



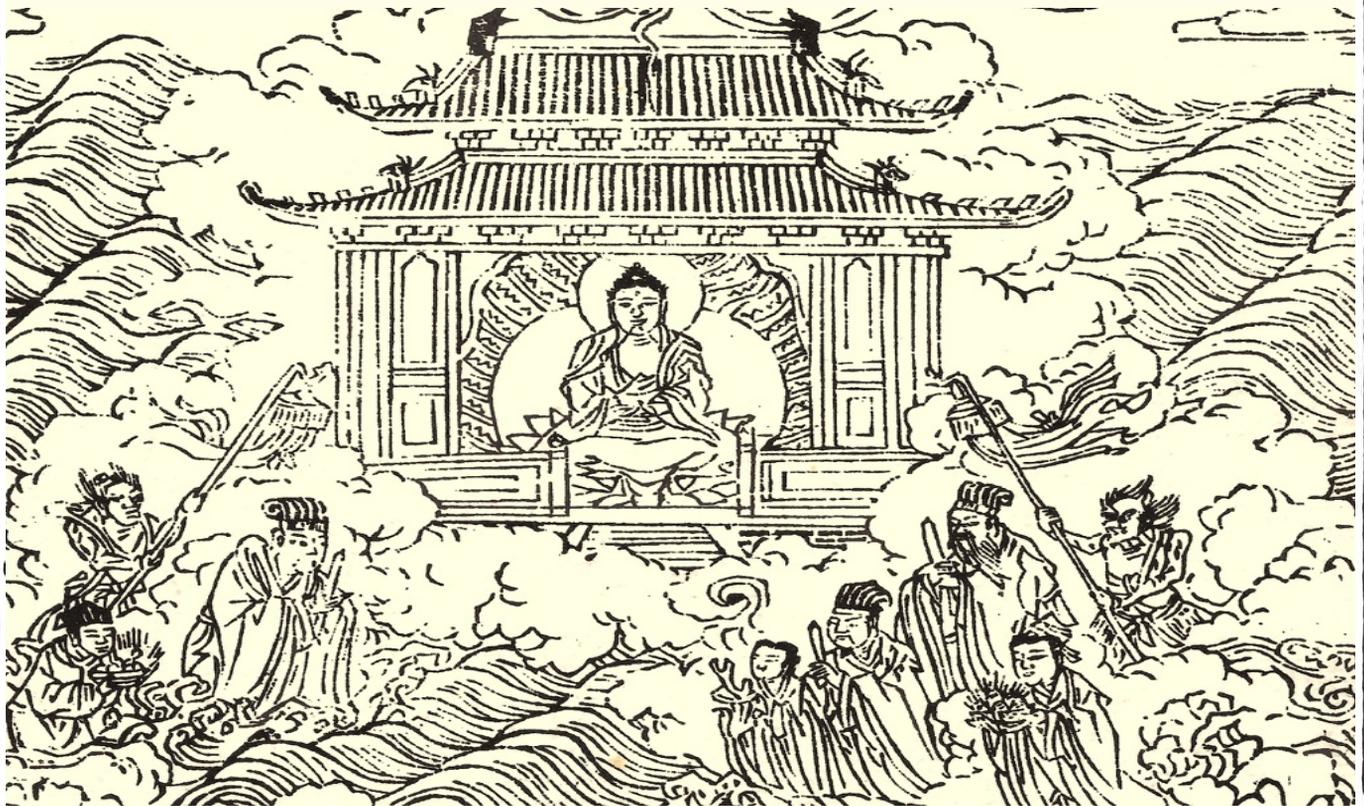
UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Asian and  
Middle Eastern Studies

# Historiography and Hagiography in Buddhism and Beyond

8-10 July, 2024

Newnham College, University of Cambridge



印證佛學網絡

YIN-CHENG Network for Buddhist Studies



*This conference is generously sponsored by the Tzu Chi 慈濟  
Foundation as part of the Yin-Cheng Network  
and the Glorisun Global Buddhist Network*

## “Historiography and Hagiography in Buddhism and Beyond”

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Note: All sessions take place in the Lucia Windsor Room in Newnham College, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge. The conference is open to the public; no registration is required.

### \*\*\* Conference Schedule \*\*\*

#### Monday, July 8

9:30-10:00	Registration and coffee
10:00-12:00	<p><b><u>Session 1: Welcome and Keynote Addresses</u></b></p> <p>Welcome Address: Noga Ganany</p> <p>Rey Sheng Her The Public History of Contemporary Buddhism: Exemplifying Tzu Chi's Oral History and Documentation</p> <p>Mark Meulenbeld Place and Presence: What Peach Spring tells us about Hagiography</p>
12:00-13:30	Lunch break

13:30-15:30	<p><b><u>Session 2: The Life/Lives of the Buddha</u></b>  Chair: Richard Bowring</p> <p>Mario Poceski  Intersections of History, Legend, and Myth in the Live(s) of the Buddha</p> <p>Arun Kumar Yadav  Historiography of Some Major Biographical Events of the Śākyamuni Buddha</p> <p>Gudrun Bühnemann  An Illustrated Life of Śākyamuni Buddha According to the Newar Buddhist Tradition</p>
15:30-16:00	Coffee break
16:00-18:00	<p><b><u>Session 3: Writing, Publishing, and the Laity</u></b>  Chair: Noga Ganany</p> <p>Marcus Bingenheimer  Uses of Biography in the <i>Longshu jingtuwen</i> (1162 CE)</p> <p>Guo Xing Bhikshuni (Yu-Chen Tsui)  Hongzhi Zhengjue’s Usage of Allusions from Secular Literature in <i>Gong’an</i> Commentarial Verses</p> <p>Katherine Alexander  Creating Buddhist Literature from a non-Buddhist Story Collection: Ding Fubao’s <i>Quanjie lu leibian</i> and its Reception</p>

**Tuesday, July 9**

9:30-10:00	Coffee
10:00-12:00	<p><b><u>Session 4: Writing and Ritual</u></b> Chair: Noga Ganany</p> <p>Li Wei Finally Comes the Magical Rain: A Study of Praying-for-Rain Narratives in the Buddhist Biographies in Medieval China</p> <p>Maxwell Brandstadt Shrine to the Written Word: The Jinchuanwan 金川灣 Cave Shrine, Xinxing 信行 (540 CE–594 CE), and Scriptural Fundamentalism in Sui-Tang Buddhism</p> <p>David Mozina Performing Hagiography and Iconography in Daoist Ritual</p>
12:00-13:30	Lunch break
13:30-15:30	<p><b><u>Session 5: Writing and Visuality</u></b> Chair: Roel Sterckx</p> <p>Raoul Birnbaum Self-Portraits, Portraits, and Blood Writing: Visual Materials as Core Primary Sources for the Study of a Buddhist Monk’s Life</p> <p>Julia Murray Changing with the Times: Pictorial Hagiographies of Confucius and their Audiences</p> <p>Elizabeth Kindall Painted Mountainscape as Visual Aid and Curative Remedy</p>
15:30-16:00	Coffee break

16:00-18:00	<p><b><u>Session 6: Hagiography and Iconography in Literature</u></b></p> <p>Chair: Heather Inwood</p> <p>Li Yuhang  Animating an Icon through Fiction: Fish-basket Guanyin in the <i>Journey to the West</i></p> <p>Noga Ganany  Reflections on the <i>Shishi yuanliu</i> (“Origins of the Śākya”) and the Rise of Illustrated Hagiographical Narratives in Ming Print Culture</p> <p>Vincent Durand Dastès  Engaging the World as a Stray Saint or Facing the Wall like Bodhidharma? A Debate on Meditation Between Buddhist and Daoist Masters in a Late Qing Hagiographical Novel</p>
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**Wednesday, July 10**

9:30-10:00	Coffee
10:00-12:00	<p><b><u>Session 7: Writing and Place</u></b></p> <p>Chair: Dror Weil</p> <p>Megan Bryson  Buddhist Book Culture in the Dali Kingdom (937–1253): Song Models with a Regional Twist</p> <p>Wang Heqin  On the Construction of the Five Hundred Arhats Narratives of the <i>Nanyue</i> Mountain and the <i>Tiantai</i> Mountain by Guanding</p> <p>Noelle Giuffrida  Traversing the Daoist God Zhenwu’s Sacred Terrain at Wudangshan in Books, Bronzes, and Beyond</p>
12:00-13:30	Lunch break
13:30-15:30	<p><b><u>Session 8: Clerical and Lay Voices</u></b></p> <p>Chair: Ling Zhang</p>

	<p>Chen Ruifeng Filial Buddhist Nuns: More Aspects of Chinese Women in the Reconciliation of Confucianism and Buddhism</p> <p>Jennifer Eichman The Poetic Voice: Scripting Poems for the Abbess Zhujin</p> <p>Wang Yu-Tzu The Cultural Significance and Poetic Practice of Late Ming Literati's Copying of the 'Records of the Source-Mirror' — Focusing on Yuan Hongdao's Buddhist Philosophy</p>
15:30-16:00	Coffee break
16:00-18:00	<p><b><u>Session 9: Historiography and Gazetteers</u></b> Chair: Xin Fan</p> <p>Natasha Heller Toward a Historiography of Buddhist Plants in China</p> <p>Hsu Wei-li (Philip) New Perspectives on Yao Guangxiao: Insights from Buddhist Hagiographies and Gazetteers</p> <p>Peng Qinqin From Lineage to Evolution: The Writing of Buddhist General History in Modern China</p>
18:00	Closing ceremony

### **Conference Speakers (in alphabetical order):**

Katherine Alexander (University of Colorado, USA)  
Marcus Bingenheimer (Temple University, USA)  
Raoul Birnbaum (University of California, Santa Cruz, USA)  
Maxwell Brandstadt (Harvard University, USA)  
Megan Bryson (University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA)  
Gudrun Bühnemann (University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA)  
Chen Ruifeng (Zhejiang University, PRC)  
Vincent Durand-Dastès (Inalco, France)  
Jennifer Eichman (independent scholar)  
Noga Ganany (University of Cambridge, UK)  
Noelle Giuffrida (Ball State University, USA)  
Guo Xing (Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts, Taiwan)  
Natasha Heller (University of Virginia, USA)  
Rey-sheng Her (Tzu Chi Charitable Foundation, Taiwan)  
Hsu Wei-li Philip (National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan)  
Elizabeth Kindall (University of St. Thomas, USA)  
Li Wei (Henan University, PRC)  
Li Yuhang (University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA)  
Mark Meulenbeld (University of Hong Kong, PRC)  
David Mozina (University of Cambridge, UK)  
Julia Murray (University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA)  
Peng Qinqin (Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany)  
Mario Poceski (University of Florida, USA)  
Wang He-qin (Qingdao University, PRC)  
Wang Yu Tzu (National Taiwan University, Taiwan)  
Arun Kumar Yadav (Nava Nalanda Mahavihara University, India)

### **Chairs**

Richard Bowring (University of Cambridge)  
Noga Ganany (University of Cambridge)  
Xin Fan (University of Cambridge)  
Heather Inwood (University of Cambridge)

Roel Sterckx (University of Cambridge)

Dror Weil (University of Cambridge)

Ling Zhang (University of Cambridge)

### **Cambridge Conference Team**

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Ilay Golan (assistant)

Yizhuo Li (assistant)

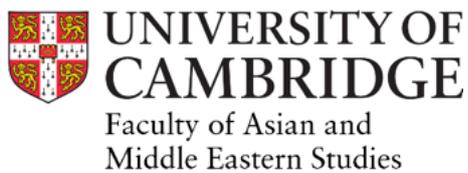
Shoufeng Liu (assistant)

### **Conference Sponsors**

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## Session 1: Opening Addresses and Keynotes

**Rey Sheng Her, Tzu Chi University**

### **“The Public History in of Contemporary Buddhism: Exemplifying Tzu Chi’s Oral History and Documentation”**

Public History emphasizes that history should be understandable to the general public, not just a narrative for the elite. Taiwanese historians emphasize that Public History is the history of the public; it is written for the public; and it is co-authored by the public. In short public history is History for the Public, of the Public, and by the Public. The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, as a religious charity organization, has a history comprised of the efforts that volunteers have made for the suffering people. Indeed, it writes the history of the masses, not the history of elite emperors. It also aims to pass on the practice of Buddhist compassion and altruism to future generations, allowing all readers to feel the power of compassion and great love. Therefore, it truly is a history written for the public. Tzu Chi's history is authored by thousands of humanitarian volunteers spread across the world, making it a history written by the public. During this period, oral history is the most convenient and feasible method for Public History.

Founded nearly sixty years ago, Tzu Chi's early history was documented through the Tzu Chi Monthly magazine. However, to capture a broader range of Tzu Chi's history, including the stories and experiences of Tzu Chi people, oral history work was initiated fourteen years ago. Combining the insights and guidance of numerous historians in Taiwan, Tzu Chi's Department of Literature and History organized various workshops to train colleagues in cultural and historical studies, as well as documentary volunteers, to collectively engage in oral history work. Over the past fourteen years, a team of nearly two hundred people has been formed to meticulously document the historical achievements of Master Cheng Yen and the Tzu Chi community in their early days. In addition to relying on the expertise of professional historians, the Tzu Chi Culture and History Team has developed its own unique perspective on religious history during this period, which has also been recognized and affirmed by professional historians.

The records of Tzu Chi's history are referred to as the "Tzu Chi Canon." The concept of the "Tzu Chi Canon" combines elements of Confucian classics and Buddhist scriptures, divided

into categories such as classics, history, philosophy, collections, and monastic rules. As a part of the development of Buddhist history, Tzu Chi hopes that the "Tzu Chi Sutra Treasury" will contribute to the development of Buddhism and embody the teachings of the Buddha, making a positive contribution to human civilization. The "Tzu Chi Canon" includes: Classic Canon (teachings by Master Cheng Yen on Buddhist scriptures), Historical Canon (comprehensive history/chronicles of Tzu Chi), Disciples Canon (stories of Tzu Chi people), Academic Canon (academic research on Tzu Chi), and Practitioner Rules Canon (compilation of Tzu Chi's spiritual practice methods), and so on.

**Dr. Rey-Sheng Her** is the Deputy CEO of Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation and an Associate Professor of the Institute of Religion and Culture at College of Humanity and Social Science, Tzu Chi University. Dr Her is also the Spokesman and Director of Humanity Development of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, which runs the largest, faith-based NGO in the Chinese world. Dr. Her received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Peking University and MA of Art on Communication Management, the Annenberg School for Communication of the University of Southern California. As a veteran media professional, he was a senior news anchor and TV program producer. Dr. Her's publications include "From Altruism to Ultimate Awakening—The Altruistic Philosophy and Practices of Dharma Master Cheng Yen", "The Philosophy and Practices of Buddhist Tzu Chi (Parts I and II)", "The Moment of Inspiration", and "Constructive Journalism"; edited "The Universal Value of Buddhism & the Dharma Path of Tzu Chi", and "The Dialogue of Religion and Environment", etc.

**Mark Meulenbeld, University of Hong Kong**

**"Place and Presence: What Peach Spring tells us about Hagiography"**

What categories do we apply when reading our sources? How do we situate them within the world that created them? Though long seen uniquely from the perspective of the Chinese literary canon, Tao Qian's 陶潛 (365? – 427) famous "Record of the Peach Blossom Spring" ("Taohuayuan ji" 桃花源記) may find an even more fruitful disciplinary home in religious studies and history. The story refers itself to a grotto at Wuling 武陵 (in present day Hunan

province), a site associated with Daoist immortals at least since the middle of the sixth century. An older Daoist monastery on that same site, the Peach Spring Abbey (Taoyuan guan 桃源觀), became officially recognized in 748 and received imperial support not long after. This talk discusses Peach Spring as a sacred site, or, as Tao Qian himself referred to it in his poem, a “divine realm” (*shenjie* 神界), and relates it to the living ritual tradition in Hunan that revolves around the female transcendents dwelling in the grotto. Doing so will redefine Tao Qian’s story in terms of hagiography and subsequently provoke questions about this genre, the places it holds sacred, and the presences it enshrines.

**Mark Meulenbeld** is an associate professor of Chinese religion in the School of Chinese at The University of Hong Kong. He holds a Ph.D. in East Asian Studies from Princeton University. He studies the history (and present) of Daoism and its interaction with the traditions of local cults, including narratives and rituals in the vernacular language. His work increasingly focuses on Daoist modes of engagement with the natural environment and its sacred presence(s). Recently he has also become interested in the Daoist co-optation of religious traditions belonging to indigenous peoples of Southwest China and Southeast Asia.

## **Session 2: The Life/Lives of the Buddha (Monday, 13:30-15:30)**

**Mario Poceski, University of Florida**

**“Intersections of History, Legend, and Myth in the Live(s) of the Buddha”**

This conference presentation explores the tangled web of historical memories, legends, and myths associated with the Buddha, and the challenges they pose to scholarly attempts at constructing a biographical narrative of his life. Given that we do not have direct access to reliable contemporaneous sources about the historical existence and religious persona of the Buddha, how are we to approach the writing of his biography, as we also reflect on the broader relationship between historiography and hagiography? If there is no choice but to approach the Buddha’s life story and historical legacy via the memories, images, and narratives created by many generations of followers, what are the strategies we should deploy

when using traditional sources, such as texts from the Pāli canon and the Chinese āgamas (ahánjīng 阿含經), or Mahāyāna scriptures such as the Lalitavistara Sūtra (Pǔyào Jīng 普曜經)? The presentation's main theme thus revolves around the seeming inseparability of the Buddha's historical life and his broader legacy, which was shaped by the evolving beliefs, concerns, and ideas of later generations of Buddhists. That legacy was never static and involved several intersecting elements: historical memories, pious embellishments, legendary narratives, philosophical reflections, esthetic sensibilities, ritual and contemplative practices, and institutional concerns. Consequently, the story of the Buddha's life cannot be separated from the broader story of Buddhism, as it evolved within and outside of the Indian homeland. This presentation is closely related to my new book, *The Buddha: Life, Legend, and Legacy* (forthcoming from Reaktion Books).

**Mario Poceski** is a professor of Buddhist studies and Chinese religions at the University of Florida. He received a PhD in East Asian Languages and Cultures (specialization in Buddhist studies) from the University of California, Los Angeles (2000), and has spent extended periods as a visiting professor or fellow at Komazawa University (Japan), Stanford University, National University of Singapore, Nanzan University (Japan), University of Hamburg (Germany), Fudan University (China), and University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (Germany). He is a recipient of several prestigious fellowships and awards, including Alexander von Humboldt and Fulbright-Hays. Prof. Poceski's publications include seven books and over forty articles, chapters, and other short pieces. His books include *Communities of Memory and Interpretation: Reimagining and Reinventing the Past in East Asian Buddhism* (Hamburg 2018, ed.), *The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature* (Oxford 2015), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism* (Blackwell 2014, ed.), *Introducing Chinese Religions* (Routledge 2009), and *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan Buddhism* (Oxford 2007).

**Arun Kumar Yadav, Nava Nalanda Mahavihara**

**“Historiography of Some Major Biographical Events of the Śākyamuni Buddha”**

The writing of Buddha’s biography is a very common feature of the Buddhist world since ancient time to till date. This paper will investigate the historiography of the Buddha's biography as portrayed in Pāli, Buddhist Sanskrit, and Early Chinese Buddhist literature, examining the evolution and transmission of narrative elements across these linguistic and cultural boundaries. By scrutinizing primary texts and scholarly interpretations, it seeks to elucidate the multifaceted ways in which the life story of the Buddha was shaped, preserved, and disseminated within these distinct literary traditions. Beginning with an exploration of the Pāli Canon, the foundational scripture of Theravāda Buddhism, the study discerns the earliest strata of biographical material and traces its development over time. It investigates how biographical narratives were composed, redacted, and interpolated within the Pāli tradition, shedding light on the socio-cultural contexts that influenced their construction.

Subsequently, the paper will examine the Buddhist Sanskrit literature, particularly focusing on texts such as the Mahāvastu, Lalitavistara Sūtra, Buddhacarita, Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra etc, which offer expanded and embellished accounts of the Buddha's life. Through comparative analysis, it will identify the thematic shifts, narrative motifs, and doctrinal emphases that distinguish these Sanskrit compositions from their Pāli counterparts. Furthermore, the study will investigate the transmission of Buddhist narratives into Early Chinese Buddhist literature, analyzing translations of key texts and indigenous Chinese compositions. It will elucidate the processes of adaptation, localization, and reinterpretation through which the Buddha's biography was assimilated into the Chinese cultural milieu, yielding distinctive literary expressions and doctrinal formulations. In conclusion, this comparative study offers insights into the fluidity and adaptability of Buddhist biographical literature, highlighting its capacity to accommodate diverse ideological perspectives while retaining its core narrative framework. It underscores the importance of contextualizing textual sources within their respective historical and cultural contexts to discern the intricate trajectories of Buddhist historiography.

**Dr. Arun Kumar Yadav** is currently an Associate Professor of Pali at Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda, India, Visiting Associate Professor at Guangzhou Academy of

Fine Arts and Visiting Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. In 2011, he received the Indo-Chinese Fellowship to study the Chinese language. Dr. Yadav has conducted two joint research projects with the Indian Council of Social Science Research and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He has also served as a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies, Taiwan. His research interests focus on Theravada Buddhism and comparative studies of Chinese and Theravada Buddhism.

**Gudrun Bühnemann, The University of Wisconsin-Madison**

**“An Illustrated Life of Śākyamuni Buddha According to the Newar Buddhist Tradition”**

The paper will introduce two manuscripts that illustrate the life story of Śākyamuni Buddha according to the Newar Buddhist tradition of Nepal. The manuscripts, dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, contain 35 panels with line drawings accompanied by explanatory text in the Newari language. The first part of the narrative corresponds with the Buddha legend known from the Lalitavistara but features some interesting minor details. The second part of the life story is of particular interest since it summarizes episodes involving Śākyamuni’s wife, Yaśodharā, who, in the absence of her husband, endures much suffering at the hands of Śākyamuni’s cousin Devadatta. Thus, Yaśodharā is cast into a pond to drown but is lifted out of it by a serpent king. She remains unharmed after being cast into a blazing fire to be burnt alive. Finally, she is made to jump from a precipice but is brought back safely by the monkey king. The illustrated life story also incorporates the episode of the Buddha’s (return) journey to Lumbinī after his enlightenment. The Buddha undertakes a journey to Lumbinī (*lumbinīyātrā*), riding standing up on a serpent king while being attended by Hindu/Brahmanical deities in service to him. This strand of the Buddha legend is specific to Newar Buddhism and became very popular in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Nepal. Since only a few illustrations of the Newar Buddhist version of the legend of Śākyamuni are known, the line drawings in the two manuscripts are important.

**Gudrun Bühnemann** is a Professor of Sanskrit and Indic Religions in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Wisconsin-

Madison, USA. After receiving her Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies and Indology from the University of Vienna, she spent extended periods of time as a post-doctoral researcher at Savitribai Phule Pune University and the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in India and at Nagoya University and Kyoto University in Japan. Her research has been supported by fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Academy of Religion, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and the German Research Council, among other organizations. She has published extensively on Tantric iconography and ritual. Her recent books include *Śākyamuni's Return Journey to Lumbinī (lumbinīyātrā): A Study of a Popular Theme in Newar Buddhist Art and Literature* (Lumbini International Research Institute, 2015) and *The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities* (First Indian edition, revised, as a single volume, Aditya Prakashan, 2016). More information can be found on her website: <https://buhnemann.ls.wisc.edu/>

### **Session 3: Writing, Publishing, and the Laity (Monday, 16:00-17:30)**

**Marcus Bingenheimer, Temple University**

**“Uses of Biography in the *Longshu jingtuwen* (1162 CE)”**

Soon after the "Essays on the Pure Land from Longshu" (*Longshu jingtuwen* 龍舒淨土文) (T.1970) were completed in 1162 CE, their author, Wang Rixiu 王日休 (1105-1173), had them printed and distributed. Since then the Essays have remained in print and are arguably the most popular work in the East Asian Pure Land tradition written by a layman. Next to more than fifteen known editions in pre-modern China, there are independent editions of the text in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

This presentation will focus on Wang's use of biography. Of the ten chapters of the *Essays* originally written by Wang, three contain biographies or biographic material in the wider sense. Chapter 5 consists of thirty rebirth biographies (*wangsheng zhuan* 往生傳), some of which are taken from earlier sources. Chapter 7 contains six cases of monastics who "failed" by being reborn among humans, neither attaining Nirvana or Rebirth in the Pure

Land. Chapter 8 consists of eighteen anecdotes, which can be considered biographical as they are always connected to a particular person, and place and time are usually specified. We will see how Wang uses this material as proof for the efficacy of Pure Land practice in general, vis-à-vis Chan practice, and in daily life. With regard to historiography, the biographical approach embodies Pure Land attitudes towards the past as a mere reservoir of cases. The Pure Land tradition neither needed nor was interested in diachronic historical genres such as lineage accounts, annals, or universal or local histories. As there is no history in the Pure Land, there cannot be a history of the Pure Land.

**Dr. Marcus Bingenheimer** is Associate Professor of Religion at Temple University (Philadelphia). He taught Buddhism and Digital Humanities in Taiwan at Dharma Drum (2005 to 2011), and held visiting positions and fellowships at universities in Korea, Japan, Thailand, Singapore, and France. Since 2001, he has supervised various projects concerning the digitization of Buddhist culture. His main research interests are the history and historiography of East Asian Buddhism, early Buddhist sūtra literature, and the application of computational methods on data in the Humanities. He has published more than sixty peer-reviewed articles, a dozen or so datasets, and a handful of books.

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**Guo Xing Bhikshuni (Yu-Chen Tsui), Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts  
“Hongzhi Zhengjue’s Usage of Allusions from Secular Literature in *Gong’an*  
Commentarial Verses”**

This paper examines the extent Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091-1157) incorporated allusions from secular literature to convey Chan insights in his *gong’an* (public cases or old cases) commentarial verses (*songgu*). Hongzhi, an influential monk in the revival of the Caodong lineage during the Song period (960-1279), produced an extensive corpus of recorded sayings (*yulu*), which remains one of the largest extant collections of *yulu*. Among the diverse writing genres exhibited in his *yulu*—including verses, portrait poetries, and commentaries on *gong’an* (Chan monks’ encounter dialogues)—

Hongzhi's gong'an commentarial verses epitomize his enduring literary legacy. His verses contributed centrally to the textual production of gong'an anthologies masterpieces, such as *Congrong lu*, compiled by Wansong Xingxiu (1166–1246), who lauded Hongzhi's literary eloquence by likening him to the Tang Dynasty poet, Du Fu. This paper explores how Hongzhi's gong'an commentarial poems intersected with literature, demonstrating his adept usage of allusions from a wide range of sources, including classics (*jing*), histories (*shi*), and writings of philosophers (*zi*) and literati (*ji*). These allusions reveal Hongzhi's erudition and virtuosity with writing, qualities he shared with secular literati. Furthermore, the paper shows how Hongzhi imbued elements from secular literature with Buddhist concepts to elucidate essential points of gong'an. His literary engagement in gong'an poems represents the paradoxical Chan image between the ineffable truth realized through Chan practice and literary refinement, pointing to the wordless truth within the larger Chan tradition. Hongzhi's approach of using literary allusions to comment on gong'an may have been a strategic means to reach a broader audience outside Buddhist institutions, particularly literati, aiming to disseminate Chan teachings and revitalize the Caodong lineage.

**Guo Xing Bhikshuni** was ordained by Master Sheng Yen (1931-2009), the founder of Dharma Drum Mountain. Guo Xing Bhikshuni is an assistant professor at the Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts. She holds a Master's degree in Religion from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in Asian Languages and Cultures from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research focuses on Chinese Buddhism, particularly Chan Buddhism throughout history. Her interests include Chan doctrine and practice, specifically *huatou* (contemplating critical phrases) of the Linji lineage and Silent Illumination of the Caodong lineage during the Song dynasty. She studies their development from the Yuan to Qing dynasties and their transmission beyond China, especially in Japan. Additionally, she examines how monastics conveyed Buddhist teachings to laypeople through written forms, including verses, epistles, and dharma words, and investigates non-canonical Chan texts from the late Ming to Qing dynasties. Her recent research examines how Master Sheng Yen integrated classical teachings and meditation methods from different traditions—including Theravada, Tibetan, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese—into practical meditation practices suitable for modern society. She also explores how Master Sheng Yen launched the

“Purification of Spiritual Environment Movement,” using Chan teachings to address global issues like ethnic and religious conflicts, poverty, and environmental degradation.

**Katherine Alexander, University of Colorado**

**“Creating Buddhist Literature from a non-Buddhist Story Collection: Ding Fubao’s *Quanjie lu leibian* and its Reception”**

In 1921, Ding Fubao (1874-1952), prolific Buddhist publisher, printed 3000 copies of a new work: *Quanjie lu leibian* 勸戒錄類編 (Record of Exhortations and Admonitions, Thematically Organized). Between 1918-1922, Ding’s series *Foxue congshu* 佛學叢書 (Buddhist Studies Collectanea) provided Buddhist beginners with dozens of carefully annotated sutras and basic primers, fueled by Ding’s conviction that the originals were too complicated for novices to understand. In the case of *Quanjie lu leibian*, however, the base text Ding worked from was not a Buddhist work to begin with. *Quanjie lu* was instead a sprawling late Qing anthology of over a thousand morality tales without any specific religious orientation. Out of its disorder, Ding crafted a Buddhist book which he then confidently advertised within the category *Foxue rumen shu* 佛學入門書 (Introductory Works of Buddhology).

My examination of *Quanjie lu leibian* is guided by two main questions. First, what made it into good Buddhist literature for beginners? By 1926, the preface to its seventh printing records that collectively a total of 20,500 copies had been sponsored by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Clearly the work succeeded in attracting broad support and interest. Consequently, what can this publication history reveal about Republican era Buddhist book culture and patronage networks? By exploring *Quanjie lu leibian*’s creation and spread, we can better understand how Buddhists engaged with narrative literature, along with their use of new print technologies to expand their reach among new, modern audiences.

**Katherine Alexander** is an assistant professor of Chinese at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her interdisciplinary research spans the fields of literature,

religion, and history, focusing on late Qing morality literature and its reception. Her work is closely engaged with publication history and critical bibliography. Her forthcoming book *Teaching and Transformation: Yu Zhi and Popular Confucian Literature in the Late Qing* (University of Michigan Press, Summer 2025) explores how mid-nineteenth-century crises compelled moral reformers to reconsider how best to effectively transform society and imagine new ways of reaching out to audiences tempted by more entertaining media.

#### **Session 4: Writing and Ritual (Tuesday, 10:00-12:00)**

**Li Wei, Henan University**

#### **“Finally Comes the Magical Rain: A Study of Praying-for-Rain Narratives in the Buddhist Biographies in Medieval China”**

There has been an in-depth exploration of the Buddhist praying for rain (including snow) ritual in the Song Dynasties (960-1279) and an intriguing explanation of some monastic rain-prayers, such as Śubhakarasiṃha (Shanwuwei 善無畏, 637-735) and Fazang 法藏 (643-712) in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). More thorough research is still needed to fully understand the basic nature, function, and impact of the rain-praying narratives in Buddhist biographies in medieval China. Praying for rain is a religious practice closely associated with political rulers (as in the case of Buddhacinga [Zhufotucheng 竺佛圖澄, 232-348], Shi Tanyan 釋曇延 (516-588), Fazang, and Amoghavajra [Bukong 不空, 705-774], etc.) , a practical application of Tantric rituals (such as the *maṇḍala* practices of Vajrabodhi [Jin Gangzhi 金剛智 669-741], Yixing 一行 [683-727] and Bukong), a typical example of the blending of Taoist and Buddhist rituals (especially on the worship of Dragon [Long 龍] or Dragon King [龍王]), and a significant way for monasteries to gain more widely social influence (such as Longchisi 龍池寺 in Fazang's case). In terms of literary function, rain-praying is not only a significant "event" that illustrates the monks' magical abilities, but it's also a "plot" with a largely harmonious narrative structure (the story's placement inside the narrative, the plotting to solve the issue, and the echo the specifics). Eventually, praying-for-rain narratives were selected and written about independently in later literature as the chief event for certain

eminent monks, along with additional imagery (such as Tanyan in Dunhuang painting, and some cases in *Shishi yuanliu yinghua shiji* 释氏源流应化事迹 [*Sympathetic Resonance Stories in Buddhist Tradition*]).

**Wei LI** (born in 1991) received his Doctor degree of Literature from Peking University and currently serves as an associate professor at the College of Chinese Language and Literature at Henan University, where he also fulfills the role of a supervisor for master's students and undergraduate students. His academic pursuits are centered on Buddhist *Avadāna* literature, the history of Classical Chinese literature, and the literary theories of the Six Dynasties. His research delves into the intricate relationship between Chinese Buddhism and literature, exploring topics such as novels, poems and Buddhist biographies in early medieval China. His teaching portfolio includes courses such as "The History of Classical Chinese Literature," "Classical Chinese Literary Theory," and "Fictions of the Six Dynasties," among others. Additionally, he is actively involved in the translation of Buddhist scriptures into English, bridging cultural gaps and facilitating a deeper understanding of Buddhist teachings. He authored a translated work and published numerous research papers in prestigious journals, including *World Religions Research*, *Religions*, and *Hualin International Journal of Buddhist Studies*. He also leads a social science project funded by the Henan Provincial Government.

### **Maxwell Brandstadt, Harvard University**

#### **“Shrine to the Written Word: The Jinchuanwan 金川灣 Cave Shrine, Xinxing 信行 (540 CE–594 CE), and Scriptural Fundamentalism in Sui-Tang Buddhism”**

Throughout Buddhism's history in China, many eminent Buddhists have parlayed their skill in scriptural exegesis and commentary into an enduring legacy in hagiography and post-mortem worship. At few times, however, has text and worship been so strangely entwined as in the case of the infamous sixth-century monk Xinxing 信行 (540–594). Xinxing has long been known as the founder of the Three Levels movement 三階教, which flourished during the sixth- and seventh-centuries. However, because Xinxing's writings and movement were suppressed by the Tang regime, the content of Xinxing's teachings have long been a mystery.

Recent archaeological and manuscript discoveries, however, have shed new light on this enigmatic “heretic.” Surprisingly, these discoveries show that Xinxing’s teachings focused on the *act* of reading Buddhist scriptures. Uniquely in Chinese Buddhist history, he attempted to create a reorganized, closed canon of Buddhist scripture, and demanded that his followers approach this canon from a *literalist* and *fundamentalist* perspective. Xinxing’s fundamentalist approach was intensely polarizing. After his death, his enemies attacked Xinxing’s movement, but his followers worshipped Xinxing as a new Buddha and held that his reorganized canon supplanted the previous scriptural transmission in China. This paper charts the rise and spread of hagiographies in which Xinxing figures as a divine reader—a bodhisattva of exegesis. It culminates with an examination of the recently rediscovered seventh-century Jinchuanwan cave shrine 金川灣, arguing that this unusual site—in which inscriptions of Xinxing’s writings serve as the main program of design—functions as a shrine to Xinxing *qua* exegete.

**Max Brandstadt** is a Buddhologist and historian focusing on the intellectual history of medieval Chinese Buddhism, particularly during the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries of the common era. His current project, growing out of his dissertation research, centers on the thought of the sixth-century monk Xinxing 信行 and the development of his unusual teachings among his followers, often referred to as the Three Levels Movement (三階教). His broader thematic interests include the nature of religious authority and the relationship between state and sangha. Max received his Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from UC Berkeley in 2022. He is currently a Junior Fellow at the Society of Fellows at Harvard University.

**David Mozina, University of Cambridge**

**“Performing Hagiography and Iconography in Daoist Ritual”**

This paper asks how Daoist hagiographies get made, unmade, and remade within Daoist liturgical practice. It shows the nexus of hagiographies (*zhuan* 傳, *chumai* 出脈, *yuanliu* 源流), iconographies, and talismans (*fuming* 符命), how hagiographies and iconographies of deities and ancestral masters are part and parcel of talismans, which are ritually produced

amalgams of writing, speech, and gesture designed to communicate with deities. The paper examines how hagiographies and iconographies get interpreted and reworked as Daoist masters work to make sense of their arcane talismans. The paper zeroes in on Southern Song- and Yuan-era hagiographies and iconographies of a particular thunder god (*leishen* 雷神), Marshal Yin Jiao 殷郊元帥, and shows how subsequent Daoist masters in various parts of south China have thought with those stories and images to redact their liturgical manuals scripting performed rites for producing talismans for summoning Yin Jiao. Close readings of moments in those liturgical manuals throw light on how Song and Yuan hagiographies and iconographies change in actual liturgical usage, how the written form of hagiography and visual form of iconography have been bound up with the performance art of ritually producing talismans. This fascinating connection between text, image, and bodily action shows that Daoist performance arts have in fact been a major driver of change in hagiographical narration, thereby adding a dimension to our thinking about the relationship between text and performance from the Song period until today.

**David J. Mozina** (Ph.D. Harvard) will this fall assume the position of Affiliated Researcher in the Faculty of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies, here at the University of Cambridge. He studies living Daoist and Buddhist ritual traditions in rural south China, and their roots in the liturgical vibrancy of the eleventh through early fifteenth centuries. He is the author of *Knotting the Banner: Ritual and Relationship in Daoist Practice* (University of Hawai'i Press, Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2021), which was named a finalist for the 2022 Best First Book in the History of Religions by the American Academy of Religion. David has authored articles that have appeared in venues such as the *Journal of Chinese Religions*, *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, and *Daoism: Religion, History, and Society*. He has received research grants from the American Philosophical Society, the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, and the Social Science Research Council; and has served as co-chair of the Daoist Studies Unit of the American Academy of Religion and on the Executive Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions.

## **Session 5: Writing and Visuality (Tuesday, 13:30-15:30)**

**Raoul Birnbaum, University of California, Santa Cruz**

### **“Self-Portraits, Portraits, and Blood Writing: Visual Materials as Core Primary Sources for the Study of a Buddhist Monk’s Life”**

What can we learn, in historical studies, when we move visual materials from a secondary role as illustrations to a principal function as core primary sources? More specifically, can visual materials – both expressive works and documentary records – aid us in gaining access to hitherto unseen interior elements of an eminent Chinese Buddhist monk’s life?

Study of the life of the acclaimed modern monk Hongyi 弘一大師 (1880-1942) is simultaneously aided and burdened by an extraordinary wealth of primary sources, as well as numerous works about him by contemporaries. Among the primary sources, there is a vast textual corpus (both published and unpublished) as well as a sizable body of visual materials (most especially paintings, photographs, and calligraphy). At times these two categories overlap, because Hongyi was an innovative and accomplished calligrapher; there are instances among his works where an example of calligraphy may convey important textual information, and a significant document may also be valued for its exceptional calligraphy.

This study will focus on three careful slices across the large visual corpus, studied against the contextual background of relevant textual materials. First, at age thirty (in 1911) some eight years prior to the start of his monastic career, he painted a remarkable self-portrait to fulfill a graduation requirement that marked the completion of five years of rigorous study of western oil painting in Japan. This unique painting will be considered together with several key photographs across the period 1910-1918, as well as with a “proxy portrait” created by eminent painter Chen Shizeng 陳師曾 in 1918 to mark the moment that his friend left home to become a monk. (Chen’s painting, previously unknown and unheralded, surfaced two years ago at a London auction and remains unstudied.) Second, we will consider the possibility of a kind of “self-portraiture” – deliberate posing to create effects – in selected studio photographs. And third, we will look at examples of blood calligraphy (writing using his blood as ink) as pointers to the particular Buddhist commitments that Hongyi considered especially important.

These apparently disparate matters are linked by concerns about the construction, presentation, and application of self. What I seek in these connected studies is the possibility of a deeper understanding of this complex man's interior life. In addition to textual sources, I believe that visual works used as core primary sources may in their own particular ways allow us to discern or confirm significant threads that otherwise might go unnoticed or minimized.

**Raoul Birnbaum** (Professor of Buddhist Studies Emeritus, University of California, Santa Cruz) works in the interdisciplinary fields of Buddhist studies and the study of Chinese religions. Trained in visual studies, history of religions, and ethnography, his research is rooted in historical approaches. His studies have focused on three great themes: the major deity cults of Buddhist China, visions of the landscape intertwined with religion, and close examination of the lives of individuals within this religious field. In recent decades he has looked at significant figures of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as the 17th-century figures and phenomena to which they often turned as their models and sources. In this regard, he has been working toward the completion of a long study of the artist-monk Hongyi 弘一大師 (1880-1942), a remarkably complex, inventive, and influential figure in Chinese Buddhist worlds. Birnbaum's work has included intensive field study carried out over several decades within Chinese Buddhist monastic communities and across a wide variety of the mountain sites that form the backbone of this tradition's conceptual geography. In recent years he also has been investigating the many worlds of St. Francis of Assisi, with appreciation for the intrinsic interest of these materials and their associated worlds of scholarship, and to exert pressure on the studies of Master Hongyi.

**Julia Murray, University of Wisconsin-Madison**

**“Changing with the Times: Pictorial Hagiographies of Confucius and their Audiences”**

The life of the Buddha has been illustrated innumerable times over the centuries and across a wide geographical area, with many variations in content and style. Visual depictions of the life of Confucius owe something to the influence of Buddhist hagiography, and the subject

also has been treated in a great number of versions that display considerable variety. However, it seems that Confucius's pictorial hagiographies have addressed a much greater range of contexts and purposes, leading to different approaches in terms of medium, content, and technique. Even their titles vary a great deal, from the straightforward *Shengji tu* 聖蹟圖 (Pictures of the sage's traces) to *Xinbian Kongfuzi zhouyou lieguo dacheng qilin ji* 編孔夫子周遊列國大成麒麟記 (Newly compiled record of Master Kong making the rounds of the states and fulfilling the unicorn). In addition to material elements that may suggest intended uses and target audiences, paratext often provides information that sheds light on the specific circumstances surrounding the production. Drawing on my longstanding interest and research in this area, my paper compares the contents, technical characteristics, and likely purposes of several notably different versions of illustrated hagiographies of Confucius. These range from the initial 1444 handscroll with paintings and calligraphy, subsequently reproduced on incised stone tablets from which rubbings were circulated among officials and eventually inspired displays in Confucian temples; to sixteenth-century woodblock-printed books that were part of a surge in commercial publications targeting a less erudite reading public; to late-imperial albums and scrolls containing colorful paintings that appealed to novice art collectors; to contemporary animated cartoons and film for a mass audience.

**Julia K. Murray** is Professor Emerita of Art History, East Asian Studies, and Religious Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Non-Resident Associate at Harvard University's Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies. She previously worked in curatorial positions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Freer Gallery of Art, and Harvard Art Museums. Her books include *The Aura of Confucius: Relics and Representations of the Sage at the Kongzhai Shrine in Shanghai* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), *Mirror of Morality: Chinese Narrative Illustration and Confucian Ideology* (University of Hawai'i, 2007; Chinese edition 道德镜鉴：中国叙述性图画与儒家意识形态, Sanlian, 2014); *Confucius: His Life and Legacy in Art* (with Wensheng Lu; China Institute, 2007); *Asian Sculpture in the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden* (1994); *Ma Hezhi and the Illustration of the Book of Odes* (Cambridge University Press, 1993); *Last of the Mandarins* (Harvard Art Museums, 1987); and *A Decade of Discovery* (Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1979). She has published numerous journal articles and chapters on wide-ranging topics in Chinese pictorial art and narrative illustration,

and on the visual and material culture associated with the veneration of Confucius.

<https://arthistory.wisc.edu/staff/julia-k-murray/>

**Elizabeth Kindall, University of St. Thomas**

**“Painted Mountainscape as Visual Aid and Curative Remedy”**

This reception study argues a handscroll illustrating the Yandang mountains (Yandangshan 雁蕩山) in Zhejiang Province was used by fifteenth-and-sixteenth-century-viewers as an aid in their meditation practice to achieve relief from the ailments of old age. Originally produced in 1316, the scroll was kept and used by later Buddhist believers as part of their contemplative practice. The scroll combines paintings of monasteries, topographical forms, and Buddhist icons with prose and poetry inscriptions to immerse viewers in a visual and literary journey through ephemeral landscape features and mythic Buddhist history.

Viewers engaged in one set of contemplative practices as the scroll was unrolled and another set as it was rerolled. As they unrolled the scroll, viewers were reminded of the topographical identity and religious history of the site as they gained a somaesthetic understanding of its geography. As viewers rerolled the scroll, they engaged in the fully interactive meditational practices of walking and seated meditation associated with the Chan Buddhist founder of the range, Nakula. The circumstances of the colophonists who wrote on the scroll suggest they sought a realm devoted to healing. This was made manifest for them in the scroll by applying their knowledge of the curative history of the mountain range to the scroll’s painted imagery. Analysis of this scroll and the later writings attached to it allow us to reconstitute a rare and authentic episode in the larger tradition of the belief in the restorative powers of mind journeys through painted landscapes.

**Elizabeth Kindall** is Associate Professor of Art History at the University of St. Thomas. She specializes in Chinese landscape painting. In her work, she investigates functional visual experiences captured in paintings of real places through examinations of their distinctive topographical vocabulary and site-specific views. She is presently completing her second book, “Personascape: Place Painting as Biography in Ming China.”

**Session 6: Hagiography and Iconography in Literature (Tuesday, 16:00-18:00)**

**Li Yuhang, University of Wisconsin-Madison**

**“Animating an Icon through Fiction: Fish-basket Guanyin in the *Journey to the West*”**

Throughout *Journey to the West*, Guanyin is clearly identified as Guanyin of the South Sea. However, in chapters 47 to 49 of the novel, Tripitaka undergoes the 36th ordeal of sinking in the Heaven-Reaching River and is finally saved by another manifestation of Guanyin, Fish-basket Guanyin. Regarding the study of the characters in the *Journey to the West*, most discussions have focused on the Tang Xuanzang or Tripitaka and his disciples and the metaphorical dimensions of these characters in relation to various religions in the late imperial period. Guanyin is an important figure who ties together the entire narrative of the *Journey to the West*, yet s/he has been largely overlooked by scholars. In this paper, I will unpack the textual and visual conventions embedded in the character of Fish-basket Guanyin and discuss how a wide range of iconographies of Guanyin and various literary sources of Fish-basket Guanyin are fused together to portray a fictional icon. This paper will address some questions about the relationship between image and text in religious literature, such as how could the symbolic meaning associated with iconography be altered by literary imagination? How was the pictorial representation of religious icons enacted through fiction? How is such a verbalization of an image folded into a narrative?

**Yuhang Li** (PhD, University of Chicago) is Associate Professor of Chinese Art in the Department of Art History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research interests cover a wide range of topics and media related to gender and material practice in late imperial China, mimesis and devotional practice, textile art, paper as an efficacious medium, opera and Chinese visual culture, theater and religion. She is the author of *Becoming Guanyin: Artistic Devotion of Buddhist Women in Late Imperial China* (Columbia University Press, 2020), which received the 2021 Religion and the Arts Book Award from the American Academy of Religion and the 2024 Geiss-Hsu Book Prize for the Best First Book in Ming Studies from the Society for Ming Studies. She also co-curated and co-edited with Judith Zeitlin the exhibition and resulting catalog *Performing Images: Opera in Chinese Visual Culture* (Smart

Museum and University of Chicago Press, 2014). She has published extensively on Chinese women artists, performance and religious practice including Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908) dressing up as Guanyin, hair embroidery, theatricality and narrative robe, paper dharma boats, nineteenth century Chinese tomb, and whole-tree designs and garments in the Qing dynasty.

**Noga Ganany, University of Cambridge**

**“Reflections on the Impact of *Shishi yuanliu* on Illustrated Hagiographical Narratives in Late Ming Print Culture”**

The extraordinary lives of cult figures attracted unprecedented attention in late Ming print culture. Hagiographies of Buddhist saints, Daoist immortals, and prominent deities were included in a variety of commercial publications during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, from daily-life encyclopaedias to literary anthologies. The producers of these publications drew heavily on pre-existing materials and are particularly indebted to major compilation efforts in the preceding centuries, most notably the Zhengtong Daoist canon and the Northern and Southern Buddhist canons, among other printing projects.

This paper considers the long-term impact of the fifteenth century *Shishi yuanliu* 釋氏源流 (“The Origins of Śākya[muni]”) on popular hagiographic writing and publishing in late Ming. First completed in 1425, *Shishi yuanliu* is an illustrated compilation spanning four hundred episodes which combines the life story of the Buddha with summaries of the Buddhist teachings and a revisionist history of Chinese Buddhism from the Han to the Yuan dynasty. The immense popularity of *Shishi yuanliu* soon after its appearance spurred the publication of other editions during the Ming and Qing that enjoyed wide circulation in China, and subsequently in Korea and Japan. The mid-Ming editions of *Shishi yuanliu* not only contributed to the emergence of a renewed hagiographic *imaginaire* during this period, but also represent an important milestone in the development of Chinese print culture and vernacular literature. In this paper, I suggest that *Shishi yuanliu* set the stage for the rise of illustrated hagiographic “novels” (which I term “origin narratives”) that were particularly in vogue in late Ming.

**Noga Ganany** is an Associate Professor in the Study of Late Imperial China at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, and a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College. Her main research interests are Chinese cultural history, religious practice in China, late imperial Chinese literature, print culture and history of the book. Her first monograph, *Origin Narratives: Hagiographic Literature and Religious Practice in Late Ming China*, examines the interplay between cultic reverence and narrative writing in commercial publishing. Among her recent publications are “Writing and Worship in Deng Zhimo's *Saints Trilogy*” (*Religions* 2022) and “Journeys Through the Netherworld in Late Ming Hagiographic Narratives” (*Late Imperial China*, 2021). Before assuming her current position at Cambridge, Dr Ganany taught briefly at Boston University (2018-2019), after receiving her PhD from Columbia University in New York (2018). Dr Ganany is a member of the board of directors of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions (SSCR) and a board member of the Society for Ming Studies.

**Vincent Durand Dastès, Inalco**

**“Engaging the World as a Stray Saint or Facing the Wall like Bodhidharma? A Debate on Meditation Between Buddhist and Daoist Masters in a Late Qing Hagiographical Novel”**

At least since Song-time *neidan* treatises, the Daoist tradition has taken inspiration from *chan*-school meditation techniques. The Quanzhen order, by stressing solitary meditation in the *huandu* enclosure, has remarkably placed itself in this very tradition. Yet, in a late Qing hagiographical novel about Quanzhen founder Wang Chongyang and his early disciples, one finds a harsh critic of the solitary contemplation by itself. It appears in a comic episode where Liu Chuxuan, one of the “Seven perfected”, defeats Bodhidharma in a duel of words and magic in the peculiar surroundings of a brothel. In a connected episode of the same novel, it is the legendary figure of Baozhi that Wang Chongyang calls in to ruin the ascetic and meditative achievements of his disciple Hao Taigu. In both episodes, what is advocated instead of solitary contemplation is engagement with the world as a stray holy man. My paper will show how this relates to a feature of Ming-Qing hagiographical vernacular narratives:

preferring profane ways of salvation in the midst of the laity to haughty withdrawal from the world of dust.

**Vincent Durand-Dastès** is currently Professeur des universités at the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales INALCO in Paris where he teaches pre-modern Chinese language and literature, and teaches also at the University of Geneva. He conducts researches about late Imperial Chinese narrative literature and drama, and their relationships to religion and the supernatural. He writes mostly in French ( « Une ardente alchimie ou l’immortalité par les cuisines » [A blazing alchemy or how to reach immortality in the kitchen], 2019 ; « Une matinée au théâtre des enfers : les incrustations narratives dans les rouleaux verticaux des Dix rois du monde des ténèbres de la Chine moderne [Narrative inlays in the Ten Kings of Hell’s scrolls in modern China] » 2022). He has published in English « A late Qing Blossoming of the Seven Lotus: Hagiographic Novels about the Qizhen 七真 », 2013 ; « Divination, Fate Manipulation, and Protective Knowledge : The Wedding of the Duke of Zhou and Peach Blossom Girl, a Popular Myth of Late Imperial China », 2018 and « Metamorphosis of the Snake Empress: Emperor Wu of the Liang’s Wife from classical and vernacular narratives to rituals and Religious Art » (forthcoming, 2024).

### **Session 7: Writing and Place (Wednesday, 10:00-12:00)**

**Megan Bryson, University of Tennessee**

**“Buddhist Book Culture in the Dali Kingdom (937–1253): Song Models with a Regional Twist”**

The Dali kingdom (937–1253) was a Buddhist regime that ruled a large swath of territory centered in what is now southwest China’s Yunnan province. Dali bordered Song China (960–1279) as well as Tibetan regions to the northwest, Bagan to the west (with Pāla India not far beyond), and Đại Việt to the south. Trade and transportation routes connected Dali to these diverse neighbors and gave Dali Buddhists several options for the forms of Buddhism they could adopt. This paper uses Buddhist manuscripts from Dali to argue that Dali-kingdom

Buddhist book culture followed Song models in their materials, bindings, and commentarial practices. Dali adoption of Song book culture is unsurprising considering the close historical interactions between people in Dali and the Sichuan region, as well as several Song records attesting to Dali representatives' desire to trade horses for books. However, I also highlight Dali's regional book culture, which include the use of both unique Sinitic characters and distinctive Nāgarī Sanskrit syllables. This paper focuses on two texts: the 1136 manuscript *Zhu fo pusa jingang deng qiqing yigui* and undated manuscripts of the *Renwang huguo bore boluomiduo jing*. Dali-kingdom Buddhist manuscripts offer important resources for thinking about book cultures and textual production in the hubs of crosscultural networks. For example, Dali materials reveal different patterns of Buddhist transmission than do the roughly contemporaneous manuscripts found in Dunhuang. Understanding the Dali kingdom's manuscripts allows us to go beyond geographical determinism in making sense of Buddhist book cultures.

**Megan Bryson** is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies and chair of the Asian Studies program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Her research focuses on religion in southwest China, specifically the distinctive Buddhist tradition that developed in the Dali region of Yunnan province. Bryson's monograph, *Goddess on the Frontier: Religion, Ethnicity, and Gender in Southwest China* (Stanford UP, 2016), traced the worship of a local deity in Dali from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. She has also published several journal articles in such venues as the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, and *Asia Major*. Recently she published the co-edited volume (with Kevin Buckelew) *Buddhist Masculinities* (Columbia UP, 2023). Bryson is currently completing a monograph on Buddhist transmission through the Dali kingdom (937–1253) on the southwestern "Silk Road," and she is working on a collaborative sourcebook on Chinese women's religious lives in and beyond the family. In the realm of professional service, Bryson just became the Vice President of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, and serves as the book review editor for the *Journal of Chinese Religions*.

**Wang Heqin, Qingdao University**

**“On the Construction of the Five Hundred Arhats Narratives of the *Nanyue* Mountain and the *Tiantai* Mountain by Guanding”**

In the Southern Song Dynasty, Chen Tianfu's (陳田夫) *Nanyue Zongsheng Ji* (南嶽總勝集) recorded that the *Fangguang* Temple (方廣寺) in the *Nanyue* mountain (南嶽) was the abode of the five hundred arhats (羅漢, Pinyin: *luohan*, Wade–Giles: *lohan*), and told the story of the arhat Huihai's (惠海) appearance and magical deeds in the *Tiantai* Mountain (天台山), which suggests the connection between the *Nanyue* mountain as the holy place of the five hundred arhats and the *Tiantai* Mountain. The same book also related that the five hundred arhats of *Nanyue* ceded the land to Huisi (慧思), which was likely a creation of Huisi's disciples in the process of deifying the sect's ancestors. According to Zhipan's (志磐) *Fozu Tongji* (佛祖統紀), Guanding (灌頂) compiled the one volume *Nanyue Ji* (南嶽記), which was probably the same volume of *The Record of Nanyue and Tiantai Mountain* in the *Chuanjiao Dashi Jianglai Taizhou Lu* (傳教大師將來台州錄). This was the source of later supernatural narratives about Huisi and arhats. Between Huijiao (慧皎) and Daoxuan (道宣), it was Guanding that played a key role in the development of the legend of the *Tiantai* Mountain Sacred Monastery (天台聖寺) as well. The earliest detailed description of the *Tiantai* Mountain Sacred Monastery in Guanding's *Sui Tiantai Zhizhe Dashi Biezhuan* (隋天台智者大師別傳) had an obvious influence on Daoxuan. The *Tiantai* Sacred Monastery, later was given the name *Fangguang* Temple, undoubtedly a heritage from the *Nanyue* mountain. The records of the deeds of Zhiyi (智顛) and Guanding, and more importantly Guanding's writings in particular, are important to our understanding of the interaction between the two mountains.

**Wang Heqin** is an Associate Professor in School of History, Qingdao University, China. Ph.D. in Chinese History, Northwest University, China. Prior to joining Qingdao University, she held postdoctoral fellowship at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Wang Heqin researches the origin and development of the Arhat Cult in Chinese Buddhism. She published papers on the origin of the Eighteen Arhats in China and sanctification of the Yandang Mountain (雁蕩山) where is seen

as arhat Bakula's Residence. Currently, she is concerned with the narrative traditions associated with the Five Hundred Arhats. In addition to this paper she is presenting today, she is writing a paper on the tradition of the story of the Tang Monk who accompanied the 500 Arhats to Tianzhai (天齋 the feast held in heaven) in the *Journey to the West* text.

**Noelle Giuffrida, Ball State University**

**“Traversing the Daoist God Zhenwu’s Sacred Terrain at Wudangshan in Books, Bronzes, and Beyond”**

This paper examines three free-standing Ming (1368–1644) bronze objects featuring narratives associated with the Daoist god Zhenwu, the Perfected Warrior, and his terrestrial base in the Wudang mountains. Drawing on textual and visual sources such as hagiographies, local gazetteers, painted albums, and woodblock-printed books, this paper first identifies a most prominent episode represented in the bronzes and connects it with Zhenwu’s apotheosis and ascension at locations linked to Wudangshan. The scene’s absence in imperially commissioned paintings and prints as well as widely circulated woodblock-printed books such as the *Beiyou ji*, suggests that these bronzes were localized for Wudangshan. The patrons who sponsored their casting and the artists who crafted them intended these bronzes to live in temples on the mountain. I then analyze the spatial arrangement and the hybrid mode of presentation—simultaneously synoptic and topographic—deployed in the bronzes, demonstrating how these objects encouraged active, immersive experiences, allowing viewers to, visually and imaginatively, traverse Zhenwu’s sacred terrain.

**Noelle Giuffrida’s** research focuses on Chinese art, particularly the visual culture of Daoism in late imperial China and the history of collecting and exhibiting premodern works in American museums after World War II. Her first book *Separating Sheep from Goats: Sherman E. Lee and Chinese Art Collecting in Postwar America* was published by University of California Press in 2018. Giuffrida’s object-oriented Daoist scholarship engages with materiality, pilgrimage, body, performance, and ritual. Her research has examined fourteenth through seventeenth century painted albums and woodblock-printed books featuring Zhenwu as well as the Daoist patriarchs Zhang Daoling, Lü Dongbin, and Xu Xun, elucidating the ways in which

they participated in and evoked the material and immaterial realms of Daoist experience for viewers. Her work has also explored the performative dimensions of Zhenwu images, including bronze sculptures featuring episodes from the hagiography of the god at Wudangshan. Recent curatorial projects include the special exhibition *Fibers of Being: Textiles from Asia in the David Owsley Museum of Art's Collection* (2023). Giuffrida earned a PhD in East Asian Art History from the University of Kansas, an MA in Asian Art History from the University of Wisconsin, and a BA in Asian Studies from Vassar College.

### **Session 8: Clerical and Lay Voices (Wednesday, 13:30-15:30)**

**Chen Ruifeng, Zhejiang University**

#### **“Filial Buddhist Nuns: More Aspects of Chinese Women in the Reconciliation of Confucianism and Buddhism”**

Scholars of Chinese Buddhism (e.g., Bret Hinsch 2002; Ping Yao 2014) have demonstrated how Buddhist nuns were depicted as ideals of filial women in the *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 (Biographies of *Bhikṣuṇīs*), a collection of hagiographies likely compiled around 517 CE, and in epigraphical texts, as a Buddhist response to the criticism from Confucians. These studies mainly focus on nuns from medieval China. Also, most of the nuns' impressive filial deeds in the hagiographies that have been discussed occurred before their renunciation. By employing examples found in the *Xu biqiuni zhuan* 續比丘尼傳 (Continued Biographies of *Bhikṣuṇīs*), another collection of Chinese Buddhist nuns' hagiographies ranging from the sixth to the twentieth century, and other epitaphs of Chinese *Bhikṣuṇīs*, I introduce more roles Chinese Buddhist nuns played, both actively and passively, and the efforts they made, as filial women in the confrontation of these two traditions. Expanding on the previous scholarship, I will highlight how nuns maintained their images of filial women after their renunciation. I will also explain why the death of parents easily leads to the renunciation of children, especially young girls. This study sheds light on more aspects of Buddhist nuns in the transformation of leaving the family from an unfilial action to a filial behavior in China, and on how these women undermined the boundary between the religious and the secular spaces in this reconciliation.

**Ruifeng Chen** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Literature at Zhejiang University. This year he is working as a Sheng Yen Postdoctoral Research Scholar and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion at Columbia University. Ruifeng's research interests mainly lie in premodern Chinese Buddhism. He has been studying Dunhuang Chinese manuscripts with colophons, particularly on how they reveal the lived religious experience of historical individuals, for example, medieval Chinese Buddhist nuns. Ruifeng is now expanding his research on the scripture-copying practices of Chinese Buddhist nuns, to their life stories by considering their biographies preserved in epitaphs. His new project is named "A Compilation and Study of Epitaphs and Burial Stūpa Inscriptions of Chinese Bhikṣuṇīs up to the Yuan Dynasty," which is supported by the National Social Science Fund of China. By analyzing epitaphs that preserve the life stories of pre-Yuan Chinese Buddhist nuns (before 1271 CE), this project aims to rediscover the stories of these Buddhist women. In the process, he will also try to update our understanding of how Buddhism developed in Chinese society from the perspective of specific female Buddhist professionals' lives.

**Jennifer Eichman, Independent Scholar**

**"The Poetic Voice: Scripting Poems for the Abbess Zhujin"**

The abbess of the Hangzhou nunnery, Filiality and Righteousness Unobstructed Zhujin 祿錦 (1548-1614) was married to the eminent monk Zhuhong 祿宏 (1535-1615). After their deaths, the Qing dynasty monk playwright Zhida 智達 (d.u.) and the lay Buddhist *baojuan* author Fan Zhen 范珍 both reimagined the lives of this couple. When confronted with lacunae, they created scene-length episodes replete with dialogic exchanges, supporting characters, and spatial descriptions of 'actual' events. The *circa* 1781 *baojuan* entitled, *Nine Levels of the Lotus Platform* (Jiupin liantai 九品蓮臺), dramatizes new, never before heard of episodes: No longer a girl from a poor family, Zhujin plays the zither, sings, and writes poetry. 'Her' seven poems were written in response to seven poems attributed to Zhuhong in the play script, *A Pure Land Transmission of the Lamp: The Mirror of the Return to the Origin* (Jingtu chuandeng guiyuan jing 淨土傳燈歸元鏡) written *circa* 1650. Fan Zhen's

work is clearly in dialogue with this playscript, which he both cribs and augments. How her male narrators voice her and how her voice is employed to proselytize to premodern elite literati and theater audiences, and how this voicing resonated with young literate urban women of the Republican Era (1911-1949) will be the subject of my presentation. This work shifts the perspective from one of recovering individual female voices to that of examining how the voicing of a nun-character, one with a real backstory, is used to shape perceptions of religion, gender, and renunciation.

**Jennifer Eichman** (Ph.D., Princeton University) is an Independent Scholar. Along with her 2016 monograph, *A Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship: Spiritual Ambitions, Intellectual Debates, and Epistolary Connections* (Brill 2016), she has also published research articles on women and animals, Buddhist reading practices, Buddhist and Confucian syntheses, and Buddhist monastic culture in the *Journal of Chinese Religions*, *Asia Major*, *T'oung Pao*, and *NAN NÜ*. She is currently working on two monographs, one on the Ming dynasty nun Zhujin and the other on the Confucian exegete Wang Ji and his Buddhist interlocutors.

**Wang Yu-Tzu, National Taiwan University**

**The Cultural Significance and Poetic Practice of Late Ming Literati's Copying of the "Records of the Source-Mirror" — Focusing on Yuan Hongdao's Buddhist Philosophy**

The rise of Buddhism and the flourishing of Yogācāra in late Ming China, as well as their influence on the East Asian world, have become hot topics in recent years. However, the attention to Yogācāra still tends to be confined to the literary and philosophical domains, making it difficult to transcend the disciplinary boundaries and recognize the cross-domain realization of Buddhist culture. This paper aims to focus on the phenomenon of copying the *Zongjinglu* 宗鏡錄 (Records of the Source-Mirror) in late Ming China, particularly highlighting the *Zongjingshelu* 宗鏡攝錄 (Records of the Source-Mirror Compilation) by the literati Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道, a leading figure of the intellectual and spiritual movement known as the "the School of Mind and Spirit" (*xingling pai* 性靈派). It examines how their interaction and joint reading of the text with the Yangming scholars, the Tao brothers (Tao

Wangling 陶望齡, Tao Shiling 陶奭齡), created a context for Chan meditation practice, influencing their contemplation on Chan and purity issues and reflecting in their literary and poetic theories. Previously lost, the Records of the Source-Mirror Compilation has escaped researchers' attention until now. A surviving copy was discovered by the author in the valuable collection of Kyoto University in Japan. The discovery not only helps reconstruct the genealogy of late Ming literati's reading of the "Records of the Source-Mirror" but also reveals the Buddhist Yogācāra resources provided by the text, which became central to the literati's handling of the relationship between mind and phenomena, and even to the construction and understanding of the world, becoming the core of their poetic and literary theories.

**Wang Yu-tzu** is an Assistant Researcher in the Department of Chinese Literature at National Taiwan University. Dr Wang's research interests include Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties, the interactions between Buddhism and Confucianism, and the philosophy of Wang Yangming. Dr Wang primarily focuses on the intellectual exchanges and mutual influences between Buddhist and Confucian scholars.

### **Session 9: Historiography and Gazetteers (Wednesday, 16:00-18:00)**

**Natasha Heller, University of Virginia**

#### **“Toward a Historiography of Buddhist Plants in China”**

This paper offers an initial exploration of how plants are represented in Buddhist gazetteers. Buddhist gazetteers, in parallel to local gazetteers, were widely produced in the Ming and Qing periods, and they provide with abundant information on the geography and important personages associated with Buddhist sites. Some of these gazetteers also catalog flora and fauna. I will begin my talk with an analysis of the “Natural Resources” (*wuchan* 物產) section of the *Gazetteer of Mount Chicken-foot* (*Jizu shan zhi* 雞足山志), showing how descriptions of plants incorporate three different types of knowledge: historical, geographical, and botanical. Although historical and biographical material in gazetteers is largely

standardized, the sections on plants differ widely in length and content. The second part of my paper will consider these variations and suggest some reasons for them.

**Natasha Heller** is a cultural historian of Chinese Buddhism with research interests spanning the premodern period (primarily 10th through 14th c.) and the contemporary era. *Illusory Abiding: The Cultural Construction of the Chan Monk Zhongfeng Mingben*, her first book, is a study of an eminent monk of the Yuan dynasty using poetry, calligraphy, and gong’an commentary to explore the social and cultural dimensions of Chan Buddhism. Her second monograph, titled *Literature for Little Bodhisattvas: Making Buddhist Families in Modern Taiwan* will be published in the Contemporary Buddhism series at the University of Hawai‘i Press in January 2025. *Literature for Little Bodhisattvas* explores the rich and inventive corpus of Buddhist children’s literature, showing how authors and illustrators engage with scriptures, commentaries, and visual traditions against a backdrop of the concerns of global modernity. She has just begun research for a third book, on trees in Chinese Buddhism, which she hopes will help bridge the disciplinary divide between environmental history and the study of religion in Asia, as well as to challenge anthropocentric histories by engaging arboreal temporalities.

**Hsu Wei-li (Philip), National Cheng Kung University**

**“New Perspectives on Yao Guangxiao: Insights from Buddhist Hagiographies and Gazetteers”**

This article reevaluates the historical significance of Yao Guangxiao (Du’an Daoyan; 1335-1418) within Buddhism during the early Ming Dynasty, drawing on Buddhist hagiographies as well as local and monastic gazetteers. Previous studies, primarily grounded in official records from a Confucian perspective, have tended to overlook Yao’s efforts in defending Buddhism. Yao drew inspiration from the life of the political monk Liu Bingzhong (1216-1274). Additionally, he was significantly influenced by Jitan Zongle (1318-1390), who advocated for Yao’s participation in the Ming political sphere. Records of Yao Guangxiao’s early years reveal his establishment of a robust Buddhist network, a factor pivotal to his

subsequent political success. Holding a position of considerable political power during the Yongle period (1402-1424), Yao saved Buddhist clergy from political persecution and compiled a collection of Buddhist hagiographies, placing him second only to Song Lian (1310-1381) in his contributions to the preservation of Buddhist history during the Yuan-Ming transition. Yao Guangxiao likely helped overturn the “ancestral law” governing Buddhism in the Hongwu period (1368-1398), establishing him as a prominent Buddhist figure in the early Ming era. Consequently, particularly during the anti-Buddhist period of the Jiajing reign (1522-1566), Yao’s legacy became a primary target, leading to his removal from the imperial ancestral temple in 1530. It wasn’t until the late Ming period that Yunqi Zhuhong (1535-1615) reassessed Yao’s historical position and highlighted his significant role in defending Buddhism.

**Philip Wei-li Hsu** is an Assistant Professor at National Cheng Kung University in Tainan, Taiwan. He received his training in history and Buddhist studies both in Taiwan and the United States. During his doctoral research at UCLA, he specialized in Chinese Buddhist history and East Asian Buddhist culture, teaching courses on Buddhism and Chinese religions. His PhD dissertation examines the history of the prominent Lingyin Monastery, focusing on the historiography of its monastic gazetteers over the past four centuries. Currently, Philip is working on a book project on Chinese history during the Yuan-Ming period, with a specific focus on Buddhist individuals and institutions. Additionally, he is interested in Taiwanese religious history and its interactions with other traditions.

**Peng Qinqin, Ruhr-Universität Bochum**

**“From Lineage to Evolution: The Writing of Buddhist General History in Modern China”**

Since the late nineteenth century, traditional historiography of Buddhism in China has faced challenges from new concepts and theories of history, including linear time, progress, and evolutionary theory. Influenced by modern historical scholarship, historians and Buddhist intellectuals have endeavored to establish pragmatic, critical, and structured Buddhist histories focusing on changes, continuities, and relationships. Specifically, the writing of Buddhist general history in modern China illustrates the emergence of new

knowledge concerning the origin, development, and periodization of Buddhism. Using Taixu (1890-1947) and Liang Qichao (1873-1929) as examples, this study aims to demonstrate how the history of Buddhism was interpreted beyond traditional sectarian narratives and how the causality behind historical changes in Buddhism was understood from a perspective of modernity. Meanwhile, by comparing the Buddhist general histories written by Taixu and Liang, this study explores different discursive paradigms and frameworks in modern Chinese historiography of Buddhism, as well as the tension between “doctrinal truth” and “historical truth” in constructing the past of Buddhism-- in particular, Chinese Buddhism. The paradox of “evolution” and “decline” in Buddhist general histories will also prompt reflections on the dominant “revival” model in current scholarship on modern Chinese Buddhism.

**Qinqin Peng** is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Faculty of East Asian Studies at Ruhr University Bochum. She studied Chinese literature and philosophy in Nanjing and received her Ph.D. in 2021 from the University of Göttingen for her dissertation titled “Between Faith and Truth: The Historiography of Buddhism in Modern China (1902-1965).” Her research interests include the transformation of Buddhist knowledge in early twentieth-century China and the impact of Buddhism on modern Chinese intellectual life.