

A SENIOR PRIEST TELLS A STORY
INTERVIEW WITH JISAI WATANABE

The following is a two-part article based on an interview that appeared in four installments in the Soka Gakkai youth division newspaper, the Soka Shimpo (Nov. 18 and Dec. 2, 1992, issues), with Mr. Jisai Watanabe, chief priest of Daikyo-ji temple in Kanagawa. Mr. Watanabe, a former high-ranking official of Nichiren Shoshu, seceded from the head temple last October to protest the injustices of High Priest Nikken. During his 44 years with Nichiren Shoshu, Mr. Watanabe witnessed the sect's remarkable rise under the protection of the Soka Gakkai as well as the recent series of questionable actions the priesthood has taken against the Soka Gakkai.

As is well known, the person who urged President Makiguchi and President Toda to accept the Shinto talisman [during World War II] was my father, Nichiyo (Jikai) Watanabe, the head of General Affairs at that time. Because the priesthood was severely oppressed by the military, it felt the only choice was to go along with the priest Jimon Ogasawara's plot to sell out to the Minobu sect. The result was that President Makiguchi died in prison. I'm deeply shamed by this.

I had decided to break away from the priesthood by Nov. 18 [of last year], the anniversary of President Makiguchi's death. I deeply apologize from the bottom of my heart, and I wish to make a fresh start.

In November, I heard that some members of the Makiguchi family said, "We are deeply pleased to hear that he has seceded from the priesthood." It would be natural for them to feel indignant toward me as Nichiyo's son. For the rest of my life I will remember their warm and encouraging words.

My father also repented his behavior later in life. He praised and wholeheartedly expressed his understanding of the Gakkai's great goal of worldwide kosen-rufu. He told me, "You must be a priest who protects the Gakkai for the rest of your life, even if by yourself." I think he would be happy with my decision to break from the priesthood.

It is now clear that Nikken and others conspired in July of 1990 [to enact a plan to sever the SGI]. In fact, when I was at the head temple for a teachers guidance meeting last summer, Jitoku Kawabe asked me if I had my father's diary. I assumed they were looking for information to counter the Soka Gakkai's argument regarding the Shinto talisman issue, should a conflict arise. Mr. Kawabe must have been collecting information since that time.

However, if you were to ask me when it was that Nikken conceived Operation C, I would say that it was when he became high priest in July of 1979.

His jealousy of President Ikeda could be one reason for this problem. However, from the point of view of those inside the priesthood, Nikken has always had deep ambitions to become the greatest high priest, a brilliant "restorer" of Nichiren Shoshu. I think this has been the motivation behind his actions.

During the ceremony to report to the Dai-Gohonzon of the transfer of high priests held in April 1980, Nikken said that the "restoration of the teachings" means to return to the time of

the founder of the teachings and the founder of the head temple (Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin). He stated, “I will accomplish the ‘restoration of the teachings.’” He was implying that the previous high priests had acted incorrectly.

During the time of Nissho Shonin (the 64th high priest, who served from 1947 through 1956), the impoverished head temple was reconstructed through the devoted protection of Mr. Toda. Simultaneously a great shakubuku campaign began. In other words, the sun of kosen-rufu began to rise. Also, during the time of Nichijun Shonin (the 65th high priest: 1956-1959), the Grand Lecture Hall and the Hoanden were built. This was a time of absolutely pure harmony between priests and laity. Moreover, during Nittatsu Shonin’s time, the Grand Reception Hall was completed and the Sho-Hondo was erected through the efforts of President Ikeda. Hence, the foundation for kosen-rufu in the Latter Day of the Law was achieved.

The question then became: What did High Priest Nikken have to leave as his legacy? No matter how eager he may have been, there was nothing that would make his name famous throughout history.

Nikken, with his selfish and competitive nature, could not stand for this. That is why, on the pretext of “restoring the teachings,” he tried to deny and destroy the achievements of the Soka Gakkai and the successive high priests by saying that they had nothing to do with kosen-rufu and that the true foundation of kosen-rufu would be established during his time.

You might say that his primary motivation has been the acquisition of wealth and fame. He is truly dreadful. Nikken’s nickname, “instant boiler” [which refers to his hot temper], does not apply in the case of breaking with the Soka Gakkai. The jealousy and rage he felt toward President Ikeda manifested in the plot about which he thought long and hard.

He was always saying that “rationale” and “opportunity” were very important. He pondered carefully over the timing. Also, in order to cut off the Soka Gakkai, he asked himself, “What is the best ‘rationale’ to carry out my intent?” The 700th anniversary of the founding of the head temple was the best opportunity for the point of demarcation.

Seven hundred years ago, Nikko Shonin left Mount Minobu and built Taiseki-ji because of the slander of Hakiri Sanenaga, the lord of the manor there. Nikken twisted historical facts to say that Hakiri Sanenaga and President Ikeda play similar roles in Nichiren Shoshu history. He proceeded to “cut” [excommunicate] President Ikeda. In the same way that Nikko Shonin built the Mutsubo as the starting point of the head temple, Nikken began rebuilding the Mutsubo as his own starting point.

Nikken decided to do this suddenly. [The initial plans for refurbishing the head temple for the 700th anniversary did not include the Mutsubo.] Because the original structure had completely deteriorated since Nikko Shonin’s time, a new Mutsubo was donated by the Soka Gakkai during Nittatsu Shonin’s time.

One by one, Nikken began to destroy the buildings related to President Ikeda. This means that he has also been destroying the achievements of earlier high priests. The new Mutsubo is very luxurious; for example, the cost of a single pillar was more than ¥100 million (about \$800,000). In addition, Nikken destroyed the Daikejo and the “Nagare no Niwa” (flowing garden) located in the Daibo, both of which Nittatsu Shonin had constructed with great care.

He also changed the Fuji Seminary into a Kyoto-style garden. He has thus been trying to completely transform the head temple over the last 10 years.

But because he could never surpass Nittatsu Shonin, who constructed the Sho-Hondo, the true high sanctuary, Nikken employed makeshift methods to try to discredit him. After the current dispute began, he gathered all of the certified priests at the head temple on January 6 of last year [1991] and made a crucial statement: “What is the source of President Ikeda’s arrogance? The answer is that he himself decided upon the significance of the Sho-Hondo when no one in the priesthood spoke of it. That was the major source of his arrogance.”

Nikken later admitted that his statement was a result of his own misunderstanding.

But his statement reflects more than a simple misunderstanding. In my opinion, Nikken’s real intention was not only to accuse President Ikeda of arrogance, but to distort the fact that Nittatsu Shonin had defined the Sho-Hondo as “a supreme edifice that is the High Sanctuary of Honmon-ji (the Temple of True Buddhism).” Nikken has insisted that Nittatsu Shonin’s definition of the Sho-Hondo was forced upon him by President Ikeda.

Supposing this were true, the Sho-Hondo, which was established during Nittatsu Shonin’s time, would not be the true high sanctuary that accords with the will of Nichiren Daishonin. After negating the validity of the Sho-Hondo, Nikken would then establish the “true” high sanctuary—this would have been his scenario.

It is believed among the priests that Nikken would have designed his high sanctuary in the traditional Japanese fashion, just like the Mutsubo.

Last June he was troubled by the Soka Gakkai’s letter of inquiry concerning the correction of his statements about the Sho-Hondo. After a meeting with other priests in the Grand Lecture Hall, he whispered to me that we should not keep his thesis titled “Regarding the Error of the Theory of the National High Sanctuary” in the records. He said it would make him look bad.

This thesis refutes the Myoshinko group’s statement that the Sho-Hondo should be the “national high sanctuary.” Of course, the tone of the thesis supports the Soka Gakkai’s view of the significance of the Sho-Hondo. Knowing it could be fatal if this document remained in the records, he requested its recall.

He began to tell people that writing this document had been a mistake. He has been collecting money during the last ten years or so to construct a building that would replace the Sho-Hondo. In other words, accumulating as much money as possible and then cutting off the Soka Gakkai were premeditated acts.

The amount of the donation required for priests to bestow memorial tablets (toba) was raised in April 1990. At that time, thousands of toba were being manufactured at the head temple every day. Nikken saw this and, in one stroke, doubled the price under the pretext that “The local temples strongly requested this.” However, the local temples had heard nothing about it, and no one had asked for such a thing. We priests were surprised ourselves to hear about the sudden doubling of the price. Now people are saying that Nikken has amassed an enormous amount of money.

In January 1991, when the conflict came to the forefront, there was a funeral for the chief priest of Minaminobo temple (on the head temple grounds). Mrs. Hayase (wife of Gikan Hayase, chief of General Affairs of Nichiren Shoshu) told my wife: "This time we have power that we did not have in 1977. We have built enough financial strength to fight the Soka Gakkai."

It is tragic that the priesthood is fulfilling its wicked ambitions using the members' sincere contributions.

There is still more evidence of Nikken's ambition. He is now planning to publish a new compilation of the Gosho as a way of leaving his name in the annals of Nichiren Shoshu forever. Because he resents the fact that the Soka Gakkai provided the fundamental support for the Gosho's publication, he is having the study department of the priesthood begin the publication of a new Gosho.

The current *Gosho Zenshu* (the complete collection of the Daishonin's Writings) was published at the request of Mr. Toda and through the efforts of Nichiko Shonin, who was then 86 years old. How much painstaking effort he must have made. He said that he cried with joy when the transcript was completed.

While it would be natural to make corrections if there were any typographical errors in this great high priest's achievement, as one of Nichiko Shonin's disciples, I can never forgive these recent actions, which show a total disregard for his accomplishments.

Furthermore, in local temples, under the pretext of both the 700th anniversary of Nichiren Daishonin's passing (1981) and the 700th anniversary of the founding of the head temple (1990), many temples were newly built or remodeled. In each new Gohonzon room, Nikken replaced those Gohonzon that had been petitioned by President Ikeda [which bear Mr. Ikeda's name as the petitioner] with a Gohonzon that was made by Nikken himself. This was another attempt to erase evidence of the SGI President's achievements.

The number of temples in which the Gohonzon was replaced reached several dozen. At my temple, Daikyo-ji, I felt it natural and ideal to protect the Gohonzon petitioned by President Ikeda to whom we owe a deep debt of gratitude. In the end, I was able to protect that Gohonzon.

I believe the cause of Nikken's attitude is the fact that he grew up as an overprotected, only child who never experienced hardship. Nikken's mother, Myoshu Ama (nun), did not treat Nikken as a child but spoiled him and treated him as though he was already a senior priest. He did not experience hardship when he joined the Navy, either. After World War II, he rebuilt Hongyo-ji as its chief priest by using lumber from the head temple. Another important point is that his wife, Masako, was also trained by Myoshu Ama. She was brought up under the same framework of values as was Nikken and increasingly contributed to Nikken's arrogance.

One priest mentioned an interesting point: "Nikken was born in 1922, exactly 700 years after the Daishonin's birth. That is why he is convinced that he is a 'child of mission' or a 'special child.'"

He doesn't listen to what others say. He is always saying "I, I, I." Since his youth he has never experienced hardship and that is why he doesn't understand the struggle for kosen-rufu. Neither can he understand the difficulties President Ikeda has had, nor how much the Soka Gakkai has struggled. Although he has praised President Ikeda at many ceremonies, it was just tacked onto the end of his speech.

On the other hand, Nittatsu Shonin praised President Ikeda's achievements and what they meant based on the Goshu. However, I am sure that Nikken has never spoken of President Ikeda's achievements on the basis of the Goshu.

The worst instance in which Nikken acted against the intent of earlier high priests was when he erected a tombstone in honor of his ancestors at a Zen temple in Fukushima on July 17, 1989. The next day, Nikken attended a completion ceremony at Kairen-ji (a Nichiren Shoshu temple in Fukushima). In fact, my son was the chief priest of Kairen-ji at the time.

I arrived in Fukushima one day early to prepare for the completion ceremony. I ran into Nikken and his group at the hotel where I was staying. His wife Masako and his daughter Yuriko were also there. I was surprised to see [Nikken's family members] because they were not scheduled to attend the completion ceremony.

Now I realize that Nikken had just returned to the hotel after attending a ceremony at the Zen temple and then a party. I thought that running into Nikken there would have been awkward for him, so we tried to stay out of sight. The next morning I saw him at breakfast in the hotel restaurant. This time I greeted him, but he replied in a confused manner. Waving his hand [in a gesture of dismissal], he said: "Don't worry. This is a private party, so you need not concern yourself with us."

Even though Kofu-ji (a Nichiren Shoshu temple) is in Fukushima, Nikken found it necessary to install a tombstone for his family at the Zen temple grounds, surrounded by older and smaller tombs, in order to display his power. This is why he secretly imported \$44,000 worth of stone directly from Sweden to build the tombstone. This incident reflects Nikken's true nature, which is controlled by secular trends, his desire to flaunt his money and his need to be the center of attention. None of his actions in this matter were based upon faith.

One might think that priests within Nichiren Shoshu would have spoken up not only about the Zen temple incident, but about other scandalous behavior on his part as well. Yet although there might have been those who viewed Nikken as immoral, Gestapo-type tactics were set forth in order to prevent them from speaking out. If we as priests were to speak ill of Nikken in conversations even with our wives while at the temple, it soon became common knowledge. Those priests who excel at espionage always watch the words and actions of the chief priests and their wives and report to Nikken in order to distinguish themselves in his eyes.

Recently, not only the acolytes but also youthful chief priests have been driven to watch other priests. In fact, Gikei Sakaguchi, who used to be the chief priest of Shoko-ji temple in Kofu and also Koshin Propagation District chief, was demoted in October to a lodging at Myoren-ji temple in Shizuoka Prefecture.

I heard this happened because of secret information from a young chief priest in the same propagation district. In addition, the sect assigns younger assistant priests to older priests who

know of Nikken's past in order to watch them closely. In this way, Nikken's "spy priests" are placed in each of the propagation districts, and the web of espionage grows thicker and thicker.

The rendezvous point for these "spy-priests" is Hokyo-in seminary in Shibuya, Tokyo. There, they bring information from their temples and exchange opinions. Hokyo-in seminary was established by Nikken to counter Soka University, which was established by President Ikeda. He considers it his university. In reality, however, it has become a training ground for young priests loyal to Nikken who are willing to do his bidding in the form of espionage against their peers—a kind of secret police force like the Nazi S.S.

The truth is that there would be no prosperity of the head temple Taiseki-ji or global propagation of the Daishonin's teachings without the Soka Gakkai. Nichiren Shoshu owes a great debt of gratitude to the Soka Gakkai.

I entered the priesthood in 1949 when I was a freshman in high school. At that time, people seldom visited Taiseki-ji. I had to go to Utagawa on the other side of the Meido and work to reclaim and farm the land. There were times when we didn't have enough to eat or wear. I had no hope for the future. Although I was the son of a priest at the Jakunichi-bo (the highest ranked lodging hall) at Taiseki-ji, I could not afford the examination fee to enter a university, so I went to work as a substitute teacher for one year.

After World War II, the head temple was losing its land little by little because of the Agricultural Land Reform Policy, and the financial condition of the priesthood was growing worse. Eventually, the priesthood even proposed the idea of opening the head temple to tourists for sight-seeing, charging a fee.

Local temples also had difficulties during that time. My wife was the daughter of Chief Priest Gikan Hayase of Tsuchiura, Ibaragi Prefecture. To supplement his livelihood, he worked at a post office and a clothing store. His position as a priest seemed like a second job. Some priests from the head temple conducted funerals for believers of other sects at the request of neighborhood associations. Although it is already well known that parishioners of the head temple have little faith and act against the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, many priests as well were shamelessly committing such transgressions at that time. Soka Gakkai members, however, were dedicating their lives for the sake of kosen-rufu and the protection of Nichiren Shoshu even though they themselves led difficult lives. Compared to the members' efforts, those of the priests were superficial. From another angle, the head temple showed no passion for kosen-rufu and forgot the strict spirit to refute slander.

It was the Soka Gakkai that saved the priesthood from serious deterioration. The shakubuku campaigns by the Soka Gakkai advanced kosen-rufu, promoted the refutation of slander and increased participation in Gohonzon-receiving (gojukai) ceremonies like never before. Above all, the head temple was able to develop and prosper because President Toda promoted and suggested the Soka Gakkai pilgrimage (tozan) system, contributed funds to repair the Five-Story Pagoda and donated the Hoanden and the Grand Lecture Hall.

However, even though the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood was given so much help, there were few at the time who understood that worldwide kosen-rufu could not be completed without the Gakkai, except former High Priest Nichiko Hori, former High Priest Nissho Horigome,

and the head of General Affairs Hosoi (who later became Nittatsu Shonin, the 66th high priest). At least 90% of the people in the priesthood regarded the Gakkai as troublesome.

I think the priesthood failed to make an effort to understand the Soka Gakkai because of a conceited belief that those who wear priestly robes are superior to others. In addition, I suspect that the priesthood's anti-Gakkai sentiment stems in part from the Ogasawara incident.

On April 27, 1952, the 700th anniversary of the establishment of Nichiren Shoshu was celebrated. I was then living at the Jakunichi-bo at the head temple. Although Jimon Ogasawara lived at the Honkyo-bo across the way, he happened to come to the Jakunichi-bo, where he saw some Hokkeko members from Owari. That's when I became a witness.

Some people mistakenly believe that this incident was one of the Soka Gakkai youth division unfairly putting a priest on trial. However, it was actually a debate concerning the heretical doctrine of shinpon busshaku [the doctrine that Shinto represents the "true entity" while the Buddha is its transient aspect, which Ogasawara promoted before and during the war in order to ingratiate himself with the military authorities].

The youth division grilled Ogasawara about his culpability in spreading this heretical doctrine within the priesthood. President Toda also came later and said to me: "We will never use violence. We just want him to apologize. Please observe as a witness." But Ogasawara was old and hard of hearing. Because he could hardly get the point, the youth division had to speak loudly. That's why they might have seemed high-handed. But I can verify that the Soka Gakkai never used force.

However, the priesthood insisted that the youth division members used violence toward a priest. The priesthood held an assembly and decided to punish President Toda as a warning. As punishment, President Toda was:

1. Required to submit a written apology through the local temple.
2. Dismissed as chief lay representative (daikoto).
3. Prohibited from visiting the head temple.

[Similar actions were taken against President Ikeda at the beginning of the current dispute.]

As soon as this punishment was announced, youth division members, including President Ikeda, visited each member of the Nichiren Shoshu Council throughout Japan and negotiated with them to withdraw the punishment. I think some priests thought poorly of these actions and developed anti-Soka Gakkai sentiments from then on.

As the expression goes, many priests couldn't "see the forest for the trees." They never clearly grasped the true story or the real problem. They saw only the surface. Moreover, publicly criticizing a fellow priest was out of the question.

After the Ogasawara incident, whenever a problem arose between Nichiren Shoshu and the Soka Gakkai, anti-Gakkai sentiment gushed forth like a geyser from many priests. The

feeling of “persecution paranoia” has increased because of the perception [when the Gakkai would point out transgressions and laxity on the part of the priesthood prior to the current situation] that “the Gakkai is attacking priests again.” This is why I think that the Ogasawara incident is one source of the anti-Gakkai attitude within the priesthood.

It is well known that when Nikken was chief priest of Hongyo-ji temple he had already started forming a danto group. When the Ogasawara incident occurred, Nikken was already maneuvering behind the scenes. That was the time when the youth division visited each member of the Council throughout Japan to ask them to rescind President Toda’s punishment. At Myoko-ji temple in Shinagawa, Tokyo, where I worked, the assistant priest, Kocho Kakinuma, disagreed with the withdrawal of the punishment. He had received numerous phone calls from Nikken. I think Nikken thought it was a good opportunity to be recognized as an anti-Soka Gakkai priest.

After that, Nikken received support from other anti-Gakkai priests and was elected as a member of the Council in 1955, though he was still young. He was willing to say whatever it took to ensure his personal success.

Nikken was involved in many other schemes. One of them concerned the chapter on persecution in *The Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, which was compiled by former High Priest Nichiko. In this work, Nichiko Shonin stated that the suppression by the military government that the Soka Gakkai had to endure before World War II was much greater in scale and intensity than other persecutions in the history of Nichiren Shoshu.

Therefore, he recorded the incident in the chapter on persecution as an example for posterity to follow. Nikken seemed disgruntled by this.

Nikken talked about former High Priest Nichiko with contempt, saying he regarded the former high priest as “merely a scholar,” at the August training seminar for the priest teachers. I believe he had been harboring these feelings for a long time.

The late high priest Nichiko praised first President Makiguchi by calling him “a person who surpasses a common priest.”

I believe that Nikken, who lacks depth and caliber, will never understand the true value of the contributions by members of the Soka Gakkai. Second president Toda dealt strictly with arrogant or corrupt priests, but nobody embraced the priests as warmly as Mr. Toda did, nor strove for the unity of priesthood and laity as sincerely. Every New Year’s Day, Mr. Toda kindly invited the acolytes of the local temples in Tokyo to the Soka Gakkai headquarters building and treated them to a feast. I had been working for Myoko-ji temple since 1951 and was treated to such feasts as one of the “people who would shoulder the future of Nichiren Shoshu.”

President Ikeda established the Eikokai (Glory Group), a group consisting of youthful priests, and took good care of them.

If the Soka Gakkai did not treasure the priesthood, President Ikeda and second president Toda would not have warmly supported the priesthood as they so clearly did.

It is a fact that young men's division members raised contributions for Ogasawara and took care of him after he showed remorse and repented of advocating his erroneous doctrines.

To be continued.

If I may, I would like to speak about what really happened in the so-called Matoba Incident of 1958, but first, to give some background, I will touch on the transmission of the lineage of high priest from Nissho Shonin, the 64th high priest, to Nichijun Shonin, the 65th. I think this will shed some light on how high priests of the past have wholeheartedly trusted the Soka Gakkai, conferring upon it the mission of accomplishing kosen-rufu.

In January of 1956, Nissho Shonin announced his intention to retire as high priest. Just before that, he came to the Jakunichi-bo temple to see my father after ushitora gongyo. I had been resting, and noticed that the light was on. After he left, I asked my father what they had talked about. To my surprise, he said they were discussing whether Nichijun Horigome should be the next high priest.

At that time, there were four priests who were potential candidates for the position. Nissho Shonin had pondered the future of kosen-rufu and decided to focus on the harmonious unity of priests and laity. Nissho Shonin had decided upon Nichijun Shonin as his successor because, of the four candidates, Nichijun best understood the Soka Gakkai. Nissho Shonin had come to ask my father's advice on this question, because my father had strong influence within the priesthood.

Nichijun Shonin, who became high priest in March 1956, was a stern, dignified man. He was very strict with us and often said "If you have time to sleep, you should read the Gosho and the *Rokkansho* (the Six-Volume Writings by Nichikan Shonin, the 26th high priest)." His character also had many gentle aspects.

One day, a new acolyte accidentally caught his robe on Nichijun Shonin's favorite potted plant, breaking the pot. Instead of getting angry, the high priest simply said, "It was the potted plant's fault for catching your robe." Nichijun Shonin's character sharply contrasts with that of Nikken, who is short tempered and unmerciful.

Nichijun Shonin also trusted his subordinates and delegated responsibilities to them. Director Gisei Yoshida (now chief priest of Myoren-ji temple and currently known as Nichiyu Yoshida) was in charge of Internal Affairs, and General Administrator Hosoi (who later became Nittatsu Shonin) was responsible for the Administrative Office. Nikken, however, is so inflexible that he cannot entrust another person with anything.

What came to be known as the Matoba Incident took place during the completion ceremony for the Grand Lecture Hall at Taiseki-ji in March 1958. This ceremony was one of the most important events during Nichijun Shonin's time. I was a witness to this incident as well as the Ogasawara Incident.

The largest special ceremony in the history of the head temple up until that time was the transfer and temporary enshrinement of the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary in the

Grand Lecture Hall. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood and the Soka Gakkai worked together to carry off the event. Members of the young men's division stood guard around the Grand Lecture Hall in the cold of the night. President Ikeda (then Soka Gakkai chief of staff) and Director Yoshida agreed in advance that no alcohol would be consumed during the ceremonies.

However, the chief acolyte, Shojun Matoba, returned to the head temple drunk almost every night. Though it was late at night, he would create a disturbance by shouting loudly. The young men who were on guard warned him. Matoba swore at them, shouting, "Hey, you guys must be students doing this as a part-time job!"

Despite repeated warnings, Matoba's disgraceful behavior continued. To make matters worse, he tormented the other acolytes, using his authority as their superior. Finally, President Ikeda encouraged Director Yoshida to request that Matoba apologize to the young men's division members for his abusive behavior. However, [upon learning of this] Matoba himself fled the head temple.

I was then asked by Director Yoshida to find Matoba because I knew he would seek refuge in a bar that he frequented. When I got there, however, the proprietor told me he hadn't come in. When I pressed, however, she told me he had left instructions to tell anyone who came looking for him that he wasn't there, as I had expected. I found him hiding in a closet.

I escorted him out of the bar and took him to face the members of the young men's division. We agreed that we would demand his apology after he became sober. So, we took him to the bank of the Urui River. Another priest, Jiun Kanno (who had arrived later), and I had Matoba wash his face in the river, which he did of his own accord. I would not allow the YMD members to touch him. He sat erect on his knees and finally apologized to them. The YMD members never used any force or violence against him.

However, in 1977, 20 years later, this case was distorted and portrayed by a weekly magazine as a "lynching" of a priest by the Soka Gakkai.

Mr. Yoshida (Liaison Bureau chief of the Nichiren Shoshu Administrative Office in 1977) clearly stated in the Aug. 27, 1977, *Seikyo Shimbun* that the Soka Gakkai did not assault Matoba in any way, and that the magazine article had been maliciously fabricated. Nevertheless, the priesthood has used this article to attack the Gakkai.

Another article portraying the same incident as a lynching appeared recently in a weekly magazine. The author, a man named Ryu, is a former senior leader who has abandoned the Soka Gakkai.

In 1977, at the request of the Nichiren Shoshu Study Department, I submitted a report detailing the truth of the Matoba Incident, which the weekly magazine had focused on. After reading my report, the priesthood was well aware of what actually happened.

Nevertheless, Ryu called me about his fabricated article, saying, "I will ask the priesthood to look at the rough draft as well, but would you look at it meanwhile?" I ignored his request because I was convinced that senior members of the priesthood, aware of the truth of the incident, would correct any inaccuracies.

Although he knew the truth, Nikken did not repudiate Ryu's fabricated article and allowed him to submit it to the weekly magazine unchanged; this despite the fact that Nikken, on Aug. 28, 1980, had instructed that taking advantage of the media in this way is a disgrace to Buddhism.

Nikken is an utter failure as a high priest and as a human being. The successive high priests before him were great people. Nichijun Shonin wore only cotton robes and lived a very simple lifestyle. Nikken, on the other hand, always wears silk. His extravagant handmade robes cost millions of yen.

Nichiko Shonin told us right before his death, "When I die, I hope to have only a private funeral service, without informing the entire head temple." He was a person who lived a simple existence, satisfied with his humble lifestyle until the last moment of his life.

Nittatsu Shonin always tried to maintain a simple way of life. Unlike Nikken, he did not use expensive dishes. I would like to share an incident that illustrates how Nittatsu Shonin cared for the members.

In 1963, I participated in Nittatsu Shonin's trip to conduct the opening ceremony of a temple in Shikoku. An elderly lady visited our hotel the night before we left Takamatsu City for Nakamura City in Kochi Prefecture. We asked her to leave her name, address and phone number and sent her home because it was so late.

However, the next morning, Nittatsu Shonin, who rarely scolded anyone, became severely angry with us for not informing him of the visitor. He waited until she returned, meeting with her and departing behind schedule for the temple. He was willing to delay his schedule for even a single member.

I think his behavior was an expression of Buddhist compassion and the proper attitude for a high priest as a practitioner of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I think that we cannot expect Nikken, who forsakes his former master, to ever behave this way.

In 1952, Nikken vehemently opposed establishing the Soka Gakkai as an independent religious organization. Nikken himself admitted during a meeting for certified priests on Aug. 28, 1992, that he has been opposed to the Gakkai since long ago.

In 1952, the Soka Gakkai became an independent religious corporation. Nikken stated as follows at the August 1992 meeting: "To specify, I opposed it. At that time, Nichijun Horigome Shonin was chief priest of Josen-ji temple, which was across the street from Hongyo-ji temple, where I was chief priest. I told him frankly of my opposition to the creation of a separate religious corporate body." Until recently, Nikken has pretended to understand the Gakkai, while in reality harboring a boiling hatred toward it. This is the true manifestation of the function of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven.

Nikken's hatred for the Gakkai, however, was occasionally apparent. He was eager to gain danto members (those affiliated directly and only with the temple) and establish a Hokkeko group by inviting those who had left the Soka Gakkai to join him during his term at Hongyo-ji temple.

When President Toda passed away, Nikken, still at Hongyo-ji temple, wrote a eulogy for him that appeared in the Dai-Nichiren. From this article we can detect Nikken's tendency. He wrote as follows: "In 1959, perhaps due to my negative karma, or to what President Toda referred to as 'a monk's nature,' I built a wall in my mind. This sometimes interfered with my understanding of the spirit of President Toda, who was perfectly broad-minded and strictly practiced the way of mentor and disciple."

I think that "a monk's nature" here means a desire for monetary wealth. Nikken seemed suspicious of President Toda even then, and leapt enthusiastically into wooing members who had left the Gakkai to join his temple's Hokkeko group.

This is in contrast to the spirit of "Hokkeko Shu," which the Daishonin inscribed on one side of the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary. The original meaning of the spirit of "Hokkeko Shu" (the order of believers in the Daishonin's Buddhism) is faith with the spirit to give one's life for kosen-rufu in the same way that the believers involved in the Atsuhara Persecution did.

There has always been trouble within the Hokkeko (the general amalgamation of Nichiren Shoshu believers affiliated directly with local temples) in general, and in the Hokkeko of my own temple as well. Some people are hungry for fame and seek only position. Others are starving for benefit and practice solely for the sake of gaining profit. Where among these people can we find the spirit of being willing to offer one's life for kosen-rufu?

On the other hand, the Soka Gakkai members have been devoting their lives to kosen-rufu with the correct spirit. It is just as Nittatsu Shonin once said at a Hokkeko meeting: "All of you must see this. Our Soka Gakkai members have been fighting with the willingness to give their lives for kosen-rufu; this is the spirit of the Hokkeko Shu" (1st Hokkeko Federation Kansai District General Meeting, Oct. 6, 1963).

He also declared, at the 29th Headquarters General Meeting, "The true spirit of the Hokkeko exists among the current members of the Soka Gakkai" (May 3, 1966). Needless to say, even without this guidance there is no room for doubt that the true Hokkeko Shu, with a direct connection to the Daishonin, is none other than the Soka Gakkai.

Since the beginning of this year, as well, Nikken has been revealing his capriciousness. His campaign to get members to quit the Soka Gakkai having reached an impasse, he stated on Jan. 6, "From now on we will invite those who have yet to practice faith to our temples and conduct shakubuku."

Hokkeko members and priests, who have never conducted shakubuku seriously, have not experienced how difficult it is. Some Hokkeko members were involved in my temple's affairs. Rather than thinking about propagation, they were only concerned with their own promotion within the Hokkeko organization. President Ikeda has met and held extensive dialogues with leading public figures. His actions are in accord with Nichiren Daishonin's maxim: "The Law does not spread on its own. It must be propagated by a person, and thus both the person and the Law are worthy of respect." (Gosho Zenshu, p. 856). President Ikeda's actions are examples of how to conduct shakubuku.

Needless to say, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the compassionate Buddhism of Sowing. The seed of the Law is implanted in the hearts and minds of people by those who practice it.

This principle is clear when we observe the life of Nichiren Daishonin, who was dedicated to propagating true Buddhism. During the Kamakura period, Nichiren Daishonin fought against erroneous sects that were linked to the authorities and secular power, and continued to sow the seeds of the Law through his humanistic behavior and character, never giving in to any form of persecution. I think the formula for accomplishing kosen-rufu lies in actual example.

Nikken repeatedly slanders President Ikeda, making statements like: “He does not do shakubuku. What he is doing is not shakubuku. He acts only for his personal desire for fame and honor.” Such criticism is completely misdirected. President Ikeda’s actions are filled with humanity and in accord with the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. Nikken is unable to see the reality of these actions because he himself is bound by greed.

Once you realize that understanding of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is increasing all around the world due to President Ikeda’s character and wisdom, it becomes clear that his actions constitute shakubuku. All members engaged in Soka Gakkai activities, including President Ikeda, are the true votaries of the Lotus Sutra who practice shakubuku.

On the other hand, the priests of Nichiren Shoshu have rarely if ever practiced shakubuku, and so have fallen into a lackadaisical Buddhist practice that has won Buddhism in Japan the derisive designation, “Funeral Buddhism.”

This is most likely the essence of all of the problems, including the Shoshinkai Incident, that the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood has been experiencing. During that time they desperately plotted to subjugate the members by hiding the truth and touting tradition in order to protect the authority of the priests.

Up until and during the so-called 1977 Problem and the Shoshinkai Incident, the Soka Gakkai was busy promoting kosen-rufu and consistently striving for harmonious unity between priesthood and laity.

I mentioned earlier that President Toda warmly encouraged young priests. President Ikeda has also shown great care and concern for youthful priests. The first Eiko-kai (Glory Group) meeting (of youthful Nichiren Shoshu priests) was held on Sept. 24, 1968. President Ikeda ate sukiyaki with us youthful priests and listened to our opinions. There were 15 priests in attendance at the first Eiko-kai meeting, including Juken Omura, Jiun Kanno, Gikan Hayase and myself. President Ikeda gave us the name “Eiko-kai.” He encouraged us many times, asking each of us to “please become priests who take serious responsibility for the development of Nichiren Shoshu.” He also proposed the compilation of two books, *The Life of Nichiren Daishonin* and *The Accounts of Nichiren Daishonin’s Disciples and Lay Believers*. We did indeed publish these books.

One day President Ikeda asked the priesthood to please tell him if we had any requests of the Soka Gakkai. One priest, Juken Omura, asked that the number of participants in the monthly oko lectures increase. Immediately following this request, attendance at oko lectures increased throughout Japan. The young priests were deeply impressed by the sincerity with which President Ikeda followed through.

Nevertheless, priests have used the occasion of the oko lecture to criticize the Soka Gakkai in front of the members.

This is truly shameful. This time as well, just as in 1977, priests immediately began attacking President Ikeda once conflict arose. This sort of action reflects their deep ingratitude, and [according to the Daishonin's teachings,] places them on a level lower than animals.

I am among the graduates of the first session of the Eiko-kai. Immediately after the second session was formed in July 1970, trouble began.

These problems are also related to the Shoshinkai Incident, which followed later. Ten people were involved, including Kotoku Obayashi, Gijun Hayase and Kosai Watanabe, who later became chairman of the Shoshinkai. President Ikeda proposed that the Gakkai and the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood work together in the area of study. However, the priesthood responded that there was no need for them to cooperate with the Gakkai in Buddhist study, claiming differences between the Gakkai's approach to study and theirs, and citing their own busy schedule. It was amid this atmosphere that the Eiko-kai dialogues ceased.

I think this situation arose due to disrespect for President Ikeda. Before the second Eiko-kai session began, it seems that Nikken, then the head of the Nichiren Shoshu Study Department, secretly directed the priests involved to use their authority as priests to say whatever they wanted to say, no matter how brazen.

I regret deeply that this opportunity for sincere dialogue, created by President Ikeda, was lost to such appalling circumstances.

Half of the participants of the second session later joined the Shoshinkai, which was beginning to grow about this time.

Their conceit prevented them from understanding anything of President Ikeda's intentions, particularly his desire for harmonious unity among priests and lay believers.

When the Shoshinkai Incident occurred, Nikken pretended to support the Soka Gakkai, but was already taking actions against it.

Nikken is duplicitous. This became apparent when a problem arose from a study thesis written by a Nichiren Shoshu priest. The story began when Mr. Kendo Kanno's thesis, which criticized the Gakkai, was printed in the priesthood's publication, the *Fuji-Gakuho*. Nikken, then Study Department chief, rather than reprimanding Kanno, praised his thesis as excellent. This is proof that Nikken already harbored anti-Gakkai sentiments.

In January 1977, Nikken visited the Soka Gakkai Headquarters together with Kanno regarding this matter. Judging from Nikken's stance until then, Kanno believed that the Study Department chief (Nikken) would stand by him and refute the Gakkai's position. Kanno therefore felt secure enough to accompany Nikken. However, as soon as they arrived, Nikken made no attempt to protect or stand up for his subordinate, but instead instructed him to apologize unconditionally. Kanno could not comprehend this behavior. Hadn't the Study Department chief, who must have been well qualified to judge, praised his article? Yet Nikken merely reprimanded him to avoid taking the blame himself.

Under these circumstances, it was quite natural that the young priests' distrust of Nikken increased. I would guess that one of the reasons for the Shoshinkai's attacks on Nikken can be traced to this story.

Those days were a bitter experience for me because I had not taken an active role in criticizing the Soka Gakkai during the Shoshinkai Incident.

I was reproached by two acolytes and about 20 Hokkeko members for four or five hours for my failure to criticize the Soka Gakkai. It is now the same as it was then. A resident priest at Daikyo-ji temple summoned my wife and me to the reception hall and read aloud a list of items charging us with treating believers too kindly. From this we can sense the backwardness and insanity of their world.

However, it is absolutely impossible for me to criticize President Ikeda, to whom I am deeply indebted.

My wife and I met President Ikeda for the first time in 1961. He visited me right after I was assigned as chief priest of Ryusen-ji temple in Fuji City (which has a close connection to the Three Martyrs of Atsuhara). Since he was unaware before his visit that I was married, he told me that he would definitely bring something for my wife on his next visit. He later carried out this promise. This kind of concern shows what sort of person he is. I will never forget his thoughtful consideration.

It is pointed out that Nikken has rarely praised the Gakkai since he took office as high priest of Nichiren Shoshu. Nikken rebuts this argument by saying that he rarely had opportunities to attend Gakkai functions. However, this is wholly a case of sophistry. So long as he appreciated the Gakkai's efforts, any praise would have been acceptable. Though he attended the openings of more than 100 temples donated by the Gakkai where he saw many Gakkai members and could have expressed his gratitude to them, he did not do so. He naturally failed to do so because burning deep within his heart was a dark desire to some day sever relations with the Soka Gakkai.

Nikken often received invitations to Soka Gakkai culture festivals. I, too, was often invited to the Gakkai's culture festivals. Yet, whenever he attended such an event, his jealousy toward President Ikeda increased.

At each culture festival, the participants would tearfully express their heartfelt appreciation to President Ikeda after their performance. They would call out "Sensei!" but not "High Priest Nikken!" This intensified Nikken's resentment against President Ikeda. In short, he could not tolerate the natural heart-to-heart exchange that exists between President Ikeda and the Gakkai members.

The warm world of the Soka Gakkai, centering on the successive presidents, is depicted in the novel *The Human Revolution*. I feel that Nikken and many other priests became jealous of this as well. They pressured the Gakkai to cancel the serialization of this novel. Such a negative atmosphere toward *The Human Revolution* certainly existed within Nichiren Shoshu.

At any rate, the priests have been too steeped in protecting their own status and have always functioned as major obstacles to the Soka Gakkai in its sincere, painstaking effort to promote kosen-rufu. There is no doubt about this. This time, Nikken revealed his true identity as the manifestation of the third of the three powerful enemies in Buddhism (sensho zojoman—respected priests who appear as saints or sages yet conspire, out of self-interest, to

persecute the votaries of the Lotus Sutra). In this sense, he can only serve as a harbinger to the commencement of the substantial worldwide propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

I will continue to share the noble history of the Soka Gakkai so that I may repay my great debt of gratitude to the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, President Ikeda and the Soka Gakkai itself. I will do my best, making it my utmost lifelong mission, to fight resolutely against the unpardonable mercilessness of Nikken and his anti-Buddhist behavior, which I have witnessed over the past several decades.

(Previously published in *The SGI-USA Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 3, April 19, 1993)