

The Role of the Lotus Sutra Exhibition in Inter-civilizational and Inter-religious Dialogue

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ALONG with traditional exhibitions of Western and Japanese art, Japanese museums and art museums have increasingly begun to hold exhibitions with a Buddhist theme in recent years. Buddhist teachings are said to number 80,000¹ and as the influence of Buddhist thought is widely prevalent in Japanese society, such exhibitions are not unusual. However, the contemporary trend for exhibitions featuring Buddhist themes is for the focus to be placed on specific temples. This provides viewers with a unique opportunity because when the entire temple is featured, the displays can include a wider variety of works that have been overlooked previously and is a chance for closer examination of the historical context in which these works were produced. From the year 2000 onwards, exhibitions have featured not only temples such as Todaiji, Nishi Honganji, and Nanzenji, but also the founders of sects such as Nichiren and Kukai. These exhibitions have drawn crowds numbering in the thousands.²

Looking back at the special exhibitions that have taken place over the years at the Tokyo National Museum, Kyoto National Museum, Nara National Museum, and Kyushu National Museum, themes related to Buddhism have varied from artwork to specific sects, sect founders, and statues of the Buddha. However, an exhibition dedicated to a particular sutra is rare³ and only a few studies on touring exhibitions have been conducted to date.⁴

Planned and produced by the Institute of Oriental Philosophy (a public interest incorporated foundation; hereafter IOP), the exhibition titled, 'The Lotus Sutra — A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence' (hereafter The Lotus Sutra Exhibition), is a highly unique undertaking as most exhibitions sponsored by museums or art museums both within and outside of Japan mainly tend to feature traditional Japanese artwork or Chinese works of art or culture, rather than a particular Buddhist teaching. This exhibition is centered on a single sutra and its aim is to deepen the understanding of the culture and history surrounding this

teaching by chronicling its dissemination and its acceptance by various cultures.

This exhibition examines the Lotus Sutra, which is one of the most important Buddhist teachings within those regarded as the Mahayana School which traversed a northern route.⁵ As Buddhism spread from India to China, the Korean Peninsula, and then to Japan, many artifacts and works inspired by its teachings were created in East Asia. Among these works are manuscripts of the sutra as well as frescoes in the Dunhuang Mogao Caves,⁶ and replicas of these works are displayed in the exhibition.

In this way, the Lotus Sutra Exhibition, themed on the Lotus Sutra alone, differs from any other exhibition produced by domestic institutions. Another feature of this exhibition which merits note is the fact that the content was modified as it toured internationally with the IOP and local organizers working together to customize exhibition items and replicas specifically in accord with requests from the host country.

This exhibition can be researched from several perspectives including museology, exhibition studies, architecture, as well as touring exhibition studies. Approximately 60 percent of domestic museums are history museums, therefore, there are many examples of research regarding exhibitions with historical themes. However, “in the fields of museology and exhibition studies, research regarding permanent exhibitions at historical museums report mainly on local circumstances of the exhibitions”,⁷ in most instances. Very few studies report on the effects that touring exhibitions have on the culture and ways of thinking of the countries or regions where they are held.

Factors such as the exhibition content and the location and scale of the facility have to be carefully considered when holding an exhibition, as these influence the impression that viewers walk away with. Exhibitions are not only planned and produced by museums, but also by universities, research institutes, libraries, or corporations. Here again, when looking at the research, papers which center on exhibitions by museums represent the largest share while papers centering on exhibitions sponsored by libraries and other institutions are severely limited.

To summarize, this article aims to shed light on the features of the Lotus Sutra Exhibition as a touring exhibition and the cultural impacts it has on the host regions both in and outside of Japan. It will also explain how the exhibition is tailored to the location.⁸ These aspects have rarely been reported on in the field of museology and in conjunction with the fact that the principal organizer of this exhibition is an academic

research institute and not a museum, the author hopes the article will contribute to the expansion of this area of study.

The Significance of the Lotus Sutra

Firstly, the centerpiece of the Lotus Sutra Exhibition is, of course, the Lotus Sutra and in order to explain the significance of this teaching in various countries, it is necessary to understand its place within the overall context of Buddhist teachings. If a person were to ask, "Which sutra is representative of all Buddhist teachings?" it would be difficult to choose just one out of the 80,000 that are said to exist. What would be the criterion that could be used to judge? Perhaps it could be the oldest teaching of the Buddha, or a measure of the cultural and societal influence a certain teaching had in the world, or the number of followers or believers of a sutra in a particular community. Depending on the criterion, a different teaching would be chosen. Among all the world religions, Buddhism may be the most diverse in the variety of sacred texts that are used as a basis for the teachings. The complexity connected to the width of interpretations of the original texts is the cause of so many different sects and schools of thought within Buddhism.

Buddhism as taught by Shakyamuni⁹ mainly spread to East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. In the process of its spread, many cultural influences can be observed such as in the ruins of Gandhara (Afghanistan), the Dunhuang Caves (China), Bulguksa Temple (South Korea), and the ruins of Borobudur (Indonesia). Buddhist influences vividly appear in the architecture, literary works, and artwork of each region.

The Lotus Sutra is one teaching within the school of Mahayana Buddhism, and according to the *Iwanami Dictionary of Buddhism*, it was established as a teaching circa 50 CE to 150 CE making it a relatively new addition to the body of Buddhist teachings. Due to differences in the information contained in Buddhist texts of the northern route and southern route (Ceylon), the exact timing of the Buddha's birth and death has yet to be agreed upon. Akira Hirakawa states, "A number of different theories have been advanced concerning the birthdate of the Buddha."¹⁰ He also states, "dates [by the northern route source] of 463–383 B.C.E. for the Buddha would be appropriate; they fit in well with the subsequent history of the development of the Buddhist order... [H]owever [it] should not be interpreted as a rejection of the Sri Lankan chronicles as sources."¹¹

The earliest compilations of Shakyamuni's original teachings were

made about one hundred years after his death,¹² and the Lotus Sutra was most likely compiled four to five hundred years afterwards. Due to this long gap in time, there is a long-standing argument that the Lotus Sutra and other Mahayana teachings are not the direct teachings of Shakyamuni. Furthermore, in refutation of the claim of the Lotus Sutra being ‘the king of sutras’, it is pointed out that the phrase “So likewise, this sutra is king of the sutras”¹³ is taken from the Lotus Sutra itself. Therefore, much doubt has been cast on the validity of this claim throughout history.

Yoshiro Tamura writes:

European and modern scientific research methods were introduced into Japan, and into the field of Buddhist studies during the Meiji period, and Japanese scholars undertook to study original texts and do historical research on them. Along with this came the theory that the Mahayana is not the words of the Buddha — that is to say, the idea that Mahayana sutras are not authentic sermons of Shakyamuni. There was a call for a return to an early, or fundamental, form of Buddhism.¹⁴

However, he also points out:

As recent research on early sutras has progressed, the idea that these early sutras, because they are the earliest, are the words of the Buddha has become suspect. Among the early sutras, the Pali sutras had been thought to be earlier than the Agama sutras that exist in Chinese translation, but research comparing the two has revealed that this is not necessarily so. Research has found that some components of the Pali sutras were formed somewhat later than the Agama sutras. In addition, there are definite indications that some components of both the Pali sutras and the Agama sutras were formed after the early Mahayana sutras. If this is so, the conviction that early sutras are the earliest, and thus the words of Buddha, cannot be firmly established.... Thus, even if we return to early Buddhism or to the early sutras, we reach the conclusion that we cannot confidently say that they are the earliest, or the words of the Buddha. If it is said that Mahayana is not the words of the Buddha, the same has to be said of the early sutras.¹⁵

Thus, the conclusion being, there was no practical use in deciding the importance of sutras based on the timing of their compilation.

Regarding the origins of Buddhist scriptures, Prof. Seishi Karashima states:

In Shakyamuni's time, there was no written language. Not only in that time, but for a long period after that, this continued to be the case. The early sutras that are known today as the Five-volume Pali Sutras and the Four-volume Agon Sutras translated into Chinese were originally transmitted orally for hundreds of years by monks who specialized in memorizing and reciting them (bhānaka reciting monks). The bhānaka reciters had the important task of faithfully memorizing and reciting the sutras that the Buddha is said to have taught and passed them on to the next generation. Without them, the early Buddhist scriptures would not have survived to the present day.¹⁶

Since the scriptures did not exist in written form for a long period after the Buddha's death, it can be said that the date of the establishment of the scriptures in written form is not related to their authenticity as the Buddha's teaching.

Although the view that Mahayana teachings are non-Buddhist has existed for many centuries, it has become increasingly difficult to decisively conclude that the Lotus Sutra and other Mahayana teachings are non-Buddhist due to evidence that continues to emerge as research advances.

The IOP and Its Founder's View of the Lotus Sutra

Hajime Nakamura, on the other hand, regarded the Lotus Sutra as “the most representative of all the Mahayana teachings, often called, ‘the king of all sutras’ because it is the highest of all Buddhist teachings, and it is worshipped widely as such in many Asian countries”,¹⁷ and that “‘the Lotus Sutra’ is the foremost of all sutras”.¹⁸ He believed that the Lotus Sutra was the ultimate Buddhist teaching. Regarding the extent of the Lotus Sutra's influence, Tamura states:

Faith in the Lotus Sutra has been especially strong in China and Japan. Systematic teachings, worldviews, and philosophies of life based on the Lotus Sutra have been developed in those countries. It has been applied to political ideas and has had such an influence on literature that there has developed a Lotus Sutra literary genre.¹⁹

The Lotus Sutra was translated into 11 languages²⁰ before the 20th century, mostly in East Asia. In the West, it was one of the first sutras to be translated into French²¹ by the linguist Eugène Burnouf,²² and this work was in turn translated into English²³ for the first time by the

philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson²⁴ and writer Henry David Thoreau.²⁵

As we can see, although the details of the origins of the Lotus Sutra are still under debate, its influence on culture and language as it was propagated has been significant. Putting aside the religious debate on the superiority or inferiority of the Lotus Sutra, its immense value as a historical and cultural heritage is indisputable. At the very least, there should be no serious problem in treating it as a representative sutra among the many Buddhist sutras. In fact, by making the Lotus Sutra the theme of an exhibition, a wider audience will come to know the ways in which Buddhism was transmitted as well as gain insight into the process of how the sutras came to be. The cultural and social influence of the Lotus Sutra Exhibition carries great significance.

The IOP was founded by Daisaku Ikeda in January 1962 to promote research on Eastern thought and in particular, Buddhist thought and philosophy, and to conduct interdisciplinary research in order to contribute to overcoming the many problems facing humanity. The Lotus Sutra Exhibition directly relates to this mission of the IOP.

Ikeda identifies the position of the Lotus Sutra by stating,

When Shakyamuni attained enlightenment, his wisdom and compassion were directed towards the salvation of the people. This became embodied in the many Buddhist scriptures that adorn the history of the religion. Among these, the Lotus Sutra in particular represents an attempt to express and embody the Dharma to which Shakyamuni himself awakened, and it has been conspicuously embraced by the peoples of the East.²⁶

He also explains, “The reason that the Lotus Sutra was propagated so widely is because of the profound religiosity contained within this sutra — the fusion of the state of cosmic life with its simple method of expression.”²⁷

In a dialogue with Chinese scholars, Ikeda states:

[E]ven if several hundred years had passed since the Buddha’s death, it would be impossible to claim that the Mahayana sutras were arbitrary fabrications, totally unrelated to Shakyamuni. And even if the teachings of Shakyamuni were committed to writing years after his death, it is entirely reasonable to assume that an oral tradition of the Buddha’s discourses had evolved and was transmitted from generation to generation. This can be said not only of the Lotus Sutra, but also of other Mahayana sutras that appeared during the

same period.... Accordingly, the simplistic view which holds that only the Hinayana sutras represent the Buddha's teachings, and categorically condemns the Mahayana sutras as false and illegitimate, is not acceptable. Rather, it would be more accurate to say that the Mahayana as well as the Hinayana sutras evolved from the teachings of Shakyamuni.²⁸

Ikeda clarifies his position on the debate about the authenticity of Mahayana Buddhism by explaining:

I believe that in the compilation of the Lotus Sutra, the concepts that were the essence of Shakyamuni's original teachings took form under the influence of the historical conditions and philosophical trends of that period.... When I read the Lotus Sutra, I am deeply moved by the vibrancy of the text. This is a result of the compilers' excellent choice of central concepts in the Buddha's teachings which were handed down in the writings and oral tradition. I cannot help but be impressed by the ability of talented individuals among the compilers to profoundly comprehend the Buddha's enlightenment and to present these concepts so splendidly in the text.²⁹

With this background of academic research, combined with the historical trends and content of the sutra itself, the IOP places great importance on the Lotus Sutra, and for this reason, commenced planning, producing, and holding of the exhibition.

The Lotus Sutra Exhibition: Its Content and Changes Over Time

Since 1994, the IOP has been researching and publishing the Lotus Sutra Manuscript Series³⁰ which contributes to the study of the original texts of the Lotus Sutra. This series includes the Petrovsky Manuscripts,³¹ which have been published as *The Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Manuscripts from the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (SI P/5, etc.)*, *Facsimile Edition*, and *The Gilgit Lotus Sutra Manuscripts from the National Archives of India, Facsimile Edition*. It has also published a number of books on Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra, both in Japan and abroad. The institute has also actively held exchanges with scholars studying Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra in Japan and abroad, including Lokesh Chandra, Ji Xianlin, and Hajime Nakamura. It continues to hold symposia and workshops as well as publish research

articles in journals.

The IOP strives to make its research results public by holding exhibitions such as ‘The Lotus Sutra and Its World — Buddhist Manuscripts of the Great Silk Road’³² in 1998 and 2000, ‘The Lotus Sutra — The World Spiritual Heritage’³³ in 2003 and 2004, and ‘The Lotus Sutra — A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence’ held several times since 2006. It also held an exhibition from 2016 to 2018 on the broader theme of Mahayana Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra titled, ‘Buddhist Sutras: A Universal Spiritual Heritage — Manuscripts and Iconography of the Lotus Sutra’.³⁴

The first ‘Silk Road’ Lotus Sutra exhibition in 1998 featured 47 items from among the 100,000 items archived by the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IOM RAS, then Saint Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the RAS), including original manuscripts of sutras and block prints shown for the first time in Japan. One world-renowned authority on Sanskrit Lotus Sutra manuscripts, Dr Hirofumi Toda,³⁵ even remarked, “How lucky I am to have lived to see this day! This is my straightforward impression about my first viewing of this original manuscript”³⁶ upon laying eyes on them. This comment reveals how precious the displayed items were.

From that time to the present³⁷ the content of the exhibition has been renewed and the title has been changed to ‘The Lotus Sutra — A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence’. This exhibition has been organized with the full assistance of not only the IOM RAS,³⁸ but also the Dunhuang Research Academy³⁹ and the International Academy of Indian Culture (IAIC).⁴⁰ A characteristic feature of this exhibition is the extent to which the commentaries, replicas, resources, and reproduced images have been co-created and authorized by the supporting institutes. Due to the high degree of cooperation from these institutes and the generosity with which they have granted access to collection items, the number of visitors to this exhibition and the number of venue countries vastly outnumber those of previous IOP exhibitions. In the background of the development of trust between these three institutes and the IOP is the amicable exchanges that the founder, Daisaku Ikeda, has had with these institutes over a period of many years as well as the frequency of cross-institutional exchange with the IOP centered on Lotus Sutra research (see Photo 1). From the first exhibition held in 2006 in Hong Kong, it has expanded in scale from year to year with the exhibition in Tokyo totaling 150 display items, which has become the base for the current exhibition of 2022.

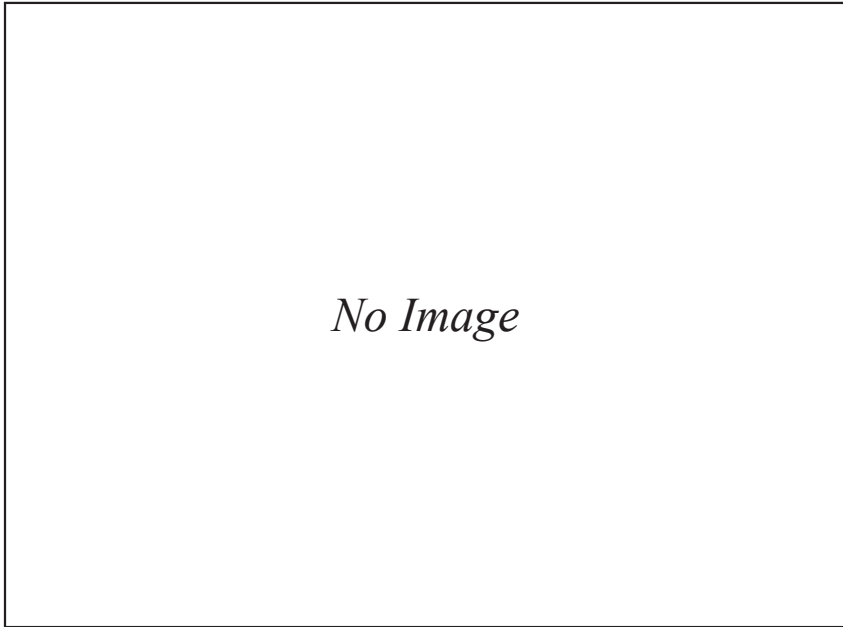


Photo 1 Founder of the IOP, Daisaku Ikeda, viewing ‘The Lotus Sutra and Its World — Buddhist Manuscripts of the Great Silk Road’ exhibition, which was the precursor to ‘The Lotus Sutra — A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence’ exhibition. (November 1998 in Tokyo) ©Seikyo Shimbun

The underlying concept behind the Lotus Sutra Exhibition was “to see the Lotus Sutra with one’s eyes”.⁴¹ Therefore, the content of the exhibition was geared for an audience that included not only researchers and experts in the field, but also made easy for members of the general public to understand. First, the focus is placed on the Lotus Sutra as one of the main teachings of Mahayana Buddhism and introduces the northern path it traversed. Display items such as replicas of sutra manuscripts of East Asia and images of the frescoes from the Mogao Caves of Dunhuang in China vividly illustrate the reality of Buddhist influence as it spread eastward from India to China, the Korean peninsula, and then to Japan. In contrast to a traditional museum exhibition, there are very few original works on display, which is also a defining characteristic of this exhibition. From this perspective, the display items were leveraged to provide a deeper understanding of the Lotus Sutra and how the Lotus Sutra impacted the cultures it came into contact with. Based on this, the planning and production of the exhibition was divided into five different parts.

1. The Birth of Buddhism and the Propagation of the Lotus Sutra

Panels in this introductory section explain the birth of Shakyamuni, the establishment of Mahayana Buddhism, the compilation of the Lotus Sutra, translation by Kumārajīva into Chinese, and then the cultural influences of the Lotus Sutra in East Asia. The main theme is ‘how the Lotus Sutra was transmitted’ and the introduction states, “The transmission of Buddhism was not something that happened as a matter of course. The Buddhist teachings were protected and spread by numerous practitioners who overcame various hardships, sometimes even at the cost of their lives.”⁴² Also, “Even today, the Lotus Sutra contains wisdom that must be passed on to future generations no matter what difficulties await.”⁴³ As representatives of those who have preserved and faithfully transmitted the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni, King Ashoka, King Milinda (Menander I), Nāgasena, King Kanishka, Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, Kumārajīva, Fa-hsien (Faxian), Hsüantsang (Xuanzang), I-ching (Yijing), Chih-i (T’ien-t’ai), Chan-jan (Miaolo), Ganjin, Saicho (Dengyo), and Nichiren are listed. The panels briefly describe each person’s life and the region in which they were active, along with an explanation of the Buddhist ruins, terminology, and artifacts connected with that person.

2. The Diversity of Translated Languages

This part of the exhibition features facsimiles of the manuscripts and block prints of the Lotus Sutra and other Mahayana sutras held in the collections of the IOM RAS and IAIC. It also shows that the Lotus Sutra was translated into over 10 different languages including Sanskrit, Old Uygur, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Xixia (Tangut) as it was propagated. The Sanskrit manuscript of the Lotus Sutra, part of the Petrovsky Manuscript collection, and the Gilgit manuscript,⁴⁴ which was preserved underground for one thousand years, received great attention from visitors.

3. The Lotus Sutra Manuscript Series

The publication committee of the Lotus Sutra Manuscript Series was set up in 1994 and the exhibition features both photographic and Romanized versions of the Lotus Sutra manuscripts that have been published thus far with the cooperation of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the National Archives of India, the British Library, and the Asiatic Society, Paris. A very interesting feature of the exhibition is that it explains that the Buddhist sutra manuscripts are divided into three lineages.

4. Buddhist Artifacts Gifted from Various Institutions

In the course of his ongoing exchanges with research institutes and researchers around the world that house manuscripts of the Lotus Sutra, Ikeda has been presented with many Buddhist artifacts closely related to the Lotus Sutra. Researchers include Dr Chang Shuhong,⁴⁵ Dr Duan Wenjie,⁴⁶ and Dr Jao Tsung-I⁴⁷ in China, and Dr Lokesh Chandra in India, as well as institutes such as the Dunhuang Research Academy and the Institute of Kucha Caves.⁴⁸ In this part of the Lotus Sutra Exhibition, a statue of Kumārajīva, the first print of the Kern-Nanjo edition manuscripts, and the painting ‘Flying Beings’ are on display. These artifacts greatly enhance this section as they are among the few original artifacts in the exhibition held by an institute that is not a museum or art gallery. Given that items in the other sections of the exhibition are more educational in nature, the display of the original artifacts in this section is aesthetically a great draw for visitors and provides them with an opportunity to experience Buddhist art.

5. Dunhuang Mogao Cave Frescoes

The Dunhuang Research Academy has sponsored the Lotus Sutra Exhibition from its inception and, beginning with the Singapore exhibition, it has taken part as a co-organizer. In this capacity, it has generously provided artifacts and other textual and photographic resources. Documents relating to the Lotus Sutra have the largest share among the several tens of thousands of ancient documents discovered in Dunhuang.⁴⁹ In the exhibition, the frescoes depicting the doctrines⁵⁰ and parables contained in the Lotus Sutra, such as the Parable of the Three Kinds of Medicinal Herbs and Two Kinds of Trees,⁵¹ are accompanied by detailed explanations from the Academy, which indicates its understanding of the fundamental concept of the exhibition. It also provides replicas of the Lotus Sutra manuscripts unearthed in Dunhuang.

Depending on the venue country or region, and the degree to which the audience is familiar with Mahayana Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra, the IOP seeks advice and works in conjunction with local academic or educational institutes. For example, the National Museum of Korea and the National Museum of Indonesia were asked to assist the IOP’s efforts by providing materials, giving permission for the making of replicas, and adding appropriate explanations to existing commentaries of display items. The Japanese version of the exhibition guidebook was completed in 2013 and translations of the guidebook in Chinese (traditional and

simplified), Korean, and English followed.

Two other fundamental guidelines for the exhibition are to provide explanations with a clear objective⁵² and to convey information that is based on a purposeful intent.⁵³ There is a standard set of display items for the Lotus Sutra exhibition, but the scale of the exhibition can be changed depending on the size of the venue and the audience. It goes without saying that it is necessary to physically adapt the display to each exhibition site, but the level of understanding of the audience is also an important factor. Planning and production take place under the guidance of the IOP but the actual panel design and exhibition layout are carried out by the host organization. Therefore, although the display items are the same, the way in which the items are presented to the audience differs according to each location. The examples of the South Korea and Thailand exhibitions illustrate this process in detail.

The Exhibition in South Korea

In this section, I will briefly review the history of the introduction of Buddhism in South Korea and Thailand and clarify how Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra are understood in these two countries. Then, I will present the challenges of holding exhibitions in both countries, the differences in the way they responded to these challenges, and how the exhibition was received based on questionnaire answers of visitors.

Egaku Maeda writes, “Because Japan has benefitted by learning about Buddhism from Korea, we cannot hold a proper discussion about Buddhist history if we ignore Korea.”⁵⁴ He adds:

It is interesting to note that Korean Buddhism has its own history that is older than that of Japanese Buddhism, and that it has shown different tendencies from those of Japan, even though it also received Buddhism from China. Knowing the characteristics of Korean Buddhism is essential for understanding the characteristics of Japanese Buddhism.⁵⁵

In the process of Buddhism’s travel eastward from India, Korea played a crucial role in Japan’s acceptance of Buddhism.

However, currently, although Buddhism is one of the major religions in South Korea, Christianity has a greater influence in the country.⁵⁶ In addition, even though the theme of the exhibition is Buddhism, it was planned and produced by a Japanese research institute, and in consideration of some negative reactions this could cause it to receive,

some of the contents were modified and the panels translated by Korea Soka Gakkai International (KSGI), the co-organizer of the exhibition.

There is no doubt that the acceptance of Buddhism in Korea, which was brought from China, greatly impacted and benefited Japan, not only in terms of religion but also in terms of culture and lifestyle. In the guidebook and on the panels connected with this history, a description of the history of the reception of Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra in Korea, which was not explained in detail in the Lotus Sutra Exhibition in Tokyo, was added. Including the additions described in the following paragraphs, the exhibition in South Korea (held in Seoul) displayed 200 items, the largest number of any Lotus Sutra Exhibition held to date.⁵⁷

The new exhibition focused on the propagation of the Lotus Sutra in Korea during the Three Kingdoms Period, the Northern and Southern Kingdoms Period, the Goryeo Period, and the Joseon Period. This includes the reception of the Lotus Sutra from China (Three Kingdoms Period), the construction of the Sakyamuni Pagoda and the Many Treasures Pagoda at Bulguksa Temple (Northern and Southern Kingdoms Period), the establishment of the Goryeo Tripitaka (Goryeo Period), and the rise of Lotus Sutra copying (Joseon Period). It also mentions that the *Taisho Tripitaka*⁵⁸ edited in Japan is based on the *Goryeo Tripitaka*,⁵⁹ which shows that the Lotus Sutra has been influential in the Korean Peninsula since ancient times, and this influence in Korea impacted Japan's acceptance of the Lotus Sutra (see Fig. 1).

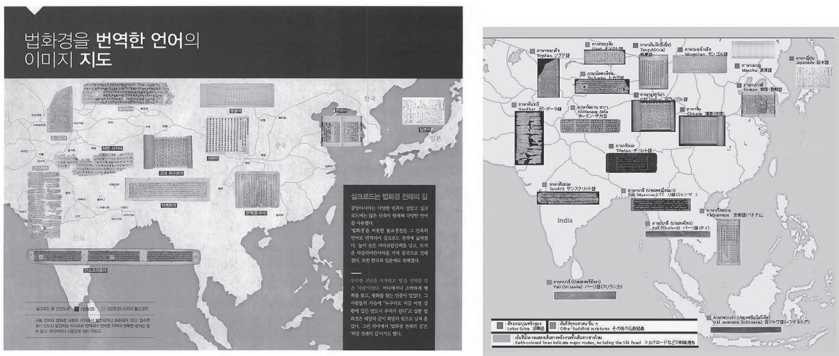


Fig. 1 The panels created for the exhibitions in South Korea (on the left) and Thailand (on the right) show the acceptance of the Lotus Sutra in each country. The South Korean exhibition features sutras that traversed the northern route, whereas the Thai exhibition features those that were transmitted to Sri Lanka and Thailand.

With these additional explanations, the South Korean exhibition had basically the same exhibition items as the Tokyo exhibition. However, there were two other aspects that were significantly different.

One was a change in layout and content. The exhibition was scaled up in size as compared to the Tokyo one. Since the planning was executed by a Japanese research institute, the original panels and guidebook contained many detailed explanations of how the Lotus Sutra was accepted by the people of Japan, but only a few that touched on its acceptance in the Korean Peninsula. As the Lotus Sutra Exhibition toured overseas, the display items and panels that were used in the Tokyo exhibition served as the base, but the content was finalized in consultation with each host institution.

For these reasons, the exhibition in South Korea had to be tailored to reflect the wishes of the host institution and the societal background of Korea. While there is still some anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korea, its role in the history of the transmission of culture from China to Japan, in particular Buddhist culture, is of utmost importance. The focus of this section of the exhibition in South Korea was altered to minimize the description of the Lotus Sutra's influence on Japanese culture and instead the description of how the Lotus Sutra influenced Korean culture was given more play. Emphasis was placed on the content of the Lotus Sutra's teachings and the history of its acceptance.

With special assistance from the National Museum of Korea and Horim Museum, replicas of artifacts designated as Korean national treasures and important cultural properties were made available for display. The National Museum of Korea authorized replicas of the *Lotus Sutra in Silver on Indigo Paper* (1422) and *Volumes 5 to 7 of the Lotus Sutra* (1488), which are designated as important cultural properties, while the Horim Museum authorized a replica of the *Lotus Sutra in Ink on White Paper* (1377), which is a national treasure from the Goryeo period.

In addition to explaining the history of the reception of the Lotus Sutra in Korea, these artifacts also provide concrete evidence of the spread of the Lotus Sutra and its beliefs on the Korean Peninsula. Although the artifacts are replicas, they are of immeasurable importance in providing support for these explanations. In addition, the cooperation of these two major South Korean museums enabled the traveling exhibition to retain the scale and degree of influence of the Tokyo exhibition.

Another fundamental difference in the South Korean exhibition was that 200 volunteer staff from KSGI were stationed throughout the exhibition to assist with explanations (see Photo 2). Previous exhibitions

had staff or researchers from the IOP to assist with explanations on occasion, but South Korea was the first exhibition to have full-time docents throughout the entire exhibition period.

Tota Nomura et al., in their 1993 paper, comment about the impact of having such guides:

Although there were some logistical considerations, such as how to allocate the time for explanations in each section, having overall explanations allowed visitors to spend about twice as much time watching the exhibition as those who do not receive any explanations. This would suggest that the explanations had an effective impact on visitors' lifelong education and learning. In the case of spot explanations in certain sections, the viewing time was extended somewhat. In particular, when the behavior of visitors was observed carefully, it could be seen that after receiving an explanation, visitors tended to view the exhibition more carefully from that point on or went back to a section they had already visited, indicating that the explanation was effective. This method of display and explanation has yet to become a common activity in museums, but it is something that may potentially change the way of thinking about the reasons why exhibitions are held in the first place along with the enhancement of the learning that takes place after viewing.⁶⁰



Photo 2 The second South Korean exhibition in Busan (August–October, 2018). As in Seoul, docents, who were not experts or specialists, were trained to provide live explanations about the exhibition, which were based on Daisaku Ikeda's view of the Lotus Sutra.

In the exhibition in South Korea the docents were not researchers or curators with specialized knowledge, but members of the general public who started with more or less the same amount of background knowledge as the visitors. Through numerous study meetings focused on understanding the content of the exhibition, they were able to gain knowledge about it from the same starting point as the visitors, which sensitized them to the questions that viewers might have as they viewed the exhibition. The head of the docents, Mr Jeong Junghwan⁶¹ commented:

Six months before the exhibition started, we held weekly study meetings. At first it was difficult to come to an understanding about Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra but the more we studied, the more we became excited about our roles as docents to help visitors understand more deeply about the history of the acceptance of Buddhism in Korea and the Lotus Sutra's spread across East Asia.

Through this experience, the importance of having docents to help explain parts of the exhibition was established and for the exhibitions that followed in Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia, docents were trained and fulfilled a vital role in the success of the exhibition.

Questionnaires⁶² were randomly distributed to visitors, and here I would like to share some of the findings regarding what visitors thought of the docents and the content of the exhibition:

I thought this was a very high-level exhibition in terms of the aesthetic expression of religion. I felt that the starting point of true peace is achieving equality without discrimination, especially when learning about the Parable of the Medicinal Herbs. I once again discovered the meaning of compassion and peace. The Lotus Sutra is an artistic teaching that elucidates the true path of a human being and shows how to become more humanistic. (Member of Gyeonggi Provincial Assembly)

I was able to deepen my understanding of the history of Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra through this exhibition. When viewing the mural from the Dunhuang Caves, I was most impressed by the phrase 'all beings have within themselves the life of the Buddha' from the Lotus Sutra, which I did not really understand before. This has been an excellent opportunity to become more familiar with the Lotus Sutra. (Former Aide to the Prime Minister)

I had never heard of the Lotus Sutra before, but I was very impressed by the fact that so many different kinds of people, regardless of race or gender, thought highly of this teaching and copied the manuscripts. I was also surprised to learn that this teaching contained the story of the enlightenment of women and how carefully the teachings were preserved for so long. This exhibition's message, regardless of its religious aspect, is a very positive one. I was also encouraged to know that others were working for the sake of peace and seeking happiness, just like myself. (Kyung Hee University Graduate Student)

There were some critical comments such as about the lettering being too small or the content of the exhibition being too difficult to understand, but the majority of the comments were positive, praising the multi-faceted approach to explaining the flow of history. The history of the acceptance of Buddhism in Korea goes back to ancient times, but there are very few opportunities to learn about this in contemporary daily life. This exhibition provided a chance for viewers to heighten their awareness of Buddhism as a humanistic way of thinking based on the principles of peace which value equality of all people without discrimination based on race or gender. Regarding this point, the South Korean mass media also showed understanding. Articles in both Korean and Japanese were published in *JoongAng Ilbo*, which was also a co-organizer, and KBS (Korean Broadcasting System) and *Chosun Ilbo* also covered this event.

Public broadcaster KBS News reported, "An exhibition featuring the Lotus Sutra, one of the most copied and read scriptures in the history of mankind, has opened. Please see this exhibition which conveys the message of realizing the dignity of each individual and to act for the happiness of others." Yonhap News Agency also reported, "This exhibition introduces Buddhist philosophy and artifacts that have conveyed the spirit of human dignity and the importance of peaceful coexistence in Asia and the West for 2000 years."⁶³ Similarly, the *Cheonji Ilbo* reported, "The exhibition introduces the philosophy and relics of Buddhism, which for 2000 years has carried the message of human dignity and appealed for coexistence in Asia and the West,"⁶⁴ and praised the exhibition highly for conveying the message of human dignity and coexistence as taught in the Lotus Sutra.

Beyond the fact that this exhibition promoted understanding of the religion and culture of Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra, the cooperation of Japanese and South Korean institutions in co-organizing an exhibition on a theme that is historically familiar to both countries was

highly significant in light of the current political and economic situation of these two countries. Especially noteworthy was the widespread understanding and sympathy that resonated in South Korean society for the message of peace and coexistence expressed through the exhibition.

The Exhibition in Thailand

Thailand is said to be the largest Theravada Buddhist country in Southeast Asia with 94 percent of its population being Buddhist.⁶⁵ Regarding the acceptance of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia, Yoneo Ishii writes,

Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia has its roots in Sri Lanka. One of the schools of Buddhism that originated in India was transmitted to Sri Lanka and there, the teachings were cultivated, then spread to various regions in Southeast Asia across the Bay of Bengal.... In the interior regions of Southeast Asia, Theravada Buddhism flourished under the protection of kings and strongly influenced all aspects of people's daily lives to the point where traditional values and people's lives in Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia cannot be talked about without mentioning Buddhism.⁶⁶

As Thailand is a country pervaded by Theravada Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra Exhibition⁶⁷ required some modifications — similar to those needed in countries which are predominantly Christian or Islamic. The IOP and the hosting institution had to re-examine how to best present the Lotus Sutra, which is a Mahayana Buddhist text. In Thailand, the panels were translated into Thai by the Soka Gakkai Thailand, the co-organizer of the exhibition, and modifications to the content were made based on feedback and experience gathered from the Tokyo and South Korea exhibitions (see Fig. 1). Just as with the KSGI, Soka Gakkai Thailand was well-suited for this task as it shared a long history of working together with the Soka Gakkai in Japan on translations of various publications, including the Thai version of the Lotus Sutra, and possessed a deep understanding of the Lotus Sutra and Buddhism. This background was opportune for bilateral communication about the needs of the exhibition. There were 160 display items in the Thai exhibition, putting it in second place after South Korea.

Questionnaires were also randomly distributed among visitors to the Thai exhibition,⁶⁸ to obtain first-hand responses about the measures implemented:

To those who are studying Buddhism through the Lotus Sutra and other sutras, this exhibition presented everything I wanted to know very nicely. I was able to learn so much in a short amount of time. I felt it was a very valuable experience for me to see this exhibition. My understanding of the Lotus Sutra and Mahayana Buddhism has been deepened through this exhibition. I would like many more Thai people, especially the younger generations of Buddhists to see this Lotus Sutra Exhibition. It would be wonderful if they could also further their understanding of the Lotus Sutra and implement its teachings in their daily lives. (Associate Professor, Burapha University)

From what I could gather, I think the most important message of the Lotus Sutra is to continually re-evaluate your own values along with the people in your surroundings, to live in harmony with those around you, and to show mutual respect. This exhibition was of very high value to me. As a human being, I felt there was much more that I can learn through Buddhism and about Buddhism. I am thankful from the bottom of my heart to the organizers of this exhibition. (Faculty member, Chulalongkorn University)

The people who saw this exhibition have been provided with an opportunity to not only learn about Buddhist history and how to live lives of peace and harmony through Buddhist teachings, but also how Buddhist principles can be applied in daily life. The more people understand the message of this exhibition, the more Thai society as a whole will become stable and united toward development. (Superintendent of Education, Bangkok, Bang Khun Thian District)

Compared to the participants in South Korea, the visitors in Thailand seemed to have understood the content of the exhibition more, so there were fewer critical opinions about difficulties in comprehending the content. Instead, there were many opinions related to how interesting it was to see Buddhism from a different perspective. In other words, from the answers to the questionnaire, it can be seen that a Theravada Buddhist background provided a good basis for comparison, and although they recognized differences in the religious texts, the core message resonated with the Thai audience and made them hopeful that these principles would be applied to daily life and in society.

Two characteristic features of the Thai exhibition were: 1) change in the images for promoting the Lotus Sutra Exhibition and 2) strong

support from Thailand's Ministry of Culture. Before the Thailand exhibition, promotional materials such as posters and the homepage freely used images of manuscripts of the Lotus Sutra, Ashoka pillar, and the 'Flying Beings' depicted in the Mogao cave frescoes to show potential visitors that this exhibition features Buddhist artifacts.

However, given the religious background of Thailand, images related to Mahayana Buddhism and the sutra manuscripts were not advertised for the Thai exhibition. Instead, one of the main images that was used in the panel of the exhibition entrance and for promotional flyers was the statue of young Kumārajīva. Kumārajīva was one of the priest-translators who worked on translating the Lotus Sutra into Chinese. By placing the focus on a priest as a spreader of the Buddha's teachings, whether it be Mahayana or Theravada, issues regarding differences in religious sects or doctrines could be de-emphasized and a larger audience addressed.

In the exhibition, emphasis was also placed on introducing the academic and objective aspects of the Lotus Sutra and replicas of manuscripts of Theravada sutras in Pali were put on display. Another important replica that served a crucial role was the Gandhari translation of the Dhammapada⁶⁹ which was written in the first or second century. The Pali version of the Dhammapada is one of the most beloved scriptures in Theravada Buddhism and explaining that Buddhism was able to spread into Central Asia because it was translated into Gandhari illustrates why it holds a very important place in the history of the spread of Buddhism. In addition, a video depicting the westward transmission of Mahayana Buddhism from India and Western Asia to China, then across the Korean peninsula into Japan also shows how Buddhism spread to Thailand, Cambodia, and Indonesia.

Thailand's Ministry of Culture, which always actively promotes exhibitions of Japanese art, again lent strong support. The Ministry's press release⁷⁰ regarding this exhibition, titled 'Thai people's understanding of Buddhism creates harmony and morals to make a strongly supportive society', stated, "One purpose of this exhibition is to spread the philosophy of the Lotus Sutra, a Buddhist scripture which promotes peace and harmonious coexistence. Another purpose is to make widely known, the various beautiful languages, artwork and culture connected to the Silk Road which is one of the world's greatest heritages." The Minister, Vice Minister, Minister's Cabinet Secretary, and Administrative Vice Director were all present for this press release.

This press release from the Ministry of Culture spurred the media outlets in Thailand to report on this exhibition. According to the Soka

Gakkai Thailand, there were at least 52 news reports by 32 media sources: 10 newspapers (14 times), six television stations (10 times), one radio station (once), 15 Internet sites (27 times).

Furthermore, Thailand's Ministry of Culture also informed schools about the exhibition, and schools organized outings to see it (see Photo 3) so that many children were able to attend. One result of this was that the organizer, Soka Gakkai Thailand, receiving a commendation from a public junior and senior high school, Chaichimpleewittayakhom School, proved that the exhibition had increased the understanding of Buddhism.

In the Thai exhibition, just as in South Korea, members of the Soka Gakkai Thailand acted as docents. The success of this approach in South Korea was shared with the organizers in Thailand, and that is probably the reason why they also adopted it. Due to this effort, visitors to the Thai exhibition seemed to walk away with a deeper understanding as compared to the Tokyo and South Korea exhibitions and a total of 125,000 viewers visited the exhibition. As with the exhibition in Korea, exact figures are not available, but the high number of visitors indicates that despite the fact that the exhibition contained elements of Buddhist doctrine and was originally produced by a Japanese institution, these factors were not of primary concern to visitors. A positive impression was left on many visitors making this a highly successful exhibition.



Photo 3 Many children and students were excited to see the exhibition (May 2017). A wide variety of people viewed the exhibition including Theravada Buddhist monks and Privy Council advisors.

The Role of the Lotus Sutra Exhibition

It is the norm for museums and art museums to feature original artifacts as the main attraction in an exhibition. However, the Lotus Sutra Exhibition mainly displays replicas. As of 2022, the exhibition has been opened in four cities in Japan — Tokyo, Hyogo, Fukuoka, and Hokkaido — with a total of 240,000 visitors. Overseas, the exhibition has been held in 16 countries and regions across Asia, Europe, and South America in countries such as India, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and Brazil with 660,000 attendees. Altogether, the editions of the exhibition across Japan and the rest of the world have hosted 900,000 visitors (see Table 1). The fact of it having traveled to various countries around the world and opened multiple numbers of times makes this exhibition rather unique.

Since admission to the exhibition is free of charge,⁷¹ not only did it attract specialists and researchers, but also many people from the general public. Based on the responses to the questionnaires and the pictures taken of visitors, it can be seen that attendees ranged from the elderly to elementary and junior high school students. The objective of the exhibition was for the audience to deepen its understanding of Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra through the displays and artifacts, and a majority of viewer responses indicated this. In a 2017 questionnaire conducted by the Japan Buddhist Federation,⁷² people were asked what images they associated with the words ‘Buddhism’, ‘temple’, and ‘priest’. Most had a rather negative image such as ‘funeral’ or ‘memorial service’ associated with these words. Only 10 percent of the people surveyed replied that they associated them with positive images such as ‘friendly’, ‘actively propagating the teachings’, and ‘contributing to world peace’. When considering Buddhism in this context, this exhibition contributes to both improving its image through its presentation of the Lotus Sutra as well as providing an opportunity to share

<i>The Lotus Sutra — A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence Exhibition: List of host countries and territories</i>		
1	Hong Kong	2006, 2007, 2015
2	Macau	2007
3	India	2007, 2008, 2009, 2010
4	Spain	2009, 2012
5	Nepal	2010
6	Brazil	2010, 2011
7	Sri Lanka	2011, 2013
8	United Kingdom	2011
9	Japan	2012, 2013, 2014
10	Taiwan	2013, 2015
11	Malaysia	2014
12	Argentina	2014
13	South Korea	2016, 2018
14	Peru	2016
15	Thailand	2017
16	Singapore	2017
17	Indonesia	2019

Table 1 List of countries/territories and exhibition dates of ‘The Lotus Sutra — A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence’. (Compiled by the author)

the message of this teaching with a wide audience.

Additionally, even though the original planners and producers of the exhibition are a Japanese research institute, by working together with local organizers in the respective countries, the translations and expressions of the content took on a more universal hue, and as experience was gained through each iteration, improvements were incorporated. The Lotus Sutra Exhibition has transformed as it tours and has helped to deepen the understanding of the Lotus Sutra in South Korea and Thailand. This is most likely true of the other countries it has toured in Asia and Europe as well. It is clear that the Lotus Sutra Exhibition, which aims to promote understanding of different cultures and religions, has greatly assisted the IOP in achieving one of its most important aims of promoting inter-civilizational and inter-religious dialogue.

The Lotus Sutra Exhibition has also given shape to the wishes of Daisaku Ikeda contained in the founding guideline:

What sets this research institute apart from others is its commitment to maintain a continuous direct connection with the people. Most other institutes cater to the needs of a limited few with their research going unnoticed by the general populace, but is that how things should be? Our institute chooses to divert from this path of isolation and will continue to share our findings with a wide audience. We shall always be together with the people.⁷³

For future research, I would like to turn my attention to the influence of the Lotus Sutra Exhibition on countries with a shorter history of Buddhism such as those in Europe and South America. I would also like to explore the specific ways in which the ideas of peace and coexistence are understood and spread through this exhibition activity.

Notes

¹ '80,000' is a rounding off of the '84,000' teachings said to exist in Buddhism. There are an incredible number of sutras and teachings attributed to Shakyamuni. Also known as *Hachiman Shogyo* [Eighty-thousand Sacred Teachings] and *Hachiman Hozo* [Eighty-thousand Storehouses] from *Seisenban Nihonkokugo Daijiten* 精選版日本国語大辞典 (Select Edition of the Comprehensive Dictionary of Japanese) (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2006).

² Kei Itoi 糸井恵, 'Kinnenno jinten, bukkyo bijutsu bumu 近年の寺院展、仏教美術ブーム' (The recent boom of Buddhist temple exhibitions and Buddhist

- artwork), *Sekai shuho* 世界週報 (World affairs weekly) (Tokyo: Jijitsushinsha, 2004), 68–71.
- ³ Information obtained through the homepages of each museum. Tokyo National Museum: https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=1470, Kyoto National Museum: https://www.kyohaku.go.jp/jp/tenji/koremade/koremade_archive_tokuchin.html, Nara National Museum: <https://www.narahaku.go.jp/exhibitionion/past.html>, Kyushu National Museum: https://www.kyuhaku.jp/exhibitionion/exhibitionion_old-sp.html. Retrieved on March 26, 2021.
- ⁴ “There have been studies concerning visitor behavior such as tracking visitor flow or item-viewing time of exhibition displays, but these studies have been limited to exhibitions at art museums,” from Tota Nomura et al. 野村東太他 ‘Hakubutsukan no tenji kaisetsuga raikansa koi ni ataeru eikyo 博物館の展示・解説が来館者行為に与える影響’ (The Influence of Exhibitions and Explanations on Visitors of Museums), *Nihon kenchiku gakkai keikaku kei ronbun hokokushu* 日本建築学会計画系論文報告集 (Architectural institute of Japan collection of planning-related papers), vol. 445 (1993): 73. Currently, not only are there very few studies in existence on the subject of exhibitions which are not related to art museums or museums, but there are also no studies about how visitors are affected domestically or internationally by touring exhibitions.
- ⁵ A group of Buddhist teachings made their way from India to China through a northern route. Among those are teachings of the Mahayana School and Tibetan Buddhism.
- ⁶ Positioned as a major hub on the ancient Silk Road, Dunhuang, China has been an important center for trade between East and West. It is a place where several religions, cultures, and knowledge melded. The stony Mogao Caves, which are also known as the Thousand Buddha Caves are located approximately 25 km from the city center on a cliff of Mount Mingsha. First beginning to be excavated from the Former Qin era around 366 CE, 492 grottoes of various sizes containing frescoes or colorful statues have been discovered to date. It has been regarded as sacred ground for Buddhist artwork throughout the one thousand years excavation has continued. See also the China National Tourism Administration Osaka homepage: <http://www.cnta-osaka.jp/heritage/mogao-caves>. Retrieved on March 26, 2021.
- ⁷ Translated from Japanese. Aki Masuda 増田亜樹, Tomoko Usuda 碓田智子, and Naoki Tani 谷直樹, ‘Koritsu rekishi hakubutsukan no josetsu tenji no ruikai to sono hensen ni kansuru kenkyu 公立歴史博物館の常設展示の類型とその変遷に関する研究’ (Study on Classifications and Transition of Permanent Exhibitionions in Public Museums of History), *Nihon kenchiku gakkai keikaku kei ronbun hokokushu* 日本建築学会計画系論文報告集 (Architectural institute of Japan collection of planning-related papers), vol. 667 (2011): 1745.
- ⁸ This article is based on a Master’s thesis submitted in 2019 to The Open University of Japan titled, ‘*The Lotus Sutra — A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence* Exhibition and Its Effect on the View of the Lotus Sutra at Exhibition Locations’. New content has been added and the article has been revised in its entirety.
- ⁹ The progenitor of Buddhism is known by many names such as Gautama Siddhartha and Buddha, but in this article, he is mainly referred to as Shakyamuni.
- ¹⁰ Akira Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early*

- Mahāyāna*, trans. by Paul Groner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 22.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.
- ¹² Hirakawa suggests that sutras with longer texts were edited within one hundred years after Shakyamuni's passing.
- ¹³ Burton Watson trans., *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2009), 327.
- ¹⁴ Yoshiro Tamura, *Introduction to the Lotus Sutra*, trans. by Gene Reeves and Michio Shinozaki (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2014), 16.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.
- ¹⁶ Translated from Japanese. Seishi Karashima 辛嶋静志, 'Daijobukkyo to Gandara — Hannyakyo, Amida, Kannon' 大乘仏教とガンダーラ — 般若経・阿弥陀・観音 — (Mahāyāna Buddhism and Gandhāra — On the Prajñāpāramitā, Amitābha and Avalokitasvara), *Soka daigaku kokusai bukkyogaku koto kenkyujo nenpo* 創価大学国際仏教学高等研究所年報 (Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University), vol. 17 (2014): 451.
- ¹⁷ Translated from Japanese. Hajime Nakamura 中村元, *Gendaigoyaku Daijobukkyo 2 Hokkekyo* 現代語訳大乘仏教 2 法華経 (Modern Translation of Mahayana Buddhism vol. 2 The Lotus Sutra) (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 2013), 15.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.
- ¹⁹ Tamura, *Introduction to the Lotus Sutra*, 56.
- ²⁰ Institute of Oriental Philosophy, ed., *Guidebook: The Lotus Sutra — A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence* (New Delhi: Eternal Ganges Press, 2017).
- ²¹ Eugène Burnouf, *Le Lotus de la bonne loi, traduit du sanscrit, accompagné d'un commentaire et de vingt et un mémoires relatifs au buddhisme* (The Lotus of the Good Law, translated from Sanskrit, accompanied by a commentary and twenty-one memoirs related to Buddhism) (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1852).
- ²² French linguist and Orientalist.
- ²³ Daisaku Ikeda 池田大作 and Lokesh Chandra ロケッシュ・チャンドラ, *Toyo no tetsugaku o kataru* 東洋の哲学を語る (Buddhism — A Way of Values: A Dialogue on Valorisation Across Time and Space) (Tokyo: Daisan bunmeisha, 2002), 267.
- ²⁴ American thinker and poet. Established Transcendentalism and is a pioneer of American philosophy.
- ²⁵ American thinker and writer. Influenced by Emerson's Transcendentalism and pursued "a pure nature absent of man".
- ²⁶ IOP, ed., *Guidebook: The Lotus Sutra*, 10.
- ²⁷ Translated from Japanese. Toyo tetsugaku kenkyujo ed. 東洋哲学研究所編, *Gaidobukku Hokekyo ten — Heiwa to kyosei no messeji* ガイドブック 法華経展——平和と共生のメッセージ—— (Guidebook: The Lotus Sutra — A Message of Peace and Harmonious Coexistence) (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Philosophy, 2014), 7.
- ²⁸ Daisaku Ikeda, Ji Xianlin, and Jiang Zhongxin, 'Dialogues on Eastern Wisdom (2)', *The Journal of Oriental Studies* 12 (2002): 21.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 23–26.
- ³⁰ This collaborative project between the IOP and the Soka Gakkai involves digitizing the manuscripts as photographic records and publishing Romanized translations of the Lotus Sutra manuscripts which are housed in overseas research institutes. The IOP homepage (<http://www.totetu.org/>) states that the objective

of this project is “to contribute to the furthering of research of early Mahayana Buddhism centered on the Lotus Sutra by making the manuscripts widely available to researchers.” As of 2022, 19 manuscripts have been published.

- ³¹ This manuscript, which is thought to have been written in the ninth or 10th century, was discovered in Central Asia on the outskirts of Khotan. The Russian consul general stationed in Kashgar, Nikolai F. Petrovsky (1837–1908) acquired a large share of the manuscripts and sent them to the Asiatic Museum under the Imperial Academy of Sciences, the precursor of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IOM RAS).
- ³² The IOP co-organized the exhibition together with the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The event was sponsored by the Russian Embassy of Japan, the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs, the Soka Gakkai, the Soka Gakkai International, and the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University. The Josei Toda International Center which hosted the exhibition (November 10–30, 1998) had 50,000 visitors.
- ³³ This exhibition featured texts and pictures related to the Lotus Sutra. It traveled from India to Sri Lanka and Singapore and had 30,000 visitors.
- ³⁴ The scope of this exhibition was expanded to include Buddhism as a whole. This exhibition was held in Paris, Rennes, and Marseille with 9600 visitors in attendance.
- ³⁵ Honorary Professor of Tokushima University and specialist of Buddhology.
- ³⁶ IOP, ed., *Guidebook: The Lotus Sutra*, 113.
- ³⁷ The scope of the exhibitions ‘The Lotus Sutra and Its World — Buddhist Manuscripts of the Great Silk Road’ and ‘Buddhist Sutras: A Universal Spiritual Heritage — Manuscripts and Iconography of the Lotus Sutra’ is not limited strictly to the Lotus Sutra and both are no longer being held. ‘The Lotus Sutra — the World Spiritual Heritage’ was only shown in France, so it will not be addressed in this article.
- ³⁸ The IOM RAS, originally the Asiatic Museum under the Imperial Academy of Sciences, is a leading research institute for Oriental Studies established in 1818. After the Russian Revolution, it became part of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in 1930 with the establishment of the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg. It boasts a world-class collection of approximately 85,000 manuscripts in 65 different languages, including valuable Buddhist manuscripts of sutras and copies of manuscripts from Central Asia and regions connected with the Silk Road excavated in the late 19th century.
- ³⁹ The Dunhuang Research Academy, originally the National Research Institute on Dunhuang Art, was established as a national research institute in 1984 and is charged with overseeing the protection, promotion, and research of the Mogao Caves and has been carrying out activities for many years toward this mission.
- ⁴⁰ The International Academy of Indian Culture (IAIC) was established in 1935 by Raghu Vira and is dedicated to Buddhist and Oriental Studies. The institute aims to collect items related to Indology from throughout the Asian region and research and publish their findings. Dr Lokesh Chandra, who is the former president of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the son of Raghu Vira, serves as the director.
- ⁴¹ From the IOP homepage (<http://www.totetu.org/>). Retrieved on March 26, 2021.

⁴² IOP, ed., *Guidebook: The Lotus Sutra*, 20.

⁴³ Translated from Japanese. Toyo tetsugaku kenkyujo, ed., *Gaidobukku*, 12.

⁴⁴ A group of manuscripts discovered in 1931 at the ruins of Naupur near Gilgit. It is believed to have been copied in the sixth or seventh century and is one of the oldest complete manuscripts of the Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures.

⁴⁵ Honorary Director of the Dunhuang Research Academy.

⁴⁶ First Director of the Dunhuang Research Academy.

⁴⁷ As lifetime Chair Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Professor Emeritus at several prestigious universities, he was an accomplished sinologist, calligrapher, and poet. His academic pursuits ranged from Buddhism to Confucianism, archeology, Dunhuang studies, and linguistics. He was considered one of the greatest social scientists by his contemporaries.

⁴⁸ The mission of this institute is the protection and research of the Kizil Thousand Buddha Caves and their artifacts. It is located in Kucha, the birthplace of Kumārajīva.

⁴⁹ Several tens of thousands of ancient documents were preserved in Cave 17 of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang. Near the end of the 19th century, Taoist Wang Yuanlu discovered these manuscripts and in 1907 sold some of the manuscripts to Aurel Stein and then a great many more the following year to Paul Pelliot, which led to the documents traveling to Great Britain and France and becoming known throughout the world. (From *Encyclopedia Nipponica*, Shogakukan, 1994. Translated from Japanese.)

⁵⁰ A pictorial representation of Buddhist doctrine.

⁵¹ A parable contained in the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra tells the story of a nourishing rain falling from a cloudy sky on plants of varying types and sizes (three kinds of medicinal herbs and two kinds of trees). In this parable, the rain is a metaphor for the Buddha's teachings which is delivered universally to all, and the various types of plants are a metaphor for the variety of people with different capacities and personalities. Depending on individual differences, the benefits derived from the Buddha's teaching vary, but ultimately all are led to Buddhahood. This metaphor also provides the concept of peaceful coexistence between diverse identities. (From IOP, ed., *Guidebook: The Lotus Sutra*, 145.)

⁵² Translated from Japanese. Yuji Kato et al., eds. 加藤有次他編, *Hakubutsukan Tenjiho* 博物館展示法 (Museum exhibition methodology) (Tokyo: Yuzankaku shuppan, 2000), 3.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Translated from Japanese. Egaku Maeda 前田恵學, 'Kankoku bukkyo no tokushitsu — Nihon bukkyo no soretono taihi ni oite 韓国仏教の特質 — 日本仏教のそれとの対比において' (The characteristics of Korean Buddhism: Compared to Japanese Buddhism), *Aichi gakuin daigaku bungakubu kiyo* 愛知学院大学文学部紀要 (Bulletin of the Faculty of Letters of Aichi Gakuin University) (1976): 183.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ In South Korea, the percentages of followers of different religions are: Buddhism, 24.2 percent; Protestant 24.0 percent; Catholic 7.6 percent; and non-religious 43.3 percent. Combining both Protestants and Catholics brings the total of Christian believers to 31.6 percent (from Kyodo News Agency, ed., *2017 World Almanac*, 2017, p. 133).

⁵⁷ The exhibition in South Korea was co-organized by the IOP, Korea Soka Gakkai International (KSGI), and Korean *Joon Ang Ilbo Plus*. Supporting organizations

- included the IOM RAS, the Dunhuang Academy China and the IAIC. The exhibition site — Ikeda Memorial Auditorium in Seoul — was provided by the KSGI. The exhibition lasted from September 21 to December 21, 2016. In 2018, the exhibition was also held in Busan.
- ⁵⁸ Junjiro Takasaku and Kaikyoku Watanabe edited the Taisho Tripitaka from 1924 to 1934 and published it under the auspices of the Tokyo *Taisho Tripitaka* Publication Association. As a searchable index of Buddhist teachings, it is regarded as the most complete and of the highest quality.
- ⁵⁹ Printed from the carved wooden blocks of the *Goryeo Tripitaka*.
- ⁶⁰ Translated from Japanese. Nomura et al., ‘Hakubutsukan no tenji kaisetsuga raikansha kooini ataeru eikyō’, 80.
- ⁶¹ Staff member of KSGI.
- ⁶² Translations from Korean into Japanese by KSGI staff. (English was translated from Japanese.)
- ⁶³ From KBS world (broadcast on September 27, 2016). Translations from Korean into Japanese by KSGI staff. (English was translated from Japanese.)
- ⁶⁴ *Cheonji Ilbo*, September 22, 2016 edition. Translations from Korean into Japanese by KSGI staff. (English was translated from Japanese.)
- ⁶⁵ Kyodo News Agency ed., *2017 World Almanac*, 184.
- ⁶⁶ Translated from Japanese. Yoneo Ishii, ed. 石井米雄編, *Koza bukkyō no jūyō to henyo 2 Tonan ajia hen 講座 仏教の受容と変容 2 東南アジア編* (Adaptation and Transformation of Buddhism in Southeast Asia vol. 2) (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 1991), 1–2.
- ⁶⁷ The exhibition in Thailand was co-organized by the IOP, Ministry of Culture (Thailand), World Buddhist University, and Soka Gakkai Thailand. Supporting organizations included IOM RAS, the Dunhuang Academy China, and the IAIC. The venue for the exhibition was the Headquarters of Soka Gakkai Thailand (Nonthaburi Province), and it was held from May 3 to June 28, 2017.
- ⁶⁸ Translated by staff at Soka Gakkai Thailand into Japanese. (English was translated from Japanese.)
- ⁶⁹ This sutra is one of the divisions in the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism. [From Hajime Nakamura et al., eds. 中村元他編, *Iwanami bukkyōjiten dai nihan 岩波仏教辞典 第2版* (Iwanami Dictionary of Buddhism 2nd ed.) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002)].
- ⁷⁰ Translated by staff at Soka Gakkai Thailand into Japanese. (English was translated from Japanese.)
- ⁷¹ All exhibitions after 2006 were made free of charge.
- ⁷² From the Japan Buddhist Federation report on *Field Survey on Buddhism*, 2017.
- ⁷³ Translated from Japanese. Daisaku Ikeda 池田大作, ‘Sokan o shukusu 創刊を祝す’ (Message of Celebration), *Toyo gakujutsu kenkyū 東洋学術研究* (Journal of Oriental Studies), vol. 1, no. 1 (1962): 1–2.

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