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11 Tiantai Transnationalism: Mobility, Identity, and Lineage Networks in Modern Chinese Buddhism

Current scholarship on modern Chinese Buddhism has tended to focus on the globalized reform organizations that have emerged in Taiwan in the last few decades. The success of these groups, such as Fo Guang Shan 佛光山 and Tzu Chi (Ciji 慈濟), has made it easy to overlook other paradigms of transnational transmission in modern Chinese Buddhism. These organizations, with their strong "corporate" identities and centralized management of assets and personnel, are relatively new.[1] Yet little is known about the vast array of other Buddhist networks that followed different expansion paradigms in forming transnational connections. Focusing on the growth and expansion of the Tiantai 天台 lineage network that predates or parallels the development of the above-mentioned groups, this chapter examines the role of religious kinship as a cohesive norm of affiliation. Despite their decentralized nature and fluidity, these "traditional" networks remain immensely powerful and influential in shaping Chinese Buddhist practices.

The expansion of the Tiantai network can be attributed to an innovative lineage transmission practice, in which Dharma transmission was disassociated from the succession of temple abbotship. Subsequently, the network drew in a diverse group of lineage holders, who travelled far and wide to spread Tiantai teachings. Such reformulation of identity and orthodoxy was instrumental in shaping the border-crossing experience of Chinese Buddhists in the twentieth century. The inclusion of these groups in our (re)conceptualization of modern Buddhist transnationalism will shed light on the multifaceted flow and exchange of religious capital in the making of global Chinese modernity.

For the purposes of this paper, while fully acknowledging its nuances, I deploy the term transnationalism in a loose sense, meaning the transfer of knowledge, identity, and human capital across various political territories and boundaries. Therefore, the Tiantai monastics moving between mainland

1 For comprehensive accounts of the history, development, and organizational structure of Fo Guang Shan and Tzu Chi, see S. Chandler, *Establishing Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004; and C. Huang, *Charisma and Compassion: Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi* Movement, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, respectively.

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China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and North America in the second half of the twentieth century are here considered transnational agents. I focus on two of the most prominent Tiantai masters in the twentieth century: Dixian 諦閑 (1858–1932) and his Dharma heir Tanxu 倓虛 (1875–1962). They built and restored a number of major monasteries, founded a handful of influential Buddhist seminaries, drew a large following among China's social and political elites, and brought about a revival of the Tiantai lineage and teaching across and beyond China. The first section examines Dixian and his role in educational reform in the first decades of the twentieth century; the second focuses on Tanxu and his lineage transmission practice. Although often characterized as "conservative" or "traditional" and hence not "modern", a series of innovations has nonetheless allowed the Tiantai lineage to gradually grow into an extensive yet fluid network with considerable social and spiritual capital in the Chinese Buddhist world. Therefore, like their reformist counterparts, "conservative" Chinese Buddhists too, are cosmopolitan.

According to Holmes Welch, Chinese Buddhism has historically been held together by informal networks of affiliation that were centred on religious kinship, charismatic monks, and regionalism. These networks were diffused, localized, and "superimposed haphazardly upon each other".[2] By situating the modern Tiantai network within Welch's typology, I will show that, despite its fluidity, it consists primarily of lineage holders who are faithfully devoted to their teachers, whereas regionalism might play a role in some cases. However, rather than the haphazard overlapping of relations, it is a distinct lineage network that strongly shapes the religious identity of its members. Furthermore, Buddhist seminaries, such as those founded by Dixian and Tanxu, provided the locales in which meaningful kinship and affiliations have been further formed and imagined.

Dixian and Modern Monastic Education

Dixian was born into the Zhu 朱 family in Huangyan 黃巖 County, Zhejiang 浙江, in 1858. His father died when he was 15, and he was sent by his mother to work as an apprentice at his maternal uncle's medical clinic. A few years later, he got married and set up his own clinic in the county town. When he was twenty, he sought tonsure as a Buddhist novice after his mother, wife, and son died. Three

2 H. Welch, *The Practice of Modern Chinese Buddhism, 1900–1950*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp. 403–406.

years later he received full ordination at the famous Guoqing Monastery (國清寺) on Mount Tiantai, where he had his first awakening experience during a winter meditation retreat.[3] After travelling to various monasteries to attend lectures on the Lotus Sutra, he received Dharma transmission from the forty-second generation Tiantai master Jirui 迹瑞 (n. d.), who was also the abbot of Longhua Monastery (龍華寺) in Shanghai.

In addition to preaching various *Mahāyāna sūtras* such as the *Lotus* and *Śūraṅgama*, Dixian was also actively involved in Buddhist educational reform when the first wave of modern Buddhist schools emerged between 1903 and 1911. When Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911) founded the Jetavana Hermitage (Qihuan jingshe 祇洹精舍) in Nanjing in 1907, Dixian served as the Proctor and gave instruction on Tiantai doctrine.[4] He was also the co-founder and principal for the Jiangsu Sangha Normal School (Jiangsu seng shifan xuetang 江蘇僧師範學堂), founded in Nanjing in 1909.

Scholarship has paid little attention to the first wave of modern Buddhist schools. It is commonly understood as a transitional, reactionary strategy to avoid temple confiscation that had a negligible impact on the overall development of modern monastic education. As Welch puts it, "none lasted long enough to be important in itself."[5] Sometimes the names of schools and monks involved are mentioned in passing as evidence that the monks merely pretended to promote modern education, whereas their real motive was to escape temple confiscation.[6] There is a consensus that the *miaochan xingxue* 廟產興學

3 Dixian, *Dixian dashi yiji* 諦閑大師遺集 [Posthumously Collected Works of Master Dixian], Hong Kong: Huanan xuefoyuan, vol. 1, 1952, p. 1. See also Yu L. 于凌波, *Minguo gaoseng zhuan chubian* 民國高僧傳初編 [Initial Volume of Biographies of Eminent Monks of the Republican Era], Taipei: Yuanming, 1996, p. 179; and Yu L., *Xiandai fojiao renwu cidian* 現代佛教人物辭典 [Biographical Dictionary of Modern Buddhism], vol. 2, Gaoxiong: Foguang chubanshe, 2004, pp. 1621–1624.

4 The reformers Taixu and Ouyang Jingwu were among the students of the Jetavana Hermitage, which closed after one academic year due to financial difficulties. See Chen B. 陳兵 and Deng Z. 鄧子美, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo fojiao* 二十世紀中國佛教 [Twentieth-Century Chinese Buddhism], Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2000, p. 82.

5 H. Welch, *Buddhist Revival in China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, p. 13.

6 He J. 何建民, "Cong Qihuan jingshe dao Wuchang foxueyuan 從祇洹精舍到武昌佛學院" ["From the Jetavana Hermitage to the Wuchang Buddhist Academy"], *Jindaishi yanjiu* 近代史研究 [Modern Chinese History Studies] 4 (1998), p. 114; Dongchu 東初, *Zhongguo fojiao jindaishi* 中國佛教近代史 [A History of Modern Chinese Buddhism], Taipei: Zhongguo Fojiao wenhua guan, 1974, p. 78; X. Yu 學愚, *Fojiao, baoli yu minzu zhuyi: Kangri zhanzheng shiqi de Zhongguo Fojiao* 佛教、暴力與民族主義: 抗日戰爭時期的中國佛教 [Buddhism, Violence, and Nationalism: Chinese Buddhism during the Second Sino-Japanese War], Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2011, p. 58.

(build schools with temple property) campaign served as a wake-up call for the Chinese Buddhists to contemplate their own efforts to reform Buddhist education. Modern Buddhist education in China, according to this line of argument, did not begin until the more "serious" schools emerged.[7] In fact, the influence of the *sangha* schools seems to be rather modest when compared with the relative success and scholarly attention the later Buddhist academies (*foxueyuan* 佛學院) achieved. However, we do not know enough about Buddhist participation in educational affairs in this period, as related activities are not as well documented as the later Buddhist schools. This formation period is historically significant in the story of Buddhist modernity in China, as it sowed the seeds for two of the most significant developments in Chinese Buddhism in the twentieth century: first, the change in the administrative structure and self-understanding of Buddhism through the founding of various associations (at both the local and national levels), though their actual control over all Buddhist temples nationwide is debatable; and second, the emergence of a new discourse on Buddhist participation in nation-building projects, manifested in the attempt to adopt and respond to the national educational reform programme.[8]

Dixian's most remembered undertaking in Buddhist education was his founding of a Tiantai sangha school that was the largest and most influential in Zhejiang. In 1913, the year after he was installed as abbot of the Guanzong Monastery (觀宗講寺) in Ningbo 寧波, he set up the Guanzong Study Society (Guanzong yanjiushe 觀宗研究社) within the monastery.[9] With financial support

7 Deng Z. 鄧子美, *Chuantong fojiao yu Zhongguo jindai hua: bainian wenhua chongchuang yu jiaoliu* 傳統佛教與中國近代化: 百年文化衝撞與交流 [Traditional Buddhism and Chinese Modernization: A Century of Cultural Conflicts and Interchange], Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1994, pp. 108–109.

8 On the rhetoric "Saving the nation with Buddhism" (*fojiao jiuguo* 佛教救國), see R. Lai, "Praying for the Republic: Buddhist Education, Student-Monks, and Citizenship in Modern China, 1911–1949", PhD thesis, McGill University, 2013, chap. 2; S. Travagnin, "Concepts and Institutions for a New Buddhist Education: Reforming the Saṃgha Between and Within State Agencies", *East Asian History* 39 (2014), pp. 89–102.

9 Guanzong Monastery was originally one of the contemplation halls (*guantang* 觀堂) of Yanqing Monastery (延慶寺) founded by the Song Tiantai patriarch Siming Zhili 四明知禮 (960–1028). It had fallen into a state of disrepair in the late Qing. When the magistrate of Yin County 鄞縣, in present-day Ningbo, invited Dixian to take up the abbotship, he agreed on the condition that he be allowed to rename the monastery Guanzong and set up a Buddhist school within the monastery. He Jianming has pointed out that Taixu was involved in the initial planning of the school. See He J., "Minchu xingjiao fengchao yu Ningbo Guanzong yanjiu she de kaiban 民初興教風潮與寧波觀宗研究社的開辦" ["Buddhist Revival and the Founding of the Ningbo Guanzong Study Society in the Early Republican Era"], *Fayin* 法音 [The Voice of Dharma] 12 (2009), p. 48.

from the Beijing political elites Ye Gongchuo 葉恭綽 (1881–1968) and Kuai Ruomu 蒯若木, the school was renamed Guanzong School (Guanzong xueshe 觀宗學舍) and expanded to include both a study and a research division in 1919. At its founding in 1913, admission to the Study Society was limited to resident monks at the Guanzong Monastery due to the lack of funding. Later on, a small number of monks from the outside were allowed to attend. By 1919, the school had around forty students divided into the preparatory class (*yuke* 預科) and the general class (*zhengke* 正科). In 1928, the school was further expanded and renamed Dharma Propagation Study Society (Hongfa yanjiushe 弘法研究社).[10]

The curriculum, for which Dixian was the principal instructor, focused primarily on Tiantai doctrine. Student life was very similar to that of a traditional public monastery (*conglin* 叢林). Discipline was strict, and students followed a rigorous daily routine. For two hours each afternoon, the Dharma master would ascend the teaching platform in his red robe to formally expound a passage from the scriptures; students from the different classes would obediently listen to the sermon, which was preceded and followed by regular daily devotions, meditation, and communal rituals.[11] As other new-style Buddhist schools began to adopt the blackboard, assignments, examinations, diplomas, as well as secular subjects and foreign languages into their curriculum, Dixian's traditional pedagogy would remain the distinguishing feature for his school and those founded by his student Tanxu in later years.

Welch observes that this system of teaching and learning was still practised at major Chinese monasteries in the Republican period.[12] Such an intensely formalized and ritualized monastic training system has often been critically scrutinized and compared to the modern Buddhist academies in the Buddhist discourse on monastic education during the Republican period. In

10 Chen Y. 陳永革, *Fojiao honghua de xiandai zhuanxing: Minguo Zhejiang fojiao yanjiu* 佛教弘化的現代轉型: 民國浙江佛教研究, *1912–1949* [The Transformation of Buddhist Propagation: A Study of Buddhism in Zhejiang during the Republican Period], Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua, 2003, p. 62; Fang Z. 方祖猷, *Tiantaizong Guanzong jiangsi zhi* 天台宗觀宗講寺志, *1912–1949* [Tiantai Guanzong Temple Gazetteer, 1912–1949], Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2006, p. 146; Li S. 李四龙, *Tiantaizong yu Fojiaoshi yanjiu* 天台宗與佛教史研究 [Research on the Tiantai School and Buddhist History], Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2011, p. 163. According to Huiyue 慧嶽, however, the Guanzong Study Society and Guangzong School were originally separate entities that were merged to form the Dharma Propagation Study Society in 1928. See Huiyue, *Tiantai jiaoxueshi* 天台教學史 [A History of Tiantai Teachings], Taipei: Zhonghua Fojiao wenxian, 1974, p. 320.

11 Welch, *Revival*, pp. 107–110; Tanxu 倓虛, *Yingchen huiyi lu* 影塵回憶錄 [A Memoir of Shadow and Dust], Hong Kong: Zhonghua fojiao tushuguan, 1993, p. 64.

12 Welch, *Practice*, pp. 310–314.

analysing the cause for the lack of spiritual vigour and doctrinal creativity in late imperial Chinese Buddhism, scholars often point to the stagnant ritualism and deemphasized scriptural learning associated with Chan in the public monasteries' pedagogy.[13] When writing about specialized training institutions such as Yuexia's Avatamsaka University (Huayan daxue 華嚴大學) and Dixian's Guanzong School, Taixu (1890–1947) doubted if these "schools for fostering Dharma teachers" (*fashi yangcheng suo* 法師養成所) in the doctrine of one school or lineage would produce sangha members who were prepared to lead and sustain Buddhism in the modern age.[14] Even Welch, who is not always enthusiastic about the reformist project, comments that the atmosphere at the Guangzong School was "too old-fashioned for many of the younger monks." One of his informants even reported that "some students could not take the rigours of the program and died of tuberculosis."[15] Yet it is important to note that the proposal for Buddhist educational reform in the late Qing and early Republican periods was not always univocal – not even among the so-called reformists. In fact, the call for a new Buddhist education by reformist monks was not a wholesale rejection of traditional training. Rather, many lamented the demise of virtue in public monasteries and their failure to live up to their own model as places that fostered enlightenment.[16] In can be argued that the revitalization of this traditional clerical training system lied at the heart of Dixian and Tanxu's project.

The Guanzong School produced a generation of graduates who went on to establish or teach at other monastic schools across the country. Armed with a specialized training in Tiantai doctrines and, for quite a few, lineage transmission from Dixian, these monks gradually formed a community with a distinct "sectarian" identity. Even Taixu acknowledged that Dixian's school led to the appearance of a "Dixian lineage" within the Chinese Sangha.[17] In fact, the

13 Guo P. 郭朋, *Ming Qing fojiao* 明清佛教 [Ming-Qing Buddhism], Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1982, p. 7; Jiang C. 江燦騰, *Ming Qing Minguo fojiao sixiang shilun* 明清民國佛教思想史論 [On the Intellectual History of Buddhism in the Ming, Qing, and Republican Periods], Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1996, pp. 89–91.

14 Taixu, "Seng jiaoyu zhi mudi yu chengxu 僧教育之目的與程序" ["The Goal and Program in Monastic Education"], in: *Taixu dashi quanshu* 太虛大師全書 [The Complete Works of Master Taixu], vol. 17, Taipei: Shandaosi fojing liutongchu, 1980, p. 475.

15 Welch, *Revival*, p. 110.

16 For a vivid biographical account for monastic training and criticism of the abuse and laxity at public monasteries during the Republican period, see Chen-Hua, *In Search of the Dharma: Memoirs of a Modern Chinese Buddhist Pilgrim*, C. Yü (ed.), D. Mair (trans.), Albany: SUNY Press, 1992.

17 Taixu, *Quanshu*, vol. 13, p. 1432.

debate on *conglin* vs. *foxueyuan* was far from over. One can even say that it has shaped the way Chinese Buddhists discuss the goal and purposes of education up to the present day.[18]

Dixian also lectured tirelessly and authored numerous commentaries during his lifetime.[19] He was especially well connected with the political elites in Beijing in the early years of the Republic. In 1915, he was invited by Yuan Shikai to deliver long sermons in Beijing.[20] He met his lifelong patrons Ye and Kuai on his second teaching tour to Beijing in 1918. In addition to their generous donation for the expansion of the Guanzong School, Ye would remain a major patron for Dixian and Tanxu's temple construction and educational projects in the following decades. Between 1913 and his death in 1932, Dixian attracted many students from across China to study Tiantai thought and *sūtras* with him.[21] He had over twenty tonsure disciples and transmitted the Tiantai lineage to twenty-four monks, most of them students at his school. These monks would eventually bring about a Tiantai revival that spread beyond China's borders during the second-half of the twentieth and well into the twenty-first century.

Before moving on to Dixian's legacy, I would also point out that although he was often targeted by China's young monks as the conservative and rigid "old monk" (*jiuseng* 舊僧) who was preventing Chinese Buddhism from modernizing, Dixian's relationship and interaction with many progressive monks were more complex than they have been portrayed. For example, Renshan 仁山 (1887–1951) was mostly known for his involvement with Taixu in the famous "Jinshan Conflict" (*da nao Jinshan* 大鬧金山) in 1912, when they attempted to

18 Education in contemporary Chinese Buddhism lies beyond the scope of this chapter. For the various contemporary organizations and teachers that consider modernizing Buddhist education their mission, see Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land*; Changhui 常慧, *Shengyan fashi fojiao jiaoyu lilun yu shijian* 聖嚴法師佛教教育理論與實踐 [The Theory and Practice of Venerable Shengyan's Buddhist Education], Taipei: Fagu wenhua, 2004.

19 For the collection of his works, see Dixian, *Yiji*, 4 vols (see fn 3).

20 When Yuan's Beiyang government, in an attempt to bring religion under state control, promulgated the Rules for Temple Management (*Guanli simiao tiaoli* 管理寺廟條例), which also disbanded the General Chinese Buddhist Association founded only two years earlier, there were rumours that these Rules were based on Dixian's requests. This generated much criticism and attack from other Buddhist leaders in the country. From his sealed confinement, Taixu wrote a letter condemning Dixian. See Taixu, "Taixu zizhuan 太虛自傳" ["An Autobiography of Taixu"], *Quanshu*, vol. 29, p. 200. On the Rules, see V. Goossaert and D. Palmer, *The Religious Question of Modern China*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, p. 59; Dongchu, *Jindai shi*, p. 113.

21 Dixian's Dharma heir Baojing 寶靜 (1899–1940), a graduate of the seminary, took over the administration and teaching until it was forced to close down at the outbreak of the war in 1937.

turn the well-endowed Jinshan Monastery (金山寺) into a monastic school.[22] Lesser known is the fact that Renshan later attended Dixian's Guanzong School and, in 1919, founded a Tiantai institute in Northern Jiangsu. Renshan would spend the remainder of his life teaching and composing commentaries on Tiantai, Huayan, and Yogacara thoughts.[23] Another Guanzong graduate was the reformist monk Changxing 常惺 (1896–1939), who was instrumental in Taixu's educational and institutional modernization projects.[24]

This dispute between the "old" and "new" factions in the monastic establishment was more than just an ideological debate. Beside the competition for authority and orthodoxy, the "old" monks formed the immensely powerful lineage and temple networks that controlled a substantial proportion of monastic landholdings. It was also a process of differentiation. By calling themselves "new", young monks in China attempted to distinguish themselves from the "old monks" – elders who controlled the well-endowed public monasteries but did not support their reformist projects, especially educational modernization. Therefore, criticism of the conservative monks, often painted in broad strokes, was important to the formation of the new-monk identity. As we have seen in the case of Dixian's career, the "conservatives" had apparent advantages in implementing their reforms. The story of their success and legacy can only be understood when positioned *beyond* the narrative of the "old" vs. the "new". Furthermore, as the examples of Renshan and Changxin have shown, there was much overlap, interaction, and exchange between the rival groups, if indeed they should be considered rivals at all.

As one of the most renowned monks of his time, Dixian was instrumental in the nascent reform project in Buddhist monastic education. He is also remembered as a compassionate teacher who deeply cared about the wellbeing of his students. He was especially concerned about spreading Buddhism beyond its historical stronghold in the Lower Yangzi region. As such, he would admit students from Northern China and encourage them to return to their native places to teach. As a charismatic and prolific preacher, Dixian cultivated a large following among the social elites. These lay patrons not only supported his many undertakings, but also proved to be indispensable in supporting the growth of the Tiantai network driven by Dixian's students.

22 Welch, *Revival*, pp. 28–33; D. Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2001, pp. 74–77.
23 Chen, *Fojiao honghua*, p. 94; Yu L. 于凌波, *Minguo gaoseng zhuan chubian*, pp. 82–83.
24 Dongchu, *Jindai shi*, pp. 850–879.

Tanxu and the Tiantai Lineage Network

One of Dixian's students often credited for continuing his effort in reviving Tiantai Buddhism and spreading it beyond the Lower Yangzi region is Tanxu. As the founder of nine monasteries, 17 lecture halls, and 13 seminaries, he was without a doubt one of Dixian's most prominent Dharma heirs.

In 1875, Tanxu was born into the Wang family in a poor fishing community in Beitang village, east of Tianjin.[25] He received a few years of basic education, then got married at the age of seventeen. Two years later, in 1894, he travelled to Fengtian 奉天 (present day Shenyang) to work for a distant relative in the tobacco trade. But he left after a few months, when news broke that the Japanese army was moving towards Fengtian. Upon returning home, he found out that his father had died. He now had to shoulder the burden of supporting his family. He had worked in the county magistrates' office, the local government, and eventually as a healer blending fortune telling and medicine, a trade that he learned from a friend.[26] In 1908, now the owner of a thriving pharmacy, he moved his family to Yingkou 營口.

In his memoir, Tanxu recalled that he had wanted to leave home and seek the spiritual path from an early age. Before he sought tonsure as a novice, he had spent several years studying the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (*Lengyan jing* 楞嚴經) on his own. He is said to have achieved a deep level of understanding, being able to teach and discuss sophisticated Buddhist doctrine with his lay Buddhist friends. For a monk of his time, Tanxu was ordained very late in life – he was 43 and had six children.[27]

In 1917, he travelled to Ningbo to receive full ordination under Dixian at the Guanzong Monastery, where he would remain until 1920 to study Tiantai doctrine. At first, he was heckled for being an older Northerner who could not understand southern accents. But later, he excelled in his study. Dixian is said to have been very kind to him and impressed with his diligence and ability to explain complex doctrinal concepts.[28] Concerned with the lack of vitality in Buddhism in the North, Dixian encouraged Tanxu to return there to spread the Dharma. In the following decades, Tanxu founded, revived, or expanded major temples in the cities of Harbin 哈爾濱, Changchun 長春, Yingkou, and Qingdao 青島. These cities were marked by a heavy foreign presence at the time – from

25 Tanxu, *Yingchen*, vol. 1, p. 2.

26 J. Carter, *Heart of Buddha, Heart of China: The Life of Tanxu, a Twentieth-Century Monk*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 34.

27 Tanxu, *Yingchen*, vol. 1, pp. 45–46.

28 Yu, *Xiandai fojiao renwu cidian*, vol. 1, pp. 800–803.

Western imperial powers competing for resources to the occupation by the Japanese army during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Despite Tanxu's insistence on his apolitical propagation of the Dharma in the region, Carter characterizes his activity as a form of nationalism in resisting foreign encroachment.[29]

When he was teaching at the Wanshou Temple Buddhist Seminary (Wanshousi foxueyuan 萬壽寺佛學院) in Fengtian in 1923, he received an invitation from the general Zhu Ziqiao 朱子橋 (1874–1941) to help establish a Buddhist temple in the city of Harbin. A former Russian concession, the city had no Buddhist monastery prior to this time. Tanxu's task was to oversee the construction of a temple, the Jile Monastery (極樂寺), so as to compete with the local landmarks of foreign architecture by inscribing a Chinese identity onto the heart of the city. When construction was completed the next year, Tanxu, now the temple's abbot, established the Jile Monastery Buddhist School (Jile si fojiao xuexiao 極樂寺佛教學校). He received Dharma transmission as the forty-fourth generation Tiantai lineage holder from Dixian in 1925.[30]

In subsequent years, he built Bore Monastery (般若寺) in Changchun, Lengyan Monastery (楞嚴寺) in Yingkou, and Zhanshan Monastery (湛山寺) in Qingdao. Tanxu rose to prominence quickly. His monasteries and seminaries attracted a large number of students because of their welcoming policies. Jile Monastery had around four hundred monks in residence in 1927; his seminary in Qingdao attracted over a hundred and twenty students in its inaugural class.[31] He was nominated to join the Chinese delegation to the East Asian Buddhist Conference in Tokyo in 1925, whose members included Taixu, Daojie 道階 (1870–1934), Chisong 持松 (1894–1972), Zhang Zongzai 張宗載 (1896–?), and Ning Dayun 寧達蘊 (1901–?).

In 1948, with Ye Gongchuo's help, Tanxu left Qingdao for Shanghai and eventually arrived in Hong Kong. There, with the help of Zhu Ziqiao, he was able to revive the abandoned Hongfa Hermitage (Hongfa jingshe 弘法精舍) and established the South China Buddhist Seminary (Huanan xuefoyuan 華南學佛院). Until his death in 1963, Tanxu preached at his seminary as well as around Hong Kong. Tens of thousands of lay people took the Three Refuges with him. He also gave Dharma transmission to a few dozen monks. Besides his success in building monastic schools and enrolling students, Tanxu is also remembered as a prominent Tiantai master who transmitted the lineage beyond mainland China.

29 J. Carter, "Buddhism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Manchuria", *Journal of Global Buddhism* 10 (2009), p. 193; Carter, *Heart of Buddha*, p. 106.

30 Pan G. 潘桂明 and Wu Z. 吳忠偉, *Zhongguo Tiantaizong tongshi* 中國天台宗通史 [A General History of the Chinese Tiantai School], Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2008, p. 738.

31 Tanxu, *Yingchen*, vol. 2, p. 170.

An innovative move in Tanxu's propagation of Tiantai lineage was his "transmission without succession" (*chuanfa bu chuanzuo* 傳法不傳座), which he saw as essential to the institutional health of the tradition.

There were three forms of affiliation based on religious kinship – tonsure, Dharma, and ordination. One could only have a "tonsure family", and a tonsure temple was usually smaller and more local. Full ordination and Dharma transmission almost always took place at larger public monasteries. While every novice was expected to take full ordination after a probationary period, only a select few, usually those who were recognized for their talent or spiritual capacity, were granted Dharma transmission. Since the Ming and Qing, a large majority of monks and nuns belonged to the Chan lineages of Linji 臨濟 or Caodong 曹洞 upon tonsure, whereas the Huayan 華嚴 and Tiantai lineages were bestowed during Dharma transmission. During both tonsure and Dharma transmission, a candidate would be given a Dharma name, which indicated his/her generation within the lineage.[32] It was not uncommon that a monk might receive transmission in more than one lineage. Receiving transmission into a lineage also did not exclude one from studying other doctrines or following other practices.

Although the notion of the transmission of Dharma is inherent to Chan identity, the practice of Dharma transmission only began to become institutionalized during the Song period, when transmission certificates were issued to certify and authenticate Dharma heirs in the Chan lineage. During the late Ming, Dharma transmission was further associated with the succession of monastery abbotship.[33] Zhang Xuesong has rightly observed that this was closely related to widespread kinship practices, manifested in the production of genealogies, ancestral halls, and family rules during this period.[34]

Welch loosely classifies the practices into institutional and private transmissions that marked a disciple's introduction into a specific Dharma family that had genealogies going all the way back to the historical Buddha. An institutional transmission, which was most common in the Jiangsu 江蘇 area, was a

32 Welch, *Practice*, pp. 279–281, 403.

33 J. Wu, *Leaving for the Rising Sun: Chinese Zen Master Yinyuan and the Authenticity Crisis in Early Modern East Asia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 72–75. Transmission certificates were called *sishu* 嗣書in the Song, *yuanliu* 源流 during the Ming and Qing, and *fajuan* 法卷 in the Republican and contemporary periods. See also H. Welch, "Dharma Scrolls and the Succession of Abbots in Chinese Monasteries", *T'oung Pao* 50 (1963) 1–3, pp. 93–149.

34 Zhang X. 張雪松, *Fojiao "fayuan zongzu" yanjiu: Zhongguo zongjiao zuzhi moshi tanxi* 佛教"法緣宗族"研究：中國宗教組織模式探析 [The Dharma Lineage in Chinese Buddhism: A Study on the Organizational Model in Chinese Religion], Beijing: Renmin daxue chubanshe, 2015, p. 111.

"seal of office" that established succession to the abbotship. Despite the common claim of an authentic Chan lineage, many Dharma lineages were monastery-specific, meaning that a Dharma transmission ceremony was performed to identify and secure Dharma relationship between the current cohort of candidates for the abbotship and the future one. It was not uncommon that, during a collective Dharma transmission, several masters would transmit the lineage to several Dharma heirs at the same time. These Dharma heirs would serve as abbot according to the order prescribed in the transmission scroll, a document detailing the genealogy. On the other hand, a private transmission involved a single master transmitting to a single disciple, and no succession was guaranteed.[35]

Tanxu spoke against Dharma transmission that presumed succession, as he saw several problems with such practice. First, it was conducive to factionalism within the community when a teacher favoured candidates from the same native place or with whom he had a personal connection. Second, when more than one candidate received Dharma transmission, it instigated unnecessary competition and tension among the Dharma heirs of the same teacher. Lastly, such practice could lead to a decline in the spirit of the tradition and the quality of future leaders, as teachers often picked successors who were younger, less spiritually attained, and therefore more obedient.[36] When succession became a right, he argued, then one would just wait for one's turn after receiving transmission. Instead, he thought selection should be based on a disciple's capability as a teacher and administrator. By considering the transmission of Dharma lineage a completely separate issue from the management of the monastic community and property, he did not hesitate to make as many lineage holders as he deemed appropriate, according to their spiritual capacity and insight into the Dharma. He therefore urged his students to travel far and wide to spread Buddhist teaching and the Tiantai lineage.

Today, a glance of the list of former and current executives of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association reveals the large number of Tiantai lineage holders. Jueguang 覺光 (1919–2014) received transmission from Baojing 寶靜 (1899–1940), a contemporary of Tanxu and Dharma heir of Dixian. Yongxing 永惺 (1926–2016) first attended Tanxu's seminary in Qingdao and later graduated from his South China Buddhist Seminary after relocating to Hong Kong. Together, Jueguang and Yongxing led the Hong Kong Buddhist Association

35 Welch, *Practice*, pp. 158, 315.
36 Tanxu, *Yingchen*, vol. 2, pp. 226–236.

for over half a century. According to one estimate, over half of all Buddhist temples in Hong Kong claim a Tiantai affiliation.[37]

Another outstanding Tiantai monastic in Hong Kong, the nun artist Xiaoyun 曉雲 (1912–2004), was a tonsure disciple of Tanxu who founded the first Buddhist university (Huafan University 華梵大學) in Taiwan in 1990. The Tiantai dominance in the Buddhist landscape in Hong Kong later led to the spread of the lineage to North America. Ledu 樂渡 (also spelled Lok To, 1923–2011), Chengxiang 誠祥 (1920–2006), and Xingkong 性空 (b. 1924) were all graduates of seminaries founded by Tanxu who received Dharma transmission from him. With the approval of Tanxu, Ledu departed for San Francisco in 1963. He relocated to New York the next year at the invitation of several lay Buddhists. He also founded the Sutra Translation Committee of the United States and Canada in 1974, which has translated over thirty Chinese Buddhist works into English.[38]

In 1967, Ledu invited his peers Chengxiang and Xingkong to visit North America. They settled in Toronto and established the first Chinese Buddhist temple, Cham Shan Temple (Zhanshan si 湛山寺), currently the largest Buddhist temple in the city. These organizations remain active and significant centres for the dissemination and propagation of Buddhism up to the present day. Furthermore, the lineage identity and loyalty among these monastics remains so strong that subsequent leaders of their organizations would all take on Tiantai transmission. Because of the prestige that Tanxu enjoyed and the customary practice of granting Tiantai lineage to more than just a few in every generation, Tiantai lineage holders gradually grew into a wide yet tightly connected network that commands considerable social and religious capital in much of the Chinese Buddhist world.

Conclusion: What is in a Transmission?

Due to the lack of a centralized authority, Chinese Buddhism has historically been held together by informal networks of affiliation. Unlike the various sects in Japanese Buddhism or modernist Buddhist organizations based in Taiwan, the Tiantai lineage does not have a headquarters. Autonomous temples and monasteries within the lineages are connected through a fluid, flexible, and diffused network of identity and affiliation. In fact, the fluidity of such decentralized networks

37 Huiyue, *Tiantai jiaoxueshi*, p. 336.

38 Carter, *Heart of the Buddha*, p. 6. Sometimes the translation project is attributed to the Young Men's Buddhist Association founded by Ledu in the same year. The relationship between the two entities is unclear.

poses a challenge in terms of both access and visibility, and is the primary reason why they are often overlooked in scholarly literature. However, this mode of affiliation represents the majority of the Chinese sangha up to the present day. Rather than being sectarian and exclusive, the modern Tiantai network can be thought of as a complex and extended "Dharma family" that offers its members authority and legitimacy. By expanding the narrative of modern Chinese Buddhist transnationalism to include understudied groups such as Tiantai, we will be able to better understand the intersection between institution, identity, and spatial dislocation, as well as how kinship and alliance are formed, maintained, and disseminated in modern Chinese Buddhism.