

## 15th European Shin-Buddhist Conference

### May peace and tranquility prevail throughout the world

26-29 August 2008 - Bad Reichenhall, Germany

locations: **Hotel Golden Tulip** (conference room) & **Shin Do** (optional services)

#### Schedule

#### Part I - 12th European Branch Conference of the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies (IASBS)

##### Tuesday August 26, 2008 (IASBS)

08h30	<i>Registration</i>
09h30	<i>Opening messages</i> <i>Presentations</i> - Chair Person: Ilona Evers
	1 Thomas Moser, Rev. - May peace and tranquility prevail throughout the world: introduction
	2 Hoyu Ishida - May Peace Prevail on Earth!
	3 Esho Sasaki - "A reflection on "May Peace and tranquility prevail throughout the world" : Shinrans letters and his Buddhist spirit"
	4 Tomomasa Teramoto - Conflict and Diversity of Religions - Christian Theology of Religion(s) and Buddhist View of Religion(s)
12h00	<i>Lunch</i>
13h30	<i>(optional)</i> Shinshu workshop, German/English synthesis about presentations
14h00	<i>Presentations</i> - Chair Person: Taira Sato
	5 Krech Gregg - Naikan: Self-Reflection and the Path of Pure Land Buddhism
	6 Hidetsugu Takayama - Otani Kozui and Europe
	7 Eiken Kobai - Establishing Shinjin: the Premise of Peace and Tranquility
	8 Angela Andrade - Learning with Translation of Buddhist Texts
17h00	<i>evening service</i> Sambutsuge - Jérôme Ducor

##### Wednesday August 27, 2008 (IASBS)

08h30	<i>morning service</i> Juseige - Diane Van Parijs
09h30	<i>Presentations</i> - Chair Person: Kurt Krammer
	9 Toshikazu Arai - Non-violence as the Universal Principle for Creating Peace
	10 Jackson Cheng - Yin Kwan's Pure Land Thought with His Practice
	11 Nobuyuki Kashiwahara - Covered with the light of Amida
	12 Chao Ti Wu - Tan-Luan's Pure Land Thought and Practice
12h00	<i>Lunch</i>
13h30	<i>(optional)</i> Shinshu workshop, German/English synthesis about presentations
14h00	13 <i>Discussion session 1 - European shin followers</i> Fons Martens - Building a sangha: professionalizing tips
16h15	14 <i>Closing session</i> : Kenneth Mullen
17h00	<i>end</i>
17h30	<i>memorial service for Rev. Chiba (former IABC Chairperson) and Richard Hastreiter (Shin Do)</i>

#### Part II - Conference of European Shinshu Communities

##### Thursday August 28, 2008 (ESC)

08h30	<i>Registration</i> -or- morning service junirai - Marie Angela Andreda
09h30	<i>Opening session</i> <i>Presentations</i> - Chair Person: Adrian Cirlea
	15 Kenneth Mullen - Shinjin: Buddhism and Addiction
	16 David Brazier - Existence as Poetry
	17 Eisho Nasu - Fluidity of Shinjin: Personal Reflections on Ways of Talking about Shinjin for Contemporary Buddhist Living
	18 Jan Marc Nottelmann-Feil - Some reflections on the term "peace"
12h00	<i>Lunch</i>

13h30 (optional) Shinshu workshop, German/English synthesis about presentations  
14h00 Presentations - Chair Person: Frank Kobs  
19 Adrian Cirlea - Peace of shinjin  
20 Caroline Brazier - Writing About Guilt  
16h00 21 Kikyoshiki Ceremony  
18h00 end

### **Friday August 29, 2008 (ESC)**

08h30 morning service Sambutsuge - Adrian Cirlea  
09h30 Presentations - Chair Person: David Brazier  
22 Ilona Evers - The peace within  
23 Sandor Kosa-Kiss - Peace in the mind, peace in the world  
24 Taira Sato - The Notion of Buddha-nature in Shin Buddhism  
25 Frank Kobs - The day Amida meet me or better hit me!  
12h00 Lunch with Shinmonsama  
13h30 (optional) Shinshu workshop, German/English synthesis about presentations  
14h00 26 Discussion session 2 - European shin followers  
Planning on further networking of European Sangha's  
16h15 27 Thomas Moser, Rev. - May peace and tranquility prevail throughout the world:  
conclusion  
16h45 Closing session: Hoyu Ishida

### **Part III - Guided tour in Bad Reichenhall/Salzburg (optional)**

#### **Saturday August 30, 2008**

10h00 start guided tour Bad Reichenhall & Salzburg  
12h30 End of guided tour  
Lunch at leisure, in Salzburg

## Report

Over the days of the conference, many topics were presented and discussed. Please, let us take some passages from each presentation that - according to our humble opinion - touched us most as being important enough to remember. We are convinced that the selection of these passages is personally colored, and at the same time that you will accept it as yet another contribution in spreading the Dharma.

### **Part I - 12th European Branch Conference of the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies (IASBS)**

#### **Tuesday August 26, 2008 (IASBS) - morning**

The Opening session started at 9:30 by the presentation of the Shinmon Kojun Ohtani and Shinourakatasama Lady Ruzumi, where Jérôme Ducor read a message from Kenneth Tanaka, IASBS President, who could not attend due to his other commitments. Following the Opening session, the first presentation session was started by Ilona Evers, Chairperson.

Thomas Moser explained the Theme of this 15th Conference by his introductory presentation *May peace and tranquility prevail throughout the world!*

The pure clear water that runs downs a natural spring, searches its way, mingles with our tears of pain and tears of joy and becomes a river and goes down the long way to the sea where clouds carry it back to the mountains, me not separated from them and them not separated from me, part of the unlimited circle of life.

Hoyu Ishida's presentation with the title *May Peace Prevail on Earth! - Shinran's Letter to Shōshin* explained in detail the contents of this Letter. Amongst other interesting views, he stressed:

Religious values lie in the core of the person who seeks freedom and liberation from the bondage of dukkha or suffering, and it should be very subjective and particular. Through a particular path, one comes to realize a universal norm of religion. Exclusiveness or exclusion of others is the issue that we have to conquer especially in this confused world of our today.

Shinran's wish "May there be peace in the world, and may the Buddha's teachings spread" is particular in terms of "holding the nembutsu in their hearts" and universal in terms of the wish for world peace.

The third presentation also stressed specifically Shinran's viewpoint: *A reflection on "May Peace and tranquility prevail throughout the world": Shinrans letters and his Buddhist spirit, by Esho Sasaki*. He quoted Shitoku Adriaan Peel, answering the question:

"Becoming a Buddhist priest, how do you consider about the peace of the present confused world? Peel spontaneously answered, "I believe the peace of the world is possible to be realized: when the people in the world recognize that our own beings are defiled with evil passions, then the peace of the world will be naturally be realized."

Tomomasa Teramoto's *Conflict and Diversity of Religions - Christian Theology of Religion(s) and Buddhist View of Religion(s)* contained a call for Buddhism to respond with its own inter-religious theology, based upon Jan van Bragt lectures of Theology of Religions at the Interreligious Studies in Japan Program:

"Theology of Religions cannot simply be a 'Christian Theology'. It must be a 'theology in the presence of the others', together with the others. It must not be a theology by Christians (subject) about the others (object), but, ideally, a theology by us all about us all."

## Tuesday August 26, 2008 (IASBS) - afternoon

Chair Person for these presentations was Taira Sato.

Krech Gregg opened the afternoon sessions with *Naikan: Self-Reflection and the Path of Pure Land Buddhism*. He stressed i.e. the impermanence and the interconnectedness of each and everybody, and the notion of things being entrusted to one. Naikan is a Japanese word which means “inside looking” but a more poetic translation is “seeing oneself with the mind’s eye. Let’s quote from Taitetsu Unno:

“In between birth and death everything I have is a gift – my body, the clothes I wear, the knowledge I have, family and friends, hobbies I enjoy, the house I live in, and so on. They are all ‘mine’, but only as things temporarily entrusted to me during my sojourn on earth.”

Next came a very original presentation by Hidetsugu Takayama about a colorful Monshu: *Otani Kozui and Europe*. The interplay between Japan and Europe in connection with Jodoshinshu ideas came clearly to the foreground. Can we relate this to the current Core Programs from Hongwanji?

For three years Kozui stayed in this place (London). During this time, he mainly investigated the relationship between religion and politics. He also observed social welfare programs. (...) Kozui even visited Turkey to study Islam; to learn about the situation of “old Christianity he visited Rome,...

Eiken Kobai again returns to the theme on how peace may spread with *Establishing Shinjin: the Premise of Peace and Tranquility* by expounding on hymn 66 of Hymns of the Dharma-Ages:

No less than people of shinjin,  
Practicers of doubt who cling to self-power should  
Awaken to the benevolence of Amida’s great compassion  
And endeavour in saying the nembutsu.

Maybe we can add “then” between “And” and “endeavour”: And then endeavour in saying the nembutsu? That way we can probably discover the premise...

In *Learning with Translation of Buddhist Texts* Angela Andrade explained us some interesting ideas about the difficulties one can have when translating between one culture and the other. It will certainly take some generations before we can agree upon several western terms...

Each of the three most well known methods, namely neologism, borrowing and concept matching show efforts either to keep in line with the tradition or, conversely, to move toward what is new. (...) As Kaneko Daiei once quoted in his dialogue with D.T. Suzuki and Soga Ryojin, “When you’ve truly grasped something, you’re free to express it in any way you like.”

At 17h00 Jérôme Ducor conducted the evening service with the chanting of Sambutsuge.

## Wednesday August 27, 2008 (IASBS) - morning

At 08h30 Diane Van Parijs conducted the morning service with the chanting of Juseige. During the next days we chanted Ondokusan a few times... So nice!

Kurt Krammer chaired the presentations of this morning session.

Toshikazu Arai opened with *Non-violence as the Universal Principle for Creating Peace*. He used several examples from i.e. Gandhi (“non-violence is for those who have strong determination to achieve a goal even at the risk of severe suffering and at the cost of their own lives”), Ambedkar,

Martin Luther King and, of course, Sakyamuni Buddha (Dhammapada, verse 5: “Hate is not overcome by hate; by Love (Metta) alone is hate appeased. This is an eternal law”).

For the world to be truly peaceful, every person must be “at peace” with himself as well with the outside world. From this standpoint it can be said that perfect peace can never be achieved in this human world, and that peace is a process, rather than a static condition, in which people are making conscious efforts to eliminate elements that might lead to enmity and violent conflict.

In his presentation *Yin Kwan's Pure Land Thought with His Practice*, Jackson Cheng emphasized the fundamental contribution of this master to the Pure Land School in China. Yin Kwan not only made a synthesis of Buddhism and Confucianism, but also criticized the influence of Neo-Confucianism.

(...) the Buddha says, “They should comprehend very carefully the essence through their experiences, rather than blindly believe the heresy, tradition, legend, book, guess, inference or instructor.” (...) instead, we have to practice Buddhism in the midst of current events and actual people. This is the era spirit of the Pure Land conception.

Nobuyuki Kashiwahara explained in his presentation *Covered with the Light of Amida* by means of several excerpts of Shinran Shonin's works how the apparent contradiction in “covered with light” can be interpreted. He used the different meanings of the Japanese kanji and their corresponding translations to explain that we as Buddhists can be optimists, because we are “covered with the Light of Amida”. He used concepts like:

Though the light of the sun is veiled by clouds and mists, beneath the clouds and mists there is brightness, not dark.

The last Buddha was named Light that Surpasses the Sun and the Moon.

Chao Ti Wu concluded the morning session with *Tan-Luan's Pure Land Thought and Practice*. She used several concrete examples from the Master stressing the meaning of faith (not blind faith, but reasoned faith) with the first sentence of a hymn in Avatamsaka Sutra: Faith is the source of the path. Faith is the mother of merit and virtue. Tan-Luan adopted Nāgārjuna's distinction between the difficult and easy practice. The “easy-way” appealed to the help of Amitabha Buddha; it can be likened to riding a boat to cross the ocean, but he differs with Nagarjuna in such that: Nāgārjuna believed that the easy-way means you have to pay respect in mind, and you have to chant the name of the Buddhas from the ten quarters, while Tan-Luan advocated only the chanting of Amita Buddha's name is called the easy-way.

### **Wednesday August 27, 2008 (IASBS) - afternoon**

The afternoon started with the first Discussion session for European shin followers. Fons Martens presented *Building a sangha: professionalizing tips*. Using the Report of Activities 2000-2007 of the Belgian jikōji-sangha, illustrated with explanatory notes, the session brought us tips on how to enlarge the likelihood that a prospect turns into a full fledged sangha member. Via a Global Frame we stepped through several activity groups where sangha members can engage themselves in, and we received several tips for each group to make the sangha still more professionalized. Let us select a few tips from the list:

- Take care of your temple day by day
- Create house style
- Use a global strategy & Check activities against this strategy
- Stimulate contributions from all members

During the closing session for the IASBS part of the 15th ESC, Kenneth Mullen summarized the presentations. And we ended with a memorial service for Rev. Chiba (former IABC Chairperson) and Richard Hastreiter (Shin Do): as doshi functioned Esho Sasaki, Thomas Moser and Fons Martens; we chanted Sambujo, Amidakyo (with settaku) and read a short memorial text.

## Part II - Conference of European Shinshu Communities

### Thursday August 28, 2008 (ESC) - morning

The Opening session of the ESC15 was started at 9:30 by the presentation of the Shinmonsama by Nobuaki Ryu, Director of Chikushi-jogakuen Educational Organization. Thereafter Shinmonsama Kojun Ohtani gave an address to the participants, followed by a message by Esho Sasaki, IABC Chairperson.

At 08h30 Marie Angela Andreda conducted the morning service with the chanting of junirai. Adrian Cirlea chaired the presentations of this morning session.

In *Shinjin: Buddhism and Addiction* Kenneth Mullen detailed the approach to addiction from within different Buddhist Schools (Tibetan, Zen and Shin. In the mandala about the Pratitya Samutpada, he pointed out: We move within this circle to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. (...) A very important point to note is that ignorance is the root cause of this cycle. So it is this that must be eradicated. He then informed us that - under influence from mostly Zen - recently a mixture of therapies are becoming prevalent, known as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). Interestingly enough he quoted Davies: "Paradoxically, by believing that the power of a higher being is the only thing that can help them in their helplessness, they cease to be helpless, because believe in an *external* higher power changes *internal* motivation."

We were moved by very nice personal impressions given by David Brazier in his talk *Existence as Poetry*. Let us just take a few:

Mourners admire the medals  
and the faded commendation letter,  
but only the son knows  
Dad never got over the war.

Sky jumping  
there's no turning back  
whether the 'chute opens or not.  
So, before you open your heart to Amida,  
beware!

In his presentation *Fluidity of Shinjin: Personal Reflections on Ways of Talking about Shinjin for Contemporary Buddhist Living* Eisho Nasu talked about Shinjin as Water as seen by Shinran, Rennyo and by Contemporary Expressions.

Shinran says that the working of Other Power can reach ordinary beings' mind as shinjin naturally because shinjin is not only "diamondlike," but also shinjin is fluid like "water" that naturally flows into the mind of ordinary beings. Rennyo says it is hard to accept shinjin with the mind filled with blind passions. But by diligently exposing oneself to the flow of Dharma, slowly but naturally shinjin will reach the mind's fountainhead as water can bore a hole in a stone.

Jan Marc Nottelmann-Feil gave us *Some reflections on the term "peace"*. He took a dive in the deeper meanings of external peace (as the opposite of war or external conflict) and internal peace (peace of the heart or as the opposite of inner conflict). He referred to the Japanese words *annon*

and heiwa, indicating the difference when we speak of peace talks: we never use annon no talks, but instead heiwa no talks...

He indicated that Shinran used annon threefold: referring to freedom from conflicts within interpersonal relations, to rich harvests and to peace in later life (within the Pure Land), and he talked about Shotoku Taishi, the Prince with the Eight Ears, a mediator for preventing conflicts, and thus for bringing annon.

### **Thursday August 28, 2008 (ESC) - afternoon**

The two presentations in the afternoon were chaired by Frank Kobs.

Adrian Cirlea expounded the meaning of *Peace of shinjin* within his personal life and brought as a personal interpretation out of his own understanding. Again he stressed the importance of: How can outside peace exist without inner peace? And of the peace of mind coming from entrusting to Amida: "All right if I live, all right if I die." He quoted Master Zuiken:

At most, man can do only one thing  
In his life  
And that is to acquire shinjin.

In her paper *Writing About Guilt: bombu nature for Europeans* Caroline Brazier explained from a personal view how writing is a creative journey, how she experienced that most of the Europeans are converts (coming from other religions) and thus are often confronted with the notions of guilt and even guilt about being guilty... During the presentation itself she seemed to freewheel, based on the previous presentations, and she managed to create a nice scheme fitting into her thoughts of the notions of guilt.

At 15:00 we kind of rebuild the conference room into a nice temple space, preparing for the Kikyoshiki Ceremony, lead by Shinmonsama. Sammi Kiribayashi from Hongwanji International Center was so kind to prepare all twelve candidates and to explain to all of us how this ceremony would be conducted. This event was for so many of us the most intense of the whole conference! We will certainly take home the nice warm feelings of this moment where our sangha once again grew a bit stronger!

### **Friday August 29, 2008 (ESC) - morning**

The morning service with the chanting Sambutsuge was conducted by Adrian Cirlea, while David Brazier was the chair person for the remaining four presentations.

Ilona Evers started that day with her paper *The peace within*: another rather personal interpretation, nicely illustrated with concrete examples from the daily life. The question Is it actually possible to live with a peaceful mind in a society full of problems, resentments of fights? immediately set the atmosphere of her talk.

No reason to complain, no reason to struggle, every situation gives me the chance to make the best out of it and to learn as much as possible. I am a complex interweaving of good and evil, of joy and suffering and of the Nembutsu which penetrates everything that is existing.

*Peace in the mind, peace in the world* was the title of Sandor Kosa-Kiss' very original and colorful presentation - or should we say (with respect!) a real movie script? It must have taken him several weeks to prepare these sceneries of an internal journey connected with the outside world. Notions of mind, world, self, non-becoming, bodhisattva, compassion, Amida,... were painted as meaningful images.

I was that helpless green lizard for whom this sudden gift of life, this reprieve, this near-death, the renewed beating of its heart, breathing the air again, was as much a mystery as was the drowning – perhaps an even greater, more profound mystery...

Taira Sato's presented *The Notion of Buddha-nature in Shin Buddhism*. He explained that the notion of Buddha-nature is hidden by our blind passions and selfish attachments, and that the name "Ajātasatru" belongs to all those who have not been awakened to the incomparably perfect Supreme Enlightenment.

The concept of tathāgatagarbha means not only that all sentient beings carry "unborn children of Tathagata" or "the womb that gives birth to the Buddha" but also that the Tathagata himself possesses the womb that contains all sentient beings. Although the former meaning is always emphasized, we often fail to notice the latter.

Frank Kobs had the honor to present the last paper of this 15th European Shin-Buddhist Conference: *The day Amida meet me or better hit me!* - and he took that honor with glance! Again this was a very personal story about how he encountered the Buddha in his daily life... a moment he vividly recalled and painted for our eyes:

It was as if the Buddha smiled at me and I could not help but to smile as well.  
"Why worry about it, why think so much? It's all there and already done – keep on going and leave the rest to me."

The Shimada-group was so kind to lead us at the chanting of **Shinshu-shuka**.  
At noon, we were all invited for a lunch with Shinmonsama and Shinourakatasama.

### **Friday August 29, 2008 (ESC) - afternoon**

During the *Discussion session 2 for European shin followers* we had a round (square) table, not about the *Planning on further networking of European Sangha's*, but about what we experienced during this 15th European Shin-Buddhist Conference. This very lively discussion session was colored with personal impressions, positive comments and nice suggestions for the next meetings: starting with a smile and message from the youngest participant, via several interventions from other members, until two important decisions:

#### 1 Concerning the next European Shin-Buddhist Conferences

We would like to suggest to IASBS, IABC and Hongwanji to organize the 16th European Shin-Buddhist Conference (ESC16)

- period: Tuesday 24th - Friday 27th of August 2010;
- place: Romania (Craiova);
- organizing sangha: Tariki Dojo, Rev. Jōshō Adrian Cirlea;
- co-organizer (via e-mail): jikōji, Rev. Daijō Fons Martens;
- period: 2 clearly different conferences:  
IASBS Tuesday 24th - Wednesday 25th of August 2010;  
and European Shin sangha's Thursday 26th - Friday 27th of August 2010;
- proposed topic: Tannishō.

We would like to suggest that the Polish sangha (unfortunately not present at this 15th conference - we wish Myoshu the very best with recovering!) can take care of the 17th European Shin-Buddhist Conference, taking place in 2012 - coinciding with 750 years Shinran Shōnin.

## 2 Concerning the proposal of Hongwanji Governor Deguchi

Hongwanji Governor Deguchi made us a proposal for establishing a permanent representation in Europe in the near future, probably consisting of a bureau and a representative from Hongwanji in/near one of the existing European sangha's.

We would like to answer "Yes, you are welcome!" to this proposal.

At 16h15 Thomas Moser made his concluding short speech: *May peace and tranquility prevail throughout the world: conclusion*, thanking all participants for their energy, presentations and contributions - all leading to this successful four day meeting of 62 participants from 12 nationalities. During the closing session at 16:45, Hoyu Ishida presented an address on behalf of the IABC to express thankfulness to the organizing staff.

Thanks to the energy of several members of the German Jodoshinshu sangha and of the management team of the Golden Tulip Hotel, we managed to let run the conference smoothly. We also discovered that our team (Thomas, Kurt and Fons) was able to discuss about so many different details and organize the ESC15, although we live one thousand kilometers from each other - thanks to the regular contacts via internet. This test case proved it: we are ready for the next conference!

Let us conclude this Report with some words from Serena Tanaka, *More than the Nembutsu*, in: *Wheel of Dharma*, August 2008, p.5:

"I'm confident that the path to living the Dharma takes more than chanting the Nembutsu - it takes initiative. (...) I too will work for that passion. (...) So stay open minded, for sometimes the answers to your questions may come in strange packages."

We will inform all European sangha's, and send this report to Hongwanji, IASBS and IABC. We will also inform Louella Matsunaga.

In the name of the ESC15-team - Antwerp, September 12th 2008.