

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Institute of Oriental Philosophy was founded by Soka Gakkai International (SGI) President Daisaku Ikeda on January 27, 1962. Now, on the happy occasion of the 50th year since its founding, we are celebrating the successful completion of its progress to produce and publish the facsimile edition of Gilgit manuscripts of the Lotus Sutra belonging to the National Archives of India. We wish to offer to all who participated in this project our heartiest congratulations and thanks.

In July of 2010, Professor Dr. Lokesh Chandra, the Director of the International Academy of Indian Culture, a Buddhologist and authority of world standing on matters pertaining to the Vedic language, with whom the members of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy had been cooperating, sent a letter to SGI President Ikeda, the founder of the institute. In it, Dr. L. Chandra writes that when he showed the facsimile editions and romanized versions of the Lotus Sutra Manuscript Series to Professor Mushirul Hasan of the National Archives of India and the other members of his organization, they expressed their admiration to the researchers and staff of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, working on behalf of the Soka Gakkai, for the splendid way in which the project had turned out.

In February of 2011, I and other staff members of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, together with Dr. Noriyuki Kudo, Associate Professor at the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology of Soka University, paid a visit to the National Archives of India in New Delhi. At that time, we consulted with the Director General, Professor Mushirul Hasan, the Deputy Director, Dr. Sanjay Garg, and the Deputy Director, Dr. Meena Gautam, regarding matters pertaining to publications of facsimile editions of the valuable Gilgit manuscripts in the possession of the National Archives. It was agreed that the assembling and publication of a facsimile edition of the Gilgit Lotus Sutra manuscripts in the possession of the National Archives should be carried out jointly by the Soka Gakkai and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, and that the assembling and publication of facsimiles containing other sutras' Gilgit manuscripts should be left to the undertakings of Soka University's International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology. Later, these agreements were put into formal language and distributed to all those concerned.

The bulk of these manuscripts, which were discovered in 1931 in the interior of a building in Naupur, near Gilgit in the region of Kashmir, were turned over to the care of the National Archives of India, although a few of them escaped to countries outside of India. Those that did so were folios or fragments of manuscripts, which have since been

published and their contents made known by scholars studying them in Europe, India, Japan, and other countries. Later, in 1974, through the efforts of Dr. Raghu Vira and Dr. Lokesh Chandra, most of the photographs possessed by the National Archives of India have been published in the Śata-Piṭaka Series 10 in New Delhi. In 1982 Dr. Oskar von Hinüber published *A New Fragmentary Gilgit Manuscript of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, a copy of the Gilgit fragmentary Lotus Sutra manuscript preserved in the Sir Pratap Singh Museum in Srinagar, Kashmir.

Though 80 years have passed since the discovery of the Gilgit manuscripts, we cannot say that the circumstances of their discovery, the state in which they were found, or the historical conditions of the time, have been subjected to the kind of deep and searching inquiry that one would like. However, with the introductory article supplied by Dr. Hinüber to the manuscripts published at this time, something of one's hopes is finally fulfilled. In it, not only the manuscripts of the Lotus Sutra but those of other sutras as well are supplied with the sort of background material of the sociological and cultural circumstances that surrounded the Gilgit finds, in a manner sufficient to meet those demands.

And in addition, the introductory remarks supplied by Dr. Lokesh Chandra to the study draw attention to the special importance of the finds, including those of the Lotus Sutra manuscripts, and briefly outline their special importance and the progress of their examination.

With the realization of a colored facsimile edition of the Gilgit Lotus Sutra manuscripts, work can now begin on comparisons between it and other texts of the Sanskrit Lotus Sutra, which will contribute to the main concerns of scholars of the philological significance of the finds. While, because of the extremely rich and abundant number and volume of the Nepalese Lotus manuscripts, there remains much fertile ground for further study of them, according to the researches of the late Professor Hirofumi Toda, Professor Emeritus of Tokushima University, the oldest readings of the Nepalese Lotus manuscripts appear to be quite close to those of the Gilgit manuscripts, and he states that the Gilgit readings are related to those in the Tibetan versions of the sutra.

One of the objectives of the Lotus Sutra Manuscript Series is to examine and compare various readings of the Nepalese manuscripts and clarify those readings into groups. The results of the study by the late Professor Shoko Watanabe, found in his *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Manuscripts Found in Gilgit, Part One and Part Two*, which was published in 1972 and 1975, has offered a start in the study of their relations to the Gilgit manuscripts. And the present publication continues the process, building on the

results of the previous endeavors and will make it possible to go into concrete philological studies, following Professor Toda's speculations.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed to this publication, to Dr. Lokesh Chandra, Professor Mushirul Hasan, Director of the National Archives of India, and to all their associates, to Dr. Oskar von Hinüber of Freiburg University of Germany, who contributed an introductory article, and to Director Professor Seishi Karashima and Associate Professor Noriyuki Kudo of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University who offered to us their valuable advice, to Mr. Noriyoshi Mizufune, Researcher in charge of manuscript projects of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, and to all the others who helped to bring this project to a successful conclusion.

Yoichi Kawada  
Director  
Institute of Oriental Philosophy  
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