

The New Human Revolution, Volume 7, Chapter 2, Parts 13–14

'Fresh growth'

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A Hawaii member's request for Nichiren Shoshu priests to visit America leads to the first overseas Gohonzon-conferral ceremonies (and Nikken's infamous trip to Seattle). Shin'ichi and party depart Hawaii for his second visit to Los Angeles.

A Q-and-A session with President Shin'ichi Yamamoto then followed.

At the discussion meeting he attended on his first visit to Hawaii, some of the members had been so overwhelmed with life's sorrows and pains that they could not even state their questions without breaking down in tears. But today's scene was vastly different. The room was filled with the cheerful, resolute smiles of people looking with hope toward the future.

The questions centered for the most part on how to promote kosen-rufu and arose from a sense of responsibility and mission to accomplish the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law. Among the issues raised was a request for visits by priests to conduct *gojukai* (Gohonzon-conferral ceremonies). This was needed to accommodate the increasing number of new members.

The meaning of *gojukai* is accepting the precepts, but Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that embracing the Gohonzon is in itself enlightenment, that embracing the Gohonzon means upholding the precepts. Thus, the only precept or rule of action to be upheld by believers of the Daishonin's Buddhism for attaining enlightenment is to embrace the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws.

The true meaning of *accepting the precepts* is for believers to make a solemn vow to embrace the Gohonzon and exert themselves in faith throughout their lives. In this respect, the conferral ceremony serves simply as a formal setting for making such a vow.

First Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi requested that the priesthood conduct conferral ceremonies for new members, hoping that this would be the opportunity for them to make a fresh start in correct practice and strengthen their determination in faith. From that time on, it became customary for new members to receive *gojukai* upon taking faith.

To the Hawaii member's request for priests to visit, Shin'ichi replied: "I understand your concern. I will make a request to High Priest Nittatsu."

After returning to Japan, he immediately submitted a request to Nittatsu to have priests sent overseas to conduct Gohonzon-conferral ceremonies.

And so it was that, two months later, two priests were sent to the United States from March 16–30 to conduct conferral ceremonies for members in a number of key cities across the country. One was a priest by the name of Shinno Abe, then the Nichiren Shoshu Study Department leader, who would later become the 67th high priest, Nikken.

The first place they visited to conduct *gojukai* was Hawaii. And the same hall at the Kaewai Elementary School where the Hawaii meeting had been held was used. On that occasion, Abe somehow managed to leave the Gohonzon he used for the ceremony behind in — of all places — a restroom there. Luckily, Hiroto Hirata and S. G. Like discovered the Gohonzon when they conducted a final check of the premises. The two successfully tracked down Abe and returned the Gohonzon to him, thus avoiding a major problem.

Through this careless incident, Abe showed a glimpse of his true colors — though a priest in name, he utterly lacked faith and was morally corrupt.

And this was not the only untoward event to occur during the trip. A Soka Gakkai leader

Title: Volume 7: Chapter 2 Fresh Growth (13-14)

Subject: World Tribune 12/11/98 n.3221 p.5 WT981211p05

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: Chapter Fresh Growth History Human Kosen-rufu Revolution Tribune Volume World

in Seattle during Abe's visit to conduct *gojukai* there would later testify as to the priest's disgraceful escapades there.

On Jan. 9, the day after the meeting that marked a fresh start for the kosen-rufu movement in Hawaii, Shin'ichi and his party visited the island of Kauai, known for its spectacular Waimea Canyon.

Most Japanese associate Hawaii only with Honolulu and the island of Oahu. But Hawaii in fact consists of a number of islands, including Kauai, Hawaii and Maui. Among these are found a wide variety of natural environments and ways of life.

In considering the development of the kosen-rufu movement in Hawaii, the real conditions on each of these islands had to be understood. Had Shin'ichi's schedule been more flexible, he would have seen some of the other islands, but it was hard to make time to do so — he had to be sure to set aside enough time for giving guidance to individual members.

A steady stream of people came to receive guidance from him at the hotel where he was staying. On the evening of the 9th and again the 10th, the day of his departure, he continued encouraging one person after another, not wishing to waste a moment of the limited time.

It is through such efforts to illuminate the darkness of people's sufferings with hope and to plant the seed of fresh determination in their hearts that people are nurtured and encouraged to grow and develop as human beings. This is what gives rise to fresh growth in the realm of kosen-rufu.

On the other hand, an organization where dialogue is missing will sooner or later succumb to bureaucratic abuses and lapse into a cold style of management lacking in human warmth.

The more the Soka Gakkai increased in size, the greater emphasis Shin'ichi placed on dialogue, on making wholehearted, dedicated efforts to talk directly with as many people as possible toward ensuring that the lifeblood of humanism would continue to flow through the organization.

Shin'ichi and his party departed Hawaii at 2:00 p.m., Jan. 10, and a number of members came to Honolulu Airport to see them off.

They touched down at their next destination, Los Angeles, after a flight of approximately five hours. Because of the time difference, it was already after 9:00 p.m. when they arrived. The moon was visible when they emerged from the plane, but apparently it had been raining until a short time before. The tarmac was wet, and there were puddles here and there.

In the airport, 50 or 60 members were waiting to greet them. They included Los Angeles Chapter Leader Akio Ishibashi and Women's Division Leader Kiyoko Kuwano, along with chapter staff Kazuko Ellick. Everyone was full of energy.

The first person Shin'ichi addressed was a young man, Yuji Nakahara. "You must be very busy with your studies," he said. "Thank you for taking the time to come to see me — both this time and last time."

At the time of Shin'ichi's last visit, Nakahara had been appointed the leader of the Los Angeles young men's division. He was studying political science at UCLA.

To be continued