



**Vello Vaartnou**  
**Master VanTao**  
万道仁波切

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Philosophical and religious interest in Estonia increased in Estonia in the 1970s-80s, when a Buddhist group emerged, who practiced Buddhism as religion and called themselves Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood.

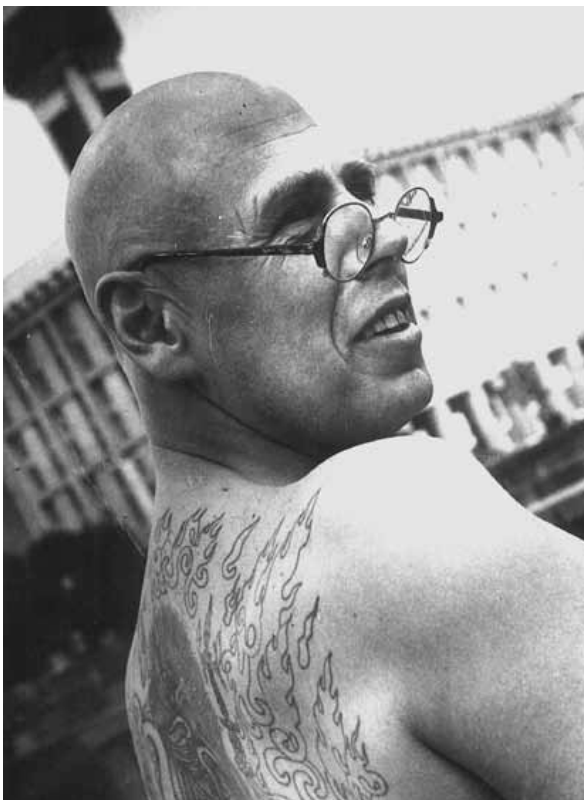
## The Foundation of the Buddhist tradition in 1982

The first Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood was established by Vello Väärtnõu in 1982 in Tallinn. He gathered around him a group of people, who already in these soviet times were interested in practical Buddhism. With this Brotherhood the tradition of living and practical Buddhism and the tradition of Nyingma was established in Estonia. Under his guidance the Brotherhood or Taola (meaning something like Tao's place) had set the beginnings of a practical Buddhist tradition and Nyingma tradition in Estonia.

### Vello Väärtnõu

Vello Väärtnõu was born in 1951 in Saaremaa. He studied in Kuressaare gymnasium and was very active in sports. There were a lot of ship captains and Estonian Republic military officers in Vello's family. Many of them were killed or imprisoned for several years when the soviet occupation began. This family history has set base also for Vello's political views.

Vello Väärtnõu.  
Head of Estonian  
Nyingma



When he was 17, he tried to escape to the west, setting his sights for studying Buddhism there. This attempt ended in 3 years of prison time in Vuktõl prison camp and lifetime of KGB interest in him. KGB colonel Movtshan later made a statement that it was obvious in his case genes had played greater role than soviet discipline

In the 70s Vello got interested in philosophy, languages and history and already then all his readings and activities were directly connected with Buddhism. Parallel to the interest in Buddhist and Taoist philosophy there rose an interest in Chinese art. His special interest was in 16th century literature and art, to which additional interest in Japanese Edo period evolved. Favourite subject in Chinese religious landscape of this period was Taoist mystical school of "White Lotus".

Taoism as religion and philosophy has always intrigued Väärtnõu and he has claimed that in China the Nyingma school was always greatly

influenced by Taoism. After the famous Samye dispute, which lasted 3 years and ended of Nyingma or Red-hats school. Both schools (White Lotus and Nyingma) have influenced each other for years. The reports from Russian missionaries in 18th century also mention the wide range of Taoist monks in Buddhist monasteries. That this point of Väärtnõu's is valid was shown also by the life of last Chinese empress Tzu Hsi, who was helped by two Taoist monks from Nyingma monasteries living in the backyard of her imperial palace..

Väärtnõu was the only one, who already in the 1970s socialist Estonia publicly called himself a Buddhist. Moving around in Tartu and Tallinn, in cultural circles, he enjoyed having disputes with Christians and philosophy students and interestingly many of his conversation partners from these days are nowadays leaders of different religious institutions in Estonia.

Crowing interest in astrology lead Väärtnõu to establish Estonian Astrology Association in Soviet times, lecturing those with interest in the years 1980-82 about astrology and Buddhism in the studio of artist Jüri Arrak in Tõnismägi.

The creation of Buddhist tradition in Estonia was a wish of his already in 1970s, because the tradition imported by Tõnisson had already lost its continuity. Väärtnõu had always been interested in Nyingma school (as the first and oldest tradition in Tibetan Buddhism) and hence the wish to establish this tradition in Estonia. Since there were no Nyingma monasteries in Soviet Union, his only opportunity to reach Buddhism was through Gelug school and so he made contact with the monastery of Ivolga in Buryatia.

The establishment of the Brotherhood was only on step in far-reaching plans, which included the creation of Nyingma monastery in Estonia, where an opportunity of Buddhist education was to be established for the purpose of creating educated Buddhists in Estonia. Plan included sending people to study in Asia and get educated lamas and Buddhist scholars to return.

Väärtnõu studied from 1978-1986 Buddhist philosophy, psychology and meditation under the guidance of a number of famous teachers in Ivolga monastery which is the main monastery in Russia today, and two of his gurus, Munko Tsybikov lama and Zhimba Erdineev lama, were the Head Lamas (Hambo Lamas) of Russia.

All these years found Väärtnõu in constant travels between Buryatia, spending sometimes months at a time, learning from elderly lamas of the monastery. In Ivolga the gurus understood his fanatic interest in Nyingma school, he even got a nickname Guru Rinpoche, as when reading texts, he read Padma instead of Tsongkhapa. All



*First Stupa*



*First Stupa*

*at Pangarehe*

that was learnt was made of use in home land Estonia. Brotherhood's activity was educative and oriented to propagate eastern culture and the Buddhist way of thinking among Estonians. In socialist time any religious propaganda was officially forbidden, because Soviet Union was the atheistic country, but despite of that, this little community was very effective in its actions.

Since it was forbidden by the law to build cult objects (stupas, temples etc.) and copy Buddhist books, the activities of translating and copying were very risky business. Those who participated risked punishment. The same was true to practical Buddhism, which they were in to.

Väärtnõu spread Buddhist teaching to the Brotherhood and conducted the first Buddhist rituals in Estonia, planned and leaded Taola's life and activities personally during the six years.

Väärtnõu: "Taola members were outlaws in communist lead occupation called Estonia, since officially no one recognized Taola. On the other hand the constant presence of KGB cars in front of the house and other surveillance by the authorities hinted that official system was keenly following every step and word made

by Taola. Now the ex communists are saying they did all this to restore independent Estonia".

An example of unmerciful of the authorities for propagating Buddhism was Bidja Dandaron, who died in prison and whose disciples had to spend years in institutions because of Buddhist activities

In these times a developing interest in Denge Dongma cult and practices could be noticed in Väärtnõu's field of studies, which was followed by interest in the biography and person of the poet and Taoist 6th Dalai Lama. In the centre of his interest during these years was Mahakala, which gave him basis to say that according to traditions, Estonian Buddhism already has personal embodiment of wrathful deity – namely religious hero baron Roman Ungern von Sternberg, a claim that was confirmed by further studies about baron's life in Buryatia.

In that time the lamas from Ivolga monastery started to visit Estonia regularly. Since in the conditions of Soviet times these Buddhist activities were best kept secret, the wider public of Estonia never heard of the activities of Taola. Even inside the community lot of his activities with the monastery remained unknown. If authorities had learned about this, they would also have suffered many repressions. This period of mutual visits lasted until 1988 – the year when KGB deported Väärtnõu from Soviet Union.



^ Maitreya Festival Ivolgaa



^ Ven. Hambo Lama Munko Tsybikov



<-- Vello Väärtnõu and

Ven. Hambo Lama Zhimba Erdineev

## The Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood

Accordingly to the Buddhist tradition activities began with the building of first stupa that was erected in 1983 in the summerhouse of artist Jüri Arrak in Pangarehe. Participants of the building were Jüri Arrak, Urve Arrak, Jaan Arrak and literati Jaanus Tamm. The upper part, which symbolizes the heavens of Brahma, were made by Vigala Sass alias Aleksander Heitalu, who is known in wider public as healer and believer in natural religion.

Estonian first Buddhist Brotherhood started to live and act together in Tallinn, Kadrioru and was known as Taola (meaning something like "Tao's place"). Its members were called taolane (a member of Tao's place, in Estonian not the same word as Taoist) and Väärtnõu as the spiritual leader and teacher – Vanemtaolane (the Elder Tao).

The first taolane was Arno Arrak, who had known Väärtnõu already for years. Later Jüri Saard and Tõnis Promet joined them. Each of them had their own living space and specialized area of Buddhism. In different times different members lived in Taola – Boris Saabas, Peep Paasian, Peeter Kaasik and others. With their work they have helped to establish Nyingma tradition, which starts from the Samje monastery, in Estonia.

Lot of others gathered around Taola for help – Tiina Hallik, Anu Rootalu, Enn Jaanson,



Head Temple in Ivolla monastery



Estonian Brotherhood in Ivolla. 1982



*Buriat lamas in visiting Taola. Tallinn 1983. From left: E. Pärnaste, E. Jaanson, N. Väärtnõu, Laama Dugarsab, T. Promet, Lama Bahir, A. Arrak, J. Saard.*



*Estonians in Ivolgaa 1984.*



*< Estonian stupas, built*



*Lamas in Tallinn 1983*



*From the left: Jüri Saard, Enn Jaanson, Tõnis Promet, Vello Väärtnõu, Arno Arrak.*



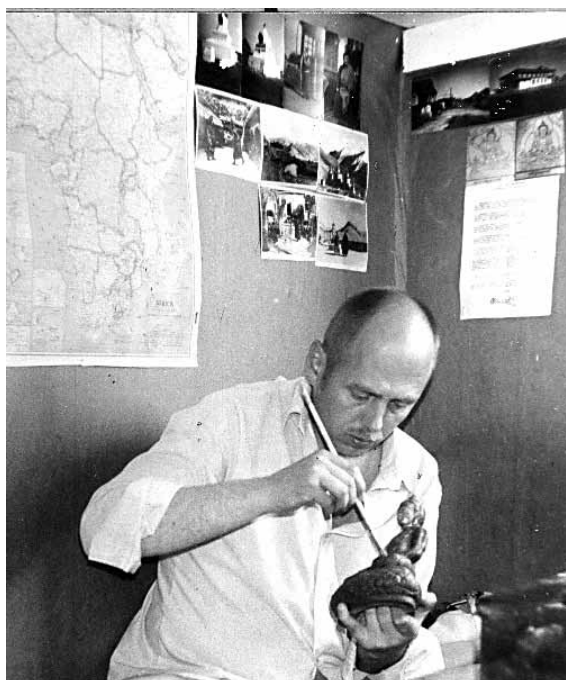
*From the left: Arno Arrak, Tiina Hallik, Tõnis Promet, Anu Rootalu.*

Eve Pärnaste were engaged with translation works and also Ants Luik and others gave their helping hands in many things.

Taola was very popular place during the whole active time with Buddhists, but also with other literates and culture people. Taola was visited by other folk from all over Estonia and often from Russia and Siberia. Many people who went there, helped to obtain materials, book binding, copying and other things.

Part of the products went to Buryatia, where they were expected and held in high honor, because they did not make those them-selves. All this was given to the monastery for free, because one of Väärtnõus principles has always been not to take money for work done in the name of Teachings. This is something he follows until today.

*Making the Buddha Statue.*



Buddhist brotherhood was engaged with translating. They translated tens of books, copied them and distributed in hundreds of them. Also noteworthy library was established, where most of the Buddhist texts came from Buryatia.

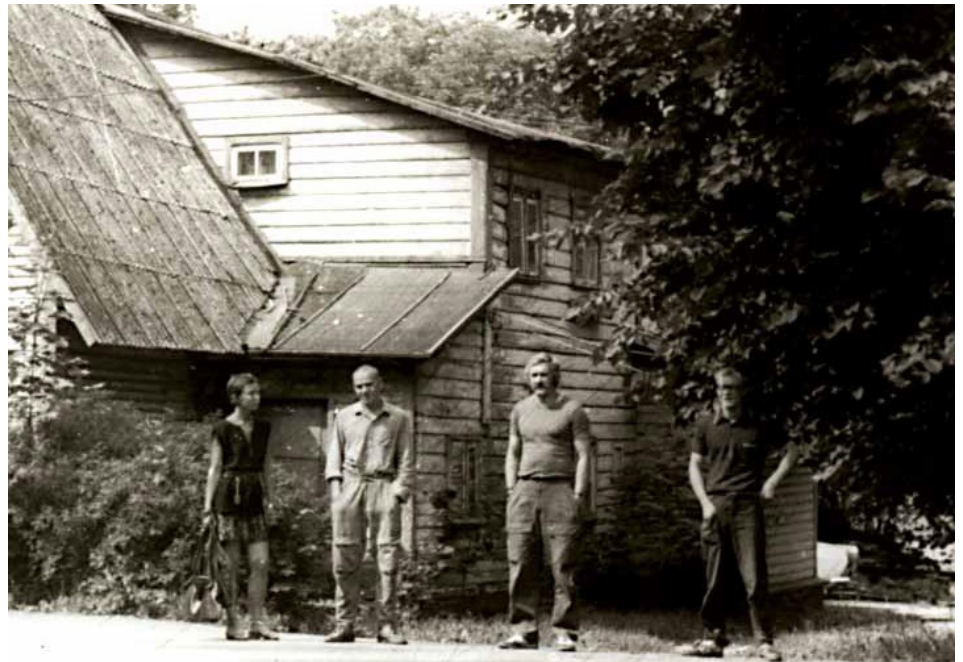
All the ritual objects in Taola were brought from Ivolga and prayer drums made locally in Estonia. One can say that the lamas in Ivolga monastery have done enormous favour to Buddhism in Estonia and all Soviet Union. While in Ivolga they copied manuscripts, texts and photographed great amount of thangkas and burhans. Unfortunately KGB took all this precious material of slides and microfilms, so the fate and place of these is unknown until today.

To get the literature from the Western countries, help was received from foreign friends, who bought

suitcases full of books giving their part to establishing basis of Estonian Buddhism. Finnish writer Harri Sirola wrote about Taola and its leader in Finnish newspapers and later published a novel "Two Cities".

In the years 1984–1985 three more stupas were built in West Estonia, near Haapsalu. All these 4 stupas built by Brotherhood, were the first stupas in Northern Europe and the only stupas that were built in the territory of Soviet Union in soviet times.

Since that kind of activity was prohibited during those times, then only guarantee, as said Väärtnõu, was Buddhist rituals and finding astrologically correct timings, to have



*Taola in Leineri Street*



*<- Stupas in Estonia*

maximum effect and duration in time for the stupas. All these religious buildings were untouched by Soviet authorities and are still standing.



*Mask of Deity made in Taola*

The main interest was still learning and self-educating. Vello Väärtnõu shared Buddhist knowledge and language studies were helped – developed by famous linguist Pent Nurmekund, who also founded oriental studies in Tartu University. Apart from all the other oriental studies in Tartu, he was tolerant towards Buddhists, taught them Old-Mongolian language and got respective nickname "Professor".

Väärtnõu about Pent Nurmekund:

About "Pent" I can say so much, that he visited Taola with bus from Tartu and this skinny 2-metre high Pent

was wearing only thin blue jacket. Since Nurmekund refused to take any fee for his teachings, Taola decided to give him something as a gift. They bought nice warm winter jacket, so that language-Guru would not catch cold while visiting Tallinn. Next time he arrived to the lesson, they presented him with the gift. At first he refused to take it and if at last after great hirdum-dirdum from the students language-Guru put the jacket on. When he left he took the jacket with him, but next time arrived in his old jacket. When questioned, what had happened, he answered with great dignity that he had taken the jacket to a shop, sold it and brought books with the money received. Here one could add similar event from his past, where students in Tartu University gave him a radio or television set, which came to a similar fate. It travelled to a shop and with the money received Professor bought books again.

Additionally to language courses that took place in Taola, they studied in Tallinn language school, because as Väärtnõu liked to say – self-reliant studies were always “obligatorily popular.” A farmhouse was brought in West Estonia to build a monastery. Architect Leonhard Lapin made project for this future monastery, which was first of its kind in Estonia. The building was halted by later political actions and halted was also the publishing of first Estonian schoolbook on Tibetan language.

## The Creation of Estonian National Independent Party



Väärtnõu with the Buddha statue that he made

Being forward looking and ahead of time, 5-6 Buddhist opened the door for freedom and independence in Estonia.

In 1987, Vello Väärtnõu came up with the idea and program of creating Estonian National Independent Party with the aim of restoring a free and independent Estonia by working as an opposition party to the Communist Party.

On 7th of November in 1987 in a gathering in Pärnu Vello Väärtnõu came out with the idea to establish Estonian National Independence Party. He said openly that it is a necessity to create our own party and take power from communists, because it is pointless to ask from them sausages and bread. These should be made for ourselves.

### Väärtnõu:

When first the spontaneous stand-ups started, it was clear to me, political landscape was possible only if an opposition party against the communists was assembled (officially) and openly. There was a gathering in Pärnu, where excited citizens talked about lack of sausages. I gave a speech about the necessity of organized opposition. I also offered preliminary program to be published. My talk in this mass-meeting in Pärnu was held incomprehensible

and provocative, because no one dared even to think about taking power from communists. I composed a project for the creation of party and offered participation for many people. There was much hesitation and denials.

This was the first time in the history of Soviet Union, when the leaders in Moscow were faced with the proposal of the creation of opposition party.

Brotherhood's house was the only place that printed, copied and spread leaflets. Due to the collapse of the communist system, they were under constant control by the KGB – the Buddhist library was “cleaned” on several occasions and large amounts of Tibetan texts, thangkas, slides and reels of manuscripts were taken from Väärtnõu.

At the time of creating ENIP Väärtnõu was helped by Tiina Hallik, Anu Rootalu and Eve Pärnaste who was Buddhist at the time and acted as secretary in Taola.

On 21st of January in 1988 a proposal to create Estonian National Independence Party was signed by 14 Estonian Citizens under the leadership of Vello Väärtnõu. The proposal was signed by Vello Väärtnõu, Eke-Pärt Nõmm, Ävi Orula, Eve Pärnaste, Heiki Ahonen, Erik Udam, Urmas Inno, Karin Inno, Endel Ratas, Mati Kiirend, Kalju Mätlik, Rein Arjukese, Mati Vilu, Arvo Pesti.

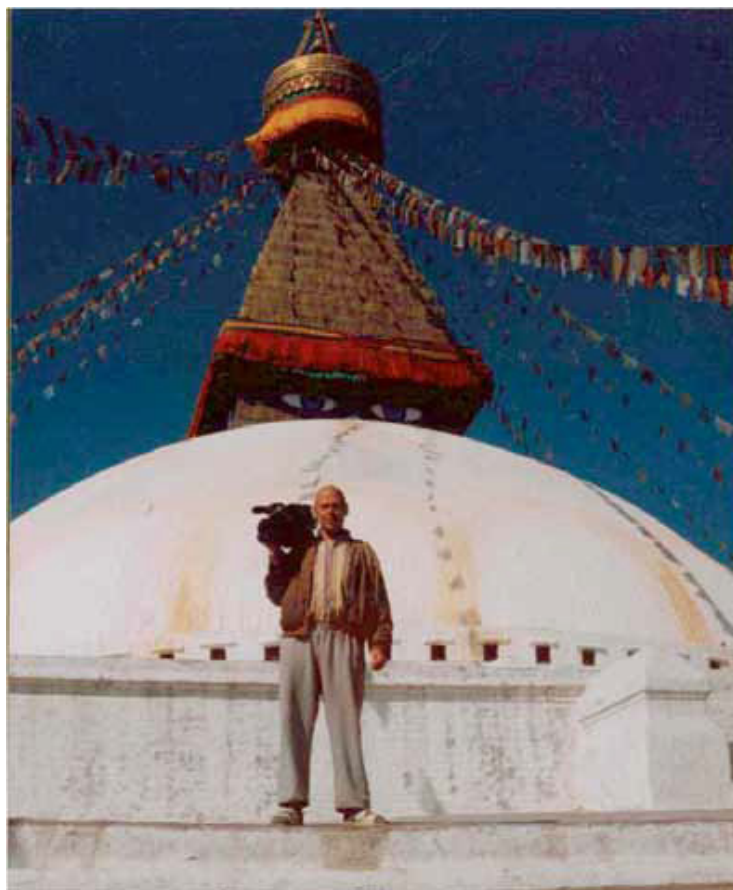
A sensational press conference in Moscow followed. Western countries learned that the castle of communism – Soviet Union is falling and behind this process is a small company of Estonian Buddhists.

On 30th of January in 1988 Väärtnõu organized press conference for accredited western journalists in Moscow. New York Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune and many other newspapers were present, as well as US TV company ABC. Väärtnõu announced to the international media the proposal of creating opposition party – Estonian National Independence Party. That was a sensational event in the world at that time, but not a word was said in local press, although news spread around Estonia very fast. Apart from the press in Estonia at the time, this idea found a lot of responses throughout west and east, finding mentioning in foreign media. For example in the front page of New York Times Philip Taubman writes about the handwritten document signed by 14 citizens that calls people to form the first independent political party in Soviet Union.

Not much of these news was released in Estonia. Since Väärtnõu had no access to the local mass communication – radio, TV, newspapers, he used skilfully western media



*The first thangka made by Väärtnõu.*



*Väärtnõu in Nepal. 1992*

to deliver the message of freedom and independence to people.

Due to the demolishing of communist system, Taola was under constant surveillance by KGB. Buddhist library was "cleaned" repeatedly, number of Tibetan texts, slides of thangkas and films of manuscripts were confiscated from Väärtnõu. Miliati was used in repressions against Taola.

The limit of KGB tolerance cup was filled with the press conference and events evolved very fast after that. Väärtnõu had organized the printing and distribution of leaflets before the 71st anniversary of Estonian Republic and also printing of anniversary cards. On the 6th of February KGB searched Väärtnõu's home and on 13th of February he was deported from Soviet Union to Sweden.

### **Väärtnõu:**

I flew to Sweden with the flight from Moscow to Stockholm. Few dozen foreign

Estonians were in Arlanda airport to greet me. They waived the blue-black-white flags happily and felt pity for me – see a repressed man and they have shaved his head as well. I had to disappoint them – I am hairless for a long time and because of Buddhism, not because of being the enemy of the state.

KGB did not tire of spreading rumors about me being an agent of CIA who went through a subtle training. Recent writings about Buddhists (Taola) in the late era of Soviet Estonia, talk about them hiding behind Buddhism from atrocities of Soviet life. At that time Taola was the only society in Estonia who followed their program and demolished the foundation of red communist powers – they printed, copied and distributed leaflets, pamphlets, posters and conducted other activities that destroyed soviet power. It should be mentioned that many commoners helped with the distribution and suffered for that at the hands of KGB. Somehow nowadays these names are not even mentioned in Estonia, even though they could very well be the new personal pensioners of our times.

KGB killed some of the members of Taola – Tiina Hallik and Enn Jaanson. Unfortunately the first victims of new independent Estonia were Nyingma Buddhists in the ranks of Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood – of these people the history of our pink republic is silent for some reasons."

It was common at the time that any kind of opposition movement tried to avoid political form, which would have lead to open conflict with the autocratic communist party and its repressive organ – KGB.

Many of today's parliament members refused to sign the application in that time, saying that Estonian people will be murdered, because the party openly declared the making of first opposition party in the Soviet history, which goal was to establish independent Estonia.

Estonian authorities have tried to ignore Väärtnõu's national actions, since mostly the state power is in the hands of the same communists, who had the power 20 years ago. 2010 in newspaper "Sirp" Jaak Allik is asking questions why Väärtnõu is the only one with whom there is no interview in the voluminous book about the history of ENIP, although he is the establisher of this party and why public is still in the dark about his heroic journey to Moscow in 1988, where he held a press conference for foreign newspapers announcing the creation of first opposition party, the ENIP, and its program. Politician Tunne Kelam has stated in a speech years later that timing of this kind of national political alternative was only possible through good instinct and personal risks.

And so can the Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood and Buddhist way of thinking be considered a part of Estonian fight for independence. They were the first in Soviet times to openly attack the foundations of the communist country giving the direction of independence fight in the future.

KGB killed some of the members of Taola – Tiina Hallik and Enn Jaanson. Unfortunately the first victims of new independent Estonia were Nyingma Buddhists in the ranks of Estonian Buddhist. This was the end of active movements of Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood in Estonian soil in 1988. Within 6 years Taola had built touchable, visible body of Buddhism in Estonia.

Under the Väärtnõu's guidance they built first Buddhist stupas, manufactured thangkas and statues, translated and copied many Buddhist books, which most of us have used in guiding us to Buddha's teachings.

They translated into Estonian language tens of books and articles, for example:



*The supporters of the Brotherhood with White Tara thangka made in Taola*



*A. Arrak and V. Väärtnõu in Ivolga*



*Estonian Stupas, built in 1984-85*



- ◇ "The Cult of Tara" by Stephen Beyer;
- ◇ "Tibet, Its History, Religion and People", by Thubten Jigma Norbu;
- ◇ "Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan" by Melvyn Goldstein,
- ◇ "The Hundred Parables Sutra", "The Chariot for Travelling the Supreme Path" Kunkhyab Chuling;
- ◇ "Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion. Asvagosha" Geše Ngawang Dhargey;
- ◇ "Psycho-Cosmic Symbolism of the Buddhist Stupa" by A. Govinda;
- ◇ "Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism" by A. Govinda;
- ◇ "101 Zen Stories";
- ◇ "Commentary by HH XIV Dalai Lama on Tsonkhapa "Agrim" London 1977;
- ◇ "The Tibetan Book of the Dead I-II (Bardo Thötröl)," Psychological commentary by G. Jung;
- ◇ "Freedom From The Known" by J. Krishnamurti;
- ◇ "A Buddhist Catechism. According to the Canon of the Southern Church." by Henry Olcott;
- ◇ "The Light of Asia" by Edwin Arnold;
- ◇ "Essays on life of Buddhist monasteries and the Buddhist clergy in Mongolia 1887" by Pozdneyev

They also copied, bound and multiplied more than 40 books:

- ◇ "The Buddhist Philosophy of Thought" by A. Piatigorsky,
- ◇ "The Lamp for the Path and Commentary of Atisha" by R.Sherburne;
- ◇ "The Navya-Nyaya Doctrine of Negotiation" by B.K.Matilal,
- ◇ "Panchatantra" by A.Sörkina;
- ◇ "Tibetan - English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology" by Tsepak Rigzin;
- ◇ "The Land of the Lama" by David Macdonald;
- ◇ "An Introduction to the Grammar of the Tibetan Language" by S. Chandra Das;
- ◇ "Tantric Practice in Nyingma" by Khetsun Sangpo, J. Hopkins;
- ◇ "Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon" by Berriedale Keith;
- ◇ "Himalayan Art" by Madanjeet Singh;
- ◇ "Buddhist Logic" by F. T. Stcherbatsky,
- ◇ "Madhyanta-Vibhanga Vasubandhu and Sthiramati" by Th.Stcherbatsky,
- ◇ "The Tantric Way of Life" by H. Guenther,
- ◇ "Taoist Yoga: Alchemy & Immortality" by Charles Luk, London 1972;
- ◇ "Treasures on the Tibetan Middle Way" by H. V. Guenther,
- ◇ "Sinhalese Doorways" by C. E. Godakumbura;

♦ "Tibetan-Russian-English dictionary"; J. N. Roerich

♦ "The Secret of the Golden Flower A Chinese Book of Life" by Richard Wilhelm, C. G. Jung;

The archives of Taola are lost for the most part of it by now. Väärtnõu offered at the time lot of texts, translations, books, photos and archive after deportation to Tartu University, to Maret Kark, to preserve this as a part of Estonian Buddhist history. But Maret Kark refused, saying that Tartu Oriental department was not interested in these kinds of things. Today these translations and books are preserved in private libraries only and were presented to public at Tallinn City Museum in 2009.

After deportation Väärtnõu lived in the Himalayas and in Stockholm for many years .



# Selection of articles and interviews

## Tibet in Estonia

*Tarmo Teder "Existentsia 3" p 38-41, 1985*

### III

...One branch of Buddhism – Lamaism or Tibetan Buddhism was founded on 7th century by Padmasambhava and by his school of Nyingmapa or red hats and magicians ("Old" in Tibetan). This school is followed by those young taolas in Estonia and this writing with

it's prolonged foreword is meant to talk about them.

A man from Saaremaa, with prolonged journeys, with interest in paintings and recognized astrologist – Vello Väärtnõu – has been since 1972 until today a man dedicated to Buddhism. More exactly to Taoism and Lamaism, but enough of -ism's.

For a decade he obtained, researched and systematized relevant articles, books, scripts, albums and catalogues, receiving help from a few sympathizers, hectic and for now withdrawn from religion. Until 1983 he wandered alone in the knot of numerous problems, when a group of enthusiasts joined him in tighter co-operation, who today have become young taolans – principled Buddhists, followers of Dharma and dedicated in thriving towards monk-hood. Every one of them has an altar or a sacred corner (so called micro temple), which is decorated by tens, if not hundreds, of burhans or statues of gods. Resourcefully they build prayer wheels, where thousands of mantras or prayers circulate.

They are diligent in translating texts about Buddhist and about Buddhism from foreign languages; they are learning Tibetan, gelding Buddha statues and painting thangkas – sacred pictures from the land of Tibet. The dream of these young taolans is to build a temple and home monastery; also they believe in learning abroad. Is the desire for pilgrimage of Barefoot

Tõnisson formed into five, his reincarnation pentapluralized? For every year some

of the Buddhists of the brotherhood take upon themselves to make a long journey into Soviet Buryatia, monastery of Ivolga, where the head lama, Hambo Lama (Erdinejev) of Soviet Buddhists is located. For those interested one thorough official evening of diapositives and comments has taken place, when materials brought from travels had been shown and touched (prayer wheels, burhans etc).

But most important, that has been the reason behind this overview, are the

STUPAS under Estonian trees, which seem to



Brotherhood in front of the Ivolga Head Temple

visually melt into part of our small land.  
Is Tibet really moving to Estonia?

But most important, that has been the reason behind this overview, are the STUPAS under Estonian trees, which seem to visually melt into part of our small land. Is Tibet really moving to Estonia?

#### IV

Stupas are three- stepped places for sacred relics, which are built for gods (not to confuse with God!) and dedicated to gods, events in Buddhism and great persons (look Angarika Govinda "Buddhist Stupas"). First stupas were erected after the death of Buddha. Stupa became the model of the body of Dharma, its expression and symbol and it consists of three parts or realms or steps: 1. Kama dhatu or the realm of desires; 2. Rupa dhatu or the realm of ideas, forms and imagination; 3. Arupa dhatu – the realm without form.

The time for the building to start is determined astrologically and the place for the "faith pedestal" is also important. The erected stupa symbolizes five basic elements – fire, earth, air, water and ether. 13 heavens, moon, sun and lotus are located in the upper part. The bells ringing in the top express compassion towards all living beings.

First stupa was built in Estonia in the summer of 1983. It is located in Pärnu County, in Pangarehe near Tõstamaa. Stupa has been erected under the leadership of V.Väärtnõu and it is dedicated to the spread of the Law or Dharma. The other, about 6 meters in height (the middle one on the pictures) was built by the brotherhood in the summer of 1984 to Haapsalu, Tuuru village near Ridala and dedicated to Buddha himself (in Mongolian burhan bhanksü suburgan). The third and fourth stupas were raised in the next year, 1985, in the same Tuuru village.

#### V

Thus, thanks to Buddhas and Boddhisattvas, there are already 4 stupas in Estonia, which is a cultural history fact, not yet introduced to public not by "Kultuur ja Elu" ("Culture and Life") nor "Kunst ja Kodu" ("Art and home"), nor "Kodumaa" ("Homeland"), but pictures and hearsay about holy pedestals as special architecture or monumental sculpture examples have reached far in the worlds.

Anyways, five of them have succeeded in enriching the culture and people from across the ocean have come to gaze at those unusual signs. It is worth marvelling that five young men have succeeded in such things. It must be that honourable Brother Vahindra has created good grounds for the spread of Dharma. And the constant visits to monastery by the young brotherhood, that look like modern pilgrimages, have brought themselves the protections of local spirits and help so that the sacred undertaking would succeed and grow in Estonia.

It seems that young taolans are persistent and modest in their undertakings, because it



*From the left: Ven. Munko lama, Jüri Arrak, Siim Jõesaar.*

shows nowhere that they try to promote their activities or let it be known by wider public. This shows sureness and respect to the culture, lack of self-pride and confidence enabled by the refuge in the Three Treasures.

It is common of small hearts that the "Coffee shop Buddhists" and honourable orientalist have been heard to make bitter and demeaning commentaries about the activities of the Brotherhood. But everyone tries to demonstrate their existence and desire to be superior in their own possible way and how much it contains Eastern compassion or understanding of Being, this is already shown by life.

And up until now, the brotherhood seems to be unaffected by the things in their way and relying on the help and opinions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas about how to cope with the passion of envy in the Sansara.

## About Vello Väärtnõu

*13. September of 1991 by Eve Pärnaste*

Vello Väärtnõu was born on 17th of July in Saaremaa. He studied in Kuressaare and was very active in sports, especially in swimming, pentathlon and yachting, being one of the firsts in Estonia

In the year 1972 he came to live in Suure-Jaani and in the summer of the same year he painted his first paintings and became interested in history and philosophy. He finished in distance learning 2 years of high schools grades 10 and 11 in one year, went to live in Tartu and got acquainted with its art life. He studied drawing in Kalju Põllu's art classes and completed his first graphic papers.

Soon Väärtnõu began living in Tallinn. Graphic Alo Hoidre had invited him to design graphic in Art Institute and in the years 1973 – 78 Väärtnõu studied graphic techniques under the guidance of Art Institute's master Aleksander Sarri. From studying Buddhist

*Väärtnõu in Ivoga  
1986*



and Taoist philosophy an interest in Eastern art developed, special hobby of his was 12th century Japanese and 16th century Chinese art, he also translated from Russian materials about Chinese art. He also studied painting under the guidance of his friend Jüri Arrak between 1974-80.

In 1975 an interest in astrology added and Vello Väärtnõu founded Estonian Astrology Society, lecturing in 1980-82 those who were interested about astrology and Buddhism.

In 1979 Väärtnõu was accepted as member of Artist Union Youth Organization. Next year art scientist Sirje Helme wrote in the magazine "Noorus" (Youth) about him as landscape painter with great future. In September he made his first visit to Buriatya

In 1980 Väärtnõu's first paintings made it to Tokyo world exhibition

In 1982 he founded Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood. They translated Buddhist books from English, Russian, German and Finnish language; made Buddha statues and Buddhist thangkas and built 4 stupas in Läänemaa.

At the fall of the same year allegations were fabricated against him and Tarmo Urb of attempt to cross borders. For the lack of evidence he was released in 1983 at May 5th, when commission lead by professor Jüri Saarma testified him being schizophrenic and he was admitted to psycho-neurotic hospital for one month. When he was released from there, he found himself expelled from Artist Union with reasoning that he had not paid traffic violation tickets of speeding and his behaviour was not suitable with soviet artist behaviour norms. The door to exhibitions in Estonia closed.

In 1988 on January 21st 14 Estonian citizens signed a proposal to create Estonian National Independence Party under Vello Väärtnõu's leadership. This was followed by press conference in Moscow. Väärtnõu had organized the printing and spreading of leaflets before the 71st anniversary of Estonian Republic and also printing of anniversary cards. On February 6th KGB conducted search in his place as well as at others and on February 13th he was deported to Sweden.

During his life in exile he has had following exhibitions all over the world, in Europe as well as America and Asia. Already in the end of May 1988 his first exhibition took place in one of Stockholm's art galleries (pictures were painted in his hotel room, where a quarter of meter free space was in between 2 beds). Many of these works are now in Sweden in private collections of Björn Halgren, Göte Terseus and others. In the years 1993-1998 Väärtnõu lived in Asia, Himalayas and now is mostly living in Stockholm, Sweden.



*Väärtnõu painting a thangka*

## How to characterize the art of Vello Väärtnõu.

In his case it is not important if he has completed figure composition, landscape painting or abstract picture – the determinatives are colour, texture, fractures. Recently

he has used mixed techniques and deriving from Japanese valued opinions that all that is old, is good, gives his pictures scent of old – mainly with the choice of colours. The density and deep gamma of colours of many of his paintings brings old masters of Europe to mind. Long friendship with one of the first avant-gardist of Soviet Union Gleb Bogomolov has also left its mark in his works. And since Väärtnõu had studied thangka paintings, his colour use is oriented to eastern art principles, which consider the effect of colours to psyche under very strict rules. All in all Väärtnõu's paintings mostly do depict psychic states of mind.

Buddhist view says that reality is illusion of our consciousness, what we receive with the help of our senses is illusion and the state of our consciousness reflects the surrounding world better than our senses. His pictures are like signpost or guide to psychic analysis. Väärtnõu's principle is not to depict actual objects but feel himself in relations to surrounding world, because this relationship which expresses itself in psychic state of mind, is more objective and real than the object itself.

Vello Väärtnõu says that a picture does not have to say anything, but create a mood. Picture depicts a moment's state, looking at it, it is possible to restore that and transfuse to the viewers. Psychic state in the picture is like symbol for interpretation.

Väärtnõu uses colours masterfully. I do not know any Estonian artists, who come close to knowing the art of glazing as well as he does. Painting is just part of his activities to which he has dedicated himself. Western media has talked a lot about his political background in connection with his exhibitions, but most important about him, is art in itself and Buddhism.

## Gentle Brutal

*Estonian Life 1990. Interview by Liis Pajupuu*



On October 11th, an exhibition of Vello Väärtnõu's paintings was opening in "G"

Gallery. This is the first personal exhibition over of this 39 year old artist from Saaremaa who is versatile in renaissance way. About his art I do not like when artist talk about their over and under goings. This is not necessary. One does not talk openly also about intimate life. My creation is strongly connected to Buddhism. Picture for me is visual expression of psychic states expressed by senses. Reality is not a chair or still life or landscape, reality is a state of

mind. Colour is the cleanest thing that can transmit subconscious state. My pictures do not carry with themselves a concrete message. Rather it is rummaging in self-consciousness and subconsciousness. Abstraction is fairer and more direct than realism.

## About Buddhism

I have practiced Buddhism for long time and fervently. For me it is old and deep culture, not religion. I have a lot of valuable literature (KGB was worried that I take this with me and sell for profit). The real plan is to organize exhibition about Buddhism in Tallinn. This is all too valuable to loose for Estonians just for ignorance or lack of possibilities.

## Artist Vello Väärtnõu Building a Buddhist Temple

*Eesti Ekspressi Esmaspäevaleht, 1990 Interview by Sulev Teinemaa*

In the back garden of one farm in Läänemaa are 3 stupas, 7-9 metres high. As I went to gaze at those unusual buildings in our conditions, it turned out that the leader of Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood and builder of stupas, artist Vello Väärtnõu is also in his country home near Lihula. I asked Vello Väärtnõu to explain, what is the meaning of stupas for him.

--"A stupa is psycho-cosmic model. Where is stupa, there is Buddhism. It is exactly like this: where are people, are their living places. If a person is interested in something, then a mark must be made of his actions. Buddhism for me is not religion, but purely a life form or structure."

--"The principle is that stupas are created for all kinds of gods and all kinds of events. But all for themselves they depict the world. Every step, every floor has a meaning. There is a cube, a sphere and triangle. They mean primary elements and that is full of symbolism. All kinds of herbs and texts are placed inside a stupa. In the upper part there is a round part – bumba – this is donation box or treasure hiding place. In that Buddhist sculptures and mandalas are put. Mandala means a model of world, where the fields of gods exist and they are used for meditation etc. A stupa also contains holy pictures – thangkass. Stupa gives psychic strength to a person, it affects a person. We follow actually Tibetan Buddhism – Lamaism." ...

Mr. Väärtnõu is mainly engaged in art in Sweden. He started painting and many people were interested in his paintings. By now he has had many exhibitions (Zurich, Vaasa, Hamburg, Munich and off course in Stockholm, where he lives). Here it would be good to mention that a lot has been written about Mr. Väärtnõu and his art in western journalism. This winter Väärtnõu will have exhibition of his works in 3 major cities in USA. Last winter he was invited to Australia, but he gave up traveling so far. This summer he had intentions of visiting Tibet, but he decided in favour of coming to Estonia.



*Building the  
first stupa in  
Läänemaa*

# К нам приехал эстонский художник, буддист, революционер

**ВЫСТАВКИ**

**Виктор СЕМЕНОВ**  
«Всеукраинские Ведомости»

С 11 по 28 июня в Центре искусств «Славутич» пройдет выставка нефигуративной живописи Вэлло Вяяртнуу.

В 1988 году художник был изгнан из СССР. Приобрел большую известность на Западе. Его выставки проходили в самых престижных галереях Европы, обеих Америк и Азии. «Я не диссидент, я революционер», — заявляет художник, создавший в 1987 году первую в Эстонии оппозиционную Партию национальной независимости, имевшую, по его словам, весьма меркантильную программу. Это, так сказать, переполнило чашу терпения советских властей, и Вэлло пришлось переехать в Швецию. До того

раз, с 1969 по 1972 гг. — за анти-советскую пропаганду. Во второй, в 1982 году, его арестовали при попытке нелегально перейти границу.

Художнику чужда рабская психология большинства обывателей, выражением которой, по его мнению, является христианство. Своим идеалом Вэлло называл Агасфера, Вечного Жиды.

В 14 лет он стал буддистом, так как считает, что эта религия более всего соответствует свободной личности. Живя в Эстонии, Вэлло создал Буддистское общество, построил ряд культовых объектов и храм. Несколько лет



в качестве оператора Би-би-си документальные фильмы о буддизме. Ни к одному из существующих в живописи течений Вэлло Вяяртнуу себя не относит. Он говорит, что, хотя на его картинах отсутствует объект, фигура, сконструированы они так, что каждый может увидеть на них то, что больше всего отвечает его восприятию.

В 1982 году Вэлло исключили из Союза художников Эстонии за образ мыслей и поведение, не соответствующие советскому человеку. Иллюстрацией этого несоответствия может быть картина «Смерть летчика». Кто-то заметил, что на ней изображен самолет,

фото Д. СЛУСКОГО, «Всеукраинские Ведомости»

## Swedish Estonian Daily paper

19th February 1988, T. Madisson/EVVA

On 19th of January at 10 o'clock in the morning a press conference for foreign journalists was announced to be held in one of Moscow's private apartments, no 56 in 14 General Rõtshigov street, where headquarters of human rights group "Doverie" is located. The organizers of this press conference were the members of initiative group of forming Estonian National Independence Party - Vello Väärtnõu, Eke-Pärt Nõmm and Ärvi Orula (all together there are 16 persons in the initiative group).

Little before 10 o'clock militia started lamenting behind the door of apartment no 56, demanding to be let in. The door of the apartment was opened at 10 o'clock when also the journalists of many major newspapers in the world ("Washington Post", "Chicago Tribune" etc.) had gathered.

One of Moscow's passport control heads Ovtšinnikov rushed in with the journalists and started checking everyone's documents and demanded that they depart with him. Militia and men in plain-clothes surrounded the house.

The situation was changed by the arrival of American TV-station ABC, who started filming what is going on. Publicity was not to the liking of Ovtšikonnikov and he fled. The press conference lasted one hour. Three Estonians explained the goals of Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP).

## Eesti Päevaleht (Estonian Daily Newspaper)

23.03.1988

Citation of the article by Sylvie Kaufmann in French newspaper "Le Mond" 16.02.1988.

On the 11th of February Sylvie Kaufmann spoke to Vello Väärtnõu in Tallinn, who had talked about the KGB's proposal to him, to go either to west or to east. Sylvie Kaufmann talks about demonstrations in Riga on 17th November and Tartu 2nd February. The militia in Tartu used helmets and shields...

# Estonian National Independence Party is history by now

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*Tunne Kelam, Postimees (Estonian Daily Newspaper) 21.01.1998*

10 years ago – 21st January in 1988 – news of 14 individuals openly proposing to form Estonian Opposition Party had an effect of bomb blast. The name suggested – Estonian Independence Party – did not leave any room for doubts of its goals.

One of the characteristics of those times was that all kinds of opposition activities tried to avoid political forms, which would have lead to conflict with the only party in power and with its repressive organ KGB. National goals were tried to achieve under the labels of societies, cultural events and clubs. Still since the summer of 1987 a sense of roughing out and strengthening the political alternative was felt and parallel to it the signals of confusion in communist party itself were more frequent. But when would there be a right moment to openly declare national political alternative, without risking to tragically through back the development so far?

This moment was only possible to define by good instinct and personal risks.

14 nationals – Vello Väärtnõu, Eke-Pärt Nõmme, Ävi Orula, Eve Pänaste, Heiki Ahoneni, Erik Udami, Urmas Inno, Karin Inno, Endel Ratase, Mati Kiirendi, Kalju Mätliku, Rein Arjukese, Mati Vilu, Arvo Pesti – signed the proposal. And the risk taken was timed well.

First impossible and incomprehensibly dangerous idea came to exist as a possibility in half a year and soon the only possibility. 20th august 1988 Estonian National Independence Party was founded with the goal of national independence and exactly 3 years later – 20th august 1991 the utopic goal came to reality.

The idea under question – to create independent democratic party in dictatorship – gained a lot of attention in the West, finding mentioning and commentating in such big magazine as New York Times.

The reporter for American newspaper Philip Taubman, informed about handwritten document by 14 citizens, which calls for forming first independent political party in Soviet Union.

Like Lagle Parek has said, the first three months of 1988 broke the backbone of KGB and under constant peaceful political pressure the old terror organization gave up its active role by spring.

But suddenly, on 21st of January 1988 the main goal of restoring Estonian National state was declared and this was made in a way practically official and open opposition to communist party. At the same time, it was natural development of demands of disclosure, although it should be mentioned that not all MRP/AEG activists were convinced of the choosing of correct time.

Following the introduction the future program of ENIP was drafted in the form of 11 thesis. Part of those were: restoration of historical truths, announcing the Estonian language as state language, instituting Estonian citizenship under the continuity from 1940 Estonian Republic, stopping the degradation of environment and misuse of natural resources, moving to market economy and self-support, full assurance

of human rights, freeing the culture from ideological control, free opportunities to obtain education in foreign countries, making the refugee's culture available, the cultural autonomy for minorities, the development of healthcare and social welfare, organising elections with multiple candidates, Estonian representation in UN and International Olympic Committee, the opening of Estonian diplomatic missions in foreign countries. The 11th and last theses formulated the request of those behind the proposal to celebrate 24th of February as Estonian National Independence day.

When celebrating the 80th anniversary of Estonian Republic on 24th of February, there is a reason to pay tribute and thanks to them, who ten years ago came public with such a proposal with the sense of historical justice and personal citizen courage.

## About one interesting man

*Newspaper "Leole" 4.17.2001 by Tõnu Kukk*

Vello Väärtnõu has been characterized as "gentle brutal", who is known to wider public from the field of art, religion and politics.

Born in Saaremaa, the young man was caught in Karjala in Soviet time, trying to cross border and since then the security forces at the time (KGB) were keenly interested in his life. Young man was kept far from Tallinn and was banished to Lahmus, where search for work took him to be stoker in the collective farm in Paala. Great reading and active drawing and talking with co-thinkers characterize this period. Often, friends gathered in the boiler house to talk about astrology, art, Christianity and Buddhism. Later he was taken with philosophy of Buddhism totally and with friends from the Estonian Brotherhood went to pilgrimage to Buryatia in the late 1980s. Returning from his journey first Buddhist stupas were built in Estonia, in Tuuru village Läänemaa. As an artist Väärtnõu was self educated. His sketchbook visions from the days in Suure-Jaani, later evolved into large surrealistic paintings. The young man interacted at that time with Jüri

Arrak and Leonhard Lapin – now well known artists. Väärtnõu's creation became more abstract in the 1990s, colour and form became more important. His large screen printed abstractions are very enjoyable. Väärtnõu has also taken a swing at "great politics". In 1988 he participated in that bold initiative group, who proposed the founding of ENIP. This party was the first alternative party in the whole Soviet Union. Repressions followed – condemning article by M.Mets in "Noorte hääl" ("The Voice of Youth") and deportation. Väärtnõu who is now living in Sweden turns 50 on the 14th of July this year.



*The first stupa  
in Tuuru village  
Läänemaa*

# Estonian Nyingma



In the 2000s, Väärtnõu started his educational activities again and today the members of Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood and new Nyingmapas operate under the guidance of Vello Väärtnõu.

During the last 10 years Vello Väärtnõu has developed extensive educative work in Estonia. Under his guidance Estonian Nyingma searches and introduces Buddhism, organizes conferences, seminars, courses, translates and publishes informative materials, creates Buddhist sacral architecture, as well organizes cooperation with universities, societies and companies.

## Encyclopedia of Buddhism

In 2005 the new Internet project was started by Vello Väärtnõu.

He created the first web portal, the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism in Estonian language that contains scientific works, terminology, explanations, articles, travelogues etc. about the eastern culture and Buddhism. It is the first and only encyclopaedia on Buddhism in Estonia, including more than 3200 articles. This Encyclopaedia is the result of Väärtnõu's many years of work and he has done this remarkably capacious educative work for free.

Also most of articles about Buddhism in Estonian Wikipedia are written by him.



Henri and HH Crown princess Srirasmi at  
Vesak 2011



White Tara. Väärtnõu 2004



Tsangyang-Gyatso Väärtnõu 2001



*Vaishnavana 3-Lha*



*Manjusri Potala 2000*

## Thangkas

Väärtnõu was the first person to start drawing traditional Buddhist paintings with computer designs; he is highly skilled in 3D Graphics and Vector Graphics. Väärtnõu's gift as an artist can be best appreciated in hundreds of his original thangkas, where his knowledge of Buddhism and art comes together perfectly. Väärtnõu studied in the Estonian Art Academy and was already an acknowledged artist in Estonia in the 1970s. Some of his paintings were exhibited at The Tokyo World Exhibition in the 80s and later on he had numerous exhibitions in Europe, Asia and America.

He has created many thangkas while living in Sweden and his thangkas are highly valued there and beyond, for example the Stockholm Ethnographic Museum, Thailand Crown Princess HRH Srirasmī and Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has some of Väärtnõu's latest thangkas.

# New Buddhist Architecture

From 2007-2009 Estonian Nyingma has built under the guidance of Vello Väärtnõu the new Buddhist architecture in Veltsa, at the centre of Estonian Nyingma. The 5th stupa in Estonia, 10m high, has been built for the protection of all sentient beings, big prayer wheels and temples.



Fire-temple at Veltsa



The conference lecturers looking the new Buddhist Architecture at Veltsa.

# The International Conference

## “Buddhism and Nordland”

The idea and realization of the international conference “Buddhism and Nordland” originates from Vello Väärtnõu, who had the idea to organize the international conference on Buddhism in cooperation with other Nordic countries already many decades ago.

During the soviet occupation it was impossible to organize such a conference in Estonia because it was forbidden to propagate religion in every way and it was not possible to research Buddhism on an international cooperation level. It was also Väärtnõu’s idea to bring scholars, scientists and Buddhists together who then would complete each other by revealing different aspects and materials on the subject of the history of Nordic Buddhism during the conference.

The first real step toward the realization of this idea was made in 2007 when the first conference “Buddhism and Nordland” took place. (Nordland is a common

synonym for the Nordic countries and which historically included Germany in addition to the traditional Nordic countries. In older translations from Estonian, Nordland was used instead of contemporary Nordic.)

Inspired by such a conference idea, the Russian and Finnish scholars, also some Buddhists and along with Estonian speakers, formed the so-called Guard of the first conference in February 21, 2007.

Participated Priit Kelder, Anti Kidron, Leo Lapin ja Tiit Pruuli from Estonia, Tuula Saarikoski and Alpo Ratia from Finland, Natalia Yakhontova and Alexander Andreev from Russia and Ciren Sambueva from Peterburg` Cultural Society of Buriats Aya Ganga.



*Opening speech by V. Väärtnõu*



*HE Apichart Chinwanno with his wife visiting the exhibition on 25.02.2007*

The main subject of the conference was “Historical Connections of Buddhism in the Nordic countries” and the theme for 2007- Karl Tõnisson.

Worldtraveller Tiit Pruuli introduced the life and activities of the first Estonian Buddhist Karl Tõnisson, Leo Lapin talked about the connections between Zen Buddhism and Estonian poetry, Alpo Ratia talked about the beginning of Buddhism in Finland and the Finnish writer and Buddhist Tuula Saarikoski about her experiences in Buddhism. Alexander Andreev from St. Petersburg` Institute for the History of Science and Technology made a review about Buddhism in Russia in the 1980s and 1990s, Buddhism in Kalmykia was introduced by Natalia Yakhontova from St Petersburg Institute. of Oriental Studies. Priit Kelder, who is

the first practitioner of martial arts in Estonia, presented the philosophical concept of Tai Chi Chuan and psychologist Anti Kidron described Zen in everyday life.

A photo exhibition „The Buddhist Temple of St. Petersburg“ (photographs by Erki Meister) was organized in connection to the conference to emphasize the importance of Estonian first Buddhist Karl Tõnisson. The Royal Ambassador of Thailand H.E. Apichart Chinwanno with his wife visited the exhibition (Estonians Karl Tõnisson and Friedrich Lustig lived as monks in the monasteries of Thailand for many years and were well-known monks-Buddhists in Thailand and Burma).

## The second conference „Buddhism and Nordland“

25. – 27.09.2008 in Tallinn University

The main subject of the conference was “Historical Connections of Buddhism in the Nordic countries” and the theme for 2008 was “Roman Ungern von Sternberg.”

There were participants from Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Sweden, Russia, Buriatya and Taiwan, altogether 18 lecturers. From Russia - Buda Badmayev, Head of St. Petersburg’ Buddhist Temple, Alexander Andreev, the director of P.Kozlov museum and Natalia Yakhontova, the senior research fellow of Institute of Oriental Studies. From Latvia three scholars came - Agita Baltgalve and Anita Stasulane from Daugavpils University and Leons Taivans, Dean of Asian Studies in Latvian University.

Lithuania was represented by tibetologist Vladimir Korobov and Audrius Beinorius, Dean of Asian Studies in Vilnius University, Finland by Tibetologist Alpo Ratia, Tiina Hyytiäinen from Helsinki University and by Tulku Dakpa and Buddhist Centre Danakosha. Sweden was represented by Jürgen Offermanns from Lund University and Hakan Wahlquist from Stockholm Museum of Ethnography and Estonia by writer and translator Jaan Kaplinski, political scientist Karin Dean and martial arts specialist Ville Jehe. The subjects of papers concerned the history (Sven Hedin and the Golden Temple, Roman Ungern von Sternberg and Pan-Mongolism Ideas, Early Buddhism in Latvia, Buddhism in Sweden in 17-18 century, F.L. Lustig - Estonian Buddhist no 2) and present time (activities in St. Petersburg temple, the internet resources, mistakes in translation from Sanskrit to Mongolian and Tibetan



From the left: Jaan Kaplinski, Jürgen Offermanns, Leons Taivans, Alpo Ratia



Hakan Wahlquist and Buda Badmayev looking at the exhibition in National Library



From the left: Natalia Yakhontova, ChiTinan, Anita Stasulane



The conference lecturers at Veltsa. 2009

languages, energetic architecture, Tibet in 2008) Also there were presentations about Budo and Bushido, theosophy and Buddhism, the neo-Confucian approach to the concept of Void and about visits to Buryatia in 1963.

Also a photo exhibition "The Buddhist Tradition in Estonia" was organised in connection to the conference and its opening was on 25th of September in the National Library of Estonia. It was the first time in Estonia to have public exhibition about Estonian



Jürgen Offermanns

Buddhist Brotherhood and its activities

In 2008, a trip to Pärnumaa was also organised. The participants were introduced to the new Buddhist architecture in Estonia – in May 2008 a new stupa, 10m high and the Fire temple had just been built in Veltsa, the centre of Estonian Nyingma.

With the first two conference it became clear that the volume of material to be researched is very wide, there is a lot of interesting and new historical material, that is unknown for the broader public and a lot of work still remains to be done in this field.

For example Jürgen Offermanns from Lund University emphasized in his presentation the scarce treatment of this matter-subject:

“

*I'm a lonely man. Not only because I am a long way from home but also because my field of research, the early reception of Buddhism in the West.../ ....the research on the historical reception of Buddhism in the West is still in its infancy...."*



Knut Jacobsen

His fellow scholar from Tallinn University Karin Dean emphasised the importance to research the life of the first Estonian Buddhists that should be the affair of honour to Estonian Buddhists and orientalists. Leons Taivans, Dean of Latvian University, mentioned that Estonian Karl Tõnisson was obviously the first who spread Buddhism in the Baltic States, but he has remained unknown to the general public.



Karin Dean presentation about F. Lustig and K. Tõnisson

## The third conference "Buddhism and Nordland"

8.-10.10.2009 in Tallinn university

There were participants from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Oxford University and also from Buriatya and Mongolia. The main subject of the conference was "Historical Connections of Buddhism in the Nordic countries" whereas subjects connected to

Buddhism were also accepted - Buddhism in a broader sense of schools, themes related to Buddhism (art, architecture etc); Buddhist philosophy, psychology, rituals; western Buddhism and local cultures - assimilation, conflict and absorption, contemporary Buddhism in Asia etc.

In connection to the conference was organised the exhibition about the Buddhist books which were translated and published by the Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood.

The third conference continued its work with historical subjects – the history of Buddhism in Finland (Tibetologist A. Ratia) and in Norway (professor K. Jacobsen from Bergen University), the spread of Buddhism to the West (chief-editor of "Buddhism of Russia" A. Terentiev), the Borobodur phenomenon (Dean of Latvian University L. Taivans), P. Kozlov expeditions (A. Andreev from the Institute for the History of Science and Technology in St. Petersburg). Johnny Petersen from Sweden talked about the growing interest in Buddhism in Scandinavian countries and A. Stasulane about the present of Buddhism in Latvia. Spiritual practice was the subject of the research of A. Beinorius and V. Korobov from Vilnius University and Buddhist philosophy was the subject of I. Urbanaeva from Buriatya, Ch. Oyun from Mongolia and J. Kaplinski from Estonia.

## The fourth conference "Buddhism and Nordland"

8.10.-10.10.2009, Tallinn university in Tallinn Hall

The fourth conference was very colourful with its participants – theravada Buddhists from Thailand and Malaysia, gelug Buddhists from St Petersburg and Ivolga monastery, nyingma Buddhists from Italy, Sweden and Finland, kagyu Buddhist from Sweden-Tibetan society.

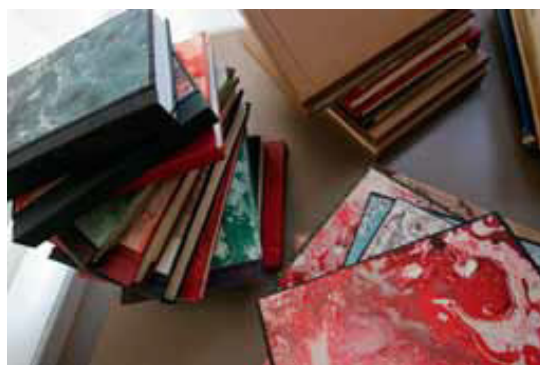
Scholars-scientists gathered from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Sweden, Germany, St Petersburg, Buriatya, USA, India and Nepal.

The topic spectrum was very large and interesting to all participants – from historical subjects and Buddhism in different countries at present time to new quantum physics theories in Buddhist perspective.

Looking back to the first four conferences, it has to be said, that this unique idea harnessed itself smoothly and became popular among scholars and Buddhists.



*Exhibition in City Museum 2009.*



*Books translated by Taola*



*Ven. Zhen Chan from Thailand*



*Conference hall*



*Rigdin Dorje is asking questions*



*From the left: Audrius Beinorius and Andrei Terentiev*

Scientists from different countries plus Buddhists from different schools – it is the best format for cooperation to research Buddhist topics.

During the four years, the conference grown into a three-day conference, has increased in the number of participating countries and lecturers. It also expanded geographically – in addition to the Nordic countries there are scholars and Buddhists from the eastern countries.

Scholars and scientists from different European universities participated – from the Latvian University, the Vilnius University, the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS in St. Petersburg, Helsinki, Lund, Bergen and Oxford University, from Stockholm Ethnographic museum and also beyond – from the universities of Mongolia, Kathmandu and Jawaharlal Nehru University.

The St. Petersburg Buddhist Temple, the International Buddhist College in Thailand, the Ivolga Monastery in Buriatya, the TaoZen Centre in Sweden, the Aro tradition in Italy, the Swedish-Tibetan Society, the Danakosha Centre and Finnish Buddhists, and the Cultural Society of Buriats in St Petersburg A-ja Ganga attended the conference.

Conference “Buddhism and Nordland” has already increased scientific research into the area of Nordic Buddhism in Latvia, Finland, Lithuania: Professor Anita Stasulane started to investigate Buddhism in Latvia, also her student Marika Laudere presented a paper on Latvian Buddhism in the fourth conference; the complex work on Finnish Buddhism was started by Alpo

Ratia in connection to “Buddhism and Nordland 2007”; Buddhism in Lithuania was presented at the conference “Buddhism and Nordland” by Audrius Beinorius in 2009.

The idea and functionality of the conference has turned out to be of great vitality and proven itself excellent.

## The 5th International “Buddhism and Nordland” Conference

15-17.09.2011 in Tallinn University

The 5th conference was the first little jubilee and had some extra activities for speakers.

The Tallinn City government welcomed the conference participants at the reception in Town Hall on 16 September and funded the City tour in Tallinn Old Town.

This time the traditional outgoing took place to Haapsalau, on 17th September. The speakers were welcomed by the Mayor and had a lunch in historical Assembly House, having lot of discussion and communication.



*Reception of the conference speakers in Tallinn Town Hall, 2011*



*Zoltan Cser, the Vice-rector at Budapest Buddhist College*



*Markus Laitinen, University of Helsinki & Kajo Zendo' Zen Buddhist Centre*



*Dr. N. Bolsokhoeva, Russian Academy of Sciences*



*Dr. Chunyang Chou, Hamburg University*



*Ven. Buda Badmayev, Head of St Petersburg Buddhist Temple and Marju Broder*

Participants were from 12 countries, including speakers from Helsinki, Hamburg and Vilnius Universities, St. Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Institute of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies of Buryatia, Buddhist College of Hungary, St. Peterborough's Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography etc.

The conference covered subjects of Buddhist history in Latvia and Hungary, Buddhism in daily life, Calligraphy in Ancient China, Tibetan medicine, Chinese Chan, the Buddhist philosophy, education etc.

These five conferences have all had a very good atmosphere between the participants – very friendly and efficient. Citing Dr. Yakhontova from St. Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, who participated in all 5 conferences:

“ *The conferences have always a good atmosphere, the time isn't unnecessarily wasted and the people are eagerly listening and working.* ”

The conference has got a lot of experience in organizing and translating. Specific interpreters, also from Russian into English, have evolved for these conferences in having got the practise in translating the research texts filled with eastern culture terminology. This is also valuable practice for them, because we don't have other conferences on Buddhism in Estonia.

All the conferences were funded by members of Estonian Nyingma.

# To the lands of Estonian Prophet a Buddhist park is to be made

*Maaleht (Country Paper) 16.7.2009*

In the parish of Koonga, in Pärnumaa, in the lands of forest farm, first Buddhist buildings can be seen and the future should see it with Buddhist park similar to Rocca al Mare – Tibetan corner open to all.

The founder of Buddhist Brotherhood (Taola) in Estonia in Soviet times, Vello Väärtnõu, is realizing his ideas from 1980s that were unfinished because of political situation of that time and his deportation.



*The 5th stupa in Estonia*

2 years ago he returned as Swedish citizen to his farm in Pärnumaa that he had bought in the end of 1980s, to finish what once was started.

After making the living rooms liveable, the first stupa (built in honor of Buddha, marking the fixed system, dedicated to "the protection, welfare and happiness of all beings") was erected. 2 prayer wheels are finished and the place for buildings is marked with garlands (prayer flags) in Buddhist colours.

If things go according to plans, then the area will be surrounded with 6 stupas in the future. Väärtnõu also talks about Buddhist monastery and temple for wrathful deities.

Väärtnõu, who studied extensively in Buryatia and Himalayas during his refugee years, says that first of all, this Buddhist corner of Tibet is created with his kindred spirits for himself.

"As for making it for others, I can explain in the way of being so old and learned so much, gotten so wise, that my brain will not receive more knowledge – now it wants to come out", the man smiles.

## Soaked with Buddhism

Väärtnõu, whom his associates have called Elder-Tao since the beginning of Buddhist Brotherhood, is soaked with Buddhism, so to say. Being socially active, he has not had the chance to become self-absorbed old wise, as we imagine typical Buddhist to be.

In addition to creating a place, where Estonians could get more sense of Buddhism, he has created Estonian Buddhist Encyclopaedia in the Internet that he updates.

He has also investigated historical Buddhists connected with Estonia, of these the most known are Karl Tõnisson (or Barefoot Tõnisson, brother Vahindra) and Baltic German baron, army leader and later saint Roman Ungern-Sternberg. It is when talking about Ungern- Sternberg, Väärtnõu lights up with wish that Estonians knew more truthful facts about this man.

Vello Väärtnõu is also active Buddhist artist, who has permission to paint thangkas, which we find plenty hanging on the walls of his Veltsa village house.



*Guru mandorla. Väärtnõu 2001*

He uses mainly blue and grey colours: "I feel that the colours of Estonian Buddhism should be such. We are like that – greyish."

Elder-tao does not persuade people to become Buddhists. This would not be possible, since all our culture, language and growing environment is intertwined with Christianity, in the same way as in those lands culture space prepares Buddhists by itself.

"The cosmology of Christianity and Buddhism is totally different. Figuratively speaking in Christianity the world started with one push of a button and if it is pressed again – the end will come. In Buddhism there is a lighter time and darker time and everything can change", talked Väärtnõu. According to him Buddhism is not religion but knowledge.

"Christians have one god to whom they count on and to whom they pray. The view of the world stands on paradise-hell contradiction and living the correct way one will get to paradise. In Buddhism there is endless amount of gods, no begging and no one promises paradise.

Buddhist concentrates on education, psychology and self-improvement. In the end there is nirvana, which means that karma will come to an end and you become like Buddha. If people were to ask me, if I wish to become Buddha, then I say yes, because this is what I do, but most of all I wish to become wise," said Väärtnõu.

Väärtnõu and Estonian Nyingma lead by him organizes also Buddhist conferences (it is the third one this year). The specificity of these conferences is that both scientists (orientalists, Tibetan studies etc.) and Buddhist, who in their ordinary life act separately.

Väärtnõu and the secretary of Estonian Nyingma Marju Broder experience sharp opposition among those who practice Buddhism while organizing the conferences. It may be that part of this is because Väärtnõu is a known opponent of soviet times. He was imprisoned at the time for trying to cross borders, which created controversies also in the university. He was expelled from the artist union (reasoning for this was that his behaviour was not in accordance with soviet artists – his traffic ticket was unpaid). At the same time he was the founder of Buddhist Brotherhood as well as astrology Society and as well as ENIP.

Now acting in the village of Veltsa, Estonian Nyingma has made contacts with the locals, because he sees the future of co-operation in creating the Buddhist park.

Väärtnõu, who is not lacking irony, joined lately in the fight against mining company in the neighbourhood and is arguing with the gravel diggers about ruined roads. He also has researched the possibility to expand the territory of his farm, which would be indispensable for creation of the park, but until now, he as Swedish citizen, has not been allowed to buy land.

The parish of Koonga is in Mihkli area, where 200 years ago lived Järva Jaan, later known as prophet. The people in the Buddhist farm indicated that might be Jaan's prophecy about the comings of a church road near Veltsa manor might be connected to them.



Natalia Yakhontova



Ven. Buda Badmaev

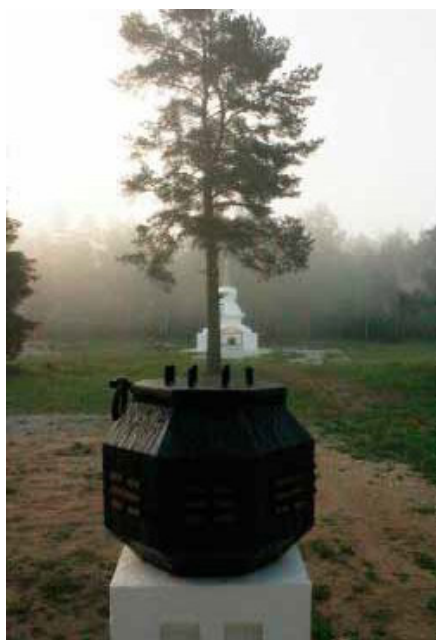
## The Veltsa Village Will Have a Piece of Tibet. Anu Jürisson

*Pärnu Postimees, July 2009*

The editor's blue Nissan jumps around on the stone field roads like a horse carriage on wooden wheels even though the driver slows down considerably. Nothing indicates that here in the middle of the fields and forests a man is constructing a Buddhist centre. Finally we see something shining-white showing from behind the trees. In the middle of the yard the visitors are welcomed by snow-white 10-meter construction with steps and a round top that catches the eye – the oldest Buddhist form of architecture – the stupa. Small colourful prayer flags flutter in the wind. Also in the middle of the yard there's a half-way done red construction with round pillars. In front of the stupa there's a fire temple with an oil lamp and Buddha statues, and a smoke can that emanates a sweet oily juniper smell. Vello Väärtnõu, the master of the premises, with a shaved head like a monk, wearing a chequered flannel shirt and having on sandals soaked with cool light rain since early morning, says that next to the "Stupa for the Protection, Good and Happiness of All Beings" two more lower and wider stupas are to be built and several temples. Above the red pillars there will stand grand prayer wheels with Tibetan texts and on top of that a temple for the wrathful deities. „The big temple is big and we don't have money for that. I'll do the smaller things first", Väärtnõu says, and adds that lack of land obstructs the construction of the big temple, the next lot belongs to the state. The reinforced concrete stupas are hollow and filled with Tibetan texts printed on wax paper, thangkas – the Buddhist icon paintings made by Väärtnõu himself, texts written in Tibetan, holy statues and other religious objects. He may look like an Estonian, but is really more like an Asian in the way of thinking and lifestyle, he says about himself. „I have always buried all my money in Buddhism. I believe that people should get part of this grand cultural heritage offered to us by Orient. This is my passion, my addiction. These are the only symptoms I have", say the man even after continuing spreading Buddhism among fellow inmates at Patareil prison and promising to widen the scope of the Buddhist tradition in Estonia, signing a document to disclaim his Soviet citizenship, got a diagnose of „schizophrenia – crazy Buddhist" from professor Jüri Aarma. He was jailed together with Tarmo Urb for border violation at Karjala. „I yearned to go East", he explains now. „I like Buddhism



*The Stupamaster and the 5th Stupa in Estonia*



*Veltsa in the morning*

because it's not so much about religion but knowledge and I like the Buddhist psychology. In the beginning of the 70s I was the only man walking around and stating proudly that he is a Buddhist, although I knew very little of Buddhist at the time", Väärtnõu reflects on his youth.

## The First Buddhist Brotherhood

Upon getting out of jail in 1982 Väärtnõu and his companions built Estonia's first stupa to his friend Jüri Arrak's summer house in Tõstamaa. The upper part, which symbolizes the heavens of Brahma, was made by healer and traditional religion follower Sass of Vigala. "At the time we had a gang called Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood also known as Taola. We had a house at Kadrioru, where we lived and practiced Buddhism. You could say it was a small monastery. We had sneaky professions, we heated boilers in the mornings and evenings, the days were empty. To be able to do this I even became the boss of the boiler houses in the Kadrioru Board of Housing. We cast holy statues at the boiler houses, made silk print thangkas and used the system totally", tells Väärtnõu. The main activities at Taola were still learning and self-educating. Old Mongolian, for example, was taught by the linguist and founder of Tartu University Oriental Studies Pent Nurmekund. Study trips were made to Buryatia's Ivolga monastery. The goal of founding the Brotherhood was to establish the traditions of Tibet's oldest school of teaching – Nyingma, and in the long-run to found a Nyingma monastery, where Buddhist education could be obtained. This is why in 1986 Väärtnõu bought an estate to Veltsa village, Leonhard Lapin made the drawings for the future monastery. The activities of Taola seized, but the step, later declared insane, to form an alternative party to the communist party in 1988 to free Estonia ended in Väärtnõu's and others,' who signed the document, exile from the Soviet Union.

## The Revolutionary Estate

"By the way, it was at this estate, where I wrote the program for the Estonian National Independence Party, so you can call it a revolutionary estate. The KGB kicked me in the butt because they didn't need this kind of active men in Estonia", says Väärtnõu. "To start the process, where ENIP got started, no one dares to argue with me, when I've been silent for 20 years. Everyone was afraid to sign. I told them that they had no brains, they don't understand the situation. That fall of 1987 I realized that something must be done. Lagle Parek and other started collecting signatures to open a memorial for the victims of Stalinism. Then I thought it's like writing a letter to the czar. may I open a memorial. And then I thought that this doesn't help the Estonian people move on politically. First, let's make a state and then start making memorials" tells Väärtnõu. He stated this thought at a November gathering at Vana-Pärnu cemetery. "Everyone shouted: 'We want food and bread and sausage!' I listened to this and stepped out and said: 'People of Estonia,

it is necessary to have our own state and make our own food and for that we need to form a party". Someone from the crowd shouted: "Provocateur!" Then I said that come here, let's talk. Everyone stayed quiet, no one could say anything. I was the first one to say that Estonia should be independent. That's a fact, no doubt about that",

Väärtnõu is sure of his memory. The list of signatures for the proposal of ENIP was closed January 21 with 14 signatures. Several members of the MRP-AEG also signed and most of them became founders of ENIP half a year later when Väärtnõu and Eke-Pärt Nõmm were already exiled. It was decided to have an information session for the international media about the formation of the party a week later in Moscow and even when Väärtnõu, Ärvi Ojula and Eke-Pärt Nõmm, who came by car, were followed by the KGB and were searched as suspects of "robbing a Finn" and taken to the militia station, Nõmm successfully exited the car at a curb in Moscow with document hidden in the coffee thermos. The press conference in a private apartment in Moscow saw journalists from the Chicago Tribune, the Washington Post, the New York Times, a US television company ABC and Russian militia. The proposal of forming ENIP was read on the same day on American Voice and Free Europe Estonian radio and an interview with Väärtnõu about the document that invited to form the first politically independent party in the Soviet Union was later published on the front page of the New York Times. "I don't know, the word "dissident" would be wrong to say about me. I consider it about a person, who sits quietly at home, writes something and then sends out. I always say it out loud. "Freedom Fighter" is also not correct, as if I had had a terrible fight", says Väärtnõu about himself. Being exiled from the Soviet Union meant that his roads to the Himalayas finally opened, he managed to work there as a cameraman for many years working with Western linguists who knew the local languages and dialects. They visited monasteries and teachers and built stupas there also. Most of his exile-time was spent in Sweden, where he worked as a graphic designer and held exhibitions creating his own version of canonic art and thankas. He finally returned to Estonia in 2007 with the aim to restore his estate at Veltsa, which had been empty and therefore vandalized and left without electricity, but again he ended up in a scandal.

### "Buddhism and Nordland"

The last three years besides the activities at Veltsa Väärtnõu has been created an internet-based free encyclopaedia of Buddhism to hold articles of the information, explanations, persons and history of Buddhism. Having returned to Estonia, the Swedish citizen Väärtnõu started to organize the annual conference "Buddhism and Nordland" held in October- November at Tallinn University together with the not-for-profit organization Eesti Njingma. These Estonians have spoken at the conference: Tiit Pruuli, Leonhard Lapin, Priit Kelder and Anti Kidron, as well as scholars and monks from other countries. "The idea for the conference I have already had since 1985. The aim is to cover how Buddhism is developing in the Baltic Sea region. We bring science with research materials and those, who practice Buddhism, together", explains Väärtnõu.



*Amitabha mandala. Väärtnõu 2006*



*From the left: Henri Lebedev and Ven. Väärtnõu*



*Opening speech by Ven. Väärtnõu*



*Ven. Othok Rinpoche, Drepung Gomang monastery*

## Australia

In 2011, Australia granted a Distinguished Talent visa to Vaartnou and common to him started to develop Buddhist education and academic cooperation in the field of Buddhist Studies.

He organized the international conference "Buddhism & Australia", the first of a kind in Australia that took place 2 - 4 February 2012 in Murdoch university, Perth. The aim of the conference is to provide a channel for information of interest and relevance to scholars in Asian & Buddhist studies in Austral-Asia, to research and investigate the buddhavaacana, the original teachings of the Buddha, without bias to any particular school or discipline (such as Theravada, Mahayana or Vajrayana) and to promote both the academic study of Buddhism, and the application of the teachings to daily life.

The first conference gathered high level academics and Buddhist scholars from 16 countries, including Taiwan, China, India, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, USA, Germany, Russia, Buryatia, Canada, Latvia and Australia.

The main emphasis of the annually planned series of conferences is academic/scientific approach to Buddhism. On the first conference gathered delegates from 16 countries to present their works. The conference was officially opened by Vello Väärtnõu, who outlined in his opening speech some of the goals of Buddhism & Australia conferences: „The teachings of Buddha have spread through-out a variety of cultures spanning a widely in geographical terms, especially in the last 60 years. It is thought that in a few thousand years the teachings of Buddha helped attain a totally different mental dimension and method of thinking compared to

the forms we know today. The world is changing in all its forms and so are we, things that surround us become sources of knowledge and such is the way of Buddhist knowledge. From this concept manifested the idea of calling together monks, scientists, lay Buddhist and other people, who are interested in researching the way of the Buddha.

“

*This works to fulfill knowledge both within the context of practical wisdom and academic knowledge as well. We live in a period of increasingly rapid globalisation. This means we have to talk about subjects within a wider geographical perspective tapping in to the ways various countries think.”*

The 2012 conference covered a large variety of topics, which clearly indicated the direction for the next year. All in all Buddhism & Australia contributed over 30 scientific works in the first conference, which will be available to the public online: [www.buddhismandaustralia.com](http://www.buddhismandaustralia.com).

The conference was welcomed by Federal Senator Louise Pratt, Honorary Consul of Mongolia Mr. Peter Stuart, Ajahn Brahmavamso from Serpentine Bodhinyana Monastery, followed by messages from Lao Sangharaj, HH Phong Samaruks, Mr. Kim Hollow, the President of Federation of Buddhist Councils of Australia and many others.

Amongst the distinguished participants we should mention Ven. Otag Rinpoche from Drepung Gomang monastery, Ven. Dr. Ashin Ketu from State Pariyatti Sāsana University, Ajahn Brahm from Bodhinyana monastery, Ven. Dr. Bulgan Tumeekhuu from Gandan Tegchenling monastery, Prof. Emeritus Lewis Lancaster from Berkeley University, Dr. Hema Goonatilake from Sri Lanka Royal Asiatic Society, Ven. Dr. Wei Shan and Ven. Dr. Yuan Liu from Renmin University China PR, Ven. Shih Lien Hai from the World Buddhist Association, Taiwan, Dr. Carola Roloff from Hamburg University.

The conference was held free of charge and was self-sponsored by the small group Estonian Nyingma, including accommodation, transportation and meals for quests and Sangha.

Since 2012, the conference has been held annually in Perth, and the 9th international conference Buddhism & Australia will be held 6.02- 8.02.2020 All conferences have been carried out on voluntary basis.

All presentations of the Buddhism and Australia conferences are available for free on the conference website: [www.buddhismandaustralia.com](http://www.buddhismandaustralia.com)



*Dr. Ian Cook from the Murdoch university*



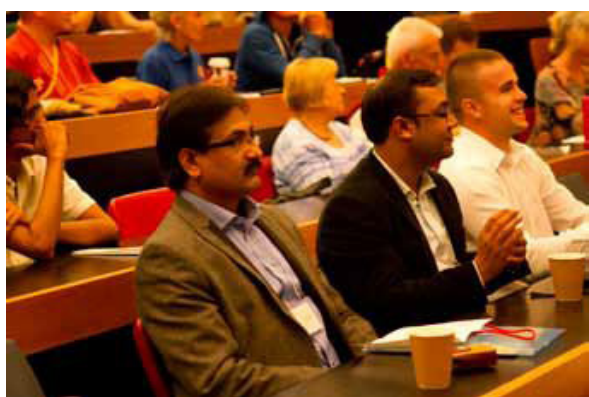
*Honorary Consul of Mongolia Mr. Peter Stuart*



*Senator Louise Pratt*



*Prof. Lewis Lancaster*



*From the left: Dr. Soni and Dr. Singh from India*



*In the conference hall*

## History of Buddhist Australia

There are more than 500 000 Buddhists in Australia, who are members of numerous different Buddhist temples, monasteries and other organizations, and they all have their profound history of who they are and how they have arrived to Australia. Buddhism has enriched Australian culture enormously by different cultural customs, rituals, symbols and traditions; however nobody has done collective research on this subject. Estonian Nyingma will invite Australian Buddhists to gather the historical facts, documents, photos and art and will compose them into a well structured and informative online database: [www.australianbuddhisthistory.com](http://www.australianbuddhisthistory.com). This will be a long term project for the next 5years.

## Exhibitions of Australian Buddhism

The idea is to gather photos from Buddhist communities and informative Buddhist art. The exhibition will unite Buddhists across Australia, members of Buddhist societies of Australia would present their artefacts – photos, paintings, statues, relics, ritual items, etc. introducing Buddhism through visual presentation. Once the exhibition of Australian Buddhism is established, the plan is to organize an exhibition of Austral-Asian Buddhism.

The first photography exhibition “Buddhism in Western Australia” took place in June 2012 in Perth Town Hall.

## Stupas and prayer wheels in Australia

Vello Vaartnou has plans to build the stupas and prayer wheels in Western Australia. Building stupas creates a positive field of energy and as the purpose of the stupas themselves is: “Peace, Harmony and Understanding between all living beings”. Prayer wheel as a symbolic and religious tool is common to Tibetan Buddhism, but it is recognized by all Buddhist tradition

## Buddhist studies in Universities

The idea is to establish the Buddhist Studies as a discipline in WA Universities. Buddhism & Australia conference involves numerous specialists from around the world, who can help Australia in setting up the Buddhist- and Oriental studies.



*Dr. Hema Goonatilake from Sri Lanka*

## Buddhism could enlighten Australia and Asian cultures

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*January 24, 2012 PerthNow, Australia | Katie Robertson*

CREATING awareness about Buddhism could help to bridge the cultural gap between Asia and Australia, a WA-based monk says.

Vello Väärtnõu, who is the head of Estonian Nyingma Buddhism, said he wanted to bring together the Buddhists in Perth and encourage more people to learn about the tradition.

The monk moved to Perth in 2010 and is now busy organising the first Buddhism and Australia conference which he will host here in February.

The 60-year-old anticipates the conference will attract international scholars and monks. Mr Väärtnõu, now a permanent Australian resident who lives in a humble farmhouse near York, said a growing community of Buddhists would bring more Asian business to WA.

"It's a way to bring business and culture here," he said.

"When you bring Buddhism here, it means the Buddhists come."

Mr Väärtnõu said he enjoyed living in Perth, but would like to see the community care for each other more.

"I think the city should pay more attention to ethics," he said.

"Here, people are very friendly but they do not care so much about others. They are just friendly. People should pay a little bit more attention to each other."

The monk has had a colourful history, having graced the pages of the New York Times and Washington Post in the 1980s after he founded the Estonian National Independence Party during Soviet rule in the tiny European country.

He was deported from Estonia in 1988 into exile in the Himalayas.

He later went to live in Sweden and continued studying and promoting Buddhism. Mr Väärtnõu, when not travelling, now spends much of his time painting intricate Buddhist thangkas and often sits at his computer using 3D modelling software to design temples.

He will deliver the welcome speech at the conference and said there would be a variety of speakers at the conference and "everybody can hear something useful". Buddhism & Australia Conference will be held at Murdoch University from February 2-4. For more information visit [www.buddhismandastralia.com](http://www.buddhismandastralia.com).

## Buddhist Gathering Australia

*Buddhistdoors Hongkong, 1 March, 2012 | By Pille Repnau*

During the 3 days the conference covered a range of topics including issues on Buddhist history and presence in Austral-Asian region, Buddhist psychology, philosophy and manuscripts, discussions such as strengthening the future regional collaboration, disputes of Buddhist view on globalization and topics that shed light on the lasting validity of Buddhism in our modern world and society.

Having visited the conference for all three long, but very interesting days of lectures, it felt as if every visitor found something of interest, every presentation found an interested ear and only few of the presentations were left without questions from the public – and that so only because the time was running out.

The setup for presentations was greatly balanced; some presentations were more specific than others – being of interest mainly to other lecturers; others touched more common ground with a common visitor without too much previous knowledge of Buddhism. The public cheered over the opportunity to take part of in-depth Buddhist studies and to meet educated Buddhist from around the globe whom they could ask questions from. The friendly environment between the participants created a unique atmosphere and the bond of common understanding and activities was established. Many old and new friendships amongst Buddhist around the globe were made.

Citing the quests of the conference:

“

*The conference was a milestone for Australian Buddhism...”*

Citing Venerable Väärtnõu's conclusion: "Buddhism is not only the catalyst for spiritual development, but in many countries it is also a successful mediator for economic relationships. Australia is the economic polygon of Asia and Western Australia is especially popular and alluring for foreign investors.

It is because of this that one could assume that Western Australia dedicates itself to researching its partner's ideological, historical and cultural background. The most powerful of these ideologies that has been dominant in Asian continent for thousands of years, is Buddhism.

Because Western Australia is the centre of Asian economic relations, it is also a suitable environment for an international conference on Buddhism and Australia"

The organizers are looking forward the next event, because the plans for that have already been made. In the end of the conference Vello Väärtnõu presented some of his ideas and projects and introduced the next conference.

One of the ideas proposed by Vello Väärtnõu was to build stupas in Western Australia.

The public's reaction was very positive and supportive; the idea of building stupas had a great interest by everyone, as there are almost no existing Stupas within Australia. Every- one agreed that the proposed ideas would contribute to the international co-operation amongst Buddhists from around the globe."

Melbourne based scholar Prof. Padmasiri da Silva (June 2014)

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*"I came to know about both the Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia & the Conference on Buddhism and Australia held in Perth during recent times. I felt that both projects located in Perth was a kind of little oases in the Australian culture at large, where existing universities have not given Buddhist studies it's due place. Meditation and mindfulness-based therapies which comes within my practice, have made a mark in Australia, strange enough serious academic studies in Buddhism, Pali and Sanskrit are being neglected. This conference (B&A) was to me an eye opener to a treasure house of knowledge which is found in the Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia. The work that has gone to the making of the Encyclopedia is of a very high calibre."*

Professor Lewis Lancaster, University of California, Berkeley (February 27, 2012)

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*I wish to thank you for the first conference on "Buddhism and Australia". It was well organized and the presentation touched on very important issues, not only for Australia but for Buddhism in general in contemporary society. It would be helpful if this type of conference can be repeated on a regular basis. The form of Buddhism developing in Australia is at time unique and in other respects a reflection of what is happening in many places outside of Asia. For this reason, keeping attention on Australia will be a good method to gauge what the future of Buddhism will be in new lands. Australia has opened its door to Asian immigrants. It is doing more than half of its trade with nations that are predominantly Buddhist. In the current situation of global economics, nations need to find ways of dealing with diversity in a creative manner. This means that immigrant groups should be included openly in conferences and public life and not reduced to ethnic ghettos. Having a place where every Buddhist tradition can be heard and accepted is one important way of dealing with these issues.*

# An Online „Buddhist Encyclopedia of China“

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In 2012 Ven. Vāārtnōu started the new big project, an online „Buddhist Encyclopaedia of China“ that could be called the Project of Century because of its capacity.

An author of the Idea of „Buddhist Encyclopedia of China“ and the leader of the project is Ven. Vāārtnōu. Ven. Vāārtnōu considers that it would be very useful for China to put together the Buddhist Encyclopaedia as their cultural heritage is extremely large and must be thoroughly explored and recorded. The planned “Buddhist Encyclopaedia of China” web environment will be in two languages- Chinese Mandarin and English, maximizing the impact on more Buddhist readers around the globe. This will also influence the view of English speaking Buddhists, present an opinion on Buddhism from the Chinese side.

Separately, Buddhism in other countries should be introduced. The materials used must be presented in an academic form, at the same time materials that are not available in Chinese must be translated into Chinese and English. The source materials exist in English, Russian, Tibetan, Mongolian, Sanskrit, Pali and other languages. Academic materials on Buddhism and related topics must be gathered and published as well. If our resources allow, we should start translating materials available in Chinese into English, if they are not translated yet, creating the English version of the Encyclopaedia

## An Online Buddhist Encyclopedia of China

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Ven.Vāārtnou

Author of the Idea of „Buddhist Encyclopedia of China“

the leader of the project

### Buddhism in China

Chinese Buddhism (simplified Chinese 汉传佛教; traditional Chinese 漢傳佛教; pinyin: Hànnchuán Fójiào) refers collectively to the various schools of Buddhism that have flourished in China since ancient times. Buddhism has played an enormous role in shaping the mindset of the Chinese people, affecting their aesthetics, politics, literature, philosophy and medicine.

For over a thousand years Buddhism dominated religious life in China, having both a profound impact on China and Buddhism and producing a great body of literature and art. China was the conduit through which Buddhism reached Korea, Japan and Vietnam. The Buddhism found in China is almost exclusively Mahayana.

Buddhism is regarded as the largest religion in China today, with 100 million followers, or about 8 percent of the Chinese population, including Tibetans, Mongolians and a few other ethnic minorities like the Dai. There is roughly around the same number

of Christians and Muslims. According to the State Administration for Religious Affairs there are about 13,000 Buddhist temples and about 200,000 Buddhist monks and nuns.

Over the centuries as Buddhism developed it splintered into many schools and sects, each with its own distinctive traditions, doctrines and practices. Sub-sects—representing lineages of disciples that split off from the

main schools often over minor doctrinal differences—and cults—that conducted special observances and rituals often focused on a particular sutra and kept alive by a lineage of masters—also developed.

In modern China numerous different Buddhist traditions are practiced, for example of Chan, Tibetan Buddhism, etc., which results even more variety in available Buddhist materials in China.

We can say that China, with all its available information sources on Buddhism is richest in the world.

For a beginner on Buddhist path, the vast amount of different sources on Buddhism might be confusing. Also the most qualitative and informative materials might not be available for everyone, due to the expense of books, or they simply might not have access to the materials.

At the same time it has become common in China that we hear news about fake monks and charlatans, who wear the monk robes and pretend to be educated monks, which often misguides people.

Nowadays, when we have internet and available resources to publish and print books, everyone can write about Buddhism and express their opinion.

As a result, such a large amount of materials are published, that the genuine and most profound Buddhist materials are amongst piles of opinions and expressions made by people, who are not always educated Buddhist.

This creates a great risk to the tradition of Buddhism, as the younger generation of Buddhists and people interested in Buddhism might reject or build their understanding of Buddhism based on others miss-conceptions.

China, with the biggest population of Buddhists in the world and the large and increasing global influence has the biggest potential to preserve and develop Buddhist tradition, influencing the course of development for Buddhism globally. Therefore, Venerable Vello Väärtnõu has presented the following idea and project- On-Line Buddhist Encyclopedia of China.

An encyclopedia (also spelled encyclopaedia or encyclopædia) is a type of reference work, a compendium holding a summary of information from either all branches of



*Manchu Gangyur*

knowledge or a particular branch of knowledge.

Encyclopedias are divided into articles or entries, which are usually accessed alphabetically by article name. Encyclopedia entries are longer and more detailed than those in most dictionaries. Generally speaking, unlike dictionary entries, which focus on linguistic information about words, encyclopedia articles focus on factual information to cover the thing or concept for which the article name stands.

The word encyclopaedia comes from the Koine Greek **ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία**, from Greek **ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία**, transliterated enkyklios paideia, meaning "general education": enkyklios, meaning "circular, recurrent, required regularly, general", + paideia

(**παιδεία**), meaning "education, rearing of a child". But it was reduced to a single word due to an error by copyists of Latin manuscripts.

Together, the phrase literally translates as "complete instruction" or "complete knowledge".

The planned "Buddhist Encyclopedia Cofhina" web environment will be in two languages - Chinese Mandarin and English, maximizing the impact on more Buddhist readers around the globe. This will also influence the view of English speaking Buddhist, present in an opinion on Buddhism



*Seven treasures Gugong*

from Chinese side.

The main emphasis of the Encyclopedia would be Chinese Buddhism, but it would not exclude any Buddhist materials which are not directly related to China. To fulfill such enormous work will take generations and even then the encyclopedia can be enriched by new movements in a tradition with history of 2600 years. Buddhism has continuously been around since Buddha Sakjamuni, in China Buddhism has been present for nearly two millenniums. The Encyclopedia would gather all the historic materials; information on all current Buddhist activates and would lay a foundation of highly educative Buddhist information for future generations.

The overall layout of the Encyclopedia research fields would be following:

- ◆ The History of Different Traditions
- ◆ Gurus and Masters of Different Traditions
- ◆ Temples and Monasteries in China
- ◆ Texts from Different Traditions
- ◆ Social Activities of Different Traditions
- ◆ Chinese Tripitakas
- ◆ Tibetan Buddhism with all its Traditions and Linages
- ◆ Different Chinese Buddhist traditions - Chan, Tentai

- ◈ Buddhist Philosophy
- ◈ Vajrayana including Texts, Tantras and Commentaries
- ◈ Separate Section of Hinayana
- ◈ Buddhism in Different Dynasties

## Benefits of an On-Line Buddhist Encyclopedia

1. The encyclopedia creates an opportunity for the public to access a vast amount of collected, sorted and categorized materials about Buddhism. The service will be provided free of charge, the only condition and need would be a computer with internet access.
2. The encyclopedia collective will gather all available relevant materials on Buddhism in China and elsewhere, analyse their origin, properties, authors and position, then correct and set them into logical and chronological order. There are vast resources of available materials, accumulated over thousands of years in history of Chinese Buddhism, which will be published in the encyclopedia, adding new layers of cultural movements which have occurred in China over centuries.
3. Academic approach and methods of work will provide the opportunity to handle the materials and information scientifically, providing new means how to obtain the knowledge in Buddhism. The scientific/academic approach is often more acceptable for the members of modern society.
4. The people involved in the encyclopedia project will be highly educated in Buddhism, which for China results a large group of specialists in fields of Buddhism and Oriental Science. The project will also result large quantity of qualified and well educated Chinese translators for Buddhist terminology.
5. Chinese Buddhism has a very rich and colourful history and presence. The goal and aim for the encyclopedia project would be establishing complete and in-depth overview of all the different aspects of Buddhism in China.
6. It is very possible that during the research and development of the encyclopedia, new materials about Chinese Buddhism will be found which have not been available for the public so far (for example Buddhist text, Chronicles, Commentaries, etc.)
7. The encyclopedia gives China an opportunity to become a leader in Buddhist and Oriental studies globally.
8. The Encyclopedia can be used by universities, schools, monasteries and other institutions as a source of qualified information and materials.
9. The encyclopedia can be used by Buddhist monks to extend and improve their knowledge about Buddhism
10. The encyclopedia project enables to influence and interact on other countries where Buddhism is practiced.
11. The encyclopedia project provides opportunity for Chinese and overseas readers to further understand the history of China and the cultural heritage of China, reaching back for over 5000 years.

12. The on-line encyclopedia is an opportunity for people in the modern, 21th century to obtain old and new ethical and cultural values.
13. The Project will result vast amount of knowledgeable historical materials, which otherwise are threatened to be lost in history.
14. With the technology of modern 21th century, it will be easy to collect, maintain and publish large amount of materials.
15. The Encyclopedia will have strong emphasis on audio-visual materials in order to provide the best opportunities available for the readers. The encyclopedia will contain all available relevant audio-visual files, which are combined with the content. Artists and designers will be involved in the project, who will be in charge of gathering and composing audio-visual materials.
16. It is important that to make this encyclopedia, the processing and publishing of information would take place in a politically free and uninfluenced environment, which provides free and perfect development of the encyclopedia.
17. The on-line database will provide highly informative source of information and knowledge, which is independent from any personal, political, religious views. The working collective for the encyclopedia will have the same condition; they have to be independent and uninfluenced from any personal or third party opinions.
18. The Encyclopedia is a lifelong project, which means over the coming decades, the structure of the encyclopedia might change, as well as the working collective will be replaced with a younger generation, which if guided properly can benefit the project and the impact of the project. We have to be aware that the encyclopedia carries key value for the following generations, who will read, use and further develop the encyclopedia and the field of Buddhist knowledge.
19. The key people involved in the encyclopedia will take part of all major scientific and religious Buddhist conferences, which result better opportunities and new ideas and networks on how to develop the encyclopedia. Participating such events gives excellent opportunity to improve the overview of different aspects of Buddhism.
20. Specialists from other fields of professions will be involved to maximize the quality result of the encyclopedia. For example- IT-specialists, designers, artists, photographers, translators, etc.
- To give the Encyclopedia a material foundation, sponsors are required.
21. There is large number of materials available which have already been translated into Chinese, which will be used. For example the Tripitaka
22. There are numerous materials on Buddhism available in English, Russian, Tibetan, Mongolian, Sanskrit, Pali, Thai, Burmese, which are not available in Chinese at the moment. The purpose of the Encyclopedia would be translating all relevant materials from any language into Chinese and English, which are the two most common languages in the world.
23. The purpose of the encyclopedia is to create an in-depth and complete database about materials related Buddhism, with main emphasis on Chinese Buddhism.
24. One of the conditions of the encyclopedia would be that used materials would not lose their religious value and that published materials would not insult anyone's

religious beliefs or values.

25. In the organizing committee, the key emphasis and importance should be given to educated Buddhists, who would supervise and help in understanding the handled materials correctly from a Buddhist point of view.

26. There are many different traditions in Buddhism. Specialists from different traditions will be involved in the project, who will assist in gathering and composing materials about the history, texts, sutras, etc. relevant to the Buddhist tradition they belong to

27. The published articles will have academic prologue. In case of traditional Buddhist texts, Chinese, Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Mongolian terminology will be used. The meanings of the terminology will be explained in Chinese and English.

28. The work will be carried out in two forms- one would be traditional Buddhist concept and other academic view of the matter.

29. According to the Buddhist practice in some traditions, some texts should never be published. The committee of the Project should be aware of such conditions and never breach them.

30. The aim and goal of the encyclopedia is to gather all available relevant and qualitative materials on Buddhism, publish those materials and preserve them for the following generations.

31. The Project will involve IT specialist, who will create a large database, which is able to contain, maintain, manage, preserve and publish a large volume of content.

The Buddhist Encyclopedia of China is a lifelong project, which carries value to millions of Buddhist's around the globe, giving free access to vast amount of Buddhist materials.

The usage of all available technological solutions in the 21th century will be utilized in collecting, gathering, structuring all traditional and available materials and also in creating new solutions.

The project will be led by specialist from different fields, whose co-operation can maximize the effect and benefits of the encyclopedia. The working collective will be led by an organizing committee, who in majority will be educated Buddhist. The committee will review the work of the collective and guide the overall activities related to the Project. The committee will be led by a leader, who can have free and independent views and opinions from the rest of the committee.

# The Background of Buddhist Encyclopedia of China”

*Ven. Vello Väärtnõu*

One snowy day two fellows arrived to Beijing - one of them was older and bald, the other one younger. Both Buddhists. The younger came to do business to build a Temple and the older carried an Idea that was to create a positive attitude toward Buddhism in China again. The older fellow had been a Buddhist for years, the younger was a beginner, who considered the older to be his teacher.

Beijing was cold and ugly to arrivals. Tainted sky, here and there were a few patches of snow and cold winds awesome. As well, above the city there was frozen smog, which spouted out millions of cars that all were screaming in that snotty smog, trying to make the way in this metallic commotion.

They were the Red Guard, who had gone through the Cultural Revolution and the young Chinese, who were eager to dart into business, forgetting Chairman Mao's advice and dreams.

Two Taoists, Buddhist's, were taken aback staring at the westernised city image and there was no trail or sign of Old China. Only glass and concrete, between them the mighty river of cars, transferring new westernised Chinese to their westernised stores and homes. Farewell to old dim China with skills to tell stories, embedding philosophy and mysticism, offering so much inspiration and narratives to poets in beautiful pavilions.

All this was lost. Also masses of cyclists from the time of Chairman Mao and raving crowds with red flags in the background had vanished into history. It had been replaced with westernised China, where the power was still in the hands of the pippin

party. Allowing Chinese to buy, sell, speculate, trade on a condition that the Chinese don't think about the religion and politics, such a simple solution has been chosen by the ruling party of the biggest nation in the world.

China's glory and splendour from culture, about what these two Taoists were



*Ivolga monastery*

dreaming of, all this was overlapped under the red history and today's commercial campaign.

The Taoists stared at this phenomenon dimwittedly, because their minds were still dwelling in the philosophical landscapes of Confucius and Lao Tzu.

Some weeks ago I met two local Rinpoche's in China. One of them belongs to the Nyingma tradition as well to the Bon tradition, and he was from Derge, Tibet, where they used to print all Gangyur and Tengyur editions. By now, he had abandoned this place, I guess.

Moreover, those two were brothers.

At first I talked with the younger brother about Buddhism and other matters for a few hours, and finally I explained that it would be very useful for China to put together the Buddhist Encyclopedia. Whereupon he answered, that right now he is only interested in restoring the old temples, in addition, in recent years his focus has been on old statues, and when all this is done, he could deal with the Encyclopaedia.

For sure the statues are necessary, but to understand their essential necessity is mandatory to gather knowledge. Zimba, my rootguru explained to me, that most of what the eye can see cannot be touched by hand. And the sense is clinging to the mind like love to self. The first step for Buddhists was to give up things, also the statues.

Adding to this, one story of Zimba about the learning and monasteries. There are such monasteries that had to be with golden statues, soup kettle big like a yurt, and meat floating in the kettle. In these monasteries most of the time is spent on preparing food and eating. The other kind of monastery was tainted and with clay statues, the soup kettle is tiny and you need to look for the meat in this kettle. In such monasteries there is nothing else to do than learn and learn, because the meals of the day are rare and poor. Guru asked me which of them I would prefer.

The only answer that came to mind was – the golden Middle Way.

A little bit later his brother arrived, who was an older and who belonged to Bon and Nyingma tradition. His attitude was reluctant and sceptical towards me - whether I am a Buddhist at all. I explained to him that even if I was not a Buddhist, this idea is highly useful and necessary for China, but he was not interested in the Buddhist encyclopaedia. When I had talked to the Rinpoches, I started to look for ordinary people to put the idea to use, and after some while some candidates appeared.

Dwelling on the first summer in Ivoga, in the monastery where I studied, I got an idea to go to the town of Ulan Ude. I went to the front of the monastery to wait for the bus and I saw an old granny, who had started investigating me already from a far distance with her intrinsic eye. When coming closer, the granny asked me - are you a lama? As I had been studying in the monastery only for some months, I didn't know how to answer at once, and mumbled that I came here to study.

Granny asked again, is she talking to the lama, so I decided to pretend that I didn't hear the question.

Then granny said: Interesting, you were so blarney and clever when with Munko lama, but coming out from the monastery you were enshrouded by ignorance.

Interesting, that monastery has such effect on people.

With them I have been carrying on recently. The problem is that I don't speak Chinese, so I don't have access to direct materials; and those people don't know the terminology, so I have to go to Taiwan to find such people – I mean monks, who are educated and proficient in English and with them I can check the translations and terminology. Another important point should be mentioned, namely I want this encyclopaedia to be quite academic, to gather material widely and from everywhere but at the same time everybody should have access to it, be able to read it and get used to such textual style.

I had a talk to Munko lama about how to learn, how much, how long and what to learn. I proposed a plan that covered about 30 years and Munko said that it would not be possible, because sooner or later I will lose interest in the surroundings, because with some people the mind will be buried under the knowledge and it would be impossible to find that person under this heap of knowledge. Then I proposed that maybe there is the way to get rid of the barriers of knowledge.

The next day I marched to my first retreat behind Munko.

That's why it will be difficult to do this, because everybody expects this site to be sweet and Buddhist, to be filled with stories written by Rinpoche's to believers. I don't have anything against believers; on the contrary, my aim is to educate people more on Buddhism. For me Buddhism has always been the source of knowledge and growth, and faith will develop itself, it is like a by-product. Moreover, I have been utterly fascinated in Buddhism and hoped that others would get part in this source of knowledge that has been in our disposal for more than two thousand years. It is strange that my fascination in Buddhism has only grown over the years and it seems not to end. I am almost sorry, that I don't have anybody to share this fascination. I think that the only way to show my respect and exaltation to Buddhism is my activities in the scientific field of Buddhism. I don't know how successful I have been, but I have done some things in my life.

For already some years I felt at home in Ivölga monastery, one day I found myself sitting with Baasan on the stairs of the house and slurped tea. Baasan was from Mongolia and he often visited Ivölga monastery to acquire knowledge and that was the beginning of our friendship. We were investigating Vasubandhu's Abidharmakosha the whole day and were taking advantage of the tea break. We discussed the limit of our knowledge- is there a border that our mind cannot cross? And what could replace this experience of the mind. We both fell into deep thoughts, because there seemed to be no logical answer. Then at one moment Bair's mother, at whose house we lived, entered the gate and clanged to us- already in Nirvana that you don't know how to say Hello?

I'm not tired of praising my Gurus. The more I think of them, the more I understand how dim-witted I am compared to them and it makes me enforce myself more and more.



*Vello Väärtnõu and Ven.Munko lama in Ivolga*

Already long ago I thought of building a temple in their honour and now this idea has taken a more concrete form. I would like to build a temple, which is partly a mandala and the higher part of the temple would be the Bumbaa, like a stupas. So it would combine both principles. All those ideas that I haven't had a chance to share, because I assume many people wouldn't understand me, need to be fulfilled before death.

After the retreat I understood that I wouldn't be a good teacher because I cannot communicate with people on Buddhist teachings, as I consider it is better to do it myself and as much possible for Buddhism.

I had been in Ivolga for many years and felt homey in Dharma and I was sure that my ability to differentiate people was well developed. In the evening Munko lama told me that tomorrow my new teacher would arrive.

In the morning I went as usual to make my three circles around the monastery, to make prostrations and to spin the prayer wheels. Half way under the prayer wheels a man was sleeping in a dirty coat. I thought it's clear; some drunkard has got to the monastery and fell asleep. Let him sleep there, I thought, and be part of a better karma in this holy place. When I finished my circles I went to Munko's house to meet my famous and powerful teacher, who was supposed to provide me the final grind in Dharma.

Stepping through the door, I saw that Munko lama was drinking tea with the same drunkard. He became my best teacher in philosophy for many years and my closest rootguru Zimba.

That's why my thoughts are such with the Chinese Buddhist Encyclopaedia. How many people would support this idea, I don't know, but I hope that at least some Buddhist will understand me and will find the wish within him to support this idea.



*Avalokiteshvara  
temple in Ivlova*

To compile Encyclopaedias you need to have a lot of money. I have never had money, because for me money is not a goal, but knowledge is. Again, I assume that there are people in the world who understand this project and would give their contribution.

These would be my thoughts in connection to my activities in Australia. It seems that the conference, Australian Buddhist encyclopaedia, building of a Fire temple and Stupa in WA would be too much for me, because lack of money is the problem that wouldn't let me fulfil those ideas. Such a thought came to me in Beijing at night, when I was searching for materials and articles for the future Chinese Buddhist Encyclopaedia.

We were sitting with Zimba in the yard and talking about the validity of the mind to perceive the surroundings. I talked about the circus and magicians who are doing tricks. Zimba liked the story and added that the biggest magician for us is sansara itself. I agreed, because with Guru it is possible only to agree, but I thought that sometimes our senses are able to feed us truthfully.

After this, Zimba took a vajra from his pocket, showed it to me and even let me touch it, then threw the vajra few meters away, into the grass and told me to give it back to him.

I saw exactly where this vajra fell. I even noticed the tuft of grass behind which the powerful tantric hardware fell. I got up on the bench and started to investigate the ground, because the grass was not so high. I searched in depth but did not see anything, I squatted down and started to grope, but the fingers felt nothing. I made a bigger circle with my fingers –and nothing. I looked back, Zimba sat on the bench, his eyes laughing. I started even aggressively scour the grass, but the result was the same.

Then Zimba got up the bench and picked up the vajra right in front of my nose from the grass, saying - so much about the philosophy and sansara.

To explain further the reasons of my stay in China then at first I wanted to invite educated monks to the conference in Australia. Unfortunately, it turned out that the only wise were those monks who already participated in our previous conference. As well, the attempts to contact the Chinese Buddhist Association have had no results – because it was impossible to reach them. I see that official organizations keep away from me as if I had leprosy. Of course we could talk about the eternal suffering and the readiness to wait for years, but I don't have this time any more, as I am Old. This forces me to find out other possibilities to get results that are useful to Buddhism.

I met many different people whose only interest was to make money until I finally met the right ones, who were Buddhists in their internal nature. At the first meeting, there was only me, two young ladies and one master, who had visited the Kalachakra celebrations in Bodhgaya and who had such an interest in Buddhism that he was also interested in compiling the Buddhist encyclopaedia.

At the next meeting already 8 people gathered, 3 of them were men and others were ladies. It seems that nowadays the interest in Buddhism is more popular amongst women than men. This evening it turned out that the level of knowledge about Buddhism is surprisingly low. Later, a lady arrived 1.5 hours late and began volubly speaking against the encyclopaedia. When I asked who she was, it turned out she's the so called - sponsor. I told her that hardly anyone here is interested in money, here brains are more needed.

Upon which she stated that if I'm planning to translate Buddhist material without knowing the subject and context I would receive bad karma.

We went with Zimba to visit his childhood friend who had been living in the steppe for many years. They had been together in the monastery for some months, before Zimba was sent to Drepong monastery in Tibet. We walked for some hours and then got a ride on a random car, the driver knew Zimba and offered to drive us to the house. We drove for a while and reached a big yurta. Zimba's friend was a lama, so the conversation promised to be interesting. We stepped in and I was astonished that all the same necessities, as in the city, existed there– TV, refrigerator, kettle etc.

We sat down and the old lama made a fire in the stove and put there the old soiled teapot. I asked if it wasn't easier to make hot water with a kettle. And the old lama answered, that he has no electricity. Then I understood that the yurta was in the middle of steppe and of course there were no electric circuits or posts. I asked from the lama, why he had a TV, refrigerator, kettle and all these things?

And got the answer. If all this stuff is in the city, then he can have it also, because anyway everything is unnecessary and vain in this life.

One of the men who arrived reported that Buddhism doesn't need knowledge but faith and everything starts from believing. To what I responded that before he could start believing, the knowledge on that subject had to come to him first. Not withstanding my objection, this master stayed firm to his opinion. In addition, one man was displeased about how I dared to come to China with such an idea. I had to say that all this here is wasting my time.

I could also hear people from the crowd saying things like who am I to dare to speak about Buddhism and what have I ever done for Buddhism.

It was interesting – the people who came to the meeting, had received a brochure about the conference Buddhism & Australia, some of them had even read it, but it seemed that all that had disappeared from them, especially from the knowledge part.

By the way, I made a long speech as an introduction, where I talked about myself and about the history of Chinese Buddhism – I mentioned that the Heart Sutra was translated in China already in the 5th century and the first monastery in China was White Horse monastery and so on.

I also explained that it is a big historical moment in which they are involved in, to start to compiling an encyclopaedia in a language spoken by most of people in the world.

By the end of the meeting the company was divided into two. One that kept overflowing me with questions about how I dared to do it, who would allow it, and we need permission from the government, need to register etc. And the other majority of the people were listening in silence, because they seemed to have understood my idea and the necessity of my idea for China.

\* \* \* The meeting lasted 5 hours and by the end you could clearly see how the two different companies were attuned. \* \* \*

I rather imagine myself in the catalyst role, who should develop and encourage investigating and promoting Buddhism in China. Because online Buddhist encyclopaedia in Chinese would be available to everybody interested in Buddhism, giving them the access to Buddhist materials. In addition, the encyclopaedia would be the body of knowledge that could be used by scientists, Buddhists, monks and other people interested. Until now nobody has offered this online and this makes this project to be unique.

Computer makes this material accessible to all free of charge. This is my purpose in the life, to make Buddhism accessible to people for free. When Buddha Shakyamuni declared his teachings in the market-places, he didn't ask money for this.

Nowadays, when everyone writes incompetently and sometimes wrongly about Buddhism, it's only goal is to make money, and this is contrary to the original principle in Buddhism.

The aim of the Chinese Buddhist encyclopaedia is to approach Buddhism from the academic aspect, so that it would contain terminology with Sanskrit counterparts, and also Tibetan language terminology.

Chinese Buddhist encyclopaedia would be in Chinese, containing all the materials offered by the rich and historically far-reaching Chinese Buddhism. It can be expected to be the world's most extensive Buddhist encyclopaedia and doing this, and it takes up with the innovations and improvements for decades. If it is possible, then an English version of this encyclopaedia should be made parallel to it, which gives the encyclopaedia the opportunity to conquer western readers. Then we could say that China has once again made something great like the Great Wall of China known from the history.

Chinese Buddhism has existed in time for a long time, already in the 5th century the Heart Sutra was translated, and we all know the White Horse Temple as the first temple

in China.

We can freely say that the time has come to create the first Chinese Buddhist encyclopaedia. The encyclopaedia would help to get rid of the false beliefs and false notions on Buddhism.

## Today

Since 2012, Master VanTao has worked on Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia, organized conferences along with his secretary Marju Broder, presented research articles every year at Berkeley university conferences in Macau, Los Angeles, Taiwan, Singapore.

Master VanTao has developed encyclopedia to 55 000 articles, plus terminology dictionaries - Tibetan, Sanskrit, Pali, Zen, Chinese and so on.

All material is categorized, cross- linked and illustrated. Such encyclopedia needs deep knowledge in Buddhism and strong IT skills, and Master VanTao has both.

Usually people think there are dozens of people working on the encyclopedia but this is not so. All the work with encyclopedia has been done by Master VanTao alone, and it has been done on voluntary basis, using his own finances.

Australia has not supported Buddhism & Australia conferences, which is the only annual Buddhist conference in Australia, or Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia.

In Australia Christianity is very popular religion and Buddhists are not much noticed. The encyclopedia has thousands of readers every day from Alaska to Australia, and is already considered one of the biggest online resources on Buddhism. CBE offers free access for everybody, everywhere.

The most important - the work that has gone to the making of the Encyclopedia is of a very high quality.

The screenshot shows the Buddhistdoor Global website. The header includes the logo, navigation links (HOME, FEATURES, NEWS, MEDIA, SUBSCRIBE, SUPPORT US, ABOUT US, 中文版佛門網), and a search bar. The main content area features a news article titled "Presentation of Buddhism & Australia Projects at the Pacific Neighborhood Consortium 2015 Conference" by Ryan McDermott, dated 2015-10-23. The article includes a large group photo of people at the conference. To the right of the article are sections for "OUR SPONSORS" (listing The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation and Tung Lin Kok Yuen) and "RELATED ORGANIZATIONS" (listing Buddhistdoor, Pure Land Buddhism, and the Centre of Buddhist Studies at The University of Hong Kong).





*Guru Padmasambhava mandala. Väärnõu 2006*

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