

kam die Idee zur Schaffung eines komparativ orientierten Wikis zu Regionalstädten in Südostasien auf.

Im Abschluss-Panel „Südostasienwissenschaft im deutschen Sprachraum – Wohin geht die Reise?“, das auf Deutsch stattfand, sollte Vertretern der Südostasienforschung in Deutschland die Möglichkeit gegeben werden, den aktuellen Stand von Forschung und Lehre an ihren Instituten zu erläutern und einen Blick auf zukünftige Projekte zu werfen. Das Panel fand in Form eines moderierten Gesprächs statt. Teilnehmer waren Bernhard Dahm (ehemals Universität Passau), Claudia Derichs (Universität Marburg, Vorstand Deutsche Gesellschaft für Asienkunde), Arndt Graf (Universität Frankfurt), Michaela Haug (Universität Köln), Vincent Houben (HU Berlin), Melanie Pichler (Universität Wien) und Susanne Schröter (Universität Frankfurt). Bernhard Dahm steuerte eine aktuelle Erhebung zu den Standorten der deutschen Südostasienforschung, ihren jeweiligen Schwerpunkten und ihrer personellen Ausstattung bei.

Übereinstimmend sprachen sich die TeilnehmerInnen für eine stärkere Vernetzung und gemeinsame Projekte aus und äußerten den Wunsch, dass die Südostasien-Wissenschaften auf diesem Wege eine hörbarere Stimme im Konzert der deutschen Forschungslandschaft erhalten.

Die Tagung bot somit Studierenden auch die Möglichkeit, die verschiedenen Südostasien-Standorte in Deutschland mit ihren jeweiligen Schwerpunkten kennenzulernen. Auf akademischer Ebene wurde das Ziel erreicht, einen engen fachlichen Austausch mit international renommierten Expertinnen und Experten zu den Forschungsgebieten der Bonner Südostasienwissenschaft zu bieten.

*Frank Seemann*

### **13th Sakyadhī International Conference on Buddhist Women**

Vaishali/India, 5–12 January 2013

The 13th Conference on Buddhist Women, titled “Buddhism at the Grassroots”, took place 5–12 January 2013. Six hundred women and a few men, both lay and ordained, from all over the world attended the conference in cold and foggy Vaishali, where Mahāprajāpatī, the foster mother of the Buddha, and 500 noble women became *bhikkunīs* and were ordained by the Buddha according to the Buddhist scriptures. Accordingly, Vaishali is a very auspicious place for Buddhist women.

The conference was held in a big tent with bamboo supports in the grounds of the Mahāprajāpatī Monastery. Temperatures as low as 2–4°C made the conference a challenge for participants, but the interesting programme of panels and innumerable workshops and the cultural programme more than made up for that.

The day started at 7:00 am with meditations in different traditions, among them Tibetan, Korean and Vietnamese. Following the morning and afternoon panel presentation, which were translated simultaneously into several languages, different workshops were held on topics such as *bhikkunī* Ordination, Buddhism and Leadership, Sexual Harassment, LGTBQQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex), Wen Do, Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue and Rapping for Generations.

There were 11 panels in all. The tight daily conference schedule included panels, time for questions and answers, various workshops and a cultural programme. This report will provide a short summary of each of these interesting talks and highlight a few. The first panel was on “Buddhist Women of India” and the second on “Buddhist Women of the World”. Particularly interesting was a talk by Kustiani from Indonesia, “Examining the Date of Mahāprajāpatī’s Ordination”. Kustiani’s research traced the contemporary controversy about the time or the special date of Mahāprajāpatī’s ordination. She agreed that the year of Mahāprajāpatī’s ordination is still a matter of controversy, but she tried to reach a conclusion by considering all aspects of the problem. In her view, “The involvement of Ānanda in helping to successfully arrange the ordination should not be taken to mean that he was the personal attendant of the Buddha at that time. His involvement can be taken as a sign of the close relationship that existed between them, since they knew each other very well. Thus, the ordination of Mahāprajāpatī during the early years of the Buddha’s ministry can be accepted on the grounds that, if she was ordained at the later period, it would have been difficult for her to do so many sangha activities.” (All direct quotes in this text are taken from the conference catalogue: Karma Lekshe Tsomo (ed.), *Buddhism at the Grassroots*, Vaishali, 2013)

Thus, Kustiani writes, she was given the title “nun of long standing” (*rattaññūnam*) by the Buddha. Kustiani also notes that according to the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya the ordination of the Buddha’s foster mother was arranged at an early date, which substantiates her conclusion. In this text it is told that the ordination “took place in the fifth year of the Buddha’s ministry”.

Other topics covered different focuses of Buddhist women in India, Kinnaur, Sikkim, Bhutan, Cambodia and Australia, e.g. music, perspectives of women, education, and women in non-Buddhist countries.

The third panel presentation was titled “Cultivating Confidence: Self-Esteem, Self-Promotion & No-Self”. Hsiao-Lan Hu, a scholar at Michigan University, gave a talk about “Identity and Samsara”, in which she dealt with the psychological aspects a meditator is confronted with, such as discontent, lust, craving and other emotional troubles and disorders. In her talk she refers to Jon Kabat-Zinn and Tse-fu Kuan, who speaks about mindfulness as a method to “prevent(s) feelings from developing into emotional disturbances.” (Tse-fu Kuan, *Mindfulness in Early Buddhism: New Approaches Through Psychology and Textual Analysis of Pali, Chinese and Sanskrit Sources*, London: Routledge 2008, p. 10) She comes to the conclusion that by clinging “to one’s own way of seeing oneself, one binds oneself to the endless cycle of birth, death, rebirth and re-death (...)” This makes it impossible to escape the realm of Mara. But if there is awareness “of the illusive nature of one’s self-identity” one defeats Mara and has the capability to “transcend(s) death and fear.”

The fifth panel presentation dealt with the topic: “Finding Space for Upāsikās in the Annals of Ancient Indian Buddhism: Inscriptional Evidence of Lay Female Devotees”. “We Love our Nuns!” Reflections on Lay-Monastic Relations in Sri Lanka” by Susanne Mrozik was especially interesting, because the relation between laywomen and nuns is similar to the relation between nuns and laywomen in Myanmar, which the author of this conference report had the chance to experience during a stay at a nunnery in Sagaiing. Mrozik did field work in Sri Lanka and interviewed laypeople, especially laywomen, about “their” nuns. This talk was very engaged, emotional, and full of love for the Buddhist nuns in Sri Lanka, their lives and their work with laywomen.

“Bhikkhuni Revolution: The future of the Transnational Bhikkhuni Movement” was the title of the seventh panel. The most memorable talk here was that by the German Gelongma Jampa Tsedroen – or, to use her lay name, Carola Roloff – about “Latest Developments on the Revival of Buddhist Nuns’ Ordination in the Tibetan Tradition”. She came to the conference straight from Patna, where she was attending a council of the Buddhist saṃgha that discussed the *bhikkunī* ordination, especially for Tibetan Buddhist nuns, who still have to go to Taiwan or Hong Kong and become Gelongmas there. (See Rotraut Wurst, *Identität im Exil. Tibetisch-buddhistische Nonnen und das Netzwerk Sakyadhītā*, Reimer Verlag, Berlin 2001) So Gelongma Jampa Tsedroen was able to present the latest information about this important topic and confirm the rumour that, finally, in May this year the first mo Ge bśes or Geshemas were able to take their exams. But to let us be clear: this is the first step in the exams; only after several years of

oral and written exams and then several more years will the first Geshemas be officially accepted.

In the eighth panel presentation "Buddhism and Social Activism" Gabriela Frey talked about "The Council of Europe's Investigation on Religious and Cultural Relativism: A Menace for the Human Rights of Women?" She runs a group called "Frauen und Buddhismus" (Women and Buddhism) in the German Buddhist Union (DBU). In her talk she informed the conference about the European Buddhist Union and the work with the Council of Europe. "The EBU is now part of what is called the Conference of INGO's of the Council of Europe." The EBU-EU Committee is also a part of a workgroup on "Human Rights and Religion".

"Silence in a Noisy World" was the title of the ninth panel presentation. Paula Arai's talk, "The Healing Power of Beauty", which dealt with the Japanese tea ceremony, deserves special mention. She presented her talk as a guided meditation, so that people could feel the healing power of such a ritual just by listening to her talk, because, as she states "healing arts help one see everything interrelated in a perpetual dance of change." She encouraged her listeners to engage in "aesthetic practices, for the art of healing is a creative activity."

The eleventh panel was called "Women Changing Buddhism". Rita M. Gross dealt in her talk "Working with Obstacles: Is Female Rebirth an Obstacle?" with the situation of women, especially those interested in pursuing gender studies at university. In "Buddha's Lone Rangers: Vajrayana Buddhist Nuns of Contemporary Suvarnabhumi" Karma Tashi Choedron highlighted the difficult situation of nuns who on the one hand have to work to earn money just to survive, but on the other hand as nuns are not allowed to work or to touch money. Last but not least, Tenzin Palmo, the British Tibetan Buddhist nun, held an interesting talk about "Buddhism and Ageing: In Praise of Old Age", which started a discussion about the situation of Buddhist women in the West who, when they are old, still do not have the option of living a Buddhist life in a home for elderly people. Initial proposals to change or improve the situation have been made in France.

The huge programme with so different talks and workshops was very interesting in spite of the incredible cold. After the conference people also took part in different trips to Bodhgaya, Nalanda, Rajgir and even Nepal (Lumbini).

The 14th Conference on Buddhist Women will be held in Indonesia in 2015.

*Rotraut Wurst*