

## Konferenzberichte

### First Asia-Pacific Congress of Women in Politics

21.-23.6.1994, Manila

*Why Women and What Politics?* – that was the main topic of concern at the First Asia-Pacific Congress of Women in Politics, held in Manila 21-23 June 1994 and organized by the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics. Attended by some 200 women leaders (politicians, activists and researchers) from 27 countries in the region, the Congress aimed at formulating a contribution to the *Platform for Action* to be adopted by governments when they meet in Beijing at the Fourth World Conference on Women from 4-15 September 1995. Just a week before, government representatives from around the region had met in Jakarta for the *Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Women and Development* in order to formulate a plan of action to advance the status of women in Asia and the Pacific, the so-called *Jakarta Declaration for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific*. This declaration is part of the preparation for the Women's World Conference 1995 and mentions the inequitable access to power and decision-making between the genders as one of the critical areas of concern.

The Congress in Manila thus provided a venue to discuss the crucial issue of promoting women's political participation. In her opening remarks Irene M. Santiago, Chairwoman of the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics and Executive Director of the NGO Forum '95 (the parallel programme for non-governmental organisations to be held in conjunction with the 1995 World Conference on Women) said that the limited number of women in positions of public power is one of the roots of the marginalization of women in all societies. She explained the objective of the Congress, namely: to share the vision of transformative politics and to design a strategy that will bring about this kind of politics. Khunying Supatra Masdit, the Convenor of the NGO Forum '95 and President of the Center

for Asia-Pacific Congress of Women in Politics referred in her address to her experiences as a women politician in Thailand.

These welcoming speeches were followed by an opening panel on *why women – what politics* to stimulate the discussion. Dr. Rounaq Jahan, a fellow of the South Asian Institute of Columbia University, gave three main reasons for increasing the political participation of women: to influence the future direction of development, to have women's issues on the agenda and to bring about transformation in politics. The Bangladeshi researcher argued that not only women with the „right family connection“ but also „ordinary women“ should have a chance of getting top leadership positions. She further criticized the present kind of politics which involves „money, muscle men and the patron-client relationship“ and called for electoral reforms, more transparency and accountability and an involvement of the women's movement in the mainstream of politics. Khunying Supatra, another speaker on this panel, suggested training for potential leaders, networking with existing politicians, cooperation with men and going into one's constituency as strategies to bring more women into politics. Hon. Kanwaljit Soin, the last speaker on the panel and Member of Parliament in Singapore, sees the social construction of gender as a system of power that assigns greater value to activities associated with masculinity. The existing stereotype of women as uninterested in power and politics excuses discrimination and overlooks the constraints caused by the double burden of home and work. Women have internalised the gender ideology of being emotional, passive and weak and thus lowered their expectations about their leadership capability. The Singaporean politician thus challenges the nature of power and calls for addressing politics through a gender-sensitive lens.

On the first afternoon the Congress held a panel discussion on experiences in transformative politics. Shahnaz Ahmad from the Aurat Foundation in Lahore reported on their campaign for putting women on the political agenda. Yok Khoan Ung, director of the training unit of the Cambodian NGO Khemara and member of the executive board of the Liberal Democratic Party, spoke to the participants of the activities in Cambodia to mobilize women to take part in the first free elections after the civil war.

In the late afternoon the participants discussed in small groups their vision of transformative politics with the following results: The participants want politics that is both transformed and transformational. Transformed because it uses power to create change, to develop people and to build communities; it is nonhierarchical and participatory in its structures and processes and it accords priority to the disadvantaged sectors. Trans-



formational because it is issue-based, development-oriented and gender-responsive; it seeks economic, social and political equity between genders and among sectors and it builds a society that is just and humane, and a way of life that is sustainable. To achieve this vision a critical mass of women wielding power is regarded as necessary.

In another workshop the participants discussed what must be undertaken in order to achieve their vision and activities planned for the NGO Forum '95 in Beijing. The creation of support mechanisms for women in politics, such as training programmes on various aspects of political activities and mentoring by existing women politicians, the lobbying and organizing of electoral reforms and ensuring that the women's agenda is included in party platforms were among the priorities worked out.

These results were submitted to the Chairwoman of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Dr. Patricia B. Licuanan, as a joint declaration by the participants. Guest of honor during this presentation as well as speaker was the President of the Philippines, Fidel V. Ramos. As the UN Commission on the Status of Women is the preparatory committee for the Women's World Conference the conclusion of the congress in the form of the document *Asia/Pacific Women in Politics. Platform of Action* will certainly make an impact on this conference next year. Despite the prevailing low participation of women in politics in the Asian-Pacific Region there have been considerable improvements in some countries. Thus, the participants truly believe that women in the Asian-Pacific region will assume a more visible and active political role in the next century. They emphasized, however, that they do not want to act against men, but to work together with them. They further agreed that women are not on principle better politicians than men. Women from this region want to be leading in terms of political empowerment of women worldwide. A good sign in this direction is that they will play an outstanding role within the Women's World Conference 1995: it will not only be held in Asia, but three Asian women are prominent among those preparing this event: Supatra Masdit, Irene Santiago and Dr. Patricia Licuanan.

The commitment, the determination and unanimity with which participants declared their right to claim public power were catching. However, a number of women led the discussion and not all opinions were considered equally. The women from „post-socialist“ countries were few in number and they pointed out that their voices within their countries are still oppressed. Another voice was also oppressed, a woman leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, hardly mentioned at the Congress: Aung San Suu Kyi. The strength of the Congress was its alignment of perspectives as opposed to a problem-orientated approach. Many participants will have

brought home a boosted sense of togetherness which will give them energy to continue their struggle.

Anne Seyfferth

## International Conference on Buddhist Education

Taipei, 16.-20. Juli 1994

Die regelmäßige Veranstaltung der „International Conference on Buddhist Education“ (ICBE) in Taipei durch das „Institute for Sino-Indian Buddhist Studies“ (seit 1992 in Zusammenarbeit mit dem „Huafan College of Humanities and Technology“) ist zu einer festen Tradition für die Begegnung chinesischer und westlicher Buddhismusforscher geworden; über die vierte dieser Konferenzen im Jahre 1984 wurde in Band 15 dieser Zeitschrift (S. 358f.) kurz berichtet. Nun hat die neunte dieser Tagungen am 16. bis 20. Juli 1994 stattgefunden; die Teilnehmer erhielten als Vorabdrucke die Zusammenfassungen aller 46 Vorträge. Präsidentin der Konferenz war die buddhistische Nonne Shig Hiu Wan; die Organisation und praktische Durchführung ist Chen Yüan-yin (Professor an der Tamkang Universität in Taiwan) zu verdanken.

In ihrer Ansprache bei der Eröffnungsveranstaltung erinnerte Shig Hiu Wan an die Entwicklung seit der ersten ICBE vor fünfzehn Jahren sowie an die großen Fortschritte auf dem Gebiet des buddhistischen Erziehungswesens in Taiwan und legte ihre eigenen Vorstellungen über die Anwendung der „Weisheitsmeditation“ (*prajñā-ch'an*) in diesem Kontext dar. In seinem „Keynote Speech“ in der Vortragshalle der Nationalbibliothek widmete sich Richard A. Gard (zur Zeit Gastprofessor am Huafan College in Taipei) der Frage, wie sich das buddhistische Erziehungswesen in Geschichte und Gegenwart entwickelt hat und, aus dem gegebenen Anlaß der Gründung des „Huafan College of Humanities and Technology“ in Taipei, wie sich die Prinzipien buddhistischer Erziehung an dieser ersten buddhistischen Hochschule des Landes verwirklichen lassen. Am Vormittag des zweiten Tages der Konferenz waren die Teilnehmer zur Eröffnung einer Ausstellung von Gemälden der als Malerin in der chinesisch-buddhistischen Kunsttradition berühmten Gründerin des College, Shig Hiu Wan, in der Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall eingeladen.

Die weiteren Verhandlungen der Konferenz fanden in den neuen Gebäuden des Huafan College statt, und zwar in jeweils drei parallelen Sit-