

# BUDDHIST LITERACY IN EARLY MODERN NORTHERN VIETNAM

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A Multidisciplinary Symposium

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Presentation Abstracts



Presented by Rutgers: The State University of New Jersey & the  
Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation

With support from: the Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation, the Rutgers China Research Project, Center for Chinese Studies, The School of Arts & Sciences, Center for Global Advancement & International Affairs (GAIA), and the Departments of Asian Languages & Cultures, History, and Religion. For more information, please email John Phan at [john.phan@rutgers.edu](mailto:john.phan@rutgers.edu).

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Recent work from a number of quarters has scrutinized the notion of “East Asia,” as a cosmopolitan zone unified by shared script, literary language, and educational traditions. Vietnam’s inclusion in modern mappings of “Southeast Asia” has often obscured its critical membership in an East Asian cultural zone, a fact that has limited potentially fruitful comparative work with Korea, China, and Japan. One of the most important features of East Asian cultural construction was the role of Buddhism in the dissemination of script, cosmopolitan language, and literate knowledge—a phenomenon particularly important to second millennium Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, each of which suffered crises in literacy at different points, due to invasion or internecine war. While comparison of Buddhist literacy in Korea and Japan has enjoyed a relatively robust tradition (especially with recent work on shared glossing techniques such as *kunten*), comparison with Vietnam has been limited by areal and disciplinary boundaries that are more artifacts of academic history, than substantive contours defining the cultures in question.

Our symposium seeks to break down these artificial barriers by examining a set of religious texts now housed at Thăng Nghiêm and Phổ Nhân, two syncretic Buddhist temples located 15 km southwest of Hanoi, in northern Vietnam. The collection was gathered from the surrounding region by the current abbot beginning in 1997, and represents a diverse library of primarily secular xylographic and epigraphic texts, composed over the latter half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, and written in both Literary Chinese and vernacular Vietnamese “Chữ Nôm” (an extinct character script used to represent vernacular Vietnamese, until its replacement by the Latin alphabet in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). As one contributor points out, these texts are remarkable for their pedestrian character, providing a uniquely mundane portrait of literacy in early modern northern Vietnam. These texts were recently digitized through the groundbreaking efforts of the *Vietnamese Nom Preservation Foundation* (VNPF), making the entire collection accessible to scholarly examination for the first time.

Catalyzed by the VNPF’s work, our project seeks to break new ground by staging a multidisciplinary investigation into the phenomenon of literacy, and its dissemination through the Buddhist institution. The enclosed abstracts seek to explore the nature of print culture as maintained and conducted by early modern Buddhist temples, its relationship to the court, and its philological practices and traditions, as well as its relationship to folk and non-literate traditions of religious practice. Additionally, our symposium includes a special panel on issues of digitizing the Buddhist canon—work that is foundational to all cutting edge research into premodern East Asian textual culture. These inquiries illuminate not only a sorely understudied aspect of Vietnamese history and culture, but also promise fruitful comparison with Japan, Korea, and China, on issues of Buddhism and literacy, classical education, and the rise of the vernacular.

<b>Tentative Panel Themes<sup>1</sup></b>		
<b>1.</b>	<i>Issues in the Digitization of premodern East Asian texts: preservation, encoding, and character-recognition</i>	
	(12)	Jeff WALLMAN Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center
	(5)	NGÔ Trung Việt Van Lang University
	(8)	SHIMODA Masahiro & NAGASAKI Kiyonori SAT Daizōkyō Database (Tokyo Univ.)
(4)	A. Charles MULLER Tokyo University	
<b>2.</b>	<i>Print and reading practices in the Buddhist institution</i>	
	(7)	NGUYỄN Tuấn Cường The Institute for Sino-Nôm Research
	(9)	TRẦN Trọng Dương The Institute for Sino-Nôm Research
	(3)	KOSUKEGAWA Teiji Toyama University
<b>3.</b>	<i>Historical contexts of literacy and the transmission of Buddhist literate knowledge</i>	
	(2)	Liam KELLEY University of Hawaii, Mānoa
	(11)	Wynn WILCOX Western Connecticut State University
	(1)	Nhung TRAN & Kathlene BALDANZA University of Toronto Pennsylvania State University
<b>4.</b>	<i>Intersections of folk practice and literate Buddhism in the contemporary religiosity of the space</i>	
	(10)	Stefania TRAVAGNIN University of Groningen
	(6)	NGUYỄN Thị Hiền Vietnam Nat. Institute of Culture & Arts

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<sup>1</sup> The following abstracts are numbered and provided in alphabetical order. The small number in parentheses to the right of each speaker name corresponds to the order in which their abstract appears below.

## **1. Kate BALDANZA (Penn State) & Nhung Tuyet TRAN (University of Toronto)**

**Working Title: Reading and Book Culture in Vietnam: the View from Thăng Nghiêm and Phổ Nhân Temples**

**Abstract:** Buddhist pagodas have long served centres of book culture and printing in Vietnam, as in other areas of East and Southeast Asia, but the materials printed there have long been excluded in the literature on book history and reading culture. In this paper, we situate the collections of the books from Thang Nghiem and Pho Nhan temples within the history of the local production of religious texts and their proliferation along the inter-regional and international trade routes. In this paper, we describe the book market and reading cultures of Vietnam since the 18<sup>th</sup> century in order to place the temple collections in a broader context and show the different strands of the print world represented in the temple collections. We raise questions about the relationship between publishers and readers, the differences between for-profit and not-for-profit printing, and the role of manuscripts versus printed texts.

## **2. Liam KELLEY (University of Hawaii at Manoa)**

**Working Title: The Significance of Insignificant Libraries: The Thăng Nghiêm and Phổ Nhân Temple Libraries as Examples of Late Imperial East Asian Common (Buddhist) Knowledge**

**Abstract:** In examining the holdings of the Thăng Nghiêm and Phổ Nhân temple libraries what becomes immediately evident is that there is nothing particularly special about their collections. They do not, for instance, possess rare or unknown works. They are also not very extensive. Nonetheless, the limited number, and eclectic mixture, of texts that they do possess can help us gain a sense of what “Buddhist knowledge” was constructed from at the local level in late imperial Vietnam. In this paper, the author will seek to present an overview of how we can place these small libraries and the Buddhist knowledge that they represent in the larger world of East Asian Buddhism and common knowledge. By demonstrating how “insignificant” these libraries are, the point of this paper will be to also demonstrate how “significant” these libraries are for providing a window onto an ordinary (Buddhist) world in late imperial Vietnam.

## **3. KOSUKEGAWA Teiji (Toyama University)**

**Working Title: On the significance of the glosses in Vietnamese classical Chinese texts**

**Abstract:** In various regions of Sinosphere, the phenomenon of glossing classical Chinese texts is attested over a long period of time. The glosses consist of symbols

or characters directly added to the original classical Chinese text to assist in comprehending and reading it in the local language. There is a commonality and particularity in this glossing phenomenon, reflecting the relationship between the language which is to be read (i.e. classical Chinese) and the language to be read in (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese). In this talk, I will focus on the glossing phenomenon in classical Chinese texts in the Digital collection of the Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation (including Han-Nôm texts), and compare them with attestations of the glossing phenomenon in other regions and language of Sinosphere. My objective is to highlight the significance of the Vietnamese glossed classical Chinese texts.

#### **4. A. Charles MULLER (Tokyo University)**

**Working Title: Digital Dictionary of Buddhism and CJKV-E Dictionary**

**Abstract:** The Digital Dictionary of Buddhism [DDB] is a large-scale compilation of Chinese logograph-based terms, texts, temple, schools, persons, etc. found in Buddhist canonical sources. I began to compile this dictionary in 1986 in graduate school as a traditional book/paper dictionary, but converted into Web format in 1995, shortly after the creation of the WWW. The first set of data uploaded to the Web contained 3,200 entries, all written by myself. Soon after this, collaborators began to join the project, aiding in both the development of content and technical sophistication. Over time, the dictionary was converted into an XML format influenced by TEI. In 2000, the project was joined by Michael Beddow, who created the programming infrastructure, XSLT output, search engine, and web security that is in place up to present, and has continued to maintain and update the system according to new developments in web technology. Over time, the DDB has come to be embraced by the academic field of Buddhist studies to the extent that hundreds of scholars contribute interactively on an ongoing regular basis, providing both substantial new entries and minor corrections. In April of 2016, the DDB reached the number of 65,536 entries (the largest of any known Buddhological reference work, to my knowledge). It is subscribed to by over 50 universities, is used in the teaching of courses on Buddhism, and is regularly cited in scholarly research articles and monographs. DDB entries have been contributed by more than 100 scholars, many of them acknowledged as leading experts in their sub-areas of Buddhist Studies. The project has achieved a high level of sustainability and growth through a finely-balanced policy of limited free access for casual users and contribution or fee-based access for professional scholars and translators. The DDB is also implemented in a interoperative manner with the online SAT Taishō Text Database, wherein when one opens up a text from the online Taishō canon and selects a portion of text with one's mouse, the words in the DDB contained in that text will be displayed in the right-hand window with short definitions and links into the DDB entries themselves. The DDB is also integrated into Jean Soulat's Smarthanzi Chinese lookup and parsing tool, which is available both as a web application and as a standalone Windows application.

The Chinese-Japanese-Korean-Vietnamese/English Dictionary [CJKV-E] originated as part of the DDB project, but the two were separated out from each other as the need for two types of treatment of materials became apparent. The underlying XML infrastructure, search engine, maintenance, and editorial system is basically the same as that of the DDB. But the CJKV-E differs in content, seeking to provide comprehensive orthographic information on each individual ideograph, with the fullest coverage possible. Also, the coverage of compound words is focused primarily on the classical texts from the East Asian Confucian and Daoist traditions, along with premodern East Asian history and secular literature. The coverage of the CJKV-E currently exceeds 50,000 entries. The CJKV-E is distinguished from other online Chinese character dictionaries, in its being the only online lexicon of its type that is (1) not merely a computerized aggregation, and (2) not merely a reproduction of an older print dictionary. It is being actively developed in an ongoing manner by scholars in conjunction with the reading of classical texts. This presentation will focus on (1) the applicability of an XML (TEI-based) data framework for compiling and maintaining the dictionaries, and (2) the strategies used in the process of attaining crowd-sourced sustainability.

## 5. Ngô Trung Việt (Van Lang University)

**Working Title: The Preservation of Hán-Nôm Heritage using Information Technology**

**Abstract:** Semantossyllabic chữ Hán-Nôm was the main script used in Vietnam from the Xth Century until the romanized chữ quốc ngữ replaced chữ Hán Nôm as the national script in the 1920's (of course there were also other scripts for ethnics in Vietnam such as Tai, Cham). Almost a century passed since then and chữ Hán-Nôm was almost totally forgotten, as its scholars were wasted, and its documents destroyed. As time goes on, remedies become more and more unrealistic and costly. But with information technology advances, now there is a new way for chữ Hán-Nôm coming back with young generations.

This paper lays out a comprehensive view in five stages for preserving chữ Hán-Nôm with information technology (IT), in Vietnam and in the world.

1. First stage: preserving Hán Nôm characters by including them into international standards so that they could be encoded and then displayed on computers and Internet.
2. Second stage: preserving old Hán-Nôm texts in databases based on Hán-Nôm characters encoded in Unicode.
3. Third stage: preserving Hán Nôm collections of libraries by digitalizing them and opening the digitalized collection for people in the internet.
4. Fourth stage: preserving Hán Nôm heritage in living people by teaching Hán Nôm script to people via the internet.
5. Fifth stage: preserving Hán Nôm heritage by promoting Han Nôm researches with new methods based on information technology.

The above five-stage preservation will provide a general appreciation of chữ Hán-Nôm in the public as well as expert circle. They are helpful in the protection of chữ Hán-Nôm in libraries, archives, historical sites, documents and relics, but also of training teachers, professors, experts and scholars in chữ Hán- Nôm capable of conducting meaningful research in source documents.

These five stages preservation for chữ Hán Nôm have been realized by the Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation and some Vietnamese institutions in many years in collaboration with some experts from Vietnam and the world.

## **6. NGUYỄN Thị Hiền (Vietnam National Institute of Culture & Art Studies)**

**Working Title: Interreligious Dialogue: A Study of the Integration of Buddhism and Folk Beliefs of the Vietnamese (A Case Study of Thảng Nghiêm Buddhist Temple)**

**Abstract:** This paper will explore the values of the interreligious dialogue between Buddhism and folk belief in Vietnam. Buddhism came to Vietnam around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and through its development it integrated with the folk belief of the Viet people, especially in the Buddhist temples in the Northern part of Vietnam. The integration is illustrated in for example the architecture of the pagodas, and in the inscriptions in the altars saying “The first, is Buddha, the second is the Mother Goddess.” Furthermore, it is seen in the worshipping of wholly figures, rituals, festivals, offerings and in the Buddhist teaching. This integration contributes to the characteristics of the Vietnamese Buddhism. It is a characteristic that shares similarities with Buddhism in China and Japan. Drawing on field work conducted at Thang Nghiem Buddhist temple, the paper will examine how esoteric practices of tantra in this temple interweaves by examining three local practices of the worshipping of the Mother Goddess, the worshipping of the historical hero of Tran Hung Dao, and the folk belief in ghosts. The paper uses a story about a female spirit on the Dai Banyan tree at Thang Nghiem temple who controls ghosts to demonstrate the local practice at the temple. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the tantra Buddhist practice integrates the folk beliefs in ghosts (and the exorcising and healing patients). The worship of the Mother Goddesses and Tran Hung Dao historical figure and other esoteric practices reflect the beliefs of the Viet people at Buddhist temples.

**7. NGUYỄN Tuấn Cường, PHẠM Văn Tuấn, and NGUYỄN Văn Thanh (Vietnam Institute for Sino-Nôm Research at VASS)**

**Working Title: Print Culture and the Spread of Buddhist Texts in Early Modern Vietnam: A Case Study of the Woodblock Collection in Khê Hôi Temple**

**Văn hoá in ấn và sự truyền bá văn bản Phật giáo ở Việt Nam thời Tiền hiện đại: Một nghiên cứu trường hợp về bộ ván khắc ở chùa Khê Hôi**

**Abstract:** This paper conducts a case study of the woodblock print culture in Khê Hôi Buddhist Temple in Thường Tín district, Hà Tây province (now in Hanoi), situated within the same region as the Thăng Nghiêm and Phổ Nhân temples. After providing a brief history of the temple and the Buddhist schools that influenced it, we will then provide a description and analysis of its collection of more than 700 woodblock texts, largely unknown before its discovery by the authors in 2001. Next, this paper will examine the spread of books printed from Khê Hôi woodblocks to the surrounding region, through an examination of several public and private Sino-Nôm collections, including the modern collections of Buddhist temples near to Khê Hôi—such as Thăng Nghiêm and Phổ Nhân. Through an analysis of the history of the Khê Hôi woodblocks and the spread of books printed from them, this paper argues that in terms of woodblock print culture, there possibly existed three groups of Buddhist temples in early modern northern Vietnam: 1) temples that were centers of woodblock printing with a wide range of circulation to other temples, such as the temples of Bồ Đà, Vĩnh Nghiêm, Quỳnh Lâm, Bà Đá, ect.; 2) temples that possessed a number of woodblocks with a much smaller range of dissemination (Khê Hôi belongs to this group); and 3) temples that produced no woodblocks themselves, but possessed Sino-Nôm texts from other temples or from handwritten manuscripts produced by monks. The Thăng Nghiêm and Phổ Nhân temples belong to this third group. These three groups of temples may be regarded as the basic elements comprising an institutional network, disseminating Buddhist publications in premodern Vietnam.

Key words: print culture, woodblock, Khê Hôi Buddhist temple, Buddhist text

**Tóm tắt:** Bài viết này thực hiện một nghiên cứu về văn hoá in ấn ván khắc ở chùa Khê Hôi tại Thường Tín, Hà Tây (nay thuộc địa phận Hà Nội). Sau khi mô tả lịch sử chùa, các dòng phái Phật giáo ảnh hưởng tới chùa Khê Hôi, bài viết tiếp tục mô tả và phân tích các ván khắc của chùa hiện còn (hơn 700 tấm, nhiều bộ sách), bộ ván này được biết đến từ năm 2001 trong kệ sách của chùa. Tiếp theo, bài viết xem xét mức độ lưu hành của sách in từ các bộ ván ấy bằng cách: (1) Đối chiếu bản in dập ván khắc đó với sách Phật giáo trong thư viện Viện Hán Nôm, thư viện Quốc gia Việt

Nam, một số bộ sưu tập kinh sách Phật giáo tư nhân; (2) khảo sát các chùa gần chùa Khê Hồi xem có lưu giữ sách in từ ván chùa Khê Hồi hay không.

Thông qua phân tích về lịch sử khắc ván là lưu hành ván khắc của chùa Khê Hồi, bài viết cho rằng, xét trong quan hệ với văn hoá in ấn, ở miền Bắc Việt Nam có 3 nhóm chùa: (1) chùa là trung tâm in ván khắc, như chùa Bồ Đà, Vĩnh Nghiêm, Quỳnh Lâm, Nguyệt Đường; (2) chùa có in ván khắc nhưng sách lưu hành không phổ biến, chùa Khê Hồi thuộc loại này; và (3) chùa không khắc ván, nếu có sách Hán Nôm thì là đi xin từ nơi khác về, hoặc do tặng nhân từ sao chép, như chùa Thăng Nghiêm, Phổ Nhân. Ba nhóm chùa kể trên hoà quyện và đan xen thành mạng lưới truyền bá ấn phẩm Phật học trong lịch sử trung đại Việt Nam.

Từ khoá: văn hoá in ấn, ván khắc, chùa Khê Hồi, văn bản Phật giáo

#### **8. SHIMODA Masahiro (University of Tokyo) and NAGASAKI Kiyonori (International Institute for Digital Humanities/DHII)**

**Working Title: A Digital Ecosystem for Buddhist Studies: An Attempt by the SAT Project**

**Abstract:** Recently, digital tools and methods have spread extensively in the field of humanities. The situation requires digitization of humanities resources such as texts, images, and so on in order to facilitate research environments. Especially, recent Web technologies have realized wider collaboration among researchers globally. The SAT project, which has been developing since 1994, has not only been providing databases of Buddhist scriptures and related materials but has since 2005 also worked toward the collaborative digitization on the Web to form a digital ecosystem for Buddhist studies. The retrieval of information is made more convenient by linking with digital resources on other Web databases, while at the same time maintaining the independence of each project. Recently SAT has been engaging in the digitization of Buddhist images of image section of Taishō Tripitaka. It will be published on Web soon using IIIF (International Image Interoperability Framework) and open annotation.

#### **9. TRẦN Trọng Dương (Vietnam Institute for Sino-Nôm Research at VASS)**

**Working Title: A Mandala of Literacy in Premodern Vietnam: Study on Buddhist Temple**

**Mandala tri tạo kiến văn ở Việt Nam thời tiền hiện đại: nghiên cứu trường hợp ngôi chùa Phật giáo**

**Abstract:** Based on an analysis of historical materials written in Literary Chinese and vernacular Vietnamese (Chữ Nôm), this article examines the contexts of Buddhist knowledge and Buddhist literary practices in premodern Vietnam. How was literacy created and practiced in Vietnamese traditional culture? What role did Buddhist temples play in medieval networks of literacy? In order answer to these questions, this article first presents the following key concepts: *literacy* (*tri tạo kiến văn*), *literary practice* (*thực hành tri tạo kiến văn*), *factors of literary practice* (*tham thể thực hành tri tạo kiến văn*), and *mandala of literacy* (*mạng lưới tri tạo kiến văn*).

This article examines the Buddhist temple from both historical and cultural contexts. I argue that Buddhist monks, in negotiation with factors of literary practice, played an important role in a *mandala of literary practice*. They taught Classical Chinese (and Chinese characters), as well as vernacular Vietnamese (Chữ Nôm), translated Buddhist canon into Vietnamese, composed new works, made handwritten books, carved woodblocks, and published woodblock texts. Meanwhile, the Buddhist temple in traditional culture was a marvelous place not only for self-cultivation, but also to educate Buddhist novices and lay people, and to expand Buddhist orders. The Buddhist temple was a multifunctional space, existing as a hall of reverence, a place of Buddhist worship, and a temple to the forefathers, as well as a center of translation, a Buddhist school, print shop, publisher, archive, library and bookshop. There were, furthermore, a complex networks (or *mandalas*) of Buddhist temples in traditional Vietnamese society, since virtually every village contained a Buddhist temple. Thus, the literary practices of a temple directly affected the cultural life of the community of the village in which it was located, such as religious belief, village economy, and especially village education.

This article demonstrates that there are four basic connections in the *mandala of literacy*: 1) the internal connection between a high-ranking bonze or superior monk and his disciples in each temple; 2) the connection between a Buddhist temple and cultural institutions of the village; 3) the connection between a given temple and other temples (perhaps of the same denomination and perhaps of different denominations); 4) the connection between a given temple and other villages, districts, or even other countries. It is these four connections which comprise a complicated *mandala of Buddhist literacy* in Vietnamese traditional culture.

**Keywords:** literacy, literacy practice, factors of literacy practice, mandala of literacy, Buddhism.

**Tóm Tắt:** Bài viết này là một nỗ lực thử tìm về bối cảnh tri thức Phật giáo và quá trình tri tạo kiến văn Phật giáo ở Việt Nam thời tiền hiện đại. Nó hiện hữu ra sao trong đời sống văn hóa truyền thống, cụ thể là trong đời sống của một ngôi chùa? Với tư cách là một kênh truyền tải, giáo dục và hoằng dương tri thức Phật giáo, ngôi chùa chiếm vị trí như thế nào trong mạng lưới tri thức và tái sản xuất tri thức ở Việt Nam thời tiền hiện đại? Để giải đáp những câu hỏi trên, bài viết trước tiên giới thuyết một số khái niệm, như *tri tạo kiến văn* (literacy), *thực hành*

*tri tạo kiến văn* (literacy practice), *tham thể thực hành tri tạo kiến văn* (literacy factor) và *mandala tri tạo kiến văn* (mandala of literacy).

Bài viết này nghiên cứu về tự viện Phật giáo trong bối cảnh lịch sử và bối cảnh văn hóa. Kết quả cho thấy, các thiền sư, với tư cách là những tham thể, đã giữ một vai trò quan trọng trong việc thực hành tri tạo kiến văn. Họ giảng dạy tiếng Hán (chữ Nho) và tiếng Việt (chữ Nôm), phiên dịch kinh tạng Phật giáo sang tiếng Việt, biên soạn trước tác và các kinh điển mới, thực hành đăng tá sách vở (như một phương pháp giáo dục và tu thiền), tiến hành khắc ván và ấn tống Pháp tạng. Như vậy, chùa Phật, trong văn hóa truyền thống, là một không gian thiêng không chỉ để tu tập hành thiền, mà còn để giáo dục tăng tài, giáo hóa tín đồ, đồng thời còn là để hoằng pháp và mở rộng pháp phái... Chùa Phật trở thành một không gian đa chức năng, tồn tại như là một giảng đường, một nơi phụng Phật, nơi thờ chư tổ, đồng thời cũng là trung tâm dịch thuật, giảng dạy, tu tập, nhà in, nhà xuất bản, thư viện tàng kinh, nơi ấn tống và phát mãi kinh sách nhà Phật... Có nhiều mạng lưới phức tạp giữa các ngôi chùa trong xã hội Việt Nam truyền thống. Bởi vì, mỗi một ngôi làng hầu như đều có một ngôi chùa (chùa Làng). Và các hoạt động thực hành tri tạo kiến văn của chùa chiền cũng liên quan đến đời sống văn hóa của cộng đồng làng xã, như tín ngưỡng dân gian, kinh tế làng, và đặc biệt là giáo dục của làng.

Bài viết cho rằng, có bốn mối quan hệ trong hệ thống mandala tri tạo kiến văn, bao gồm (1) Mối quan hệ nội tại giữa thầy và đệ tử trong một ngôi chùa; (2) Mối quan hệ giữa ngôi chùa đó với các thiết chế văn hóa làng xã; (3) mối quan hệ giữa một ngôi chùa này với các ngôi chùa khác (có thể là cùng sơn môn, hoặc có thể khác phái); (4) Mối quan hệ ngôi chùa cụ thể nào đó với các làng khác/ vùng khác/ hay thậm chí quốc gia khác. Những mối quan hệ này đã tạo nên một mandala phức hợp về quá trình tri tạo kiến văn Phật giáo trong văn hóa Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: tri tạo kiến văn, thực hành tri tạo kiến văn, tham thể tri tạo kiến văn, mandala, Phật giáo.

## **10. Stefania TRAVAGNIN (University of Groningen)**

**Working Title:** **Interpreting a Community through their Temple Library, and Vice Versa: Notes on the Textual and Liturgical Heritage of the Thảng Nghiêm Library**

**Abstract:** Thang Nghiêm Temple hosts a rich library with almost two hundred texts. Those are texts of different provenance, different use, and printed in different ages. Despite their variety, these texts all share one feature: they arrived at the temple

library from the surrounding community, mostly as gifts and in certain cases even returns. Those texts represent the religious (rather than just Buddhist) and liturgical heritage of the community, and embody an identity marker of the community itself. We can interpret the community surrounding the Thang Nghiem temple through the analysis of the temple library and, vice versa, we can understand better the textual contents of the library through more knowledge of the lay community living near the temple.

A study of a temple library can address a few major questions: (1) the *making* of the library, which means the process of creation of this literary heritage. How and when was it made? Who (within the community) was involved in this process? And why has the community made this Library? How does the library embody the link between the monastic community and the surrounding society? (2) The *preservation* of the library is another crucial theme: the library is important for the surrounding community but also for the monastic community and the temple, and once completed it then takes on its own ontology. (3) The *contents* of the library can also be analysed, and this study involves the classifications of the texts included in the library and the unveiling of the religious and liturgical heritage of the community who preserve, read and use those texts. (4) Finally, the ontology of the library becomes parallel to the discourse of the *ontology* of the text per se.

This paper will focus on the last two issues, and thus offer a critical classification of the texts preserved in the library in order to understand the meaning of the book as well as the religious and liturgical heritage that is represented by those texts. In doing so, this paper can also suggest some preliminary considerations on the meaning that the library has for the surrounding Vietnamese community. Finally, my arguments will be articulated in full respect to history and features of Buddhism in Vietnam, so to shed more light on the specific microhistory of the Thang Nghiem community.

This paper will rely on previous scholarship on communities (like Benedict Anderson's work) textual communities (such as theories and methods developed by Brian Stock and Anne M. Blackburn), gift and exchange (see Chris Gregory and Marcel Mauss), but also attempts to formulate new analytical concepts for the study of temple libraries and precisely for the study of this specific case study in Vietnam.

## **11. Jeff WALLMAN (Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center)**

**Working Title: From the Ground Up: An Overview of Building a Digital Library of Buddhist Texts**

**Abstract:** The modern digital library is an environment in which digital texts and a great deal of information about those texts exist side-by-side. Metadata is now so rich that it can be modeled as "digital objects" in and of itself - data that can be queried, sorted, and connected just like digital texts. Transforming digital texts and metadata into digital objects and then exposing relationships that exist between

them provides completely new ways of understanding the original works. With the adoption of the Resource Description Framework (RDF), digital libraries now have the capacity to offer a diverse set of schemas to capture and express specialized knowledge about collections, and can make this knowledge completely available in the form of user interfaces and linked data. This paper will provide a quick tour of the layers of a digital library from schema, database organization, digital asset management, to the user discovery platform including search, faceted result lists and linked data.

## **12. Wynn Wilcox (Western Connecticut State University)**

**Working Title:       The Localization of Mahayana Sutras in Northern Vietnam, ca. 1800-1922**

**Abstract:** This paper is a comparative analysis of the prefaces and other commentarial information contained in sutras that were reprinted in Hanoi from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. These sutras are preserved in the VNPF's Thang Nghiem collection. They include include the *Avatamsaka/Flower Garland Sutra* (Hanoi, 1922), *Lotus Sutra* (Hanoi, late 19th or early 20th C.), *Platform Sutra* (Hanoi, no date; likely mid-19th century), *Dharmatrāta-Dhyāna-Sūtra* (Nam Định, 1908) and the *Diamond Sutra* (Hanoi, 1887). The paper will explore the role of nationalism and of regional identity in northern Vietnam in how the prefaces to these texts frame and transform their meaning.