



Estonian Nyingma & Databases

by Marju Broder

Estonian Nyingma

Estonian Nyingma is a currently operating association that unites people interested in the teachings of the Nyingma School, and was founded by Vello Vaartnou in 1982 in Estonia.

By now, after 33 years of large scale activities, Estonian Nyingma projects include several educational databases and informative sources on Buddhism.

During its existence, Estonian Nyingma has built stupas, temples, prayer wheels; created hundreds of original thangkas and Buddhist art; translated and distributed texts and books on Buddhism.

There are several projects ongoing today: the online Buddhism encyclopedias, innovative academic Buddhism conference and an online Australian Buddhism History.



All Estonian Nyingma` projects have been initiated and managed by Vello Vaartnou, a remarkable person in terms of modernizing Buddhist teachings, with the help of a small team of Estonian Nyingma members.

In the 1980s this group was also well-known by the nickname Taola (or Buddhist Brotherhood) and became known to the wider public as Estonian Nyingma through the international conference “Buddhism & Nordland” in 2007.

When talking about the Estonian-born and now Swedish citizen Vello Vaartnou, one must keep in mind that the starting point for all his actions has always been based on the principles of Buddhism. His activities are usually characterized using such expressions as ‘the first one’, ‘the founder’, ‘the leader’ etc.

To understand better how Estonian Nyingma has evolved during its existence and conceived such a massive database as the online Chinese Buddhism Encyclopedia, it is necessary to take a look at the historical background and conditions in which Estonian Nyingma has been operating.

Karl Tonisson, the father of Estonian Buddhism

Also known as

Brother Vahindra,

The Baltic Mahatma,

Dharmaduta

Karlis Tennison

Vagindra Mantramitra

1873 Estonia–1962 Myanmar



Estonia at the beginning of 20th century

Estonia had been in the sphere of Christianity for many centuries until Karl Tonisson, a native Estonian, was born in the village of Umbusi in 1873.

Karl Tonisson studied at the Buriatyan monasteries, and brought the teachings of the Gelug tradition from Buryatia to Estonia at the beginning of the 20th century.

Tonisson was the first to disseminate Buddhism in the Baltic countries and is considered the father of Estonian Buddhism.

Tonisson's contemporaries, uneducated in Buddhism, knew nothing about Mahasiddhas, yogis or Buddhism, so Tonisson was considered to be a very strange individual, and his lifestyle earned him the name "*Barefooted Tonisson*".

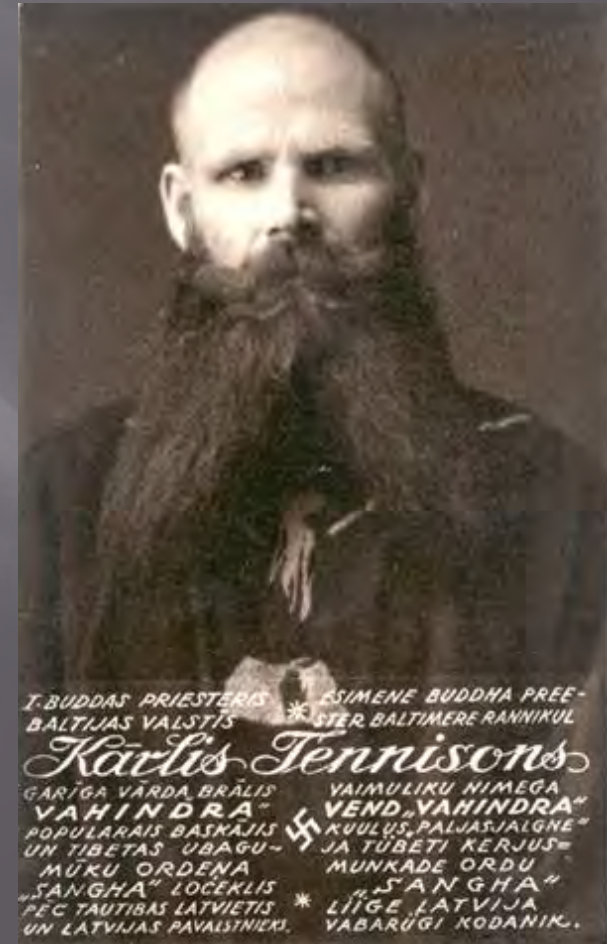
He was also called Brother Vahindra, the Baltic Mahatma, Dharmaduta and, according to his Latvian passport, Karlis Tennisons. During the Soviet era, he was called a "*rantipole freak*" by Estonian orientalists. Tonisson was talented and witty in his actions and should be considered a Mahasiddha because of his colourful behaviour and lifestyle.

Tonisson was a monk at the St Petersburg Buddhist Temple since 1914, when Tsar Nikolai II affirmed the staff of the St. Petersburg Buddhist Temple, and was appointed the head of St Peterburg's Buddhist temple in 1920 by Agvan Dorjiev.

St Petersburg Buddhist Temple in the 1920s



Tonisson was the head of the St.Petersburg
Kalachakra Tempel from 1920



F.Lustig, K.Tennissons and a Chinese monk China, 1935



In 1931, Tonisson and his student Lustig started their journey on foot through Europe to Asia, and in 1935–1936 they spent a year and a half in China.

Tonisson and Lustig in Thai and Burma

During the Second World War Tonisson and Lustig stayed in Thai monasteries. Unfortunately, they openly criticised the politics of the Thai government in local newspapers in retaliation for the renaming of Siam to Thai which they took as a backing away from Buddhist cultural inheritance, and in 1949 the Thai government exiled Estonian monks to Burma.



In 1956, Tõnisson and Lustig participated in the Fourth International Buddhist Conference in Kathmandu in Nepal, and met there Buriyat lamas who were seen the first time out of Soviet Union.

Tonisson died on 9th May 1962 in Burma, and after his death was proclaimed a Bodhisattva - an honour that is very rare in Hinayana Buddhism.

Karl Tonisson's actions in Estonia did not extend to the creation of practical Buddhism, because no buildings or objects (temples, stupas etc.) were established by him. Tonisson mainly published books, and held lectures and lamaist services in different places.

In 1941, Soviet ideological control checked the growth of Buddhist ideas in Estonia. During the Soviet time, religious activity was prohibited and punishable, which meant that not many Buddhists could practise their faith, not much literature was available and there were no specialists in Buddhism.

Foundation of the practical Buddhist tradition in Estonia

At the beginning of the 1970s, intellectual interest in Eastern culture and Buddhism increased in Estonian cultural circles, but Buddhism was merely an intellectual game and there was no practical approach to Buddhism.

At the end of the 1970s, Vello Vaartnou, a well-known Estonian artist who openly declared himself a Buddhist, decided to establish the first Buddhist Sangha in Estonia, because the tradition imported by Tonisson had already lost its continuity.

As there were no Nyingma monasteries in the Soviet Union, Vaartnou made contact with the Ivolga Monastery in Buryatia, the only Buddhist monastery in the territory of the Soviet Union.

He studied in the Ivolga Monastery from 1976–1987 under the guidance of a number of older generation lamas, including the two Head Lamas (Khambo lamas) of Russia - Ven. Munko Tsybikov and Ven. Zhimba Erdineev - and became the first Estonian with the title of Geshe.

Ivolga monastery in Buryatia, 1981



Vello Vaartnou and his first Guru
Ven. Munko Tsybikov, 1979



Vello Vaartnou and Hambo Lama Erdineev
Ivolga monastery, 1981



1982, Vello Vaartnou established the first nyingma movement, the Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood, in Tallinn.

He gathered around him a group of people who were interested in practical Buddhism. Under his guidance, the Brotherhood set the beginnings of practical Buddhist tradition and Nyingma tradition in Estonia.

In accordance with Buddhist tradition, the Brotherhood started their activities by building a stupa.



In 1984–1985, three more stupas were built in Western Estonia by the Brotherhood.

These four stupas were the first stupas in Northern Europe, and the only stupas that were built in the territory of the Soviet Union during the Soviet times.

The Estonian Buddhist Brotherhood Tallinn, 1982



The stupa master and the first stupas of Northern Europe



In 1983–1985, four stupas were built
in Western Estonia



Buddhist education was provided by Vello Vaartnou, who led all Brotherhood activities and carried out the first Buddhist rituals.

The Tibetan and Old-Mongolian languages were taught by Pent Nurmekund from the University of Tartu, who at the same time established the Oriental Studies department at Tartu University. Additional education was provided by different language schools.

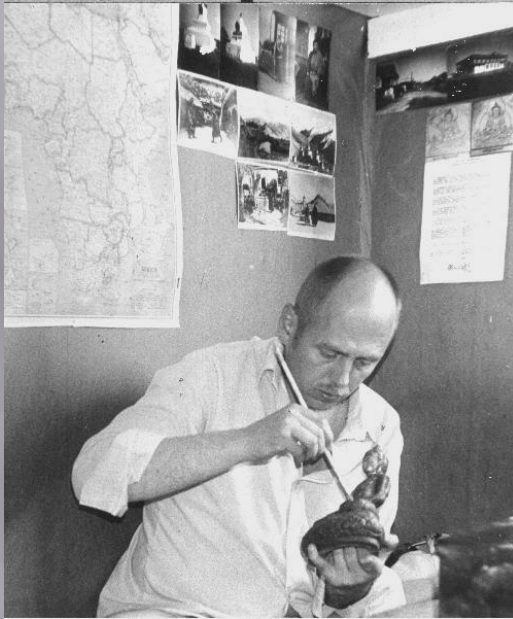
Vaartnou's gift in art was put to use in Buddhist thangkas and statues, which were made by him and Brotherhood members under his guidance.

The Brotherhood's house, also called *Taola*, was a popular meeting place among Buddhists and cultural figures, as well as among guests from Russia, including Siberia.

The establishment of the Brotherhood was only one step in Vaartnou's far-reaching plans, which included the creation of the Nyingma Monastery in Estonia, where an opportunity for Buddhist education was to be offered. The plan included sending people to study in Asia and bringing educated lamas and Buddhist scholars to Estonia.

Growing interest in astrology led Vaartnou 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 Tallinn.

Buddha statues and thangkas were made at the Brotherhood house (also known as Taola)



The first Buddhism database in Estonian language

Under socialism, it was forbidden by law to build cult objects (stupas, temples etc.), and translating and copying texts was very risky business. Those who attempted to translate or copy risked being punished by the authorities.

The same was true of practicing Buddhism but, despite these limitations, this small Buddhist community was very effective and skillful in its actions. The Brotherhood did an enormous amount of work by translating and producing extra copies of books and texts.

There was almost no Buddhist literature available then, and these handmade books (*samizdat*), were the only sources available to most Estonians interested in Buddhism.

The Brotherhood and faith-followers translated dozens of titles from English, German and French and published the series of books –

The Eight Auspicious Dharma Symbols.

Also an important library was set up, in which most of the texts were from Buryatia.

As it was impossible to publish religious literature officially, they bound and copied books by hand-typing them. All of this work was done for free

Translations and publications 1982-1988

The first Estonian Nyingma team and faith-followers translated 18 books, dozen of articles and sutras.

More than 40 books were copied into hundreds of exemplars, and the compiling of the first Estonian book in Tibetan language studies was started.

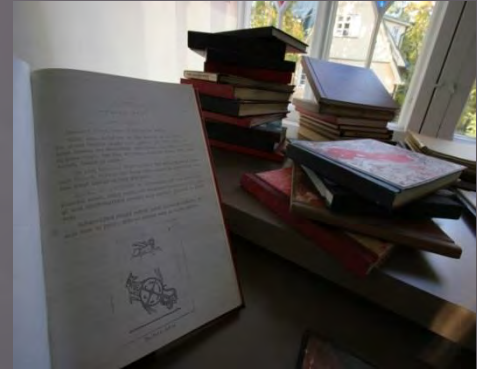
To get literature from Western countries, several foreigners were asked to help, and they brought suitcases full of Buddhist literature, helping to establish Estonian Buddhism. Finnish writer Harri Sirola, who helped to bring Buddhist literature, published several articles in Helsinki and later wrote a novel "*Two Cities*" about Vaartnou and the Brotherhood activities in the 1980s.

Today these Brotherhood translations and books are preserved in private libraries only and were firstly presented to the public at Tallinn City Museum in 2009.



Translated books

- *The Cult of Tara.* Stephen Beyer
- *Essentials of Modern Literary Tibetan.* Melvyn Goldstein
- *The Hundred Parables Sutra.* S. Gurevitch
- *The Chariot for Travelling the Supreme Path.* K. Chuling
- *Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion.* Asvagosha
- *Psycho-Cosmic Symbolism of the Buddhist Stupa.* A. Govinda
- *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism.* A. Govinda
- *101 Zen Stories.* Philadelphia 1934
- *The Tibetan Book of the Dead I-II (Bardo Thötröl).* G. Jung
- *Freedom From The Known.* J. Krishnamurti
- *A Buddhist Catechism.* Henri Olcott
- *Tibet, Its History, Religion and People.* Thubten Jigma Norbu
- *The Light of Asia.* Edwin Arnold
- *Essays on the life of Buddhist monasteries and the Buddhist clergy in Mongolia 1887.* Pozdneyev
- *Essence of Tantra.* The Commentary by HH XIV Dalai Lama on Tsonkhapa 'Agrim



Translated articles and sutras

- *The Teachings of Tibetan Tantrism.* Garma C. Chang
 - *Introduction to Yoganaddha. The Tantric view of life.* H.V. Guenther
 - *Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia.* B. Vladimirtsov
 - *The History of Tibetan Buddhism.* Lobsang Jivaka
 - *Four important points in Zen.* Garma C. Chang
 - *Zen-meditation.* D.T. Suzuki
 - *The Essence of Dharma.* Sangharaktshita
 - *A Living Buddhism for the West.* Angarika Govinda
 - *Tibetan Chronicle*
-
- *The Dharmachakra pravartana sutra*
 - *Samjuttanikaja sutra*
 - *Amitayus sutra*
 - *The Visualisation of Amitabha sutra*
 - *Golden Rule Sutra*
 - *The Sutra of the True State of Mind*
 - *Shariputra and two Monsters*



Additional copies produced

- ▣ *Tibetan-Russian-English dictionary.* J. Roerich
- The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life.* Richard Wilhelm, C.
- Lamaism in Tibet.* B. Ghosh
- Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious.* Holtzmeier
- Mongolian Grammar.* I. Shmidt,
- Prophet.* Kahlil Gibran
- Human beings and Societies.* Erich Fromm,
- Training the Mind.* Tai Situ Rinpoche
- The Cult of Tara.* Stephen Beyer
- The Tantric View of Life.* Herbert Guenther
- Taoist Yoga Alchemy & Immortality.* C. Luk
- Treasures on the Tibetan MiddleWay.* Guenther
- The Buddhist Philosophy of Thought.* Piatigorsky
- The Lamp for the Path and Commentary of Atisha*
- R. Sherburne
- The Navya-Nyaya Doctrine of Negotiation.*
- B.K. Matilal
- Pantshatantra.* A. Sörkina.
- How to Believe the Horoscope.* F. Feerhov
- World Astrology.* Otto Pöllner
- Astrology.* Wilhelm Bekker
- Initiation in Ancient Egypt by the Toth book.*
- V. Üxküll

Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology Tsepak Rigdzin
The Land of the Lama. David Macdonald
An Introduction to the Grammar of the Tibetan Language.
S. Chandra Das
Tantric Practice in Nyingma. Khetsun Sangpo
Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon. B.Keith
Himalayan Art. Madanjeet Singh
Buddhist Logic. F.T. Stcherbatsky
Tibetski jazyk. J.N. Roerich
The Buddhist Cosmology. O. Kovalevski
Tibetan Reader 4 - stories in Tibetan
Sinhalese Doorways. C.E. Godakumbura,
Madhyanta-Vibhanga. Vasubandhu and Sthiramati. from
Sanskrit Th. Stcherbatsky
Vajradhatu. Articles, Chogyam Trungpa,
Dilgo Khyentse and Ösel Tenzin
The Letters of the Living Dead. Elsa Barker
Sören Kirkegaard. E. Salumaa
Dao-De-Džing (Tao-Te-King). A. Wesley
Knowledge of the Higher Worlds. R. Steiner
Introduction to the Philosophy. W. Jerusalem
Mantra

Relations with Ivolga monastery



Lamas from the Ivolga Monastery have made major contributions to the development of Estonian Buddhism.

During the Brotherhood time, lamas from the Ivolga Monastery started to visit Estonia regularly. Because of Soviet control, these Buddhist activities were kept secret and the general public in Estonia never heard of such activities.

Vaartnou constantly traveled between Buryatia, learning from elderly lamas of the monastery. The Brotherhood members visited the Ivolga Monastery on several occasions, taking thangkas and statues made in Estonia to the Ivolga Monastery, which were thought to be of great value there.

While in Ivolga, Vaartnou and Brotherhood members copied manuscripts and texts, and photographed a great number of thangkas and statues. Also all the ritual objects in Taola were brought from Ivolga monastery.

Brotherhood in Ivolga monastery in the 1980s



Ivolga monastery in the 1980s



Buryat lamas visiting Taola Tallinn, 1980s



In 1986, a farmhouse was bought 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 actions and halted was also the publishing of first Estonian schoolbook on Tibetan language.

In November 1987, Vello Vaartnou came up with the idea and programme of the Estonian National Independence Party.

In January 1988, Vaartnou organised a press conference in Moscow for accredited foreign newspapers and made a public announcement of the establishment of an opposition party. All this resulted in the deportation of Vaartnou from the country by the personal order of Gorbatshev in February 1988.

* * * * *

The deportation of Vaartnou and others put an end to the successful activities of the first team of the Estonian Nyingma in Estonia.

Within 6 years, Vaartnou and the Brotherhood built a touchable, visible body of Buddhism and constituted the first Buddhist objects into the Estonian intellectual and religious landscape.

For years, Vaartnou lived and studied with Khenpo Namgyal from a Bhutanese Monastery in the Himalayas, and later spent 8 years in strict solitary retreat.

Foundation of the ENIP and the end of the Taola period



luetaan. Se perustettiin MRP:n rinnalle — Vellon mukaan siksi, että itsenäisyyden ollessa lopullinen tavoite on puolue tarpeen, koska MRP on oleellisesti yhden asian liike.

Toisaalta itsenäisyydenpuolueen merkitys jäi propagandavoittoon — mm. New York Times, Washington Post ja Le Monde tiedottivat siitä näkyvästi — mutta juuri asian tunnetuksi tekeminen onkin Viron tämänhetkisten vastarintaliikkeen realistisin tavoite. Samaa pyrkii MRP. Samaa näkyy yhä suuremmissa määrin pyrkivän myös Kansanrintama.

Oleellista on, että Baltiassa yli 40 vuotta kyteet mielipiteet voidaan ilmaista ja että niitä nyt, ainakin jossain määrin, kuullaan.

Itsenäisyyden menestys on Viron kansan kipein trauma, ja juuri se joka tapauksessa, vaikka kimmien kiertäisi kuumaa



THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1988

Eke-Part Nomm, left, Vello Vaartnou, center, and Arvi Orula in Tallinn, the capital of Soviet Estonia. They signed a document calling for the creation of an independent political party in the Soviet Union.

In Soviet Baltic, an Unintended Openness

By PHILIP TAUBMAN

Special to The New York Times

TALLINN, U.S.S.R., Feb. 5 — Mikhail S. Gorbachev's calls for increased openness and democracy have had the unintended effect of encouraging the Soviet Union's nationalist groups to step out of the shadows and agitate more openly for greater autonomy.

Two weeks ago, for example, 14 citizens of the Estonian Soviet republic signed a handwritten document calling for the creation of the first independent political party in the Soviet Union.

Not a word about the proposal has appeared in the local newspapers or been mentioned on Soviet television or radio, but that has not stopped the news from spreading through the Estonian community like a brush fire.

It is the latest in a recent series of increasingly bold steps by Estonians that have challenged the basic political and economic connections that bind this small northern European republic to the Soviet Union.

Few Estonians believe that the proposed political group, the National Independence Party of Estonia, will ever be formed, much less sanctioned by the authorities. The organizers — who include two converts to Buddhism, not a religion widely practiced in the region — seem unlikely candidates to lead a challenge to the supreme power of the Communist Party.

A Stirring of Pride



The New York Times/Feb. 10, 1988

Anti-Soviet attitudes are breaking more and more into the open in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

the capital of the Central Asian republic of Kazakhstan, a serious crisis. Mr. Gorbachev, the Politburo and eventually the Central Committee devoted considerable time to dealing with the unrest, according to Soviet officials.

Open Anti-Soviet Feeling

During a three-day visit to Tallinn, the Estonian capital, it was apparent that anti-Soviet attitudes that have long surged beneath the surface are breaking more and more into the open. The same thing is happening in the neighboring republics of Latvia and

This idea, presented in "Edasi," one of the republic's Estonian-language newspapers, would, in effect, sever the economic connections that have given Moscow control over Estonian industry and agriculture.

In an interview, Mr. Made played down the political implications, saying, "The economic way is the only way to do something for our people."

He added, "The political way is impossible right now."

Despite his comments, Estonians have rallied around the proposal as a veiled symbol of "iseseisvus," the Estonian word for independence. When Mr. Made was dropped as a weekly television commentator after the article was published, complaints from viewers forced his return, according to Estonian television officials.

Estonian television itself sometimes reflects the more open hostility toward Moscow. Although part of the Soviet television system, Estonian television offers its own news and entertainment programming in Estonian.

An Act of Defiance

Last August, after a nationalist demonstration in downtown Tallinn, an Estonian anchorman, Urmas Reitelman, was instructed to read on the air a Government account that many Estonians felt distorted the news. Mr. Reitelman, in an act of defiance, refused to look at the camera as he spoke.

Even Estonian government officials

Within 6 years, Vaartnou and the Brotherhood constituted the first Buddhist objects into the Estonian intellectual and religious landscape.



Vello Vaartnou and Khenpo Namgyal
Kathmandu 1993



Estonian Nyingma in 2000s

The new active period for Estonian Nyingma started in 2000s.

The members of the first Brotherhood and new Nyingmapas continued their activities under the guidance of Vello Vaartnou by building

a new stupa, 10 m high;
a temple and prayer wheels at the
Estonian Nyingma center at Veltsa.

Today Estonia has five Buddhist stupas,
which are the only stupas in the Baltic
States.



Veltsa stupa



The first Buddhism Encyclopedia in Estonian language

The development of technology and the internet opened new possibilities in the preservation of Buddhist materials and has made them more available.

In 2005, Vaartnou started his first web portal, the Estonian Nyingma Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, which contains scientific works, terminology, articles, travelogues etc, and has so far published more than 3200 articles.

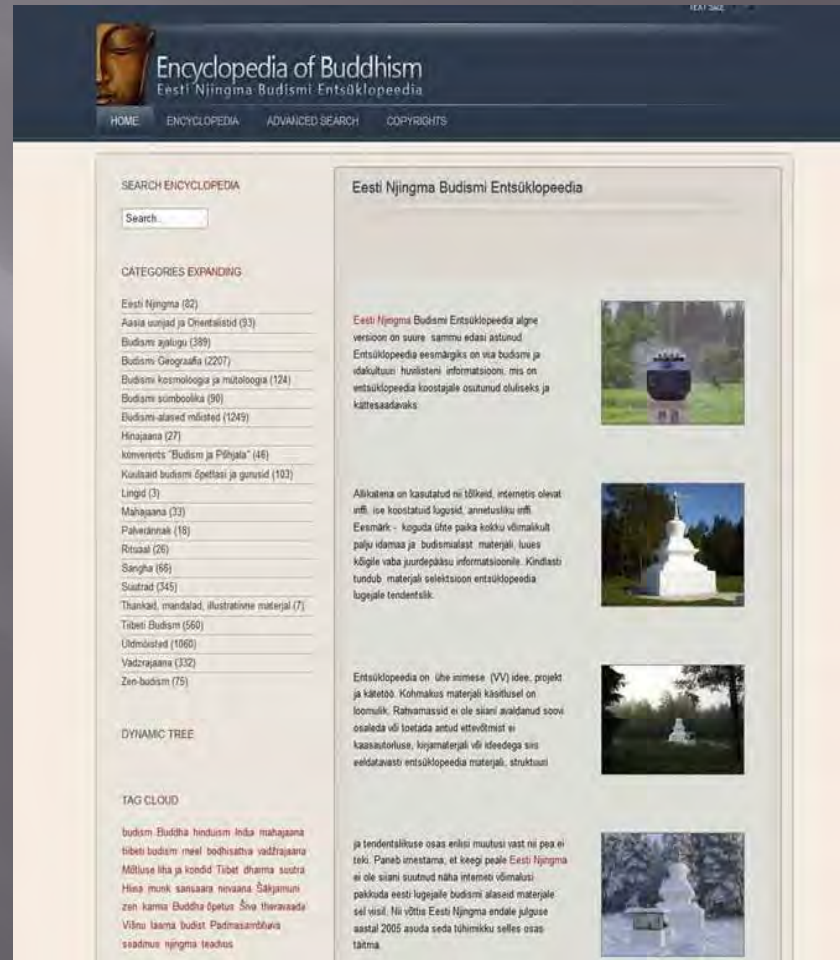
This is the first Encyclopedia on Buddhism in Estonian, and is the result of Vaartnou's personal work, done on a voluntary basis as always. Also, most of the articles about Buddhism in the Estonian Wikipedia are written by him.

While working with this encyclopedia, Vaartnou already had the idea to create a bigger Buddhism Encyclopedia in a different language, which would be available for more people. as only 1.3 million people use Estonian.

This idea was fulfilled later in Australia.

www.estoniannyingmaencyclopedia.com

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International Conference Buddhism & Nordland

In February 2007, the first International Conference Buddhism & Nordland was organised by Vello Vaartnou and Estonian Nyingma.

Already during the Soviet times Vaartnou was cherishing the idea of scientific conferences where scientists and Buddhists would work together, researching and preserving Buddhism of the Northern countries, but it was impossible to organize such cooperation at the time.

There was no research on the history of Nordic Buddhism prior to the Buddhism & Nordland conferences, and neither had little had been done about it in other Nordic countries.

We could say that the research on the historical reception of Buddhism in the whole West was still in its infancy. To stimulate academic research on Buddhism in Nordic countries, and broaden the local history with Buddhist topics has been the main aim of the conference.

The Buddhism & Nordland conferences gave impetus to research done into Nordic Buddhism in Latvia, Finland, Lithuania, Sweden, Estonia etc.

During the five years, the event grew into a three-day conference, increased in the number of participating countries and lecturers, and expanded also geographically. In addition to the Nordic countries the scholars and Buddhists from Italy, England, Germany, USA, Thailand, India, Taiwan, Mongolia, Nepal contributed.

Conferences Buddhism & Nordland 2007 - 2011

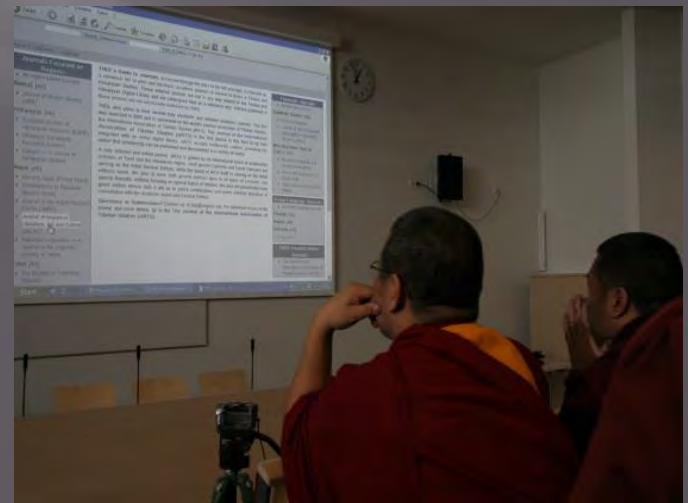


International Conference Buddhism & Nordland

Currently the conference website presents 98 articles about Buddhism in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Sweden, and Russia along with other articles related to Buddhism like philosophy, psychology, art, translation, contemporary Buddhism etc. to the wider public: www.budcon.com



All five conferences were carried out by Estonian Nyingma on a voluntary basis, and were held at the Tallinn University. In connection to the conferences, five art exhibitions were organized from 2007 to 2011.



Buddhist thangka as the visual database

Vello Vaartnou was the first person to start drawing traditional Buddhist paintings with computer designs; he is highly skilled in 3D Graphics and Vector Graphics.

Vaartnou'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.

Vaartnou 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.

Nowadays Vaartnou's innovative thangkas have found their way into the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm, MC University in Thailand and Thailand's Royal Family.

Many people are producing thangkas by copying them. Original thangkas, grown from an understanding of Buddhism, can only be created by teachers who have a deep knowledge of their subject; we can then consider them as an informative source for specialists, who are able to read and acquire knowledge from thangkas.

Vaartnou's innovative and extraordinary thangkas that contain thousands of details, should be analyzed and discussed separately.



Amitabha.
Vaartnou
2006

Manjusri.
Vaartnou
2001



Guru Mandala
Vaartnou
2003



Tsyangyang
Gyatso.
Vaartnou
2002



Estonian Nyingma in Australia

In 2011, Vello Vaartnou was granted a Distinguished Talented visa by Australian authorities, and the Estonian Nyingma continued its activities mainly in Australia.

Vaartnou started to develop Buddhist education and academic cooperation in the field of Buddhist Studies, and initiated

- an online History of Buddhist Australia (2011),
- an International Conference Buddhism & Australia (2012),
- an online Chinese Buddhism Encyclopedia (2012).

All these projects are the first-of-their -kind in Australia and compared to the Estonian period, the projects are directed toward the wider public.

The academic aspect of Buddhism is not represented in Perth; there have been no Buddhist Studies in Western Australia until today.

The academic aspect of Buddhism has been managed by Vello Vaartnou and a small group of Estonian Nyingma Buddhists.

In February 2012, the first international conference on Buddhism & Australia was held at the Murdoch University. It brought together scientists and Buddhists from 16 countries.

International Conference Buddhism & Australia

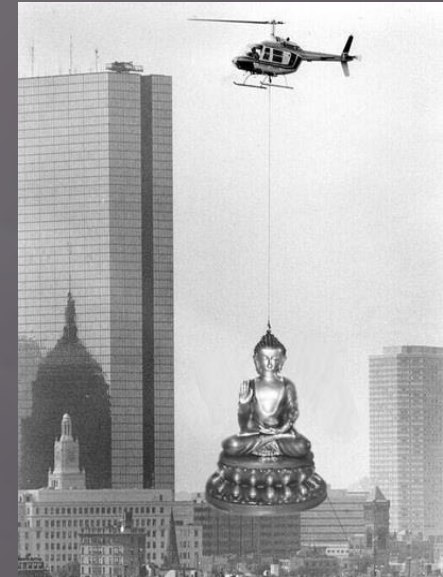
This annual conference investigates Buddhist history and its future direction in Australasia, and invites scholars, scientists and Buddhists to complete each other's views by revealing different aspects and materials on Buddhism.

Similar to European conferences, the conference on Buddhism and Australia carries the idea of how Buddhism and science could provide an on-going fruitful relationship logically and profitably.

All presentations of the four Buddhism and Australia conferences (currently 82 papers) are available for free on the conference website.

The 5th conference on Buddhism & Australia will be held in February 2016, marking 10 years of Estonian Nyingma` conferences.

We can conclude, that Vaartnou`s idea and the functionality of the conference has turned out to be of great vitality and proven itself excellent both in Europe and Australia.



Conference Buddhism & Australia since 2012



An online History of Buddhist Australia

The aim of the Australian Buddhist History project is to collect and preserve all stories, facts, pictures, videos and related materials from different organizations and individuals from all over Australia.

There are more than 500, 000 Buddhists in Australia, who are members of numerous different Buddhist traditions, monasteries, temples and other organizations and they all have their individual histories.

This project gives every Australian Buddhist organization and community an opportunity to speak and write on their own behalf, about where they are from, and how they came to Australia.. Their activities and contributions they have made will map Buddhist relationships between Australia and Asia.

In connection to the History project, an art exhibition was held in the Perth Town Hall in June 2012, to introduce local Buddhist history.

www.australianbuddhisthistory.com



Australian Buddhist History

Uniting Australia in Buddhism



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RANDOM LIST

Australian Buddhist History

There are more than 500 000 Buddhists in Australia, who are members of numerous different Buddhist traditions, monasteries, temples and other organizations. They all have their profound history of their Buddhist journey to and in Australia. Buddhism has enriched Australian culture and society enormously by different cultural and religious customs, rituals, symbols, festivals and traditions; We encourage all Buddhists to collect and preserve all historical facts, documents, photos and art.

This aim of the Australian Buddhist History project is to collect all stories, facts, pictures, videos and related materials from



Australian scholar, Dr. Padmasiri de Silva
Monash University, Melbourne

"I came to know about both the Chinese Buddhist Encyclopaedia & 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. "



June 2014

An online Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia (CBE)

This project was started in October 2012, and was officially introduced to the public at the PNC 2012 conference at the University of California, Berkeley, in December 2012.

The author and key contributor to the Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia is Vello Vaartnou, who has maintained this strong vision for many years.

It has taken Vaartnou many years to accumulate the knowledge and merits to start his biggest project-- an online Chinese Buddhism Encyclopedia.

A key function of this Encyclopedia is cultural preservation: the encyclopedia gathers all possible material on Buddhism; introduces different aspects and approaches; corrects and sets into logical and chronological order Buddhist materials and information.

www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com



Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia



English

中文

Why Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia

Vaartnou:

“The Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia is an online platform for gathering, preserving, translating, publishing, and spreading the message of Buddha through historic and contemporary texts.

Chinese Buddhism has a great potential to preserve and develop the Buddhist tradition, and to influence the development of Buddhism globally.

Buddhism has played an enormous role in shaping the mindset of the Chinese people, affecting their aesthetics, politics, literature, philosophy and medicine.

Encyclopedia connects China to Buddhism in the minds of the people and gives direction for future generations in China, reminding them that the Chinese have been Buddhists for centuries.”



How is CBE exclusive?

Instead of traditional approach to material (Vinaya, Sutra, Abhidharma), Vaartnou uses an alphabetical method and adds contemporary Buddhism related categories. For example, Buddhism and Science, Buddhist Studies, Western Buddhism etc.

Academic approach to Buddhism provides the opportunity to handle all materials and information scientifically, making them accessible for modern people

All articles have links and are cross-referenced and illustrated

CBE presents material in balanced and impartial manner and avoids advocacy

This Encyclopedia aims to gather all materials about Buddhism and evolve into a World Buddhist Encyclopedia in many languages, giving free access to vast amount of Buddhist materials



The Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia contains currently

41 Main Categories

1700 Subcategories

45,000 entries in English

4,000 entries in Chinese

300,000 linked words

Dictionaries:

Sanskrit, Pali,
Tibetan, Japanese,
Chinese, Zen,
Chinese-Sanskrit

Yogacara

Yogācāra (Sanskrit; literally: "yoga practice"; "one whose practice is yoga") is an influential school of Buddhist philosophy and psychology emphasizing phenomenology and (some argue) ontology through the interior lens of meditative and yogic practices. It developed within Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism in about the 4th century CE.

Yogācāra discourse explains how our human experience is constructed by mind.

Nomenclature, orthography and etymology

Sanskrit: Yogācāra (योगचर), Viśvāśāstra (विश्वज्ञानशास्त्र), Viśvāśāstrīya, Viśvāśāstrīya, or Citamātra
Chinese: Wúshì Zhī (唯識宗 "Consciousness-Only School"), Wúshì Yōgijīng Pā (唯識論經行宗 "Consciousness-Only Yogic School"), Fāxiāng Zōng (法相宗, "Dharmalakṣaṇa School"), Cíen Zōng (慈恩宗 "Cien School")
Japanese: Yūshiki (唯識 "Consciousness-Only"), Yōgajō (瑜伽行 "Yogic School")
Korean: Yung Jung (육식종 "Consciousness-Only School"), Yōgahwŏng P'a (육가행교 "Yogic School"), Yung-Yōgahwŏng P'a (육식육가행교 "Consciousness-Only Yogic School")
Vietnamese: Duy Thức Tông ("Consciousness-Only School"), Duy-già Hành Tông ("Yogic School")
Tibetan: sems-tsam
Mongolian: enyap, yegzer
English: Yoga Practice School, Consciousness-Only School, Subjective Realism, Mind Only School

Yogācāra is also transliterated (using standard English alphabet) as "yogachara". Another name for the school is Viśvāśāstra (Sanskrit). Vāda means "doctrine" and "way"; vijñāna means "consciousness" and "discernment."

History

The Yogācāra, along with the Mādhyamaka, is one of the two principal philosophical schools of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Origination

Masaki (2005) states: "[a]ccording to the Saṃdhiśāstra Sūtra, the first Yogācāra text, the Buddha set the 'wheel of the doctrine' (Dharmakāra) in motion three times." Hence, the Saṃdhiśāstra Sūtra, as the doctrinal trailblazer of Yogācāra, inaugurated the paradigm of the three turnings of the wheel of Dharma, with its own tenets in the "third turning". The Yogācāra texts are generally considered part of the third turning along with the relevant sūtra. Moreover, Yogācāra discourse surveys and synthesizes all three turnings.

The orientation of the Yogācāra school is largely consistent with the thinking of the Pāli Nikāyas. It frequently treats later developments in a way that realigns them with earlier versions of Buddhist doctrines. Dan Lusthaus concludes that one of the agendas of the Yogācāra school was to reorient the complexity of later refinements in Buddhist philosophy to accord with early Buddhist doctrine.

Asaṅga and Vasubandhu

Yogācāra, which had its genesis in the Saṃdhiśāstra Sūtra, was largely formulated by the brahmin bon half-brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Asaṅga spent many years in intense meditation, during which time tradition says that he often visited Tuṣṭa Heaven to receive teachings from Mañjūra Bodhisattva. Heavens such as Tuṣṭa Heaven are said to be accessible through meditation, and accounts of this are given in the writings of the Indian Buddhist monk Paramārtha, who lived during the 8th century CE. Xuanzang tells a similar account of these events:

In the great mango grove five or six li to the southwest of the city (Ayodhyā), there is an old monastery where Asaṅga Bodhisattva received instructions and guided the common people. At night he went up to the place of Mañjūra Bodhisattva in Tuṣṭa Heaven to learn the Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra, the Mahāyāna-sūtra-ālamkāra-śāstra, the Mādhyānta-vibhāga-śāstra, etc.; in the daytime, he lectured on the marvelous principles to a great audience.

Asaṅga went on to write many of the key Yogācāra treatises such as the Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra, the Mahāyāna-saṃgraha and the Abhidharma-samuccaya as well as other works, although there are discrepancies between the Chinese and Tibetan traditions concerning which works are attributed to him and which to Mañjūra.

The Yogācāra school held a prominent position in Indian Buddhism for centuries after the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Teachings and devotions of this school have influenced and become well-established in East Asian Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism.

Yogācāra and Mādhyamaka

As evidenced by Tibetan sources, this school was in protracted dialectic with the Mādhyamaka. However, there is disagreement among contemporary Western and traditional Buddhist scholars about the degree to which they were opposed, if at all. To summarize the main difference in a way so brief as to risk the accusation of inaccuracy, while the Mādhyamaka held that asserting the existence or non-existence of any ultimately real thing was inappropriate, some exponents of Yogācāra asserted that the mind (or in the more sophisticated variations, primordial wisdom) and only the mind is ultimately real. Not all Yogācāra, however, asserted that mind was truly existent. According to some interpretations, Vasubandhu and Asaṅga in particular did not.

The position that Yogācāra and Mādhyamaka were in dialectic, was expounded by Xuanzang in the 7th century. After a suite of debates with exponents of the Mādhyamaka school in India, Xuanzang composed in Sanskrit the no longer extant three-thousand verse treatise The Non-difference of Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra.

Some later Yogācāra exponents also synthesized the two views, particularly Śāntarakṣita in the 8th century, whose view was later called "Yogācāra-Svatantrika-Mādhyamaka" by the Tibetan tradition. In his view the Mādhyamaka position is ultimately true and at the same time the mind-only view is a useful way to relate to conventionalities and progress students more skillfully toward the ultimate. This synthesized view between the two positions, which also incorporated views of valid cognition from Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, was one of the last developments of Indian Buddhism before it was extinguished in the 11th century during the Muslim incursion.



Conclusion

During its existence, Estonian Nyingma has worked under the guidance of Vello Vaartnou, who has generated all these original and inventive ideas and projects.



The goal of all Estonian Nyingma` activities has been to gather and preserve materials and facts about Buddhism and about the Buddhists of our times for future generations.

When we compare the small number of Estonian Nyingmapas to the outcome of their projects, we can conclude that Estonian Nyingma has been quite efficient in producing innovative conferences, online encyclopedias and original Buddhist thangkas and art; as well building stupas, temples and prayerwheels.

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