

4 Introduction to GIS and Aerial Imaging, July 17-25 2019

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This July, the FROGBEAR (“From the Ground Up – Buddhism and East Asian Religion”) research cluster “Religion and Technology” conducted a workshop at the Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts (DILA). The 15 participants included 5 faculty members, 8 graduate students, and 2 undergraduate students coming from Italy, Israel, UK, Germany, US, Canada, China, Taiwan, and Korea. The workshop was supported by FROGBEAR, the Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts, the Chung-hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, and Fu Jen University.

This is the third workshop of this research cluster that investigates the application of information technology in the study of Asian religions, and the second time this event has been hosted at DILA. This year, the topic was the use of aerial imaging and GIS in the study of religion. While the 2017 workshop created a dataset of northern Taiwan religious sites, this year, participants made short films documenting select sites from that dataset. In 2019 the participants used open source tools to explore the fundamentals of GIS and Metadata storage, taught by Marcus Bingenheimer (Temple University), drone videography, taught by Oliver Streiter (National University of Kaohsiung), and video editing, taught by Simon Wiles (Stanford CIDR).

Participant Jacopo Scarin, of Ca' Foscari University, Venice, said of the workshop, “I had already attended last year’s workshop organized by FROGBEAR, so I knew that I was going to join a very informative and professional course on the topic. This year’s workshop touched upon theoretical and practical aspects of geographic

studies applied to humanities. It introduced us to the use of open source software for GIS, which I plan to employ both as a tool for my future research and to improve my research output. We were also trained in video editing, using Shotcut. Finally, we had the rare opportunity of learning how to fly drones for shooting videos.” He added, “I am extremely satisfied with what I learned and if I had the chance, I would attend a more advanced workshop on similar topics.”

As consumer level drones are a relatively new technology, most participants had no experience in drone videography. The drone videography portion of the workshop was led by Prof. Streiter, who has used drones extensively to showcase religious sites and graveyards in Taiwan. At first, participants could be seen on DILA’s campus learning the fundamentals of drone flight; however, they quickly went out in groups to document local religious sites. Participants filmed sites in the Jinshan and Shimen Districts that were outside of flight restricted zones. At the end of the conference, they gave presentations showcasing these films and their research findings on these sites. Edited examples of the video footage will be stored in the University of British Columbia’s FROGBEAR repository for future research use.

Drone videography is a powerful tool for research and preservation as it enables researchers to gather different perspectives on sites and collects more information than traditional photography. For the documentation of religious sites, drones can be used to show the scale of statues and buildings and allow for data collection in previously



inaccessible locations, like on mountain slopes or coastal areas.

Learning about how to use digital tools for research in the humanities is essential for data driven research; however, training opportunities can be difficult to come by, as stated by participant Yadi Qu of SOAS University of London. She said, “As a humanities student, I do not usually have the opportunity to learn about different information technology tools. In this workshop, I was given the chance to fill the gap. Marcus, Oliver and Simon are all amazing instructors and always willing to help. I’m sure this learning experience will benefit me in my future research.”

By all measures, the workshop was a success. Despite the challenge of using sensitive equipment around old structures, each team was able to produce unique and informative videos illustrating how digital tools can be used for research in the humanities. We are grateful that DILA and the Chung-hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies again were able to provide such an excellent environment for this year’s workshop.



In Service of Humanity and Buddhism Admission for 2020-2021 International Students

Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts

Important Events

- Applications Open: November 18th, 2019
- Applications Deadline: March 31st, 2020
- Application Review and Evaluation: April 20th, 2020
- Application Decisions: May 14th, 2020
- Offer Letter of Admission: May 18th, 2020

Financial Aid

- Monastic students are eligible for tuition waiver in both Department of Buddhist Studies and Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- General students also qualify for a tuition waiver in Department of Buddhist Studies. (Additional fees are required for both general graduate and undergraduate students.)
- DILA provides scholarships to qualified students who are seeking degrees here.

Programs of Study

- Department of Buddhist Studies
- Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences
 - Master Program in Life Education
 - Master Program in Community Empowerment
 - Master Program in Social Enterprise and Innovation
 - Master Program in Environment and Development

The website of Admissions:

- <http://www.dila.edu.tw/Admission>

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