

A BUDDHIST SECT HOLDS CONVENTION

Ice Show Among Events for 11,000 in San Diego

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SAN DIEGO, April 13—With a parade, a huge fireworks display and an ice extravaganza in the San Diego sports arena, it looked more like a Mardi Gras than a religious convention.

But the 11,000 persons from North and South America and Japan, all dressed alike in blue sweatshirts and white slacks, were members of the Nichiren Shoshu branch of Buddhism.

Although the sect claims 20 million adherents worldwide, mostly in Japan, it was almost unknown in this country until recently. The "San Diego-Mexico convention," as the festivities last weekend were billed, seemed to be an attempt to draw attention to the sect's rapid growth, unity, happiness and determination to expand in the West.

The sect, one of several Eastern groups that have become popular in this country in the last few years, teaches that by chanting certain phrases, the believer can put himself in tune with the basic vibrations of the universe and obtain blessings ranging from spiritual peace to material objects, such as cars and refrigerators.

The sect, which in this country operates entirely as a religion, is an affiliate of the energetic Soka Gakkai Buddhist organization in Japan, which has become a major political force there through its role in founding and supporting the Komei, or Clean Government, political party.

Three thousand paraders marched through downtown San Diego last Saturday in vivid costumes, made for the occasion.

Most attention focused on Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai organization and of Nichiren Shoshu Academy, who is "master" to millions of followers of the sect.

Leis for Favorites

Mr. Ikeda, a cherub-faced, intense man of 46, clearly likes parades and dancers and music. Each marcher looked him straight in the eye as he passed. Mr. Ikeda looked straight back and bestowed leis on his favorites.

Mr. Ikeda was here on the last leg of a 40-day goodwill tour to meet with sect members and local dignitaries in Honolulu, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Miami, Panama, Peru and Brazil. Spokesmen for the leader, who speaks no English, said he went to promote what he considers "the true philosophy of the 21st century," Nichiren Shoshu, and "world peace and humanism."

Saturday afternoon, all 11,000 members, traveling in a caravan of chartered buses, invaded Seaworld, a marine-life amusement park. At dusk 1,300 rockets exploded under a big yellow moon, a \$20,000 fireworks display Mr. Ikeda called his "gift to the people of San Diego."

Sunday, members convened in the San Diego sports arena for a music and dance production on ice.

The sect claimed membership of 200,000 in North and South America. Its first American members, in 1960, numbered less than 100.

Part of the philosophy's apparent appeal is its simplicity. The faith requires little more than chanting "nam-myohorenge-kyo," the first line of the sect's prayer which means, loosely, "all devotion to the Lotus sutra."