

## On the Opening of the China-Japan Joint Symposium

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IT has been a singular honor for the Institute of Oriental Philosophy to have been given the opportunity to hold a joint symposium with the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the most prominent research institution in China.

The Institute of World Religions is a specialist national institution, and I wish to express my deepest gratitude to three of China's most distinguished scholars, Professors Wu Yungui, Yan Zengwen and He Jingsong for their participation in the symposium.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the Chinese professors and to discuss the purpose of the symposium and the circumstances that led to holding it.

Former Director, Professor Wu Yungui is an outstanding scholar in the studies of Islam and apart from his work at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, he also serves as a member of the State Council's Academic Committee, as the Vice President of the Chinese Society for Religious Study and the Vice President of the International Scientific Committee, UNESCO.

Professor Yan Zengwen is a well-known scholar in the field of Buddhist research and also serves as the Head of the Department of Buddhist Studies of the Institute of World Religions that leads China's researches on Buddhism. Having conducted overseas research at Kyoto University, Japan, and Cornell University, USA, he is a writer of numerous books including those on the history of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism.

Professor He Jingsong is an up-and-coming scholar and serves as the Vice Chief of the Department of Cultural Arts of Buddhism of the Institute of World Religions. He specializes in comparative studies in the Buddhism of Chinese Buddhist countries. Included in his writings are *Discussion on Nichiren* and *Soka Gakkai's Principles and Practices*.

I should now like to discuss the circumstances that led to the holding of the symposium. This year marks the seventh anniversary of signing the agreement for academic ties between the Institute of World Reli-

gions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy in October 1992. Last year we suggested that a joint symposium be held to commemorate this anniversary. We received a most positive and prompt response, which led to the holding of this symposium. The decision to make the Lotus Sutra the theme of the symposium was due to the growing awareness that a clue of solutions to the myriad global issues facing humanity at the threshold of the 21st century lie in Buddhist philosophy and in particular in the Lotus Sutra—the essence of Buddhist teachings.

At the symposium we look forward to a thorough discussion by the participating scholars on how the Lotus Sutra has served as spiritual nourishment in China and Japan. As we also express the debt of gratitude we owe to China for the transmission of Buddhism, we also aspire that humanity benefit from the Lotus Sutra now and in the future. The symposium will provide an opportunity to make an in-depth study on the ideas and principles of the Lotus Sutra from the perspective of the history of Buddhism beginning with Shakyamuni, T'ien-t'ai (Chih-i, 538–597) of China, Nichiren Daishonin (1222–1282) and the Soka Gakkai.

There is no greater joy than the fact that these discussions will be an initial step towards a further in-depth study and that the joint endeavors of our two institutions may contribute to the future of humankind.