



Scuola Italiana di Studi  
sull'Asia Orientale  
ISEAS



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# 2010 KYOTO LECTURES

Thursday, October 28th, 18:00h

Judith Snodgrass SPEAKER

## Towards a Global Buddhism?

### The *Young East* and the Lumbini Festival

This talk reports on a work in progress, a study of the *Young East*, an English language journal published in Tokyo from 1924. The *Young East* shows strong intra-Asian activity in the formation of modern Buddhism. Its founders, Sakurai Gichō, Takakusu Junjirō, and Watanabe Kaigyoku, all had well established and long standing links with academics and nationalist leaders in India and other parts of Asia (and the West). The very name of the association is intriguingly resonant with the journal founded by Mohandas K. Gandhi to air his political thought (*Young India*, 1919-1932). The *Young East* similarly provided a forum for the discussion and dissemination of modern humanist Buddhism. It was instrumental in the formation of the Tokyo World's Buddhist League which aimed to 'serve as a connecting link between the various Buddhist movements of the world'; a forerunner of current global Buddhist movements.

The talk will revisit earlier work by the speaker on the Lumbini festival—a transformation of the traditional Japanese celebration of the Buddha Sakyamuni's birthday into a mass public performance of Buddhist modernity organized by the journals founders. The aim is considering the place of this initiative in a history of such celebrations manifested most recently in the international festivals that have occurred since Vesak was declared a United Nations day of international celebration in 2004.

**Judith Snodgrass**, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, is author of the book, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: Orientalism, Occidentalism and the Columbian Exposition*, University of North Carolina Press, 2003. She has written several articles on the history of modern Buddhism, with particular focus on the East West interaction in the process. She is currently president of the Australasian Association of Buddhist Studies.

**This lecture will be held at the Institute for Research in Humanities (IRH), Kyoto University (seminar room, 1st floor).**

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