

The New Human Revolution, Volume 6, Chapter 1
Treasure Land
BY HO GOKU – ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Translation of parts 1–5 of the ‘Treasure Land’ chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

The new century will be played out on a vast global stage. In far-flung corners of the world, there are friends suffering the agonies of war, mothers overwhelmed with grief and sorrow and starving children crying for food.

Spring water bubbling up from the ground can transform a desert into an oasis. Similarly, the compassion and wisdom that well up from the human heart can transform this planet into a realm of peace and happiness, an eternal treasure land. We call this triumph of humanism *kosen-rufu*.

On Jan. 29, 1962, Shin’ichi Yamamoto set off for the Middle East. He left from Tokyo International Airport at Haneda at 11:00 a.m. aboard Scandinavia Airlines Flight No. 84. The first stopover would be in Manila, the Philippines.

Shin’ichi’s official schedule included visits to seven countries: Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Pakistan and Thailand. His first destination was Teheran, Iran’s capital. The primary purpose of the trip was to offer guidance to Soka Gakkai members living in these countries and to investigate firsthand the religious and social conditions.

This time, only youth division leaders accompanied Shin’ichi — Youth Division Chief Eisuke Akizuki and two other young men, Yusuke Yoshikawa and Akira Kuroki, all three of whom were Soka Gakkai directors.

Someone especially delighted by Shin’ichi’s planned visit to the Middle East was Torazo Kawarazaki, a specialist in Arab affairs and teacher of Arabic at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Kawarazaki later compiled, edited and published the first Arabic–Japanese dictionary. Shin’ichi met Kawarazaki for the first time on Jan. 27, just two days before his departure.

Earlier that day, the Oriental Science Institute [later the Institute of Oriental Philosophy] was inaugurated in a ceremony at the headquarters of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s newspaper. This research center was the crystallization of an idea conceived and proposed by Shin’ichi during a visit to Asian countries the previous year.

Its function would be to promote research on the cultural heritage of Asia and compile academic material on Eastern thought and philosophy. It would be the forerunner of a variety of cultural organizations that the Gakkai would eventually establish.

At the inauguration, Shin’ichi voiced his hope that the institute would become a seat of knowledge that would produce many internationally respected researchers and give rise to a fresh cultural tradition. He presented each of the staff with an official institute pin and then affixed one to his own lapel. He wished to show that he regarded himself as an institute member and was firmly committed to fostering capable researchers.

Shin’ichi was to meet with Kawarazaki at the Gakkai Headquarters immediately afterward. A local Gakkai leader had asked Shin’ichi to give some words of encouragement to Kawarazaki, a member in his area. Shin’ichi was the first to set himself to the task of developing academicians.

Torazo Kawarazaki, mustached and wearing dark-framed spectacles, was in his late 40s, a

man of amiable countenance and impressive build.

Shin'ichi greeted Kawarazaki courteously. He hoped that this expert on Arab affairs might give him some useful advice for his upcoming trip to the Middle East.

"Thank you very much for taking time to visit me here at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters," Shin'ichi told him.

"Not at all, not at all," Kawarazaki replied with a vibrant, booming voice. "It's my pleasure. I'm thrilled to hear that you will shortly be visiting a number of Arab nations. The Arab world is my second homeland."

In his youth, when working for Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kawarazaki was sent to Egypt to study at Cairo University. After graduating with a degree in Arabic, he worked for Japanese missions in such Middle East countries as Egypt and Iraq, deepening his knowledge of the culture of Arab nations in the process.

After World War II, having tired of being a bureaucrat, he quit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for some time thereafter suffered great financial difficulty. His wife and son, moreover, were both afflicted with tuberculosis.

His wife first heard about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism from a relative who could not bear to see them remain in such painful straits any longer. Mrs. Kawarazaki started practicing in the summer of 1953; in April the following year she finally persuaded her husband to take faith.

Torazo Kawarazaki had no real interest in the Soka Gakkai then, but simply wanted to do whatever might please his wife, whom he loved.

Around that time, Japan and many other countries were greatly interested in developing Arab oil resources; Kawarazaki gained a position with a petroleum company. He was later recruited by another oil concern with which he eventually became a senior research advisor, a job that entailed traveling throughout the Arab world. He was also involved in the development of the first Arab oil well started by a Japanese company. Not long afterward he began to teach Arabic at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in addition to his work in the commercial sector.

Kawarazaki animatedly began to tell Shin'ichi about the situation in the Middle East.

"Many, as you may know, describe the Middle East as the most volatile place in the world," he said. "One reason for this is the rivalry between Eastern and Western powers scrambling for control over oil-rich Arab nations.

"The Arab nations have been rather late in gaining independence after long colonial rule by various European powers. Consequently, there is a strong trend toward achieving Arab unity. This is what has caused an upsurge in Arab nationalism."

Torazo Kawarazaki continued with growing emphasis:"But as Arab unity strengthened under Islam, a deepening rift began to develop between the Arab nations and the Jewish state of Israel. Also, as characterized by the withdrawal of Syria from the United Arab Republic,¹ many obstacles remain along the path to Arab unity.

"In addition, the vast wealth gained by many Arab nations through the exploitation of oil resources has led to sharp inequalities between the rich and poor. The likelihood of revolt in these countries is extremely high. In short, in the Middle East we can find the whole spectrum of possible confrontation — the East–West Cold War, ethnic conflict, religious strife, class struggle and the list goes on.

"Geographically, too, the Middle East has served as a bridge linking Asia, Europe and Africa. Arab nations comprise a significant part of the 48-nation Afro-Asian Group, which has now gained membership in the United Nations. In fact, you could say that developments in the Arab world will have a key impact on world peace.

“However, Japanese government officials, politicians and business leaders view the Arab nations solely as suppliers of oil. They are entirely indifferent to what happens in these countries, so long as it doesn’t adversely affect Japan’s oil supply. That is truly regrettable.

“The average Japanese knows very little about the Arab world. I really feel Japan should consider what it can do to promote exchange with Middle Eastern countries — existing as they do at opposite ends of Asia — and how they can mutually assist one another. I believe that this would give rise to a human solidarity transcending borders. And if such exchange were extended around the globe, this would contribute to developing the foundations for world peace.”

“I totally agree with you,” Shin’ichi said. “I can really sense your love for the Arab world. One of my reasons for visiting this time is to initiate such exchange. Peace is not something complex or extraordinary. It begins by forging heart-to-heart ties. This is where cultural exchange will be very important.

“I want to open the way for an exchange of peace and culture between Japan and the Arab nations. In Japan, American and European culture tends to get all the limelight — to the exclusion of virtually all other cultures. But there are other countries in the world. The Arab nations have a unique culture. I think that there are many things that Japan should learn from them.”

“Exactly,” Kawarazaki said with a smile, his eyes twinkling genially. “That’s precisely my feeling, President Yama moto.”

Shin’ichi Yamamoto and Torazo Kawarazaki enjoyed a lively discussion. Theirs was a dynamic meeting of the minds.

“Actually,” Shin’ichi informed his guest, “I just came from an event formally establishing the Oriental Science Institute. The institute’s purpose will be to conduct research into the cultures, religions and peoples of the world with a special focus on Asia. Its ultimate aim is to promote mutual understanding among people and contribute to peace in Asia and throughout the world.”

“Did the Soka Gakkai create this Oriental Science Institute?” asked Kawara zaki.

Shin’ichi nodded with smile: “Yes, it did. It is a research institute that was founded and will be sponsored by the Soka Gakkai. We believe that studying and learning about the cultures and peoples of each country is indispensable to developing mutual understanding among the world’s people. The mission of religion is to bring happiness to all people and to actualize world peace. The Soka Gakkai is seriously committed to finding ways to achieve this.”

Hearing this, Kawarazaki straightened in his chair and respectfully addressed Shin’ichi: “President Yamamoto, it seems that I have misunderstood the Soka Gakkai. To be honest with you, somewhere in my heart I saw it as a religious group interested only in increasing its membership with the sales pitch that daimoku enables one to overcome illness and the like. When I started practicing, I thought it not beyond the bounds of possibility that one could cure illness through faith and that quite probably the benefit of the Gohonzon everyone talked about did exist.

“However, it never seemed to me that the Soka Gakkai was making practical efforts to address the peace issue. There are, as you know, so many religious leaders who pay lip service to the peace cause but very few who make earnest efforts to achieve that goal. I am impressed, though, by what you have just told me.

“Actually, I only came to see you today so as not to disappoint my wife. She insisted that I come see you, since you had kindly said you wanted to meet me. Besides, she told me you were going to the Middle East shortly. I thought perhaps it wouldn’t do any harm in

just going one time to see the president of the organization my wife belongs to. But that was very arrogant and unfair of me. I was looking at the Soka Gakkai with prejudiced eyes, not even bothering to ascertain the facts for myself. I am very sorry about my attitude.”

After saying this, Kawarazaki bowed deeply in a gesture of apology.

Shin’ichi assured him there was no need to apologize, saying: “If one does not know the reality of a situation, it is only natural to have misunderstandings. So, Mr. Kawarazaki, you’ve never done gongyo, then?”

“No. I’ve been a member in name only....”

Shin’ichi then began to talk about Buddhism calmly: “Buddhism teaches that each person is inherently a Buddha worthy of supreme respect, that everyone has an equal right to become happy. In short, it is a humanistic philosophy, a philosophy of peace, expounding the equality of all humankind. Buddhism also teaches how we can tap the compassion, wisdom and life force of the Buddha within us.

“Everyone has their own ideals and convictions and is working with all their might to realize them. But it is human nature that, even wishing to bring forth compassion in all our dealings we can sometimes succumb to self-interest despite these best intentions.

“Life is full of setbacks and impasses. The key to happiness lies ultimately in possessing the strength to never succumb to anything, to calmly triumph over any obstacle. That is why Buddhist practice is so crucial.”

“Yes, I see,” Torazo Kawarazaki quietly agreed. “As a matter of fact, I am presently experiencing a deadlock myself. I always wanted to devote my life to working for the Arab world’s benefit, but it seems I’ve just been fighting a losing battle. Whenever I make proposals for cultural enterprises and exchanges to enhance the Japanese people’s understanding of the people and culture of that region, I am greeted with complete indifference. The hurdles are truly enormous. Perhaps I’m just being unrealistic. This thought really depresses me.”

Shin’ichi answered emphatically: “Mr. Kawarazaki, I feel the reason your wife urged you to embrace Buddhism is that she wholeheartedly wants you to realize this dream. Surely she knows and understands, more than anyone, your deep love for the Arab world. I think you would agree that she is your greatest supporter and sympathizer. I heard that you resigned from a position at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs some years ago. I would be willing to bet that your wife never uttered a word of complaint, but fully supported your decision.”

Kawarazaki nodded deeply and said: “You are right. I put her through a lot. We fell on hard times. Yet despite her weak health, she took it all in stride without a word of complaint. She scrimped and saved to make ends meet.”

“Your wife’s wish,” Shin’ichi assured him, “is to see you realize your dream of making a positive contribution to the Arab world. You mustn’t give up. Though it is only human to meet with deadlocks, there are no deadlocks in Buddhism.”

(To be continued)

1. United Arab Republic: formed in 1958 from the federation of Egypt and Syria amid the growing tide of Arab nationalism. Syria, however, left the federation in 1961. Egypt continued alone as the United Arab Republic until 1971, when it changed its name to the Arab Republic of Egypt.