Significant Potentials of the Humanities in East Asia for the Development of Globally Shared Digital Humanities: Illustrative Details Provided by Buddhist Studies

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East Asia as a Method for Research

- The factor that defines the potential wealth of the humanities
  - the richness of the humanities rests on the richness of the cultural legacy accumulated in the individual history
  - East Asia has a longer cultural history than the West, having wealthier cultural legacy

- Essential role played by language in any form of humanities studies
  - the characteristic of the humanities highly dependent on the language used in materials of research and the presentation of the result
The Humanities and the Digital Humanities (1)

- **Modern Humanities**
  - The late 18th to early 19th century Europe discovered its distant roots in the existence of Sanskrit
  - Modern Humanities brings about the broadening of the perspective of the humanities at a global scale westernization of the humanistic knowledge of the East.

- **Attitude of the Humanities toward the Truth**
  - the truth as something that was once discovered in the past and has been hidden underneath the entire legacy of knowledge
  - The mission of the humanities, is at once to rediscover the truth embedded in a particular form of knowledge, and then to bring forward it to the present context
  - India and China transmitted from a much earlier period and at a far greater scale
The Humanities and the Digital Humanities (2)

- **Indology and Buddhist Studies**
  - Indology and Buddhology are exemplars for considering the implications of “the modern humanities” from the side of the West and the East respectively.
  - Indology expanded its scope of activity to Buddhism, involving Sinology, Tibetology, Japanology etc.

- **The Emergence of Buddhist Canon in the Modern Humanities**
  - Importance of the worldwide circulation of the printed book in the western bound style in the 19th and 20th centuries.
  - Pali Text Society

- **Response from the East: The Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō**
  - Corpus composed of 100 million in 27000 kinds of characters and 7 million lines in 85 volumes.
History of the Transmission of Buddhist Knowledge

- The Buddha’s Decision on Teaching
  - The history of the transmission of Buddhist knowledge has shown two opposite movements, centrifugal and centripetal
  - “the entreaty by the god Brahmā for the Buddha to teach”

- From Oral to Written Language
  - “saṃgīti” = Confirmation of the Buddha’s teaching
  - A significant transformation in the media from oral to written language in the first century BCE
  - Centripetally bring the words of the Buddha into a single manuscript
  - The endeavor of integrating the previous knowledge into one manuscript is naturally growing larger and larger as time passes, making the history of Buddhism more complicated and wealthier
Significance of Digitization (1)

- **Span of Life of the Book in the East**
  - Only 60 years (!) from when the canon had been transfigured into moveable type print, Japanese project called SAT, Taiwanese project CBETA and Korea project TRK began digitizing the Chinese Buddhist corpus almost simultaneously.
  - Buddhist scriptures had existed in Japan in the forms of manually scribed or wood printed codices for more than 1400 years, serving as a foundation of the high rate of literacy.

- **The Encounter of Buddhism with the West and the Potentials of DH**
  - All the aspects of the humanities such as the preservation, presentation, and exchange of transmitted knowledge, with the exception of intensive reading, the digital format excels over the potentials of the printed book, especially in East Asia using more than ten thousands of Chinese characters.
Significance of Digitization (2)

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Acute Need of DH in the East (in Buddhist Studies)

- History of Buddhism of 2,500 years is a process of relocating the transmitted knowledge into the technological progress.
- Every time a development in technology or a media transformation took place, Buddhist scholarly monks and modern scholars posed at the spot to retrieve an overall picture of the transmitted knowledge.
Missions of DH

- Vanishing of Boundaries and the Transformation of Identity
  - This is the topic of “transformation of identity of an object for research.”
  - such traditional categories as title, author, genre, and scope — the crucial means for the identification of a text, are not viable. If we stick to the author-oriented notion of a text provided with distinct demarcation showing its rigid identity, an important part of Buddhist studies would be doomed to failure.
An Example for Digital Humanities in the Field of East Asian Humanities Studies

(1) SAT 2015 (http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/)
building upon SAT 2012, wherein multiple large-scale international projects were brought together to build a knowledge-base including new international projects to create an advanced network for scientific research, critically applying the text-structuring methodology (TEI).

(2) Uncover traditional humanities knowledge and share this in an interdisciplinary manner by:
1) clarifying the degree of shareability among the research methods of Buddhist studies; 2) testing the applicability or non-applicability to Asian materials of the TEI guidelines; 3) developing a long-term policy to make proposals for encoding characters in the Unicode UCS international character standard; 4) collaborating simultaneously with advanced DH projects in many parts of the world.