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## A Reflection on the International and Intensive Program on Buddhist at UBC

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# A Reflection on the International and Intensive Program on Buddhist at UBC

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The International and Intensive Program on Buddhism was held at the University of British Columbia from July 27 to August 15, 2018. This program consisted of six seminars delivered by six international scholars. Each seminar combined a close reading of primary sources with lectures on the implications of the study of these sources. I was very glad to have joined this program, and to have had the opportunity to hear lectures by these six scholars. The scope of this program's content was quite wide, ranging from Dr. Jinhua Chen's "Buddhism, Borders, and Business: Buddhism's Crossborder and Commercial Engagement" in the Tang dynasty to Dr. Zhe Li's "The Institutional Evolutions of Buddhism in Contemporary China." Additionally, lectures like Dr. Christoph Anderl's "Chinese Buddhist Iconography" in western China can trace some of its content back to eastern cities that were the research area of Dr. Barend ter Haar's "Re-reading Sources on Lord Guan."

The most interesting shared theme between these lectures was the interactive relationship between Buddhism and Daoism. Both Dr. Barend ter Haar's lecture and Dr. James Robson's lectures discussed this issue.

According to Professor Barend ter Haar, although Buddhism and Daoism are different traditions with different value systems, to some extent, they do have shared elements. He noted that when he conducts research, the first thing he does is to collect different versions of texts and then compare the differences between these versions. And if necessary, he plans to conduct fieldwork to support his observations. He mentioned that people from within and outside a culture talk about issues differently. In the lecture, Dr. ter Haar discussed the ways that Buddhism and Daoism are classified as separate instantiations, and shared some of his data taken from inscriptions and local gazetteers.

In Professor James Robson's lecture, "Buddhism, Daoism, Buddhismo-Daoism," he focused on Buddhist influences on early Daoism. He used several pictures to demonstrate this connection. Although these images and their styles look like a representation of the Buddha, actually, some of their contents can be attributed to Daoism. For instance, the figure of *Numinous Treasure* (lingbao 靈寶) which belongs to Daoism was actually influenced by images of the Buddha. To some extent, Buddhists and Daoists always critique each other. To further substantiate these observations, Professor James Robson took *Sishierzhangjing* 四十二章經 (The Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters) as a detailed example. The sutra is also found in *Zhengao* 真誥 (Declarations of the Perfected), a classic Daoist text. The compiler of *Zhengao* changed some of its Buddhist-specific vocabulary. For instance, in *Zhengao*, "Buddha said" became "Taixuzhenren 太虛真人 said." Interestingly, the complete *Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters* was not included in *Zhengao*: its first part which discusses desire and passion is omitted. Additionally, some very technical vocabulary, like *Pratyeka-Buddha*, was not included in *Zhengao*.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile noting that both Professor ter Haar and Professor Robson discussed how to effectively conduct research, which was quite helpful to myself and other graduate students. Professor

ter Haar focused on how to search for research materials and how to read them efficiently. For material related to Buddhism, sometimes the “target” might also be found in Daoist texts, which makes searching for keywords sound more reasonable. When you read those materials, it is necessary to ask yourself: Is it authentic enough? Does this text miss something important? Critical thinking can make your work easier and more efficient. Professor Robson discussed how to discover potential research topics and dig deeper. He suggested that it is helpful to write down your questions when you read, and maybe you reexamine them ten years later. He also provided us several useful research websites, like CBETA, DDB, and several helpful Buddhist dictionaries, like *Fojiaoyu dacidian* 佛教语大词典 and *Foguang dazidian* 佛光大辞典.

I learned a lot through this intensive program. It provided an excellent platform for students and young scholars to catch up to the frontier of Buddhist research.