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Toward a Spatial History of Chan

Lineages, Networks, and the Lamp Records

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Abstract

This paper lays a foundation for spatial religious histories of Chan Buddhism in the Northern and Southern Song dynasties (960–1279). The *Lamp Records* (*denglu* 燈錄) texts are genealogically organized hagiographic records of members of the Chan lineages. Scholarly consensus holds that these records are primarily religious texts and of questionable historicity, but with a critical methodology it is possible to discover patterns in these documents which can be amplified and visualized using digital techniques. This paper blends GIS geospatial analysis and traditional close reading of sectarian Buddhist sources and nonsectarian historical sources (such as “gazetteers” 地方誌). The author assembled a GIS dataset to study the Chan abbots named in the Song-era *Lamp Records* texts, including each abbot’s lineage identity, temple location, and the number of full-fledged disciples recorded in a *Lamp Records* text. The results suggest that Chan lineages during the Northern Song as presented in the *Lamp Records* correspond to regional networks and were not necessarily doctrinal opponents. This paper concludes with a series of critiques regarding the power and limits of computational methods like GIS. The author proposes that the task of the digital humanist is to go beyond building infrastructure and to engage in critical interpretation.

Keywords

Chan Buddhism – distant reading – Song Dynasty

禪宗空間歷史初探：宋燈錄記載之宗派

摘要

本文奠立了北、南宋時期(960–1279)禪宗空間歷史研究的基礎。作者援引由宋代禪林所撰《燈錄》以搜集北宋每位禪師的宗派、主持寺地名、弟子數量等信息,並運用GIS系統呈現上述資料。《燈錄》系統地記載了禪宗的發展譜系。但是,學界普遍認為《燈錄》的記載頗具宗教導向,在史實性方面尚待考證。本文將GIS空間分析技術(所謂遙距閱讀)與對宗派佛教文獻及非宗教歷史文獻(諸如地方誌)的近距閱讀相結合。分析結果顯示,根據《燈錄》的記載,北宋禪林宗派的劃分是基于地區網絡而不是教義競爭。論文還討論了GIS與宗教歷史研究方法論。

關鍵詞

禪宗, 宋代, 遙距閱讀

Introduction

Geography and spatial history can be crucial tools for solving deep riddles about the historical patterns of Chan Buddhism. An ongoing concern in the field of Chan studies revolves around the use of hagiography as source material for history. As students of religion, we deal with texts that ostensibly possess religious significance but not necessarily reliable historical data. This essay lays out one possible method for identifying and then studying the patterns of lineages embedded in the religious texts known as the *Lamp Records* (*denglu* 燈錄).

The study of Chan Buddhism has often focused on the distinctive teachings of each lineage depicted in the genealogical histories contained in the *Lamp Records*. This framework continues to provide a hermeneutical structure for recent works by leading scholars (Yang 2006; Tsuchiya 2008).¹ The *Lamp Records* of the Northern Song (960–1127) and Southern Song (1127–1279) dynasties are a source for many beloved anecdotes about Chan masters and their dialogic encounters with disciples. Numerous scholars employing sophisticated

1 Tsuchiya Taisuke (2008), for example, has made major contributions to our understanding of the development of Linji Chan in the Northern Song dynasty, including an analysis of contests between sub-branches.

historiography, many influenced by Hu Shih's pioneering work with materials recovered from Dunhuang (Faure 1993:98), have shown that the lineages portrayed in the Song-era *Lamp Records* do not reflect the historical actualities of Tang dynasty Buddhism.

While Hu was a positivist historian, later scholars have emphasized the significance of the *Lamp Records* and other Chan documents as sources for studying the religious practices of their compilers. Evaluating the historical utility of Chan histories, John McRae (2003:xix–xx, 9–11) made the pithy observation, “It’s not true, therefore it’s more important.” This quip recapitulates an earlier exhortation by T. Griffith Foulk (1987:5), who urged scholars to continue researching Chan texts, including the *Lamp Records*, but to frame our knowledge in the contexts of the religious and political needs of the Song imperial era when these texts were produced.

Two book-length studies of Chan in the Northern Song dynasty made significant contributions to the reassessment of Buddhism in the Song. Albert Welter (2006) and Morten Schlütter (2008) focus on the rise to power of the Linji 臨濟 lineage during the early Northern Song and the reemergence of the Caodong 曹洞 lineage during the late Northern Song. In between these two periods, the most preeminent lineage was not the Linji or Caodong, but rather a seldom-discussed lineage, the Yunmen 雲門.

The monks of the Yunmen lineage seem to have been the most highly regarded members of the Buddhist monastic community during the decades of the mid-Northern Song, roughly the period from the start of Renzong’s personal rule in 1033 to the end of the Qinsheng Regency in 1101. Though the lineage is named for the famous master Yunmen Wenyan 雲門文偃 (862–949), this does not tell us much about the later lineage. The documents associated with the Yunmen lineage are surprisingly well preserved, likely because many of these works came to be regarded by other lineages as part of Chan orthodoxy.

New directions for research on Chan in this period have been suggested by Benjamin Brose (2015). His work charts regional variations of Chan groups, from the disintegration of Tang society beginning in 881 up to the consolidation of the Song imperium, effectively completed in 979. The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907–960) was a time of general upheaval, disunity, and movement also marked by periodic flourishing of local Buddhisms. Thinking of Chan groups as actors within broader social networks, Brose (2015:131) remarked that “the demise of Fayuan Chan might best be characterized as the demise of a network of affiliation, not necessarily the downfall of a particular style of teaching or practice.” The resultant narrative avoids a strong cause-and-effect relationship between a group’s doctrines and its institutional

success. Brose's work on Chan lineages underscores the importance of place for historical groups.

Whereas Brose's research focused on a period of disunity and regional kingdoms, the Northern Song dynasty was a period of unity under a single imperium. What evidence is there for Chan groups affiliated with place-based or regional networks during the Northern Song? A spatial analysis of the Song-era Chan lineages described in the *Lamp Records* may reveal patterns embedded in these texts. If these Chan lineages were geographically distinct groups, they can be compared with other regional religious systems in other times and places (Wu, Tong, and Ryavec 2013). In the immediate context of a history of the rise and decline of the Yunmen lineage during the Northern Song dynasty, an understanding of the lineages as place-based regional networks that change over time may offer us new insights into the history of Chan lineages. An in-depth analysis of the GIS data gleaned from the *Lamp Records* together with corroborative primary sources will appear elsewhere. This essay focuses on the theoretical underpinnings and implications of GIS-based research on a historical religion.

Distant Reading

Given the large quantities of textual information that needed to be correlated, a geographic information system (GIS) was convenient for managing and analyzing the patterns of patronage embedded in the *Lamp Records*. Some are enthusiastic and others skeptical about GIS's potential for use in the humanities. GIS allows us to map religious texts in ways that were previously impossible, or so labor-intensive to be impractical. With its ability to cleanly represent large amounts of data, GIS opens up whole new avenues of investigation. Here, I present the combination of GIS and the mapping of texts as a form of reading situated somewhere between close and distant reading, and reliant upon both. One of my ongoing projects serves as an example of a GIS application and can illustrate the utility of digital and spatial humanities in the study of premodern Chinese religious texts.

GIS offers opportunities for employing maps to locate phenomena in time and space (Gregory 2010). A geographic information system is a digital system that allows a researcher to map, model, query, and analyze data according to location. Increasingly, any kind of data can be included, including texts, images, or events, so long as some specific location can be tied to these phenomena. For example, if a text indicates that an event happened at a specific location, e.g., a Buddhist monk was named the abbot of a particular temple, then that

can be recorded and stored in such a way that GIS tools can be used to project this event onto a map.

One way GIS is different from paper maps is that GIS tools are dynamic and easily manipulated. A researcher can quickly project layer upon layer of geographic information onto a single map. For example, a map-layer of Ming dynasty postal stations can be projected together with a map-layer of *jinshi* 進士 candidates of the Ming.² The resulting map suggests there could be a correlation between good postal service and academic achievement. Though more work would be needed to draw any conclusions, this example suggests the power of GIS as a tool for experimentation, collaboration, and visual analysis.

Another feature of GIS is the ease with which it represents change over time. My project enables the visualization of the placement of Chan abbots and uses color to symbolize lineage identity, and by viewing a series of maps in succession makes visible the movement of those lineages from one generation to the next. Though it does not show the movement of individuals over a lifetime, these maps make legible the sense of time embedded in the texts of the genealogical *Lamp Records*. My GIS research revealed patterns in the *Lamp Records* and may be foundational for developing a spatial history of Chan lineages during the Northern Song.

While developing the *Lamp Records* GIS project, I began to conceptualize mapping as a form of reading. Such reading, which is computer assisted and deals with a large quantity of text, may be referred to as “distant reading.” This term was proposed by Franco Moretti (2000) as a counterpart (or perhaps as an antidote) to “close reading,” the sine qua non of New Criticism and formalism. Moretti’s then purpose, which has been subject to numerous critiques and revisions (Ascari 2014; Trumpener 2009; Kontje 2014), was to reinvigorate the study of world literature and argue against the “narrow” pursuits of area studies and national literatures. One of the reasons Moretti has been “good to think with” is because Moretti, not unlike many scholars of Chinese religions, is interested in diversifying his sources and moving beyond a received canon. Likewise, a scholar of Chinese religions may seek to better represent the heterogeneous field of religious actors and texts.

The idea of distant reading has since developed a life of its own, divorced from Moretti’s initial project. Numerous scholars writing with more somber styles have employed the term to discuss the role of digital tools in the analysis of larger quantities of text. Some of these scholars no longer see distant and close reading as antagonists but as complementary methods. Whereas a single

2 These layers are readily available at the Harvard ChinaMap website, <http://worldmap.harvard.edu/chinamap/>.

example from a text may answer certain kinds of questions (close reading), an analysis of all the examples from a text will answer another set of questions (a distant reading). Seeking answers to “close questions” and to “distant questions” will lead to different knowledge, and this suggests that knowledge is a function of distance.³ Matt Erlin (Erlin and Tatlock 2014) has suggested this difference is one of scale rather than of distance. He asserted that a remaining challenge is to relate macro- and micro-analyses. It is for this reason that I prefer the metaphor of distance for contemplating that relationship.

For considering the connection between distant reading and maps, I have found another, less controversial essay by Moretti to be useful. When considering a map of a literary world, it is “not that the map is itself an explanation,” Moretti (2005:53–56) argues; nonetheless, if one projects the places from a text onto a map, then one “may bring some hidden patterns to the surface.” These patterns below the surface are revealed by the work of arranging a text’s information onto a map.⁴ Moretti continues to wonder at these newfound patterns hidden in texts, because “something has made the pattern the way it is. But what?” Distant readings are useful for seeing patterns, but to find meaningful explanations of these patterns, we cannot look at a subject from only this distance.

The GIS analysis of religious texts is made meaningful by interpretation. Such a position affirms that “information is not knowledge.”⁵ This is why I have found it useful to conceive of my GIS research as a form of reading and not as a strictly computational exercise. Employing GIS to do a distant reading shifts the focus of research to the interpretation of religious phenomena in Chinese history. Following the remarks of Gregory and Geddes (2014:ix), this emphasis on GIS as an integrated component within an interpretative framework is in contrast with the still widespread impression of GIS as “a quantitative technology that was to be used in a social scientific manner (to its supporters) or a positivist way (to its antagonists).”

3 Viewing an object at different distances yields distinct perspectives, and it is by flipping between these perspectives that some previously unseen depth can be perceived. I imagine this like the late nineteenth-century stereograph cards that take advantage of the manner in which natural vision creates depth perception. Each eye is presented a slightly different perspective on a single scene, and the result is a sense of depth.

4 Moretti insists on the word “diagram” in lieu of the word “map” in order to avoid a certain confusion. Moretti asserts that interpretation (and not navigation as on a highway) is the key to reading geometric or geographic visualizations. This point is on the mark, but the word “diagram” is clumsy while “map” is useful.

5 Attributed to the Harvard librarian Robert Darnton, as quoted in Erlin and Tatlock 2014:10.

The Individual Scholar as Digital Humanist and Critic

Successful GIS projects, like those at Harvard and Dharma Drum Buddhist College, have shown that with large facilities, funding, and an interdisciplinary team of computer scientists and sinologists, GIS can open new avenues for research.⁶ These large projects are creating the infrastructure needed for individuals to do research. Databases like the Dharma Drum Authority Database can be used like other reference works and are useful for all researchers doing traditional scholarship. By contrast, my relatively modest *Lamp Records* GIS project was completed by an individual with limited time and resources. A finite digital resource was created, whose referential value is limited to scholars interested in the late Northern Song and Chan lineages. Modest projects like mine, however, may be a model for broader participation in digital humanities, in which individuals or small teams set out to ask and answer specific questions that could not be answered otherwise.

Behind my *Lamp Records* GIS project was a question. What happened to the Yunmen lineage? Recent English-language scholarship has acknowledged the prominence of Yunmen during the Northern Song as well as its sudden disappearance (Schlütter, 2008:50–53).⁷ Earlier, Huang Ch'i-chiang (1997) documented the growth of the Yunmen lineage in northern China during the Northern Song, bearing out similar observations made by Kagamishima (1961) and Abe (1963:183–247). There are few scholarly narratives about the decline of the Yunmen lineage. To my knowledge, works that discuss the decline of Yunmen imply that it had become doctrinally inferior or performed merely ritualized Chan encounter dialogues (Tsuchiya 2008). In other words, the decline of the lineage was the result of spiritual laxity. This is a natural counterpoint to the

6 The Harvard WorldMap website (<http://worldmap.harvard.edu>) is an umbrella for several large projects, including ChinaMap (<http://worldmap.harvard.edu/chinamap/>), overseen by Lex Berman. The China Biographical Database Project (CBDB) at Harvard was developed by Peter Bol. Dharma Drum's Authority Database includes a "place" search that includes historical temple locations (<http://authority.ddbc.edu.tw/place/>).

7 Given the arc of this work, the Yunmen lineage serves as a foil to the revival of the Caodong lineage. Schlütter's hypotheses correctly anticipated several conclusions I been able to draw from my *Lamp Records* GIS project. For example, he notes the impact of the Jin invasion on "elite monastic Buddhism" and the expansion of local patronage during the Southern Song. His argument that the kind of factional rivalry between Chan lineages seen in Southern Song texts did not yet exist in the Northern Song (Schlütter 2008:24–25) can likewise be corroborated. The through-line in Schlütter's analysis is the appeal to literati of the newly revived Caodong teachings (105). Schlütter did not speculate on the significance or meaning of lineages during the Northern Song.

idea that the rise of any given school was the sign of an especially powerful religious teaching arriving at a propitious moment.

By assuming that the decline of a lineage is tied to its declining spiritual power, historical narratives portray material or institutional success as the outward signs of decadence and degeneracy. Such assumptions bear a suspicious resemblance to the self-image drafted by the Chan sects to establish their claims to orthodoxy. These patterns often work together with teleological biases in the telling of history. If we can refrain from regarding the events of the Southern Song, especially the rise of Dahui and *gong'an* Chan, as somehow inevitable, then the history of the Northern Song may present itself in a very different manner. To borrow a phrase from John McRae (2003:103), the institutional and material success of the Yunmen lineage “was made possible by—and in fact represents proof of—its vitality as a spiritual discipline.”

The tools of GIS provide a way to see where Yunmen temples proliferated, where they died out, and when. This in and of itself seems to defer the question, Why did Yunmen proliferate and die at these particular sites and times? Nonetheless, the vantage offered by visualizing the spatial history of the lineage, making patterns of change as well as continuity visible at a glance, proved to be integral for my conceiving of a new history for the Yunmen lineage in the Northern Song. To return to the metaphoric language of “distant” and “close” reading, the kind of knowledge I sought—this sweeping historical question begs for an answer with a relatively wide scope—could not have been conceived by examining the abundance of source materials only through the kinds of close reading traditionally done with Chan texts. GIS facilitated my examination of numerous sources in a careful manner that also allowed me to keep within my sights the wealth of materials needed to discover the intergenerational patterns of the Yunmen lineage.

The *Lamp Records* and GIS

The five *Lamp Records* are canonical Chan texts produced during the Song dynasties. The *Lamp Records* became one of the primary sources for the family tree of the Chan lineages. According to the *Lamp Records*, the master-disciple relationship that perpetuates the lineage consists of passing the lamp of wisdom from one generation to the next. Any individual in a Chan lineage is the inheritor of an unbroken, direct, personal series of links to the Buddha Śākyamuni, which can be traced back further to the ahistorical buddhas of past worlds. The *Lamp Records* texts perpetuate this genealogy by organizing the lives of Chan saints according to lineages on the family tree, from generations

past to present. The genealogical infrastructure is illustrated in an early extant *Jianzhong jingguo Xudenglu mulu* 建中靖國續燈錄目錄 (Table of Contents) printed in 1103, together with the third of the five *Lamp Records* texts (Shiina 1993:223–226, 555). This “Table of Contents” lists students (who became abbots in their own right) clustered under their authorizing teacher. The teacher who became the authorizing link for his disciples can also be found earlier in the “Table of Contents,” listed as a disciple under his own teacher. Extrapolated from these details are the well-known charts of the Chan lineages, resembling a family tree (Nishitani and Yanagida 1974).

Each *Lamp Records* text consists of thousands of entries for individual monks belonging to one lineage or another. A typical entry from the *Lamp Records* begins with a header and may offer a bare-bones biographic sketch (which may include some of the following details: family name, place of birth, evidence of youthful precocity, ordination, first encounter with a teacher, and first appointment as abbot). The main content of a record is an enumeration of one or more sermons and “encounter dialogues,” or exemplary moments from one’s teaching career (Yanagida 1983:192).⁸ A minority of entries detail a consummate death.⁹ In other words, each entry constitutes a hagiography, telling the life of a saint and including only those details that participate in the perpetuation of the lineage of awakened masters. Like hagiographies from other religious traditions, these texts are an admixture of description and prescription, telling a version of history that was to be used as a model for individual behavior and for institutions in the present and future.

Much of previous scholarship has focused on closely reading the sermons and dialogues in the *Lamp Records*, which by all accounts is the central content that animates the texts. By contrast, for the *Lamp Records* GIS project, I focused on the headers that introduce each saint. These introductory headers provide each abbot’s dharma name, the name of the temple or mountain where the abbot served, and the city or prefecture where that temple was located. For example, Dahui Zonggao is referred to as “Dahui of Jingshan in Lin’an” 臨安府徑山大慧 in the *Jitai Pudenglu* 嘉泰普燈錄 (x.79.1559). The form of the headers is fairly standard, and every entry across the five *Lamp Records* texts has a header like this. This uniformity makes the set of *Lamp Records* an excellent

8 “Encounter dialogue” renders Yanagida Seizan’s neologism 機緣問答 *kien mondō*, used to describe the teacher and student dialogic exchanges found in many Chan texts. Yanagida (1985) further developed the history of dialogue across Chan texts.

9 The kinds of ideal deaths recorded include composing a poem prior to death, dying while sitting upright in meditation posture, predicting one’s impending death, and mummification or preservation of the body after death.

candidate for GIS analysis. Using these headers, it is possible to visualize the distribution of Chan lineages across time and space.

The Yunmen lineage has been one of the least studied among the traditional “five houses of Chan.” By contrast, the Linji lineage and the role of court patrons like Yang Yi 楊億 (974–1020) during the early Northern Song are well known (Abe Chōichi 1963, Ishii Shūdō 1987, Welter 2006). It would be an error to think that the Linji lineage represented Chan orthodoxy ever since this early period. Such a conclusion seems to take the second *Lamp Record*, the *Tian-sheng Guangdenglu* 天聖廣燈錄 (x.78.1553) issued in 1036, as the final word during the Northern Song (Welter 2006:186–207; Ahn 2007:216–220).

To build an understanding of the Yunmen lineage in the decades after 1036, I focused on the third *Lamp Record*, the *Jianzhong Jingguo Xudenglu* 建中靖國續燈錄 (x.78.1556; hereafter XDL) submitted to the throne in 1101 by a prominent Chan master of the Yunmen lineage. I supplemented XDL with the two *Lamp Records* of the Southern Song, the *Liandeng Huiyao* 聯燈會要 (x.79.1557) and the *Jiatai Pudenglu*. Both of those later *Lamp Records* were compiled by Linji monks. I compared the information from these Song-era *Lamp Records* with the comprehensive *Xu Chuandenglu* 續傳燈錄 (T.51.2077) of the late fourteenth century. All of these later materials compiled by monks outside the Yunmen lineage counterbalanced some biases of XDL that may have favored the compiler’s own lineage over others. These sources also documented Chan lineages after 1101, the date XDL reached its final form. The *Xu Chuandenglu*, a relatively late text that introduced variant readings and is thus not frequently cited by philologists, was especially useful for this project. The compilers of the *Xu Chuandenglu* consulted now-lost local records and gazetteers to fill out the lineages with persons missing from earlier texts. This work by the compilers of the *Xu Chuandenglu* yielded a few additional persons not included in the original five *Lamp Records* and thereby corroborated overall trends.

The information in the *Lamp Records* GIS database is derived from the CBETA version of the *Lamp Records*. In addition to the conveniences of working with digital text, CBETA is an updated and corrected version of the Taishō canon edition. I manually prepared the text for GIS using Microsoft Excel and Google’s free cloud-based spreadsheet and database software (see Appendix). GIS software rendered the Chan genealogy of the *Lamp Records* as a series of time-maps. I used ArcGIS, which was available at my institution, and otherwise would have used QGIS.

The results can be projected on maps to represent the geographic distribution of abbots (see Maps 1–4). I structured my results so I could select a single generation of one lineage from the Chan family tree or any combination of generations and lineages. This permits me to visualize different combinations

of generations (as a measure of time) and lineages in order to answer different questions. For example, when I select a generation of Yunmen abbots, each teacher from that generation in the *Lamp Records* shows up as a dot on a map.

A comparison between the sangha and the university can help explain who is included and who excluded from the dataset and thus also from the maps. University teachers and their graduate students belong to lineages (Harrison 2003). If we were to study the lineages of modern Buddhist studies, for example, and chose to focus on teachers, we could examine how many students they trained and where those graduates went on to find employment as teachers. This is similar to the maps based on the *Lamp Records*.

On my maps, each master is represented by a single circle, with three variables: location, size, and lineage. The location is based on the temple associated with a Chan Master in the entry header of the *Lamp Records*. For example, Yuantong Ju'na was the abbot of Yuantong temple on Mount Lu, and Huanglong Huinan was the abbot of the large temple on Mount Huanglong. This location shows at least one place where a master taught. The maps would seem to suggest this is where each master trained all his students, though this is not always the case as some masters moved around frequently, including a few famous examples such as Yuanwu Keqin. This is not unlike some professors today who move between universities, training some graduate students at one institution early on and others elsewhere later. In some other cases, like that of the peripatetic Huanglong Huinan, his successive appointments were all within the region of the Jiangxi and Hunan area. In my extended qualitative analysis, I noted these irregularities and exercised caution when interpreting the maps. In general, however, the locations on the maps did turn out to be where a master trained disciples. Overall, these peculiarities suggest that the maps are more useful for the purposes of regional analysis than for more fine-grained analysis. My latitude and longitude data for historic sites is based on the Dharma Drum Authority Database, which in turn relies on a combination of field measurements, satellite imagery, information in gazetteers, and archaeological research.¹⁰

10 The geographic coordinates of historical temples and cities are gleaned first from the Authority Database hosted by Dharma Drum Buddhist College. I have, when possible, checked the location against accounts in historical gazetteers, as well as checked for temple structures using the satellite view of Google Maps. I have found remarkably few inaccuracies in the Authority Database. There are many cases, however, when the exact location of a historical temple is unknown, and in such cases I have used the geographic coordinates of the city-administration in which the temple is located. For the purposes of my regional analyses, these slight inaccuracies are insignificant. Anyone consulting the data for other purposes should be aware of these deficiencies.

On the maps, the size of each circle (its radius) represents how many disciples are listed in the *Lamp Records*.¹¹ The key on the maps gives an example of a teacher with 1, 20, and 75 disciples. This is the number of disciples who are listed under that teacher in the lineage; however, the students who are recorded in the *Lamp Records* are only those who themselves became abbots and could thereby train future students and perpetuate the lineage. The size of each point thus illustrates the influence of that teacher over the next generation of teachers. Using this number as a measure of “influence” is imperfect, to be sure, but it does tell us something about Song dynasty conceptions of lineage. Recent scholarship has shown, for example, that a student was not considered a full member of a lineage until he had become an abbot (Schlütter 2008:65). Whatever it meant for one abbot to have many students who later become abbots themselves—whether a reflection of excellent networking skills or a sign of superior religious teachings—is a matter of interpretation and open to debate. On the other hand, monks who produced no such disciples, including the profoundly influential writer Qisong 契嵩 (1007–1072), are not included on the map. These traits of my maps reflect the *Lamp Records* texts themselves. Using GIS to visualize these traits makes it possible to read the texts as they are, a kind of surface reading (Boes 2014). This process of preparing the text for visualization need not foreclose further critique and interpretation.

This essay focuses on the rise and fall of the Yunmen lineage. The maps include only lineages extant at the end of the Northern Song. Excluded are the Fayan and Guiyang lineages that each came to an end before the mid-Northern Song. I represented lineage by color: yellow for Yunmen, blue for Caodong blue, and red for Linji. This use of colors makes more discernible any geographic patterns of the lineages as detailed in the *Lamp Records*. Because Linji later split into sub-branches, I used shades of red to distinguish the two best-known sub-branches: orange for Huanglong and rose for Yangqi. In other words, all red, orange, and rose dots represent Linji, but only some represent Huanglong Linji or Yangqi Linji.¹²

By looking at where the abbots of each generation had many students, we can see the locations of large training centers at which future leaders of the lineage were educated. And, by viewing this information from generation to

11 As a result of rendering the number of disciples as the radius of the circle, if one compares two points by area then the difference in the number of disciples is squared.

12 Unfortunately, color versions of the maps could not be included in the print version of this special issue. The maps are reproduced in color in the electronic version available online at <http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/22143955>.

generation, we see the important centers of each lineage move around the landscape.

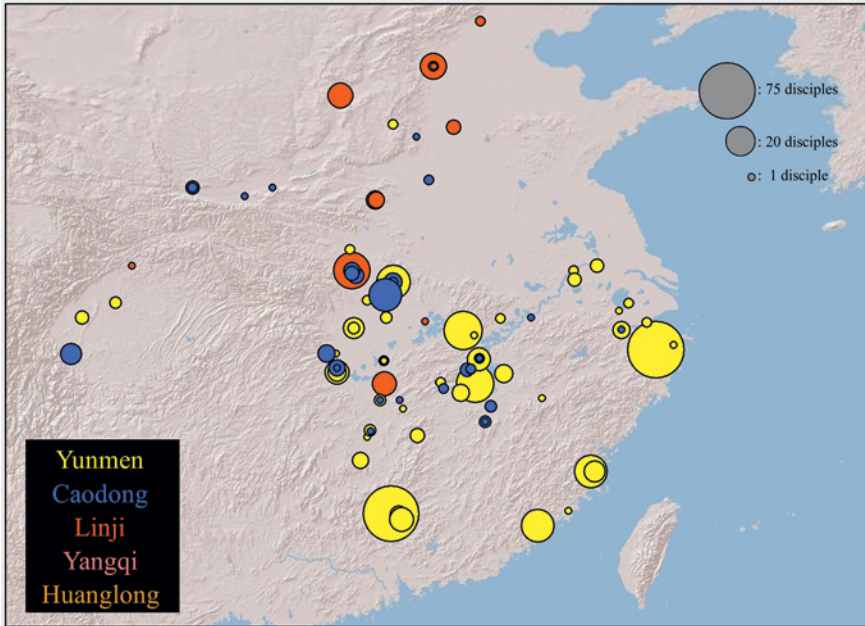
The Chan genealogy has been the subject of endless tables, charts, and graphs. This series of maps condenses this object of study into a legible form. But the GIS data is not merely the organizing of dozens of printed pages of tables, like those laboriously compiled by Suzuki Tetsuo 鈴木哲雄 (1986).¹³ The GIS data can be selectively viewed, and parts compared with one another. GIS gives us a new way to read those unwieldy tables, a new means by which to imagine the *Lamp Records*. The following four maps show a total of 482 discrete circles with over 3,329 people represented by the size of those circles. In other words, there are 482 teachers and 3,329 disciples shown on the maps. These break down as follows: 160 Yunmen lineage teachers with 1,339 students who were given abbotships; 247 Linji lineage teachers with 1,567 students who were given abbotships; 75 Caodong lineage teachers with 423 students who were given abbotships.

These four maps support a new periodization of Chan in the Northern Song. The first three maps show these lineages before, during, and after the personal reign of Emperor Renzong (1034–1063), and the fourth map shows the lineages after the calamitous Jin invasions of 1127, or the transition from the Northern Song to the Southern Song. When viewed as a sequence, these maps make visible the passage of time embedded in the genealogy. Each lineage's growth and demise comes to the surface.

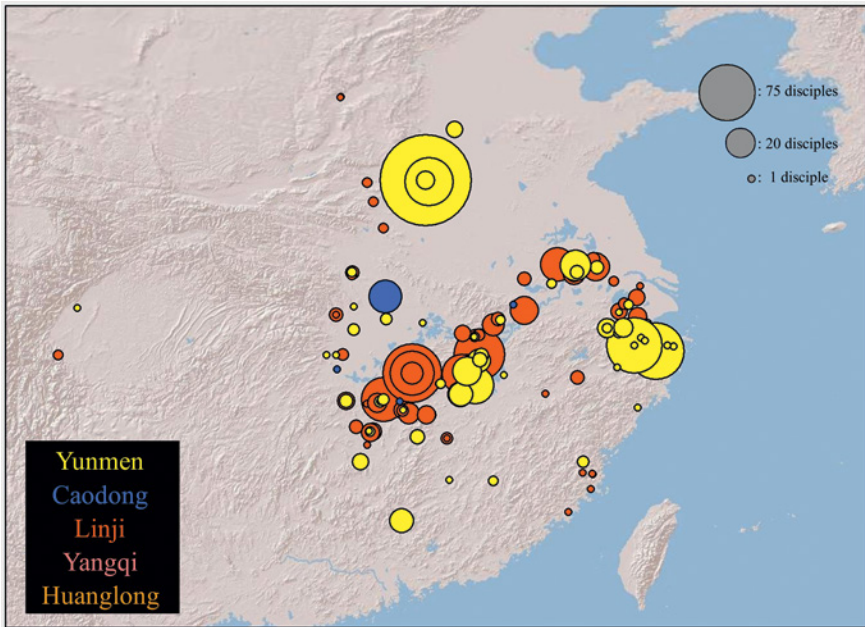
When the maps are read in this chronological manner, the Chan lineages appear to have functioned as regional groups, and perhaps as regional religious systems (Wu, Tong, and Ryavec 2013). It seems clear that the various Chan lineages were recorded as administering temples in distinct regions across the imperial domain during these periods of the Northern Song. For example, in Map 1 the Yunmen lineage is in the south; in Map 2, it is mostly in the south, but has obviously important temples in northern areas; in Map 3, it is entirely in the north; and in Map 4 it has all but disappeared.

To formulate a general hypothesis to be tested further, it seems that once the large temples in a region were given to a certain lineage, there was some kind of inertia by which members of that lineage (broadly conceived) would continue to administer the temples in that region unless acted on by some outside force, such as patronage or war. The initial evidence to suggest this hypothesis is furnished by the patterns embedded in the *Lamp Records* and made visible

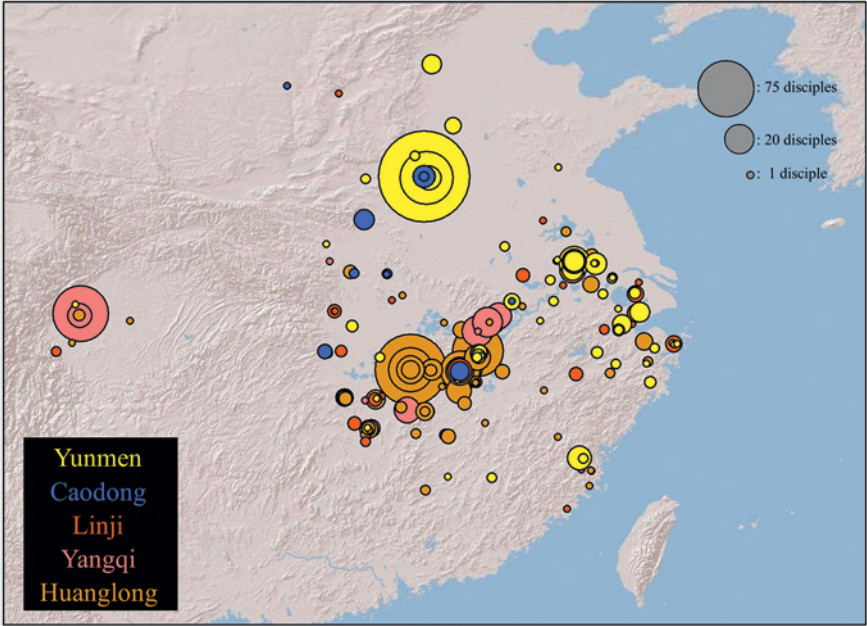
13 Between 1973 and 1986, Suzuki Tetsuo published a series of at least eight papers composed of tables, charts, and maps describing the cities and prefectures of Chan abbots from the Tang and Song. A citation to one of the eight papers is included in the bibliography.



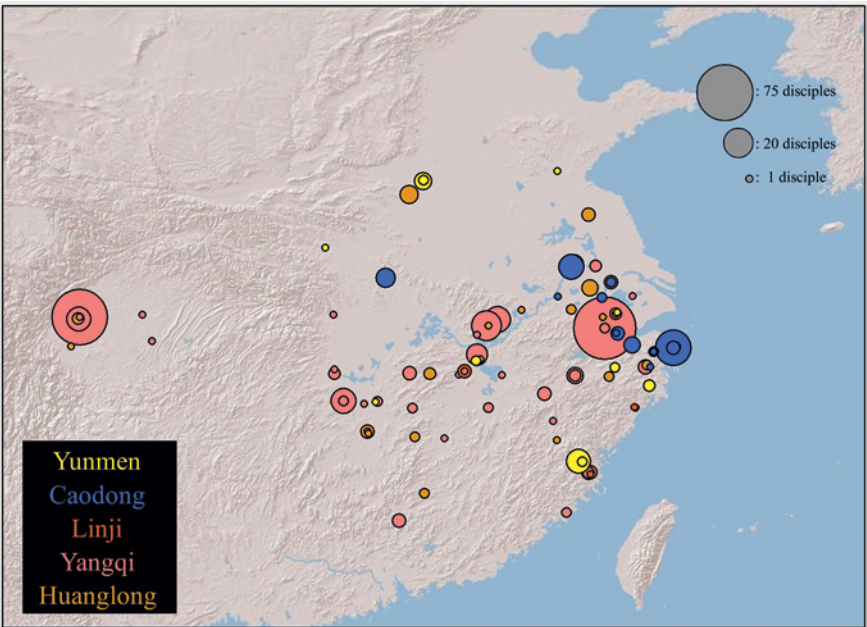
MAP 1 Northern Song Chan lineages before the personal reign of Emperor Renzong.



MAP 2 Chan lineages roughly during the personal reign of Emperor Renzong (1034–1063).



MAP 3 Northern Song Chan lineages after the reign of Emperor Renzong.



MAP 4 Early Southern Song Chan lineages after the Jingkang Calamity of 1127.

by GIS analysis. However, it would be more significant if there were evidence of this regional division of Chan lineages in nonsectarian writings contemporary to the Song.

Such corroborating evidence indeed can be found in funerary inscriptions, literati prose such as *biji* 筆記 (miscellaneous notes), and prefaces to Chan texts. For example, the following quotation from a lengthy funerary inscription, *Qing Chanshi taming* 慶禪師塔銘 (A Pagoda Inscription for Chan master [Zhao]qing), dated 1089 by Qin Guan 秦觀 (1049–1100), reflects the regional division of Chan lineages.

As for Chan masters since the Tang, only those of Yunmen and Linji clans have proliferated through the world. At this point, the descendants of Yunmen have moved to reside in the large temples overlooking the Huai and Zhe rivers. As for the descendants of Linji, north of the Yangzi there is only this one person, [the Master Zhaoqing 昭慶]. That is why some of the followers of Yunmen did not take him to be what he was [i.e., a Chan master of Linji].¹⁴

自唐以來，禪家盛行於世者，惟雲門、臨濟兩宗。是時雲門苗裔分據大剎，相望於淮浙之上。臨濟之後，自江以北，惟師一人。故雲門之徒，或不以師為然。

QIN 1994:1081–1086

Observations by contemporary Song-era writers like the above corroborate the historicity of the regional nature of Chan lineages in this period. This description by Qin hews closely to the pattern observable on the GIS-produced maps. Taken together, the distant readings of the *Lamp Records* and the more traditional readings of contemporary texts illustrate that such patterns were not merely the impressions of an individual writer or the mythopoeic aspirations of a compiler of *Lamp Records*. The geography embedded in the *Lamp Records* reflected something that was known to the world: Chan lineages in the mid- to late-Northern Song were regional groups. Distant reading—corroborated by independent texts—reveals nuanced patterns embedded in the *Lamp Records*.

When viewed in sequence, the maps display a sudden movement during the reign of the Renzong emperor, as Yunmen abbots departed Jiangxi and Hunan and settled in the capital at Kaifeng. This observation can guide a reader of the *Lamp Records* and other texts to search for corroborating evidence as well as

14 This and other examples are discussed at length in a forthcoming essay.

other materials that suggest certain interpretations of this event. On the point of the Renzong emperor's patronage and the development of Chan monasticism in Kaifeng, there is copious evidence from many texts (including imperial official records, miscellaneous literati records, and later Song and Yuan Buddhist histories) that it was the forces of patronage controlled by literati and the imperial household that shaped the migration of the Yunmen Chan lineage (Wang 2010).

To step back from those texts, it seems that once the Yunmen lineage was seated in the capital, it remained there for a number of generations. By contrast, only a few Linji monks were invited to hold abbots' seats in the capital, and from those masters who came, it seems, very few Linji students were successfully trained. The main center of Linji lineage activity during this period was in Jiangxi—the former center of the Yunmen lineage that was “converted” to Linji (Nishiguchi 1990; Ahn 2009).¹⁵ The close reading of sources, including the *Lamp Records* themselves, reveals many details about how patronage worked. The GIS analysis of Chan lineages makes plain the extent to which patronage shaped the physical location of Chan lineages. The GIS analysis can transform a broad and nonspecific statement like Qin Guan's above into a detailed and fine-grained history. In this case, the distant and close readings of a single text can inform one another.

The *Lamp Records* GIS project was created with the intention of seeking clues regarding the demise of the Yunmen lineage. Despite a position of privilege at court in Kaifeng and in Jiangnan, the Yunmen lineage did not survive in the Southern Song. My hypothesis was that the terrible Jingkang Calamity and subsequent Jin invasion into Song territory had a disproportionate impact upon any Chan groups active in those regions, just like other members in the place-based network (Bossler 1998; Mostern 2011). The *Lamp Records* GIS project shows that the Chan group centered in that region was none other than the Yunmen lineage.

For textual evidence, I found that *difangzhi* 地方誌 (“local gazetteers”) from those impacted regions record dozens of temples destroyed by Jin troops. By contrast, few temples in the areas of Linji activity—around Jiangxi and Hunan—were razed by Jin troops, according to those local gazetteers. In other words, temple infrastructure was destroyed in some geographic regions and

15 I tentatively read this “conversion” as accounting for how the figure of Yunmen Wenyan became part of the cultural capital of Linji and was divorced from the genealogical heirs to the Yunmen lineage. Huanglong Huinan was from the Mount Lu area and steeped in the local Yunmen-dominated lore.

not others. Local patrons and patronage networks likewise may have been disrupted in some regions more than others—and in no area more so than Kaifeng.

The patterns revealed by the *Lamp Records* GIS analysis together with the information gleaned from gazetteers supports the conclusion that the Song-Jin war of the 1120s and 1130s was an immediate and pressing cause of the decline of the Yunmen lineage. This cause seems more critical than ostensibly flimsy or unappealing teachings and doctrines. A distant reading of the *Lamp Records* provides the context for the interpretation of information dispersed across gazetteers. The gazetteers, in turn, provide an explanation for the phenomenon gleaned from the maps.

In each of the above cases, interpretation did not stop with GIS analysis. A hermeneutic circle moving between distant and close reading was necessary for interpretation. The use of GIS begins with, and is not limited to, distant readings. Meaning is made by moving between close and distant readings. By using this method, my research has contributed a more fine-grained periodization of Chinese Buddhism in the Song dynasties and introduced new aspects in the spatial history of Chan. The impacts of the transition from the Northern Song to the Southern Song were unevenly distributed across space. Changes in patterns of patronage likewise beg for further study. GIS enables us to see when and where geographies might have mattered for answering specific questions (Wu, Tong, and Ryavec 2013:186–187). In so far as geography is inherently political and territorial, it should not come as a surprise that some of the questions best suited for GIS research involve patronage and territory.

Conclusion

The *Lamp Records* GIS project illustrates the potential for individual scholars to successfully use GIS for research. By framing a history of the Chan lineages as regional groups, my research undermines some assumptions about the mechanism behind the rise and fall of lineages. Though scholars have written about the politics of how lineages rise to power, few have considered how a lineage declines. The decline of a lineage is often portrayed as a decline of spiritual vitality. I take issue with the assumption that a loss of religious efficacy is necessarily the driving factor in the decline of particular religious groups, and have endeavored to show that the demise of Yunmen was the result of the loss of a place-based patronage network and not a process of spiritual atrophy. In all, a spatial approach to research suggests new directions in the research of Chan history.

GIS is a tool that magnifies whatever patterns are already present in our source texts. This is useful for making visible those interesting and desirable patterns, like the geographic distribution of Chan abbots in the *Lamp Records*. At the same time, GIS cannot cure a text of its own biases. To the contrary, GIS inherits all the limitations, politics, and social conditions embedded in our sources. If anything, just as GIS magnifies the patterns we wish to see, it also shrouds absences in quantitative scientism. GIS is not a neutral tool that provides an objective perspective. For the study of historical GIS, I have found the humanist critiques articulated by David Bodenhamer (2010) and Peter Bol (2011) to be more useful than works of critical cartography focused on political and territorial implications of mapping as an activity.

For example, if one were to use GIS to study the geographic distribution of Tang dynasty Chan masters found in Song-era hagiographies, the subsequent GIS visualizations apply what Wright (1942:527) described as a “trim, precise, and clean-cut appearance,” the veneer of scientific-looking topographic maps and official-looking latitude and longitude coordinates, to what are religious texts operating under their own historiographic principles. If one uses GIS without an understanding of the limits of the source texts, one runs the risk of attempting interpretation without an adequate understanding of the mythopoetic qualities of the original texts. The answer to this conundrum is not a matter of obtaining “better data,” but of understanding the nature of what we are diagramming. GIS rendering of places mentioned in hagiographies can tell us something about the *imaginaire* of those Song compilers.

At the same time, using GIS also reveals the strengths of the source text. For example, using the *Lamp Records* to study Chan abbots of the Northern Song is different from using Song records to understand Tang dynasty masters. Though entries in the *Lamp Records* for persons in living memory were constructed to suit religious and literary norms, the location of an abbacy had to be plausible to living people who had personal knowledge of the matter. In other words, the geographic information in the *Lamp Records* recorded for near-contemporaries has a relatively higher degree of historicity. As Jiang Wu (2008) has shown with Ming-era genealogies, these records were public documents and would be contested by people who felt that their lineage had been misrepresented. This same competition between lineages in the Song ensured the accuracy of these records, and thus they possess a relatively high degree of reliability.¹⁶

16 Conflicts and contestations are recorded in the *Wudeng huiyuan*, for example. I am grateful to Jiang Wu for drawing my attention to this phenomenon.

Other critiques can be carried much further, even to the large empty spaces on my visualizations. The mapmaker, in this case me, has made a choice to generate a sleek and minimalist topographic map instead of a political map. Unmarked and open space occupies vast swaths of each map, suggesting a landscape to be filled by Chan lineages. When viewed by themselves, the *Lamp Records* GIS maps encourage a viewer to overlook the relationship between Chan Buddhism and local religious traditions. We have evidence to the contrary, like Hong Mai's *Yijianzhi* 夷堅志, which reports an encounter between a Chan temple and a local shamanic cult.¹⁷ This is evidence of the important role of Buddhism as a force for spreading the imperial, literate culture to the far reaches of the empire. Where is this represented on a map of the *Lamp Records*? My maps, by themselves, do not help us understand the multivocal roles of Buddhist temples. This is in part because the *Lamp Records* themselves do not express concern for any other tradition. The *Lamp Records* do not acknowledge any other traditions of Buddhism, let alone local traditions and important Daoist traditions of the Song, and the maps quietly follow suit. These silences, however, are not neutral. Our awareness of this should have consequences for how we read the maps, both distantly and closely.

Appendix: Examples of *Lamp Records* Data Prepared for Use with GIS Software

Figure 1 shows a rough version of the dataset in progress. The Chinese characters in the leftmost column were taken directly from the *Lamp Records*. Each row represents an individual master and includes data about the location of his abbotship as well as the number of disciples he trained successfully. Extraneous information was later elided; Column F, for example, calculated each

17 *Yijianzhi*, 夷堅甲志, *juan* 6, “*Zongyan qu houyao* 宗演去猴妖” tells the story of Chan master Zongyan at Nengren temple 能仁寺 near Fuzhou. The temple was responsible for the spirits of the local mountains. However, a monkey had been trapped alive, then plated with mud and venerated as a Monkey King. A shamanic cult developed, and was believed to be causing illness among the villagers. The Chan temple directed its numinous power, power generated by temple infrastructure like bells and drums, and by daily Buddhist rites like the chanting of scripture. A battle, both physical and spiritual, took place, and in the end Zongyan recited a *gātha*, or poem, composed just for this situation. The spirit left the monkey's body, auspicious omens were seen, and the region was pacified. I thank Prof. Lau Nap Yin 柳立言 for sharing this example, and for his numerous other comments on an earlier presentation of related materials.

57	廬陵清原山行思禪師第十二	清	11	12															法秀, 應夫, 宗本 (1020-1099)
58	越州天衣義懷禪師法嗣上三	清	11	12	74	40.66	兩浙路	越州	29.88	120.567									Faxiu, Yingfu, Zongben's teacher
59	筠州大愚曉舜禪師法嗣十四	清	11	12	14	7.692	江西南西路	筠州	28.42	115.38									Nanchang, West; 高安
60	越州天衣山在和禪師法嗣一	清	11	12	1	0.549	兩浙路	越州	29.88	120.567									
61	饒州安國保禪師法嗣一人見	清	11	12	1	0.549		饒州	28.99	116.67									
62	杭州承天傳宗禪師法嗣九人	清	11	12	9	4.945	兩浙路	杭州	30.38	119.76									
63	真州長蘆祖印禪師法嗣六人	清	11	12	6	3.297		真州	32.26	118.815									
64	漢陽軍鳳樓仲卿禪師法嗣一	清	11	12	1	0.549		漢陽	30.55	114.258									
65	湖州報本蘭禪師法嗣一人見	清	11	12	1	0.549		湖州	30.86	120.108									
66	越州稱心守明禪師法嗣一人	清	11	12	1	0.549	兩浙路	越州	30.1	120.77									
67	江州圓通居訥禪師法嗣三人	清	11	12	3	1.648		江洲	29.55	115.971									
68	永安元楚禪師法嗣一人	清	11	12	1	0.549		永安											
69	南嶽上臺真禪師法嗣二人	清	11	12	2	1.099		南嶽	27.30	112.69									
70	潭州大鴻山懷有禪師法嗣四	清	11	12	4	2.198	荆湖南路	潭州	28.22	111.978			Changsha						5
71	東京淨因大覺禪師法嗣二十	清	11	12	22	12.09	京畿路	東京	34.76	114.435			Kaifeng						23
72	福州靈峯象敦禪師法嗣一人	清	11	12	1	0.549	福建路	福州	26.4	119.04									
73	杭州靈隱慈覺禪師法嗣二人	清	11	12	2	1.099	兩浙路	杭州	30.24	120.096			Hangzhou						
74	婺州壽林壽殊禪師法嗣一人	清	11	12	1	0.549	兩浙路	婺州	29.21	120.052			Jinhua, sw of 杭州						
75	溫州靈峯文吉禪師法嗣一人	清	11	12	1	0.549	兩浙路	溫州	28.02	120.662			Zhejiang Coast						
76	婺州承天惟簡禪師法嗣二人	清	11	12	2	1.099	兩浙路	杭州	30.38	119.76			Jinhua, sw of 杭州						
77	明州九奉鑑韶禪師法嗣一人	清	11	12	1	0.549	兩浙路	明州	29.86	121.552									
78	越州東山國慶順宗禪師法嗣	清	11	12	1	0.549	兩浙路	越州	30.02	120.886									
79	荊門軍玉泉承皓禪師法嗣二	清	11	12	1	0.549	荆湖北路	荊門	31.03	112.207			Jingmen						
80	潭州夾山遺禪師法嗣一人見	清	11	12	1	0.549	荆湖北路	潭州	29.59	111.382			Lizhou						
81	潭州興化紹鉄禪師法嗣三人	清	11	12	3	1.648	荆湖南路	潭州	28.26	113.08			Changsha						
82	雲居山了元佛印禪師法嗣二	清	11	12	20	10.99		南康軍	29.1	115.577			Mt Lu						

FIGURE 1 A section of an early version of the dataset.

teacher's disciples as a percentage of the total number in that generation, a rough measure of influence over the next generation.

Figure 2 shows a sample from the final dataset prepared for GIS. Column A contains a unique identifier number for each data point, column B indicates the Teacher's Generation in the Chan lineage as given in the *Lamp Records* (calculated from Qingyuan Xingsi 清原行思 or Nanyue Huairang 南嶽懷讓), column C indicates the Students' Generation, column D records the number of students included in *Lamp Records*, columns E and F register the latitude and longitude, and column G indicates the lineage (YM for Yunmen).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Y-No	Tgen	Sgen	Disciples	Y	X	SB
2	44	9	10	78	29.693	121.214	YM
3	45	9	10	14	24.649	113.63	YM
4	46	9	10	2	32.05	112.15	YM
5	47	9	10	2	28.723	114.779	YM
6	48	9	10	3	28.1973	112.9867	YM
7	49	9	10	1	27.938	113.666	YM
8	50	9	10	5	28.42	115.38	YM
9	51	9	10	33	28.68	115.82	YM
10	52	9	10	7	28.42	115.38	YM
11	53	9	10	2	30.629	116.576	YM
12	54	9	10	3	30.6554	113.1729	YM
13	55	9	10	2	31.0889	120.399	YM
14	56	9	10	1	30.121	115.792	YM
15	57	9	10	1	28.1973	112.9867	YM
16	58	9	10	1	30.863	120.108	YM
17	59	9	10	1	29.849	121.738	YM

FIGURE 2 A section of the final dataset, formatted for use with GIS software.

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