ACIP is Planting Amazing Seeds for 2020!
A Powerful Ending to 2019: Fundraising with ACI

John Brady spreads the vision of *Snow on the Mountain* at ACI’s Bali Steps on the Path event with a presentation on our *Keep Wisdom Alive* campaign to preserve endangered texts at the National Library of Mongolia.

Check out this video of John Brady in action!
Keep Wisdom Alive Campaign Moving Ahead

Milestone event in Bali, Indonesia – Dec. 5–18, 2019
Asian Classics Institute (ACI) played host at a 5-star resort to 700 participants, ages 9 months to 90 years, from a dozen countries, including China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Mexico and the US. Over ten days, there were lectures and meditation instruction, supported by a team of ACI instructors and yogis.

At the teaching, ACIP executive director John Brady gave a rock star musical performance and a beautiful presentation asking for support for our preservation efforts in Mongolia, highlighting our vision going forward in 2020.

Our Keep Wisdom Alive goal: we need 39,500 people to donate $120 each to sponsor the preservation of a volume at the National Library of Mongolia in the next four years. If we can get this many people, we can complete the project by 2024.

We started the project in 2018 and now have ten Mongolian employees—five catalogers and four scanning technicians, who work at four state–of–the–art scanning stations, plus a senior operator. The scanners each preserve 500 volumes per year. At this rate we will not finish until the year 2037.
It’s always possible that the situation at the National Library of Mongolia will change, so going slow is our biggest risk. We would like to speed up and finish by 2024, and we need to increase production in order to do that. This means we actually need 16 scanning stations and additional employees in Mongolia to reach our goal. The cost of this increased capacity is around $500,000 per year for the next four years.

Our Keep Wisdom Alive campaign is aimed at connecting individual people with extraordinary manuscript volumes.

Sponsoring a volume will keep you connected to the wisdom for all eternity, because we will actually put your name on the scan. This is a great blessing and honor. In pre-digital times, the sponsor of a work would have their name engraved on the actual woodblock or hand written on the palm leaf. Here’s the 2020 version: a donation of $120 preserves one volume and puts your name on the metadata of the digital text forever. We have 39,500 volumes to save—so we need to find 39,500 sponsors in the next four years.

We need your passion and we need your help. Can you help us reach our 2024 goal? If you have ideas for how to do this, contact vimala.sperber@asianclassics.org.

Snow on the Mountain

At ACIP, we are very proud of our work to discover and preserve rare, endangered texts of ancient wisdom, which we have been doing for over 32 years. ACIP director John Brady compares our work to snow on the mountain, because the texts we find are often written in ancient languages that modern people find hard to understand—like frozen snow on a high mountain peak that melts and trickles down, nourishing the rest of the world with precious wisdom.

Once the texts—the snow—are preserved and translated, people all over the world can use the wisdom they contain. Now, they are like a refreshing mountain stream that comes from the snow melt, quenching the thirst of millions.
Yoga in Bali

ACIP director John Brady, Latin America regional coordinator Pau Franco, and Dr. John Campbell were among the team of yoga teachers working with the 700 students attending the Lam Rim Retreat in Bali. Our new ACIP Sanskrit project leader John Campbell is also an accomplished yogi. His yoga classes in Bali, fueled by his 20+ years of experience in Ashtanga with Sri Pattabhi Jois, were a great hit. John writes,

“You could not ask for a more perfect location to practice yoga. Such a beautiful location, and such lovely people. It was great fun to teach large classes of yoga beginners of all ages. Students from all over China, Russia, Vietnam, Japan, etc. were so very gracious and appreciative. But most of all, it was an honor to take part in this extraordinary event.”

We are hoping to see more of John teaching yoga to us at future events while he runs the global ACIP Sanskrit project. Stay tuned in 2020 for more on yoga, sacred Sanskrit texts, and ayurveda.
Some of Our Much Valued ACIP Supporters at the Bali Lam Rim Retreat

Marija and Peter Moertl
Sugeng Shi with 2 students
Pau Franco and Pachi Coquet with Geshe Michael Roach

Jenny Wang and Jasmine Yao
Elizaveta Kratasuk
Yao Li Hsu

Gibson Chang and Pau Franco
Sock Teng Ang
**Keep Wisdom Alive Campaign**

**The Campaign**

Our cultural preservation work has very concrete outcomes. Our campaign strategy is to connect individual people with individual volumes of manuscripts and block prints. If donors have a personal connection to actual manuscripts, it will make our preservation effort more transparent.

Therefore we want to offer a unique opportunity for our donors. For your one-time donation of $120, we will inscribe your name on the manuscript metadata, forever to be preserved with that particular volume.

There are different levels of donations: text and collection donations. Text Donors can make a one-time gift to preserve one text volume, and Collection Donors can make a one-time gift to preserve 108 volumes.

**Preserve One Text**

$120 ~ preserves one text volume.

**Preserve a Whole Collection**

$12,000 ~ preserves 108 volumes.

**Wisdom Keeper**

$50,000+ ~ significant donations, please contact Executive Director, John Brady.

Please join us by spreading the word of this exciting campaign at [https://asianclassics.org/get-involved/keep-wisdom-alive/](https://asianclassics.org/get-involved/keep-wisdom-alive/)
Saving Nepal’s Sanskrit Manuscript Treasures One Book at a Time

Threads of Wisdom Visits Nagarjuna Institute of Buddhist Studies Kathmandu

ACIP’s partner Threads of Wisdom began with a mission to physically care for the endangered manuscripts that ACIP preserves digitally. Since 2016, Threads of Wisdom has empowered hundreds of women in Pakistan, Romania, and Nepal, by employing them to sew covers for important manuscript collections in the St. Petersburg National Library, the National Library of Mongolia and most recently several public and private collections in Nepal.

The success of the Threads of Wisdom project is due to Dr. Nour Ibrahim’s incredible dedication and her amazing skill in planting of good seeds! After finishing her PHD at the University of Romania, Nour worked for the UNHCR for several years, and now runs the non-profit Seeds for Peace organization where she focuses on women’s empowerment. Nour is an incredible spirit and ambassador helping to preserve and spread ACIP’s mission.

Threads latest initiative is in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal, devastated by a massive earthquake in 2015. Since 2018 ACIP has partnered with the Nagarjuna Institute of Buddhist Studies (NIBS) in Kathmandu to build a center for the preservation of Sanskrit manuscripts. Generous donations to ACIP have made possible renovations, equipment purchases, along with the hiring of a staff of local Newari women to transcribe and digitally input rescued manuscripts. After many months of training, the NIBS transcription center opened in August 2019.

Nour visited NIBS in July, 2019 with our ACIP team to assess the need of book covers in Nepal and began working with a team of Nepali women to sew the book covers. At NIBS, Nour had the honor of meeting amazing local women, full of hope and dreams. A creative idea of a three-month sewing program in Kathmandu was born after that meeting. Nour realized; “What if we help this group of women by making them sew some book covers to be used in Nepal? This will empower them economically, and at the same time, they will be more connected to their cultural heritage.” Five women were hired in September to start this three month pilot project to sew 400 book covers for several important local collections in Kathmandu.
On completion of the pilot project and the 400 book covers, Nour flew back to Nepal on December 17th to meet with the women and also to deliver the finished covers to some libraries. She was amazed at the great quality of the sewing that the women did. The pilot project was a success and we’ll continue to work with these beautiful Nepalese sewing women.

Nour’s incredible good seeds were then starting to pop even more! Thanks to the efforts of NIBS directors, Dr. Miroj Shakya and Professor Milan Shakya, and local Sanskritists and Vajracharya teachers, Mr. Pushpa Bajracharya and Mr. Shanta Shree Ranta Bajracharya, ACIP has been gaining access to important private collections. Through them, the door was opened for Nour to one of the most important collections of Sanskrit manuscripts in Nepal, at the famous Swayambhu Temple.

One of Nepal’s most famous national landmarks and a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Swayambhu temple was devastated in the 2015 earthquake. UNESCO and several other organizations have paid millions of US dollars to restore the 2000 year old Swayambhu temple complex, but a library next to the stupa holding over 100 important texts has been neglected and remains in near-ruins. When the ACIP team visited in July and witnessed the condition of the library they were told it was impossible to gain entrance to the library, much less to view the manuscripts. In addition to political reasons, it was very dangerous to enter with the earthquake devastation and mold and hazardous conditions inside the building.

And then a miracle happened! Nour’s amazing seeds popped again – opening the doors to the library on December 21st, 2019. NIBS director Milan and his student, Shanta were able to connect with some important members from the Swayambhu Developing Committee. At their invitation, Nour spoke on behalf of Threads of Wisdom to clearly explain that the goal of the project is to simply help serve and preserve. cont...
Threads of Wisdom offered 108 book covers to the library for their devastated manuscripts. On the 22nd December, Nour and Milan arrived to Swayambu and were invited into the building of the library. Yes it was potentially dangerous, but as Nour said, “Well worth the risk to see this important precious collection”. Then another miracle happened. Not only did she hand over the book covers, she was asked to help hand wrap them. Nour and Milan were able to wrap over 50 manuscripts with their own hands on that historic day.

At the end of the visit, they asked for 50 more book covers to finish wrapping the collection including their tantric texts. Many of the manuscripts are in serious damage, with rats and insects chewing through the older covers and in some cases reaching into the pages.

Amazing footage was taken by a local photographer (Rishav Bajracharya) as the committee representative Mr. Manik.R.Tuladhar kindly allowed us to document this historic event. Tears were shed as Nour and Milan covered the manuscripts with the Threads of Wisdom covers, and friendships and trusts were made with the Swayambhu authorities.

We thank Nour for all she has done with her open heart and dedication to save the ancient wisdom and to help empower underprivileged women, giving them a chance at a fulfilling career to save their own heritage.

ACIP will keep you posted on this most important historical project as ACIP and Threads of Wisdom move forward preserving the wisdom books of Nepal. For more information, please visit our FB page and website: threadsowisdomproject.org
My village is well known for the rich cultural history of the Tamil Brahmin community which migrated from various parts of Tamil Nadu and settled there, just across the border in Kerala, some five centuries ago. This influx of traditional Vedic scholars to Nurani has left a strong impression on nearby Palghat. Historically in India, when a distinct group like the Tamil Brahmins relocates en masse, they often retain their strong cultural identity, even thousands of kilometers and many centuries removed. In Palghat, members of this community typically speak Tamil (in addition to the regional Malayalam) and have retained much of their traditional expertise in Vedic knowledge systems, including ancient forms of ritual, healing practices, and art forms that have mostly vanished elsewhere in India. Consequently, the area in and around Nurani is a uniquely rich place not only for locating and preserving ancient texts, but also for consulting scholars and specialists to decipher them.

Preservationist extraordinaire and director of the ACIP Sanskrit Preservation Center in Southern India, Dr. NV Ramachandran sends us this report from our office in Palghat City and from his home village of nearby Nurani.

Here, I include recent photos from the local temple dedicated to the god Ayyappa, where celebrations and pujas (ritual worship) lasting two months recently concluded.

Above: Singing the glories of Ayyappa.
Left: An elephant procession at the festival.
A highlight of the annual festival is the recitation from memory of the entire Krisna Yajurveda, India’s most ancient spiritual poetry, over 44 days by more than twenty Vedic specialists, reciting together in traditional rhythm. The festival brings together some of India’s greatest Vedic and Sanskrit scholars from neighboring Andhra Pradesh, Telengana, Tamilnadu and Karnataka. This gathering of devotees of Lord Ayyappa has been celebrated continuously at Nurani Village for more than 400 years.

Another recent highlight from our Kerala center was a visit from the Director of the Chinmaya International Foundation, Dr. Srinathan (a retired neuroscientist), pictured right.

As we look forward to our work in 2020, the most exciting development is our preservation of Ayurvedic manuscripts. Following receipt of ACIP’s previous newsletter describing our work to collect rare Ayurvedic texts, many people started bringing their manuscript collections to us. We’ll be doing more work in 2020 looking for additional Ayurvedic collections from all different areas in India.

Thank you, ACIP friends, for all your support!
Dr. NV Ramachandran
INDIA
Varanasi Center

An update to our worldwide fans from Dr. Santosh Dwivedi, Director, ACIP Varanasi Centre.

2019 saw the complete transcription and digital inputting of 28 rare and significant Buddhist and Sanskrit texts at our Varanasi centre. As 2020 gets underway we are extremely happy to be working with Dr. John Campbell as our center starts to focus more on inputting rare Sanskrit manuscripts. We are eagerly anticipating opportunities for collaboration with our sister ACIP Sanskrit Centers in Kathmandu and Kerala, and for discovering new collections throughout India.

ACIP at Kumbh Mela: January 15 to March 4
Kumbh Mela is the largest pilgrim gathering in the world and ACIP had a presence at the latest festival. Our ACIP center camp at KUMBH MELA in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, presented and introduced the ACIP Sanskrit Project to devotees from different parts of the world.

Top: ACIP Tent at the Kumbh Mela. Bottom (left): Santosh and his wife Jayanti doing a puja in the ACIP camp at the Kumbh Mela. (right): Santosh and friend at the entrance of the camp, under the ACIP sign.
UPDATE ON OUR PRESERVATION CENTERS

INDIA

Varanasi Center

In anticipation of the shift to a greater focus on Sanskrit manuscripts in 2020, the Varanasi office has been developing its capacity to work with pre-modern and less common Indian scripts. On June 3–July 2 we attended a workshop on Brahmi and Sharda scripts.

On 26th September, Varanasi Center director Santosh Dwivedi met the Director of the National Manuscript Mission (NMM), a project of the government of India and the largest Sanskrit manuscript preservation initiative in the world. We talked about the ACIP operation in India and abroad, and the Mission has indicated its readiness to share data with ACIP. This would be an extraordinary development for ACIP and its efforts to preserve the precious wisdom of ancient books and make them available to the world in perpetuity. Additionally, this affiliation would pave the way for other important institutional partnerships and access to archives. Director Santosh and Dr. Campbell hope to be able to present a proposal to NMM before the summer.

On a personal note, it continues to be my dream to establish an ACIP Sanskrit Learning Centre in Varanasi, and I am very optimistic that this dream will become a reality before long. I feel great pride in our work at ACIP Varanasi, and tremendous gratitude for the support of donors who make this mission possible. Sarva mangalam!

With regards,
Santosh

Workshop on Brahmi and Sharda script writing.

Saraswati puja in the ACIP Varanasi office with Santosh’s wife Jayanti and their son.

The family of Santosh Dwivedi & wife Jayanti Dwivedi bringing in the New Year!
Sonam Lhamo’s South India Input Centers

Sonam Lhamo reports to us that 2019 was a really good year and all their centers’ day-to-day work is going very smoothly — thanks to your support, donors across the world! She says it’s been such a pleasure working with this team and they have all become friends, helping each other when in need, like one big family. They are very grateful to all of our sponsors supporting them continuously in 2019.

For 2020 Sonam says she will pray for us and for her employees, wishing us all lots of happiness, health and prosperity, and a good 2020. Sonam and ACIP could not do this without your generous support.

Thanks to all our sponsors who continue to make this project so strong and steady.

With love,
Sonam and our South India Team
Ways to Support ACIP

ACIP Needs Your Help

ACIP is doing exciting work around the world to help find and preserve the ancient wisdom texts endangered by environmental and cultural change and upheaval. We’re making these works available for free online on our website. And we hire, whenever possible, women from underserved or impoverished communities, train them to scan, catalog, and transcribe, and give them salaries and benefits to enrich their lives and the lives of their families.

But ACIP needs your help to keep helping others. We make it as easy as possible. Your help can come in many ways and many amounts:

A One-time Gift in Any Amount
• Donating conveniently online or sending a check

A Dollar-a-Day
• Signing up for our dollar-a-day program. We will charge your credit card or debit card $30.41 a month (a dollar a day).

Regular Monthly
• Committing to a regular monthly donation.
Any amount — large or small, will help greatly.

Many of you are current, generous donors who have been supporting ACIP for a long time. Our heartfelt thanks go out to you. You make our work possible. We could not do it without you.

Thank you for your support and generosity.

Sincerely,
John C. Brady
Executive Director, Asian Classics Input Project