

## CHAPTER 13

# The Second Phase of Kosen-rufu and the Temple Issue

When Josei Toda died in 1958, many critics in the Japanese media were confident that the Soka Gakkai would not survive without his leadership. Instead, the Gakkai remained united under the leadership of Daisaku Ikeda, who was then chief of staff. On May 3, 1960, he became the third president of the Soka Gakkai.

### ***Daisaku Ikeda's Global Leadership***

Inheriting his mentor's will to spread Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism both far and wide, President Ikeda brought about unprecedented growth on a global scale. In October 1960, soon after his inauguration, he visited North and South America. The following year he traveled to India, accompanied by Nittatsu, the sixty-sixth high priest. Ikeda traveled around the globe—to the Americas, Europe and Asia, including China and the former Soviet Union. Through those visits, he encouraged and nurtured the faith of those living outside Japan while promoting peace, culture and education based on the Daishonin's Buddhism. By 1997 he had visited fifty-four nations.

In January 1975, the First International Buddhist League World Peace Conference was held in Guam. On that occasion, what later was named the Soka Gakkai International was formed, and Ikeda became its first president. Under his leadership the SGI continued to develop. As of 1997, about 1,360,000 members were practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism in 128 countries and territories outside Japan, contributing to their respective communities and nations.

In his writings, the Daishonin expresses his hope for the global spread of his teachings. For example, he states in "On the Buddha's Prophecy": "[The votary of the Lotus Sutra will establish and] spread abroad widely throughout Jambudvipa the object of devotion of the essential teaching, or the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo" (WND, 400). He goes on to state: "The moon appears in the west and sheds its light eastward, but the sun rises in the east and casts its rays to the west. The same is true of Buddhism. It spread from west to east in the Former and Middle Days of the Law, but will travel from east to west in the Latter Day" (WND, 401). Here the Daishonin indicates that his teaching, which he compares to the sun, will spread from Japan to the rest of the world and save all humanity in the Latter Day.

The Daishonin's vision has been realized through the dedicated efforts of SGI President Ikeda and his fellow SGI members. When the SGI was formed, Nittatsu stated: "The propagation of Buddhism depends on the time. But the time for propagation will not come by itself. It is President Ikeda who has made this the right time for the worldwide growth of true Buddhism. I am certain that Nichiren Daishonin would praise the great accomplishment and tireless dedication of President Ikeda" (March 1975 *Seikyo Times*, p. 15).

While spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism, Ikeda and the Soka Gakkai continued to support the Nichiren Shoshu

***Construction  
of the Grand  
Main Temple***

priesthood. In April 1964, the Soka Gakkai donated to the head temple the Grand Reception Hall, which was built with the finest materials from around the world. On that occasion, the priesthood appointed Mr. Ikeda as chief representative of all Nichiren Shoshu lay believers. Every year the Gakkai built and donated branch temples. Also more lodging temples were built on the head temple grounds by the Gakkai. And, as the membership outside Japan increased, the Gakkai donated branch temples in the United States and Brazil.

In October 1972, the Grand Main Temple was completed and donated to the head temple to house the Dai-Gohonzon. The cost of this construction project was financed by more than eight million Gakkai members. At the October 1 completion ceremony, Ikeda elaborated on its purpose: "The Grand Main Temple has been built through the passionate sincerity of more than eight million people. Put simply, this is not an edifice symbolic of religious authority but a facility for the people. . . . This Grand Main Temple is a building in which to pray for the lasting peace of humanity and for the sound progress and development of global culture. Such prayer will be offered by all those who visit here; that is, men and women of all ages and ethnic backgrounds. This is the most prominent feature [of the Grand Main Temple]." Here Ikeda explains that the Grand Main Temple was built for the peace of all humanity, transcending the narrow sectarian concern of prosperity for only Nichiren Shoshu.

Nittatsu, in his “Admonition” dated April 28, 1972, explains the significance of the Grand Main Temple as “the actual high sanctuary of this time” and “the supreme edifice that shall be the high sanctuary of the temple of true Buddhism at the dawn of kosen-rufu.” He clarified that when the Daishonin’s Buddhism is spread widely in accordance with the Daishonin’s will, Taiseki-ji would be renamed Honmon-ji (Temple of the True Teaching), and the Grand Main Temple would become the high sanctuary of that temple, the temple of true Buddhism (i.e., the actual high sanctuary). In a certificate of appreciation presented on October 12, 1972, to Ikeda, who chaired the construction committee, Nittatsu praises his contribution, calling the construction “unprecedented in the school’s history and an immortal monument to be exalted by the entire priesthood.”

While the Grand Main Temple was being built, one parish group called Myoshinko, which belonged to Hodo-in, a temple in Tokyo, vehemently opposed the construction. They claimed that the high sanctuary must be built only by the sovereign or national government. The idea of a “national high sanctuary” was originally propounded by Chigaku Tanaka (1861–1939), who founded an ultranationalistic lay Nichiren Buddhist group called Rissho Ankoku Kai (Society for Securing the Peace of the Land Through the Establishment of True Buddhism) in 1885. He renamed his group the Kokuchukai (Pillar of the Nation Society) in 1914. During the early 1900s, he promoted the idea of a national high sanctuary.

The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood had also used the term *national high sanctuary*. The expression, however, was deemed inappropriate because the scope of the Daishonin’s teaching should not be confined within one nation and the

expression often invited criticism that Nichiren Shoshu and the Soka Gakkai were aiming to establish a state religion. So, at the thirty-third Soka Gakkai Headquarters general meeting on May 3, 1970, Nittatsu announced: "From now on, there shall be no use of such terminology [as the national high sanctuary] in this school" (*Seikyo Shimbun*, May 4, 1970).

The Myoshinko, however, insisted on the idea of a national high sanctuary and criticized the priesthood and the Gakkai for rejecting the term. After failing to persuade the group to change its stance, Nittatsu expelled them from Nichiren Shoshu in 1974. On October 4 of the same year, about one hundred youth, members of the Myoshinko, demonstrated in front of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo. Using car-mounted loudspeakers, they demanded a meeting with Hiroshi Hojo, then the general director. Several dozen demonstrators forced their way into the building. Soka Gakkai staff and police officers pushed the demonstrators out of the building and closed the gate to the property.

The demonstrators, however, drove a car through the gate and forced their way into the building once again, injuring more than a dozen Gakkai staff members and vandalizing the facility. The demonstrators were arrested by riot police who had responded to the scene. The Gakkai lodged a criminal complaint against the demonstrators for trespassing, assault, vandalism and other acts, leading to the conviction of three Myoshinko leaders. Later the Myoshinko renamed itself the Kenshokai, and today it is an independently incorporated religious organization. Recently, the Kenshokai has been criticized for aggressive and sometimes violent proselytizing methods that target minors.

Since the Grand Main Temple symbolized the Soka Gakkai's contribution, it later became an object of resentment

for the priesthood as animosity toward the Gakkai grew within its ranks. In January 1991, Nikken, the sixty-seventh high priest, disputed the significance of the Grand Main Temple as defined by his predecessor, Nittatsu. Eventually, in April 1998, he removed the Dai-Gohonzon from the Grand Main Temple and announced his plan to demolish the structure. Nikken proclaimed that he would destroy the building “to completely refute the great slander of Ikeda and others.”

Many issues arose between the priesthood and the Soka Gakkai during the 1970s. These were, for the most part,

***Issues Between  
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in the 1970s***

rooted in the priesthood’s fundamental mistrust of the Soka Gakkai and its deep-seated insecurity about its role and purpose. This was greatly complicated and aggravated by the machinations of a single person, Masatomo Yamazaki, then chief legal counsel for the Soka Gakkai.

Seen from another perspective, the Gakkai’s progressive ideals and openness to society, which had become more apparent in the 1970s, caused a backlash within a priesthood constrained by its conservative traditions and institutional authoritarianism. The temple’s inability to understand and embrace the breadth and depth of the Gakkai’s movement led to deep frustration among priests, which was born out in repressive action.

After the Grand Main Temple was completed in 1972, the Gakkai began conducting its activities and spreading the Daishonin’s Buddhism in a broader and more flexible manner than it had during its period of rapid growth during the fifties and sixties.

This new phase of development was referred to as “the second chapter of kosen-rufu.” In his speech delivered on November 2, 1972, Ikeda remarked: “We now greet a new sunrise. It is the dawn of the second chapter of kosen-rufu, a voyage toward realization of true global peace” (January 1973 *Seikyo Times*, p. 13). In this new phase, the Gakkai began communicating the Daishonin’s teaching as a philosophy that elucidates the profound workings and potential of human life.

Later in the same speech, Ikeda stressed this very point: “It is not too much to say that the Soka Gakkai begins and ends with the philosophy of life. To be more specific, the Soka Gakkai has as its essential foundation the enlightenment that Mr. Toda attained in prison. The theory of life, however, is not one formulated by the Gakkai organization. Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is in itself the philosophy of life that the Soka Gakkai inherited in its purest form. Thus the kernel of the Soka Gakkai’s teaching lies in Nichiren Daishonin’s writings and in the enlightenment of Mr. Toda who interpreted these documents as revealing the philosophy of life” (ibid., pp. 15–16).

The priesthood could not appreciate the fact that lay believers were now gaining a sufficiently profound grasp of Buddhist principles to interpret the writings of Nichiren Daishonin on their own, without clerical instruction, thus successfully convincing many others of the greatness of the Daishonin’s Buddhism. The priesthood’s inability to explain Buddhism to a broad and diverse audience and its diminishing role in guiding lay believers exacerbated the priests’ insecurity. This greatly contributed to friction with the Gakkai in the 1970s.

Furthermore, after the completion of the Grand Main Temple in 1972, the Gakkai, with Nittatsu’s approval, began

to build more community centers. Until that time, the Gakkai's resources had been mainly devoted to the development of the head temple and its branch temples. Besides building the Grand Main Temple and many branch temples, the Gakkai donated the following buildings to the head temple grounds: the Daikejo Hall in 1960, the Daibo Hall in 1962, the Grand Reception Hall in 1964, the Mutsubo Hall in 1965 and the Tenrei-in Hall in 1969, not to mention many lodging facilities.

Conversely, during this time, the Gakkai's rapidly growing membership suffered from a shortage of adequate facilities for its own use. While the Gakkai's desire to build more centers for the benefit of its members was understandable, the organization nonetheless never stopped building temples for the priesthood. Rather, it simply shifted its emphasis from funneling nearly all of its available resources to the priesthood to dedicating a portion of those resources to building community centers and related facilities. Young priests who had not yet been assigned to their own branch temples were not pleased by this decision. They were concerned about their financial prospects and felt that they were being deprived of the prosperity and comfort that should have been afforded them by the lay organization. These young priests, who had been ordained under Nittatsu, later formed a core of anti-Soka Gakkai sentiment within the priesthood.

The Gakkai also started to improve its organizational structure and procedures, especially in terms of legal and administrative aspects. The Gakkai's efforts to improve itself as a religious corporation made many priests apprehensive, and some concluded that the Gakkai was preparing to separate itself from the priesthood. Furthermore, the priesthood had become completely dependent upon the Gakkai. Their



resulting sense of insecurity led them to misinterpret the Gakkai's sincere intentions at every juncture during the mid to later 1970s.

Keenly aware of this atmosphere of mistrust, the lawyer Yamazaki took steps to aggravate the situation with his personal gain in mind. An understanding of Yamazaki's role in manipulating the priesthood is essential to gaining insight into the problems that occurred between the priesthood and the Soka Gakkai in the 1970s and, more important, into the fundamental nature of the priesthood itself. It also sheds light on the enormous influence of the media on people's perception of a religious movement that seeks to establish deep roots into society.

For the first time in its history, the Soka Gakkai experienced extensive, ongoing media attacks, most of which were concentrated on Ikeda himself. Yamazaki cleverly took advantage of this media influence and used it to undermine the spread of the Daishonin's Buddhism. In this sense, the temple issue during the 1970s was a painful yet valuable experience for the Gakkai in terms of promoting its Buddhist movement in an increasingly information-oriented society. (For a more detailed explanation of what took place in the 1970s, please refer to the timeline in Appendix A.)

Yamazaki became legal counsel for the Soka Gakkai in May 1970. In dealing with issues regarding the Myoshinko, Yamazaki developed close contacts with the Nichiren Shoshu administration. He saw an opportunity to amass wealth through his actions as an intermediary between the priesthood and the Gakkai. Yamazaki started to manipulate the tension between both parties. Throughout most of the late 1970s, he fueled the priesthood's antagonism toward the Gakkai by feeding it misinformation.

Yamazaki's greed and corruption may be summed up in his view of the Soka Gakkai as a moneymaking opportunity. For example, in 1975, Yamazaki earned a handsome profit from a real estate deal involving the priesthood and the Gakkai. He persuaded Taiseki-ji to sell a large tract of land in Fujinomiya City to his own paper company at a low price. Yamazaki then sold the property to a developer who, in turn, sold it to the Gakkai for a cemetery park.

Each time the land was bought and sold, the price was inflated. From this real estate deal, Yamazaki amassed a profit of some 50 million yen, which he did not properly report as income. When the Gakkai bought another property for a memorial park from the same developer, Yamazaki received a kickback of about 400 million yen from the developer for arranging that an affiliate company be involved in the construction.

By leaking misinformation to the priesthood, he also aroused its distrust of the Gakkai and then contrived to position himself as a mediator to resolve the conflict. In the mid-1970s, he created the impression within the priesthood that the Gakkai was trying to control it. Throughout the rest of the seventies, while still in the role of mediator, he continued to leak misinformation in an attempt to sabotage the Gakkai's efforts to bridge the gap and create harmony with the priests.

Yamazaki also encouraged a group of disgruntled young priests to attack the Gakkai. These priests refused to perform funeral services for Gakkai members, while at the same time asserting that unless lay believers have their funeral conducted by a Nichiren Shoshu priest, they would be damned to the hell of incessant suffering. With such threats, those priests encouraged members to quit the Gakkai and join a

temple parish. Those anti-Gakkai priests later formed a group called the Shoshinkai (The Group of Correct Faith).

In January 1978, when the situation started to improve, Yamazaki wrote a document titled "Letter From a Certain Believer," which he submitted to the priesthood. In it, he alleged that the Gakkai was systematically promoting the view that its president was the true Buddha, and he instructed the priesthood how to control the Gakkai by leveraging its authority. As this document circulated within the priesthood, the situation intensified.

The Gakkai continued to try to mend its relationship with the priesthood. The situation proceeded toward a resolution when Nittatsu stated on November 7, 1978: "From now on, let us realize true harmonious unity between the priesthood and laity and protect our school" (*Seikyo Shim-bun*, November 8, 1978).

Disgruntled priests, however, continued to attack the Gakkai and to encourage Gakkai members to leave the organization and join temple parishes. To end the priesthood's attack on the Gakkai and avoid further confusion, Ikeda announced his resignation as Soka Gakkai president on April 24, 1979, and Hiroshi Hojo became the fourth president of the Soka Gakkai.

On July 22 that year, Nittatsu died suddenly. Shin'no Abe, then the general administrator of Nichiren Shoshu, claimed to have received the lineage of high priest from Nittatsu on April 15, 1978. With no one contesting his claim to the high office, Abe changed his first name to Nikken and became the sixty-seventh high priest on August 6, 1979.

Yamazaki at first curried favor with Nikken so that he might continue to manipulate the priesthood and exert his influence over the Gakkai. After his attempts failed, however,

Yamazaki started questioning the legitimacy of Nikken's succession and attacking him in the media. For example, in the weekly tabloid *Shukan Bunshun* dated November 20, 1980, Yamazaki alleged that Nikken never received the lineage of high priest from his predecessor. Furthermore, Shoshinkai priests started to attack Nikken's legitimacy as high priest. In January 1981, Shoshinkai priests filed a lawsuit against Nikken, seeking to nullify his status as high priest. Starting the following year, Nikken expelled about 180 Shoshinkai priests from the priesthood.

Meanwhile, Yamazaki resigned his position as legal counsel for the Gakkai in March 1980. After his resignation, he started to attack the Gakkai overtly in the media and incited the priesthood to do the same. At that time, he was in possession of a large volume of the Gakkai's internal documents, which had been stolen by Takashi Harashima, the former Study Department chief who betrayed the Gakkai in league with Yamazaki. Yamazaki, burdened with large business debts, decided to extort money from the Gakkai by threatening to use the contents of those internal documents to fuel attacks by the priesthood and the media.

The circumstances surrounding the Gakkai at this time were complex. Around the end of 1979, Yamazaki brought several of those stolen documents to the attention of the media and the priesthood. One of them was a memorandum written in June 1974 by Hiroshi Hojo, then Soka Gakkai vice president. In 1974, the Soka Gakkai proposed to the priesthood the establishment of a Nichiren Shoshu International Center to better support its rapidly increasing overseas membership. The priesthood, however, vehemently opposed the idea, suspecting that the Gakkai was attempting to control the priesthood under the umbrella of the proposed NSIC.

Hojo, out of deep frustration, wrote a report to Ikeda, characterizing the priesthood as “a serious obstacle to kosen-rufu.” He also wrote in the report: “I think that in the long run, we have no choice but to separate wisely. [The difference between the priesthood and the Soka Gakkai] is essentially similar to that of Catholicism and Protestantism.” Ikeda admonished Hojo at that time for emotionalism and rejected his idea, and the Gakkai continued to support the priesthood. When this memorandum was leaked to the media and the priesthood around the end of 1979, the Gakkai found itself in an awkward position since, to explain the context of Hojo’s document, the Gakkai would have to reveal the obstinate emotionalism exhibited by the priesthood regarding the NSIC. Bound by its role to support and protect the priesthood, the Gakkai was thus defenseless against the onslaught from the media and the anti-Gakkai priests.

When Yamazaki attempted to blackmail the Gakkai with a threat to leak more of the Gakkai’s internal documents in April 1980, the bitter experience of the Hojo report was still fresh in the minds of the organization’s senior officials. By this time, they had also become keenly aware of Yamazaki’s cunning at mixing factual information with falsehoods and engineering information leaks to elicit a negative response. Because its relationship with the priesthood was still fragile, the Gakkai expected a more virulent attack from the media and the priesthood, one that would ultimately hurt the members. So Soka Gakkai senior officials made the painful decision to comply with Yamazaki’s demand and pay him 300 million yen.

When Yamazaki demanded another 500 million yen, however, the Gakkai leadership decided to report everything to the authorities and press charges against Yamazaki for extortion. In January 1981, Yamazaki was arrested and, on March

26, 1985, convicted of extortion in the Tokyo District Court. He was sentenced to three years in prison, which he served from February 25, 1991, until April 27, 1993.

After his release from prison, Yamazaki allied himself with Nikken, whom he had previously attacked, as well as with anti-Gakkai politicians and journalists in his vendetta against the Gakkai.

Since well before Nikken's tenure as high priest, the Soka Gakkai maintained its dedicated support of the priesthood. With this support, the priesthood held major events, such as a weeklong service in October 1981 to celebrate the seven-hundredth anniversary of the Daishonin's passing. There was also the observance of the 650th anniversary of Nikko Shonin's passing in March 1982, and one in December of the same year to mark the 650th anniversary of third high priest Nichimoku's passing.

Furthermore, the Gakkai proposed the construction of two hundred branch temples for the priesthood. Thus, every year, the Gakkai donated many branch temples throughout the 1980s. With the Gakkai's enormous contribution, the priesthood, although it had lost many priests and branch temples through its conflict with the Shoshinkai, started to enjoy once again an unprecedented level of development and prosperity.

In his New Year's message for 1991, even as he was hatching his plan to attempt to disband the Gakkai, Nikken wrote: "Also worthy of special mention about President Ikeda's leadership is that he has greatly advanced worldwide kosen-rufu.... The many offerings to the head temple and the donation of local temples begun by the Soka Gakkai around the time of President Toda have been diligently carried on by President Ikeda, whose contributions have earned numerous

words of praise from my predecessor” (January 1991 *Seikyo Times*, p. 3). As evident in his message, Nikken could not deny Ikeda’s unprecedented contributions to the global spread of the Daishonin’s Buddhism and to the priesthood’s prosperity although, when he wrote this message, he had already decided to expel Ikeda and destroy the Gakkai.

Although it had witnessed numerous unmistakable signs of corruption and authoritarianism within the priesthood, especially during the late 1970s, the Gakkai continued to increase its level of support for the priesthood. In this regard, Ikeda talks about the basic stance of the Gakkai before the most recent outbreak of the temple issue at the end of 1990: “We protected the priesthood with the utmost sincerity. In recent years, as well, even while confronted with the reality of the decadence and runaway greed of priests, we have all along made known our wish that the priesthood purify itself” (from his speech on May 3, 1992, in the June 8, 1992, *World Tribune*, p. 5). Unfortunately, those years of tolerance by the Gakkai toward the priesthood were completely betrayed the moment Nikken declared his true intentions to disband the Soka Gakkai.

(See Appendix A for a chronology of events covered in this chapter.)