



Study of Religion
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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To the Members of the International Association of Buddhist Studies

Re.: Postponement of the XIXth Conference of the IABS

March 31, 2020

Dear Members of the International Association of Buddhist Studies,

In these probing times and with the original date of the XIXth Conference of the IABS less than six months away, the health and well-being of all the association's members has been of great concern to the IABS Board of Directors as well as to the conference's organizers. We hope you are doing well. We also thank you for your patience in waiting till now to hear back from us with a decision regarding the event we have all been looking forward to so much.

After monitoring the developing global health situation and its potential impact on the projected conference for the last two months and after extensive consultations with the other members of the conference organizing team as well as with members of the IABS Board of Directors, the conference's convener Professor Eun-su Cho has let the IABS Board know that in view of the global health crisis caused by the spread of COVID-19 she and her team have decided that the conference will not be held this year and will be postponed to 2021.

As you can imagine, this has been no easy decision. Although the situation in Korea is currently stabilizing, Professor Cho and her team had to consider developments across the globe, which remain very serious, highly unpredictable, and the scale and outcome of which will depend on seasonal changes as well as on the degree of preparedness of individual national health systems. Another major factor contributing to the decision has been the closing of borders and the imposing of local, national, and international travel bans by governments around the world.

The new date for the XIXth Conference of the IABS is August 16-21, 2021. As for the modalities concerning the rescheduling of the conference, I would like to share with you some of the arrangements regarding the conference programme and the conference registration fee Professor Cho in her role as convener has told the IABS Board will be made to guarantee that the conference's shift from 2020 to 2021 will be as effortless as possible:

"1. Those who have been chosen to present at the Congress are assured of a spot on the new program. We understand that there may be some individuals who were selected to present at this year's Congress but would not be able to attend the event if held next year. We would ask that those who want to cancel their participation next year convey this to us by email

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(iabs@snu.ac.kr) by April 30th. We will assume that those presenters from whom we have not heard by that date do intend to participate; their spots on the program of the postponed event are assured. We do, however, need to have at least a rough idea of how many individuals chosen for the current program are likely to not attend next year, so that we can begin developing the program for 2021.

2. Concerning the registration fee: We would like to reserve the fees of those who have already registered and can now commit to coming towards the postponed meeting. Those who have paid the registration fee but will not be coming to the rescheduled event will have their fees refunded. Those who paid the registration fee by PayPal should understand, however, that PayPal imposes a \$23 charge on all refunds. We understand that there will be some who have paid the registration fee but cannot now say whether or not they will be able to attend the postponed event next year. Should they wish to have their fee refunded now, we will be happy to comply.”

I should add that, as over the course of a year ongoing research projects are bound to develop further, new projects are certain to emerge, and specific research interests that brought together panelists may shift, the conference management will do its best to accommodate possible realignments, substitutions, and changes to the current programme. For more details, the convener will reach out to you in due time. For now, please be so kind as to direct all further questions about the conference and its postponement to Professor Cho (iabs@snu.ac.kr) who will be the person most qualified to answer them.

Professor Cho and her team have been forced to deal with a challenge no other convener of any IABS Conference has ever had to face and have made a decision no convener should ever have to, but which so many other conveners of big academic events planned for this year also had to make. This comes in addition to the inordinate amount of work which organizing a big event such as the IABS Conference demands in the first place. The IABS Board, including myself, would like to thank Professor Cho and our Korean colleagues for their magnificent work so far, for their steady stewardship in these difficult times, and, already now, for the strength it will take to wait for one more year to complete a task that was so near completion and to reap the fruits of their extraordinary efforts a whole year later than expected.

Let me close by expressing my most heartfelt regrets to you for us not being able to get together in Seoul this August. I very much hope that this change of plans will not bear too heavily on you and your plans for the year and that all of you who intended to be there and to convene, present, or discuss will be able to postpone your travels to next year.

With warm regards,



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