

THE WOODBLOCK COLLECTION IN KHE HOI TEMPLE IN THE CONTEXT OF BUDDHIST PRINT CULTURE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

(The Woodblock Collection in Khe Hoi Temple
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1. Introduction

Khe Hoi pagoda is located at Khe Hoi village, Ha Hoi commune, Thuong Tin district, Ha Tay province (nowadays belongs to Hanoi), 25 km to the South from the center of Hanoi (Hoan Kiem Lake). Khe Hoi pagoda 溪洄寺, whose formal name is Hoa Lam Tu 華林寺, is most often called by the name Khe Hoi, follow suit of the village where it's at. Khe Hoi Pagoda used to be the place to print and seal Buddhist sutras books to supply other pagodas; where the sutras books are printed for the Summer School, and during the monks' ceremonies and gatherings. The pagoda is also the place to train the talented, and the connecting vertebra of a massive buddhist pagoda network around the districts of Thuong Tin, Thanh Oai, Phu Xuyen, My Duc, and even further Southern to Ha Nam province.

The real age of Khe Hoi Pagoda hasn't been identified. According to the documentation on the pagoda's remaining stone stelae, we get to know some historical information from the Chinh Hoa period (1680-1705) Le Dynasty, which means the pagoda must have been built even earlier than that. From the documentation on the stelae and the engraved boards, from the Hoa Lam Pagoda's Founder ceremony chanting as well as from the narrative of Thich Dam Tien buddhist nun – the current head of the pagoda, the list of pagoda's head monks could be extracted as follow:

First generation head: Tu Niem Tich Chieu 慈念寂照 (?-1816)

2nd generation: Tu Hoa Chieu Thuong 慈和照常(1780-1840)

3rd generation: Tu Dat Pho Thich Thich Quang Quang 慈達普盛釋光光

4th generation: Tu Khue Thong Huyen Thich Khiem Khiem 慈珪通暄釋謙謙

5th generation: Tinh Chau Tam Truc Thich Hoang Hoang 盛珠心竺釋煌煌

6th generation: Tu Nhanh Thanh Quy Thich Minh Minh 慈忍清規釋明明

7th generation: Thich Thanh Soan 釋清撰 (?-1954)

8th generation: Phuc Nghiem Thich Thanh Chinh 福巖釋清整 (1919-2008).

Nowadays, the size of Khe Hoi pagoda remain the same, followed the Noi Cong Ngoai Quoc orientation (Inner – character Gong (工), Outer – character Guo (國)) with the back hall and the ancestor chamber. In front of the front hall, there’s the bell tower which is which is attached to the hall itself. The close structure helps create the pagoda architecture’s unique vibe. The pagoda still keeps its Amitābha statue since Tu Niem’s time, as well it’s statues of 3-Timeline Buddha, Ananda and Kāśyapa that create the symmetry. Most of the parallel sentences and the horizontal boards were remade at the end of 19th century and early 20th century

2. Woodblocks in Khe Hoi pagoda: discovered, listed, sorted.

In a visit to the rural area of Thuong Tin district, Ha Tay province, our group¹ has investigated the Sino-Nom legacy in Khe Hoi Pagoda on 26/7/2001. The legacy was various: apart from the system of parallel sentences and boards, stone stelae and bronze bell, the pagoda also preserved many woodblocks with buddhist content. We are particularly interested in this collection (since its existence was never known to the academics), and selected and printed a book with the woodblocks. In 2005, Nguyen Tuan Cuong đã used the printed document retrieved from the visit in 2001 to publish the first paper written about the woodblocks Khe Hoi pagoda, focused on the section *Ly tuong cong minh ti luc* 李相公冥司錄 (the in Nom characters is *Li tuong quan chep su minh ti* 李相公劄事冥司).² Since then, the academics got to know of this woodblocks collection. In 2012, Thich Dong Duong published a supplement paper, which clarified many matters related to the board set *Ly tuong cong minh ti luc*.³ In 2015, a group of staffs from The Institute of Sino-Nom studies (ISNS) printed all the documents in the board collection, and the document set’s currently archived at the ISNS . In 2016 we⁴ returned to Khe Hoi pagoda 3 more times for further investigation and interviewing the locals.

As anyone would understand, the tradition of printing books in pagodas has multiple purpose, the primary of which is to provide books for the disciplines in the pagoda itself, and the secondary is to spread the books around, so that the Buddhist teaching could be spread and handed down, as to benefit the livings. Taking up that tradition, Khe Hoi Pagoda engraved a number of Buddhist sutras book, woodblocks of which has been preserved in the

¹ The research group’s members (names arranged in alphabet order): Nguyen Tuan Cuong, Dang Ngoc Diep, Nguyen Duc Dung, Tran Trong Duong, Nguyen Quang Dong, Nguyen To Lan, Tran Mai Loan, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen, Nguyen Van Thanh, Nguyen Dat Thuc.

² Nguyen Tuan Cuong, “General research of the engraved boards and the decipheration of *Li tuong Cong chep su minh ti*,” *Sino-Nom studies announcement 2004*, Ha Noi: published by Institue of Sino-Nom research Hanoi, 2005, p. 83-105.

³ Thich Dong Duong, “Return to the engraved boards of *Giai am Ly tuong công Minh ty luc*,” *Buddhism culture* no. 146, 2012.

⁴ Nguyen Tuan Cuong, Pham Van Tuan, Nguyen Van Thanh.

pagoda till today. The collection of woodblocks were stored in a board-storing wardrobe, 3 meters in height, 2 meters in width, built in the Tam bao chamber of the pagoda. The statistics regarding the print books are as followed:

No.	Name of book	Woodblock's age	Person to order the carving work	Number of boards noted on the wardrobe	Number of remaining boards (2015)
1.	<i>Ly tuong cong minh ti luc</i> 李相公冥司錄	1827	Tu Hoa	31	31
2.	<i>Ngu Bach Quan The Am Thanh Nghii</i> 五百觀世音名儀	1840	Thanh Tung	30	25
3.	<i>Phong quang bat nha ba la mat kinh</i> 放光般若波羅密經	1839	Tu Hoa	354	297
4.	<i>Tay Phuong cong cu</i> 西方公據	1803	Tu Hoa	10	10
5.	<i>Trang Nghiem luan</i> 莊嚴論	1873	Tu Khe or Thinh Chau	177	160
6.	<i>Truy mon canh huan</i> 緇門警訓	1822	Tu Hoa	150	150
7.	<i>Van Thu Chi Nam Quoc Am</i> 文珠指南國音	?	Tu Hoa	17	11
8.	Total:			769	684

The total number of boards noted on the wardrobe was **769** (not to mention the odd boards which didn't belong to the 7 listed books). According to our investigation data in 2015, the total number of board remained in the pagoda was **726** boards, including 684 boards under the 7 listed books, and a number of odd boards, including safety-wish charms, picture sculptures, chants; and some boards whose book has not been identified. Among the books, *Phong quang bat nha ba la mat teaching books* have the most boards - 354 boards, which is more than 50% of the total number of board. In this paper, we will not give indepth discuss the odd boards, and will only focus on the 7 books listed above. Among the preserved boards, 1/3 were in bad condition: have termite, decayed, or give missing/unclear characters while printing. The other 2/3 were in good condition, capable of giving sharp printing. All of these boards were used to print 3 document copies in ISNS in 2015.



Board-storing wardrobe in Khe Hoi pagoda (2016)



Board-storing wardrobe in Khe Hoi pagoda (2013)



Staff of the Institute of Sino-Nom studies instructing the Sino-Nom studies students (Vietnam Nation University) to print with the boards in Khe Hoi pagoda (2016)

3. The set of woodblocks the books' contents, and the publication of the printed pieces

(1) *Ly tuong cong minh ti luc* 李相公冥司錄 (name in Nom characters: Li tuong cong chep su minh ti 李相公割事冥司), master Tu Hoa invited a craftsman called Su Te 使濟 from Hong Luc village, Hai Duong to come to Khe Hoi pagoda and to engrave the boards in the year Dinh Hoi (1827). This is a copy from a Nom lecture of a zen master whose formal name was Duc Hung 德興, and title was Vien Tri 圓智, who was the Head of Ngoa Van Buddhist temple on Yen Tu mountain (Quang Ninh). However, the board copy of Khe Hoi pagoda (1827) removed the original introductory essay, and replaced with a new introductory essay – *Minh ti tu* 冥司序 composed by master Tu Hoa. The book tells the story of Ly Quy To 李詭祖 – a man who was sent by the Heaven, to be the Grand Chancellor to assist emperor Nguy Van de 魏文帝 during daytime, and to be a judge in the Underworld during the night, judging the sinners. This is a pro-goodness book, encouraging people to do good things and to let their good deeds mount up. Tu Hoa used a paper version as a mold to stick over the board and then carve, to write the introductory. The book consists of 31 boards as noted on the wardrobe and till nowadays, none was missing.⁵

(2) *Ngu Bach Quan The Am Danh Nghi* 五百觀世音名儀, also called *Le Ngu Bach Quan The Am Ho Quoc Kinh* 禮五百名觀音護國經, is a very popular Buddhist teaching book in the North of Vietnam. This book is copied and published by many pagoda and

⁵ Also read: Nguyen Tuan Cuong (2005), Thich Dong Duong (2012).

distributed to the monks and nuns so they could chant frequently. Sách do bhikṣu Thanh Tung Vo Nghi 比丘青松無疑 with the help of everyone else in the pagoda work together to make. The woodcut copy in Khe Hoi dated back to the year Minh Menh 21 (1840). This copy is probably also the copy made by the disciples as tribute their master – Tu Hoa, who passed away in 1840.

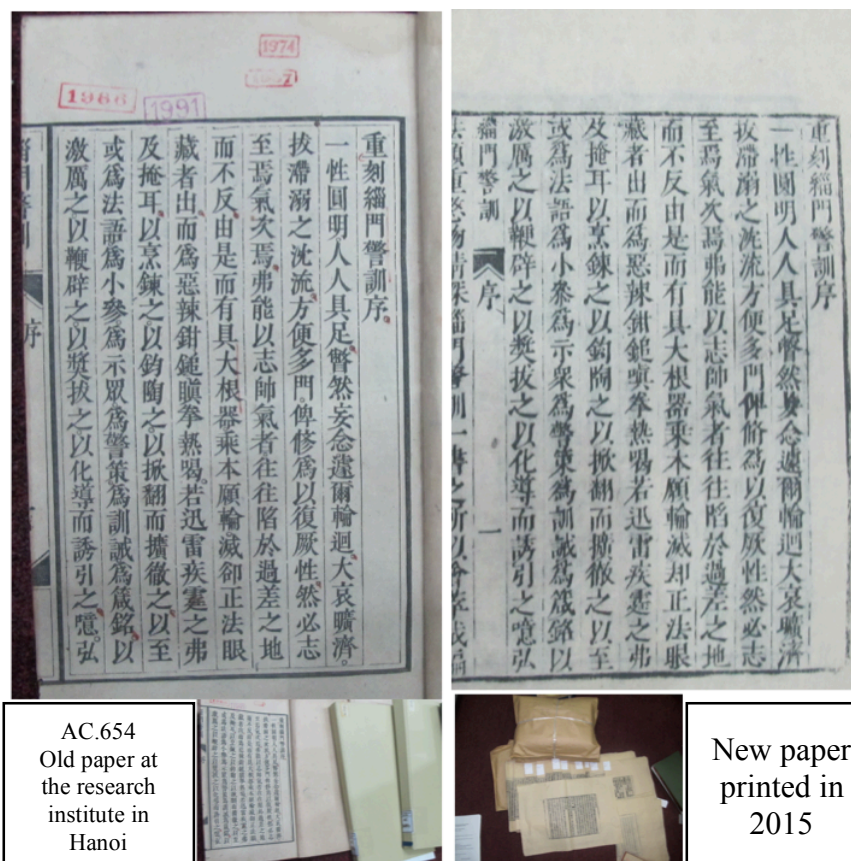
(3) *Phong quang bat nha ba la mat kinh* 放光般若波羅密經, consists of 30 volumes, and accounts for 354 boards according to the number noted on the wardrobe, is the biggest book set in the woodblock collection of Khe Hoi pagoda. It's written in the 1st volume that Vo La Xoa 無羅叉 and Truc Thuc Lan 竺叔蘭 translated the book to Chinese from the Western Jin 西晉 dynasty. It's also clearly stated in the 3rd volume that this is a re-printed version from the year Canh Tuat (1610) in Van Lich 萬曆 period, Ming Dynasty. The woodcut copy was made in master Tu Hoa's final year, written in the book as the year Ky Hoi – Minh Menh 20 (1839). When the carving was completed, at the bottom of the book they wrote the name list of the contemporary senior monks who certified and published the book, as well as the contributors who helped funding the book. The book's copies are currently archived in ISNS, code AC.527/1-4, in which clearly stated that it was master Tu Hoa who carved, published and stored the woodcut copy in Khe Hoi pagoda (tang ban- 'store the copy' 藏板).

(4) *Tay Phuong Cong cu* 西方公據, is a book of Pure Land Buddhism. The woodcut copy in Khe Hoi was a re-printed version. According the document *Trung tu cong duc bi ki* (*The record of the pagoda-restoring contributors carved on stelae*) engraved on the stone stelae in Khe Hoi pagoda, in 1824 master Tu Hoa engraved and published this woodcut copy. However, this is also copied from the woodblock of master Tinh Chuc 性燭 at Hoe Nhai pagoda (Ha Noi). Tinh Chuc was originally a disciple of Bang pagoda in Ha Noi, however, there were also times when he lived in Bang pagoda, which was only 1km away from Khe Hoi pagoda. Thus, Tinh Chuc's version was later copied by Tu Hoa into his woodblocks. In the latter version, *Tay Phuong cong cu* also had the introductory essay called Tinh Chuc Thich Duong Duong 性燭釋堂堂, which clearly stated: The latter learner Tu Hoa Tai Tai carved the copy. On a lucky Autumn day in the year Quy Hoi (1803) Long live the Emperor. Hoa Lam pagoda in Khe Hoi stores the copy” (後學慈和在在重刊。皇朝萬萬年歲次癸亥秋吉日。華林溪洄寺藏板). ISNS is currently keeping 2 version of *Tay Phuong Cong cu*, including an original version in Chinese, coded AC.383, Guangdong, China in 1806; and a translated-to-Nom version coded AB.486 in Can An pagoda (Ha Noi) in 1848. The 2 copies mentioned do not overlap with the version in Khe Hoi, and were both printed after the version in Khe Hoi. We also searched the surrounding areas and haven't found any paper version of the book printed using the set of boards kept in Khe Hoi pagoda.

(5) *Trang Nghiem Luan* 莊嚴論, consists of 13 volumes, is a Buddhism sutras book of Mahayana Buddhism, which was translated and brought to China since Tang Dynasty. The version brought to Viet Nam dated to rather recently. The woodcut copy in Khe Hoi, according to a part written in the book, was carved in the spring of the year Quy Mui – Tu Duc year 36 (1873), restored and published by the monk community in Hanoi.⁶ The copy of the book currently archived in ISNS, coded AC.348/1-2, was actually a copy version printed by using the woodblocks in Khe Hoi pagoda. This version of *Trang nghiem luan* revealed that it was first carved in Quang Khanh pagoda (Hai Duong) in the year Long Duc 1 (1732) based on the version from Ming Dynasty (China). Later, the book was engraved and published again by the monks of Khe Hoi pagoda.

(6) *Truy mon canh huan* 緇門警訓, is originally a book from Yuan Dynasty (China), which noted down the masters' teaching for the disciplines to help them learn. The book was preserved and brought to Viet Nam in Le Dynasty. Aside from the woodblocks stored in Khe Hoi, very few paper versions were found anywhere else. There currently is a paper version stored in ISNS coded AC.654, which was actually printed using the woodblocks stored in Khe Hoi. The woodblocks were fully intact, from the introductory writings to the list of contributors who helped making them. Just like any contemporary woodcut boards ordered by Tu Hoa or any other monks, the making of *Truy mon canh huan* woodblocks employed the same technique “phu ban – cover board 撫本”, which is a technique that requires covering a reversed paper version (printed using an older woodblocks) over a new woodblock to engrave a new one, so that the layout and spacing on the 2 boards could be perfectly the same. Tu Hoa reused the introductory writings of Hai Kham Thich Than Thanh 海欽釋親親 of Bao Quang pagoda (Bac Ninh) and reprinted it in the book. The introductory writing revealed that *Truy mon canh huan* was printed in 1614 in Minh Dynasty and was first brought to Vietnam in 1775. The Intro also said that the woodcut copy in Khe Hoi pagoda was made using Canh Hung's version, when Tu Hoa used the “phu ban” technique to make a new board in 1822 to distribute in the pagoda as study material as well as to promote the religion. After building the stelae *Trung tu cong duc bi ki* in the year Trieu Tri 4 (1843), Tu Hoa's disciples also listed the effort and accomplishment of their master in printing *Truy mon canh huan*. The version in Khe Hoi stated that the book has 10 volumes, has a table of content and an informal introductory essay, and another essay explaining the reason why the book was printed.

⁶ In Le Dynasty, Khe Hoi commune belonged to Son Nam ‘Tran’. In the year of 1830-1831 – Minh Mang period the ‘Tran’ was changed to provinces, and Khe Hoi pagoda belonged to Hanoi Province.



Truy mon canh huan the old paper copy stored in ISNS coded AC.654 (left) and the newly printed copy in 2015 (righty)

(7) *Van Thu chi Nam quoc am* 文殊指南國音, translated to Nom from a Sino version of *Van Thu chi nam do tan* 文殊指南圖贊. This woodblocks originated from the version documented by grandmaster Duy Bạch 惟白 from Phap Van 法雲 pagoda in Tong Dynasty. The book has many volume, the most important of which is the lecture of 53 mystical stories of *Thien Tai dong tu* 善財童子. The carved board book also has 2 other parts *Hoa tang hai nhan duyen tu* 華藏海因緣序 and *Nam tuan quoc am khuc* 南詢國音曲, out of which the introductory for *Nam tuan quoc am khuc* was written by do Tinh Quang Thich Dieu Dieu 性廣釋條條 (1694-1768) of Thien Phong buddhist temple. The content of the writing Tua chau Tinh Quang stated that his will was to have a disciple of Phap Dang Buddhist temple – Hai Truong Thich An An 海漲釋隱隱 of Bao Khanh pagoda in Hieu Bo commune Luong Tai district (nowadays, Quang Bo commune, Luong Tai district, Bac Ninh province) to restore and engrave a copy of his version. Later, Tu Hoa used Hai Truong’s woodblocks to make his version in Khe Hoi. We could have learnt from Tinh Quang’s essay how this book was spreaded and handed down, but we didn’t have the year when Tinh Quang wrote the introductory or the year when Tu Hoa made the woodblocks . Currently, there is no copy of this book in ISNS. During our many years of researching books and documentaries at rural areas, we have never seen any version of this book. It seems that this pagoda was the only

place to print this book, which also means that the book was intended for internal use and was distributed only to the monks in the disciple community of Khe Hoi pagoda.

4. Khe Hoi pagoda's woodblocks and Vietnam Buddhist printing culture in 19th Century

According Peter Kornicki, the printmaking craft appeared in China at least from the 7th Century, when many engraved boards was made in China; and the craft was then spread to Japan and Korea before the end of the 8th century, all began with the documents of Buddhist invocation. The printmaking craft was brought to Viet Nam much later, as there are evidences of Buddhist printmaking dated to the end of 13th century, but none of the printed document remained. Thus, for the sake of absolute certainty, we can take 15th century as the beginning point of printmaking craft in Viet Nam.⁷ In any of the countries, Japan, Korea or Vietnam, as soon as the woodblock printmaking technique was imported, this craft immediately became the primary force in promoting documentation for a period of more or less than 1000 year, before getting replaced by modern printing technology at the late 19th century - early 20th century.

For the early 20th century period, Shawn McHale revealed that in Hanoi in 1909 there were 34 publishing company, only one of which used lithographer technology, the rest used woodblock printmaking. In 1920, modern printing technology has replaced the tradition woodblock printing techniques.⁸ During the period 1920-1945, along with the Buddhism Revival Movement, which is exceptionally active in centers such as Saigon and Hanoi, many Buddhist documents were printed using modern printing technology in Vietnamese alphabet, or bilingual with Sino writing and Vietnamese alphabet serving as pronunciation.⁹ The new printing technology and the newborn modern publishing industry (books and newspaper) was the main factor contributing to the fact that the Buddhism Revival period in Vietnam hosted more Buddhist documents than there had ever been in the country. From that basis, Shawn McHale deducted that during this period, Buddhism had an important role in the public life;

⁷ Peter Kornicki, "Japan, Korea, and Vietnam," in: *A Companion to the History of the Book*, edited by Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, Oxford: Blackwell, 2007, p. 111-125. According to Le Quoc Viet and Cung Khac Luoc (1999): Luong Nhu Hoc 梁汝鵠 (1420-1501) was sent as an envoy to China twice in late 15th century, learned the woodcut printmaking technique, taught the technique to the farmers Hong Luc and Lieu Trang in Hai Duong, and become the Ancestor of the craft. There is currently no other source more reliable. There is a theory saying that Buddhist woodblock printing in Vietnam started from the 1st-3rd century but it's highly implausible and unsupported.

⁸ Shawn McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004, pps. 17-18. Also read: Nguyen Thi Duong, "Booksellers and woodblock book printing craft in Hanoi in early century XX" *Han-Nom magazine*, no. 4/2000, p. 40-44.

⁹ Shawn McHale, 2004, p. 154.

and thus, while doing research on Vietnam in the early 20th century period it's ill-advised to focus only on the familiar topics such as the resistances against the French, Confucianism, or Communist movements, while neglecting the influence of Buddhism.¹⁰

What about the earlier period – the 19th century? It's also Shawn McHale who believed that in Vietnam in 19th century, the culture of printing was the most active comparing to the South East Asian nations, but not as strong as that of the East Asian countries such as the Qin Dynasty in China or Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan. The (woodblock) printmaking culture in Vietnam failed to dominate the institution like it did in China and Japan where it was used to promote and popularize Confucianism teaching books.¹¹

We agree with Shawn McHale's thought that Vietnam's printing culture in 19th century never get close to the scale of that in China and Japan. Still, it appears to us that Shawn McHale was only focusing on the publishing of Confucian books when he commented about the period. If we cast our view to the Buddhism books sector, we might come to a different conclusion to that of the American researcher. Among the 318 woodblocks printwork publishers that Mai Hong and Nguyen Huu Mui have enlisted based on the documents of ISNS,¹² we have spotted 179 publishers that specialized in printing Buddhist teaching books (most of which were pagodas), accounted for more than a half (56%) of the total number of known publishers. There were more than 100 pagodas participated in the woodblocks printing activity in the 19th century. This statistic means that pagodas account for one third of the woodblock publishing institutes in Vietnam in the 19th century. Thus, it's impossible to neglect the contribution pagodas to the printing culture in Vietnam during this period. In the area of Ha Noi (as well as Hai Duong, Bac Ninh, even till nowadays we could still see with our eyes the great various system of woodblocks preserved in the pagodas, through the following statistics.¹³

Some Buddhist-book woodcut printmaking center of late 19th and early 20th century.

No	Storage place	Century	Number	Condition
1.	Linh Tien Pagoda (Ha Noi)	15-18	1 set of "luc thu" boards ¹⁴	Intact

¹⁰ Shawn McHale, 2004.

¹¹ Shawn McHale, 2004, p. 12.

¹² Mai Hong, Nguyen Huu Mui, "Tim hieu ve nghe in cua ta qua kho sach Han Nom ," *Han-Nom magazine*, no 1/1986, p. 43-55.

¹³ We based on the statistics recorded by Tran Trong Duong and Thai Su Trung (Institute of Sino-Nom studies) to add and correct the information about the list of pagodas participated in woodblock printing books. There were many other pagodas participated, but the enlisted pagodas were the most significant.

¹⁴ 'Luc thu 六殊' boards: the woodblocks used to print the cloth needed to enshroud the dead during the Buddhist bury ritual.

2.	Bo Da Pagoda (Bac Ninh)	17-19	Nearly 3000 boards	Deteriorating
3.	Lien Phai Pagoda (Ha Noi)	18-19	6-7 set of sutras books	Good condition, poorly sorted
4.	Ba Da pagoda (Ha Noi)	18-19	6-7 set of sutras book	Good condition, intact
5.	Lang Pagoda (Ha Noi)	18-19	1 “thap vat” set ¹⁵	Deteriorating
6.	Kim Lien Pagoda (Ha Noi)	18-19	2 set of incantation	Deteriorating
7.	Hoe Nhai Pagoda (Ha Noi)	18-19	5-6 set of sutras books	Deteriorating
8.	Institute of Sino-Nom Studies (Hà Nội)	18-19	Around 5000 boards	Deteriorating
9.	Quan Su Pagoda (Ha Noi)	18-20		Deteriorating
10.	Quang Ba Pagoda (Ha Noi)	18-20	2 set of sutras booka	Engraving was incomplete
11.	Ky Da Pagoda (Hai Duong)	19	1 set of “luc thu” boards	Intact
12.	Mau Hoa Pagoda (Ha Noi)	19	1 set of “luc thu” boards	Intact
13.	Bai Pagoda (Ha Noi)	19	1 set of “luc thu” boards	Intact
14.	Thien Hung Pagoda (Ha Noi)	19	1 set of charms	Deteriorating
15.	Mia Pagoda (Ha Noi)	19		Deteriorating
16.	Dong Bo Dau Pagoda (Ha Noi)	19	1 set of “luc thu” boards	Deteriorating
17.	Hoa Lam Pagoda (Khe Hoi)	19	5-6 set of sutras books	Deteriorating
18.	Vinh Nghiem Pagoda (Bac Giang)	19-20	More than 3000 books	Deteriorating

¹⁵ ‘Thap vat 什物’ boards: woodblocks used for printing drawings used in Buddhist rituals.

The listed pagodas mostly participated in printing activities from late 18th century till late 19th century. Some vast storage of woodblocks still remain: Ba Da pagoda (Ha Noi) with 2.600 boards, Da Bao pagoda (Ha Noi) with around 1000 boards, Bo Da Pagoda (Bac Ninh) with nearly 3000 boards, Vinh Nghiem Pagoda (Bac Giang) with more than 3000 boards... They are the greatest woodblocks engraving centers in Northern Vietnam whose woodblocks still remain till nowadays. Some other printing institutes with fewer boards are Khe Hoi pagoda (Ha Noi) with 700 boards, Hoe Nhai Pagoda (Ha Noi) with 400 boards, Dau Pagoda (Bac Ninh) more than 100 boards... Aside from the pagodas, ISNS is also storing Buddhist woodblocks originated from pagodas around Ha Noi, and Hanoi Museum also stored 2000 boards. The vast number mentioned is only small fraction of what was the massive culture of woodblock printing culture which used to exist in the area around Hanoi, mostly during the period of 18th -19th century.

Nowadays we could not estimate how many paper book copies had been printed using the woodblocks carved in the enlisted pagodas ever since the woodblocks were carved until nowadays. These paper copies were distributed and used mostly internally in the pagodas themselves, to facilitate the monks' studies and chanting, and there might be some copies circulated outside of the pagodas. Currently, ISNS still preserves 217 recovered Buddhist books, a tiny fraction of the actual number of Buddhist books circulated in Vietnam during the ancient time, which were lost for many reasons, or were preserved in the pagodas as relics instead of being used.

The list made by Mai Hong and Nguyen Huu Mui (1986) included Hoa Lam pagoda a.k.a Khe Hoi Pagoda, 5 books of which were said by the 2 researchers to lie in the archive of ISNS, printed in the period "1839-1883". Nowadays, we have managed to identify 3 works printed by Khue Hoi Pagoda was kept in ISNS's archive long ago, including the *Phong quang bat nha ba la mat kinh* (coded AC.527/1-4, engraved in 1819), *Trang Nghiem luan* (AC.348/1-2, 1873), and *Truy mon canh huan* (AC.654, 1822). Combining with the information extracted from the 7 woodblocks book in Khue Hoi, we learned that the pagoda engaged in engraving woodblocks in the period 1803-1873, and the printmaking using these woodblocks may last longer, to the 20th century. From 2001 to 2015 there had been 4 woodblocks investigator groups to visit Khue Hoi Pagoda in print copies using the woodblocks.

5. Conclusion

Based on the story of the woodblocks in Khue Hoi pagoda, we believe that Buddhism was of great importance in creating and promoting the publication of books during the 19th century period. Engraved printing boards, a.k.a woodblocks, is an extremely popular form of

print culture in East Asia in the history. About the print culture of Viet Nam during the 19th century, had we too focused on Confucianism, we would have missed a large number of Buddhist published works. The question is, why are researchers often focus more Confucian print culture than Buddhist print culture? The answer is Confucianism published works were much more widely circulated, from the Confucian classes in villages to the Regime. Confucian documents were official material, used in examination and education, which led to its great popularity and significance in the public life, as Shawn McHale mentioned. In the 19th century, despite the vast scale of Buddhist printing culture, its published works were mostly circulated only in the pagodas, and even till nowadays many Sino-Han teaching books are still preserved in the pagodas. Which means, in the 19th century, Buddhist woodblock printing culture (engraved board) despite being highly developed, were not popular in the public life as it was later in the period 1920-1945 when it was converted from print culture to modern form of publishing.

Ha Noi, 2015-2017

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(5.500 words)