

Dear IABS members,

We hope that all are doing well in this extraordinary time. Thanks to your warm support, the 19th IABS conference was finally held on August 15th-19th at Seoul National University in South Korea. We write to you to report on the proceedings of the conference.

The conference was attended by 354 members altogether. Among them, 171 participated in panels/sections in person, and 109 online by zoom. 74 were registered without presenting papers. Participants from overseas were 268, and those from South Korea were 86. The conference consisted of 33 panels (34 sessions) and 21 sections (33 sessions). The number of participants was smaller than at the previous conferences when we had about 500-600. However, considering the current circumstance of the protracted Covid and enormous difficulties in international travel, this was nevertheless a very impressive number. We share with you the PDF version of the program of the conference (minus the abstracts).

The opening ceremony was held in the evening of the first day (Aug. 15th) at the auditorium of the Kyujanggak Institute of Korean Studies, Seoul National University. It started with the welcome address by the president of the University (Se-jung Oh) which was followed by the IABS presidential address (Juhyung Rhi, "Why Did the Buddha Not Shave His Head?"), the convenor's (Eun-su Cho) welcome address, and the keynote address by the conference president (Mark Siderits) ("A Philosopher and Philologist Walk into a Bar"). The video of the opening ceremony has been uploaded on Youtube by a Buddhist television network, so those interested may look it up at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2qWQCif5dg&t=2529s>

On the evening of the fifth and final day (Aug. 19th), the IABS general meeting was held with dinner at the La Ville Hall in Seoul. It was attended by 160 members. (The quorum of the general meeting is 25 according to the IABS statute.) The meeting reviewed five items. (1) the remembrance of the deceased members in 2017-2022, (2) the new membership structure and dues, (3) the statement of accounts, (4) the 2019 election result, and (5) the venue of the 20th IABS conference (University of Leipzig, Germany). All the items that required the voting of the members at the general meeting (2, 3, 4, 5) were approved.

Lastly, we presented two projects the IABS board has been pursuing. One is to study ways to improve the board election system in order to make the board more representative regarding regions, fields, gender, etc. A working group has been formed to explore this issue. While we will try hard to achieve this goal institutionally, the active participation of all the members in nomination and voting is crucial. We urge all the members will participate in the process enthusiastically. The other project is to explore ways to improve the IABS's services to the membership. A working group has also been formed for this issue. The board will make every effort to find the most viable solutions to these agendas. If you have any suggestions for the working groups or the board, please feel free to contact us at [jhrhi@snu.ac.kr](mailto:jhrhi@snu.ac.kr) or at [christoph.emmrich@utoronto.ca](mailto:christoph.emmrich@utoronto.ca).

The results of the meeting are summed up in the minutes prepared by the General Secretary and attached to this email. The PDF of the PowerPoint file shown at the meeting is also shared with the membership for their reference.

The Covid infection was the most serious concern the IABS officers and the conference convenor had to deal with throughout the conference. About ten cases were reported, and the infected had to be quarantined for several days before their departure. We are sincerely sorry for their troubles. However, the fact that the number of infections was relatively low when compared to the total number of participants of the conference may be a relief.

On behalf of the IABS officers and board, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the convenor and staff (together with the student volunteers) of the conference for their several year-long dedication towards meticulously preparing and successfully hosting the event to everyone's satisfaction. We also send huge thanks to all the participants who took the great trouble to travel to South Korea on longer and tiresome flights in this extraordinary time. We wish all of you the best in your work and health.

Sincerely,  
Juhyung Rhi  
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Professor  
Department of Archaeology and Art History  
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and

Christoph Emmrich  
General Secretary  
International Association of Buddhist Studies  
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