Computational Philological Study of the Chinese Buddhist Canon

In this talk, I will introduce newly developed software tools for the computer-assisted philological analysis of large quantities of digitized text in the Chinese Buddhist canon. These tools can be used for research into problems of intertextual relations, sources, impact, style, dating, and economies of textual circulation, among others. The tools also admit of adaptation to other large bodies of digitized texts and languages, with some provisos. I will also introduce three large projects based upon use of these tools. The first is a monographic study of problems of style and ascription in the corpus of Dharmarakṣa (fl. ca. 266-308?) as a proof-case for the tools. The second, funded by the DFG, will apply the tools to a thorough critical review of ascriptions in translated canonical scriptures in the first three centuries of the Chinese tradition (ca. 150-450). The second constructs and applies algorithms for large-scale batteries of texts with the software, using the supercomputing facilities of the state of Baden-Württemberg, to seek accelerated progress on a related set of research questions.

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