

Inaugural General Meeting (IGM) of the Australasian Association of Buddhist Studies

Held: Sunday, 2nd October 2005, University of Sydney, 9.00 am to 1.00 pm.

Present: Mark Allon, Drasko Mitrikeski, Ian McCrabb, Judith Snodgrass, Adrian Snodgrass, Peter Oldmeadow, Mohan Pankaj, Andrew McGarrity, Edward Crangle, Primoz Pecenko, Mohini Gunsekere, Ven. Suddhamo, Ven. Kaset, Ven. Prasarn, David Bubna-Litic, Dh. Ratnavyuha, Rod Bucknell, Brendon Stewart, Gill Green, Ruwan Palapathwala, Peter Fredlander, Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi, Mun-Kaet Choong, Andrew Wicking.

Minutes

Chair: Mark Allon

Agenda:

- Welcome Address
- Report of activities to date
- Confirmation of agenda
- Review of aims and envisaged activities
- Discussion regarding postgraduate students
- Discussion regarding the Buddhist Seminar series
- Discussion regarding the holding of conferences
- Discussion regarding design of AABS web site
- Discussion regarding the liaison with other organizations
- Annual membership fee and register of members
- Election of the Executive Committee members
- Discussion on sources of funding for activities
- Scheduling time and place for the next General meeting
- Close

1. The meeting started with the welcome address by Mark Allon during which he discussed the purpose of the Association and introduced the core group.

2. Following the welcome address, Drasko Mitrikeski reported on the activities of the core group to date. This included:

- the creation of the draft Constitution
- the creation of a logo
- establishing a mailing address
- opening up a bank account
- registering a domain name
- obtaining a Tax File Number
- obtaining an Australian Business Number
- obtaining ISP which allows our website to be operational and publicly available
- creating an extensive e-mail list with more than 150 names
- organising the IGM where Executive Committee would be elected.

Mitrikeski noted that the Association is at the moment registered as a simple non-profit organization but would need to become a corporation, once the more complex projects begin. The constitution at the moment reflects the legal status of the association but there is a prepared version for when the association incorporates.

Mitrikeski reported on the responses received on the three circular letters sent to the whole email list during the previous two months, noting that all were extremely positive about the formation of the AABS and that about thirty scholars from the region expressed the wish to be actively involved but, regrettably, could not come to the IGM.

Apart from the review of activities to date, Mitrikeski reported on the current financial situation:

The association started with the fund of \$400, after eight core group members contributed \$50 each. Out of that fund, \$88 was paid for registering a domain name (for 2 years) and \$47 for ISP (for 1 year). Balance at the moment was \$265.

3. After the report, the participants were invited to vote on acceptance of the agenda. After accepting it, the discussions on various topics begun.

4. Judith Snodgrass discussed the objectives of the Association, as listed on the website and at the beginning of the Constitution. After the discussion it was concluded without objections that the objectives should remain as formulated and there was no need to spell out all particular proposals since they were already anticipated by the formulation.

The draft Constitution was also discussed and it was decided that it was currently acceptable and that it could be modified later if necessary.

5. Andrew McGarrity discussed the involvement of postgraduate students in the Association. The emphasis of his discussion was on the need to provide a meeting point for all students engaged in Buddhist Studies. Furthermore, help should be offered to postgraduate students in terms of where to go and what to do in the search for information, education materials, graduate programs, etc. In that context, a proposal was made to organize workshops that will assist students throughout the process of completing the PhD theses.

McGarrity emphasised the need to include honours students as postgraduates.

Proposals were made to offer a discussion page on the web for postgraduates, to organize seminar series and conferences specifically for postgraduates. The possibility of a prize for postgraduate work was raised.

It was concluded that a strategy for involving and helping graduate students should be drawn up and posted on the website for comments.

6. Adrian Snodgrass discussed the Buddhist Seminar series. He gave a brief historical review of the seminar series that has been running at the University of Western Sydney for several years and the current proposal for it to be jointly hosted by the University of Western Sydney, the University of Sydney, and possibly other

institutions in the Sydney region. He emphasised the objective of making the seminars reflect the true Australasian character of the association and hence stressed the importance of starting such events in all major centres of Buddhist Studies in the region. Furthermore, he proposed interstate/international exchange of presentations and expanding the seminars, apart from the present format (one speaker, one hour presentation followed by one hour of discussion), to include selected reading and panel discussions. Proposals were made (1) to invite international scholars visiting the area to offer a presentation and (2) to record the seminars digitally and make them available on the website.

7. Peter Oldmeadow discussed the organization of Buddhist Studies conferences. At the moment, in his assessment, it was realistic to expect such conferences once in 3 years. As a secondary outcome he noted the possibility of publishing conference papers. The possibility of making such conferences thematic was discussed and it was concluded that this was probably unnecessary, given the fact that the number of scholars in the region are few and their specialized interests diverse. It was also agreed that in the early stages the AABS conferences should be coupled to the conferences of similar organizations (e.g. hosting our own panels). For example, we could have our own panel at the conference of the AAAS held in Wollongong, 26-29 June, next year. Another suggestion was made to circulate papers before the conference so that the 30 minutes given to the paper should be spent not in reading but in discussion. It was decided that the AABS' first independent conference should be held in 3 years time (2008), though the location was not discussed. -

8. Ian McCrabb discussed the design of the AABS website. He opened his discussion with the vision statement: "To create a website which would act as a portal: a resource for Buddhist studies in the region," and an anticipation that this site would be one that Australasian academics and students of Buddhist studies would wish to visit each day. Then he discussed the phases, the medium and long-term strategy (goals, intended audience, content model, usage and access model, value proposition, development budget, development phases, ownership and sustainability), and the detailed design plan listing the requirements, features and functions. The conclusion was made that his proposed document be listed on the website and open for comments.

9. Pankaj Mohan discussed liaisons with other organizations. He listed several groups of organizations with which AABS might want to have formal arrangements: other similar Australasian associations (such as the Australian Association for Studies in Religion), organizations with regional focus (such as Australian Association for Japanese Studies), foreign universities that offer Buddhist studies programs, foreign Buddhist universities, and other organizations concerned with Buddhist studies. Furthermore, he discussed formal arrangements with international conferences organizers, editors of international journals and various workshops. Mohan also elaborated on the possibilities and gave some details regarding applying for grants for our various envisaged projects. The presentation was followed by a discussion of these topics after which it was agreed that in all our arrangements the AABS must keep the academic aspects of our enterprise in focus.

10. Edward Crangle discussed membership fees. He presented the proposal drafted at the last meeting of the core group that membership fees be the following: ordinary members, \$30 per year; students and unwaged, \$15 per year; corporate membership,

\$50 per year; lifetime membership will be decided at a later date. Fees will be subject to revision each year. There was no proposal for honorary members at this time. At the meeting there was no formal registration of members. The decision was made to post the application on the website and register members within the next few months. The application will give details of the AABS' bank account so the members can forward the fees directly to the account or send checks by mail. The application will provide an option to withhold personal information from the web. After discussion, it was agreed that membership fees alone would not be sufficient for the Association's operations and that it would therefore be necessary to seek donations and grants. It was also proposed that members could sponsor a monk or other unwaged person, since one of the present scholars expressed a wish to donate funds for such purposes.

11. Mark Allon discussed the election of the Executive Committee (EC). He reported the decision made at the final meeting of the core group that the nine members of the core group, plus Primoz Pecenko from the University of Queensland as the tenth member, act as the interim Executive Committee for one year in order to facilitate the full establishment of the AABS. Our next meeting would take place within the next 12 months within which time the members should register and the process of nomination for election would take place as determined by the Constitution of the Association. There was a proposal that each interested party should have a representative on the EC. It was decided that such an arrangement would expand the EC to unforeseen proportions and complicate decision-making. However, it was confirmed that all interested parties should be represented and it was suggested that this could be achieved through the appointment of a liaison officer at each institution. At the end of this session, with unanimous vote, the proposal for interim executive committee was accepted:

President: Adrian Snodgrass

Vice President: Mark Allon

Secretary: Drasko Mitrikeski

Treasurer: Edward Crangle

Liaison Officer: Pankaj Mohan

Student Representative: Andrew McGarrity

Three Ordinary EC members: Judith Snodgrass, Peter Oldmeadow, Primoz Pecenko

Technology Officer: Ian McCrabb

12. Andrew McGarrity discussed the sources of funding for the envisaged activities. He invited the participants to share their ideas about possible sources. Main expenses at the moment are the creation of the website and organising seminars/conferences. Venerable representatives from the Dhammakaya Foundation, on behalf of 60th Dhammacai fund for supporting Buddhist education, donated \$ 1000.

13. Resolution was accepted unanimously that

- the participants at the IGM are the first members of the AABS;
- the Constitution was accepted as drafted.

14. Next General Meeting of the AABS was scheduled for 26th-29th June 2006 at the ASAA conference in Wollongong.

15. Mark Allon closed the conference.