

Mad but not Chan: Tu Long (1543-1605) and the Tiantai School of Buddhism

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Abstract

This article focuses on the relationship between the controversial late-Ming playwright Tu Long and the contemporaneous Tiantai school of Buddhism represented by Youxi Chuandeng. It aims to contribute on the one hand to studies of Tu Long, which have paid little attention to Tu's connection with Tiantai, and on the other hand to studies of Chuandeng and the late Ming Tiantai revival, which have not yet explored the nexus between Chuandeng's philosophical teachings and his social network. I argue that it is most likely through Tiantai Buddhism, rather than "mad Chan" or Yangming philosophy, that Tu justified his antinomian deeds. This case study of Tu Long indicates that the success of the Tiantai school in the late Ming may be attributed to its fulfillment of the literati appetite for reading and writing, as well as to its tolerance of their unconventional lifestyle and syncretic spirituality. Unveiling some disagreements between Tu and Yunqi Zhuhong, whom many regard as Tu's guru, this paper highlights the agency of a lay Buddhist amid the tensions between rival schools and teachers.

Keywords: Tiantai, Tu Long, late Ming, network, Chuandeng, Zhuhong, Inherent Inclusion in the Nature

狂而非禪：屠隆與天台宗

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中文摘要

晚明戲劇家屠隆和佛教天台宗的關係很少被學者論及，而目前對於晚明天台宗的研究也尚未將天台教理和其社會網絡結合起來進行考察。本文聚焦屠隆和晚明天台宗的重要僧人幽溪傳燈的互動，力圖揭示天台教理對屠隆的影響，同時將屠隆作為一個個案，管窺當時天台宗在僧人和士大夫中受到歡迎或引起爭議的原因。雲棲祿宏常常被以為是屠隆的唯一佛教導師，但本文亦會展現屠隆和祿宏之間微妙的思想差異，從而探討這一時期士紳居士和不同宗派高僧之間的互動模式。

關鍵詞：天台宗、屠隆、晚明、網絡、傳燈、祿宏、性具

Whoever has read Tu Long's last play *Xiuwen ji* (修文記) may notice that the eminent monk Yunqi Zhuhong (雲棲祿宏, 1535-1615), who is contemporary to Tu Long (屠隆, 1543-1605), appears briefly as a character preaching the Dharma in the "Q & A" format to a small group of audience (Act 43, "Preaching the Dharma"). This, together with some other evidence, may have led many scholars to take Zhuhong, who is famous for his Pure Land and Chan practices, as Tu's only Buddhist influence.¹ However, even this very act of the play suggests otherwise, for there is another monk, whose name is Wuqiong (無窮). Although in the play, Wuqiong sits with the rest of the audience and asks Zhuhong his question, this is not the first time when his name appears together with Zhuhong's in Tu Long's works. Tu is asked in the *Ironclad Buddhadharma* (*Fofa jintang* 佛法金湯) to comment on Zhuhong, Venerable Deng (燈公), and Venerable Qiong (窮老)² and he acclaims them all. In his *Cooling Words from the Shāla Hall* (*Suoluoguan*

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¹ For example, Lin Chih-Li 林智莉, "Renaissance zhong duhua youyuan: cong Ming mo Qing chu Fojiao zhong ren xiqu chuanzuo kan xi fo rongtong de kenengxing ji qi chuangzuo guifan" 熱鬧場中 度化有緣：從明末清初佛教中人戲曲創作觀點看戲佛融通的可能性及其創作規範, *Guowen xuebao* 國文學報 52 (2012): 147; idem, "Tu Long zhi xinyan yu shengming guan: yi *Xiuwen ji* wei hexin taolun" 屠隆之信仰與生命觀—以《修文記》為核心探討, *Shida xuebao: yuyan yu wenxue lei* 師大學報：語言與文學類 56, 2 (2011): 95-120; Xiao Ziqiang 肖自強, "Tu Long fojiao sixiang yanjiu" 屠隆佛教思想研究, MA diss., Nanjing University, 2012; Lan Qing 藍青, "Wanming shifeng bianyi yu Tu Long xiqu de zongjiao jiaohua sixiang: yi *Tanhua ji* wei zhongxin" 晚明世風變異與屠隆戲曲的宗教教化思想——以《曇花記》為中心, *Wenzhou daxue xuebao* 溫州大學學報 3 (2018): 87-94.

² Tu Long 屠隆 (A.D. 1544-1605), *Tu Long ji* 屠隆集, ed. Wong Chaohong 汪超宏 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2012), vol.6, p. 643.

qingyan 娑羅館清言), he lists the names of four monks as follows and hails them for possessing the thoughts of the Indian masters: Zhuhong, Ven. Deng, Hanshan (憨山), and Ven. Qiong.³ Whereas Zhuhong and Hanshan are clearly two of the “Four Eminent Monks of the Late Ming,” who are Ven. Deng and Ven. Qiong?

In the *Xiuwen ji*, Wuqiong claims himself to be a monk from Mt. Tiantai who has mastered the art of lecturing and the studies of the scriptures, “correcting Chan with his thoughtful efforts.”⁴ In some other works Tu composed around the same time, his compliments to Ven. Qiong and Ven. Deng for reviving the Tiantai School further reveal their identities as Wuqiong Chuanfang (無窮傳芳) and Wujin Chuandeng (無盡傳燈) respectively.⁵ Compared with the scarcity of the sources regarding Wuqiong,

³ Tu Long, *Tu Long ji*, vol.6, p. 544.

⁴ Tu Long, *Tu Long ji*, vol.11, p. 461: “精繙貝葉，苦心頗救宗門。” At least in the late Ming, the word *zongmen* 宗門 specifically refers to the Chan as opposed to the Tiantai or Vinaya school/approach. For example, a late Ming preface to the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 reads “nowadays *zongmen* has been flourishing but the [monasteries or approaches of] lecture and the precept are perhaps being neglected.” (“近日宗門盛行，講律或廢,” CBETA, T49, no.2035, p.129, b10).

⁵ The following quotes from Tu Long’s writings show that Ven. Deng must refer to Wujin Chuandeng active in Youxi, Mt. Tiantai, and Ven. Qiong to Wuqiong Chuanfang active in Ningbo where Tu Long lived: 1. “*Tiantaishan fangwaizhi xu*” 《天台山方外志》序 (1605), *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi* 天台山方外志, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 37, a5: “Youxi revived it to a greater extent while Ven. Qiong elaborated it in Juyong ... in this way the School of Tiantai has been rejuvenated just as the sun and moon reappear in the sky. How magnificent! How magnificent!” (幽溪復大振之，而窮公闡發於句甬……於是天台之宗煥然，揭日月於重朗，盛矣盛矣!) 2. “Zeng Mizang fashi zhuchi shelidian xu” 贈秘藏法師住持舍利殿序 (1605), *Mingzhou Ayuwang shanzhi* 明州阿育王山志, CBETA, GA11, no. 10, p. 278, a2-4: “Ven. Deng is preaching in Youxi, Ven. Fang is teaching in Jianshui ... The Tiantai School is being revived!” (燈公開化於幽溪，芳公闡教於鑑水……台

Chuangdeng left a lot more materials including the religious gazetteers, treatises, and exegeses that he penned or compiled. From these materials, we are confirmed that both Deng and Qiong are monks of the Tiantai School and that Tu Long was involved in the construction of this school in the Wanli period. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, no scholarly work has examined the relationship between Tu Long and the Tiantai School and Tu's works have been repetitively studied under the frameworks such as the "unity of the three teachings" or the "unity of Chan and the Pure Land." One of the goals of this paper is therefore to highlight the Tiantai influence on Tu Long. Once we take the Tiantai influence into consideration, we may be able to open up another dimension in his works and interpret them in a more holistic way. It may also help us understand some still more confounding sides of this playwright, who is known to be extremely religious while indulging himself in sensual pleasures.

On the other hand, in Buddhist studies, research on Chuandeng (傳燈, 1554-1628) and the late Ming revival of the Tiantai School has not yet looked into the connections between their philosophy and their social network. Yungfen Ma's dissertation, and articles by Ando Toshio, Huang Xianian, and Yu Hanqun only deal with Chuandeng's philosophical thoughts,⁶ whereas Puk Wingkin's article explores Chuandeng's social

宗其有興乎!) 3. "Xin jian Tiantai zuting ji" 新建天台祖庭記 (1601), *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, p814, a7-8: "Ven. Wujin Deng inherited the Tiantai teaching and disseminated it in Folong ... Ven. Wuqiong Fang elaborated the Tiantai teaching and advocated it in Siming" (無盡燈公嗣台教, 大行于佛隴……無窮芳公衍台教, 盛傳于四明.)

⁶ Yungfen Ma, "The Revival of Tiantai Buddhism in the Late Ming: On the Thought of Youxi Chuandeng" (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 2011); Ando Toshio 安藤

network without relating it to his teachings.⁷ Lin I-Luan's very informative master thesis on Chuandeng discusses both of these two sides of Chuandeng but separately, providing the names and basic biographical information of relevant laymen without elaborating on their interactions with Chuandeng.⁸ As a result, the following questions still remain: Who made up the audience of the apparently radical Tiantai teachings (such as the idea that Nature includes both evil and good)? Who were the supporters of the Tiantai revival against the prevailing odds? What motivated them? A possible answer to this last question, as many scholars have noted, may point to the fatigue that many literati in the late Ming must have felt about the non-discursive, riddling style of Chan, which spawned an interest in scriptural studies. However, since many monks other than those of the Tiantai School were also advocating scriptural studies⁹, such an answer is not specific enough to

俊雄, "Minmatu no Tendai gakushyō Yūkeidentō no kyōgaku" 明末の天台学匠幽溪伝灯の教学, *Otani Gakuho* 大谷学報 34, 3 (1954): 1-12; Huang Xianian 黃夏年, "Chuandeng dashi dui Ru Fa er jia xing shan e sixiang de pipan" 傳燈大師對儒法二家性善惡思想的批判, *Dongnan wenhua* 東南文化 A1 (1998): 65-9; Yu Hanqun 俞漢群, "Youxi Chuandeng fashi xingju sixiang xilun: yi Xing shan'e lun wei zhongxin" 幽溪傳燈法師性具思想析論——以《性善惡論》為中心, *Zhejiang xuekan* 浙江學刊 2 (2015): 44-53.

⁷ Puk Wingkin 卜永堅, "Zi gu congshu zhongxing, bi jie wangchen waihu: Wanming Tiantaizong sengren Wujin Chuandeng de wenhua wangluo yanjiu" "自古叢社中興, 必借王臣外護" —— 晚明天台宗僧人無盡傳燈的文化網絡, *Mingshi yanjiu luncong* 明史研究論叢 9 (2011): 262-273.

⁸ Lin I-Luan 林一鸞, "Ming Youxi Chuandeng (1554-1628) dashi zhi yanjiu" 明幽溪傳燈 (1554-1628) 大師之研究 (MA diss., Huaan University, 2004).

⁹ For example, Zhuhong 祿宏 (A.D. 1535-1615) wrote a short article "Fojing buke budu" 佛經不可不讀, in his *Zhuchuan suibi* 竹窗隨筆. See *Lianchi dashi quanji* 蓮池大師全集, ed. Mingxue 明學 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), p. 1394.

fully explain the revival of the Tiantai School. More in-depth studies that bridge the doctrinal/philosophical and the historical/biographical are needed. As the starting point of my bigger project on Chuandeng's social network, this paper is a case study focusing on Tu Long, one of Chuandeng's most well-known, articulate, and provocative supporters. How did the Tiantai teachers in the late Ming speak to Tu's spiritual needs, which may be shared by others of their supporters? Answering this question will enrich our understanding of the religious landscape of the late Ming regarding such issues as the reception and social impact of the Tiantai School, the tensions between different Buddhist schools or lineages, and the interactions between the clergy and the elite lay Buddhists.

This paper examines the works of Chuandeng and Tu Long side by side. I will first delineate the religious trajectories of Tu Long and Chuandeng and chronicle their interactions. In the next section, I will show that the Tiantai School at that time was not only new, but also controversial; for this reason, Tu Long's support of it must have not come from merely courtesy or a non-selective patronage of Buddhism, but rather a choice that he made consciously. Here, Zhuhong's disparagements of the Tiantai lineage is particularly telling. Finally, I will analyze what in Tiantai may have attracted Tu Long and why Tiantai is most likely the philosophical source for Tu to rationalize his antinomian behaviors.

1. Religious trajectories of Tu Long and Chuandeng

Tu Long was born in 1543, eleven years older than Chuandeng (b.1554). In 1577, he became *jinshi*. Among those who became *jinshi* in the same year were Feng Mengzhen (馮夢禎) and Wang Shixing (王士性). All three would

have a close relationship to each other and to Chuandeng. Being a literature disciple of Wang Shizhen (王世貞), Tu borrowed Buddhist books from Wang and was later involved in the Tanyangzi (曇陽子) cult of which Wang was a major promoter in the late 1570s to early 1580s.

In 1584-5, Tu Long's life was changed dramatically. Being accused of debauchery, he was deprived of his position as the Secretary of the General Bureau at the Ministry of Rites in Beijing and had to return home in the south. Although Tu insisted on his innocence, he was dismayed that Wang Shizhen and Tanyangzi's father Wang Xijue (王錫爵) did not seem to believe him.¹⁰ Around this time, Tu learned more about Buddhism while still practicing Daoism. He wrote a preface for Yunqi Zhuhong's "On stopping killing and releasing life" in 1584 (not clear whether it was before or after his political downfall). In the year after, Tu wrote a preface for the *Youmensong luejie* (有門頌畧解序)¹¹ by Baisong (百松, aka. Miaofeng zhenjue 妙峰真覺), a late Ming pioneer of the reestablishment of the Tiantai School and at that time a guru of his old friend Feng Mengzhen. This may be the earliest textual evidence of Tu Long's connection with the monastic advocates of the Tiantai School. Other people who offered Tu their sympathy at this difficult period include Yu Chunxi (虞淳熙) and Wang Shixing, both of whom would become part of Chuandeng's network.

The setback in Tu's career pushed him further to religion. In the spring of 1586 he experienced an epiphany, which made him decide to "reject all worldly shackles and cultivate himself along the great Path with all his

¹⁰ Xu Meijie 徐美潔, *Tu Long nianpu* 屠隆年譜 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2015), p. 200.

¹¹ Tu Long, fascicle 4, division of prose, *Baiyu ji* 白榆集, *Tu Long ji*, vol.3, p. 262.

strength.”¹² In the same year, he met Chuandeng through his literatus friend Wen Long (聞龍, aka. Zhonglian 仲連). In a short text that Tu composed at Chuandeng’s request when they first met, Tu showed neither knowledge nor interest in the Tiantai School in particular. He equated Buddhism with Chan, taking the lineage from Buddha to Bodhidharma as the “orthodoxy” (正宗).¹³

Baisong passed away in 1589. It seems that Chuandeng’s fame increased tremendously when he re-emerged in the public scene after the three-year mourning for Baisong. From about 1595 on, a lot more records about his interactions with Tu Long appeared. In 1595, the 41-year-old Chuandeng lectured in about five monasteries¹⁴, one of which is the Haihui Monastery in Ningbo. On behalf of the abbot of the Haihui Monastery, Tu Long and Wen Long invited Chuandeng to give lectures in the spring for three months and subsequently wrote about this extravagant event.¹⁵ About one year later, Tu Long wrote a preface for Chuandeng’s commentary on the *Śūramgama Sūtra*. In Yu Chunxi’s preface to the same text, he mentioned that his friend Tu Long appreciated Chuandeng’s teaching deeply.¹⁶

¹² Tu Long, “Yu junshan” 與君善, fascicle 13, division of prose, *Baiyu ji*, *Tu Long ji*, vol.4, p. 475: “得人生希覲奇證, 遂決志謝絕一切塵緣, 力修大道。”

¹³ Tu Long, “Zeng Wujindeng shangren xu” 贈無盡燈上人敘, fascicle 12, *Qizhen guan ji* 栖真館集, *Tu Long ji*, vol.5, p. 219.

¹⁴ Lin, “Ming Youxi Chuandeng dashi zhi yanjiu”, p. 229.

¹⁵ Tu Long, “Siming Haihuisi jiang *Lengyanjing* ji” 四明海會寺講《楞嚴經》記, *Youxi biezhi* 幽溪別志, ed. Chuandeng 傳燈, in *Zhongguo Fojiao sizhi huikan* 中國佛教寺志彙刊, ed. Du Jiexiang 杜潔祥 (Taipei: Danqing tushu chubanshe, 1985), pp. 545-550; Wen Long 聞龍, “Siming Haihuisi jiang *Lengyanjing* jieqi gui Tiantai xu” 四明海會寺講《楞嚴經》解期歸天台序, in *Youxi biezhi*, pp. 550-553.

¹⁶ Yu Chunxi 虞淳熙, “*Lengyan xuanyi xu*” 《楞嚴玄義》序, *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*

Chuandeng soon embarked on one of the most important projects in his life, that is, to rebuild the Gaoming Monastery in Mt. Tiantai. Tu Long was one of the key supporters of the project. He composed in 1598 a text to raise fund for rebuilding the Tiantai “ancestral courtyard” (祖庭) at the Gaoming Monastery¹⁷ and in 1601 another text to celebrate the completion of this project.¹⁸ Chuandeng praised him as one of the greatest patrons of his Gaoming Monastery, coming only after Tu’s old friends Feng Mengzhen and Wang Shixing.¹⁹ The triad also collaborated in producing the inscription carved on Baisong’s stupa set up next to the Gaoming Monastery: Feng composed it, Wang wrote the main text on the stele, and Tu wrote the title in seal script.²⁰

Another important project of Chuandeng is to compile a “religious gazetteer of the Mt. Tiantai” (*Tiantaishan fangwai zhi* 天台上方外志; “*Gazetteer*” hereafter). Months before he passed away, Tu wrote for that book one of the three prefaces composed by Chuandeng’s lay supporters. In addition to the preface and the aforementioned text celebrating the rebuilding of the Gaoming Monastery, there are also in the gazetteer Tu’s

天台山方外志, ed. Chuandeng 傳燈, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, p.711, a8-9: “屠緯真諸君, 聞而深嗜之。”

¹⁷ Tu Long, “Jian Gaomingsi Tiantai zuting muyuan shu” 建高明寺天台祖庭募緣疏, *Youxi biezhi*, pp. 86-89.

¹⁸ Tu Long, “Xin jian Tiantai zuting ji,” *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, pp. 813-817.

¹⁹ Chuandeng, “Youxi daochang jintang kao” 幽溪道場金湯考, *Youxi biezhi*, p. 308: “本寺金湯, 實始於樵李馮司成開之捐金贖田為大檀越主, 次則臨海王中丞恒叔, 又次則四明屠儀部長卿, 又次則黃巖林侍御澄淵。此四人者皆是同年莫逆之友, 高明護法互相表裏。”

²⁰ Chuandeng, *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA89, no. 89, p. 530, a2-4.

three letters to Chuandeng, two poems dedicated to him, and four letters to his other friends asking them to facilitate Chuandeng's visit when he traveled to their regions. He was also mentioned two times by Chuandeng and four times in other literati's writings included in the gazetteer. In total his name appeared in 17 texts in the gazetteer, making him the most frequently named individual after Wang Shixing. Interestingly but very understandably, the very first piece of text Tu wrote for Chuandeng, where he put Chuandeng under the Chan narrative of history, was not included in the gazetteer. Rather, one can see clearly from these texts that Tu was eager to help Chuandeng construct the Tiantai lineage and revive the school, although this enterprise was not without controversy at that time. I will elucidate this in the next section.

In addition to Chuandeng, Tu also associated himself with other Tiantai monks such as Mizang Zhengli (秘藏正理, not to be confused with 密藏道開) of the Ayuwang Monastery (阿育王寺). Mizang's guru is Wulou Chuanping (無漏傳瓶), who is also a disciple of Baisong and Chuandeng's peer. Tu Long helped raise fund to print the Canon for Mizang's monastery in 1602²¹ and he praised him in 1605 as the promising Tiantai master who would, in the wake of Chuandeng and Chuanfang (aka. Wuqiong, who appears in the *Xiuwen ji*), carry the great revival of this school.²²

From 1586 when Tu first met Chuandeng to 1605 when Tu passed away,

²¹ Tu Long, "Mu fangce zangjing shu" 募方冊藏經疏, *Mingzhou Ayuwang shanzhi* 明州阿育王山志, ed. Guo Zizhang 郭子章 (A.D. 1543-1618), CBETA, GA11, no. 10, p. 272, a5.

²² Tu Long, "Zeng Mizang fashi zhuchi shelidian xu," *Mingzhou Ayuwang shanzhi*, CBETA, GA11, no. 10, p. 278, a2-4.

the two had known each other for nearly 20 years. During the second half of this period, that is, 1595 -1605, they were particularly close. It is at this time that Tu Long produced all three of his plays — *Tanhua ji* (曇花記, 1598), *Caihao ji* (綵毫記, 1598), and *Xiuwen ji* (1604) — and apologist works of Buddhism such as the *Ironclad Buddhadharma* (ca 1602). The Tiantai impacts on these works need to be taken into consideration.

2. Making the Tiantai School in the Late Ming

2.1 Baisong and Chuandeng's construction of the Tiantai School

Although the Tiantai is the first Buddhist school founded in China and can be traced back to Zhiyi (智顗, 538-597), it was a new phenomenon in the late Ming. According to Chuandeng, his guru Baisong (literally meaning “a hundred of pine trees”) did not receive the Tiantai teaching from anyone in person, but from the books written by those Tiantai masters, especially Zhili (960-1028)’s *Miaozongchao* (妙宗鈔, T1751) of the 11th century. Chuandeng described the situation as “if [the school] exists, then [we learn it from] the people [of the school]; if [the school does] not exist, then [we learn it from] the books.”²³ As one of Baisong’s lay disciples, Feng Mengzhen composed Baisong’s biography that was carved on his stupa²⁴ and referred to him as the teacher who led him to the Tiantai faith. This biography confirms that Baisong is a pioneer of Tiantai, and not a follower

²³ Chuandeng, “Youxi daochang zongsheng kao” 幽溪道場宗乘考, *Youxi biezhi*, p. 169: “而我百松先師妙峰尊者生知天挺, 不由師授, 而獨契四明心宗於‘妙宗鈔’. 所謂‘在則人, 亡則書.’”

²⁴ Feng Mengzhen 馮夢禎, “Baisong zushi taming” 百松祖師塔銘, *Youxi biezhi*, pp. 443-445.

of any of his teachers: Baisong took full ordination under a Chan teacher named Xubai (虛白), and subsequently studied under Qiansong (千松, literally meaning “a thousand of pine trees,” aka. Yueting Mingde 月亭明得/德), who nonetheless revered the *Avatamsaka* (*Huayan*) *Sūtra* most.²⁵ The disagreement, if not outright conflict, between Baisong and his teacher Qiansong was reported in many sources. According to Yu Chunxi,²⁶ Qiansong often criticized his student Baisong for studying the Tiantai teachings. Yu even told a story, which illustrates the tension between the two: when Qiansong reached the topic regarding the “classification of doctrines” during his lecture in Mt. Tiantai, the apparition of General Guan Yu (關羽) came out of the tea stove. Swinging his halberd, the spirit made a dash at the lecture seat. A moment later, the hall turned into ashes. The incident was taken to indicate General Guan’s displeasure over Qiansong’s disagreement on the Tiantai classification of doctrines. From this point on, it was said, the two monks worked together to advocate the Tiantai teachings. Yet, in the *Biographies of the Eminent Monks of the Great Ming*, the author described their relationship differently: Qiansong defeated Baisong in a debate, using the *Avatamsaka* philosophy.²⁷

According to Feng Mengzhen’s biography on Baisong, in addition to lacking a firmly established lineage supporting him, Baisong also had to

²⁵ Yu Chunxi 虞淳熙, “*Lengyan xuanyi xu*” 《楞嚴玄義》序, *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 711, a9: “千松宗賢首.”

²⁶ Yu Chunxi, “*Lengyan xuanyi xu*”, *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 711, a9 - p. 712, a5.

²⁷ Ruxing 如惺, “Jiaxing Dongchansi shamen shi mingde zhuansan” 嘉興東禪寺沙門釋明得傳三, *Daming gaoseng zhuan* 大明高僧傳, CBETA, T50, no. 2062, p. 913, a28 ff.

fight against certain “sinister teachings” to gain a foothold in Mt. Tiantai.²⁸ Feng lamented elsewhere over the utter ignorance of the Tiantai teachings in his days among both the monastics and the lay, hailing Miaofeng as a “lonely phoenix singing at the dawn,” even as he was ridiculed and dismissed by some as “a strange thing.”²⁹ All the evidence above shows that the Tiantai in the late Ming was literally a newly revived school, controversial and vulnerable.

Following his guru Baisong, Chuandeng continued to construct a distinctive Tiantai identity, especially as the alternative to Chan. This is not contradictory with Yungfen Ma’s observation that “unlike his predecessors ... [Chuandeng] upheld the Tiantai school, not by belittling the doctrines of other schools but, by harmonizing them with Tiantai thought.”³⁰ Such harmonic co-existence of the Tiantai and other schools (mainly referring to Chan) that Chuandeng advocated has to be based on the assumption, rejected by many at the time, that the Tiantai is the other lineage as sacred as the Chan in that both are transmitted from the Buddha. Some of Chuandeng’s works speak directly against the Chan domination of Buddhism and criticize its fallacy.³¹ For example, an undated portrait eulogy

²⁸ Feng Mengzhen, “Miaofengjue fashi taming” 妙峯覺法師塔銘, *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, p. 849, a4: “台之道俗, 初習邪教. 師奮妙辯, 一掃空之.”

²⁹ Feng Mengzhen, “Youmensong luejie xu” 《有門頌畧解》序, *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, p. 700, a8-9: “妙峯覺法師, 奮然為鳴陽孤鳳, 幾二十年. 講者或竊咲, 斥為異物.”

³⁰ Ma, “The Revival of Tiantai Buddhism in the Late Ming,” p. 278.

³¹ Although Jiang Wu pointed out that the Chan schools in reality may have been rather shabby at this time and that during the revival of Buddhism in the 17th century, “the first type of Buddhism that was revived was not Chan but Buddhist

for Bodhidharma by Chuandeng questions why Bodhidharma should be considered the only legitimate spokesman for the Buddha, if -- as the *Platform Sūtra* suggests -- there is no difference regarding the Buddha Nature between the northerners and the southerners. It continues to hint that Chan is but one of the Dharmic “herbs” saving people from suffering and essentially as empty as dusts. However, people are pushed to strenuously conjecture about Bodhidharma’s intention and messages. “The offspring of Bodhidharma,” Chuandeng concludes, “are wanton (兒孫至今無賴).”³²

Chuandeng’s projects of rebuilding the Gaoming Monastery in Mt. Tiantai and compiling the “Religious Gazetteer of Mt. Tiantai” are obviously efforts in constructing that sacred lineage. He rebuilt the Gaoming Monastery not as an ordinary monastery but as a -- if not the only -- “ancestral courtyard” of the Tiantai School. Tu Long described its layout as follows:

“The image of Shakyamuni is set in the middle. The attendant on his east is Mañjuśrī and on his west is Maitreya. This is different from the layout in other monasteries because this one is based on the *Lotus Sūtra* that the Tiantai School regards as its root: At the outset of this sūtra, when the Tathāgata entered meditation, Maitreya asked Mañjuśrī to explain the meaning of it. ... On the

scholasticism characterized by lectures on scriptures and the learning of Tiantai, Huayan, and Yogacara” (*Enlightenment in Dispute: The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 13), this particular strategy that the Tiantai advocates took shows that the Chan discourse about the Buddhist history and the way to achieve Enlightenment was so dominant that the Tiantai supporters had to debunk it to establish their own.

³² Chuandeng, “Damo xiangzan”達摩像贊, *Youxi wenji* 幽溪文集, in *Quzhou wenxian jicheng* 衢州文獻集成 (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2015), vol. 117, p. 80.

two sides, there are [the images of] the 29 Patriarchs, from Mahākāśyapa to Fazhi (i.e. Zhili). At the very end is the image of the late master Baisong attending on them. How can the image of Chuandeng not be added in the future? We just need to wait.”³³

Chuandeng’s intention of constructing the Tiantai lineage is clearly embodied in the design of the Gaoming Monastery.

The Gazetteer, on the other hand, explicitly tries to write the history of Mt. Tiantai from the perspective of the Tiantai School. Although the chapter of “Eminent Monks” in the Gazetteer is divided into three sections for monks practicing the Teaching (*jiao*, i.e. Tiantai), Chan, and the Lotus (i.e., Pure Land approach) respectively, which seems to acknowledge the diverse religious affiliations in the mountain, there is a chapter on “the Teaching of the Tiantai School” (whereas there is no chapter on any other schools) and a chapter on the “Patriarchs” in which only the Tiantai Patriarchs from Nāgārjuna to Zhili are listed. Given the vulnerable and controversial status of the Tiantai school at that time, the gazetteer obviously was not meant to provide an objective picture of this mountain’s religious landscape, perhaps leaving deliberately some substantial disputes unmentioned. A different picture can be seen in the aforementioned *Biographies of Eminent Monks of the Great Ming*, which tells the story about how Baisong challenged his teacher Qiansong with Tiantai philosophy and was defeated. Noticeably, this text was composed by a Chan monk residing in Mt. Tiantai in 1605,³⁴ around the same time when Chuandeng compiled the Gazetteer.

³³ Tu Long, “Xinjian Tiantai zuting ji 新建天台祖庭記,” *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, p. 814, a9 - p. 815, a4.

³⁴ “Daming gaoseng zhuan xu” 大明高僧傳敘, CBETA, T50, no. 2062, p.901, a2 ff.

In the chapter on the “Teaching of the Tiantai School” in the *Gazetteer*, Chuandeng introduces what he considers to be the essence of the Tiantai teachings, particularly its relationship to Chan, in anticipation of the challenges that some Chan followers may raise. He begins with praising the *Lotus Sūtra* for its inclusion of various approaches in Buddhism, “depriving the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* of its glory for specializing in Sudden Enlightenment and washing off the shame of the *Āgama sūtras* of being snubbed as the ‘small vehicle.’”³⁵ Based on this, Chuandeng goes on to justify Tiantai’s emphases on studying scriptures and practicing structured meditation (觀), in answering to the objection as captured by the Chan slogans: “If [the true Dharma is] special transmission outside the scriptures and is not founded on words and letters, then why do people need scriptures?” and “If by pointing directly to one’s mind, one sees into [one’s own] Nature and thus attains Buddhahood, then why do they need to practice meditation (觀)?”³⁶ Chuandeng’s stance can be summarized as follows: whereas he admits that the Chan path of Sudden Enlightenment works for the spiritually gifted, he deems that ordinary people should approach Enlightenment via the study of scriptures and the Tiantai way of meditation in order to avoid going astray. Thus, he pictures Chan and Tiantai as two mutually complementing approaches within Buddhism, one being indispensable to the other: “Chan focuses more on deconstructing the attachments, whereas Tiantai focuses

³⁵ Chuandeng, “Taijiao kao” 台教考, *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 236, a8-9: “使《華嚴》失專頓之榮，《阿含》忘恥小之辱。”

³⁶ Chuandeng, “Taijiao kao,” *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 242, a4-5: “或曰：「教外別傳，不立文字，何教之有？」” p. 246, a9 - p. 247, a1: “或又曰：「直指人心，見性成佛，何觀之有？」”

more on establishing the Dharma.”³⁷

At the root of this Tiantai attitude, according to Chuandeng, is the Tiantai understanding of Nature (*xing*) that includes everything, not only good but also evil. Chuandeng considers this *the* foundation of the Tiantai that distinguishes itself from other schools:

Other schools, when talking about Nature, only focus on the ‘body of Nature’ (性體) and the ‘scope of Nature’ (性量) at most. We have not heard from them about the ‘inclusiveness of Nature.’ It is our Master Zhiyi who ... named his school ‘Tiantai’ and founded the root of his lineage on ‘the inclusiveness of Nature.’³⁸

This is a stance of Chuandeng that persisted to his later years.³⁹ The unique identity of the Tiantai School is established on its teaching of the “inclusiveness of Nature” and the Tiantai School is as indispensable to Buddhism as the Chan School, complementing the latter’s inadequacy and even correcting the fallacies of those too attached to it.

2.2 Yunqi Zhuhong’s criticism of the Tiantai School

Just like his guru Baisong, Chuandeng also had to face challenges in establishing the Tiantai School. Zhuhong’s anti-Tiantai attitude is clear and

³⁷ Chuandeng, “Taijiao kao,” *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 249, a4-5: “禪門多宗於蕩着，台教多宗於立法。”

³⁸ Chuandeng, “Taijiao kao,” *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 243, a2-7: “諸宗之言性極其玄詣，惟性體、性量。若曰性具，未聞其指。惟吾智者大師……命其家曰天台，立其宗曰性具。”

³⁹ See, for example, Chuandeng’s *Xing shan’e lun* 性善惡論, in X57, no. 970, composed in 1621 and *Tiantai chuan Foxinyin ji zhu* 天台傳佛心印記註, in X57, no. 969, composed in 1627.

has the appearance of targeting at Chuandeng. But since his criticism is found mostly in texts datable to Zhuhong's later years after Tu Long's death in 1605, it is difficult to tell if Zhuhong had conveyed his criticism to Tu. Whether Zhuhong's attitude changed dramatically in his later years or remained more or less consistent deserves a thorough examination that goes beyond the scope of this paper. What we know is that although Zhuhong and Chuandeng lived during the same period in the same region and had several lay followers in common, the trajectories of their lives looked mostly like two parallel lines that do not intersect, apparently not even by epistolary connections.⁴⁰ It is not very likely that the differences and disagreements between these two monks did not have a history prior to Tu Long's death. Below I list Zhuhong's main points of disparagement against his contemporary Tiantai School, although he might not have expressed his disparaging views in strong terms in his interactions with Tu Long.

First, Zhuhong did not accept the *Lotus Sūtra's* superior status to the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*. For him, it is the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* that contains all Mahāyāna sūtras within it:

⁴⁰ Eichman's monograph on Zhuhong's networks, *A Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship: Spiritual Ambitions, Intellectual Debates, and Epistolary Connections* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2016), does not list Chuandeng among the monks connected to him (368-369). In Chuandeng's writings, I have only found that Chuandeng listed Zhuhong's study on the *Śūramgama Sūtra* (*Moxiang ji* 摸象記) as one of the reference books for the *Yuantong shu* 圓通疏, his own commentary on that sūtra (CBETA, X12, no. 281, p.691, b3). Whereas there are two portrait eulogies (*xiangzan* 像贊) for Hanshan Deqing in Chuandeng's *Youxi Wenji*, Zhuhong was only mentioned in a portrait eulogy for a lay Buddhist identified as Zhuhong's disciple (*Youxi wenji*, p. 94-5). Although my survey is not exhaustive, I do not find Lin I-Luan's judgment on Zhuhong's friendly attitude toward the Tiantai School very convincing (Lin, "Ming Youxi Chuandeng dashi zhi yanjiu," pp. 161-163).

The *Avatamsaka Sūtra* contains within itself innumerable ‘doors’ [leading to Enlightenment] and any [other] Mahāyāna sūtra is but one of them. The *Avatamsaka* is like the heavenly king, all [other] Mahāyāna sūtras are like feudal lords, and all Hināyāna sūtras are like retinues of the feudal lords.”⁴¹

This radically differs not only from Chuandeng’s views on the supreme status of the *Lotus Sūtra*, but also from Chuandeng’s relatively indiscriminate attitude toward all other scriptures than the *Lotus*. Zhuhong wrote later, more explicitly against those of Chuandeng’s persuasion: “Some descendants [of Zhiyi] say that the *Lotus Sūtra* is the root or origin, and the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* is a branch or leaf. When did Tiantai (i.e. Zhiyi) ever say that?”⁴²

Second, Zhuhong denied the teaching of all-including Nature as uniquely Tiantai: “[Those descendants of Zhiyi] also say that the teaching about all-including Nature is exclusive to the Tiantai School, beyond the reach of all other schools ...[In fact] the idea of all-including Nature is seen in many scriptures and has been explained by many Patriarchs.”⁴³ Zhuhong particularly took issue with the idea that evil exists inherently in Nature. He believes that the word “evil” in the phrase “including both the good and evil” in a work of Huisi — one of the founding Patriarchs in the Tiantai tradition — is not genuinely Huisi’s original, but a later insertion. He

⁴¹ Zhuhong, “Huayan buru gengua” 華嚴不如艮卦 in the *Zhuchuang suibi, Lianchi dashi quanji*, p. 1392: “華嚴具無量門; 諸大乘經, 猶是華嚴無量門中之一門耳。華嚴, 天王也。諸大乘經, 侯封也。諸小乘經, 侯封之附庸也。餘可知矣。”

⁴² Zhuhong, section on “Tiantai chuan Foxinyin” 天台傳佛心印, in the *Zhuchuang sanbi* 竹窗三筆, *Lianchi dashi quanji*, p. 1500: “又後人之言曰: 法華, 根本也; 華嚴, 枝葉也。天台何曾有是言也?”

⁴³ Zhuhong, section on “Tiantai chuan Foxinyin,” *Lianchi dashi quanji*, p. 1500: “又曰性具之旨惟一家有, 非諸家所能及……夫性具之理。見於諸經。發於諸祖。”

first questioned it in his *Jottings under a Bamboo Window* (竹窗隨筆, date unknown),⁴⁴ and then firmly judged it as unauthentic in his *Final Jottings under a Bamboo Window* (竹窗三筆) compiled in 1614.⁴⁵

Third, in addition to questioning the authenticity of Huisi's work, Zhuhong denounced another Tiantai text, the "Transmission of the Buddha's mind-seal" (*Chuanfoxinyin*) composed in the Yuan Dynasty, for constructing a sacred lineage of Tiantai as the only orthodox lineage of Buddhism. "Though it is acceptable to write about the Tiantai transmission of the Buddha's mind-seal," Zhuhong wrote, "it is unacceptable to claim that the Tiantai is the only transmission, from which masters such as Bodhidharma are all excluded!"⁴⁶ Moreover, quoting Zhiyi's humble words about himself, Zhuhong tried to show that Zhiyi's achievement is limited and thus that he did not deserve the reverence heaped upon him, which he would not appreciate anyway.⁴⁷ Having questioned the authenticity of Huisi's writing and the "Transmission of the Buddha's mind-seal," Zhuhong concluded with Mencius' words: "Therefore, the ancient said 'blindly accepting whatever written in books is worse than not having any book,'"⁴⁸ seemingly in

⁴⁴ Zhuhong, section on "Nanyue zhiguan" 南嶽止觀, in the *Zhuchuang suibi*, *Lianchi dashi quanji*, p. 1413.

⁴⁵ Zhuhong, section on "Nanyue shiyuan wen" 南嶽誓願文, in the *Zhuchuang sanbi*, *Lianchi dashi quanji*, p. 1500.

⁴⁶ Zhuhong, section on "Tiantai chuan Foxinyin," *Lianchi dashi quanji*, 1500: "夫佛心印曰天台傳之可也。謂天台獨傳，而達磨諸師皆不得與焉？不可也。"

⁴⁷ Zhuhong, section on "Tiantai chuan Foxinyin," *Lianchi dashi quanji*, p. 1500: "天台，聖師也，望道而未之見者也。其自處也曰 '損己利人，止登五品。' 而後人過為稱揚，失天台不自聖之心矣。"

⁴⁸ Zhuhong, section on "Tiantai chuan Foxinyin," *Lianchi dashi quanji*, p. 1500: "故古云盡信書則不如無書。"

response to Tiantai's recurring criticism of the Chan's negligence of scriptures.

Zhuhong's criticism of the Tiantai School, capsuled in these two very short sections in his *Final Jottings under a Bamboo Window* (1614) quoted above, attacks nearly everything that Chuandeng was trying to establish: the supreme status of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Nature including evil and good as the hallmark of the Tiantai school, Zhiyi's stature as the most important Chinese patriarch, and even the Tiantai proclaimed specialization in studying scriptures. The only view Zhuhong and Chuandeng hold in common is that the Tiantai is not the only orthodox lineage of Buddhism. Not long before Chuandeng passed away, he wrote in 1627 a commentary on this very "Transmission of the Buddha's mind-seal," in which he clearly expressed his disagreement with its Yuan-Dynasty author on this point and reiterated his stance that Tiantai and Chan are not contradictory but complementary to each other.⁴⁹ Yet, Zhuhong would not even accept this mollified view, for his judgment of Zhiyi's status inevitably leads to rating the Tiantai School below the Chan. Although Zhuhong is well known for his integration of studying scriptures into Chan and many Chan monks during and before this period studied Tiantai philosophy, accepting a full-fledged *school* of Tiantai that is independent of and potentially competitive with the Chan School is still more than he could entertain.

2.3 Tu Long's viewpoints regarding the Tiantai School

What, then, was Tu Long's attitude in this regard? Expressed in his apologist work, the *Ironclad Buddhadharma*, composed around 1602,⁵⁰ his

⁴⁹ Chuandeng, *Tiantai Chuan foxinyin ji zhu*, CBETA, X57, no. 969, p. 366, b11-c6.

⁵⁰ Its preface written by Zhenyi is dated to 1602, thus it must have been written shortly

opinions regarding Tiantai are rather different from Zhuhong's. When asked whether the Tiantai teaching is unnecessarily complicated as it is often accused of, Tu Long defended Tiantai in the same way as he did in the preface of Chuandeng's *Gazetteer*: The complicated structure of the Tiantai teaching is designed to serve people of different characters and capabilities; if you consider it complicated, then so are the *Avatamsaka* and *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. Speaking very highly of Zhiyi, he warned that no one should lightly slander the "transmission of the Buddha's mind-seal."⁵¹ Here the term "transmission of the Buddha's mind-seal" can refer to both the lineage of Tiantai and the particular text that Zhuhong condemns. In either case, Tu Long supported the construction of the sacred Tiantai lineage and its approach to the multi-layered teachings that serves not only the smartest but also the ordinary. When his interlocutor asked him to explain the controversial teaching about the "evil Nature" quoted from the text "The Transmission of the Buddha's mind-seal," Tu answered him with Tiantai doctrines, without questioning the authenticity of the text or of this teaching.⁵²

As for the relationship between Chan and Tiantai, Tu Long's attitude expressed in this work is very much aligned with Chuandeng's:

The 'Teaching' generates understanding, whereas Chan generates realization; one has to first understand in order to attain

before that.

⁵¹ Tu Long, *Fofa jintang* 佛法金湯, CBETA, B28, no. 156, p. 386, a13-3: "傳佛心印烏可輕詆也。" It could also be translated as "The transmission of the Buddha's mind-seal should not be dismissed and slandered", if the character "*qing*" is taken as a verb instead of an adverb.

⁵² Tu Long, *Fofa jintang*, CBETA, B28, no. 156, p. 392, b10 - p. 393, a1.

realization. If a Chan [practitioner] does not learn from the Teaching, he himself blocks the entrance [to the Dharma]; if a Teaching [practitioner] does not know Chan, then he is unable to enter the room [of the Dharma].”⁵³

By the term “teaching,” he not only referred to scriptures in general, but specifically the Tiantai School, given that the only four Chinese figures he mentioned as examples are the most famous Tiantai Patriarchs.⁵⁴

In his writings included in the gazetteers about monasteries of the Tiantai School, Tu praised the Tiantai lineage, doctrines, praxis, and eminent monks such as Chuandeng more enthusiastically. In the text celebrating the completion of the Tiantai “ancestral courtyard” composed in 1601, he compared Chuandeng’s guru Baisong to Zhiyi and Chuandeng to Zhang’an, Zhiyi’s disciple and a Patriarch, implying several times that Chuandeng would be considered another Patriarch of this lineage.⁵⁵ He claimed the *Lotus Sūtra* as the root of all other sūtras including the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* and defended the Tiantai as the school containing all other schools.⁵⁶

⁵³ Tu Long, *Fofa jintang*, CBETA, B28, no. 156, p. 416, b8-10: “教是生解，禪是生悟，必先解而後得。悟禪不取教，是自杜其入門。教不知禪，終不入其室奧。”

⁵⁴ Tu Long, *Fofa jintang*, CBETA, B28, no. 156, p. 416, b13-15: “自阿難總持，迦葉結集，馬鳴龍樹無著天親諸師著論，天台衍教，章安結集，法智、慈雲嗣法，皆教門人也。”

⁵⁵ Tu Long, “Xinjian Tiantai zuting ji,” *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, p. 814, a6 - p. 816, a4: “余謂百松之風，直踵智者；燈公之勳，庶幾章安。世必以余為知言……若無盡師者，安知非天台應化、四明再來也？”

⁵⁶ Tu Long, “Xinjian Tiantai zuting ji,” *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, p. 813, a07- p. 815, a5: “總攝六度，融會萬行，並譚《華嚴》、《阿含》、《方等》、《般若》，歸宗《法華》。判一代時教，為佛法司南。真可謂抗折百家，羽翼千聖者矣！……通諸門為一門，合眾派為一派。”

Although Tu might be hyperbolic with his claims since these texts were written for or even commissioned by Chuandeng, his genuine support of this school is evident in his willingness to contribute to the building of the Tiantai “ancestral courtyard.” “The lineage of Tiantai received its teaching from the world-honoring one,” he wrote, “how can I allow other people to slander it lightly?”⁵⁷ This implies that the lineage was still to a certain extent controversial. Against this background, Tu Long’s interactions with monks of this school should not be seen as a courteous gesture but a conscious decision, to the extent of actively participating in the construction of the school. In the following section, I will look into the reason behind Tu’s support of Tiantai.

3. What attracted Tu Long to Tiantai

Tu Long’s life is full of puzzling contradictions. For example, claiming Buddhism as the highest among the “three teachings,” he nevertheless kept up his practice of Daoism; even though he enthusiastically preached religious moral lessons in his plays, he did not seem to find it odd to boast to his friend Feng Mengzhen in 1599 of his ability to “sleep with ten men and women in a single night.”⁵⁸ Many scholars have ascribed such syncretic and

⁵⁷ Tu Long, “Xinjian Tiantai zuting ji,” *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, p. 815, a8: “且天台一脈，稟教世尊，豈容輕詆？”

⁵⁸ Feng Mengzhen 馮夢禎, *Kuaxuetang riji* 快雪堂日記 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2010), p. 133: “一夕可度十男女。” Martin Huang translates the verb 度 as “to conquer” (*Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), p. 18, fn. 39). However, I see in this word, which rarely means “to conquer”, a strong religious connotation as it has in the compound *pu-du* (普度, meaning “universal salvation”), for the word *du*

antinomian behaviors to the influence of Wang Yangming philosophy and classified him a “Taizhou thinker” like Li Zhi and Yuan brothers⁵⁹, an assertion that has been questioned in more recent scholarship.⁶⁰ Tu Long’s own words also show that not every antinomian behavior of a Buddhist in the late Ming could be attributed to the “mad Chan.” Tu took exceptions to the charge of excessive use of language that the “mad Chan” lodged against Tiantai⁶¹ and condemned the “mad Chan” as “leaning on the mad wisdom and carrying out polluted behaviors.”⁶² How did Tu Long rationalize his own contradictions in distancing himself from the “mad Chan” and keeping up his antinomian deeds at the same time? Here, I believe that we cannot understand Tu Long fully without taking into account the Tiantai philosophy.

First, the open-mindedness of Tiantai that, based on the *Lotus Sūtra*,

is sometimes interchangeable with 渡, which literally means “to cross the river.” When Tu used this word to refer to his sexual life, he might have in mind the stories such as that of Vasumitrā, who teaches people the Dharma through satisfying their sexual desire (see the *Dafangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經, CBETA, T10, no. 279, p. 26, a20). Both Zhiyi (see the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀, CBETA, T46, no. 1911, p. 17, c24 and page 20 and footnote no.72 in this paper) and Chuandeng (*Xing shan’e lun*, CBETA, X57, no. 970, p. 424, c10) positively commented on this story.

⁵⁹ Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 70. Grouping Tu Long and Li Zhi together can be traced back at least to the *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要, *Tu Long ji*, vol.12, pp. 493-494.

⁶⁰ Eichman, *A Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship: Spiritual Ambitions, Intellectual Debates, and Epistolary Connections*, Chapter 1.

⁶¹ Tu Long, “*Tiantaishan fangwaizhi xu*” 《天台山方外志》序, *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 37, a2-3: “狂禪之徒輒詆台教為煩瑣。”

⁶² Tu Long, “*Butuo Haichaosi kaishan Dazhi chanshi bei*” 補陀海潮寺開山大智禪師碑, *Chongxiu Putuo shan zhi* 重修普陀山志, ed. Zhou Yingbin 周應賓 (A.D. 1554-1625), CBETA, GA9, no. 8, p. 37, a2-3: “倚狂慧而行染污邪。”

acknowledges the existence of different paths toward the Liberation⁶³ must have resonated with Tu Long. Through the mouth of an accomplished Daoist character, he wrote in his final play *Xiuwen ji*:

The house of the immortals and the platform of the elixirs are not the places to find the ultimate truth; how can I stop there and rest? The site of Buddhist treasures is the real destination, for which I wish to further strive! Therefore, whenever I am cultivating myself or teaching others, I practice not only the alchemy of the cinnabar, but also the *samādhi* of reciting the Buddha's name. Yet [Buddhist] monks are ignorant [of such an approach], always condemning the immortals as heretic; Daoists are also ignorant, sneering at the four [Buddhist] attainments as demonic spirits. But neither is right!⁶⁴

Accommodating all three teachings and ranking them in a hierarchical order is a common practice at that time, which we can also find in Zhuhong. Zhuhong compares the three teachings to members of one family; however, just as a family without hierarchy would not function normally, he emphasizes the hierarchy among the three teachings: Buddhism is the most senior in this “family” and thus should be most revered.⁶⁵ What is surprising and a Tiantai influence in my view is that this character in the play does not

⁶³ This attitude can be seen in Zhiyi's commentary on the Lotus Sūtra, but it seems to have been pushed further by Chuandeng and Tu Long when they tried to justify their eclectic spiritual interest and to debunk the prevalent Chan discourse, which considered only sudden Enlightenment worth pursuing. A careful comparison regarding this issue between the late-Ming Tiantai advocates and their predecessors would be very valuable but is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁶⁴ Tu Long, *Tu Long ji*, vol.11, p. 376: “仙符丹臺，未為究竟，豈堪歇腳停車？佛門寶所，方是員成，愿得竿頭進步。所以自修與教人，不專丹丸，還常修念佛三昧。那沙門不知，每詆仙人為外道；那道士不知，又笑四果為鬼靈。這都不是也。”

⁶⁵ Zhuhong, “San Jiao yi jia” 三教一家 in the *Zheng'e ji* 正訛集, *Lianchi dashi quanji*, p. 1532.

deny or abandon her Daoist practice after knowing Buddhism is superior. Whereas Zhuhong criticized Su Shi, the great poet of the 11th century, for still pursuing immortality while being a Buddhist,⁶⁶ the Tiantai teaching promoted by Chuandeng would support Tu Long on his ecumenism. As I have shown in Section II-1, Chuandeng highlighted such ecumenism as one of the most important characteristics of Tiantai, extolling the *Lotus Sūtra* for “depriving the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* of its glory for specializing in Sudden Enlightenment and washing off the shame of the *Āgama sūtras* of being snubbed as the ‘small vehicle.’”⁶⁷ Echoing Chuandeng, Tu praised Tiantai as “going through all doors as one door, uniting all schools as one school.”⁶⁸ He wrote that only the “ignorant” criticize the Tiantai teachings, for they “do not know that all sects are one sect,” just as rivers become one after converging in the sea,⁶⁹ and that all the different schools were invented just in order to accommodate people of different aptitudes.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Zhuhong, “Dongpo (yi)” 東坡(一) in the *Zhuchuang suibi*, *Lianchi dashi quanji*, p. 1391. Tu also criticizes Su Shi, but for a very different reason (See the *Fofa jintang*, CBETA, B28, no.156, p.421, a5-11). Eichman points out in her study of the social network of Zhuhong: “Tu Long, a self-described disciple of the three teachings, often combined Buddhist and Daoist cultivation techniques and conflated the spiritual goals of the two traditions; in this respect, he stands out from most in the Fellowship [centered around Zhuhong]” (*A Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship*, p. 321, fn 50).

⁶⁷ Chuandeng, “Taijiao kao” 台教考, *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 236, a8-9: “使《華嚴》失專頓之榮，《阿含》忘恥小之辱。”

⁶⁸ Tu Long, “Xinjian Tiantai zuting ji,” *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, p. 815, a4-5: “台教者……通諸門為一門，合眾派為一派。”

⁶⁹ Tu Long, “Xinjian Tiantai zuting ji,” *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA90, no. 89, p. 815, a5-6: “而昧者謂台宗為支離，不知諸門而一門，登堂無二眾；派而一派，會海則同。”

⁷⁰ Tu Long, *Fofa jintang*, CBETA, B28, no.156, p. 386, a14-15: “道惟一乘，分為四教，為是眾生機器不同。”

Tu Long's appreciation of inclusiveness applies not only to religious schools but to individual beings. He believes that all beings -- from humans and immortals to animals and ghosts — are able to attain Enlightenment directly from their own realms through their own unique paths. Even before he became close to Chuandeng, Tu was interested in collecting tales that feature antinomian but spiritually mysterious heroes. Many of those figures were despised or questioned by his contemporary elite, and Feng Mengzhen criticized him for socializing with them.⁷¹ Tiantai may have provided powerful justifications for his unconventional taste: its founder Zhiyi in his *Mohe Zhiguan* acknowledged under the Neither-Walking-nor-Sitting Samādhi a subcategory called “contemplating evil Dharmas,” as exemplified by the following antinomian characters in the sutras:

In the case of Angulimāla, the more [people] he murdered, the more compassion he had. Jeta and Mālikā were engrossed in wine but also engrossed in the precepts. Vasumitrā remained chaste [in intent] even though engaging in sexual intercourse. Devadatta's mistaken views became [in the long run] all right.⁷²

Zhili, the Tiantai patriarch from whom Chuandeng and his guru claimed to directly inherit the Dharma, defeated another sect of Tiantai in the 11th

⁷¹ Chu Shiu-on 徐兆安, “Zhengyan yu bowen: Wanlichao wenren Wang Shizhen, Tu Long yu Hu Yinglin de shenxian shuxie yu Daojiao wenxian pinglun” 證驗與博聞：萬曆朝文人王世貞、屠隆與胡應麟的神仙書寫與道教文獻評論, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 中國文化研究所學報 53 (2011): 269. See Tu Long, “Shenxian bu zhuan” 神仙補傳, in *Tu Long ji*, vol.9, p. 877.

⁷² Zhiyi, *Mohe zhiguan*, CBETA, T46, no. 1911, p. 17, c14 -16: “央掘摩羅彌殺彌慈。祇陀末利唯酒唯戒。和須蜜多姪而梵行。提婆達多邪見即正。” English translation: *Clear Serenity, Quiet Insight*, translated by Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017), pp. 372-373.

century by insisting that Nature of any being — from demons in hells to the Buddha — inherently includes both evil and good,⁷³ as Tu explained in his *Ironclad Buddhadharma*. Such all-inclusive Nature allows the fluid transformation between humans (including antinomian humans), immortals, Bodhisattvas, and so forth, by which Tu Long has been fascinated. In his preface to Chuandeng's *Gazetteer*, he mentioned several legendary antinomian figures active the Tiantai area who were said to be reincarnations of great Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.⁷⁴ In his play *Xiuwen ji*, a mad monk is said to be an apparition conjured by Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha and Maudgalyāyana,⁷⁵ and it is asserted that one does not need to be reborn as a human to achieve the Enlightenment but can do so from the realm of ghosts.⁷⁶ More than a decade after Tu's death, Chuandeng composed a text entitled "On Nature including good and evil" (*Xing shan'e lun* 性善惡論, X970), which, in addition to being a philosophical treatise, is arguably the most comprehensive collection in China of antinomian stories taken from Buddhist sūtras. Here may be some instances that show Tu Long's influence on Chuandeng but not the other way around.

Why was Tu so interested in those antinomian figures? The popularity of such folklores in the Jiangnan region at that time might be a reason, but

⁷³ Brook Ziporyn, *Evil and/or/as the Good: Omnicentrism, Intersubjectivity, and Value Paradox in Tiantai Buddhist Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000). Chan Chi-wah, "Chih-li (960-1028) and the Crisis of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism in the Early Sung", in *Buddhism in the Sung*, ed. Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), pp. 409-441.

⁷⁴ Tu Long, "Tiantaishan fangwaizhi xu," *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 34, a2-4: "而彌陀一化現國清為豐干, 文殊、普賢兩化現, 一為寒山、拾得, 一為戒闍黎、周七娘, 應變無方, 多所開化。"

⁷⁵ Tu Long, *Xiuwen ji*, Act 26, *Tu Long ji*, vol.11, p. 427.

⁷⁶ Tu Long, *Tu Long ji*, vol.11, p. 445.

more personally, Tu Long is noted in many sources as constantly struggling with his own desires that are at odds with his spiritual pursuit. In an early (prior to 1586) letter to a friend, Tu confessed:

I have been trying to rid myself of desire for three years. [The result is like] using large numbers of troops to attack a well-defended city. Every means of attack ... has been tried but failed to bring about a victory. It is also like using a huge piece of rock to stamp down grass: once the rock runs over the grass, it will start to grow again. Or it is like using cold spring water to quench one's thirst. One feels cool when drinking it, but the heat will come back nevertheless. There is really nothing one can do about it.⁷⁷

Tu Long defined “desire” in a very broad sense. For him, the desires for sex and money are essentially not different from the desires for fame, books or antiques, travel to scenic places, writing good poetry, and so forth.⁷⁸ In the early 1580s, influenced by Tanyangzi's criticisms of words and language,⁷⁹ Tu Long complained the tension between literature and liberation, lamenting to many friends that he “has not been able to tame the demon of words”⁸⁰ and that the desire of writing literature has tortured and

⁷⁷ Tu Long, “Yu Li guancha” 與李觀察 in fascicle 9 (division of prose) of the *Baiyu ji*, *Tu Long ji*, vol.4, p. 392. Translated by Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, p. 12.

⁷⁸ Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, p. 14 and 17.

⁷⁹ Chu Shiu-on, following Judith Zeitlin (*The Phantom Heroine: Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Literature*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007, p. 69), considered such complaints very common after the Tang among cultural elite and are merely a way to boast their literary talent (“Zhengyan yu bowen”, p. 275, fn.143). Yet I consider this view over-simplistic.

⁸⁰ Tu Long, “Yu Feng Kaizhi” 與馮開之 in fascicle 17 of the *Youquan ji* 由拳集, *Tu Long ji*, vol.2, p. 237: “惟文字之魔尚未能伏。”

harmed his spirit, and so on.⁸¹ Even words of religion are not exempted in his rant. In a letter to a friend, he criticized Feng Mengzhen for not being aware of the obstructiveness of words, “memorizes a lot of doctrines and babbles to others non-stop, which will only bring him the karmic retribution of speech.”⁸² He even claimed that the Buddhist Canon is useless if not obstructive to Enlightenment, for “the more people talk about the Dao, the farther they go astray from it.”⁸³ Nonetheless, he also knew that he was no better than his friend Feng at eliminating the demon of words. In other words, he wanted to repress his literary creativity but was unable to do so. He recalled in his preface to the *Cooling words from the Shāla hall* written in 1600 how his guru Tanyangzi had failed to dissuade him from speaking up — “Birds in the wood have to sing when the spring comes — how can they be silenced?”⁸⁴

In this context, it is not difficult to image the note of concord that Tu Long must have found in Chuandeng when he learned about the latter’s attitude on words. Challenged with the Chan rhetoric that true Dharma was “not founded upon words and letters,” Chuandeng eloquently answered :

⁸¹ Tu Long, “Yu Wang Yuanmei xiansheng” 與王元美先生 in fascicle 6 (division of prose) of the *Baiyu ji, Tu Long ji*, vol.4, p. 319; “Yu Wang Taichu Tianshu er daoyou” 與王太初田叔二道友 in fascicle 10 (division of prose) of the *Baiyu ji, Tu Long ji*, vol.4, p. 403; and “Da Wang Yuanyu xiansheng” 答王元馭先生 in fascicle 10 (division of prose) of the *Baiyu ji, Tu Long ji*, vol.4, p. 406.

⁸² Tu Long, “Da Fu Bojun” 答傅伯俊 in fascicle 8 (division of prose) of the *Baiyu ji, Tu Long ji*, vol.4, p. 362: “徒多記教典，向人饒舌不休，自增口業。” Xu dated this letter to 1580 (*Nianpu*, p. 106).

⁸³ Ibid. “談道彌多，去道彌遠。”

⁸⁴ Tu Long, *Tu Long ji*, vol.6, p. 537: “鸞公……以饒舌見戒，余終不能改。如……間關林鳥，春至則鳴，誰得而禁之？”

The Buddha preached the Dharma in order to help people get rid of fetters and attachments, just like using one wedge to remove another wedge. That ordinary people are fettered by words and letters in their existence is like a wedge, and the idea of not relying upon words and letters is like the second wedge. After we have removed the first wedge with the second, the second wedge should be removed too. But if people become attached to the [second] wedge, they render it an obstacle. [To remove it,] the Buddha shows the third wedge.⁸⁵

He pointed out that Chan itself has never completely abandoned words and letters; on the contrary, scriptures such as the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras, and *Platform Sūtra* have all played important roles in advancing Chan. To support his stance, Chuandeng quoted the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*: “Do not teach about Liberation without words and letters.”⁸⁶ In sum, Chuandeng and the Tiantai Buddhism emphasize words and letters as skillful means, acknowledging it, using it and transcending it. In the *Ironclad Buddhadharma*, Tu compared Chuandeng to Yunguang (雲光), a monk contemporary to Emperor Wu (464-549) of the Liang Dynasty. Here, Tu must be referring to the story that when Yunguang preached the *Lotus Sūtra* to Emperor Wu, a shower of flowers came down from the sky.⁸⁷ Although this monk is not among the most famous in the history of Chinese Buddhism, Tu Long mentioned him and referred to his story frequently, especially when

⁸⁵ Chuandeng, “Taijiao kao”, *Tiantaishan fangwaizhi*, CBETA, GA88, no. 89, p. 246, a1-5: “須知佛祖說法，使人解粘去縛，如以楔出楔。世人縛着文字如楔也，不立文字如第二楔也。楔既出矣，是楔亦出。若執楔成礙，佛祖復有第三楔矣。”

⁸⁶ Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (A.D. 406), *Weimojie Suoshuo Jing* 維摩詰所說經, CBETA, T14, no. 475, p. 548, a14: “無離文字說解脫也。”

⁸⁷ Zhipan 志磐 (A.D.1220–1275), *Fozu Tongji* 佛祖統紀, CBETA, T49, no. 2035, p. 350, a21-22: “普通二年，詔雲光法師於內殿講法華經，天雨寶華。”

he talked about the Tiantai school,⁸⁸ linking Chuandeng and other Tiantai masters with the art of speech and the discursive approach of Dharma.

In his later years, Tu seemed to reconcile himself gradually with his desires, including the desires for words. In his preface to the *Tanhua ji* (1598) and his *Ironclad Buddhadharma* (1602), he repeatedly claimed that sensual pleasures and other objects of desires can be used as skillful means to serve Buddhism and to facilitate religious practice. Did he consider himself one of those “contemplating evil dharmas?” After all, Zhiyi’s instruction on this particular *samādhi* seems to answer Tu Long’s previous frustrations over taming his desires:

If you, by nature, have much greed and desire, and are seething with [passionate] afflictions, so that even as you try to control and overcome them, they increase all the more — then you should merely allow your attention to go where it will. Why? Because if the [evil] obscurations do not arise, you cannot cultivate contemplation.⁸⁹

Zhiyi advises that one should not forcefully repress his evil mind, but instead, like a fisherman trying to net his catch, follow it, “allow it to swim around, diving and surfacing freely,”⁹⁰ analyze it, and eventually tame it by realizing its empty nature. If, as Martin Huang suggested, Tu Long represents one

⁸⁸ For example, in *Xiuwen ji*, Wuqiong describes himself as lecturing frequently under a shower of heavenly flowers (*Tu Long ji*, vol.11, p. 461). Tu also praised the Tiantai monk Mizang as someone who would “take Yunguang’s seat” in the future (“Mu fangce zangjing shu,” CBETA, GA011, no. 10, p. 272, a6).

⁸⁹ Zhiyi, *Mohe zhiguan*, CBETA, T46, no.1911, p. 17, c22-24: “若人性多貪欲穢濁熾盛，雖對治折伏彌更增劇，但恣趣向。何以故？蔽若不起不得修觀。” English translation: *Clear Serenity, Quiet Insight*, p. 375.

⁹⁰ Zhiyi, *Mohe zhiguan*, CBETA, T46, no.1911, p. 17, c25: “隨其遠近，任縱沈浮。” English translation: *Clear Serenity, Quiet Insight*, p. 375.

aspect of the late Ming zeitgeist in which obsession and apprehension toward desires existed simultaneously,⁹¹ then Tu may also represent many supporters of the Tiantai revival at that time: like him, many of them may be looking for a kind of religious teaching that acknowledges their desires and promises to transform them to Enlightenment.

4. Conclusion

This paper first shows the long-neglected social connection between the controversial playwright Tu Long and the Tiantai School of Buddhism mainly by using Tu's non-fictional writings collected in the Tiantai gazetteers and his own anthologies. This social connection then allows me to explore the philosophical and spiritual affinity between the two. This affinity deepens our understanding of not only Tu Long and his literary works, but also the Tiantai revival, Buddhism, and religion in general in the late Ming.

This study shows that it is most likely through Tiantai Buddhism, rather than the “mad Chan” or Yangming philosophy, that Tu justified his unconventional deeds. I hope to provide in addition to Chan and the Pure Land one more “tool”—that is, the Tiantai philosophy—for scholars of literature to analyze the religious ideas in Tu's works. With this tool, some of the previously neglected details may draw our attention with new possibilities of interpretation. For example, is it possible that the conversation among a dung beetle and other insects in the *Xiuwen ji* was inspired by the well-known and controversial Tiantai metaphor of the dung-beetle?⁹²

⁹¹ Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, p. 10.

⁹² Ziporyn, *Evil and/or/as the Good*, p. 298-9.

For religious studies, on the other hand, this case study shows that the Tiantai school experienced a revival in the late Ming not only because its emphasis on scriptural studies came as a breath of fresh air to a society worn down by Chan riddles, which many Chan monks such as Zhuhong also tried to invigorate. A more important and unique idea that contributed to its revival may be Tiantai's non-judgmental inclusiveness, which acknowledges the legitimacy of all spiritual paths and all desires, including the desire for self-expression through words and letters. As a new option provided to the "Buddhism market" besides Chan and the Pure Land, claiming itself to be compatible with both of them, Tiantai satisfied literati's love for reading and writing on the one hand, and tolerated their unconventional lifestyle on the other. Would these features impact the fate of the Tiantai School in the years to come? I may explore this question in the future. As for Buddhism in general in the late Ming, this study indicates that not only could a lay Buddhist have multiple teachers at the same time as scholars have noticed, but that his teachers may be rivals. In addition to Tu Long, at least Yu Chunxi and Feng Mengzhen are "disciples" of both Zhuhong and Chuandeng. It is the layperson's job to synthesize and reconcile their teachers' ideas. In this sense, it may be more accurate to call them "supporters" than "disciples."

This study is not meant to make Tu a representative of all his contemporary Tiantai followers, nor does it deny other spiritual sources of Tu Long. After all, some of Tu's deeds were criticized by his Tiantai fellows such as Feng Mengzhen and Yu Chunxi; his inclusiveness of three teachings

can also be traced to Tanyangzi,⁹³ and his use of plays to teach Buddhism may have also been encouraged by Zhuhong.⁹⁴ Tu Long may have considered Zhuhong the most accomplished master of his time, although they may not have always agreed with each other. His comments on Huineng and Yunguang may reflect his views on Zhuhong and Chuandeng:

The Sixth Patriarch (i.e. Huineng) is illiterate and entered the Dao through Sudden Enlightenment, but the *Platform Sūtra* is full of philosophical interests; Yunguang made the heaven shower flowers through his lectures, but since he did not meet Bodhidharma, he still could not inherit the seat of the Patriarch.⁹⁵

In other words, whereas good and authentic Chan, represented by Zhuhong, does not and should never abandon scriptures, Tiantai needs Chan – the wisdom of Bodhidharma -- to be good Tiantai. The Tiantai masters, just like Wujiong in the *Xiuwen ji*, may always play supporting roles in Tu Long's spiritual life, but they are the supporting roles that Tu Long could not do without.

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⁹³ Tu Long, “Ren jie” 人解, fascicle 27 in *Hongbao* 鴻苞, *Tu Long ji*, vol.9, p. 759.

⁹⁴ Tu Long's preface to the *Tanhua ji* (*Tu Long ji*, vol.11, 1) and Zhuhong's preface to *Yanmo qudian* (諺謨曲典序, see *Lianchi dashi quanji*, p. 1581-2) contain striking similarities in the idea of leading people to Buddhism by first attracting their senses. But as Zhuhong's text is undated, the relationship between these two texts still remains unclear.

⁹⁵ Tu Long, “Zeng Mizang fashi zhuchi shelidian xu,” *Mingzhou Ayuwang shanzhi*, CBETA, GA011, no. 10, p. 277, a8-10: “六祖目不知書，頓悟入道，而壇經一部理趣斐然；雲光說法，至感天雨花；而脫不遇達磨，終難紹承祖位。”

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