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IABU Newsletter

International Association of Buddhist Universities, Bangkok Secretariat
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A group photo after the founding of the IABU. The Executive Secretary was holding the founding document, bearing signatures of the members.

January Executive Council Meeting

Invitations have been sent out to all of the Executive Council Members of the International Association of Buddhist Universities to attend the first meeting of the Executive Council, from 13-14 January 2551/2008. The general aims of the ECM will be to discuss how to strengthen and expand the existing networks of Buddhist higher-education in the world and how to bring about academic collaborations in the short and long terms. The Executive Council will discuss how to implement plans for the IABU Member Symposium in 2008 so that the IABU can grow in stature in the academic world.

For this important meeting, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University is graciously supporting all expenses for the Executive Council Members: air tickets, food, accommodation and transport. We hope everyone has an enjoyable stay in the 'Amazing', 'Land of Smiles' – and every input will be valuably considered.

Message from the IABU Chairman: The Edited Transcript of the Most Venerable Rector, Dr. Phra Dharmakosajarn's Opening Speech for the Symposium of Buddhist Universities, for the UN Day of Vesak 25

Our intention and the theme is to get to know each other – and try to make a joint effort to do something together. If possible: we expect to see a new phenomenon – to create a common platform where we can come to meet with each other to share our ideas, to have dialogues – to enable us to share with and support each other. Developed institutes can help our Buddhist friends who are not quite so developed, to provide better education to the members of the *Sangha* and Buddhists throughout the world. As we will discuss in our Buddhist Contribution to Good Governance and Development, man is the center of development. If we want to see development in our religion of Buddhism, the most important factor to be developed now is not to construct new temples, but to develop manpower, that is our monks, nuns and laypeople. What would be the best way to develop them by means of Buddhist education? So far we have to accept the fact that although we have good messages of the Buddha to convey, the means and ways to train our people need to be developed. I expect those that have experience in this field, who have successes in running educational institutions can tell our friends here how to achieve that and what would be the complementary role that we expect from our friends – that is to think about the exchange programs, visiting professors, and whatever else there is. Before we achieve that we expect to invite all of you to come here and think about setting up a platform for that purpose. From my own conviction, I think this is possible, and having seen all of our faces here I hope that we can achieve something from this symposium and meeting.

The point is that if we have that platform of the International Association of Buddhist Universities, we need to organize it with good governance. What are the main factors of good governance?

The first thing is **participation**. We expect that participating universities and colleges will come forward to join our movement. It is not on an individual basis, but on the basis of institutions. We want to draw as much participation as possible from the existing institutions in the world. Maybe in the future you have to be open for new members to discuss in our platform. So participation is the first factor of good governance. Participation not only from the far developed

institutions, but for whatever possible ways we can help each other we open our platform, we open our hearts to welcome [all members] – and to pledge for the developed institutions to help us, to guide us, so that we can have something to provide support to each other.

The second aspect of good governance in our association would be **accountability**. If there is any difficulty and someone asks for our help, this association must be ready to provide assistance, not to avoid the crying voice to help us here or there… In poor countries, we must be ready to help them, to develop them. If possible we can set up information technology or computer networks – networking our institutions together – so that we can have teleconferences or whatever is necessary and possible through information technology. The way that our Venerable Friend from Australia, Panyavaro can set up a Buddhist E-Library can serve our purpose here. That is for accountability.

The other factor of our platform would be **transparency**. Our working together must be transparent, we must have check and balance, so that we can have confidence in each other. That means whatever we are doing we must be doing it with concentration, with contributions from our friends within equal rights to know what we are doing.

The last factor that we expect from the new platform is **efficiency** – invest less, put less money, less energy and effort with more productivity. We don't have to spend much time, much money to run this platform, but with our contributions from each institution we can have something "more multiplied" – that is, efficiency.

So, if we have these guidelines in our minds in the Buddhist way, we expect that our association will continue to serve our purpose with much success. So, If I may join you, I think that it is necessary to lay down these guidelines of good governance to run our own association and also societies, so that we can invite newcomers into our association and work together on equal terms, with the aspects of Buddhism helping each other, not to exploit [each other], not to do anything [that is] against Buddhist principles.

Maybe institutions in rich countries can have independent bodies without relying on others, but according to the law of *paticcasamuppada* – dependent origination – we have to depend on each other for our survival in the present-world. The Buddha has taught us this, and we ask you all here, according to the law of dependent origination that we will stick to the law and work it with discipline. I hope we can achieve our objectives, of coming here and doing something together. With this, I open the meeting and welcome you to this symposium.

Thank you!

MCU Offers Sets of Tipitaka to Japan Universities

IABU: More than 60 members of Mahachulalongkorn-rajavidyalaya University traveled to Japan, 1-5 October 2550/2007, visiting Hanazono, Bukkyo, Otani, and Ryukoku Universities, and were treated to several sightseeing trips, to: Myosinji Temple, Enryaku Temple, Kyoto Imperial Palace, Ginkakuji Temple; and several great tasting meals. Overwhelmed by the wonderful Japanese hospitality shown to the Thai delegation from MCU, the university will donate one Thai-language set of the Tipitaka to each of the visited universities. The desired result is the expansion of Buddhist wisdom; and to be utilized by students or faculty to study across a different Buddhist tradition. Furthermore, the offering may be useful for anyone from Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar or Thailand - or anyone else who can read Thai language-script. MCU hopes that the offering will be used often, and serve as a catalyst for future academic studies or collaborations. This edition is viewed highly by scholarly academics because of the accuracy of the translation. Interestingly, to learn, this modern/contemporary edition of the Tipitaka was completed to honor the 60th Anniversary of the Birth of the Queen of Thailand. Since then, MCU with the assistance of the Royal Thai Government have made minor corrections and are currently completing translations of the commentaries to the Tipitaka.

Profile - *Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University*

MCU was originally founded in 1887 for the education of Buddhist monks, novices and laypeople. The Bachelor Degree Program began in 1947, currently having four faculties, the Faculties of: Buddhism; Education; Humanities; and Social Sciences. The University offers Master Degrees in: Buddhist Studies; Pali Studies; Philosophy; Dhamma Communications; Vipassana Meditation; Educational Administration; Public Administration; and Life and Death Studies. In English, MCU offers a Master Degree in Buddhist Studies. For potential Ph.D. Candidates, MCU has the Doctoral Program in Buddhist Studies. MCU has the philosophy and strong commitment to be the leading higher educational center for Buddhist education – integrating Buddhism with modern sciences towards the goal of greater mental and social development. MCU asks its students to be able to apply Buddhist wisdom into various sciences, uphold virtuous conduct, have intellectual curiosity; be spiritual and intellectual leaders, have problem-solving abilities, faithfulness and dedication towards Buddhism – being aware of social changes, and have the vision and potential to develop themselves for the betterment of society.

IABU Institutional News:

The **Oxford Center for Buddhist Studies** website will undergo a remodeling. As reported:

1. www.ocbs.org will receive a revamp, using a Content Management System (CMS), and will change its name to www.ocbs.ac.uk, indicating that it is an academic unit;
2. www.orinst.ox.ac.uk adds a new branch, namely www.orinst.ox.ac.uk/bsu (standing for 'Buddhist Studies Unit').
3. www.orinst.ox.ac.uk/bsu is connected to www.ocbs.ac.uk and vice versa (by way of both hyperlinks and appropriate content)

Changes are supposed to be completed by February 2008. We all hope this generates greater interest in the Oxford Center for Buddhist Studies

Naropa University, in Colorado, USA is now offering a Peace Studies Undergraduate Program. The program focuses on: the causes of violence and war while focusing on a path to peace. The program works under four lines of inquiry: history and politics of social change, theory and practice of peacemaking, the arts in peacemaking and engaged learning. Interested people can see http://www.naropa.edu/news/pressreleases/070809.cf for specific details.

Buddhasravaka Bhikshu University in Sri Lanka, situated on the banks of the historical Malvat-oya in the ancient Anuradhapura Sacred City, is now offering training for monks – taking full measures to become a fully operational international university. As of this year, they now offer undergraduate programs in English – so foreign monks are welcome to Sri Lanka to reside at BBU. There are plans to open graduate and post-graduate programs in the near future. To reach the goals of BBU, the university is building a new campus designed in the ancient Sri Lankan architectural-style and aims to be a world center of Theravada Buddhist excellence, with: three faculties [Buddhist Studies; Classical Languages; Social Sciences], as well as Comparative Studies and a Post-Graduate unit. Lecture halls are "fully equipped", and the BBU has seminar rooms, resting rooms for visiting lecturers, a good library, health center, and accommodations for local and foreign students.

Buddhasravaka Bhiksu University lecturer Ven. Ambalantota Chandima and many BBU students, along with Dr. Raj Somadeva from Kelaniya University in Sri Lanka jointly participated in a historical excavation. The archeological team discovered a prehistoric site possessing stone tools, earthen and pottery fragments, and a tomb differing radically from previously discovered sites. Usual findings are tombs with stone slabs, however this tomb was a complex arrangement made of "wattle and daub". The team believes the bodies were first cremated and later placed into a pot, because BBU archeological team found ashes and bone-fragments inside multi-colored pots. The findings prove the Ranchamdama site was a habitat area for civilized, ancient groups of people living in pre-historical Sri Lanka.

The **International Buddhist College** in Songkhla, Thailand now operates a B.A., M.A., and has just opened up their Ph.D. Program in Buddhist Studies. Their programs operate in Chinese and English languages. For additional information, interested people can see: www.ibc.ac.th

The **Association of Asian Studies**, focusing on many academic disciplines, has an Thai/Lao/Cambodian Studies Group for those interested scholars. www.tlc.ucr.edu is their website, which provides many resources: reports on new publications, conferences, academia, economics, politics, religion, and the arts to members of the Thailand, Laos, Cambodia Studies Group. Additionally, there are links to major universities, bibliographies, conference resources, and more.

Editorial Message:

It is with great pleasure that the first edition of the International Association of Buddhist Universities' Newsletter is finally seeing the light of day. There were a few delays: finding office space to work from, and the editor's personal tragedy – the death of a premature-newborn son. But alas, we finally have the newsletter. This inaugaral issue oringinates from the United Nation's Day of Vesak 2007/2550's Symposium on Buddhist Universities. The transcribed speeches faced the editorial pen as fairly as possible, bearing in mind the difficulties involved with converting verbal speeches into written documents. It is the hope of the transcriber that all speeches represent the authentic message intended by the speaker.

Following the speeches is a summary, written by the Manager of the Bangkok Secretariat of the International Association of Buddhist Universities – Mr. Dion Peoples, a PhD Candidate in Buddhist Studies at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. After reviewing the speeches, and preparing the newsletter for publication, several questions arose pertaining to the IABU as an association: involving the push or efforts to strenghten the profile of Buddhism in non-Buddhist lands. The editoral staff feel his questions are valid, thus presented in this forum – but with the hope that the Executive Council Members of the IABU and other Venerable and respected professors, and friends within the IABU can take some measures to illuminate Buddhism and efforts towards the edeavors suggested by our Venerable and respected professors. The editorial staff would like to see our universities and distinguished members exerting themselves institutionally and intellectually, through partipating in various endeavors and activities which benefit Buddhist education.

As this newsletter is a beneficial forum for all members of the IABU – contributions are needed from every institution, in every country, from any version or vehicle of the Buddha's teachings. With this in mind, future IABU Newsletters can greatly serve our target audience.

Speeches delivered to the United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations, Symposium on Buddhist Universities, 27 May 2007

Venerable Bhikkhuni Dr. Yifa
Chair, Department of Religious Studies,
University of the West, L.A, USA

I have been a nun for most of my life, almost thirty years. My monastic life are almost centered in academics, either I was learning and receiving education or now teaching and working at colleges. I have joined an order called Fo Guang Shan (which means 'Buddha's Light Mountain') Monastery. This order has established more than ten Buddhist seminaries and three universities. Among three universities, one is in the United States, formally called Hsi Lai University, and now renamed as the University of the West; and the other two are in Taiwan respectively called Fo Guang University and Nan Hua University. These three universities are not limited to Buddhist Studies, they are more like secular universities, but just founded by a Buddhist order.

Today, I would like to share some very short ideas with you, why a Buddhist temple or organization would need to establish a university; and what is the difference between a university founded by the Buddhist order and a secular university.

My teacher, Venerable Master Hsing Yun, pertaining to money and the economy, has always said: money and resources comes from the ten-directions – from the public; then they need to be back to the ten-directions and used for the public. So through establishing three universities, we think that within fifteen years we can return the resources back to the public. A Buddhist organization can act as an agent of distribution of resources in our society.

Secondly, we understand that most secular universities are focused on training people to have a technique, training students how to get a job. However, for a university founded by a Buddhist organization, we do not only provide for training students in a skill, but also provide them a holistic education for being a person – our universities encourage a whole-person education. Our education that we provide is for life, not just for a job.

Nowadays, we are facing and living in a society or age of materialism and individualism; and in an age of information and high-technology, as well. I have four points which I am going to share with you – and this is my personal, very humble, opinion – about how Buddhism has to face the modern challenges to provide students a holistic education.

First, for Buddhism to face the modern society we have to adopt high technology. Most people feel it is hard to reconcile as we see on TV commercials depicting monk or nuns with PDA or with a cellular phone or sitting in front of a computer. For the public cannot match monks with high technology. People seem to forget that Buddhism is in fact a religion of science. If you look at Buddhist doctrine, for example, when Buddhism talks about time, it always talks about *kalpa*, which is incalculable. He also talks about space in the concept of *trichiliocosm* - three layers of a thousand worlds, which is unlimited. Scientists try to study life outside of this planet, but Buddhism 2500 years ago already mentioned that there are sentient beings beyond this earth. According to Mahayanist texts all the Buddhas, except Gotama, Amitabha Buddha, Medicine Buddha and the like – they are all considered as E.T., extraterrestrials or beings beyond this earth. There are lots of ideas or concepts already about the scientific nature of Buddhism; therefore it just depends on how we are going to understand the message behind the language in texts.

In addition, all Buddhist traditions are now working on the digitalization of the Buddhist canon. For example, the CBETA for Buddhist canon in Chinese– many scholars already show their appreciation to the CBETA system, and the temple I come from, Fo Guang Shan, also tried to digitalize the Fo Guang version of the canons, as well. At the University of the West, we have also developed a Sanskrit project – we are trying to put the Sanskrit Scripture into the computer and on-line, and make it available as well. Of course, right now, with the website, internet, we can make it much more accessible for Buddhist information.

The second point I would like to make is Buddhism should develop the engaged approach toward social issues, such as environmental issues, bioethics issue, or even conflict resolution. After 11 September, people started to wonder "Why do we need religions? If religions bring a lot of conflict, do we still need religions at all?" I wonder whether you are also aware of this phenomenon. Now, the young generation prefers to use the term "spirituality" rather than "religion." Also, because I spend more time in the United States, if we look at the academic approach toward Buddhism, you can say that most [universities] hold a historical or textual approach. If we look those Ivy League universities, most scholars are focused on historical and textual studies and they are considered mainstream. But nowadays a group of Buddhist scholars and practitioners start to bring Buddhist values to social engagement in those issues I just mentioned: environmental issues, bioethics, or conflict resolution issues. These are the new trends, the new tendencies for studying Buddhism.

Thirdly, Buddhist education should pursue truth, ethics and beauty through studying science and technology, religions and philosophy, art and literature. Traditional Buddhist education tends to discourage or even condemn the study of secular subjects. But I don't see there is a conflict

between religious education and secular one. We need to use secular science or social science as expedience or skillful means, as Mahayanists say, to approach Buddhism as well.

The fourth and final point: I think we need to make Buddhist education accessible and affordable. If we turn on the computer, it is so amazing that we can get a free e-mail address through Google or Yahoo – all free. There is so much information on-line – most of them are free, maybe because of commercial, money behind them. I was wondering if we could adopt the same concept and make education more affordable, even free. Finally, in order to achieve these goals, we need to have great collaborations from all Buddhist universities or even organizations from all of the traditions – and this goal won't be too far, won't be to far away. Thank you so much.

Dr Tamas Agocs
Foreign Relations Manager & Director of East –West Research Institute
Budapest Buddhist University, Hungary

"Opportunities and challenges for Buddhist education in Europe"

In contrast with most Asian countries represented in this symposium, Europe does not have a tradition of Buddhist education. This is not surprising. The Dhamma actually arrived to Europe fairly recently, just about one century ago, which is not a very long time for the Dhamma to take root. Every beginning is difficult – and one-hundred years can only be considered as a beginning. Even the very concept of Buddhism is quite problematic in the Western setting. It is generally characterized as a religion, but as the Venerable Dr. Yifa also said: many western Buddhists are uncomfortable or are getting uncomfortable with that classification and they prefer to treat Buddhism as a science, psychology or philosophy. These western concepts, whether we talk about religion or science, do not do justice to Buddhism, because it seems to cut across all of these conceptual categories.

Individual people who practice the Dhamma may overcome these conceptual distinctions and realize that the Buddha's teaching is a method to see through *dukkha* [pain/suffering]. Nevertheless, Buddhism cannot be considered a scientific method – in the western use, or western sense of the word, because it comes from a completely different cultural background – with quite different suppositions.

But when we consider Buddhism as a religion, it can be basically studied in two ways: from within, or from without. Non-historical religions, in the European sense, those not rooted in the European culture are traditionally studied from without – that is, scientifically, objectively – without any emotional or personal involvement. As Europeans started to become fascinated with the [East] about two or three centuries ago, the eastern cultures became objects of scientific investigation. Consequently, European universities developed the tradition of oriental scholarship, focusing mainly on the study of texts. Insofar as these texts are Buddhist, we may speak of the study of Buddhism in those institutions. However, these studies come under the rubric of linguistics or philology, or history of religion, and thus cannot be considered as examples of Buddhist education in the traditional sense – with textual studies as only part of the training. More recently, based on the study of various Buddhist sources and combining methods of philology and cultural anthropology, the science of *Buddhology* developed, which aims to study Buddhism in its

historical context. Though these studies may greatly enhance our understanding of Buddhism, they do not go beyond the academic style of objective inquiry and, hence again, cannot rightly be characterized as Buddhist education. Individual development in a mental or spiritual sense, which is the ultimate goal of traditional Buddhist training, is clearly outside the scope of Western academia, which, thus cannot be expected to host Buddhist educational programs.

Now, Buddhism can also be studied from within in Europe, in different Dhamma centers, but their training programs do not have any academic accreditation; and, thus, do not qualify as higher education, however high their academic standards may otherwise be. So we come to the conclusion here that Buddhist education, Buddhist higher education is virtually non-existent in Europe.

Now, about why it should exist. First, a fully qualified Buddhist education in Europe must meet two quite different sets of criteria: one set by the Buddhist tradition and another by western scholarship. These two are not easy to bring into line. Generally speaking, Western standards are based on the objective measurability of one's knowledge and skills in a certain area, without much concern for the rest of the person's demeanor. In the Buddhist sense, however, the development of skills and understanding goes hand in hand with personal advancement with morality, concentration – and these mental skills are not easy to measure. But more significantly, academic commitment demands impartiality towards one's object of study which is in striking contrast with what is expected in a traditional Buddhist school. So the basic difference between these two sets of expectations seems to lay in their respective understanding of the use of knowledge, that is: what knowledge is good for – that is, why we study. In Europe, it is shown by some post-modernist thinkers that knowledge is power, in the first place; so, it is a means to control and manipulate the world around us, ourselves, and the environment, and by objectifying one's field of study – rendering it manageable. Also, we define ourselves in relation to that object. Learning in the Buddhist sense is something quite different. It cannot be used to control or manipulate. (Quite on the contrary, it reveals the futility of these human concerns.)

All of this goes to show that Buddhism does not conform to our western categories and expectations of what a religious or scientific discipline should look like. This distinction between science and religion is a European cultural heritage, which can be traced to a split in between reason and faith – as Christian dogma failed to accommodate the findings of scientific observation. As the scientific method proved more and more successful in predicting the behavior of objects in the natural world, religious modes of understanding came to be discredited or relegated to a transcendent world. These two seem to have no relation to each other. This characteristically

western duality is reflected in the epistemic compatibility between objective scientific study and subjective religious experience.

When Buddhism is considered as a religion, it is reduced to a belief system; when it is treated as a science, it tends to be divested of its devotional aspect. So, institutionally speaking, the challenge for Buddhist education in Europe, in the 21st Century, seems to be to develop an institutional framework, which is free from the academic/religious distinction, and we should also devise programs which avoid one-sided emphasis on either intellectual or spiritual training, thus helping to restore the integrity of human experience. This is one of the main messages which I would like to put across, here: let us try to get rid of this duality!

Spiritually speaking, our main challenge seems to be to heal that very split, in the western mind, or psyche, which makes the categorization of Buddhism so difficult. It is the dominance of reason, resulting from that split that lies at the heart of the so called 'evils' of modern society and what we associate with globalization. But from its internal dimension, the divided western mind sought to control its surroundings and set out to conquer the outside world – intellectually by developing science, economically by applied technology, and physically through imperialism. The technical revolution, which changed the face of the Earth so drastically, also derives from the dominance of the rational ego. Starting out from Europe, the white-man colonized the people of other races, exploited their natural and human resources, and still continue to do so, albeit in a different guise. So thinking along those lines, we can see that Buddhism can give us key insights into the re-evaluation of our culture, and from a Buddhist perspective the history of western civilization can be seen as a series of unsuccessful attempts to resolve basic sense at insufficiency arising from *tanha* [or the craving for substance]...

For a full version, see:
http://www.vesakday.net/vesak50/article/pdf_file/06_A_Vision_of_Buddhist_Education_from_Central_Europe.pdf

Prof. Dr Chisho M. Namai
Former President & Director of
The Research Institute of Esoteric Buddhist Culture
Koyasan University, Japan

Thank you for letting me have the honor to speak at such a precious occasion. I would like to report, as a participant from Japan, the contemporary Japanese situation related with education of Buddhism within the higher educational institutions, because we need a mutual understanding of each other's situation and their traditions in preparing a platform of such an internationally cooperative project of Buddhist Universities.

In the 6th century, Buddhism was introduced to Japan officially by missionaries from the Korean peninsula. Then, in the Nara and Heian periods Japanese emperors would send monks to China to study Buddhism. Since then to the first half of the 13th Century, whenever Japanese monks experienced a new Buddhist movement in China – such as Tiantai, Huayan and Zen Buddhism – they introduced it to Japan. After that period, Buddhism in Japan continued to develop into original Japanese Buddhism until the 19th Century. In these periods, Japanese Buddhist studies were promoted and practiced by monks as part of their monastic life.

Buddhist priests and temples gratefully served the education of the Japanese people in general, in the long cultural history of Japan. Kukai (774-835) is well-known as the founder of the first private higher educational institution system not only for the students from high, noble society, or Buddhist novice, but open also to the ordinary Buddhist layman.

At the end of the 19th century, when the higher educational system was introduced from the western world, the Japanese government founded some universities. At the same time, Buddhist universities were established by traditional Buddhist schools to transmit their traditions to their inheritors. Some Buddhist schools sent young monks to Europe to learn modern methods of academic studies of Buddhism. They studied how to study Buddhism through the original Tipitaka using Sanskrit, Pali, and Tibetan languages beside the already accustomed Chinese. The monks who studied Buddhism in European universities came back to Japan and introduced new method of studies of Buddhism – especially in national universities, such as Tokyo Imperial University and etc. Some Buddhist universities also came to introduce these methods of Buddhist studies. However, that type of educational system has deviated from the traditional style of original Japanese Buddhist studies, which contained the instruction of practices in Buddhist monasteries. The Japanese educational institutions of Buddhism began to incline toward scientific or academic

studies without paying attention to the importance of the subjective, practical instructions handed down traditionally in everyday monastic life.

As a consequence of Japan's unique historical development of Buddhist studies, higher education of Buddhism in Japan has developed into three types of institutions: (1) purely academic and scientific research of Buddhism; (2) traditional monastic institutions of Buddhist studies; (3) general education of people to promote Buddhist spirituality.

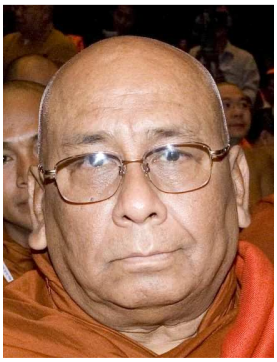
After the Second World War the Japanese government adopted the policy of separation of religions from politics. Thus, religious education was limited only to private educational institutions. So, national universities and other public universities were prohibited to give education in any special religion. They were only allowed to provide academic studies concerning the historical, social or philosophical aspects of religions in general. Some private universities, even those founded by traditional Buddhist schools, came to lay less emphasis on their ideal to educate people as Buddhists. Now they proceed not only ideally for the education of Buddhist people, but also have their mission of higher studies in general: technology, economics, laws, social sciences and so on. So, being universities, even if based on Buddhist foundations, Buddhist traditional systems of practice or training, such as meditation, became to be excluded from their curriculums. Traditional studies are instituted not by the higher educational institutions of humanities, as for example a university, but rather by institutions called "monastic ashrams". Newly established Buddhist schools also founded their universities – especially promoting internationalization of higher Buddhist educational studies. In these circumstances, purely academic and scientific Buddhist studies are emphasized in Japanese universities in collaboration with western universities. Associations of academic Buddhist studies were promoted by the major national universities, such as Tokyo Imperial University etc. in association with traditional school-founded universities. These academic associations of Buddhist studies have a long history of successful development, hold conferences and publish journals annually. Numbers of scholars in these associations are coming not only from Buddhist universities, but also major national universities and newly formed Buddhist universities. The most authoritative association is the Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist studies.

Some major Buddhist private universities formed cooperative organizations to pursue the project of editing the index in the succession of the publication project of the Thaisho Tipitaka. Such kind of cooperative systems came to be integrated into the Input project of Electronic Text of the Tipitaka. Based on their cooperative association of the research project of Buddhist universities, in 1994, the Japanese Association of Buddhist Universities was established. This association consists of ten core member universities with fifty-eight associate member universities. Annual meetings were

held once at each of the core member universities. The proceedings of the meetings have been published every year. In 2000, the association published a book in Japanese in order to publicize their activities in Japanese higher education. The representative office of the association is now at Komazawa University, succeeding after six years committee management of the Ryukoku University. The information about the association can be referenced in a book, which is brought to the committee office at this occasion, however, unfortunately published in Japanese only. Anyway, national universities and newly established universities are not joining this association now.

The other is the Union of the Graduate Schools; most of the member universities of that association are located in Kyoto and are also the member of the above mentioned Japanese Association of Buddhist Universities. About this association called as the Kyoto Graduate Union of Religious Studies –a short booklet is also published in English; I bring it for this occasion. The office of the Union is open internationally, welcoming for researchers and associations for international cooperative academic exchanges in graduate-level studies and education of Religion.

The Most Venerable Dr Ashin Nyanissara
Chancellor, Sitagu International Buddhist Academy
Myanmar



Good Afternoon! Please try to wake up, my dear brothers and sister!

In this symposium, all Buddhist universities aim to ensure the future of Buddhist scholarship – as mentioned in the first circular. The aim is that it should continue to grow; its quality should continue to rise; and its importance should be evermore widely accepted. This is the aim and objective of our symposium, and our organization on Buddhist universities. So I would like to only discuss this matter. Later on, we have to discuss many different thing, about: how to organize, how to form the organization, how to lay down the rules and regulations later, etc.

Nowadays, the whole world is needy. The Buddha said: "The whole world is needy." Therefore, we need to fill it – what does one need today? According to a Buddhist scholar, we should fill this needy world with education. For example: we need to try to educate the people in the Buddha's teachings. Here, we shall understand we shall never try to convert wanting people from their own religion to the Buddhist religion – we never try to convert. But we should be trying to convert the ignorant to enlightenment; we must try to convert from evil to good; from jealousy to joy; from competition to satisfaction, etc. This is Buddhist conversion. We should be trying to educate the people to understand this task. The whole world is full of problems, but some people – I think many people, do not understand the sources of the problems in the world. Buddhism teaches, to understand the true nature of life. Without understanding the truth, it is very difficult to solve the problems of the world. Without understanding the truth, it cannot be possible to be: real humans or Buddhists. For example, as you know, in the Eightfold Noble Path, the first factor is: *sammaditthi* – true understanding, understanding the truth… So, when we are facing the problems in the world today, we must search for what is the problems or origin of the problems. What is the solution, what is the origin of the solutions, etc. In his the opening speech, the Venerable Phra Dharmakosajarn said: dependent origination – everything is dependent on origin – we should search for origins of the light. This is why we are going to organize the International Association of Buddhist Universities.

In the university, we are going to educate the people. Students that come to the universities, after their matriculation, passing of the matriculation classes – a lot of educated people come to the

university – most of the people cannot come to the university. I want to tell you one thing, a very brief story:

In 1982, when I was in the United Kingdom – this was my first visit to the United Kingdom, my teacher Sayadaw U Thittila, he spent 16 years in the United Kingdom – even within the Second World War… Sayadaw and me, we stayed in a village named Alton St. Lawrence, near Oxford. It was a very beautiful place. In this village, some very pious and devout Buddhist members of the Pali Text Society – they founded their own library in their house. My teacher, Sayadaw U Thittila stayed there almost one year to translate the *Vibhanga* from Pali, the second book of the *Abhidhamma*, translated into English. Then, in this library, I had a lot of time with my Sayadaw. After a brief ceremony, one morning, I walked around the whole village with my teacher. My teacher was almost eighty years old! After my Sayadaw came back from the walk and took a rest in the house, he went out again to visit the surrounding villages.

OK, in the middle of one of the villages, I saw a church, a Roman Church – very big, very old – almost a one-thousand year old church. On a Saturday, very early in the dark morning, they would ring the bell [ding, ding, ding, ding…] – very noisily for almost one hour. Around ten o'clock very few, very old ladies and gentlemen come in slowly, slowly – and enter, into the church. Not more than twenty! But in this village, there are over eight-hundred houses. I followed after these old ladies and gentlemen and sat behind them in the church – teaching and teaching and teaching in a different way. I listened behind them. After that class, the Roman clergyman came to me and asked me one question:

"Hello, from where, are you from?"

"I come from Burma."

"Hey, this is Burmese person!"

"Yes"

"Why do Burmese people come in like this, wearing a dress?"

He had never seen a Buddhist monk. Later, I explained that I am a Buddhist monk, etc. And then in many discussions, only one question:

"You ring the bell for almost an hour from nine o'clock to ten o'clock –yet very few people, only old people come into your church, none of the young people, and with over eight-hundred houses in the village – nobody comes here?"

This clergyman said: "Venerable Sir, nowadays in the modern world, in the west, the young generation is trying to become liberated from religions."

Therefore, we need to educate young generations on how to live together with religion. Thank you very much.

Venerable Prof. Geshe Ngawang Samten
Director/Rector, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies
Sarnath, India

[Greetings]

The Buddha has addressed all of the challenges that humanity faces. So long as *samsara* exists, and so long as beings suffer, Buddhism is relevant and quite useful for elevating them from suffering. Buddhist education is not for immediate purposes – for providing jobs or other things like that; Buddhist education emancipates beings from suffering. Therefore, first of all, I think it is extremely important to understand that Buddhist education now being provided around the world, in many of these institutions, just like any other modern discipline – they do not have the characteristics of being Buddhistic in nature. Buddhist education is quite different from what is being provided in the modern education.

The modern world is facing many problems, fundamentally, due to the development of its education system. The modern education is totally extroverted, and the people who are trained through this process of education cannot introvert themselves – cannot understand their life. They cannot understand themselves or the world around them – becoming a mere biological machine.

So I would like to quote one statement from His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, which has become quite popular and sometimes printed on t-shirts and in many articles – about the paradoxes that modern society faces: *"We have bigger houses but smaller families, more conveniences but less time; we have more degrees but less sense; more knowledge but less judgment; more experts but more problems; more medicines but less healthiness; we have been all the way to the moon and back but we have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor; we build more computers to hold more information than ever but we have less communication; we have become long on quantity but short on quality; these are the times for fast foods but low digestion; tall men but short character; steep profit but shallow relationships…"*

I think these paradoxes that we face at the moment are at the global stage or global level. Such paradoxes are primarily, as I had said earlier, because of the existing education systems that we all have. Therefore, I really want to urge all of our Buddhist universities, scholars, teachers and students to not be infected by the disease of modern educational systems. Our Buddhist education should not be infected, rather the Buddhist educational system should give directions to the modern education system.

In Buddhism, education, as I have said earlier, is not for an immediate purpose, but for the total emancipation from suffering. Therefore, the very motivation behind the entire education

system and the people who come to give education and who come to receive education should have the motivation of bringing peace into a person and bringing transformation into a person rather than obtaining some information – just as modern education is completely based on the transformation of data rather than the realization and transformation of the person. Buddhist education is primarily based on the transformation of the person. In Buddhism, we have the three [trainings], in the real sense – this is education. How can these transformations be brought about? The Buddha has rightly pointed out, and he has given during his lifetime, the [three trainings]. This is why we have the Tipitaka – the three vessels, the three containers of these three [trainings].

First of all, the person should have moral ethics, proper understanding of moral ethics. They should abide by the moral ethics; and thereafter, they can have meditational processes. Meditation processes do not necessarily mean the person has to go to a remote forest-cave for meditation, but mediation can be done at any time, can be done by lay people, can be done by students while they are attending their classes. So therefore, Buddhist education is all about transformation; and through meditation, one can realize the reality of external and internal phenomena-worlds – and through that, one can understand reality and further develop and cultivate wisdom. Therefore, the core element of Buddhist education is transformation, and as the Buddhist education should not be confined to the written walls of Buddhist institutions and Buddhist society. It should have a better interaction with other disciplines. In the past, in ancient Nalanda and other great Buddhist monastic universities – the great scholars interacted with the leading, prevalent, different disciplines in India. Similarly, now we should have interactions with different, other disciplines: science, western philosophy, social sciences, and many other things – so that we can have these similar interactions.

Buddhism does not need to fear from science, Buddhism does not need to fear from post-modernism. Whatever is based on rational ground is acceptable for Buddhism, and can have interaction. So, therefore, as His Holiness, the Dalai Lama has been having interactions constantly for the last twenty years with the scientists, and the scientists accept that Buddhism has given science a new direction for the world of science.

Finally, Buddhism can provide lots of proper direction to various sciences: ecology, economics, and as we have been discussing, to governance, to bring real peace to society. Real peace is possible only through transforming individuals within the society; and this transformation can be brought out through proper education and training of the students – and for that, in Buddhism we have different criteria for teachers and for students. Students should also ponder upon these subtle issues, so that Buddhist education can become a unique in itself, which can provide directions to the other disciplines around the world.

Prof. Dr Le Mahn That
Acting Rector, Vietnam Buddhist University
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

[Greetings]

We are here, talking about the Buddhist education, especially at the higher level – that means, at the Buddhist universities. We hear some of our panelists talking about whether Buddhist education would train people for jobs or train people for ending suffering. So, I feel like I am living good in real life, and we think that in the case of Vietnam, Buddhist education has a long tradition.

Actually, in the first millennium, the Buddhist temples were our own schools. Some of our kings, Vietnamese kings, graduated from the Buddhist temple education – and they did a good job, at leading the nation, the setting up of the Vietnamese nation.

And then in 1069, they set up the first Vietnamese university – they consider that higher learning in Vietnam began at that time. Now, if you come to Hanoi, you will see what they call the Temple of Literature. That temple, they revere Confucius, as an educator. But that temple was built by a Vietnamese Buddhist king. He was at the same time founder of Vietnamese Zen School in Vietnam. So that means from the Buddhist education – now the Buddhist education secularized formerly in the temple. Most of them study in order to have knowledge to lead the nation, to work for the nation, to lead – what ever they learned, they learned it from the temple.

But then, in 1069, the government secularized, they set up a new university, under the guidance of the government. So we see that Buddhist educators, and they call themselves 'Buddhists' – even at that time, they studied Confucius - that means the Confucian literature and books. Of course, at that time, they studied the Tipitaka, also. They had examinations for these things. So we see that the Buddhist education in the case of Vietnam – they have two tasks: one task is the nation-building task; and the second is for protecting or for spreading Buddhism – something like that [propagation?].

We have the Sangha University. They train Buddhist monks. In Vietnam, we train Buddhist monks and nuns for educating people about Buddhism and the other is the ordinary Buddhist university for training young people not only for a job, as Dr. Yifa said, but for also knowing about what Buddhism is.

So, within that, this first circular here – we set up the aim of our Buddhist education is to further Buddhist scholarship and that scholarship is first of all, to let young people understand and practice Buddhism; and the second thing is to make contributions, to the meeting of challenges to humanity. That means, trying to meet the challenges of their own nation, first.

So in Vietnam, when, after the 1963 Buddhist movement moved against the government at that time – they set up a full university, we have Van Hanh University. Within, ten years, to 1975, we have 10,000 students, we have five faculties. Besides the Faculty of Buddhist Studies, now we have the Faculties of: Humanities; of Letters; of Science; of Social Science; of Education; of Engineering.

After 1975, of course, the Communist Nation or government, took over the education – and they let us just have the Buddhist Studies Program. They let us have or carry out our translation of the Pali Tipitaka into Vietnamese – and now we have the Pali Tipitaka translated into the Vietnamese language, already.

I went on to study the Buddhist history of Vietnam – the history of Buddhism in Vietnam – and taught people about Sanskrit and Tibetan. Then in 1984, they allowed us to take in students, but only monks and nuns. This year, after almost 25 years – we again, begin to have a full university. So that means the Buddhist education in Vietnam, we have a special case – and here we submit this to the delegation for our meeting here to deliver.

We should think about: what kind of Buddhist university should we have? Of course, when we make the association here, we would like to discuss and would like to have the contribution from all of the members of the Buddhist University circles.

Responding to the Symposium Speeches:

Prof. Dr Richard Gombrich
Emeritus Professor & Academic Director
Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, Oxford University, UK

[Greetings]:

I am going to begin by being completely out of order. Today is the 27th of May 2007. This will be a red-letter day, in the history of Buddhism; not, I am afraid, for what we are saying in this room. This very afternoon, in Bombay, half of a million people are formally being converted to Buddhism. There are hardly any other days in the history of mankind when so many people have joined Buddhism, and I think it would be a pity if we did not take any notice of this interesting fact – something that is perhaps more interesting than all of the interesting things that we are telling. Why? Of course, the setting up of an International Association of Buddhist Universities would be a very important step – and I would link the two things.

Just as I think it would be significant that we don't take any notice of half a million people convert to Buddhism in one day in India – because Buddhist communication is still very poor. So Buddhist communications are still very poor at the university level. One has to ask: what is going to happen to those half a million people who have embraced Buddhism formally today – where will they get their information from? Where will they learn about Buddhist books; about what they can learn from Buddhism from the internet, and so on?

Ultimately, these things have to trickle down from universities. These universities are concerned first and foremost with higher education – but higher education in the end has to set the tone for the whole society. It was Christian universities, which gradually improved the standard of Christians in their own religion. The same has to be true of Buddhist universities. So what happens in the wider world to Buddhism is extremely relevant to today's topic.

Now the wonderful, venerable, learned speakers, who have addressed us – have very largely, been telling us things that I think everyone of us would agree with, because we wouldn't be here if we didn't. Namely, that the world would be a much better place if more people were Buddhist and more people understood and followed Buddhist principles. But I think my brief is to speak on perhaps a narrower field, and that is what can be expected and hoped from an association of Buddhist universities?

I think it is a wonderful project – and I think it is very important that from the outset one or two principles should be understood and followed. Firstly, I think that this association should be as inclusive as possible and not exclusive. It should not be difficult for an institution to prove that it deserves to come into this institution. I have in mind, particularly two dimensions of inclusivity. We would like this institution to operate with the consensus of as many Buddhists, and indeed even non-Buddhists in the world as possible. And there is still a danger in certain parts of the Buddhist world where we do not think of the female gender. I think it would be a very good idea, indeed, if we could be conscious, even at the level of enshrining it into the constitution - of the necessity, to include women in the study and propagation of Buddhism. I would go so far as to say, and I would go so far to suggest that it might be a good idea to say that at least one member of the council should be a woman.

[Applause]

Well, I am glad to have some applause – and no apples thrown!

The second point is that in other contexts of course, people are rather fond of saying: 'Well, we don't associate with such and such, because they are not really good Buddhists.' This is, of course, the history of religion, the formation of new sects. Who would have thought that when Henry VIII, of England decided to take his country out of the Roman Catholic Church because he wanted to get divorced and the Roman Catholic Church wouldn't allow it – that we would end up with the Church of England, which wasn't just a minor side-show, but actually, nowadays seems to be utterly respectable. So, today's renegades may be tomorrow's mainline.

I don't want to be controversial by naming names, but I think that we can all think of major Buddhist movements in Buddhist countries which are frowned on by the establishment. Some of these major Buddhist movements may in fact do have their own universities. I have no particular interest in forwarding their doctrine or their particular practices – but I think it would be a great mistake if an attempt were made by Buddhists to cut out other people on the grounds that they are not really very good Buddhists or this is a new kind of Buddhism or a funny kind of Buddhism. So, I am in favor of inclusivism as much as possible. We should take the history of sectarianism as a warning, here.

There is another danger, and that is that Buddhist universities may come to look rather like Christian seminaries. Christian seminaries are taken very seriously by Christians, and of course

they are necessary for the continuation of the Church – but they are not, on the whole, taken very seriously by the rest of the world and by secular authorities.

We heard a lot from our panel about the relationship between what a Buddhist institution does and what a Buddhist university does. I think there is little to worry about, but I would define a university – of course, a university in the modern world often gives training for jobs. That is a great deal of what it does – but the essence of the university is about the pursuit of truth. You pursue truth - that is the morality of being at a university – to dedicate yourself to the truth, and to follow that trail wherever it leads you, however uncomfortable it may be. So, the one discrepancy that I see that might arise is between being Buddhist and being a university is that at a university you must have the courage to doubt everything and not to prohibit any line of inquiry.

What could this association do? It could do many things, but I mentioned about the half of a million people converting to Buddhism today. Another thing that has happened in India over the last days is that in Uttar Pradesh, which has more than three hundred million inhabitants – the first minister has just signed a decree to set up a Buddhist university. She is a lady who is herself, a Buddhist. That sort of thing is happening with increasing speed, all over the world. You can bet your bottom dollar, or the last scrap at the bottom of your rice-bowl that there is nobody in Uttar Pradesh that has any idea on how to go about this. If there were an association of Buddhist universities, that would be the obvious reference point for a newly created university to come to in the world, to say, how do we do this, how do you advise setting up a curriculum, how do we set up a library, what are the resources for e-texts, what are the resources for books, and so on? And it can serve as the gathering point for information and making it incredibly much easier to start a new institution on decent lines – and such institutions are going to proliferate.

So, my final brief-point is that, I was the founding member of the International Association of Buddhist Studies; I am the President of the UK Association of Buddhist Studies; I was President of the Pali Text Society, and so on – I can assure you that none of those institutions comes anywhere near performing the kind of function that this International Association of Buddhist Universities can and will perform. I think that whatever reservations one may have in principle about this or that clause of the constitution, in the end we should sink our differences, because this is so important. It must go forward, and go forward as soon as possible.

Dr Thomas Coburn
President, Naropa University
Boulder, Colorado, USA

[Greetings]

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this august gathering this afternoon. I have two introductory comments about the context in which I offer my remarks, and then two metaphors to describe what I think we are about.

The first setting of context comments are these: my training is as a historian of religion, and the simplest way to capture this meaning is to recall an examination that I took, some thirty-five years ago – consisting of: walking into the room, and finding three dates on the chalkboard. The assignment was to discuss the religious situation in the world at one of the following dates. It was a terrifying exam to prepare for, but it also constructed in me a way of thinking about the world's religious history that has remained with me ever since.

The second context is that of serving, for the past four years, as the President of Naropa University, in Boulder, Colorado [in the United States]. The former of those contexts has encouraged me to look for broader, sweeping patterns in the world's religious history. Some of those patterns are obvious to all of us. Things like the Axial Age [the era when many ancient religions were founded, from Plato, Gotama Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Judaism, etc.] – that produced the Buddhist religion that we know so well, but also produced other religions as well – none of which had the broad historical sweep in the world, that the Buddhist religion had. But certainly, those centuries of the 5th-6th BCE were momentous, for the world as a whole.

That sweeping pattern enables us to look at movements like the western pattern of colonialism and the age of exploration, whose effects are still with us. Let me suggest that there is another sweeping movement that is underway that is part of what this conference is all about, an aspiration for a Buddhist consortium. I think there is evidence beyond this particular conference of course that I think clamors to be taken account of – a colleague has just noted one of those. But as I look at the currents in higher education in the West, I see things like the movements for women's liberation, also apparent outside of the West, that has really changed the face of the academy in one single generation. Similarly, the environmental movement has more recently encouraged us to think about our experience as a whole – about our relationship to nature.

I see today's, tomorrow's, and yesterday's events as part of that revolution of consciousness, that invites us to think about our own particular heritages, as part of something revolutionary, in a

global context. So, what I see going on here, is something certainly Buddhist, but it is also larger than Buddhist. I see it as something that is educational, but also larger than educational.

The second setting that I see in which I find myself speaking, is that of the President of Naropa University. Rather than rehearse for you the features of that institution you should find on your desks some brief handouts dealing with that, including the mission statement that the board of trustees has revised, just within the last year or so.

The metaphor… here is the first of my two metaphors. The metaphor that I started using to describe Naropa's work when I became President, four years ago, was that we find ourselves in this little institution in Boulder, Colorado, at the confluence of two rivers that had their origins deep in history. One of them is in the experience of Sidhattha Gotama, the Buddha, in India, 2500 years ago. That experience spawned a movement that each of you know across cultures, transforming every culture that it came into contact with – it now finds itself flowing through Boulder, Colorado. There was also another Buddhist river, our institutional heritage – that had its headwaters, not in classical India, but in the classical Mediterranean – what we know as classical Greece and the birth of the liberal arts tradition. That tradition too has flowed over many cultures, always enrichening them. It too, now, finds itself flowing through Boulder, Colorado. Never before in human history has that confluence happened. It is that excitement that drew me there some years ago.

The institution was born in 1974, as the brain-child of our founder, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Trumpta Rimpoche is one of the great founders, one of the great missionaries in bringing Buddhism to the West. It was understood as a Buddhist movement, but if you look at the mission statement that I have handed out, you will also see that it is broader than Buddhist. It is described as Buddhist inspired, ecumenical, and non-sectarian. The vision that Trungpa Rimpoche had was that what Naropa was exposing, exploring, was what happens when one draws upon the inner resources that every person in this room knows through meditation and contemplation into interaction with the disciplines of higher education – the conventional liberal arts disciplines. His metaphor was that what Naropa was about in bringing that experiential component to bear was that it was re-igniting the pilot light in all contemplative traditions, all religious traditions, and all educational traditions that had often gone out. What I think he was referring to was that aberration that a number of people have referred to this afternoon that happened in the western understanding of education around the time of the 'enlightenment'. The assumption that what defined a human being was what was in the head rather than what was in the heart; and it was defined as what was out there rather than what was in here. This afternoon, I have been reminded of the fundamental meaning of the word 'education' – which is 'to draw out'. How can it be, I ask myself, that we in the west have thought that what we are doing was drawing out the inner being,

when all we were talking about was the head; and, much of what we were talking about was the objective world.

So, what I think we are about at Naropa, what I think that the appetite is that I sense is, in this room – is for a more holistic, more rounded understanding of what it means to be human, that includes the whole-heart, as well as the head, intuition as well as intellect. What we are about, therefore, in this enterprise and at Naropa in particular, is the same kind of transformative effect that Buddhist had on Buddhism, on the previous cultures in China, and the previous cultures in Japan. What we are about is something that is Buddhist and therefore larger than Buddhist. Can you imagine Japanese art without Buddhism? What we are about is that kind of transformation of the world.

My second metaphor and my final comment will be to invite us to think about what we are here doing is having had a long out-breath of Buddhism for the last 2500 years, with the decentralization in the spread of Buddhism, what we are about here is the in-breath – drawing ourselves into interaction with one another, engaging in our own particular ways in which I think is the most challenging episode in the 21st Century – "How do we get along with people who are not like ourselves?"

What we are involved in here, is drawing Buddhists of all natures, of all nations, to engage that issue of diversity, and it will have a spill-over effect, I believe, for: far outside educational institutions.

My last quotation would be, Naropa was privileged last fall to co-host the visit by the Dalai Lama to Denver, and at the very end of his talk, in response to questions about what one can do about the woe in the world, uniquely so in the 21st Century, he said: "Education is the answer." That is us, folks.

Ven. Weiwu MSc
Founder-Chairman, Council of International Buddhist College
Hat Yai (Thailand) – Penang (Malaysia):

[Greetings]:

I really admire each and every one of our panelists, in their ability to be within ten minutes to share with us, many issues. In fact, collectively, they have only 60 minutes, but we hear issues about the modern education versus Buddhist or traditional approach to education – the modern education has emphasis only purely the academic versus the traditional/spiritual dimension – in the traditional approach. As well as the providing of skills or jobs versus development of insights to free oneself from sufferings, the extroverted versus the introverted approach, and so on and so forth. In fact, in our experience in establishing the International Buddhist College, a very new baby, we experience these types of conflict.

There were many people who also advocated that we take a very liberal approach to a Buddhist university or college. Eventually, we got around it by having an academic component that operates exactly the same as what is required by even the government of [Thailand], but to have the traditional approach in terms of our students that need accommodations – so they live in the monasteries. For students who do not like to be confined to this monastic training – we give them the option to stay outside. But I am happy to report to you that with our experience most students have chosen to stay outside. So that is our solution to that.

A few months ago, Professor Gombrich was there, we were in India and Ven. Professor Samten was there – we had a conference on the theme of 'Buddhism in the 21st Century', and His Holiness, the Dalai Lama – in his opening address, said something quite interesting in terms of the Buddhist teaching of what our Venerable Geshe mentioned, on *sila*, *samadhi* and *panna*. So, His Holiness advocated that we have to have the roots in the tradition in *sila* and *samadhi* before following the *vinaya* and the *suttas*. But in the histories of the development of Buddhism, in India and subsequently in other places – the ancient masters used theories in *Abhidhamma*, certainly, had re-expressed the Buddhist wisdom according to the different age-level that people were at. So, H.H. Dalai Lama, said that we are now living in the 21st Century, he liked the theme very much, so he advocated that we have to express the Buddhist wisdom in the methodology of the 21st Century. I think this is a very practical approach – so there is no conflict, so we can have both.

I would like to see more Asian students being exposed to the western way of academic pursuits – you know, you have all of this doubt in the academic approach but before, the Professor

Coburn said, another way is to have western students to come and visit Asia – to see the living tradition. This is better than trying to explain to them the 'other' dimension; let them see and experience for themselves. So, I think there is no conflict. There is no conflict, but there is a big challenge that we face – that is our ability to re-express the Buddhist wisdom in the language and methodology of the modern age.

Secondly, I would like to touch on the association. It is very meaningful for us to be here together, with the idea of setting up this platform for Buddhist institutions, the colleges, to get together and be able to share resources.

I was very surprised, of course, pleasantly surprised to hear about the Budapest Buddhist University. Dr Agocs visited us, and from our conversation it is very clear that European Buddhists are struggling very hard in an environment in Europe to establish universities in terms of the financial resources, and also in other resources in terms of staffing, so I feel that this is, besides many things mentioned by Professor Richard Gombrich right now, for Asians – where we have people practicing the tradition of *dana* – I think we should go 'all out' to support our brothers in the West, when they are trying to establish universities and facing financial difficulties. So this is something specific that we can do also.

Lastly, I would like to report one thing: that, only last week I visited China, attended on conference there and I was very surprised that besides looking at the list that the Venerable Dhammasami and his friends have prepared – there are so many other secular Buddhist universities in China that are now providing Buddhist studies – and I am very sure that they would be very happy to join us in this platform. So we can work together in promoting Buddhist education in this modern time.

I am also very happy that Professor Charles Willemen from the IBC. He is a good resource to link us to scholars in China, and will be happy to help do this to get more Chinese scholars to get to join our association.

Summarizations of Speeches to the Symposium on Buddhist Universities

Mr. Dion Peoples
IABU Manager - Bangkok Secretariat,
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

Any silent witness, or the transcriber of the various speeches preserved as audio-files delivered to the United Nations Day of Vesak 2007/2550 Symposium on Buddhist Universities, could have taken home the following impression from the excerpts of various speakers:

Buddhism now has an institutional-level platform that strives to be well-governed, through the principles of: participation, accountability, transparency, and efficiency – all necessary factors in good governance. Greater, more economically developed nations should assist in encouraging and fostering development in lesser developed nations. Towards this result, members of the IABU should look into the greater benefits of educational exchanges between universities, professors and students – deepening the development of Buddhism and Buddhist education – and the International Association of Buddhist Universities, as such, is the established platform.

The association should strive to research into, and protect the methods of knowledge acquisition - from the variances in local Buddhist traditions; as well as, interact with ostracized Buddhist groups who have established their own universities. The various nations all offer valuable, traditional methods at understanding and practicing Buddhism; and while technology might be employed – the human factor should never be ignored.

The International Association of Buddhist Universities should somehow: return economically productive and ethically responsible graduates into the society. Towards this goal, for instance: the conscious recipients of all of the association's noble intentions should be women and marginalized minority groups in distant, non-Buddhist lands. Also, the association should provide scientific and technological training to Buddhist students who can additionally utilize modern means to make Buddhist education affordable or even free to those seeking wisdom.

Buddhist education should be brought up to universally accepted standards – standards of which might not be based on Western culturally-biased principles – towards curriculum void of the academic/religious duality. Perhaps insufficiencies in both fields should be addressed. For example, the secularization of Japanese Buddhist universities has had some negative impacts on society, when the original intent was to provide higher types of training to future leaders – but instead education has developed to the extent that teaching religions in these institutions has

become prohibited and limited to historical discussions, or social and philosophical aspects of Buddhism.

Buddhist universities should not try to convert people of other religions into being Buddhists; rather, Buddhist universities should convert ignorant populations to become enlightened members of society – those who can discern the sources of the world's suffering, because many young people see religion itself as a source of suffering and therefore, need to be taught to live with religion. Again, Buddhist education should liberate young students from suffering.

Since Buddhism rests on rationality, there should be no fear amongst Buddhist educators in incorporating modern secular issues into their curriculum – material should be selected carefully to assist in the transformation of individuals as well as providing ethical directions for various academic disciplines and society. Additionally, Asian Buddhists should do more to support and ensure that Western attempts at establishing Buddhist centers or universities should be properly guided. There are many social paradoxes that must become rectified - some of which can be seen from actually witnessing the living Buddhist traditions in various regions. Finally, as we all can see, education is the answer to end global suffering.

From the perspective of transcribing the numerous speeches, and writing this brief summary, one might challenge to ask: "What is actually happening to achieve the above goals; and how can poor Buddhist nations, with poor historical records of human/civil rights oversee and protect the development of Buddhist Studies in progressive/economically-powerful and spiritually-uninviting [prejudicial] foreign-lands, while remaining relatively passive in terms of missionary activities – towards the establishment or existence of a foreign religion inside these nations?" Perhaps the question is large, and maybe IABU members would be interested in providing or reading the answers in the next edition of the IABU Newsletter.

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About the IABU:

The International Association of Buddhist Universities, IABU, is an international forum for institutes of Buddhist higher education to network, understand, and benefit from the richness and variety of the multinational Buddhist tradition. There are already excellent international organizations which bring Buddhist scholars together; but those organizations, for example, the IABS and the AAS, bring together Buddhist scholars only at the individual level. The IABU is the first global forum that brings entire institutions together. As such, it provides new challenges as well as opportunities to those involved.

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