

Greetings

Einosuke Akiya

THE Soka Gakkai is pleased to announce the publication of the eighth work in its Lotus Sutra Manuscript Series, entitled *Xixia Version of the Lotus Sutra from the Collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences*. It was edited by Dr. Tatsuo Nishida, professor emeritus of Kyoto University and a world-renowned authority on the Xixia language. I wish here to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Nishida and all those who helped to make this publication possible.

The Xixia version of the Lotus Sutra was prepared on the basis of an Agreement for Exchange entered into by the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, a Japanese foundation located in Tokyo. The work presents facsimiles of manuscripts and xylographs of the Xixia version of the Lotus Sutra in the possession of the above-mentioned Institute of Oriental Studies in Russia, along with the text of Kumarajiva's Chinese translation of the Lotus Sutra, which formed the basis for the Xixia version of the sutra.

Of the facsimiles of the manuscripts and xylographs included herein, the originals of the color ones were shown earlier in the exhibition entitled "The Lotus Sutra and Its World" held in Tokyo in November of 1998 and sponsored jointly by the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy. The monochrome facsimiles are based on microfilms that were presented to the president of the Soka Gakkai International, Daisaku Ikeda. It is a rare event to have texts in the Xixia language introduced in such number and such beautiful color reproductions.

According to the historical records, the Xixia state ruled an area in the eastern part of the Silk Road from the beginning of the 11th to the 13th century. It prospered in a region that was active in the East-West trade, and controlled urban centers such as Dunhuang that were home to various ethnic groups and were markedly international in character. The state displayed a high level of cultural development, devising its own unique Xixia system of writing and translating many Buddhist sacred

texts into Xixia. It was, in effect, a Buddhist state whose inhabitants were well familiar with such texts. Among these, the Lotus Sutra seems to have been held in particular esteem, the Xixia ruler himself having participated in the process of translating it into Xixia. In some of the xylographs of the sutra such as that of the 25th chapter, which concerns the bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, the text is accompanied by illustrations. Now, when the Xixia state has long since vanished from the scene, we are more than ever moved to think that the Lotus Sutra commanded a place of such intense devotion among the many peoples that inhabited the state and by individuals of varied social station.

We, members of the Soka Gakkai and Soka Gakkai International, are presently engaged in a wide range of peace-oriented, cultural and educational activities in numerous areas of the world, hoping thereby to ensure that the 21st century will be an era of peace. And the backbone of all our endeavors is the belief in the dignity and equality of all persons that is expounded in that same Lotus Sutra, hailed from early times as "the king of sutras."

We are firmly convinced that the light of the Lotus Sutra, in concert with the SGI's exertions for world peace, will transcend barriers of time and place and shine more brightly than ever.

The Soka Gakkai Lotus Sutra Manuscript Series is designed to present facsimile reproductions and romanized texts of examples of the Lotus Sutra that are of particular scholarly importance, our hope being that, in doing so, we may contribute to studies of Buddhism throughout the world. A committee was set up in January of 1994 to plan the project, and so far seven works have been published. The plan is related to the fact that in the past Mr. Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International, has received as gifts from academic institutions in various countries a number of reproductions of valuable Lotus Sutra manuscripts that are in their possession.

Ten years have now passed since we began publication of the series and we have in large part completed our original plan. We offer here a listing of all the works in the series:

1. *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Fragments from the Lüshun Museum Collection, Facsimile Edition and Romanized Text.* (1997)
- 2-1. *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Manuscript from the National Archives of Nepal (No. 4-21), Facsimile Edition.* (1998)
- 2-2. *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Manuscript from the National Archives of Nepal (No. 4-21), Romanized Text 1.* (2001)
- 2-3. *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Manuscript from the National Archives of*

- Nepal (No. 4-21), Romanized Text 2.* (2004)
3. *Fragments of a Manuscript of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra from Khādaliq* (presently the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China). (2000)
 4. *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Manuscripts from Cambridge University Library (Add. 1682 and Add. 1683), Facsimile Edition.* (2002)
 5. *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Manuscript from University of Tokyo General Library (No. 414), Romanized Text.* (2003)

In the publication of the series as a whole, we were fortunate in receiving the cooperation of the late Dr. Hirofumi Toda, professor emeritus of the University of Tokushima, an authority on the study of Sanskrit manuscripts.

The publication of the first item in the series, *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Fragments from the Liishun Museum Collection*, was carried out with the kind assistance of the late Professor Jiang Zhongxin of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Ms. Sanimaiya Rana, then chief of the National Archives of Nepal, and other persons associated with the Archives, were of great help in the publication of the second item in the series, *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Manuscript from the National Archives of Nepal* and the Romanized texts that accompanied it. Dr. Toda supervised the photographing of the manuscripts, traveling to Kathmandu to do so, and also acted as editor of the romanized texts.

The publication of the third item, *Fragments of a Manuscript of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra from Khādaliq*, was proposed by Dr. Heinz Bechert, then director of the Seminar für Indologie und Buddhismuskunde of the University of Göttingen; the editing was done by Dr. Klaus Wille of the same Seminar.

For the publication of the fourth work, *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Manuscripts from Cambridge University Library*, we are much indebted to the assistance of Deputy Librarian D. J. Hall, Mr. Craig Jamieson, keeper of Sanskrit manuscripts, and other members of the library staff.

The publication of the fifth item, *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Manuscript from University of Tokyo General Library*, was guided by Dr. Toda; Mr. Haruaki Kotsuki, a researcher in charge of manuscript studies of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, contributed to the project by acting as editor.

On the occasion of the present publication, the latest in the series, *Xixia Version of the Lotus Sutra from the Collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies*, we wish to thank Dr. Yuri A.

Petrosyan, the original director of the Institute; Dr. Evgenij I. Kychanov, the former director; and all the other members of the Institute, as well as the editor, Dr. Nishida, for their wholehearted cooperation.

Dr. Nishida contributed a highly valuable study entitled "On the Xixia Buddhist Scriptures" which appeared in the Institute of Oriental Philosophy's publication *The Silk Road and Buddhist Culture, Continued* in 1980, and over the years he has been extremely helpful in other ways. In spite of illness and major surgery, he has continued to contribute to the successful completion of the present publication, for which we offer our most sincere thanks.

He not only carefully oversaw the preparation of this publication on Xixia manuscripts and supplied an explanatory essay, but has undertaken other written works for us. I know that all those throughout the world who are concerned with Xixia studies and research related to the Lotus Sutra will join us in wishing him health and long life and will look forward eagerly to future publications from his hand.

Thus, through the kind assistance of persons who recognized the scholarly importance of our undertaking, we have been able to proceed to the present point in our series of publications on Lotus Sutra manuscripts. We are deeply gratified by the welcome and praise that have so far been bestowed on the series by scholars and specialists worldwide who are concerned with the study of Indian Buddhism and Buddhist literature. Such a response lends great encouragement to those of us responsible for the series.

Once more we offer our sincerest thanks to all those persons and institutions who were charged with the handling of the manuscripts involved in these publications.

To bring my greetings to a close, I would like to affirm our determination to pursue a wide variety of activities consonant with the teachings of Buddhism, striving thereby for the realization of world peace. With regard to the Lotus Sutra manuscript series, we will continue our research step by step, with similar activities centering around the Institute of Oriental Philosophy.

October 2, 2004

*This article is reprinted from the *Xixia Version of the Lotus Sutra from the Collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2005).