference by its authors for one lineage or another. The essay analyzes the early example of this genre known as the Zutang ji, and shows its relation to the most famous version of transmission texts, the Jingde chuandeng lu (The Jingde era record of the Transmission of the Lamp).