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Buddhism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Manchuria

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Abstract

This essay attempts to characterize Tanxu's experiences in Manchuria and north China between 1920 and 1945, focusing especially on the war years. Tanxu's actions during this time have been seen, broadly, in three different ways. First, as examples of Chinese nationalism, or "cultural patriotism," and thus resistance to Japanese encroachment; second, as accommodation of, if not collaboration with, the Japanese; and third—what Tanxu himself proclaimed—as apolitical actions intended to promote Buddhism. I attempt to reconcile these views in order to understand how Tanxu's Buddhist activism can contribute to our understanding of the complex and controversial categories of resistance and collaboration.

Introduction

Tanxu 倓虛, also known as Wang Futing, was a Buddhist monk, trained in the Tiantai tradition, who was active in the first half of the twentieth century. Tanxu's activism took the form of founding temples, mainly in North and Northeast China: he founded, revived, or expanded major temples in the cities of Harbin, Changchun, Yingkou, and Qingdao. These activities took place in the context of

intense competition among imperial powers for the resources of Manchuria, as Russia, Japan, and China all tried to assert their control over the region, while Western powers attempted to maintain or enhance their presence in the region as well. The presence of foreigners was particularly strong in the specific locations where Tanxu operated: Harbin was founded by Russians in the 1890s and operated as a virtual Russian colony until the Russian Revolution; Qingdao was a German colony; Yingkou was opened by the West as a treaty port in the mid-nineteenth century; and Changchun was a center of Russian and Japanese railway development before it became the capital of the Japanese puppet state, Manchukuo 滿州國, in 1931. And all of these cities, like most of China, were occupied by Japan during the Second World War.

This essay attempts to characterize Tanxu's experiences in Manchuria and north China between 1920 and 1945, focusing especially on the war years. Tanxu's actions during this time have been seen, broadly, in three different ways. First, as examples of Chinese nationalism, or "cultural patriotism," and thus resistance to Japanese encroachment; second, as accommodation of, if not collaboration with, the Japanese; and third—what Tanxu himself proclaimed—as apolitical actions intended to promote Buddhism. I attempt to reconcile these views in order to understand how Tanxu's Buddhist activism can contribute to our understanding of the complex and controversial categories of resistance and collaboration. Assessing his role is not easy: some of his colleagues and friends are widely regarded as collaborators, and the major source for understanding his life is his own memoir.

Sources

The major source for Tanxu's experience is his own memoir, *Yingchen huiyi lu* (影塵回憶錄 *Recollections of the Material World*, or literally, "*Shadows and Dust*"). He dictated this memoir to his students in 1947 near the end of his stay in Qingdao, which he left for Hong Kong in 1948, ahead of advancing Communist armies. Working under joint American and Guomindang occupation, and during a time of Civil War, there were clear advantages to depicting

himself as anti-Japanese, or anti-Communist, yet Tanxu does neither. At times, he rails against the dangers of Japanese imperialism, while at others he seems content to work with the Japanese.

Tanxu's memoir recounts his experience of the wartime years, primarily at three major temples: Jilesi (極樂寺 Paradise Temple) in Harbin, Boruosi (般若寺 Temple of Expansive Wisdom) in Changchun, and Zhanshansi (湛山寺 Tranquil Mountain Temple) in Qingdao. In contrast to often vitriolic and didactic accounts that strive to justify one's actions during the war, Tanxu's book is frustrating for its lack of clear political agenda. Direct statements about the political context are rare, and Tanxu neither justifies his cooperation with the Japanese occupier nor points out the ways he might have resisted.

To address the weaknesses of the memoir as a source, I have compared the *Yingchen huiyi lu* with other available sources. In his book, *Buddhism, War, and Nationalism*, historian Xue Yu observes that information about Buddhist activities in Japanese-occupied areas in the 1930s and 1940s is scarce and often unreliable. Records that did survive the war are often highly politicized. My experience certainly supports that conclusion: primary sources including newspapers and municipal archives from Harbin, Shenyang, Qingdao, and Yingkou are scarce. I have augmented the memoir with important secondary sources, like Holmes Welch's standard *The Buddhist Revival in China*. I have also drawn on oral interviews with Tanxu's students and fellow monks in Hong Kong, China, the United States and Canada (complex sources in their own right). Where Tanxu is silent, we are usually left to speculate or infer what he leaves out, and why. I have tried to do this responsibly, drawing on the work of other scholars who have examined the categories of resistance and collaboration in their research of wartime figures, and comparing their conclusions with Tanxu's actions.

Founding Paradise

Tanxu's work in Harbin can be interpreted as promoting both

Buddhism and Chinese nationalism in Manchuria: the temple he founded there was not only the first Chinese Buddhist temple in the area, but also the first prominent structure with Chinese architectural features in a city that had been founded as a Russian enclave. The temple was also sponsored by the local Chinese governmental authorities, who wished to enhance the Chinese presence in the region in order to better compete in the international rivalries that defined Manchuria throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Russia and Japan, both expansionist empires, saw in Manchuria solutions to their geo-political needs: for Russia, easier access to Vladivostok, its new port on the Pacific, as well as the promise of ice-free ports in southern Manchuria. For Japan, the mineral and agricultural wealth of Manchuria would alleviate shortages of both in the Japanese home islands, as well as a staging ground for an enhanced economic, political, and, perhaps, military intervention in the rest of China. (1)

Harbin illustrated this competition well. Constructed in the 1890s by Russian railway engineers building the railway from Siberia to Vladivostok, the city was a virtual Russian colony for twenty years. It took on the appearance of a provincial Russian city, and was governed almost completely by Russians. The fall of the Tsarist state in 1917, though, and the refusal of the Chinese government to recognize the Soviet Union called the city's identity into question. The 1920s became a period of intense nationalization, as a newly installed Chinese government sought to remake the city as, in Tanxu's words, "a Chinese place."

After beginning his career founding temples in Yingkou, a treaty port on the Bohai Gulf in Southern Liaoning province, Tanxu was invited to Harbin by local political authorities in 1922 (Carter, 2002: 126-161). Tanxu recalled the justification for building a new Buddhist temple through the eyes of one of his patrons,

In the 10th year of the Republic [1921], Chen Feiqing 陳飛青, a lay Buddhist, was appointed Chief of the Chinese Eastern Railroad Customs Bureau. His ancestral home was in Jiangsu, and he had a very deep Buddhist faith. ... Chen

saw that [in Harbin] every official or worker who believed in Roman Catholicism, or Protestantism had built in Harbin three or four large churches, all of which were funded by the Chinese Eastern Railway.... For Harbin, as a Chinese place, to not have a single proper Chinese temple, was in the eyes of international observers very embarrassing...it was simply too depressing to bear! It was then that he made up his mind to construct a great temple (Tanxu, 1993 [1955] vol. II: 208).

Chen sought approval for the temple project in Beijing, and once this was obtained, looked for a monk to lead the enterprise. Ma Jiping 馬冀平, a government minister in Beijing, had heard Tanxu lecture when he had been in Jingxing County a few years earlier, and recommended him for the task. In the first week of February 1922, Tanxu went to Harbin.

Tanxu welcomed the chance to found a temple in Harbin for several reasons. His teacher, Dixian 諦閑, had long emphasized the importance of reviving Buddhism in North China, and this resonated with Tanxu, who had spent most of his life there. The lack of Buddhist facilities in the north had frustrated him as a younger man trying to learn more about the sutras, eventually driving him south to study. More northern monks, and more northern temples and monasteries, were needed if Buddhism were to thrive here. Harbin, one of the largest and most important cities in Manchuria, was a perfect location. Furthermore, the struggle over Harbin's political and cultural identity evoked Tanxu's own observation of China's place in the world. Like the rest of Manchuria, Harbin was a crossroads for many nationalities, especially Chinese, Russians, and Japanese, but also Americans and other Europeans. Tanxu had experienced the conflicts among these nations since childhood—and had always seen China on the losing end. Although it was first a religious edifice, the new temple—to be named Jilesi—would be a marker of Chinese identity, making clear that Harbin was a Chinese city.

To do this, a suitable location had to be found. For maximum

political impact, the temple needed a highly visible location, one where foreigners as well as Chinese would see it and understand its message. At the first meeting about the temple, in February, it was decided to purchase land with government money (from the railroad ministry), and the location chosen was one that would have maximum impact. Harbin's original layout, chosen by its Russian designers, was a cross. At the intersection of the two axes was the ornate, wooden Cathedral of Saint Nicholas, constructed in 1898 (this church was the most visible victim of the Cultural Revolution in Harbin, burning to the ground in 1966). At the base of the cross were the city's foreign cemeteries, primarily Orthodox Christian and Jewish. The wide boulevard of Bolshoi Prospekt connecting the Cathedral and the graveyards were most of the city's other important churches, including Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox sites that remain active today.

Jilesi was to be built in the midst of these flows of European religious practice. The plot of land chosen was on Bolshoi Prospekt, just outside the entrance to the cemeteries. As the temple's pagodas, pavilions and *stupas* rose, they literally overshadowed the paths of mourners and celebrants traveling between the churches and the graveyards. Russian mourners passing by the bright yellow temple walls, inscribed with large Chinese characters, would have had clearly understood that they were not on Russian soil. This was part of a broader campaign to mark public spaces with Chinese architecture, including a school opened opposite the main entrance to the train station, and a Confucian Temple located opposite the Jilesi, also near the entrance to the European cemetery.

In this context, Tanxu's work showed him to be a sort of Chinese nationalist. Although not the prime mover, he was engaged in a project designed to strengthen Chinese national identity.

East Asian Buddhist Association

Not only his temple-building activities suggest a nationalist agenda for Tanxu. In 1925, befitting his influence in the northeast and also



Fig. 1: St. Nicholas cathedral represented the Russian architecture that defined Harbin when Tanxu arrived in 1920. This photograph dates from the 1950s.



Fig. 2. The traditional Chinese features of Jilesi were a clear contrast with the Russian architecture typical of Harbin at the time it was built.

his new role as a forty-fourth generation patriarch of Tiantai, Tanxu was invited in the summer of 1925 to visit Japan as part of the first congress of the East Asian Buddhist Association. The meeting, to be held in Tokyo, was organized in part by the eminent Monk Taixu. Taixu embraced reform more readily than did Tanxu, and the seminaries Taixu founded had more modern curricula, including foreign languages and western mathematics, than did those of Tanxu, who focused more narrowly on scriptural exegesis and Chinese literature. Their differences notwithstanding, the two men were among the most influential monks in China, and Tanxu was one of twenty-one Chinese delegates invited to attend the congress in November 1925.

The conference itself fell short of many of its stated goals. First, although it was called the "East Asian Buddhist Association," nearly all of representatives were from China and Japan. Small delegations from Taiwan and Korea—both Japanese colonies at the time—also took part, but no one represented the vibrant Buddhist communities in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Thailand, and Burma. It was suggested that the name of the organization be changed to the Sino-Japanese Buddhist Association, but the organizers resisted this, feeling it was important for the congress to represent all of East Asia, and thereby demonstrate Japan's leadership role in the region.

Even in the context of Sino-Japanese relations, the conference did not proceed without controversy. Addressing the congress, Taixu criticized Japanese monks on several counts. They were, he said, too influenced by modern life. They were unable to withstand privation as their counterparts in China were. They lacked the deep religious conviction and rigorous discipline of Chinese monks, and as evidence of this he noted that many Japanese monks kept wives and ate meat. Furthermore, touching on the conference's reason for existence, he criticized Japanese Buddhism for being too nationalistic and also too sectarian. Aided by his observations on this trip, Taixu confirmed that the Japanese *sangha* could not be a model for reviving Buddhism in China (Welch, 1966: 77).

The criticism of Japan was not limited to religious matters. One

Chinese delegate excoriated the host country for professing to seek friendly ties with China, while at the same time acting belligerently toward the Chinese people, exemplified by the twenty-one Demands (Tanxu, 1993 [1955] II: 43).

Tanxu, like Taixu, was troubled by the relationship between China and Japan, and the state of Japanese Buddhism. Returning to China after the conclusion of the meeting, Tanxu's opinion foreshadowed the shape of Sino-Japanese relations for decades to come:

The Japanese had long cherished intentions toward China and if the Chinese government did not strengthen itself in the future, China would certainly be controlled by Japan. Looking at the Chinese people, their spirit is in decline and dispersal, as though they are sick, while the Japanese people have risen up, like a great flood. These are both because of the policies of their governments, who teach individuals to fight with guns and swords, and but are ignorant of educating the people; they have caused China to be paralyzed and spiritless, without any ability to organize.... How can a nation like this survive (Tanxu, 1993 [1955] II, 44) ?!

His participation in the East Asian Buddhist conference seems to underscore Tanxu's anti-Japanese feelings, his skepticism concerning Japanese Buddhism, and his doubts about China's future.

Tanxu under Japanese occupation

After war began with Japan, Tanxu's attitude toward the Japanese changed. Japan invaded Manchuria in September 1931. Tanxu was in Harbin, where he was abbot of Jilesi, the last city to be occupied by the Japanese, in March 1932. Shortly thereafter, the state of Manchukuo, supported and directed by Japanese military and political power, was proclaimed.

The Japanese authorities in Manchukuo suspected that Tanxu was involved with the anti-Japanese resistance. The Civil Administrator

of Harbin at the time of the invasion was Zhu Qinglan 朱慶瀾, an active Buddhist and a general with the Nationalist Army. Zhu was a strong supporter, both politically and financially, of Tanxu and the Jilesi project, and after the Japanese invasion, Zhu led an army against the Japanese occupiers. The link between Zhu and Tanxu was well known to the Japanese, and starting in the fall of 1931 Tanxu was regularly followed by informants. The government even placed a spy—Imai Akirayoshi 今井明孝—in the temple, living as a monk, to assess not only Tanxu's political activities, but those of the entire temple, since it had been founded with General Zhu's support. Even with hindsight and obvious political incentive to do so, though, Tanxu insists in his memoir that he was *not* involved in the anti-Japanese resistance. He says that his association with Zhu Qinglan and the activities of another monk—Ciyun 慈雲—aroused suspicion, but that he was never directly involved.

The Japanese agent remained at the temple for about six months, questioning all of the monks in the temple. When Tanxu traveled to Changchun, Imai questioned the monk in charge, hoping to find proof of Tanxu's involvement. The monks Imai questioned, though, denied Tanxu's involvement in the resistance, according to Tanxu's own account of the exchange:

'My teacher is an old monk, and he spends every day constructing temples and lecturing on the *sutras*. Right now he is constructing the Boruosi in Changchun. There may be monks in the resistance army, but Tanxu is certainly not one of them. If you investigate his words, I assure you that you will see what is in his mind!'

Imai understood that Jueyi 覺己 spoke very vehemently and candidly! There was not one bit of ambiguity. It was clear that Tanxu was not one of the anti-Japanese monks. After this, Jin Jing returned to the secret police, and returned later to again investigate the situation. The actual agent working for General Zhu's staff was Ciyun, and Jueyi had done an excellent job staving off Jin Jing and keeping him away from the real agent (Tanxu, 1993 [1955] I: 243).

Tanxu's actions after the Japanese invasion are difficult to characterize as resistance or collaboration. He did not change his activities markedly, continuing to lecture at Jilesi and traveling frequently between Harbin and Changchun (renamed Xinjing, the "new capital" of Manchukuo). In Changchun, the new administration (characterized by Tanxu as "Japanese") razed the site of his Boruosi, still under construction, in order to create a new boulevard, part of the grand architectural and urban planning scheme for the new capital. Rather than rail against the occupiers, though, Tanxu saw this as a blessing in disguise, noting that "Almost the entire budget was funded by the [new government] in the end, and although it was unfortunate to have our site destroyed, the end result was still good" (Tanxu, 1993 [1955] II: 5)!

Here, again, Tanxu's attitude is ambiguous. He is eager to assert that he was not involved in the resistance, but seems pleased that the monks who were actively involved were protected and not discovered by the Japanese. He had harshly criticized some practices of Japanese monks, yet he was happy to receive funding from the Japanese authorities. After going out of his way to prove to the Japanese that he was not involved with the anti-Japanese resistance, Tanxu accepted an invitation from General Zhu to join in him in Xi'an, the northwestern Chinese city that had become the base for many elements of the Chinese army ordered, by the Republican Chinese government, to abandon Manchuria to the invading Japanese. Within months of the Japanese invasion, just before the formal proclamation of Manchukuo, Tanxu left Manchuria.

Qingdao

Tanxu stayed in Shaanxi, renovating and managing temples, for less than a year. In the fall of 1932 he received word that his teacher Dixian had died and left Xi'an to attend the funeral in Ningbo. There, he accepted an invitation to develop a temple in Qingdao, which followed a similar pattern as the Jilesi in Harbin: an example of traditional Chinese architecture in a Chinese city with a strong European heritage. Also similar to Harbin, the project in Qingdao represented a confluence of religious and secular authority: local

government officials sponsored the project out of a desire to promote both Buddhism and Chinese cultural identity, in a city where neither had a long history or prominent markers. Echoing his earlier description of Harbin, Tanxu wrote of Qingdao:

In recent years, Qingdao had developed as a seaport.... Because of this period of openness, the power of foreigners there has been significant, and Christianity and other foreign religions have flourished! And yet, there was not a single Chinese temple (sic), and no monks. I remember when I first came to Qingdao,...everyone I saw appeared to be a foreigner, and they all looked at me as though they had never seen a monk before, and this made me feel very strange (Tanxu, 1993 [1955] II: 117).

The importance of the new temple's physical appearance was made plain by the subsequent construction of a smaller memorial hall, located nearer the center of the city's European-style central district. This structure was first built in a more modern, international style, but Tanxu and others objected, feeling that traditional Chinese features would strengthen the temple's impact:

The first building that was built there was a flat-roof, foreign style building.... but this did not have this simple elegance of design that would inspire faith in people's hearts. So, we decided to erect another building in front of this one, this time with traditional (lit. old style) architecture. Qingdao's buildings are entirely Western in design, all red and green scattered throughout a dense and gloomy forest; only the Zhanshansi Memorial Stupa stood out on the top of the mountain, showing people a Chinese style building, and enabling people to have the hope and knowledge that there was a temple (Tanxu, 1993 [1955] II: 169).



Figs. 3 (above) and 4 (below): Qingdao's German colonial architecture was a stark contrast with the Asian features of Tanxu's Zhanshansi.



These architectural features were important aspects of Tanxu's political activism. Even as he strengthened and spread Buddhism, his temples proclaimed Chinese cultural identity in ways that made it useful for the promotion of Chinese nationalism. The identification of Buddhist temples with Chinese cultural identity is not always justified, given Buddhism's trans-national and varied past, but in contrast to Russian and German designs that dominated Harbin and Qingdao, it was easy to establish.

However, the meaning and use of the temples changed when Japan became the occupying power. After invading Manchuria in September 1931, and establishing Manchukuo as a puppet state in the months following, Japan exerted constant, but restrained, pressure on China. Japan extracted a stream of concessions—including demilitarizing the region around Beijing and permitting Japanese troops to be based in China. The Chinese government was required to take responsibility for controlling anti-Japanese sentiments among the Chinese people, which were blamed for poor relations between the two countries. Within this context, a series of confrontations between Japanese and Chinese took place. The "Marco Polo Bridge Incident," as it is known in the West, did not appear to be an exceptional or important one of these, but on the night of July 7, 1937, Japanese troops on maneuvers came into conflict with Chinese government troops. Details of what happened remain unclear, including which side fired first, and a cease-fire followed four days later. However, despite neither side wanting to escalate this incident into unlimited war between the Japan and China, this is just what happened. Japanese reinforcements were sent to the area, including three divisions from Japan, which landed—like so many invading armies before them—at Tanggu, just a few miles from Tanxu's birthplace, on July 25. Within a week, Japanese troops captured Tianjin, and soon afterward took Beijing. On August 7, Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT leadership mobilized all Chinese armies. The war between China and Japan began in earnest, and as summer turned to fall, Japanese troops extended their control across eastern China (Hoyt, 1986: 148-150).

In the last week of 1937, the Chinese governmental authorities in Qingdao evacuated without warning, turning the city over to several days of looting. Virtually all Japanese shops and businesses in the city were ransacked, and when the violence began to spill beyond just the Japanese concerns, the Europeans in the city and a handful of Chinese police organized a militia to protect foreign property. Japanese marines landed at Qingdao by sea on January 10, 1938, and within two weeks had established an occupation government (Thomas, 2005: 159-165).

Tanxu had lived in conflict zones for most of his life (in addition to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, he had seen firsthand the fighting that accompanied the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5, the Boxer Uprising of 1899-1900, and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5). He had existed in political gray areas for just as long, spending most of his career in treaty ports, colonies, or semi-colonies, where the lines dividing ruler and ruled, and Chinese and foreign, were complex and frequently in question. Except for a few months in Harbin in 1932, though, he had not lived under Japanese occupation before, and it presented important contrasts to living under European colonialism, or its shadow. No longer was a *stupa* or a half-hipped, half-gabled roof an obvious contrast to the occupying power. Furthermore, Japan hoped to use Buddhism to unify Asia as part of its Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

Buddhism was of most use to Japan as part of the New People's Principles (*xinmin zhuyi* 新民主義), a contrast to Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles of Nationalism, Democracy, and "the People's Livelihood" (sometimes translated as Socialism). The New Principles were an attempt to provide an ideological foundation for the unification of China and Japan (along with the Japanese-installed regime in Manchukuo) under Japanese leadership. It developed as a corollary to the "Kingly Way" (*wangdao* 王道), a Confucian concept that determined the righteousness of a ruler and thus his right to rule. The Kingly Way was developed strongly in Manchuria, where the Japanese used its emphasis on maintaining order and its deep historical roots to give gravitas to their new regime there. In North China, the Kingly Way was promoted by Major General Kita

Seiichi 喜多誠一, who argued—in the same month that Japanese marines captured Qingdao—that "it was necessary to go back to Confucian times to find a really satisfactory system for the rule of the Chinese people" (*China Weekly Review*, January 1938, in Boyle, 1972: 85).

Kita was in charge of political control of all Chinese government organs under Japanese occupation in North China. Responding to concerns that Japan appeared to be "Manchurianizing" China, and also worried that overreliance on Confucian concepts would alienate young Chinese, Kita developed the ideology of the New People's Principles to replace the Kingly Way as an ideological justification for Japanese rule in North China. He established the New People's Society (*xinmin hui* 新民會) to spread the new ideology, becoming so pervasive that historian John Boyle argued it "all but replaced the Provisional Government as the governing body of North China" (Boyle, 1972: 93).

Like the Kingly Way, the New Principles were based on Confucianism, but other East Asian belief systems were prominent as well. Bushido, the Japanese warrior code, was considered essential for justifying why Japan had come to dominate China. Buddhism, too, was part of the New Principles' syncretic ideology: Japanese occupiers planned a Buddhist university as part of their regime. The goal of this university was to educate on the common bonds that united Chinese and Japanese culture, and furthermore, by teaching not only the Mahayana tradition common to those countries, but also the Theravada tradition found in Southeast Asia and the history of Buddhism's origins in India, the university demonstrated how Buddhism united all of Japan's "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," under their slogan of "Asia for the Asiatics" (Conroy, 1952: 372).

Tanxu's account of the Japanese occupation at Qingdao frustrates the historian, for it is virtually silent about his interactions with the Japanese. It appears that he maintained the same pattern of activities as before the occupation, moving throughout north China lecturing on *sutras* and participating in various ceremonies and rituals. Tanxu

took part in a ceremony for Japanese soldiers organized by the Japan-China Buddhist Study Society, and also that he later served as chair of the Common Buddhist Purpose Society branch in Qingdao, though these events do not appear in his memoir (Xue, 2005: 166). The omission of these events indicates that Tanxu did not wish to share them, and this might be seen as evidence of cooperation with the Japanese. Tanxu does describe his visits to various temples and organizations, including the Red Swastika Society (a Buddhist relief agency), during the war, but little can be gleaned from these about his political leanings, other than to note that he was apparently able to travel without great difficulty.

Scraps of information about the war years in Qingdao can be found from the autobiography of Master Lok-To 樂渡, who enrolled as a student in Tanxu's seminary in 1941. Lok-To reports that the seminary operated as usual, serving the monastic community and the local Chinese population: few Japanese took part because there were other temples expressly for Japanese. Conditions at the monastery remained good until the last few years of the war, when food became scarce (Lok-To, 2001). With provisions being redirected toward the military, and to the labor camps, the monks of Zhanshan relied on food they grew themselves at the monastery. Although conditions in the city suggested that Japan was losing the war, no one predicted the speed with which the war ended, following the American atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The suddenness of the Japanese capitulation intensified the chaos that accompanies the end of any war. Furthermore, the political divisions within China that had been disguised by the war with Japan were exposed after the surrender. Within weeks of the surrender, five uniformed armies were fielding weapons in and around Qingdao. The Chinese Nationalist and Communist forces competed for the early advantage in what would clearly be a civil war between the sides. The Japanese forces awaited formal surrender and repatriation; in the meantime they remained armed and in control of material assets including the railroad that ran to Qingdao. This was in accordance with allied instructions, who wanted to ensure that Japanese assets were transferred as efficiently

as possible to the Chinese Nationalists. The army of the Japanese –allied Chinese regime had surrendered, and most of its members were recognized and deployed by the Nationalist government.

When the war ended, Tanxu reported jubilation that "the nation was recovered, and everyone was very happy!" But his activities seemed to change little (Tanxu, 1993 [1955] II: 258). In 1947, he traveled to Changchun for an ordination ceremony, at the invitation of Master Shanguo 善果, who had been a student of Tanxu and then served as abbot of Boruosi in Changchun. Tanxu continued to work in Qingdao and at other temples in north and northeast China until 1949, when he fled to Hong Kong, just a few weeks before Communist armies took over Qingdao.

Collaboration and Resistance

Defining "collaboration" and "resistance" is essential to understanding wartime interactions and also destructive to such attempts. As soon as either of these words is uttered or written, dialogue becomes difficult; blame and judgment take the place of understanding and analysis. Timothy Brook defines "collaboration" as "the continuing exercise of power under the pressure produced by the presence of an occupying power" (Brook, 2005: 2). Under this definition, Tanxu clearly worked as a collaborator: he was no longer abbot of the temple, but he continued to perform ceremonies and rituals, and otherwise influence Buddhist clergy and laity throughout the war. Yet, this defines nearly anyone who lived through foreign occupation as a collaborator, and this seems too broad a category. The title of Larry Shyu and David Barrett's edited book on this same topic suggests a subtler approach: "the limits of accommodation" (Barrett and Shyu, 2001). Although less absolute and less satisfying, "accommodation" and its limits seems a more useful way of understanding the actions of individuals under totalitarian regimes. As Brook notes in his own review of another work on collaboration during this period, collaboration is not a single response, but a complex range of reactions that is often much more morally complex than "resistance":

[R]esistance simplifies the range of moral choices available to the occupied, and is complex only insofar as the resister manages to find ways to stay alive. Collaboration on the other hand is a matter of shifting definitions and inconsistent responses. To collaborate is to involve oneself in constant renegotiation with the enemy, with one's associates, and with oneself (Brook, 1996: 80).

Vaclav Havel, the Czech dissident, playwright, and president, strikes a similar note in his many essays addressing life under a totalitarian regime. For Havel, the important aspect of understanding the actions taken, or not taken, during a period of occupation is not to assign guilt to the collaborators, but to recognize that everyone living under the regime is culpable: "We are all—though naturally to different extents—responsible for the operation of totalitarian machinery. None of us is just its victim: we are also its co-creators." Phrased another way, Havel questions the existence of a bright line dividing resistance from collaboration. Instead, he sees the important "line of conflict" that "did not run between the rulers and the ruled, but rather through the middle of each individual, for everyone in his or her own way is both a victim and a supporter of the system" (Havel, 1997: 4; Havel, 1991: 125-214).

This is certainly the position in which Tanxu found himself after 1938. The most morally clear position he could have taken would have been to refuse to live under the Japanese. Xue Yu's research shows that some monks took up arms in defiance of their occupiers. Tanxu did not, and to the contrary worked hard to prove to the Japanese—who suspected him of being active in the resistance—that he had not. Rather, Tanxu's life continued much like it had before. In his memoir, he is silent on his reasons for behaving as he did, neither justifying nor defending his actions. Rather, he describes matter-of-factly that he continued his work spreading the *dharma*, as he had done for decades.

Tanxu was apparently invited to go to Japan during the war, but refused on the grounds that he was not interested in politics. I have not been able to confirm or refute the invitation, but it does seem

clear that Tanxu did not return to Japan after his 1925 visit, and also that the Japanese would have desired closer cooperation with Tanxu. Two of Tanxu's students, Ruguang如光 and Shanguo, both worked closely with the Japanese in Manchuria after succeeding to the abbotship of Jilesi and Boruosi, respectively. Shanguo went to Japan in 1938 and then became a branch chairman of the General Buddhist Association of Manchukuo. Ruguang also held a leadership position in the General Buddhist Association of Manchukuo (Xue, 2005: 169).

Tanxu's relationship with Ruguang and Shanguo can be used to support either side of the argument about Tanxu's attitudes toward the Japanese. That two of his students cooperated actively with the Japanese authorities in Manchukuo might be seen as evidence that Tanxu too was willing to accommodate the occupying forces, especially given that Tanxu's temple in Qingdao was tolerated—at least—by the occupation forces. Tanxu traveled to Changchun at Shanguo's invitation after the war, suggesting that he did not disapprove of his former student's actions during the occupation. Circumstantial evidence that Tanxu took part in rituals for Japanese soldiers lends further support to this view.

It is certain that the Japanese authorities sought to enlist Tanxu in their support: as one of the most prominent monks in occupied China, Tanxu would have been very useful to Japanese plans to build a religious or ideological bridge between the two nations, or to provide ideological support to Japanese rule. Yet, Tanxu apparently refused to actively support the Japanese. This position is consistent with his criticisms about Japanese Buddhism that he voiced following the 1925 Tokyo conference. Seen in this light, Tanxu's refusal to go to Japan or take a leadership position in the Manchukuo or collaborationist Buddhist bureaucracy, when two of his prominent students had done so, suggests that he was unwilling to work closely with the Japanese, though for what reason we cannot be sure.

We are left, then, to evaluate Tanxu's own claim that he was apolitical and motivated strictly by the desire to revive Buddhism in

north China. My own research into his earlier life and career suggests that this is not entirely true. He was motivated throughout his career by a desire to advance Chinese culture, as well as Buddhism, in the face of foreign colonialism, building temples in Yingkou, Harbin, and Qingdao, especially. However, it must also be acknowledged that in so doing he cooperated with secular authorities in ways that helped him promote Buddhism. The relationship between political and religious motivations is unclear. It must be said that a similar situation exists in Manchukuo and occupied China: Tanxu cooperated—at least passively—with Japanese authorities in Harbin, Changchun, and Qingdao, but his cooperation enabled him to promote and sustain thriving Buddhist temples in monasteries in areas under Japanese control. He denied association with anti-Japanese resistance, but also refused to actively work with the Japanese. Although it seems facile to accept Tanxu at his word that he was motivated primarily by religion and eschewed politics, this seems the most satisfactory resolution of the conflicting claims about his work during wartime in China.

CONCLUSIONS

Havel's observation that the line separating collaboration from resistance runs through individuals, not between them, resonates with Tanxu's case. Certainly, aspects of Tanxu's career during the 1930s and 1940s could be considered collaboration, while just as certainly other aspects could be seen as resistance, or patriotism. His own reticence to claim any political agenda may be more useful to the historian than any avowed agenda for or against one side or the other. (2)

Motives, too, are not so stark as nationalist histories would have us believe. Collaborators who craved power or wealth, or who were coerced into violating their moral principles, are often stereotypes. Even monks who worked actively with the Japanese often genuinely believed that they were working for the good of the Chinese people—or of humanity in general. In the case of Tanxu, we are left to assess not only the motives of the man during the war, but also his motives in writing his memoir. Writing after Japan had been

defeated, Tanxu had every opportunity to portray his time during the occupation as a struggle against his occupiers, but he did not do so. He says little about his motivations and his actions, presenting a portrait of his time during the war that satisfies neither side.

Trying to assess Tanxu's relationship with the Japanese becomes an exercise in historical imagination. Sources are limited and flawed. We are left to conclude that life during wartime, like life during other times, is lived largely in an ethical gray area, where neither heroism nor treachery—or perhaps both—is obvious.

Notes

(1). The literature in English on twentieth-century Manchuria, or the "Northeast" as it is referred to in Chinese, is extensive. Important recent titles include Duara, 2003; Mitter, 2000; and Tamanoi, 2005.

(2). It seems to me that Juzan, the protagonist of Xue Yu's paper in this special issue, is also marked by ambiguities. But Juzan's ambiguities were between collaboration and survival (which might not be as defiant as resistance) in the early Communist regime.

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