

Buddhistisches Seminar (Kômyôji)

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Conference

„The Philosophy of Salvation in Buddhism“

International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies – Buddhistisches Seminar

Vienna, August 5-6, 1994

Report by Ruth Tabrah

Excellent papers and a stimulating cross section of scholarly backgrounds and interests marked the Conference “The Philosophy of Salvation in Buddhism”. The small size of the conference gave an unprecedented opportunity for full and meaningful discussions of papers and the room "Religion und Kultur" of Afroasiatisches Institut was an ideal setting for the two day program and its theme: Dr. Volker Zotz of the University of Vienna presided, introducing Professor Michio Tokunaga, executive secretary of IASBS. Unfortunately illness prevented Professor Hisao Inagaki, President of IASBS from coming to Europe as he had hoped. For this reason, Prof. Tokunaga had been asked to give Prof. Inagaki's opening address, which stressed the internationalization of Shin studies. In the past, Shin Buddhism was primarily known as a sectarian Japanese Buddhism. Now it is being seen in a broader perspective through the eyes of scholars and others around the world as a universal Mahayana stream of Shakyamuni's teachings. An increasing number of scholars in the west are exploring and appreciating Shinran and his insights.

This breadth of new interest was demonstrated at the opening session, moderated by Ruth Tabrah of Honolulu. Dr. Jan van Brut of the University of Leiden, The Netherlands, presented a most thoroughly researched and intriguing paper on "The *Potthapâda-Sutta* of the *Dîgha Nikâya*." This was followed by Dr. Volker Zotz paper on "Other Power in Indian Buddhism." In the afternoon session, moderated by Dr. Robert Janssen of the VU University of Amsterdam, Professor Hoyu Ishida of the University of Shiga Prefecture read his paper on "Salvation for Oneself and Others: The Wish to Save All Beings." Dr. Jérôme Ducor of the University of Geneve fascinated conferees with his exploration of "Zendô and the *Amida Kyô*" a subject transformed by Dr. Ducor's superb research and contagious enthusiasm. Enhancing the discussions following each of these papers was the wide range of backgrounds from Dr. Janssen's expertise in psychology and Sanskrit to Dr. Klaus Otto's emphasis on new approaches to comparative religion.

On August 6, the second and final day of the conference, Prof. Esho Sasaki of Kyoto Women's College moderated the intense discussion that, as on the first day, followed each paper. Professor Michio Tokunaga of Kyoto Women's College spoke on "The concept of 'Originally Enlightened' and Shinran's Thought." Professor Nobuo Nomura, lecturer at Kyoto Women's College, spoke on "A Reconciliation of the Two Meanings of Birth."

Professor Gustavo Pinto of Candido Mendes University, São Paulo, Brazil, moderated the fourth and final afternoon session on “East West Perspectives”. In this session Prof. Klaus Otto of the University of Frankfurt/Main and the University of Basle gave an impassioned account of his views on “Buddhist Christian comparability” in German, with English commentary. His paper was titled, "Erlöstes Sein im Buddhismus und im Christentum - Ermöglicht die Andere Kraft und die Gnade die Existenz im 21 Jahrhundert?"

The conference closed with a most interesting paper given by Professor Eryo Minoura of Otani University, Kyoto. His topic was "Self Communication and Being." As the conference closed with, again, animated discussion, there was general agreement that because of its small number of participants and ample time for discussion, from the viewpoint of scholars there was an unusual and much appreciated opportunity for in-depth exchange of ideas and reactions.