



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Dynamics of Chinese Buddhism in the Ming and Qing: Social Network Analysis Based on a Combined Dataset

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The revival of Buddhism during the late Ming and early Qing has long captivated scholarly interest. Recently, a significant methodological advancement has emerged through the application of social network analysis, leveraging the extensive “Historical Social Network of Chinese Buddhism” dataset. This paper seeks to further refine scholarly understanding of this revitalisation by incorporating monks of the Vinaya tradition, largely absent from the original dataset. To achieve this, it proposes an innovative approach that integrates period-specific data from the original dataset with newly collected data. The analysis corroborates scholarly emphasis on the centrality of Chan master Miyun Yuanwu 密雲圓悟 (1567–1642) in the late Ming, employing both degree and betweenness centrality. However, the integration of the Vinaya segment reconfigures the arrangement of Chan lineages *vis-à-vis* the High Qing imperial cluster, providing new perspectives on the early Qing and eighteenth century, particularly emphasising the role of Vinaya monks who served as Mount Baohua (Baohua shan 寶華山) abbots. These findings underscore the significance of the Vinaya tradition through quantitative metrics, enhancing scholarly understanding of the history of the Buddhist community during this period.

近期，明末清初佛教復興研究通過社會網路分析取得了重大突破。本文旨在將律宗僧人納入社會網路分析，為此提出了一種創新方法：將原始資料庫中的特定時期資料與新收集的資料相結合，以分析並驗證學界關於晚明禪師密雲圓悟（1567–1642年）居於核心地位的觀點。然而，在納入律宗資料後，基於盛清帝室群集的網路結構，禪宗法派的網路結構也隨之被重新繪製。這不僅為清初和康乾盛世提供了新的解讀視角，還揭示了律宗重鎮寶華山住持的深遠影響。這些研究結果通過量化分析，突顯了律宗在該時期佛教社群歷史中的重要性，並進一步加深了學界對這一歷史階段的理解。

Keywords: Ming-Qing Buddhism, social network analysis, Chan lineages, Vinaya, Mount Baohua

關鍵詞： 明清佛教，社會網路分析，禪宗法派，律宗，寶華山

Introduction

The history of Chinese Buddhism is often conceptualised as a cycle of decline and revival, with the late imperial period vividly illustrating this pattern.¹ Scholarship has employed two primary perspectives to outline its phases: one focusing on individual religious figures and their networks, and another emphasizing lay patronage, which fuelled the Buddhist resurgence through financial and intellectual support.² The prevailing consensus identifies the Wanli 萬曆 reign (r. 1572–1620) as the initial phase of revitalization, driven by non-sectarian eminent monks and strong imperial backing, followed by a seventeenth-century expansion of Chan lineages and significant literati patronage in the Jiangnan 江南 region. Marcus Bingenheimer’s (2023) pioneering social network analysis has recently reinforced this two-stage periodization through a quantitative approach, vividly mapping the late Ming cluster of eminent monks and the prominence of Chan lineages in the seventeenth century.

Despite its extensive scope, the “Historical Social Network of Chinese Buddhism” dataset (version 2021–06), on which Bingenheimer’s Ming-Qing study relied, remains incomplete, capturing only a fraction of the data available from existing sources. It currently includes approximately 18,000 actors and over 33,000 connections, primarily Buddhist monastics and laypeople across 1,700 years of Chinese Buddhist history (hereafter “the original dataset”).³ Of these, 6,873 actors are identified as Ming or Qing period figures (labelled 明 for Ming deaths, 明-清 for individuals who were born in the Ming and died in the Qing, or 清 for Qing deaths).⁴ The data derives from two groups of primary sources: the biographical collections *Daming gaosengzhuan* 大明高僧傳 (The great Ming dynasty biographies of eminent monks; T no. 2062, vol. 50), *Bu xu gaosengzhuan* 補續高僧傳 (Supplement to Continued biographies of eminent monks; X no. 1524, vol. 77) and *Xinxu gaosengzhuan* 新續高僧傳 (New continued biographies of eminent monks; B no. 151, vol. 27); and Hasebe Yūkei’s

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² Key examples of the first approach include Yü’s (1981) study of one of the great non-sectarian monks of the late Ming, Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲祿宏 (1535–1615), and Wu’s (2008) analysis of seventeenth-century Chan lineages. The groundbreaking work in the second approach is Brook’s (1993) examination of gentry patronage, recently enriched by Dewei Zhang’s (2020) monograph on the imperial influence shaping the fluctuations in the activities of Buddhist monastic community.

³ For the dataset, available on GitHub, see Bingenheimer (2021a). An earlier version (2020–07) of this dataset is described in detail in Bingenheimer (2021b).

⁴ I further identified 19 additional individuals from the original dataset, who had previously been given a different dynasty affiliation or lacked one, as part of this period, based on their direct ties to Ming-Qing figures, as verified by primary sources.

(2008) tables of Ming-Qing Chan lineages. However, Bingenheimer (2021b, 243) notes numerous untapped primary sources documenting Ming and Qing Buddhist interactions, indicating that integrating data from these unutilized sources could provide new insights into the social history of Chinese Buddhism during this period.

One avenue for expanding the original dataset is informed by studies on the Vinaya (monastic discipline) tradition in the Ming and Qing. Scholarship unanimously identifies Mount Baohua near Nanjing as a major new centre of this tradition, prompting detailed examinations of its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century abbots (Guodeng 2004, 103–215, 226–30; Wang 2006, 471–97; Liu 2014, 110–57; Lu 2018, 65–104). Scholars also document the proliferation of Vinaya lineages, primarily through the disciples of Baohua abbots (Hasebe 1993; 1994; 1995; Guodeng 2004, 216–25; Shengkai 2014; Lu 2018, 105–18; Lepneva 2024).

However, few of these scholars have engaged with the broader timeline of Buddhist revitalisation and its distinct phases. Hasebe (1991, 89) asserts that the period from 1621 to 1796 constitutes a vibrant phase of lineage development but leaves this stance unexplained. In my previous study (Lepneva 2023, 451), I posit that Hasebe's perspective likely stems from his extensive research on the Vinaya tradition (Hasebe 1993; 1994; 1995; 1999). Noting that his view diverges from the prevailing claim that Buddhist vibrancy waned after the seventeenth century, I conducted a case study on an eminent eighteenth-century Baohua abbot. However, my argument, confined to a specific individual, could not establish whether the Vinaya tradition exerted a broader influence, particularly in comparison with the Chan lineages.

This paper seeks to build on the existing scholarship by employing social network analysis to reassess the role of the Vinaya tradition. By incorporating a quantitative dimension, it enhances the evaluation of the tradition's overall significance within the Chinese Buddhist community during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

To bolster this expanded perspective, this paper enhances Bingenheimer's dataset, which includes limited data on Vinaya monastics. It augments the Ming-Qing segment of the dataset with 1,579 new actors and 1,888 connections, increasing the totals to 8,471 individuals and 9,837 links, a 23% and 24% expansion, respectively. Though not fundamentally altering the overall structure of the Buddhist network, these additions reveal previously overlooked structural patterns and figures often sidelined in Chan-focused analyses.⁵

The primary sources for this study are two underutilized eighteenth-century Vinaya genealogies: *Nanshan zongtong* 南山宗統 (Genealogy of the Nanshan tradition, compiled 1743, edited 1790s)⁶ and *Lüzong dengpu* 律宗燈譜 (Genealogy of the lamp of the Vinaya tradition,

⁵ The social network data referenced in this paper is available in an open-access online repository, see Lepneva (2025).

⁶ This study relies on the reproduction in modern right-to-left format with traditional characters (Chuanyin 2011) based on the 1936 four-volume photocopy held by the library of Chinese Buddhist Institute (Zhongguo foxueyuan 中國佛學院). I recently obtained a reprint of this photocopy, *Nanshan zongtong* (2016), and comparison with selected photographs of the photocopy included in Chuanyin's edition confirms that both represent the same source.

compiled 1765, edited 1790s; B no. 118, vol. 22). Hasebe (1994, 239–44) examines their structure, offering a comparative table of monastic biographies. For the late Ming period and the Qing, *Nanshan zongtong* features the Vinaya reviver Guxin Ruxin 古心如馨 (1541–1616) at the end of fascicle (*juan*) 2, with fascicle 3 covering his non-Baohua disciples and subsequent fascicles addressing Baohua lineage generations. *Lüzong dengpu* includes Guxin Ruxin at the end of fascicle 1, dedicating remaining fascicles to the generations of his disciples without emphasizing the Baohua lineage. Each fascicle in both works features lengthy lists of masters and disciples, with biographies for select disciples. *Nanshan zongtong* contains 66 biographies, and *Lüzong dengpu* includes 96 biographies, of which 61 overlap with *Nanshan zongtong*.⁷ All individuals, including monastics and lay associates, from disciple lists and biographical texts have been integrated into the new dataset.

Additional data was extracted from other sources, including biographies in two key monastery gazetteers: *Dinghushan Qingyunsi zhi* 鼎湖山慶雲寺志 (Gazetteer of Qingyun Monastery on Mount Dinghu; ZFSH, part 1, vol. 47–48, no. g051), a major Vinaya centre in Guangdong, and *Jianlongsi zhilie* 建隆寺志畧 (Brief gazetteer of Jianlong Monastery; ZFC, vol. 54, no. y078), a Baohua sublineage monastery in Yangzhou. These additional sources collectively yielded 51 individuals and 274 connections, representing 3% and 15% of new persons and links, respectively.

The new dataset predominantly comprises monastics, with only 49 laypeople. Disciple lists from *Nanshan zongtong* and *Lüzong dengpu* account for 1,382 connections (73%), followed by 317 master-disciple links (17%) from biographies, documenting tonsure, novice, full, or bodhisattva precept ceremonies, and dharma transmission.⁸ Remaining connections include monastic ties (e.g., epistolary exchanges, administrative appointments, joint travels, invitations to carry out ceremonies, kinship, etc.) and lay-monastic interactions, which generally align with Brook's (1993, 159–81) broader categories of financial patronage, land acquisition, lay supervision of monastery affairs, and literary patronage.⁹

By quantitatively examining the influence of the Vinaya tradition during the Ming and Qing dynasties, this study makes both methodological and historical advances. Methodologically, it introduces an innovative approach to integrating data from the “Historical Social Network

⁷ For the formation process of these two Vinaya genealogies, see Hasebe (1993, 92–95). My detailed analysis of the 61 shared biographies reveals that *Lüzong dengpu* compilers frequently made minor abridgements rather than reproducing texts verbatim, with significant reductions in five biographies: those of Mingji Puzhi 明極普智 (1658–1734), Tianhui Tongneng 天慧通能 (1688–1739), Sengshu Shipai 僧樹實培 (1695–1751), Taichu Laizhao 太初來照 (1684–1742), and Xiaoyun Zongqi 曉雲宗起 (1695–1765).

⁸ Dharma transmission (*chuanfa* 傳法) refers to the formal process by which a Buddhist teacher, typically in the Chan tradition, acknowledges a disciple as an authorised successor in the lineage. This transmission symbolises the passing of the authentic insight, but it is also a form of spiritual kinship between monastics and an institutional mechanism essential for nominating abbots of dharma transmission monasteries (Welch 1963; 1967, 156–70; Wu 2006; 2008, 258–62).

⁹ When multiple types of links exist between two individuals, each is recorded separately in the dataset; however, as the graph's edges are unweighted, the number of links between individuals does not influence the layout algorithm.

of Chinese Buddhism” dataset with newly collected primary source material. Previously, researchers have utilized the “Historical Social Network of Chinese Buddhism” dataset in two primary ways. Bingenheimer’s successive studies exemplify the first approach: Bingenheimer (2018) used the 2018 version (6,470 nodes, 13,257 edges, ca. 150–1650 CE) to identify twenty central figures by various metrics; Bingenheimer (2020) analysed the 2020–07 version (17,500 actors, extending to ca. 1950 due to the incorporation of *Xinxu gaosengzhuan* and Hasebe’s [2008] tables) to explore a “triangle” of fourth- and fifth-century Buddhist masters’ communities; and Bingenheimer (2023) examined the Ming and Qing using the further expanded 2021–06 version. Bingenheimer’s method leverages the entire dataset’s graph to analyse its whole or specific segments. However, adding new data for a specific community and period under this approach requires the reconstruction of the entire graph, presenting computational challenges for standard devices.

The second approach, adopted by Laurent Van Cutsem (2023) and Anna Sokolova (2023), extracts new data from previously unused sources, such as a tenth-century Chan genealogy or Tang-era Vinaya epigraphy, using existing IDs from the original dataset when available. In particular, Sokolova’s (2023) study demonstrates the Vinaya tradition’s potential to enrich Tang-dynasty datasets, creating a new dataset of ca. 700 persons, of whom 273 have already been included in the “Historical Social Network of Chinese Buddhism” dataset and whose IDs therefrom were used in Sokolova’s new dataset. Sokolova’s approach elucidates the composition of the Vinaya community as reflected in her epigraphical sources but does not explore its broader influence within the Tang network, which includes 3,483 individuals in the original dataset.

In order to overcome the limitations of the above approaches, this paper employs a targeted method, combining Ming,¹⁰ Ming-Qing transition, and Qing data from the original dataset with new data to investigate the impact of Vinaya lineages on the overall network during this period. This approach enables efficient processing on standard devices, and this paper demonstrates that the resulting visualization effectively captures temporal patterns, retains existing features, and uncovers new insights. Specifically, it examines whether the combined dataset’s network reflects the temporal shift from Ming to High Qing, as in Bingenheimer’s (2023) visualization. With limited new Chan data, minimal changes to Chan lineages are to be expected, but the study investigates how adding Vinaya monks reshapes Chan lineage positions relative to late-Ming and High Qing imperial clusters. Finally, it also analyses the structure of the Vinaya network and identifies its key figures.

Historically, this study builds on and expands Bingenheimer’s framework. It adopts his method of using actors’ network positions to assess their historical roles and cluster locations

¹⁰ Since both key primary sources, *Nanshan zongtong* and *Lizong dengpu*, primarily document lineages descending from Guxin Ruxin, data on the early and mid-Ming is limited, and these periods are thus excluded from this paper’s discussion.

to analyse the temporal stages of Chinese Buddhism. Additionally, it enhances his quantitative approach by complementing degree centrality, which measures an actor's prominence within their generation and which was employed by Bingenheimer (2023), with betweenness centrality, which highlights their role as connectors across generations. The adoption of betweenness centrality is highly relevant due to a characteristic of the data, which frequently lists numerous first-generation disciples for a given master who are otherwise historically obscure.¹¹ Evaluating such data using degree centrality may exaggerate the importance of a master with a cohort of first-generation disciples but no ties to prominent contemporaries or a lasting lineage. Therefore, betweenness centrality serves as a crucial alternative metric, emphasizing an actor's role in linking diverse groups during their era and fostering enduring social transmission of their tradition.¹² In sum, the study's innovations stem from two sources: the incorporation of new data on Vinaya masters, reshaping the positions of larger clusters and specific nodes, and the application of betweenness centrality for deeper historical insights.

This paper presents an overview of the revised network and addresses three key questions: (1) it analyses the structure of the Chan segment, noting both continuities and deviations from Bingenheimer's network; (2) it analyses a newly identified gap between the cluster of Chan masters during the Ming-Qing transition and the High Qing imperial cluster; and (3) it explores the emergent Vinaya tradition segment, spanning the Ming-Qing transition to the late eighteenth century.

Network overview

This paper employs social network analysis to integrate new Vinaya data, thereby enhancing our understanding of Chinese Buddhist history during the Ming and Qing dynasties. By merging this data with the corresponding portion of Bingenheimer's original dataset, the proposed methodology successfully preserves core features of the network, such as the prominence of Chan lineages, and uncovers novel patterns, including the influence of Vinaya

¹¹ This characteristic of the data reflects the corresponding feature in the underlying sources. Bingenheimer (2021, 241–42) notes that the Ming-Qing data in the original dataset primarily derives from Hasebe's (2008) list of Chan lineages, sourced from Chan genealogies. Similarly, my Vinaya data predominantly derives from genealogical records. These sources frequently list a master's numerous disciples without providing further details about them or even the master himself.

¹² Bingenheimer's (2018, 54–59) study of the Tang-period Chinese Buddhist community provides a compelling case for incorporating betweenness centrality, noting that it highlights different actors than degree centrality. His reluctance to apply betweenness centrality in his Ming and Qing analysis may stem from his observation (2021, 238) that sparse mid-Ming data inflates the bridging roles of obscure figures connecting early and late Ming clusters. Given that my Vinaya data primarily pertains to the Ming-Qing transition and Qing periods, this paper focuses on those eras, enabling the use of betweenness centrality neglecting the mid-Ming data limitations.

masters. The following discussion begins with an overview of the resulting visualization, highlighting its key structural elements.

Similar to Bingenheimer's layout (see Figure 1 in Bingenheimer 2023, 2), the network presented here illustrates a historical timeline (Figure 1).¹³ A yellow segment, extending from the upper right to the centre of the network, delineates the Ming dynasty from its founder, the Hongwu 洪武 emperor (r. 1368–1398), to the cluster of prominent late-Ming monks grouped around the Wanli emperor. Green nodes represent individuals who were born during the Ming dynasty but died in the Qing dynasty. A purple segment, stretching from the centre to the right, depicts the Qing period, exemplified by the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor (r. 1736–1796). In contrast to Bingenheimer's visualization, this network incorporates white nodes, representing newly added monastics from my Vinaya sources. These nodes are predominantly situated in the upper right, highlighting previously undocumented developments within the Qing Buddhist community. In sum, the integration of newly added Vinaya monastics was successfully displayed on the visualization, which retained its core function of illustrating the chronological progression of Chinese Buddhist networks.

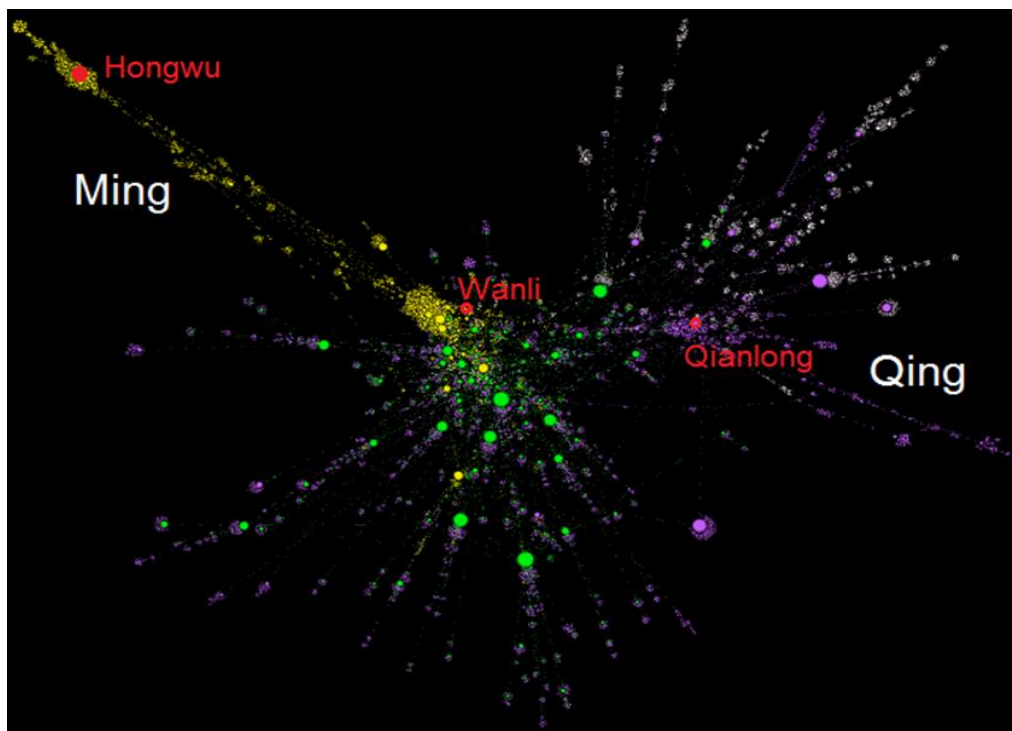


Fig. 1: Network overview (node size by degree centrality)

¹³ The network was constructed using Gephi 0.10.1 software, employing the Force Atlas 2 algorithm with the same parameters as those used in Bingenheimer's research (2023). To enhance compactness, several peripheral node clusters were manually adjusted toward the main body of the network after it had reached its final form. These adjustments did not alter the overall layout. A record of the network prior to manual adjustments has been preserved and is available for reference if needed.

Seventeenth-century Chan lineages

During the late Ming period, Chan Buddhism experienced a vibrant internal transformation, characterized by the rise of influential lineages and heated debates over Linji 臨濟 Chan teachings. This controversy, thoroughly examined by Jiang Wu (2008, 118–133), involves key Chan masters central to this study and merits a brief overview (see Figure 2 for dharma transmission ties among key Chan masters discussed in this study). In 1625, Hanyue Fazang 漢月法藏 (1573–1635) published a critique of Miyun Yuanwu’s teachings, despite Miyun Yuanwu recognizing him as a dharma transmission disciple in 1624. Hanyue Fazang only acknowledged this transmission three years later, due to their disagreements and his inability to secure another master for formal Linji Chan lineage status. Miyun Yuanwu viewed spontaneous beating and shouting as the sole expression of enlightenment, whereas Hanyue Fazang sought to theorize Linji Chan. Initially dismissed by Miyun Yuanwu, Hanyue Fazang shared his views in a letter to Miyun Yuanwu’s dharma brother, Tianyin Yuanxiu 天隱圓修 (1575–1635), who deemed them divergent from standard Linji Chan principles. Tianyin Yuanxiu informed Miyun Yuanwu of Hanyue Fazang’s essays, prompting Miyun Yuanwu’s polemical responses. This dispute escalated, engaging not only these masters but also their disciples across the seventeenth century.

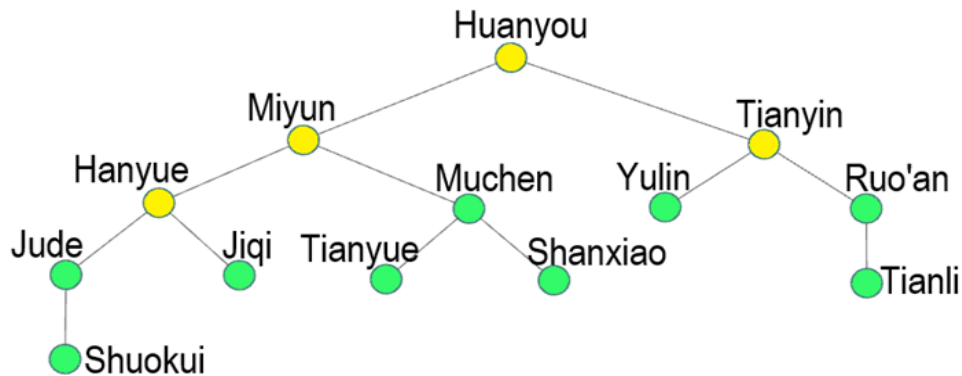


Fig. 2: Dharma transmission ties among key Chan masters

This paper begins the exploration of the new network by connecting with Bingenheimer’s (2023) research on Chan lineages. The incorporation of the Vinaya segment into the network preserves core features, though also leading to certain adjustments. This section will explore how these changes affect the ability of the visualization to align with the historical narratives in earlier scholarship. More specifically, this section will address two major arguments of Bingenheimer’s (2023) study: (1) the pivotal impact of Linji Chan master Miyun Yuanwu on the seventeenth-century monastic community; and (2) the crucial role of two groups of his disciples as mediating the transition towards the High Qing imperial cluster. Bingenheimer

advances both of these observations not just as new findings yielded by the social network analysis, but rather as the confirmation of the results of Wu's (2008) seminal study of the seventeenth-century Chan Buddhism. We will first review the key features of the original network that Bingenheimer highlights to support his argument and the historical narratives they underpin. After that, we will move on to the comparison with the new network.

Bingenheimer's (2023, 3–4, 6–7) study highlights Miyun Yuanwu's crucial role in the seventeenth-century Buddhist community, arguing that, in view of the limited social connections of the late Ming Buddhist revival into the later Chan-dominated period, it was Miyun Yuanwu's influence that initiated major developments that extended into the Qing. His analysis distinguishes two network segments: a yellow cluster of late-Ming eminent monks and a Chan lineage cluster of green and purple nodes, separated by a "thinned-out region, resembling a synaptic gap" (Bingenheimer 2023, 5), reflecting the scholarly consensus on the Wanli period and seventeenth century as distinct revitalization stages. Bingenheimer emphasizes Miyun Yuanwu's central position within the Chan cluster, where his disciples mediate the network's temporal expansion, suggesting that the dataset predominantly captures the growth of Miyun Yuanwu's lineages across the seventeenth century and mid-Qing.

Bingenheimer's (2023, 9–12) study emphasizes the significant influence of Miyun Yuanwu's disciples in shaping connections to the High Qing imperial cluster, highlighting two key Chan lineages. He notes that the purple imperial segment in his network lies "positioned right between" two opposing groups of Chan masters (Bingenheimer 2023, 9). The first group, led by Hanyue Fazang and his disciples Jude Hongli 具德弘禮 (1600–1667) and Jiqi Hongchu 繼起弘儲 (1605–1672), challenged Miyun Yuanwu's interpretation of Linji Chan teachings. The second group comprises Miyun Yuanwu's defenders, Muchen Daomin 木陳道忞 (1596–1674) and Muyun Tongmen 牧雲通門 (1599/1600–1671).¹⁴

Bingenheimer (2023, 9) interpreted this layout as reflecting the historical narrative outlined in Wu's research on the lineage disputes. Wu (2008, 163–86) identifies the Yongzheng 雍正 (r. 1722–1735) emperor's support of Miyun Yuanwu's side and suppression of Hanyue Fazang's faction as a pinnacle in this history. Correspondingly, Bingenheimer (2023, 9) notes that "the Yongzheng emperor is positioned directly between the opposing camps, further 'down in time' (with the timeline progressing toward the upper right), aligning with his role as arbiter in the dispute." Building on Wu's narrative, Bingenheimer (2023, 9) further emphasizes the connection between Muchen Daomin and the Shunzhi 順治 emperor (r. 1643–1661) as an additional factor strengthening the association between Miyun Yuanwu's lineage and the Qing imperial cluster.

Now that we have reviewed the major points in Bingenheimer's argument, we can proceed to ask whether they still hold true in the new network introduced in this paper assuming the

¹⁴ For the positions of these groups on the original network, see Figure 5 in Bingenheimer (2023, 10).

same zoom-in approach from segments to specific monks. Examining the role of Miyun Yuanwu, this study observes broad similarity, with only one notable distinction. In line with Bingenheimer's visualization, the new network exhibits a comparable gap with regard to the break between the yellow late-Ming cluster and the green-and-purple Chan lineages, marked by a white dashed line (Figure 3). However, the transition to the High Qing imperial cluster is different. In Bingenheimer's visualization, the lineages of Miyun Yuanwu's disciples extend toward the top, right, and bottom (occupying all directions except the late-Ming cluster on the left). In contrast, the new network confines these Chan lineages of Miyun Yuanwu to the left and bottom regions. A more pronounced gap separates the late-Ming cluster and Miyun Yuanwu's group on the left from the purple High Qing developments on the right, marked by the orange dashed line. This suggests that not only the disciples of Miyun Yuanwu's lineage, but also other monastics connected the Buddhist community to the Qing imperial cluster.

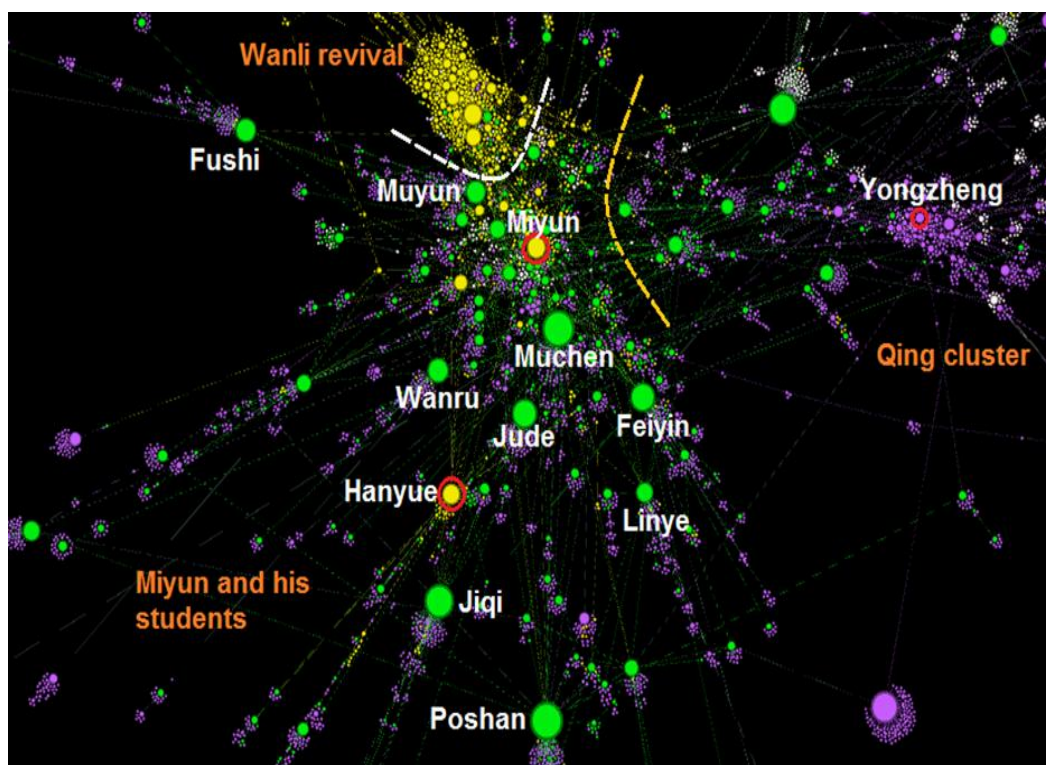


Fig. 3: Miyun Yuanwu and his main disciples (node size by degree centrality)

Despite this new feature, the cluster of Miyun Yuanwu and his defenders, Muchen Daomin and Muyun Tongmen, remains close to the orange line, reinforcing Bingenheimer's observations and Wu's note on their role in the transition to the High Qing imperial cluster, particularly through Muchen Daomin's connections with the Shunzhi emperor. However, the rival camp of Hanyue Fazang and his disciples, Jude Hongli and Jiqi Hongchu, is now positioned further from the High Qing imperial cluster, located in the network's central and

lower regions. This raises the question of who else facilitates this transition beyond Muchen Daomin, which the next section examines further.¹⁵

Transition towards the Qing imperial cluster

This section explores the key figures driving the Chinese Buddhist community's transition to the High Qing period, with a focus on the networks associated with the Qing emperors, recognizing that the controversy between Miyun Yuanwu and Hanyue Fazang was not central to this shift. To address this, the section analyses the sparsely populated region of the network bridging Miyun Yuanwu and the purple cluster representing the Qing emperors. Given that distinct centrality measures highlight different actors, the analysis first examines the network with node sizes determined by degree centrality, followed by betweenness centrality. It thus aims to elucidate the roles of Muchen Daomin's disciples, positioned closest to the transition zone among Miyun Yuanwu's followers, alongside other lineages in connecting to the High Qing imperial cluster.

The network clearly shows the Qing emperors' timeline from Shunzhi on the left to Qianlong on the right (Figure 4). Shunzhi lies at the centre of the transitional area, surrounded by green nodes of monks who were born in the Ming and died in the Qing – contemporaries of Miyun Yuanwu's disciples. When assessed by degree centrality, several smaller green nodes cluster near the Shunzhi and Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1661–1722) emperors, whereas two notably larger green nodes stand out farther away at the top. The following discussion will first examine the smaller nodes and then the larger ones.

¹⁵ The argument above primarily rests on the network's layout. Consequently, shifting from degree centrality to betweenness centrality yields minimal changes to this configuration, rendering a separate illustration unnecessary. Nevertheless, betweenness centrality offers two subtle insights. First, it underscores the prominence of Miyun Yuanwu. Although Bingenheimer (2023, 4) highlights Miyun Yuanwu's central role in seventeenth-century Buddhism, his node appears understated in Bingenheimer's visualization. Betweenness centrality rectifies this by significantly enlarging the yellow node, emphasizing Miyun Yuanwu's role as a pivotal connector linking earlier Buddhist history to numerous subsequent lineages, thus reinforcing Bingenheimer's core argument. Second, betweenness centrality enables a more refined analysis of Miyun Yuanwu's key disciples. Muchen Daomin and Poshan Haiming 破山海明 (1597–1666) gain prominence under this metric, affirming the former's critical role during the Qing transition and highlighting the latter's contribution to extending the Linji Chan lineage into Sichuan. Conversely, the influence of other disciples, such as Muyun Tongmen (1599–1671), Wanru Tongwei 萬如通微 (1594–1657), and Linye Tongqi 林野通奇 (1596–1652), diminishes under betweenness centrality, suggesting that, despite having numerous immediate followers, they failed to establish extensive or enduring lineages. Thus, betweenness centrality enhances our ability to identify the more influential Chan lineages.

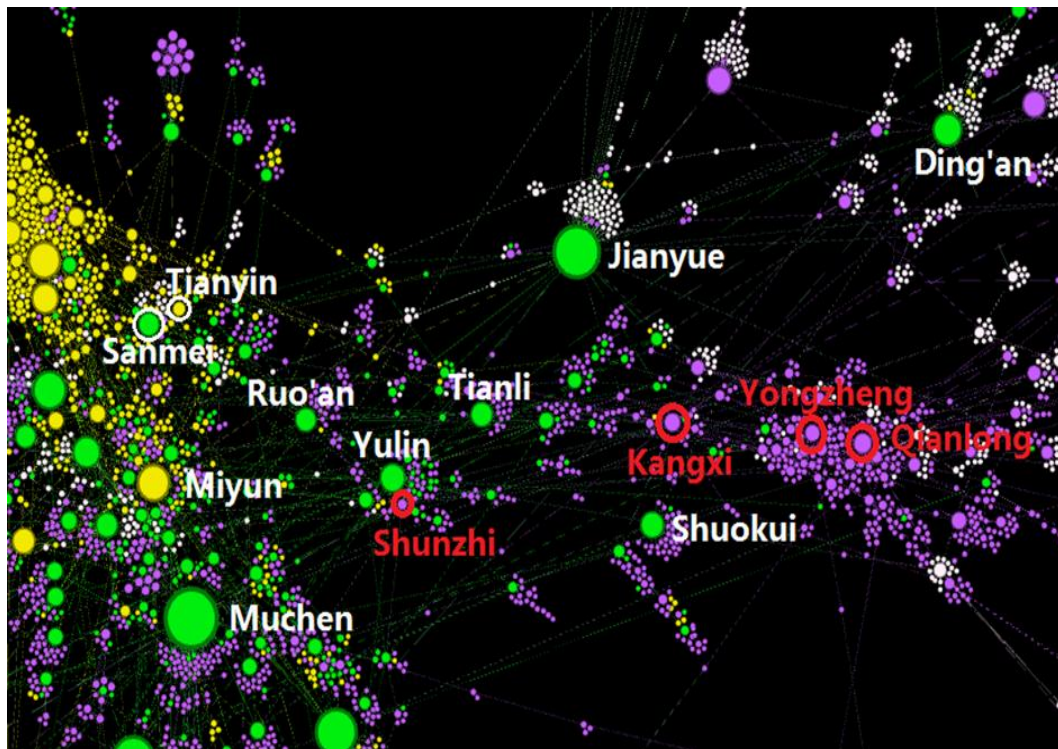


Fig. 4: Transition towards the Qing imperial cluster (node size by degree centrality; names of the Qing emperors in red, names of monks in white)

The smaller nodes represent individuals already present in the transition area of Bingenheimer's graph, not emphasized in his analysis due to his focus on the controversy between the rival lineages of Miyun Yuanwu's disciples. The significant green node closest to the Shunzhi emperor is Yulin Tongxiu 玉林通琇 (1614–1675), summoned by Shunzhi to the capital twice in the late 1650s.¹⁶ Yulin Tongxiu received dharma transmission from Tianyin Yuanxiu, who was a dharma brother of Miyun Yuanwu and thus gave a start to a distinct Linji Chan lineage, separate from that of Miyun Yuanwu.¹⁷ Two additional prominent green nodes in the transitional area represent master Ruo'an Tongwen 箬庵通問 (1604–1655) and his disciple Tianli Xingzhen 天笠行珍 (1624–1694).¹⁸ Both served as abbots of Li'an Monastery 理安寺 in Hangzhou, which received generous patronage from the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong emperors.¹⁹ Ruo'an Tongwen studied under Miyun Yuanwu but ultimately received dharma transmission from Tianyin Yuanxiu. Lastly, Shuokui Yuanzhi 碩揆原志

¹⁶ For more on Shunzhi's patronage of Yulin Tongxiu, see Wu (2008, 85, 98).

¹⁷ For more on Tianyin Yuanxiu and his support of Miyun Yuanwu in the latter's controversy with Hanyue Fazang, see Wu (2008, 121, 124–125).

¹⁸ For more on Tianli Xingzhen, see Wu (2008, 133).

¹⁹ For more on this patronage, see Wu (2008, 165). For a special relationship between the Yongzheng emperor and Li'an monks, see Ter Haar (2020).

(1628–1697), a second-generation disciple of Hanyue Fazang and thus part of Miyun Yuanwu's lineage, appears in this segment of the network, likely due to the Kangxi emperor's visit to Lingyin Monastery 靈隱寺 in Hangzhou in 1689 (*Zengxiu Yunlinsi zhi*, 197a2–3). However, the prominence of Shuokui Yuanzhi's node probably stems from the extensive list of his first-generation disciples. In sum, most of the smaller green nodes measured by degree centrality in the transitional area represent Tianyin Yuanxiu's Linji lineage, with only Shuokui Yuanzhi being a second-generation dharma heir in the lineage of Hanyue Fazang and thus a third-generation disciple of Miyun Yuanwu.

In addition to the line of smaller green nodes positioned between the yellow Ming and purple Qing clusters, two larger green nodes appear above the Qing cluster. Among these, the node representing Jianyue Duti 見月讀體 (1601–1679)²⁰ stands out, with as many as 90 connections. An effective leader and a prolific scholar, Jianyue Duti played a crucial role in the Vinaya revival. His teacher, Sanmei Jiguang 三昧寂光 (1580–1645),²¹ was the first Vinaya abbot of Mount Baohua — a position subsequently held by Jianyue Duti and later by his disciple, Ding'an Deji 定菴德基 (1634–1700), whose sizable green node appears to the right of his teacher's. Neither Jianyue Duti nor Ding'an Deji received imperial patronage, which likely accounts for their relative distance from the clusters of monks associated with the Qing emperors.

In sum, degree centrality underscores the pivotal roles of Tianyin Yuanxiu's Linji lineage and the Mount Baohua Vinaya lineage in facilitating the transition to the segment surrounding the High Qing emperors. The importance of the additional Linji and Vinaya lineages during the transition period is further evidenced by the positions of their founding masters, Tianyin Yuanxiu and Sanmei Jiguang. Their close proximity on the right side of the yellow late-Ming cluster underscores their foundational role in connecting the Ming and Qing periods. However, these findings remain preliminary, given that node sizes measured by degree centrality may be skewed by the number of first-generation disciples, necessitating betweenness centrality analysis to more accurately identify figures central to the broader developments into the High Qing period.

When evaluated by betweenness centrality (Figure 5), the ranking of Chan monks tangibly changes. Yulin Tongxiu alone retains his standing, whereas the nodes of the Li'an abbots, Ruo'an Tongwen and Tianli Xingzhen, exhibit a marked reduction in size. The same applies to Shuokui Yuanzhi, a representative of Hanyue Fazang's lineage. Conversely, two monks rise in prominence: Shanxiao Benxi 山曉本誓 (1620–1686) and Tianyue Benzhou 天嶽本晝 (1621–1706). Shanxiao Benxi, a student of Miyun Yuanwu and Muchen Daomin, received dharma transmission from the latter, accompanied his dharma master to the capital,

²⁰ On Jianyue Duti, see Guodeng (2004, 121–210) and Wang (2006, 481–89). His autobiography has recently been translated into English by Mallinson (2024).

²¹ On Sanmei Jiguang, see Guodeng (2004, 103–20) and Wang (2006, 445–46).

and was appointed by the Shunzhi emperor to reside at Long'an Monastery 隆安寺, where the emperor visited him twice more (*Tiantongsi zhi*, 281a9–283a3). Moreover, Shanxiao Benxi had direct connections with key Vinaya masters discussed above: he was ordained under Sanmei Jiguang in 1640 and was highly regarded by Jianyue Duti, who at that time assisted Sanmei Jiguang in conducting ordination ceremonies (*Tiantongsi zhi*, 550a2). Tianyue Benzhou, trained under Muchen Daomin (from whom he received dharma transmission), Ruo'an Tongwen, and Yulin Tongxiu, received a visit from the Kangxi emperor as abbot of Tiantong Monastery 天童寺 in Ningbo (*Tiantongsi zhi*, 285a8–287a1). In conclusion, betweenness centrality illuminates the critical role of Muchen Daomin's lineage – and, by extension, Miyun Yuanwu's heritage – in bridging the transition to the Qing imperial cluster.

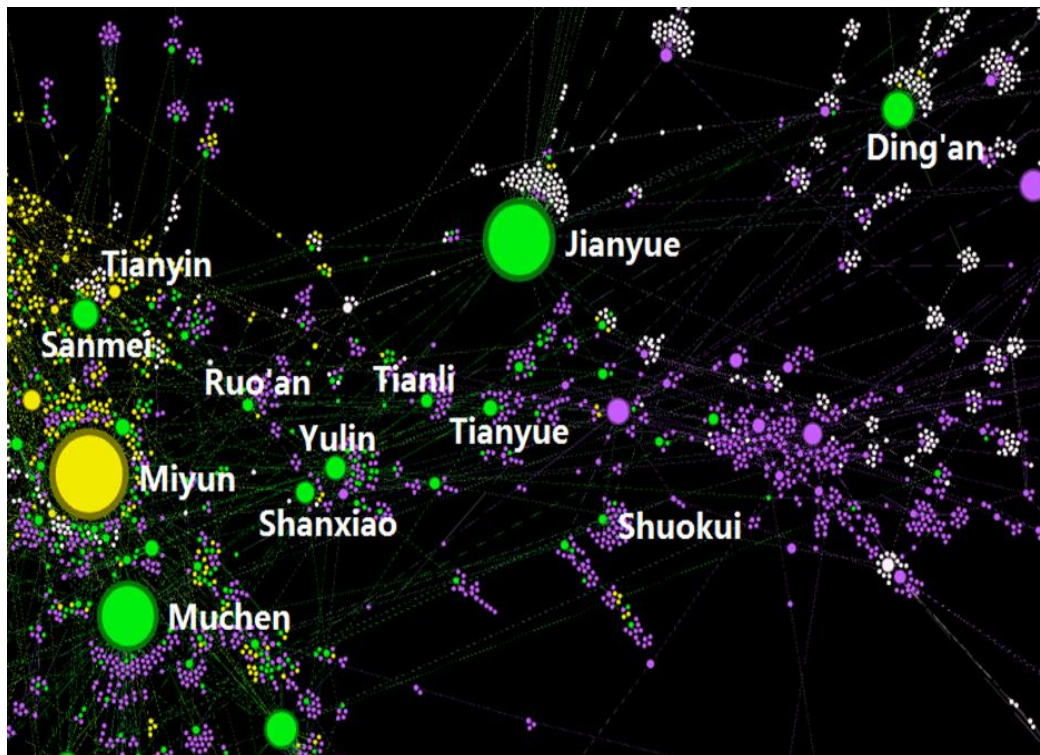


Fig. 5: Transition towards the Qing cluster (node size by betweenness centrality)

In contrast to the significant shifts observed in Chan lineages under betweenness centrality, the Vinaya lineage pattern remains consistent. Sanmei Jiguang, Jianyue Duti, and Ding'an Deji continue to be represented by prominent green nodes, with Jianyue Duti clearly holding a rank of significance comparable to Miyun Yuanwu and Muchen Daomin. This indicates that all three monks were not only influential within their own generation but also played a substantial role in shaping the subsequent development of Chinese Buddhism.

In conclusion, Bingenheimer's network depicts the transition to the High Qing imperial cluster as mediated by two rival factions of Chan master Miyun Yuanwu's disciples, but this section, relying on the expanded dataset, identifies three distinct groups linking the late-Ming to the Qing imperial cluster. Two of these groups were present on Bingenheimer's visualization but escaped his analysis due to his focus on the controversy between the camps of Miyun Yuanwu and Hanyue Fazang. The first group comprises Linji monks of Tianyin Yuanxiu's lineage, whose significance is moderate under degree centrality and further diminished under betweenness centrality. Their central position in the transition area likely stems from two factors: their master, Tianyin Yuanxiu, resides in the yellow late-Ming cluster, distancing them from Miyun Yuanwu's lineages, and they maintained close ties with the Qing emperors. The second group includes two prominent Vinaya masters, whose nodes are notably larger under both degree and betweenness centrality measures, yet they appear at a certain distance from the transition area and Qing imperial cluster due to their lack of direct links with the Qing emperors.

As for the third group, my network corroborates and even bolsters Bingenheimer's findings on the role of Muchen Daomin, member of Miyun Yuanwu's camp, in mediating the transition to the High Qing imperial cluster. The significance of both Muchen Daomin himself and his disciples is revealed by the application of betweenness centrality, which testifies to their importance in connecting the segment of Miyun Yuanwu's disciples and the Qing imperial cluster. As for why the layout algorithm that produced Bingenheimer's network arranged the rivalling camps of Miyun Yuanwu and Hanyue Fazang as flanking the developments into the Qing, one might point to the possible influence of Shuokui Yuanzhi, Hanyue Fazang's disciple with a link to the Kangxi emperor. However, the addition of Vinaya data in the new dataset likely decreased the importance of this relationship, with Muchen Daomin and Jianyue Duti being now the two key figures mediating the move towards the High Qing imperial cluster.

The Vinaya tradition in the High Qing

The focus now turns to the Vinaya segment, which not only provides key figures mediating the transition to the High Qing imperial cluster but also forms a significant portion of the network comprising their disciples. The two pivotal transition-period monks, Jianyue Duti and Ding'an Deji, lacked direct connections to the Qing emperors. This section therefore examines the principal figures within the Vinaya segment, with particular emphasis on their renewed ties to the Qing emperors, in order to clarify the network algorithm's placement of this segment in proximity to High Qing imperial history.

The Qing segment of the revised network comprises two primary groups (Figure 6). The orange frame highlights the cluster of individuals closely linked to three Qing emperors:

Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong. The upper-right portion of the network is dominated by Vinaya monks, enclosed within a green frame.

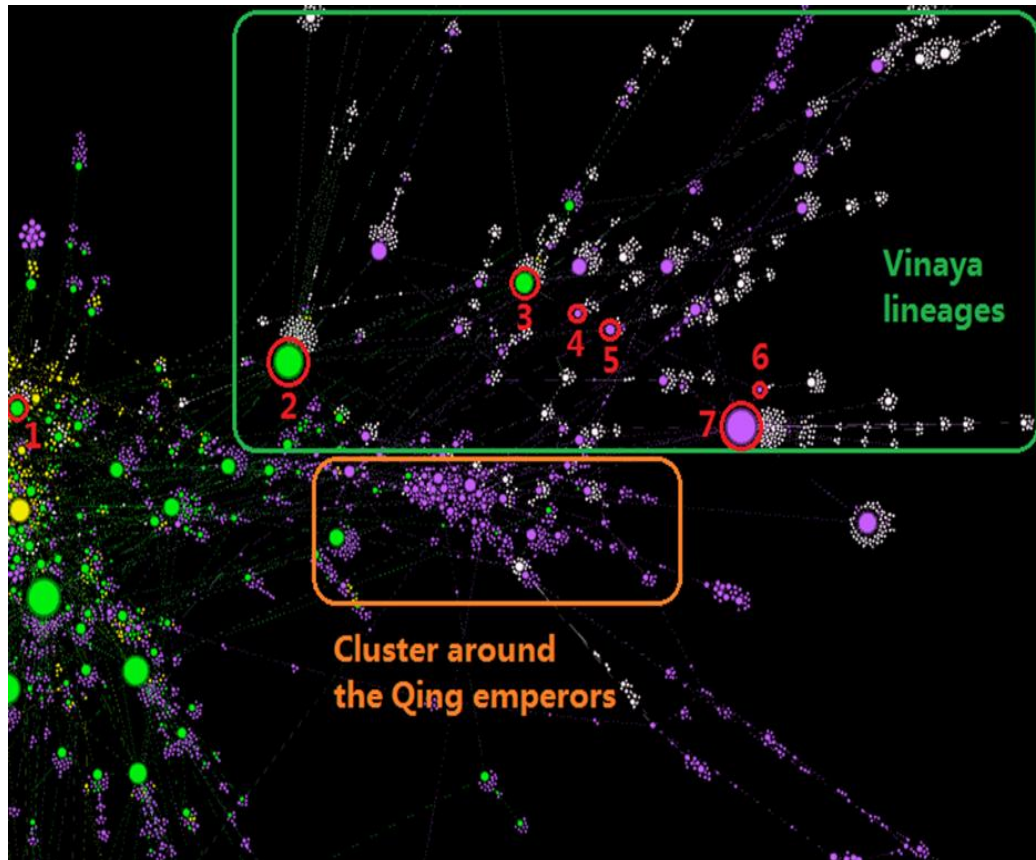


Fig. 6: Chinese Buddhism during the mid-Qing (node size by degree centrality)

Within the segment boxed in green, as one might expect considering the data sources, the most prominent figures are the abbots of Mount Baohua, the leading centre of the Vinaya revival, from whom subsequent Vinaya lineages extend, radiating toward the upper-right and right on the network. These abbots are marked with red numbers 1 to 7 on Figure 6. The previous section addressed the first three Baohua abbots: Sanmei Jiguang (no. 1), Jianyue Duti (no. 2), and Ding'an Deji (no. 3). The timeline of Baohua patriarchs continues rightward with abbots Songyin Zhenyi 松隱真義 (1660–1709; no. 4), Minyuan Changsong 閔緣常松 (1665–1718; no. 5), Zhenhui Shiyong 珍輝實琮 (1675–1722; no. 6), and Wenhai Fujū 文海福聚 (1686–1765; no. 7), whose node stands out with 96 connections.

Betweenness centrality analysis introduces two subtle yet significant shifts in the ranking of Baohua abbots. The node of the seventh abbot, Wenhai Fujū, decreases in size, becoming slightly smaller than Ding'an Deji's. This reduction may be less significant, as betweenness centrality naturally highlights nodes central to the network's diameter, and individuals at the

diachronic network's start or end typically exhibit lower betweenness centrality. Nevertheless, Wenhai Fujū's node retains prominence, suggesting its importance transcends the influence of his extensive first-generation disciple list. Its continued significance likely stems from Wenhai Fujū's role in linking three areas: the earlier Baohua abbots who were his masters, the lineages of his disciples, and the imperial cluster, with which he established strong ties. In 1734, the Yongzheng emperor summoned him to Beijing for a grand ordination ceremony at Fayuan Monastery 法源寺 in 1734, placing it under the control of Wenhai Fujū's lineage disciple upon the Baohua abbot's departure. During his stay in Beijing, Wenhai Fujū petitioned for the inclusion of several works by previous Baohua abbots in the new Buddhist canon, approved by the Qianlong emperor in 1737. The Qianlong emperor further supported Mount Baohua, granting a new canon edition in 1740 and visiting six times during his southern tours from 1751 to 1784, four of which occurred during Wenhai Fujū's lifetime.²² The second shift elevates the node of the fifth abbot, Minyuan Changsong, to a size comparable to Wenhai Fujū's. This prominence likely arises from Minyuan's interactions with the Kangxi emperor during the latter's southern inspections,²³ his studies and ordination under Jianyue Duti and Ding'an Deji, and his role as Wenhai Fujū's teacher, positioning him as a key connector across these influential clusters.

This section reveals the pivotal role of the abbots of Mount Baohua in establishing the lineages that form the Vinaya segment of the network. It particularly emphasizes the significance of two figures who linked this segment to the Qing emperors: Minyuan Changsong, patronized by Kangxi, and Wenhai Fujū, supported by Yongzheng and Qianlong. Consequently, the development of Vinaya lineages in the Jiangnan region and their reconnection with Beijing during the first half of the eighteenth century emerges as a significant element in the history of Chinese Buddhism during the Ming-Qing transition and the High Qing period.

Conclusion

This paper introduces a novel approach to leveraging the "Historical Social Network of Chinese Buddhism" dataset to explore the social networks of Buddhist monastics and their lay patrons during specific historical periods. The research presented here augments the Ming and Qing portion of the original dataset with the data on Vinaya monks, yielding fresh insights building on Bingenheimer's (2023) social network analysis of the same period.

The findings reinforce Bingenheimer's core argument regarding the central role of Chan master Miyun Yuanwu in the late-Ming and early Qing Buddhist community. However, they

²² For details on Yongzheng and Qianlong's patronage of Wenhai Fujū, see Lepneva (2023, 461–464).

²³ For a brief introduction of this episode, see Vetluzhskaya and Lepneva (2022, 5).

present a somewhat different perspective on the transition from the generation of Miyun Yuanwu's disciples — born in the Ming and dying in the Qing — to the High Qing imperial cluster. In Bingenheimer's network, this transition was mediated by the rival factions of Miyun Yuanwu and his supporters versus the camp of his dissident disciple Hanyue Fazang. This study confirms the pivotal role of Miyun Yuanwu's camp, particularly his disciple Muchen Daomin and the latter's lineage. However, the new visualization removes Hanyue Fazang from the transition area, emphasizing instead two additional groups: the Chan monks of Tianyin Yuanxiu's Linji lineage and the Vinaya abbots of Mount Baohua.

Rather than overturning established historical narratives, these findings encourage reconsideration of developments already noted in scholarship. The rivalry between Miyun Yuanwu and Hanyue Fazang's factions, central to Bingenheimer's analysis, aligns with Wu's (2008) study of Chan masters' writings, which in turn builds on Chen (1962). Given that Bingenheimer's network primarily draws its data from dharma transmission records, the prominence of this controversy among Chan masters may still hold when focusing solely on their interactions.

Nevertheless, previous studies that moved beyond this focus have already highlighted other groups emphasized in the present social network analysis. Tianyin Yuanxiu's lineage, though not highlighted by Bingenheimer, emerges as anticipated from scholarship. Ter Haar (2020) highlighted the Yongzheng emperor's patronage of Li'an Monastery, revitalized in the early seventeenth century by Tianyin Yuanxiu's dharma heir Ruo'an Tongwen. The prominence of the Vinaya tradition of Mount Baohua was also foreseeable, with an expanding body of scholarship on the subject steadily emerging since the 1990s, as noted in the introduction to this paper.

Although it might appear that social network analysis merely confirms known phenomena, its value lies in quantifying their relative significance. For instance, one might assume the Vinaya tradition, despite its growth, was less numerous than Chan lineages and thus marginal. This analysis demonstrates otherwise, revealing that incorporating Vinaya masters significantly reshapes the network layout and prompts new discussions about lineages critical to the transition to the High Qing imperial cluster. In addition, social network analysis has revealed several prominent figures, including Shanxiao Benxi, Tianyue Benzhou, and Minyuan Changsong, who remain understudied and thus warrant increased scholarly focus.

The sources utilized in this paper constitute only a fraction of the Ming and Qing materials documenting connections among Chinese Buddhists. As Bingenheimer (2021b, 242–43) notes, the vast quantity of such sources renders it unrealistic to expect for the “Historical Social Network of Chinese Buddhism” dataset to encompass all knowable connections. Despite sharing the same limitation, this paper seeks to illustrate how augmenting a select portion of the original dataset with new data refines our understanding of the roles of various lineages during a given period and holds potential for further insights as additional sources are integrated.

Two main directions are envisioned for further network development through this approach. First, my examination of late Ming materials suggests that the gap between the late Ming cluster and Miyun Yuanwu's Chan lineages may appear less pronounced if data on interactions of his disciples with various masters and associates, beyond dharma transmission ties, are taken into account. Second, applying this approach to records of later seventeenth-century Chan masters may reshape the outlook of lineages of Miyun Yuanwu's disciples, currently encoded as tree-like structures with limited inter-lineage connections.²⁴ Incorporating interactions among monastics and records of Qing imperial patronage could further refine the network layout, potentially revealing new clusters and highlighting the roles of these lineages in the transition to the High Qing. Beyond its specific contribution to the study of Ming and Qing Buddhist history, this paper aims to inspire further research through its innovative methodology. The relevant segments of the original dataset can be integrated with new data to explore other periods of Chinese Buddhist history, as well as material from Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. In addition to potential publications, another advantage of compiling such data is the ability to incorporate it both into the original dataset and the Buddhist Studies Person Authority Database,²⁵ an online platform for querying information about Buddhist monks and their lay associates, thereby benefiting the broader scholarly community.

Abbreviations

- B Lan Jifu 藍吉福 et al., eds. 1985. *Dazangjing bubian* 大藏經補編 (Buddhist canon: supplementary sections). Taipei: Huayu chubanshe. Available online through Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA). Accessed July 7, 2025. <https://cbeta-online.dila.edu.tw/zh/>.
- T Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds. 1924–1934. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (The Taisho new edition of the Buddhist canon). Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankokai. Available online through CBETA.

²⁴ Monastics in the Ming and Qing periods typically received dharma transmission from a single master. Consequently, the dataset often records only one master per monastic, due to its reliance on Hasebe's (2008) genealogical list, which documents solely dharma transmission and omits other connections between monastics. Bingenheimer (2021, 242) acknowledged the problem, stating that his team sought to address it by incorporating connections from the Xinxu gaosengzhuan. In a cursory review, I identified several cases where only the dharma transmission master's details from a biography in the Xinxu gaosengzhuan were incorporated into the dataset. This preliminary observation prompts questions about the extent of the Xinxu gaosengzhuan data's inclusion in the "Historical Social Network of Chinese Buddhism" dataset and, consequently, its potential for further addressing the lineage data bias. An even richer source of biographical data on Ming and Qing monks lies in the recorded sayings (yulu 語錄) of Chan masters, which frequently encompass their biographies, letters, inscriptions, and other writings.

²⁵ The database, maintained by the Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts, is accessible at <https://authority.dila.edu.tw/person/>.

- X Kawamura, Kōshō 河村照孝, Nishi Yoshio 西義雄, and Tamaki Kōshirō 玉城康四郎, eds. 1975–1989. *Shinsan Dainihon zokuzōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經 (Supplement to the Japanese edition of the Buddhist canon). Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai. Available online through CBETA.
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²⁶ The ZFSH is progressively being incorporated into CBETA, with each line enumerated to enable more precise citations. However, as of 2025, not all gazetteers from the ZFSH are included, so the Digital Archive of Chinese Buddhist Temple Gazetteers remains the primary reference.

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