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**DOMINATING TRADITION:
SŌKA GAKKAI AND THE CREATION OF HISTORY**

by

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**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of East Asian Studies
University of Toronto**

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Master of Arts, 1998

Levi McLaughlin

**Graduate Department of East Asian Studies
University of Toronto**

Abstract of Thesis

Since the foundation of the Sōka Gakkai, its history and tradition have been rewritten by its second and third presidents, Toda Josei and Ikeda Daisaku. This historical revision has also included the rewriting of the history of Nichiren Shōshū, the Buddhist group from which the Sōka Gakkai originated. In doing so, they have defined a world-view for millions of Sōka Gakkai adherents. This study addresses the reasons why these leaders defined and redefined their tradition, and the effect constant redefinition of key concepts and beliefs within the Sōka Gakkai has had on the organization and its membership. This will illustrate the Sōka Gakkai tradition as one of justification of new religious activity as sanctioned by tradition, and rationalization of the personal power of the postwar presidents in relation to the lineage from which it claims to be derived.

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This is also dedicated to Lauren Markley, and to my family, who suffered through endless hours of revisions, and my frequent bouts of frustration and deranged behaviour.

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DOMINATING TRADITION:

SŌKA GAKKAI AND THE CREATION OF HISTORY

PRECIS AND TEXT OF THESIS

PRECIS OF THESIS

Since the foundation of the Sōka Gakkai 倉俣学会, its history and tradition have been rewritten and reformatted to fit with the perceived reality of those writing it. That rewriting and rationalizing has generally been undertaken by the presidents of Sōka Gakkai who succeeded the founder Makiguchi Tsunesaburō 牧口常三郎, namely Toda Josei 戸田城聖, and Ikeda Daisaku 池田大作. Both of these leaders have rewritten history, not only that of the Sōka Gakkai, but of Nichiren Shōshū 日蓮正宗, the Buddhist group from which Sōka Gakkai originates, as well as the entirety of Buddhism. In doing so, they have succeeded in defining a world-view for millions of Sōka Gakkai adherents.

This study addresses several issues in relation to this point. First, the reasons why the Sōka Gakkai leaders found it necessary to define and redefine their tradition, *vis-a-vis* their predecessors within the movement itself, as well as in relation to the older Buddhist tradition. Second, the matter of the motivations for rewriting history to fit with their perceived reality. Third, the role of the Sōka Gakkai in that exercise, and fourth, the effect this had on members, as well as the perception of the movement by non-members.

This study examines primary textual evidence from Sōka Gakkai sources, as well as secondary scholarly sources, that show how the Sōka Gakkai tradition and history has been transformed and manipulated under the presidencies of Toda and Ikeda. The inquiry will begin with an examination of a major aspect of the Sōka Gakkai tradition; that of *shakubuku* 折伏, (Eng., “forced conversion”). An examination of the different ways in which this activity has been defined by Sōka Gakkai authorities will provide insights into the history of the tradition. This has been a tradition of justification and rationalization; justification of new religious activity as sanctioned by tradition, and rationalization of the personal power of the postwar presidents in relation to the lineage from which it claims to be derived.

Once again, the prison cell was no more. Toda found himself part of a multitude gathered to participate in the Ceremony in the Air, in which the Buddha imparted to the world the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The ceremony took place in the realm of the eternal Buddha, the dwelling place of all-pervasive universal life. The number of the multitude taking part equaled the sands of countless thousands of Ganges rivers. In the midst of the throng stood a resplendent golden Dai-Gohonzon. And Toda was there.

- Ikeda Daisaku, The Human Revolution, Vol. II, p. 138.

This is a passage from the biography of Toda Josei 戸田城聖 (1900-1958), the second president of Sōka Gakkai 創価学会, and the leader responsible for transforming the organization from a small collective concerned with educational reform into Japan's largest and fastest growing post-war religious movement. The Human Revolution, written by the current president of Sōka Gakkai, Ikeda Daisaku 池田大作 (1928 -), is a multi-volume historical novel that describes the growth of the movement from the immediate post-war period up to the death of Toda in 1958. The Human Revolution, as well as other works written by Sōka Gakkai presidents, is not simply a work of historical fiction. It serves a specific function, one that will be the central concern of this paper. Through writing this book, Ikeda Daisaku has created history. The book establishes his immediate predecessors as holders of sacred wisdom, and therefore effectively justifies himself as leader of a spiritual community. Through the course of the book, Ikeda makes it clear that he is the exclusive chosen successor to the enlightened rule of his teacher and mentor, Toda Josei. Simply put, Ikeda created a history that served his needs as supreme authority in the Soka Gakkai.

This is not a surprising phenomenon. Indeed, written versions of the past that substantiate claims of authority is a phenomenon that can no doubt be identified in all religious traditions. Within the context of this study, however, it is a pattern that is easily identified in the writings of the Sōka Gakkai leadership, and before that in the tradition of Nichiren Shōshū, from which Sōka Gakkai is derived.

This analysis of the creation of Sōka Gakkai history will involve examination of textual evidence that illustrates the manner in which the different leaders of Sōka Gakkai have defined the movement, and will be focused around several central questions:

First, there is the question of the manner in which the three Sōka Gakkai presidents create their own tradition. Focusing specifically on the second and third presidents, Toda and Ikeda, this will entail an analysis of how each has written a different version of religious history. This was accomplished through the creation of new texts, the rewriting and editing of previously written work, and the quieting of past works that do not conform to new versions of the tradition. This involved not only constant revision of traditions and practices that define Sōka Gakkai, but also rewriting the lineage and history of Nichiren Shōshū 日蓮正宗, and with it the entirety of Buddhism.

Another question with regard to the way in which history was rewritten is the manner in which Sōka Gakkai has been presented differently during the presidencies of Makiguchi Tsunesaburō 牧口常三郎 (1871-1944, the revered founder), Toda and Ikeda. Sōka Gakkai has been a very different organization under each of these figures. There will be a detailed examination of the ways in which Sōka Gakkai was uniquely altered by each leader. This inquiry will begin with an examination of a single word, *shakubuku* 折伏 (Eng. “forced conversion”), which has been of great concern to Sōka Gakkai since its reformation after the second World War.

Since its revitalization after World War II, Sōka Gakkai has undergone many changes. This study will be primarily concerned with the period of Sōka Gakkai history beginning around the last years of the second president, Toda Josei, up to the first few years of Ikeda Daisaku’s presidency, a period spanning from roughly 1957 until 1967, addressing the creation of Sōka Gakkai lineage and history within this context. The scope of this study is limited for the sake of clarity and in the interest of the value of an indepth analysis over that of a general survey. This period of time was pivotal for the organization, and a detailed examination of it is most appropriate to demonstrate the historical revision undertaken by Sōka Gakkai.

During that ten-year period there were many reversals and changes in doctrine, activities, official history and the definition of important religious nomenclature. For the members of a

religious community, the change of personal leader necessarily entails the adoption of a new ideological view of the world. The new leader impresses his own style on the organization, resulting in many profound changes. For the individual member, this can be likened to the trauma associated with moving from one country to another. New customs and protocols have to be observed, language and terminology is adopted, and what was once praiseworthy, even holy, may become forbidden. In order to maintain one's status as a devout member, one must adjust to these changing circumstances, or suffer ostracism. Many are no doubt left confused, perhaps even feel betrayed, by such radical changes. It is certain that Sōka Gakkai changed in this dramatic fashion when each of its three presidents came to power.

One of the ways in which the continuous reformulation of Sōka Gakkai doctrine, and the rationalization of its changing religious behaviour, can be most interestingly analyzed is in the definition of and importance placed on the term *shakubuku*. This word is made up of two characters, which individually mean to break (折, *shaku* or *setsu*, literally a hand with an axe), and to lie face down (伏, *fuku*, literally a man lying down like a dog). It is therefore easy to see why it is often translated into English as “forced conversion”. Yet, despite its literal meaning, there are almost as many definitions given for the term *shakubuku* as there are sources that describe it. In the following section, the many definitions of the term by scholars and by Sōka Gakkai shall be examined.

Shakubuku has often been maligned by Sōka Gakkai's detractors as a technique of forceful conversion, often equated with the so-called “brainwashing” practices of religious groups deemed dangerous. Stories abound from the time of Toda's presidency, and also from the first decades of Ikeda's leadership, of members harassing potential converts at their homes at all hours of the night, of intimidating rival religious groups, and other unsavoury practices¹. It is because of these accounts, spread widely by the Japanese news media and anti-Sōka Gakkai groups abroad,

¹ This has led to the publication of many works in Japanese critical of the Sōka Gakkai and its current president, Ikeda Daisaku. One of the most famous of these books is: Fujiwara, Hirotsu. Denounce Sōka Gakkai (Sōka Gakkai wo kiru 創価学会を斬る), translated from the Japanese by Worth C. Grant. Tokyo: Nisshin Hōdō Co., 1970.

that the term shakubuku has come to have negative associations amongst the public at large. Within Sōka Gakkai, however, especially in the period of Toda's presidency and in the first decade after his death, the practice of shakubuku was, and perhaps still is, considered central to the activities of Sōka Gakkai members. Along with chanting the *daimoku* 題目 (the syllables *nam-myōhō-renge-kyō* 南無妙法蓮華經, meant to symbolize the essence of the Lotus Sutra), the most meritorious religious activity is the conversion of others to the faith, defined primarily as the practice of shakubuku. It is informative how the term shakubuku is defined differently by both its supporters and detractors. This one word has been defined in terms that are, in some cases, diametrically opposed. The following section will outline as completely as possible the definitions of shakubuku found in the sources listed in the bibliography, and will examine the implications of those different definitions of this central term.

Most scholars writing in English on the subject of shakubuku translate it as “to break down and convert”. Other translations include “to conquer evil aggressively”², to “bend and cause to submit”³, and “to destroy and conquer”⁴. The term shakubuku is first mentioned in two texts known as the *Shomangyō*⁵ 勝鬘經 and the *Dainichigyō*⁶ 大日經 that predate Nichiren.

² Naylor, Christina. “Nichiren, Imperialism, and the Peace Movement.” Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 18, March 1991, p. 52.

³ Bloom, Alfred. “Observations in the Study of Contemporary Nichiren Buddhism.” Contemporary Religions in Japan, Vol. 6, No. 1, March 1965, p. 65.

⁴ International Institute for the Study of Religions, ed. “Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shō Sect.” Contemporary Religions in Japan, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1960, p. 55.

⁵ A commentary on the Srimala sutra traditionally attributed to Shōtoku Taishi 聖德太子 (574-622). The contents of this commentary are summarized in Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亨, ed. Mochizuki Bukkyō Daijiten 望月仏教大辞典, Vol. 3. Kyōto: Sekai Seiten Kangyō Kyokai 世界聖刊行協会, 1958, p. 2775. Also, see de Bary, William Theodore, ed. The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan. New York: Vintage Books, 1969, p. 263.

⁶ A seven-volume esoteric Buddhist text from Tang-dynasty China. See Matsumura, Akira 松村明, ed. Daijirin 大辞林, 2nd ed. Tōkyō: Sanseidō 三省堂, 1995.

Shakubuku is presented in these texts in connection with a parallel term, shōju 摂受, literally “acceptance”⁷. Shō, or sessuru 摂する, is an alternate form of toru 取る, the verb “to take”, or “to pull”. Ju, or ukeru 受ける, is the verb “to receive”. The combination of these characters could be interpreted as a passive, yet willing, reception of teachings, in contrast to the being broken down and forcefully converted.

Shakubuku was originally used by Nichiren 日蓮 (c. 1222 - 1282) to designate the intolerant, aggressive methods needed to convert the followers of other, “heretical” Buddhist denominations, while shōju was a tolerant approach whereby people were to be convinced to convert by moral suasion⁸. The term shakubuku largely fell out of use after Nichiren’s death, and was revived after World War II by Sōka Gakkai. In Sōka Gakkai literature of Toda’s period, it is generally maintained that in the current days of *mappō*⁹ 末法, the time of the degeneration of the law of the Buddha, only shakubuku would be an effective means of convincing non-believers to adopt the observance of True Buddhism.

Though shakubuku is generally associated exclusively with Sōka Gakkai, some scholars have noted that some Nichiren sects outside of Sōka Gakkai use that term to indicate their forms of proselytizing activities. Tanaka Chigaku 田中智学, a Nichiren priest of the Meiji era whose ideas were later adopted by prominent members of the Japanese military, advocated the forced conversion of people in countries outside Japan, and defined such activities as shakubuku. The

⁷ International Institute for the Study of Religions, “Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shō Sect”, p. 55., and Brannen, Noah S. “False Religions, Forced Conversions, Iconoclasm.” Contemporary Religions in Japan, Vol. 5, No. 3, September 1964, p. 242.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The Kamakura 鎌倉 era (1185-1331), during which Nichiren lived, was thought by many Japanese religious figures to fall near the beginning of *mappō* 末法, the third age of Buddhism, in which we still live today. This is an age wherein the teachings of the historical Buddha have fallen away, and the world has entered a period of violence and chaos. Such religious founders as Nichiren 日蓮, Honen 法然 (founder of Jōdoshū 浄土宗), and Shinran 親鸞 (founder of Jōdoshinshū 浄土真宗) believed that *mappō* had begun in 1052, the time of the fall of the Heian era. See Hurst, Nichiren Shōshū and the Sōka Gakkai in America, pp. 93-94.

whole earth was to be united around Japan, using “the Lotus Sutra and the sword.” Japan, with its “unbroken line” of Emperors inherited from Jimmu 神武, had a unique destiny to “guide and induce every country in the world” to accept the teachings of Nichiren. Tanaka was renowned as a fanatical Japanese nationalist, a monk who put the worship of the Emperor and the promotion of the Japanese state ahead of loyalty to Buddhist practice. He wrote that there was great danger in such “impure things as Chinese thoughts or foreign theories that deform the basis of the State”, and that hope lay in the “refinement of Japanese purified imports” to uphold a great and “pure” Japanese power. It was members of the Japanese military in the 1920’s and 1930’s who sought to implement this vision across East Asia¹⁰.

In later decades, the term shakubuku became commonplace, not just in Japan, but wherever Sōka Gakkai became active. As is reported by scholars studying Sōka Gakkai as a religious phenomenon in the contemporary West, the act of converting non-believers to the faith is designated by the Japanese word shakubuku¹¹, to the extent that the term has entered the vernacular used internationally by non-Japanese speaking Sōka Gakkai members.

The literal and historical interpretations of shakubuku stated above differ greatly from those provided by Sōka Gakkai sources. Official terminology from around the time of Toda’s death through the first years of Ikeda’s presidency tend to be as follows: “The merciful deed of saving those who are troubled with various kinds of misfortunes arising from heretical religions”¹². Toda defines “shaku” as “to correct one’s evil mind,” and “buku” as “to convert one

¹⁰ Naylor, Christina. “Nichiren, Imperialism, and the Peace Movement.”, pp. 54-55.

¹¹ See especially Hurst, Jane D. Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism and the Sōka Gakkai in America: The Ethos of a New Religious Movement. New York: Garland Publishing, 1992, Snow, David Allen. Shakubuku: A Study of the Nichiren Shōshū Movement in America, 1960-1975. New York: Garland Publishing, 1993, and Wilson, Bryan and Dobblaere, Karel. A Time to Chant: The Sōka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

¹² White, James Wilson. The Sōkagakkai and Mass Society. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1970, p. 82.

to his good mind”¹³. It is conceivable that this definition is derived from an examination and rationalization of the individual characters, as images of hands wielding axes and people forced to lie prostrate could have been construed by Toda as inferring a judicious use of force in the interest of converting people to the teachings of Sōka Gakkai.

The Shakubuku Kyōten 折伏教典, the “Handbook of Forcible Conversion” produced by Toda in the years before his death, outlines the mission of shakubuku as one “to discover the pernicious character of heretical sects and to invite all to worship the Dai-Gohonzon 大御本尊¹⁴. From the point of view of believers in Nichiren Shōshū, those who are not followers of “True Buddhism” are condemned to a horrible fate. They will never achieve enlightenment, and will suffer in terrible ways during this lifetime and in succeeding ones. Shakubuku is therefore an act of mercy, an attempt to save one who is unaware of the danger he or she is in. It is equated with “a kind of forceful urging as in the case where a child may be about to fall off a precipice or into a river¹⁵”. It is also equated with the urging of a stern father. This is behaviour analogous to that of Nichiren Daishōnin 日蓮大聖人¹⁶, who is interpreted by Toda as a type of universal father-figure. The teachings of Nichiren are perceived by Toda as “a father’s noble affection”, in contrast to the gentle, motherly teachings of the historical Buddha Sakyamuni. The more gentle teachings are inappropriate for this time of degradation; more suitable is the scolding we receive from the fatherly Nichiren¹⁷. Thus, in adopting an urging, forceful attitude,

¹³ Toda, Josei. Lecture on the Sutra: Hōben and Juryō Chapters. Tōkyō: Seikyō Press, 1968, p. 48.

¹⁴ Sōka Gakkai Kyōgakubu 創価学会教学部, Shakubuku Kyōten 折伏教典. Tōkyō, 1966, pp. 282-284.

¹⁵ Bloom, “Observations in the Study of Contemporary Nichiren Buddhism,” p. 65.

¹⁶ Sōka Gakkai Kyōgakubu, Shakubuku Kyoten, p. 244. Nichiren Daishōnin (Great Master Nichiren) is the reverential title used by followers of Nichiren Shōshū.

¹⁷ Toda, Josei. Lecture on the Sutra, p. 144.

one adopts the personal attributes of the Eternal Buddha Nichiren. This is a phenomenon that will be discussed in detail later in this paper.

Such urging is necessary, for the consequences of not adopting the faith are truly dire. Sōka Gakkai literature is replete with cautionary tales of people who denounce the Nichiren Shōshū tradition and foolishly follow “heretical” religions. For instance, Toda maintained that by believing in inferior religions, children contract polio¹⁸. Ikeda’s opus, The Human Revolution, is peppered with many testimonials of members who suffered financial ruin, the death of loved ones, disease and other calamities. In such instances, the members are advised by Toda that their bad luck is a result of Nichiren Daishōnin’s displeasure with them, usually as reprimand for their negligence in their religious practice¹⁹. Thus, it is not difficult to see how followers of Sōka Gakkai could be convinced that the forced conversion of their friends and neighbours is an act of mercy and compassion, despite protests to the contrary by prospective converts.

Indeed, Toda made other bold statements designed to convince Sōka Gakkai followers that conversion of friends and family was not simply meritorious, but a matter of urgency. “If you practice shakubuku on your friends, you will be able to be born with them in the next existence of life, where you will believe in the true faith together²⁰.” Thus, while the practice of conversion of others is primarily meant to produce benefits in this lifetime, it also ensures good fortune in the next. More sinister than this, however, is the threat that one will not be reborn with one’s friends and family if one does not practice shakubuku on them, and thus one will abandon them to a lesser existence that doubtless awaits them in the future. If a member does not practice shakubuku on those held dear, he or she is destined to lose them, and remain alone in future existences. The message is clearly stated by Toda: “you are required to convert your family²¹.”

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 134.

¹⁹ For example, see Ikeda, Daisaku, The Human Revolution, Vol I, New York: Weatherhill, 1982, pp. 113-114.

²⁰ Toda, Lecture on the Sutra, p. 106.

²¹ Ibid., p. 107.

An important addition to this equation are Toda's comments on the relationship between the converter and the converted in future existences. The converter will be reborn into a happy, healthy existence, replete with fortune and a successful business. According to Toda, friends from past existences will be reborn as housemaids, or possibly as the Sōka Gakkai member's chauffeur²². Thus, those who are one's peers or superiors in this life will be in a subservient position in the next existence, a result of having been converted through shakubuku. This is a revealing statement by Toda. The act of conversion, while being defined as an act of mercy, is essentially one of domination. What is portrayed on the surface as an act of love for the other is, ultimately, an attempt to seize control of that person, in this life and in the next.

What is notable about this domination is that it is not voluntary; the Sōka Gakkai member, aware of the consequences of not following the faith, is compelled to convert his or her loved ones, or lose them. This is confusing at first, because the primary message being communicated is a vision of empowerment through practice. The material benefits of following Sōka Gakkai practice are constantly stressed²³, in addition to the promise of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime. However, Toda's writings on the subject make it clear that there are only two paths: shakubuku or misery.

This matter of dominance is multilayered. On the one hand, the responsibility of the person practicing shakubuku is very much like that of a parent with a small child. In converting another, one is in a dominant role, able to exert one's influence on and superiority over another. However, like a parent, one's dominance and superiority are not without their down side. It is not voluntary dominance; it is a great responsibility, and at times a great burden, and it is a position that cannot be renounced. Similarly, shakubuku can also be a burden, in that it is incumbent upon the Sōka Gakkai member to continue to seek the conversion of loved ones, no matter what the obstacles may be.

²² Ibid.

²³ For instance, "I recommend you accumulate good fortune in this life so that in the next existence of life, you can be born into a family possessing five Cadillacs." Ibid., p. 100.

Distinct from this, however, is the sense that shakubuku is undertaken by the Sōka Gakkai member for reasons that are plainly less than selfless. The practice of shakubuku is superior to parenthood in that the rewards are many times greater. Not only does one gain the satisfaction of merit derived from attaining the salvation of another, but one is also rewarded with material wealth and the promise of enlightenment in this life, as well as a guarantee of dominance over that person in a future life. Thus, while raising children is not necessarily without self-centered motivations and rewards, in most people's formulations these rarely translate into assurances for future existences or guarantees of material success in this one.

Another aspect of the selfish nature of shakubuku is that it ensures that the member will never be left alone. By converting those people who are most cherished in this life, they will remain with the member in future lives, ensuring that he or she is never without the comfort of their presence. However, any conflict that may be present in this incarnation will be eliminated in the next, because the member will be in a position of power over them; those who are quarrelsome now will be happily subservient in the future.

As was mentioned briefly above, it appears as if, in practicing shakubuku, the Sōka Gakkai member is adopting behaviour and attributes of Nichiren himself. This can be interpreted as directly related to the adoption of the role of a parent over the prospective convert. The paternalistic implication in Toda's writing is clear; the stern rebukes of a father are more desirable and efficacious than the gentle persuasions of a mother. The father is strong and capable, the mother is weak. The Sōka Gakkai is by no means unique in implying a preference for the male over the female. Indeed, it may be argued that there are almost no non-paternalistic religious groups, especially in Japan. Toda's reference to Nichiren as a "paternal" figure, dominant over the "maternal" teachings of Sakyamuni, is emphasized in this study for its relevance to the manner in which Nichiren's identity and authority are adopted by Sōka Gakkai, not as an illustration of gender bias.

When one imitates Nichiren's attitude and behaviour, one functions in a manner in keeping with the severe paternalistic methods necessary for this time of the decline of the Buddha's law. More than this, the Sōka Gakkai member, when he or she is infused with the words and actions of the Eternal Buddha, dominates the faith in a personal way. In a sense, the member *becomes*

Nichiren. He or she attains mastery over the religion, and transforms into a powerful paternalistic figure, more powerful than any ordinary human. The personality and charisma of this powerful religious figure are co-opted to suit the individual needs of the Sōka Gakkai member.

This mode of personal domination of the religious tradition of Sōka Gakkai is also in evidence in the practice of chanting daimoku. Sōka Gakkai literature constantly stresses the efficacy of daily repeated chanting of the seven sacred syllables, *nam-myōhō-renge-kyō*, that Nichiren claimed were the supreme essence of the Lotus Sutra. Sōka Gakkai texts declare that through chanting the daimoku, every wish will come true²⁴. Diseases will be cured, businesses will prosper, and life in general will be full of happiness²⁵. As with the practice of shakubuku, through chanting the daimoku, an entire religious tradition is channeled into serving the needs of a single individual. Thus, the act of engaging in Sōka Gakkai religious practice is itself an act of domination. It must be attractive for an individual seeking a sense of superiority and power in his or her life to feel that a religious tradition, with all of its accompanying majesty and sense of power and purpose, is under their personal control. It is conceivable that this is a major attraction of Sōka Gakkai to those who join.

It must be stressed, then, that the faith propagated by the Sōka Gakkai is patently *not* altruistic. Its purpose is to serve those who personally engage in its practice and proselytization. As an example of this, Sōka Gakkai avoids ongoing large-scale official charity-related activities. They do not sponsor any hospitals, the Boy Scouts, or any other such organization²⁶. Overall, there is no sense that practice itself is intrinsically valuable. An action is only as good as what it produces, and shakubuku is no exception.

²⁴ See *Ibid.*, p. 207, in the appendix written by Ikeda Daisaku, entitled "Every Wish Comes True."

²⁵ For instance, Ikeda wrote that "there are no diseases that cannot be cured through faith in True Buddhism." Ikeda, Daisaku. *Guidance Memo*. Tōkyō: Seikyō Press, 1966, p. 99.

²⁶ From an interview with Tony Meers, Vice-Chairperson of SGI Canada, February 15th, 1995, recorded at length in McLaughlin, Levi, *The Sōka Gakkai: Its Ethos, Origins and History in Canada* (publication forthcoming, manuscript 1995).

Toda's writings on the subject of forceful conversion are of an imperious, sometimes vitriolic character. Ikeda's writings on the subject, however, are of a different nature. In his Guidance Memo, there is a section entitled "Happy Shakubuku", in which the practice is described as "an austere practice of Buddhism"²⁷. His "guidance" in this matter is to instruct members affectionately, to change their bad karma. Says Ikeda, one gains satisfaction in succeeding in the difficult task of shakubuku, with the sense of self-satisfaction one gains from a job well done. In relation to this, success in this practice is likened to attaining very high grades in university entrance examinations. This is in stark contrast to the comparisons drawn by Toda, who was more inclined to liken success at shakubuku to a grand victory over the dark forces of the universe.

Indeed, it is interesting to note that Ikeda stresses that shakubuku is "real" only if it is difficult. This is, of course, useful guidance for a leader to give to his or her membership to encourage them to persevere in the face of opposition. The emphasis in Ikeda's writings is different from that of Toda. Toda's primary focus appears to be on convincing every person of the absolute supremacy of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, as the tradition is interpreted by him, by whatever means necessary. The literature explaining the importance of conversion is taken up with explanations of the benefits accrued thereby, as well as the dire consequences of not conforming to his vision. Ikeda's writings are more light-hearted in tone. It is true that Ikeda defines Nichiren Shōshū as "the religion of shakubuku," and claims that the world will become stabilized around the "pillar" of shakubuku, creating unity in a chaotic Japan²⁸. However, he stresses that members should refrain from "any shakubuku which requires excessive effort on your part," and that they should not "overstrain in achieving," but rather should speak in accordance with ability²⁹. Replacing the sense of urgency conveyed by Toda is an attempt to proclaim an

²⁷ Ikeda, Daisaku. Guidance Memo. Tokyo: Seikyo Press, 1966, p. 129.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 140, 143.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 148, 180.

equanimous vision, in which the merciful teachings of Nichiren are propagated to all the people of the world in a gentle manner.

Several years after the death of Toda, Ikeda began to emphasize his own interpretation of shakubuku, and Toda's writings on the subject became increasingly difficult to find. At the twenty-ninth general meeting of Sōka Gakkai, on May 3, 1966, Ikeda gave a speech that stressed moderation first. Henceforth, shakubuku was to be accomplished by conversion through exemplary model, not forceful activity³⁰. Subsequently, shakubuku was defined in increasingly friendly, if ambiguous, terms. Instead of harshly condemning those who did not submit to conversion, shakubuku was about creating a “heart-warming interflow of trust and mutual understanding³¹.” Gone were the forceful rhetoric and bald promises of unlimited riches. There was no more Shakubuku Kyōten, the handbook on forced conversion; instead there was the Guidance Memo. Gradually, discussion of shakubuku in Ikeda’s work appeared less frequently. Recently, stress has been put almost exclusively on the practice of shōju, or acceptance of teachings based on logical argument and reason.

Nonetheless, underlying Ikeda’s gentler message of peace and love is the same theme of domination discussed in reference to Toda’s works. Special emphasis is placed on propagation internationally, especially in Asia: “If you go to other Asian countries as Buddhist missionaries, Sakyamuni and T’ien-t’ai 天台 will be pleased, and Nichiren Daishōnin, the true Buddha of mappō, will be overjoyed³².” Indeed, in Ikeda’s vision, the domination of those who bring about conversions over those converted is expanded from personal to national: “...each of us ought to observe strictly the teachings of Nichiren Daishōnin...and practice Shakubuku throughout our

³⁰ Murata, Kiyooki. Japan’s New Buddhism: An Objective Account of Sōka Gakkai. New York: Weatherhill, 1969, p. 128.

³¹ Ibid., p. 129.

³² Ikeda, Guidance Memo, p. 202.

whole lives for the sake of our sons and daughters, posterity...thereby contributing toward world peace by letting others know the superiority of Japanese people³³.”

Sōka Gakkai has been accused of harbouring nationalistic and militaristic sentiments. There was a great deal of controversy surrounding the establishing of the political wing of the movement that came to be known as the Kōmeitō 公明党 (Clean Government Party), and concerns were raised, and continue to be raised, regarding perceived transgressions of laws separating religion and state. Indeed, the statements quoted above, as well as such bald declarations from Ikeda as “I am ruler of Japan, the supreme authority³⁴” in regard to his perceived personal power, might well lead one to this conclusion. If, however, one were to observe Sōka Gakkai’s religious activity from the point of view of Sōka Gakkai doctrine, it is apparent that the sentiment being expressed is more all-encompassing than Japanese nationalism. The importance of spreading the doctrine to all people, known in Sōka Gakkai as *kosen-rufu* 広宣流布, is based on the Sōka Gakkai view of the nature of the universe. That is to say, Sōka Gakkai places its religious beliefs and goals at a higher premium than domestic political concerns. There is no doubt that Sōka Gakkai sought political power, and gained it, domestically. However, in the more than thirty years that it has been active politically, and in all of its dealings in countries outside of Japan, there has been no evidence of an attempt to reinvoke Japanese militarism. The emphasis has always been on *kosen-rufu* – the evangelization of the earth – and the spread of the personal influence of the Sōka Gakkai president.

The fact that the term *shakubuku* has various and highly contrasting definitions in Sōka Gakkai illustrates a major characteristic of the tradition. That is, its constant manipulation of history to conform with the present. A word with a literal meaning of “to break and convert” came to mean “an act of love destined to break the evil religion in those converted” in the time of Toda, to “a heart-warming interflow of trust and mutual understanding” under Ikeda. The activities of propagation described as essential by Toda are described as undesirable by Ikeda.

³³ Ikeda, Daisaku. Lectures on Buddhism, Vol I. Tōkyō: Seikyō Press, 1962, p. 94.

³⁴ White, The Sōkagakkai and Mass Society, p. 229.

Both presidents, however, claim to be perfect exemplars of the Nichiren Shōshū tradition, to the extent that they are themselves viewed by their membership as enlightened beings. It is worth considering how these obvious contradictions can be accounted for, and how the differences between the two leaders are justified.

It is apparent that Sōka Gakkai under Ikeda is dramatically different than it was under Toda. Similarly, the organization was still radically different under the leadership of its first president and founder, Makiguchi Tsunesaburō. The transformation of the organization is due to many factors, including such obvious things as the shifts that have occurred throughout the entire world over the course of time. One of the most important ways in which to examine these changes is to identify how Sōka Gakkai has continually defined itself *vis-a-vis* its own heritage and traditions. Under each of its three presidents, Sōka Gakkai has been a very different group. Yet, despite its revisions, the leadership of Sōka Gakkai has always portrayed it as being unfalteringly loyal to the Nichiren Shōshū tradition. Each new regime has therefore had to rewrite and redefine not only its own authority, but the entire history of the Sōka Gakkai movement, the Nichiren Shōshū tradition, and the history of Buddhism as a whole. The following section addresses the manner in which history has been revised to fit the perceived reality of those writing it, and the ways in which the presidents of Sōka Gakkai, especially Toda and Ikeda, asserted their authority. It also examines how the Sōka Gakkai lineage was defined and solidified as a result of this process.

In establishing himself as the head of the newly-formulated Sōka Gakkai immediately after World War II, Toda not only extensively redefined the history of the group, but that of the entirety of Buddhism. In his Lecture on the Sutra and in the Shakubuku Kyōten, Toda clearly reinforced the notion originally espoused within Nichiren Shōshū that Nichiren is not only the Buddha of the age of *mappō*, but is the "Eternal Buddha". Nichiren is the source of all enlightenment, and Sakyamuni, the historical figure known to all other Buddhists as the primary Buddha of this existence, was a transitional figure. This is, obviously, in conflict with other Buddhist traditions, including other Nichiren-derived groups. As defined by Toda, Nichiren is the True Buddha of the infinite past. Sakyamuni attained enlightenment by studying with Nichiren in

the eternal past³⁵. After Toda made this statement establishing Nichiren's true identity, to regard Nichiren as anything other than the Eternal Buddha was confirmed as heretical by Sōka Gakkai. Other Nichiren sects commonly held that Nichiren was the Bodhisattva Jōgyō 上行菩薩 (Visistacaritra), who was present at Vulture Peak during the delivery of the Lotus Sutra by Sakyamuni. Others hold that he was simply an extraordinary and courageous man³⁶. Toda reinforced the "Buddafication" of Nichiren that was begun in the 18th century by the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood, confirming him as the foundation from which all future enlightened beings would emerge.

Toda based his belief on the claim that it was revealed to him personally. The opening quotation of this paper, as recorded by Ikeda, explains that Toda was personally present at the moment of revelation of the Lotus Sutra. Furthermore, in his Lecture on the Sutra, Toda elaborates on his revelation. At his delivery of the Lotus Sutra to the assembled multitudes of Bodhisattvas and fantastical creatures at Vulture Peak, Sakyamuni revealed that he had been instructed by Nichiren in the eternal past. This is offered as an explanation of how Sakyamuni was able to have instructed so many disciples across countless eons. In addition, Toda emphasized that "We, Bodhisattvas of the earth, were actually present at this ceremony together³⁷." In past existences, all faithful members of the Sōka Gakkai *personally* witnessed the words of the historical Buddha, delivered in the presence of the central object of worship of the universe, the Dai-Gohonzon.

From the point of view of a non-believer, the religious assertions of Toda appear bizarre. However, it might be argued that Toda's rewriting of the history of Buddhism was a clever means of justifying his authority to a religious following. By claiming personal enlightenment, Toda rendered himself inviolable in the office of Sōka Gakkai president. In rewriting history, he

³⁵ Toda, Lecture on the Sutra, p. 82.

³⁶ Rotermund, Hartmut O. "Sōka-gakkai: Idéologie d'une Nouvelle Secte Japonaise." Revue de l'Histoire des Religions 184, 1973, p. 154.

³⁷ Toda, Lecture on the Sutra, p. 85.

was also undertaking a profoundly influential course of action, namely manufacturing the lineage of Sōka Gakkai.

Though it has never been set out clearly in writing, through careful examination of the works of Toda and Ikeda, the lineage of Sōka Gakkai can be drawn from the distant past to present day:

Nichiren – the Eternal Buddha, countless previous existences

- Sakyamuni – the Historical Buddha
- Nichiren – Returned, Buddha of the age of *mappō*
- Nikkō 日光 – (1245-1322) Nichiren’s “finest disciple”, exclusive heir to Nichiren’s teachings, according to the Nichiren Shōshū tradition
- Nikkan 日寛 – (1665-1726) High priest of Nichiren Shōshū, systematized doctrine of the tradition, and incorporated the concept of *Nichiren honbutsu* 日蓮本仏 i.e. that Nichiren himself is the Eternal Buddha
- Makiguchi Tsunesaburō – Founder of pre-war Sōka Kyoiku Gakkai 創価教育学会
- Toda Josei – Creator of Sōka Gakkai as religious group
- Ikeda Daisaku – Current leader, responsible for massive growth of movement and propagation worldwide

The most important way in which the lineage of Sōka Gakkai has been established is through constant textual revision. There is no set body of interpretive literature for the followers of Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism, and the gap thus produced has been filled with a series of publications aimed at strengthening the faith of Sōka Gakkai followers. The main body of sacred texts is fairly rigid, however. There is the selection from the Lotus Sutra considered by Nichiren to be “true teachings” (*honmon* 本門). These are the *hōben* 方便 and *juryō* 受領 chapters of the Lotus Sutra. The rest of the sutra is considered to be *shakumon* 跡門, i.e. provisional teaching, which are not heretical, but not useful for the purpose of enlightenment. Other sacred texts in the Nichiren Shoshu tradition include the collected works of Nichiren, called the *gosho* 御書, which are highly revered, perhaps more so in terms of content than the Lotus Sutra itself. Nichiren’s

works, including his several letters of admonishment to the heads of the Kamakura Bakufu 鎌倉幕府, are read, studied, and commented on, and are generally the source of the writings of Toda and Ikeda.

Another important work is the Ongi Kuden 御義口伝, written by Nikkō. This is supposedly the “oral” tradition of Nichiren – the direct words of the master, recorded faithfully by his one true disciple. This work guarantees Nikkō as the true successor, and is often read and quoted from by followers of the Nichiren Shōshū tradition, including Sōka Gakkai. Indeed, Ikeda wrote an extensive commentary on this text called Ongi Kuden Kōgi 御義口伝講義 (Lectures on the Ongi Kuden).

There is another major body of literature in the Sōka Gakkai tradition, that of the leaders themselves. Each of the three presidents of Sōka Gakkai has produced a number of books, articles and collected speeches. Ikeda, has been by far the most prolific, with over two hundred published works bearing his name, including poetry, history, fiction, collections of speeches, and his own photography. In reading the texts of the succeeding presidents, much is revealed about the formulation of the Sōka Gakkai lineage. To begin with, with only a few exceptions, every major work of a past president of the Sōka Gakkai has been “revised” (i.e. rewritten) by the subsequent president. Makiguchi Tsunesaburō’s work, Philosophy of Value, was substantially reinterpreted by Toda to fit his religious views, and was re-presented in the Shakubuku Kyōten to the Sōka Gakkai followers. Similarly, all of Toda’s extant published works include the words “with an introduction by Ikeda Daisaku”, or “edited by Ikeda Daisaku”. As Nikkō did to Nichiren with his Ongi Kuden, so each new leader of Sōka Gakkai has done to his predecessor. Both Toda and Ikeda have carefully edited the words of the past to conform with those of the present.

A cursory examination of Sōka Gakkai literature is all that is needed to confirm this observation. This inquiry begins with an examination of Makiguchi’s writings, and the figure of Makiguchi himself, as they have been reworked by Toda. Makiguchi’s Philosophy of Value, as has just been stated, is re-presented in the Shakubuku Kyōten. It was also republished independently, again “revised” by Toda. The reason that Makiguchi has barely been mentioned until this point is that he was not a significant figure in the formation of Sōka Gakkai. Makiguchi

is, however, held up by both Toda and Ikeda as the father-figure of the movement, the illustrious founder who was martyred while boldly and selflessly promoting “True Buddhism” in the face of militaristic oppression. He is described in glowing terms by both Toda and Ikeda. Indeed, in The Human Revolution, at his death, Makiguchi exhibits all of the signs traditionally attributed with enlightenment: rosy cheeks, a smile on his placid face, half-opened eyes, slightly parted lips, and the complete absence of rigor mortis or the odour of death; in every way, “a vision of Buddhahood itself”³⁸. These are all signs that are held to have been exhibited by the historical Buddha at death, and it is not uncommon for many Buddhist traditions to describe their dead founders as displaying these exact characteristics³⁹.

Upon reading the works of Makiguchi that have not been “edited” by his followers, a different conclusion can be drawn. It is apparent that, for the most part, Makiguchi’s concerns were not primarily religious or spiritual in nature. His unedited writings reveal that he was focused more on educational reform, argued from the standpoint of a re-examination of European enlightenment philosophy⁴⁰. In 1937, Makiguchi and a group of sixty other educators formed the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai, or “Value Creation and Education Society”. Along with specific goals to reform the Japanese education system, Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai was dedicated to spreading the message that humankind found happiness in the search for beauty, gain, and good, and was unhappy because it did not know how to maximize positive values in life⁴¹. Though Makiguchi and the vice-president of the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai had converted to Nichiren Shōshū in 1928, it is apparent that initially the group was not concerned primarily with spreading the faith.

³⁸ Ikeda, The Human Revolution, Vol. I, p. 87.

³⁹ Hesselgrave, David J. Dynamic Religious Movements: Case Studies of Rapidly Growing Religious Movements Around the World. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978, p. 143.

⁴⁰ See Makiguchi, Tsunesaburō. Education for Creative Living: Ideas and Proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. Translated by Alfred Birnbaum, edited by Dayle M. Bethel. Iowa State University Press, 1989.

⁴¹ Metraux, Daniel Alfred. The History and Theology of Sōka Gakkai: A Japanese New Religion. Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 1988, p. 28.

Despite this, Toda constantly stressed that Makiguchi's principle aim in forming the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai was the conversion of all to Nichiren Shōshū⁴². It is through the efforts of Toda that Makiguchi is justified as the founder of a religious movement. The Philosophy of Value, presented by Toda as a coherent work, was actually compiled after Makiguchi's death by Toda from a series of articles called "A System of Education Based on the Value Creation Principle 創価教育学会体系". In reading the edited work, it is readily apparent where Makiguchi's original writing ends and Toda's additions begin. The book includes a section entitled Standards of Religious Value 宗教の価値判定, obviously inserted by Toda, which states that value and happiness cannot be separated from religion. This section states that "religion" is believing that the object of faith (for Sōka Gakkai members, this implies the Dai-Gohonzon) has beauty, benefit and goodness, though this cannot be judged with one's own intelligence. Instead, a leap of faith is required. This entreaty to give up one's reason in favour of blind faith is a direct refutation of the theories expounded by Makiguchi throughout the rest of the book, wherein he asserts that a thing's value can only be determined through one's own perception and judgment⁴³. The Nichiren Shoshu doctrine of the supremacy of the Dai-Gohonzon was thrust upon the original Philosophy of Value by Toda, and the two are not well matched.

There is a question as to why Toda felt it was necessary to revise and alter Makiguchi's works, and why, for that matter, he bothered reviving them at all. Had he not reintroduced them, they would surely have been forgotten by a Sōka Gakkai membership that from its inception has been constantly inundated with new publications. Toda did not simply give Makiguchi's works a cursory overview, either. They were painstakingly reviewed and analyzed by him, and presented in the most widely circulated Sōka Gakkai publications. An entire section of the Shakubuku Kyōten is entitled "Value Theory" 価値論, and is taken up with an examination of the qualities

⁴² See Toda's introduction in Sōka Gakkai Kyōgaku, Shakubuku Kyōten, p. 1.

⁴³ Brannen, Noah S. "Sōka Gakkai's Theory of Value". Contemporary Religions in Japan, Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1964, p. 152.

of beauty, profit and goodness⁴⁴. Makiguchi is still revered in Sōka Gakkai, as its founder and a spiritual leader.

It was necessary for Toda to resurrect the figure of Makiguchi; not as a person, but as a martyr and religious symbol. It is possible that Toda was in part acting in what he perceived as a loyal and selfless manner. While in prison, Toda maintained that he vowed to make Makiguchi immortal through the promulgation of his mentor's teachings, to ensure that his death under the oppression of the Japanese military was not an empty one⁴⁵. Toda ensured that Makiguchi was revered as a martyr of the faith, as he still is by members of Sōka Gakkai. However, as it became apparent that Makiguchi's original teachings were antithetical to the faith being promoted by Toda, they had to be reworked in order for him to keep his prison vow.

The reasons for Makiguchi's revival extend beyond this. Toda had to ensure that Sōka Gakkai had a concrete history, a noble lineage that could be traced back directly to the original source of enlightenment. Of course, he had his visions and visitations in prison to rely on, but in order to link himself tangibly to the history of Nichiren Shōshū, he had to justify his own place in the tradition with some sort of human connection. This necessarily had to begin with his immediate predecessor. Thus, Toda embarked upon the deification of his mentor, who, judging from his unedited works, might have been surprised to see how he was portrayed after death. Whether consciously or not, Toda was conforming to the lineage of Nichiren Shōshū in more ways than one. By establishing Makiguchi as a spiritual, even enlightened leader, Toda was ensuring his own exalted status when he justified himself as the chosen and only true successor of the founder. The same process occurred in the late 13th century, after the death of Nichiren. Nikkō, one of six remaining head disciples at Nichiren's main temple at Mount Minobu 身延山, broke with the other five followers after a dispute over sharing authority of the tradition. After Nikō 日向, another disciple of Nichiren, was chosen as leader, Nikkō moved, along with his camp of followers, to the foot of Mount Fuji 富士山, where he established his congregation in the

⁴⁴ Sōka Gakkai Kyōgaku. Shakubuku Kyōten, pp. 253-258.

⁴⁵ Brannen, "Sōka Gakkai's Theory of Value," p. 154.

temple called Taisekiji 大石寺⁴⁶. This is where the tradition that came to be known as Nichiren Shōshū (True Nichiren Sect) is still headquartered. Nikkō produced the Ongi Kuden, a document that is supposedly the true words of Nichiren, the “oral teachings”, that only Nikkō, as Nichiren’s chosen disciple, was privy to. This record, along with other documents produced at the time, and a tradition that stemmed from the monks of Taisekiji, established Nikkō as exclusive heir, supreme among the surviving disciples of Nichiren, who were confirmed as heretics and traitors. This tradition also established the Dai-Gohonzon as the central object of worship. Though Nichiren supposedly inscribed approximately one hundred and thirty mandala, or *gohonzon* 御本尊⁴⁷, during his lifetime, Nichiren Shōshū holds that only the one enshrined at Taisekiji, composed on the twelfth day of the tenth month of 1279, has the power of salvation for all of humankind⁴⁸. Followers of Nichiren Shōshū maintain that Nichiren’s main purpose in returning to earth in the time of *mappō* was to inscribe the Dai-Gohonzon. It is itself the embodiment of Nichiren the Eternal Buddha, of dharma, the *daimoku* (nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō), and also symbolizes the universe as a whole and the basic laws of life⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ International Institute for the Study of Religions, ed. “Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shō Sect.” Contemporary Religions in Japan, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1960, p. 62.

⁴⁷ The Dai-Gohonzon, and all of the replicas made of it, consist of the characters nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō in the centre, encircled by the names of several Bodhisattvas that were present during a scene described in the Lotus Sutra wherein Prabhuta-ratna, a Buddha of a former age, invited Sakyamuni to enter Nirvana as a reward for teaching the dharma of the Lotus. See Brannen, Noah S. “The Teaching of Sōka Gakkai.” Contemporary Religions in Japan, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1962, p. 258. The word *gohonzon* is translated as “object of worship”, and does not necessarily strictly imply that the object in question is a mandala. Religious traditions in Japan other than Nichiren Shōshū enshrine other objects, such as statues or relics, and describe them as *honzon* or *gohonzon*. See Matsumura, Daijirin, p. 2403.

⁴⁸ Metraux, The History and Theology of the Sōka Gakkai, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Kirimura, Yasuji. Buddhism and the Nichiren Shōshū Tradition. Tōkyō: Nichiren Shōshū International Centre, 1986, p. 160.

When one reads the actual writings of Nichiren, it becomes obvious that he did not assert any of these things himself. Most of Nichiren's works are concerned with refuting the claims of rival religious groups, and making dire predictions about the coming disasters that will surely befall Japan if the government continues to ignore his teachings. He does not claim to be eternal, much less the precursor and mentor to Sakyamuni. Indeed, in the Risshō Ankoku Ron 立正安国論, Nichiren declares that "I was born as son of Sakyamuni, and serve the king of scriptures, the Lotus Sutra"⁵⁰. He asserts that he must have been a participant in the congregation at the delivery of the Lotus Sutra at Vulture Peak, though he is in this existence only a "common mortal"⁵¹.

Claims of Nichiren's eternal divinity, in the Nichiren Shōshū tradition, were codified during the time of Nikkan in the 18th century, and were expanded upon by succeeding generations of priests. Toda, in declaring Makiguchi an enlightened spiritual leader, was loyally following the pattern set by centuries of Nichiren Shōshū priests, a pattern no doubt analogous to that found in every venerable religious tradition.

The pattern of rewriting tradition was continued with vigour by Ikeda after the death of Toda. The Lecture on the Sutra, for instance, includes an introduction by Ikeda, which appears to be a transcript of a speech he gave about Toda, with little or no relation to the content of the Lecture itself. Ikeda also tacked on a number of appendices. Part One of the appendices is called "Guidance", which is followed by a section entitled "Every Wish Comes True", and a short question and answer section wherein Ikeda gives his advice on how to address specific problems. All of Ikeda's contributions to this text are rambling and completely out of context, having no perceivable relation to the preceding writings of Toda.

Their placement, however, is crucial. This document represents Sōka Gakkai; it is an English translation, and is thus aimed at a global audience. Ikeda's focus is clearly the spread of

⁵⁰ Watson, Burton, et. al., trans. Selected Writings of Nichiren. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, p. 29.

⁵¹ de Bary, The Buddhist Tradition, pp. 353-354.

the Sōka Gakkai movement beyond Japan to the rest of the world. As an example of this, Sōka Gakkai was re-organized in 1975 into Sōka Gakkai International, an umbrella organization that includes all aspects of the movement worldwide. The English edition of the Lectures on the Sutra is a detailed work aimed at committed members of Sōka Gakkai in the West, and no doubt was read by members during weekly *zadankai* 座談会, or study sessions. By contributing to the text, Ikeda was reinforcing his dominance over the information given to members, and therefore over the members themselves. By including himself in this text, no matter how irrelevant his contribution may have been, Ikeda was effectively reminding all Sōka Gakkai members who read it that he, not the past president Toda, was the final authority in the organization.

However, as in the case of Makiguchi's works reintroduced by Toda, it could be argued that it was not technically necessary for Ikeda to even bother republishing Toda's works, much less translating them and introducing them to a world audience. Ikeda could have chosen to quickly silence the memory of the dead president, and focus exclusively on his own aggrandizement. However, it was necessary for Ikeda to revere the memory of Toda. In placing Toda upon a pedestal, Ikeda has guaranteed his lineage. In Ikeda's case, lineage is much more important than in the case of his predecessor. As *de facto* founder of the Sōka Gakkai, Toda theoretically could have claimed himself the sole authority, the exclusive recipient of divine wisdom, and thereby easily justified himself as the leader of a religious community. He could have avoided the construction and justification of a human lineage. This is exactly what was done by the founders of most other Japanese New Religions, such as Nakayama Miki 中山みき of Tenrikyō 天理教, Kawate Bunjirō 川手文二郎 of Konkōkyō 金光教, and, more recently, Asahara Shōkō 麻原彰晃 of Aum Shinri Kyō アウム心理教⁵². Each of these leaders claimed to have been visited by a higher power, and to have themselves become divine and possessed of

⁵² For detailed information on these groups, see Matsuo, Junko 松野純孝, et. al., eds. Shin Shūkyō Jiten 新宗教辞典. Tōkyō: Tōkyōdō Shuppan 東京堂出版, 1984. McFarland, H. Neill. The Rush Hour of the Gods: A Study of New Religious Movements in Japan. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Reader, Ian. Religion in Contemporary Japan. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991.

exclusive knowledge and powers of salvation. It is perhaps testament to the importance of a clearly drawn human connection to illustrious religious figures of the past and to their own leadership structure that Sōka Gakkai is Japan's most successful New Religion. Toda perhaps realized that his followers would need to rely on more than his dreams of the Dai-Gohonzon to justify their own faith. He also perhaps realized that pursuing a path of personal and exclusive divinity, while also being counter to the Nichiren Shōshū tradition from which Sōka Gakkai is derived, would have meant that his religious order would have lived and died with him.

Ikeda, as Toda's successor in office, in order to secure the loyalty of the faithful Toda followers, had no choice but to consecrate the figure of Toda. The written works of Toda, therefore, were edited and presented in a fashion that was in harmony with the version of Sōka Gakkai that Ikeda was in the process of forming. The Lectures on the Sutra was translated and edited. Other publications from the Toda era, such as the Shakubuku Kyōten, were edited, then eventually discontinued, and books more in keeping with Ikeda's kinder, gentler Sōka Gakkai were released.

There is another aspect to all of this, which relates to what was discussed earlier in relation to shakubuku: by rewriting the tradition, the leaders of the Sōka Gakkai and Nichiren Shōshū have established their personal dominance over it.

It has been established that by rewriting the works of past leaders, the presidents of Sōka Gakkai justified their position in the lineage of leaders. Previous leaders, not only of Sōka Gakkai, but also of Nichiren Shōshū, are portrayed as meritorious and enlightened. It is important to note that, in their new formulations, preceding leaders are invariably portrayed as *unthreatening* to the new president. Each successive president is confirmed through writings as a perfect disciple of the previous one. Glowing accounts are written about not only the esteemed behaviour of the previous regime, but also of how the current leader is a perfect exemplar of that which was envisioned by his mentor. Indeed, the current ruler is portrayed as having exceeded far beyond the expectations of the previous president. The message is clear: the old man would surely be proud of his student, were he alive today.

Of course, it is impossible to know if this is true or not. All written works of previous presidents have been rewritten by their successors, and any mention in the preceding president's

works of the possible successor, if there ever was any, has been omitted. All of the literature that connotes approval of the leader has been created *ex post facto* by the leader himself.

This is another example of domination. By rewriting the past, the leader exerts his dominance over it. The figure of the previous leader, who was once the overwhelmingly dominant figure in that leader's life, is now controlled by the once-dominated current president. By confirming through rewritten history that everything the current president is doing is enlightened and worthy, the current leader and author of the new history is co-opting the eminent figure of the dead leader into a subservient role. It is possible to view this behaviour as a type of retribution for years of his own subservience. Now that the dominant figure is dead, he, or at least his public persona, can be used and manipulated by his replacement.

The result of the dominance of the past is dominance over people in the present. By rewriting history to confirm that the current president's rule is a paragon of a long and noble tradition, his office and his person becomes inviolable. Information about the past is rigidly controlled, and all actions in the present are portrayed as exemplary and part of a long and unbroken tradition. This is certainly behaviour practiced by Ikeda Daisaku. Though technically only Honourary President of the Sōka Gakkai, Ikeda dominates every aspect of the organization. Most notably, since first taking office as president after Toda's death, Ikeda has produced a great many texts on the history of the Sōka Gakkai, Nichiren Shōshū, and Buddhism in general. He consistently reinforces the position of the Sōka Gakkai as the only true path to enlightenment, and his position as leader as completely unquestioned.

I believe that the best example of his domination of the Sōka Gakkai tradition is The Human Revolution. This sprawling multi-volume novel is a detailed history of the Sōka Gakkai movement, from the days of Makiguchi to the death of Toda. The introduction by Ikeda indicates that the first volume was actually written by Toda, then reworked by Ikeda to fit in with the rest of the story⁵³. This book is touted as a significant contribution to world literature and history, and it is carefully presented as such. There is an introduction at the beginning of every volume by the historian Arnold Toynbee, wherein he praises Sōka Gakkai's, and especially Ikeda's, contribution

⁵³ Ikeda, The Human Revolution, Vol. I, p. 2.

to the culture of the world. Toynbee is held in the highest esteem worldwide as one of this centuries' most important historians, a figure who literally symbolizes study in that field.

Juxtaposing Ikeda's book with the praise of this eminent scholar serves to legitimize The Human Revolution to Sōka Gakkai members and non-members alike as a contribution to the body of "great" literary works of the world.

The book has gone through two editions in English, and has been translated into many other languages, such as Chinese, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Since first being published in serial form in the Seikyō Shimbun 聖教新聞, Sōka Gakkai's official newspaper in Japan, its contents have been made intimately known to every Sōka Gakkai member. The novel has even been serialized in New Century, the monthly magazine of Sōka Gakkai's Canadian chapter⁵⁴. Every effort has been made to inform the entire membership of the "correct" history of the Sōka Gakkai, the glorious efforts of its past presidents, and the enlightened leadership of Ikeda.

Much of The Human Revolution is written from the point of view of Toda Josei. It begins with his release from a war-time Tōkyō prison, and chronicles his early frustrations in restarting the organization founded by his mentor. Throughout the novel, Toda flashes back to his time in prison, as well as to memories of his teacher, Makiguchi Tsunesaburō, and to his pre-war Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai. Toda's vision of receiving the teachings of the Lotus Sutra directly is presented in great detail on more than one occasion. As has been discussed previously, this firmly justifies Toda as the spiritual leader of the Sōka Gakkai. By presenting the story of Toda's vision in The Human Revolution, however, Ikeda is ensuring that every member realizes the lineage from which he himself derives authority.

Other important claims of lineage are made in the novel, presented as historical "truths". For instance, in regards to the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood, the book confirms that the teachings of Nichiren were passed down "through an unbroken line of chosen disciples, beginning with Nikkō, whom Nichiren himself selected"⁵⁵. This is the same "unbroken line" that can be traced

⁵⁴ McLaughlin, The Soka Gakkai, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Ikeda, The Human Revolution, Vol. I, p. 171.

back to Sakyamuni, who passed the Mahayana tradition to his disciple Manjusri, and the teachings of the Lotus Sutra on to Visista-caritra. These teachings, unsullied by the passage of time and the interpretation of countless generations, have been received by the Nichiren Shōshū tradition, the "only truly orthodox branch of Buddhism"⁵⁶. Therefore, the high priest of Nichiren Shōshū, who is presented in the novel as having nothing but the utmost respect for Toda, is understood as espousing the exact words of Nichiren. This implies that Toda, in being praised by the High Priest, is receiving the approval of the Eternal Buddha himself⁵⁷. All actions undertaken by Toda, including choosing Ikeda as heir, can therefore be seen as having received sanction from the most sacred source.

Throughout the novel, Toda's every action is described as inspired and transcendent. Ikeda is careful to link him to the most important historical events that occurred in Japan during Toda's life. For example, Toda's opinion of the verdict reached by the judges in the Tōkyō Trials is carefully documented. His judgment of those on trial is juxtaposed favourably with that of the judges of the international tribunal; Toda is presented as being as wise in worldly legal matters as Pal and William Webb⁵⁸.

More important than his acute perception of human affairs, however, is his comprehension of religious doctrine. Toda accomplished what Nichiren and his predecessors Chih-i and Dengyō Daishi 伝教大師⁵⁹ could not: a clear understanding of a portion of the Lotus Sutra entitled the Sutra of Infinite Meaning. Toda interpreted this section as an explanation of the energy of the Buddha, and of the entire universe, as that of "life force". The Buddha is "life force", and guides all living things and events⁶⁰. In The Human Revolution, this realization is intimately tied to his

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 163.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 165.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 101.

⁵⁹ Also known as Saichō 最澄 (767-822), founder of Tendai.

⁶⁰ Ikeda, The Human Revolution, Vol. II, p. 133-135.

vision in which he received teachings directly from the Buddha. Eventually, Toda composed an essay called “The Philosophy of Life Force”, which, according to Ikeda, in a few centuries will become “the root from which will grow a flourishing tree of philosophy destined to sweep over the world”, in the same manner as A Discourse for Method by Descartes⁶¹. The essence of this philosophy of “life force” is never clearly explained in the novel, and it is apparent that the majority of the Sōka Gakkai membership to whom it is explained by Toda found it confusing. In the novel, it is only the character of Ikeda that understands what Toda is talking about, and he is so profoundly affected by the idea of an all-pervasive “life force” that he is driven to devote his life to Sōka Gakkai.

Ikeda, rather than write about himself directly in The Human Revolution, introduces himself into the story as a thinly-veiled allegorical figure named Yamamoto Shin'ichi 山本伸一. Though physically weak and consumptive, Yamamoto “had intellectual powers that set him apart from the average man”⁶². Although he is only twenty years old and without a university education, he is well versed in both Japanese and Western philosophy and literature, and has powers of observation and intellect far beyond everyone else in the novel, aside from Toda. Eventually converted to Sōka Gakkai, he can only be appealed to by Toda himself, due to the “intellectual inferiority” of lesser followers⁶³. Throughout the novel, the characters of Toda and Yamamoto grow ever closer. Indeed, at the beginning of the second volume, there is an entire chapter called “Drawing Closer”, in which Yamamoto (Ikeda) exclusively understands the message delivered by Toda in lectures and meetings; the future leader is “drawing closer” to the teachings of Nichiren Shōshū, to his future role as president⁶⁴, becoming himself a part of the noble history being recorded. The second volume ends with an exchange of poetry between Toda

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 153.

⁶² Ibid., Vol. I, p. 204.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 205.

⁶⁴ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 73.

and Yamamoto which presages the passing down of power within the Sōka Gakkai: the final poem reads "Two physical bodies / But one eternal life force⁶⁵."

The Human Revolution serves many useful purposes for Sōka Gakkai and Ikeda. It confirms Sōka Gakkai as the only forum for the lay person to achieve enlightenment in this lifetime. It outlines the history of the Sōka Gakkai in such a way that the leaders of this lay movement are themselves shown to be in possession of divine characteristics and exclusive knowledge of the path to enlightenment. Returning to the theme of domination, it can be clearly shown that The Human Revolution is a means by which Ikeda establishes the prior presidencies of Toda and Makiguchi as the foundation for his own edified rule. Ikeda glorifies the memory of his mentor Toda, and in doing so guarantees his own eminence as exclusive successor to this illustrious figure. The text of The Human Revolution has been studied by all members of Sōka Gakkai in conjunction with the study of other doctrine, such as the writings of Nichiren, and other speeches by Ikeda, at weekly *zadankai* (prayer meetings) across the world. The Human Revolution can therefore be seen as an effective a tool of domination, of the past, and therefore of the present.

The pattern of dominating tradition in Soka Gakkai was begun by Toda, the leader who transformed the group into a religious movement. The most notorious means by which he accomplished this is through the Shakubuku Kyōten, the "Handbook of Forced Conversion." What is notable about this book is its intense focus on historical revision. Through the course of the Shakubuku Kyōten, Toda confirms Nichiren Shoshu as the only "true" religious practice, and condemns all other traditions as false and misleading. He "proves" this to be true by carefully documenting the history of Nichiren, and his importance as Buddha of this age. The origin of the Nichiren Shōshū tradition is also outlined in detail, and is shown to be the only orthodox, non-heretical version of the master's teachings. In the following section, the extent to which religious history, including that of Sōka Gakkai, Nichiren, and the entirety of Buddhism, has been altered to legitimize Sōka Gakkai's supremacy will be illustrated.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 244.

It is not just the content of the Shakubuku Kyōten that is of relevance to this study. The controversy over the wide proliferation of the Shakubuku Kyōten and its precipitous decline into obscurity reveal the ways in which Toda, and subsequently Ikeda, exerted their dominance over Sōka Gakkai through control of information given to the membership. These observations also demonstrate the radical changes that can occur when the leadership of a religious organization changes hands.

The Shakubuku Kyōten was widely distributed by Sōka Gakkai, reprinted several times. It was clearly intended that every member in Japan was to be in possession of a copy. Its contents were studied, its arguments against other religions memorized by the membership to be used in shakubuku activities. Then, abruptly, it disappeared. After 1966, it was no longer published, and its distribution was abruptly halted. Today, copies of the Shakubuku Kyōten are difficult to come by⁶⁶.

The texts that appeared in its stead are of a very different nature. They contain no specific condemnations of other religious traditions, and the overall tone is much less vitriolic. In other studies of the differences between the leadership of Toda and Ikeda, there is generally a discussion of how Sōka Gakkai has been successful because it has been able to adjust its rhetoric to fit with the tenor of the times. Reference is generally made to a phrase used by Sōka Gakkai, adopted from Nichiren's writings; *zuihō-bini* 隨方毘尼, or adopting the teachings to fit the time and place⁶⁷. While the exclusivist, intolerant writings of Toda were acceptable, even attractive in the immediate post-war period, they became increasingly unpopular by the 1960's. Japan had by this point transformed into a different nation, with different priorities, interests, and tolerances. Thus, Sōka Gakkai also changed. Ikeda replaced Toda upon his death, and implemented policies and activities designed to attract the post-war generation. The Shakubuku Kyōten was

⁶⁶ The author of this study could only find the Shakubuku Kyōten at one university library in North America.

⁶⁷ Wilson and Doblaere, A Time to Chant, p. 19. The phrase *zuihō-bini* is also used to explain the different ways in Sōka Gakkai doctrine is successfully explained and adapted in different countries.

discontinued, and in its stead were substituted other widely-distributed texts that were more in keeping with the interests of the Japanese people of that time. A number of books were written that were intended to serve in the same capacity as the Shakubuku Kyōten. Sōka Gakkai Kyōgakubu 創価学会教学部 (Sōka Gakkai Department of Education), the group whose name appears as author of the Shakubuku Kyōten, published a book in 1971 entitled Sōka Gakkai Nyūmon 創価学会入門 (Introduction to Sōka Gakkai) that has been identified by some scholars as the replacement for the Shakubuku Kyōten⁶⁸. However, for the purpose of comparison in this study, an analysis of Ikeda Daisaku's Guidance Memo will be juxtaposed with that of Toda's text.

As the Guidance Memo was first published in 1966, the year the Shakubuku Kyōten was discontinued, it can be seen as its most immediate replacement. In simple terms, the Shakubuku Kyōten can be viewed as the final chapter of the Toda era, and the Guidance Memo as the introduction to the Ikeda years. A comparison of the content of these two works illustrates the manner in which both Toda and Ikeda have reinterpreted history, revised doctrine, and focused the energies of the membership in ways designed to legitimize their leadership and to ensure their dominance over the past and present of the Sōka Gakkai tradition.

It appears as if the methodology advocated in, indeed the very existence of, the Shakubuku Kyōten was something the Sōka Gakkai under Ikeda wanted the public at large to forget. During Toda's final years, and into the years immediately following his death, this handbook went through six editions, from 1958 to 1966, and was issued to virtually every Japanese member of Sōka Gakkai. It was meant as a "how-to" guide, on refuting the claims of rival religions in favour of following True Buddhism (Nichiren Shōshū), and convincing would-be converts of the dire necessity of believing in Nichiren as the Buddha of this age. It was during these years that the Sōka Gakkai gained a reputation for harassment. In addition to pamphletting strangers on street-corners and subways, they were known for bothering potential converts at their homes at all hours of the night, "brainwashing" members into giving over vast quantities of

⁶⁸ Rotermond, "Sōka-gakkai: Idéologie d'une Nouvelle Secte Japonaise," p. 157.

money and personal property, and other activities traditionally associated with religious “cults⁶⁹.” These methods were apparently effective. It was during these years that the Sōka Gakkai membership grew in orders of magnitude. By the time of Toda’s death in 1958, Sōka Gakkai had grown to 750,000 families⁷⁰, from a membership of only a few thousand after World War II. The organization continued exponential growth under Ikeda, and by 1990, Sōka Gakkai International claimed more than eight million families in Japan, and upwards of five hundred thousand families in one hundred and fifteen other countries⁷¹. Much of the initial growth is attributed to the techniques and forceful attitude discussed and promoted in the Shakubuku Kyōten.

From even a preliminary examination, it is evident that the Shakubuku Kyōten, like all works of previous presidents, was carefully edited and revised after the death of its original author. Initially published in 1957, the year before Toda’s death, it was reprinted yearly until 1966, the year the Guidance Memo was released. In the course of those reprints, new sections were added, and older sections edited by incumbent president Ikeda. He prefaced the book with his own introduction, in which he praised Toda for providing a single volume that explains the most important concepts behind Nichiren’s teachings, and wrote that the Shakubuku Kyōten is as important and influential as the works of Nichiren himself⁷². There are other signs that this book was significantly altered by Ikeda. For instance, the entire last section, entitled *Nyūshin shita hito*

⁶⁹ Brannen, Noah S. “False Religions, Forced Conversions, Iconoclasm.” Contemporary Religions in Japan, Vol. 5, No. 3, September 1964, pp. 243-245.

⁷⁰ Wilson and Doblaere. A Time to Chant, p. 10.

⁷¹ These figures are difficult to confirm, though outside sources claim that the actual size of the movement may be closer to 4.5 million households. Estimates are based largely on circulation of the Seikyō Shimbun, the main organ of Sōka Gakkai in Japan, and that of the World Tribune, its publication in the United States. See Hurst, Nichiren Shōshū and the Sōka Gakkai in America, pp. 108-109.

⁷² Sōka Gakkai Kyōgakubu. Shakubuku Kyōten, pp. 1-3.

no tame ni 入信した人のために("For the Purpose of New Converts")⁷³, was clearly added after the death of Toda. It includes a subsection on the importance of Kōmeitō, Sōka Gakkai's political wing, which was not even been officially incorporated until the early 1960's, well after Toda's death⁷⁴. Another subsection is called *Kaigai ni okeru shinkō katsudō* 海外における信仰活動(Practicing Religious Faith Overseas), and is obviously aimed at spreading Sōka Gakkai internationally, a topic that was only seriously considered under Ikeda's leadership⁷⁵.

The Shakubuku Kyōten is a long book, numbering nearly four hundred pages, and is divided into many small sections and subsections. Much of the beginning is taken up with a detailed examination by Toda of the doctrine of Nichiren Shōshū. This consists of a precise analysis of terminology derived from Nichiren's writings, as well as the works of his predecessors in the Tendai tradition, and the ways in which they apply to Sōka Gakkai practice. Entire sections of the book are devoted to explanations of such concepts as *ichi-nen-san-zen* 一念三千(three thousand worlds in a single thought), as well as other concepts derived from Tendai such as *jikkai* 十界(ten realms or categories of existence). What is obviously of prime importance to Toda in the early sections of the book is emphasizing the importance of Nichiren as the true Buddha of the age of *mappō*, and the various "proofs" that exist to convince all people of this truth. Every concept explained is related back to the benefits accrued by engaging in Sōka Gakkai practice, those of happiness (*kōfuku* 幸福) and profit (*rieki* 利益), and the dire consequences that will doubtless arise if these teachings are ignored or opposed.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 351.

⁷⁴ Sōka Gakkai began its political activities as early as 1955, when Sōka Gakkai candidates ran as independents for Prefectural Assemblies, and again in 1956, when three candidates won seats in the Upper House (House of Councillors). The political wing was reorganized under the name Kōmei Seiji Renmei 公明政治連盟 (The League for Clean Politics) in 1962, and became the Kōmeitō (Clean Government Party) on November 17, 1964. See Brannen, Noah S. "Religion and Politics: Sidelights on Sōka Gakkai." Japanese Religions 4, 1966, pp. 79-81.

⁷⁵ Sōka Gakkai Kyōgakubu. Shakubuku Kyōten, p. 372.

After spending significant effort on emphasizing the importance of believing in Nichiren as the Buddha of this age, and Sōka Gakkai as the only true path by which a lay person can gain enlightenment, Toda carefully details why other religions are dangerous and evil. He refers to them by the derogatory term *jashū* 邪宗 (false sects), and, in deliberate fashion, explains why each type of religion is dangerous and misleading. The religions Toda singles out for attack are all Shintō 神道 or Buddhist-based traditions (so-called "native" Japanese religions), in addition to Christianity. There is a special subsection devoted to each, with specific lists of their deficiencies and dangers.

Shintō practice is generally maligned as being preposterous and superstitious. For instance, the Shintō practice of donating money to the kami 神 is ridiculed. If money is offered, what use, Toda asked, will the kami have for it⁷⁶? If protective talismans purchased at Shintō shrines are supposed to be effective, Toda wrote, why are they burned after six months? They must surely be worthless. The ancestral gods that are an important part of the Shintō pantheon, however, are not completely denounced by Toda, but they are to receive only tokens gestures of thanks. True worship is limited to the Dai-Gohonzon⁷⁷.

This book was obviously written with only a Japanese constituency in mind, as Christianity is the only "foreign" religion to be criticized. The conspicuous absence of criticism in the Shakubuku Kyōten of other Western religious traditions, such as Judaism or Islam, is doubtless due to Toda's ignorance of their content or existence, rather than his tacit approval of them. So-called "Western" religious traditions outside of Christianity are almost non-existent in Japan, and as such were probably not thought of as potential targets for shakubuku activity.

Toda summed up his criticism of Christianity by pointing out contradictions that he saw within it. These include such observations as the fact that, though Christianity proclaims its own righteousness, an atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese Christian city of Nagasaki. He also pointed out that, while Nichiren was able to evade execution at the hands of government

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 164-165.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 168-169.

authorities, Christ died a miserable, violent death. Christian doctrine is shown to be impotent by the obvious disunity between different denominations, and the lack of a single coherent message, such as the one that exists in Nichiren Shōshū. The last point that Toda made is that, since the various sects teach false doctrines that send people deeper into sin, it is impossible to tell which of all the Christian sects is the true, orthodox teaching. Toda pointed out that none of the Christian traditions are holders of the truth. All of them teach that the highest goal is reaching heaven, but this is a fabrication, since all people, if they only knew it, could achieve the highest goal in their own lifetime by worshipping the Dai-Gohonzon⁷⁸.

Various ancient and contemporary Buddhist traditions are singled out by Toda for attack. The older Buddhist groups, such as Pure Land (Jōdo-shu), Shingon 真言 and Tendai are criticized as being irrelevant to the modern world, with no spiritual power or influence. They are criticized as having yielded to militaristic governmental powers of the past, becoming mere tools of the state. Their priests are impotent and shallow, concerned only with making a living from funerals and taking care of cemeteries. Newer Buddhist groups also have sections of the Shakubuku Kyōten devoted to them, as do so-called New Religions derived from other sources, such as Tenri-kyō, Konko-kyō and Seichō no Ie 成長の家, among many others. These groups are referred to collectively by the pejorative term *shinkō shakyo* 新興宗教 (newly arisen sects). These sections outline the various ways in which each of those traditions lacks merit and spreads "heretical" teachings⁷⁹.

One group of Buddhist traditions that is particularly vehemently attacked by Toda is other Nichiren-based traditions, especially the largest, Nichiren-shū 日蓮宗. The teachings of Nichiren groups derived from lineages outside that of Nichiren Shōshū are considered by Toda to be especially dangerous and heretical, as they are derived from priests who directly betrayed the Eternal Buddha. Toda documents how Nikkō was clearly chosen by Nichiren to be sole inheritor as leader, only to have his legitimate authority undermined through influence peddling and

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-174.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-154.

politics. He was turned upon by the other five high priests, led by Nikō, traditionally held to be the successor to Nichiren in Nichiren-shū. According to Toda, these five further compounded their betrayal by returning to the Tendai fold from whence they had originally come⁸⁰. Toda also carefully documents the manner in which each of the other Nichiren-based traditions that has arisen since the Kamakura era, such as the Nakayama 中山 branch and the *Fuju-fuse* 不受不施 movement, has misinterpreted Nichiren's teachings.

When the Shakubuku Kyōten was published, the targeted Nichiren sects took these defamatory claims very seriously. It is clear that Sōka Gakkai specifically attacked rival Nichiren groups with more than mere words. Members of these groups were, or at least felt they were, the subjects of specific shakubuku campaigns. In an attempt to counteract the Sōka Gakkai offensive, a number of Nichiren groups banded together and formed an anti-shakubuku campaign. This resulted in the publication in 1962 of a two-volume book entitled Shakubuku no shakubuku 折伏の折伏 (Converting the Converted), meant to undermine the arguments put forward in Toda's text⁸¹.

The overall worldview promoted by Toda in the Shakubuku Kyōten can be summarized as one of intolerance. This is very much in keeping with the theme of domination that has been discussed at length in this study. Toda had a vision of manifest destiny, that Sōka Gakkai would complete the task of *kosen-rufu*, or the evangelization of the earth. It is clear through reading the book that this was to be accomplished through the aggressive targeting of rival religions and conversion of their members. In order to legitimize this course of action, Toda carefully rewrote the history of Nichiren Buddhism, as well as its precursors and descendent traditions, to conform with his affirmation of Nichiren Shōshū as the only true faith. Codified sets of arguments were laid out for the followers to memorize as ammunition against enemy religions, to be used as weapons to dominate and take over their opponents. This domination of the other was to be accomplished through unobvious, direct means.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 118-121.

⁸¹ Rotermond, "Sōka-gakkai: Idéologie d'une Nouvelle Secte Japonaise," p. 156.

To give Toda credit, his methods of recruitment were successful. As has been mentioned previously, the membership of Sōka Gakkai grew by orders of magnitude under his leadership, and this assumedly was due in part to the vigorous arguments presented in the Shakubuku Kyōten. Toda provided a guideline for the devout membership to hone recruitment techniques, while at the same time strengthening their faith by reconfirming for them the righteousness and exclusivity of Sōka Gakkai doctrine.

Upon the ascendancy of Ikeda to the position of president, the focus and temperment of Sōka Gakkai changed. Ikeda officially became president in 1960, but did not begin substituting his own written works for those of Toda until a few years later. One of the earlier books that was widely distributed by Sōka Gakkai, and abruptly replaced the Shakubuku Kyōten, was the Guidance Memo of 1966. Prior to this, Ikeda's teachings had been recorded in a regular column in the Soka Gakkai newspaper, the Seikyō Shimbun. The Guidance Memo is a compilation of these columns that were "corrected" by Ikeda¹². He evidently felt that the Seikyō Shimbun reporters had misrepresented him in some way, and his teachings had to be properly systematized. It is also possible to conjecture that, given the controversy that surrounded the Shakubuku Kyōten, Ikeda felt that the time was right to substitute a text written by him for that of the previous regime, and the easiest way to quickly produce a set of guidelines for the membership was to collate previously written material.

The edition used in this study was published in 1969, and it included an introduction by the General Administrator of Sōka Gakkai at the time, whose words are a paragon of the adulation a follower can show for his leader. He claims that "when you get accustomed to the book, it will become part of you"¹³. Ikeda is clearly shown to be more than simply the leader of a lay following: "Every word Ikeda uttered normally in daily life gives clear-cut answers to the questions on the profound Buddhist philosophy and various problems in life and arouses delight,

¹² Ikeda. Guidance Memo, p. i.

¹³ Ibid., p. v.

hope, and confidence in life for anyone⁸⁴." He goes on to point out that the gifted leadership of Ikeda led to Sōka Gakkai growing to a membership of 6.5 million, "although it only had 800,000 under Toda⁸⁵." Clearly, this introduction is meant to establish clearly from the outset the supremacy of Ikeda over his predecessors.

The book is divided into eight chapters, entitled Leaders, Concentrated Mind, Unity, Practice, Hopes, Ideal Women, Culture, and Guidance for Daily Life. Each of the chapters is divided into short, mostly unrelated sections, evidently pieced together from a number of different records from different times. The entire book contains language heavily loaded with religious terminology. Every section uses specialized vocabulary derived from the writings of Nichiren and his forerunner, Tendai (Chih-i), and is peppered with quotes from the *goshō* (Nichiren's collected writings). Some of the terms used include that which has already been cited in this study, such as *ichi-nen-san-zen*, *jikkai*, etc. This vocabulary is largely untranslatable into English, and as such the book has extensive footnotes and explanatory additions. The book also includes an extensive glossary that explains these terms, as they are relevant to Sōka Gakkai practice.

The focus of the book is on the organization of Sōka Gakkai from the top down rather than serving the needs of the individual member. Most of the "guidance" appears to be aimed at instructing those in leadership positions on how to better rally the members under them. Even in the sections with titles such as "Concentrated Mind" and "Guidance for Daily Life", the emphasis is on how Sōka Gakkai leaders can best recruit new members and impress the established membership with their own cultivated leadership skills. It is full of military jargon; words such as "frontline", and "generals" are common, and Ikeda encourages the Sōka Gakkai member to "fight bravely like a lion against enemies who make people unhappy⁸⁶." The term "destroying the demon" is used often, as a euphemism for overcoming obstacles. For instance, Ikeda writes that "words of encouragement destroy the demon", the demon being that which prevents the believer

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. vii-viii.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

from continuing in his or her religious practice. Faith is a “constant battle of the army of the devout against the forces of hell that surround us all the time⁸⁷.”

Another notable aspect of the Guidance Memo is that it redefines much of what is generally taken for granted in society at large, in terms of logic, reason, and definitions of basic terminology. One of the most notable redefinitions is that of the term “democracy”. As was stated above, much of the book is concerned with leadership within the movement, and how this leadership can best mobilize the membership to more effectively satisfy the needs of members and bring in new converts. This is summed up in Ikeda's urgent appeal to Sōka Gakkai members: “I want you to bear in mind that you feel at the bottom of your heart that the president is the central figure in the organization, with the great object of attaining *kosen-rufu* (the evangelization of the earth).⁸⁸” he writes that everyone is equal under the Dai-Gohonzon, and all Sōka Gakkai members are disciples of former president Toda, “master of shakubuku.⁸⁹”. Ikeda further states that he “was with Toda for fourteen years, I would never regret being deluded, as long as I was with my master.⁹⁰” The message is clear: a devout member is to unquestioningly follow his leader, just as a loyal soldier would follow his general into battle. Indeed, the worst sin of all is that of disrupting *shi-teikai* 師弟界, the unity of master and disciple⁹¹. Another sin which Sōka Gakkai members are admonished never to commit is *ha-wagoso* 破和合僧, or “breaking the harmonious unity of believers⁹².”

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 185.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 186.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 167.

⁹² Ibid., p. 147. Ikeda states that no factions exist within Sōka Gakkai because such factionalism would be an act of *ha-wagoso*. Ikeda wrote that this warning against questioning decisions made by the president was also given to those challenging former president Toda. See Ikeda, The Human Revolution, Vol. II, p. 242.

Despite this degree of blind obedience that is demanded, however, “no other world is more liberal, joyous and carefree than that of Sōka Gakkai...the most democratic world⁹³.” Ikeda’s definition of “democracy” is vague. He evidently holds that there is a reified ideal of democracy to which those engaged in majority rule subscribe to, but do not always realize. As an example of this he raises the situation at the death of Nichiren, when there was dissent between six high priests over leadership of the tradition. According to Sōka Gakkai, in adherence to the Nichiren Shōshū tradition, of those six, only Nikkō was able to truly understand Nichiren’s teachings. However, he was ousted by the other five, and forced to move to Taisekiji. According to Ikeda, this illustrates that “the decision by the majority is not always up to the principle of democracy⁹⁴.” Evidently, as unquestionable leader, Ikeda is able to define what “democracy” essentially is, and whether or not any decision made is in accord with his definition. Ironically, any decision by majority within Sōka Gakkai that was in opposition to him would not truly be a “democratic” decision, and would in fact be labeled *ha-wagoso*, one of the cardinal sins.

The Guidance Memo continues in the tradition of historical revision set by previous Sōka Gakkai leaders. In this sense, it is like the Shakubuku Kyōten, though less detailed and systematic in its historical description and justification. In describing the noble qualities that leaders within Sōka Gakkai should cultivate, Ikeda recalls several illustrious figures from Japanese history. In keeping with his militaristic focus, the leaders he invokes are Oda Nobunaga 小田信長, Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 and Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康, whom he describes as the “most humane” in Japanese history⁹⁵. Even the most cursory review of the history of the vicious exploits of these warlords of the *sengoku* 戦国 (Warring States) period reveals Ikeda’s assertion as ludicrous.

This comment, and others like it, must be viewed in context with the rest of the book. Ikeda is evidently relying on the principle of the authority of the leader as absolute. He

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

determines that figures such as Nobunaga, Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu are the "most humane", for reasons that are never made clear in the Guidance Memo, and, according to his own declarations about the sanctity of his own office, no one is in a position to argue with him. In theory, Ikeda could write anything he pleased. Opposition to his claims would be branded *ha-wagoso*, a breach of *shi-teikai*, and the opponent would be labeled a traitor and heretic in the eyes of the Sōka Gakkai establishment.

There are other examples of common presumptions redefined by Ikeda. In discussing confronting problems in the world, he explains a phrase in Japanese, *bonnō soku bodai* 煩惱即菩提. This translates roughly as "troubles become happiness." When one is confronted with difficulty in life (*bonnō* 煩惱), the solution is to chant the *daimoku* more frequently and with more passion. This leads to the great reward of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime (*bodai* 菩提)⁹⁶. Therefore, by this logic, troubles automatically lead to happiness. All problems in life are transformed into opportunities for achieving Buddhahood. In all of Ikeda's writings, the solution prescribed for all difficulties in life is more emphasis on Sōka Gakkai practice; that is, chanting *daimoku* and engaging in *shakubuku*. All challenges to the members and opposition to the group as a whole are characterized as chances to reach a state of enlightenment. By this definition, negative equals positive.

Cultivating this mentality in a religious following is a potent tool for its leadership. This inverse logic implies that the more opposition the group encounters, the greater the possible rewards the individual members will believe they will receive. This is a possible explanation for why the Sōka Gakkai was able to maintain its old membership and expand immensely upon it despite great controversy and criticism. It also is an explanation for the massive (and successful) *shakubuku* campaigns that were undertaken by a relentlessly faithful and energetic Sōka Gakkai membership. Though these redefinitions of commonly held assumptions about logic and human behaviour are beneficial to a religious organization, it is possible to view them as potentially detrimental to the individual member. An obvious result of this imposed mentality is a reduced

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 248-249.

capacity for critical thought. That is to say, the member's view of trouble and conflict is inverse of that of the rest of society, i.e. that which is "bad" will always become "good". The more trouble he or she encounters, the greater the possible reward. Instead of becoming distraught by the hostile reaction of those opposed to Sōka Gakkai, the member views each new challenge as a chance to prove his or her value as a loyal soldier in the "army of the devout against the forces of hell that surround us all the time"⁹⁷. If everything is viewed in terms set out by Sōka Gakkai, it becomes impossible for the individual member to be critical of the organization or its senior administrators. Any criticism of Sōka Gakkai from outsiders is seen as an obvious attempt to sway the member from pursuit of True Buddhism, and criticism from members is seen as an insidious attempt to break the harmony of the group.

There is another attraction to persevering in the face of opposition, related to Ikeda's constant focus on the leadership of the movement. This is the attraction of Sōka Gakkai as a forum for social advancement. A primary reward for an individual member who gains numerous recruits is advancement in rank within the Sōka Gakkai organization. The member can go from being a mere participant in a local *zadankai* to group leader, district leader, and possibly higher, depending on how many new members he or she successfully recruits. The emphasis on organizational efficiency and the importance of leaders in the Guidance Memo highlights this attraction for the rank-and-file membership. The message conveyed by this focus on leadership is that if you work hard as a loyal Sōka Gakkai adherent, you will gain a position of authority. This is a very attractive proposition for many members within Sōka Gakkai. Many of the people who are active within the organization are of a low social status, and are unable, or at least feel unable, to advance socially within society at large. Sōka Gakkai provides an environment for these people to feel value and status, and the overwhelming focus on leadership in the Guidance Memo indicates that Sōka Gakkai is aware of this attraction, and is willing to take advantage of it⁹⁸.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

⁹⁸ Many of the sociological studies of Sōka Gakkai focus on its leadership structure and the attraction of Sōka Gakkai as a forum of social advancement. Some of the sources that focus on this almost exclusively are Hurst, Nichiren Shōshū and the Sōka Gakkai in America, Wilson and Dobblaere, A Time to Chant, and White, Sōkagakkai and Mass Society.

The overall message of the Guidance Memo is one of empowerment of the individual Sōka Gakkai member. By adhering to the rules as they are laid out by Ikeda, members will eventually rise to a position of dominance. Following the rules, however, means pledging oneself to a subservient role. In keeping with the reversed logic promoted in Ikeda's book, in order to dominate others, one must be dominated by the Sōka Gakkai leadership.

Through the Guidance Memo, Ikeda completed his domination of Sōka Gakkai. In his texts dealing with the lineage of the movement, such as The Human Revolution, he rewrote the past to conform with his version of the present. In the Guidance Memo, Ikeda rewrote not only history, but the definitions of fundamental concepts of right and wrong, good and evil. Conflict and trouble by definition lead to happiness. Democracy is that which is decided by a single supreme leader.

The revisions undertaken by the Sōka Gakkai leadership go beyond the historical. Historical revision is a launching point for the transformation and direction of more fundamental aspects of human behaviour. The rewriting of history is an exercise in setting precedent for contemporary activity. Once an activity has been rationalized by created historical precedent, it can be undertaken with great enthusiasm and a pure conscience. No matter what adversity the member encounters in pursuing his or her religious practice, the member is content in the conviction that the activity is sanctioned by that which is most holy. The individual member does not have to fear that his or her activity is questionable, because that activity was praised and upheld by laudable historical figures. Not only is the religious undertaking praiseworthy, it is necessary. Those who fail to conform with the norms established by the religious group are pursuing a path that has been proven historically to be fraught with peril and degradation, and they must be convinced by whatever means necessary to convert to the proper path.

In the case of Sōka Gakkai, the activity of shakubuku is held as necessary for both the member and those he or she seeks to convert. The importance of convincing all of the supremacy of the worship of the Dai-Gohonzon through the chanting of the daimoku is supported time and

again by historical example in Sōka Gakkai texts. As was detailed in this study, Sōka Gakkai texts describe the dire consequences that befall those who refuse to see the merit of shakubuku.

Activities undertaken in the present are rationalized through the creation of historical precedent. The question arises, therefore, as to why these activities are undertaken to begin with. Religious activities are driven by the need of the member to dominate, to secure for themselves a sense of personal power. As has been discussed at length, this domination is an intricate series of connections. In reference to shakubuku, the member seeks to convert others in order to have control over them, in this existence and into the future. The reward for performing shakubuku is control of those converted. Performing shakubuku also entails dominating the Sōka Gakkai tradition. The member gains control of the religious tradition by co-opting sanctioned Sōka Gakkai practice to serve his or her personal ambitions. Through practicing shakubuku, the member adopts the characteristics and charisma of the Eternal Buddha himself, Nichiren, thereby gaining power and prestige far beyond that which he or she normally possesses. The member chants the daimoku to achieve his or her personal goals, focusing the energy and power of an entire tradition to work toward an individualistic need.

The individual members, however, in order to gain this position of domination over others, must be completely subservient to the leadership of the Sōka Gakkai. The Sōka Gakkai president is in a position of complete dominance. Through rewriting the history of the movement, he verifies himself as the exclusive and unquestionable leader. This historical revision encompasses not only that of the Sōka Gakkai movement itself, but Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism, the personage of Nichiren himself as he is treated historically, and with that the entire history of Buddhism. The Sōka Gakkai president is subject to nobody. He is nominally the head of an organization that is pledged to worshipping the Dai-Gohonzon as the embodiment of Nichiren as the Eternal Buddha. As head of this organization, he is viewed as the most faithful servant of the ultimate authority, Nichiren, incarnate as a sacred mandala. However, the president is in the unique position of being able to rewrite and reinterpret every facet of doctrine, history and practice that affects the Sōka Gakkai. Every activity undertaken, every word spoken by the president of Sōka Gakkai is reinforced by the authority of his office as it is sanctioned by holy decree, and justified through an unbroken lineage traceable to the source of original

enlightenment. However, this authority is completely self-referential. All of the written sources that invoke this authority, and declare the president as supreme and inviolable are created by the president himself. As the exclusive controller of the religious tradition of Sōka Gakkai, the president is servant of nobody. In effect, it is the Dai-Gohonzon that serves him.

Both of Sōka Gakkai's post-war presidents have been aware of the power of the written word. This can be observed in the fact that all texts produced by Sōka Gakkai are written by the president. If they are not authored exclusively by the president, they are edited, prefaced, or supervised by him. If a Sōka Gakkai book does not bear his name, it is either simply labeled "Sōka Gakkai", or is credited as authored by an official department of the organization, such as the "Sōka Gakkai Kyōgakubu" (Sōka Gakkai Education Department), in the case of the Shakubuku Kyōten. There is no other Sōka Gakkai author in an office lower than the president who produces texts under the auspices of the Sōka Gakkai.

Given what has been stated above, the reasons for this are obvious. The authority of the president is absolute. This means that the president alone is allowed to write history, pass judgment on events, and comment on their significance. By deciding what is historically "correct", the president is able to decide for the present what is good and what is evil. After establishing his authority as based in a noble historical lineage, the president is able to redefine basic logical assumptions held by his loyal membership. He is literally able to redefine right and wrong. The president decides for the individual members what good judgments and meritorious activities are, and what constitutes violations of sacred law. There is no one within the organization who is in a position to argue against the decisions made by him, as such arguments constitute the gravest offences there are in the Sōka Gakkai milieu.

The decisions made by the individual at the top of this hierarchy of domination account for the discrepancies between the two post-war presidencies, both of whom claim to be perfect exemplars of the Nichiren Shōshū tradition. As absolute authorities, any discrepancy with the past regime can be explained away, justified, or simply ignored by the incumbent. As the unquestionable dominator of the Nichiren Shōshū tradition, every word delivered by the Sōka Gakkai president is tantamount to the words of Nichiren himself. The words of the president are therefore the words of the Eternal Buddha himself.

Given this outlook, it is not surprising that Ikeda Daisaku has been quoted as saying "I am ruler of Japan, the supreme authority"⁹⁹." From the point of view of Sōka Gakkai, this is unquestionably the truth.

⁹⁹ White, Sōkagakkai and Mass Society, p. 229.

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Miyoko's Homepage: Media Control by Japanese Authority

www.erols.com/miyoko.gakkai.htm

A collection of translated pro-Sōka Gakkai books and journalistic accounts, from both Gakkai and non-Gakkai sources. Also includes links to many other pro-Sōka Gakkai web sites.

Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism – Hokkekō Handbook

www2.netnitcho.net/users/jqpublic/nshhb.html

Includes the English-language text for the Hokkekō Handbook, excerpts from the Gosho, and many anti-Sōka Gakkai news reports.

“Official” Clearing House for Information on Sōka Gakkai

coyote.accessnv.com/tamonten/clearing-house.html

Relevant anti-Sōka Gakkai articles from mainstream news services, in English and Japanese.

“Official” SGI-USA Web Page

www.sgi-usa.org

Information on SGI activities in the United States and its history there. Publications in English such as the newspaper World Tribune and the magazine Seikyō Times.

Sōka Gakkai Japan

www.infoweb.or.jp/SOKAGAKKAI/Main-Home.html

Huge site in English and Japanese, includes reports on latest activities, writings of Ikeda.

Sōka University

www.t.soka-ac.jp/cgi-bin/index-test.html

Small, out of date.

Sōka University of America

www.t.soka.ac.jp:80/Education/SUA/

Small, focus is on TOEFL (Teaching of English as a Foreign Language) Degree Program.

The Pacific Basin Research Center

tpc.harvard.edu/pbrc/

Joint research program between Sōka University and Harvard University, since 1991.

Information on post-doctoral fellowship programs in public policy research related to the Pacific Rim, based in Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Tōkyō Fuji Art Museum

www.soka.ac.jp/Fujibi/fujibi-e.html

List of the collection, current exhibitions, in English and Japanese. No pictures.

United Nations Development Programme

www.undp.org

No direct mention of Sōka Gakkai, though they are heavily involved.

“Unofficial” Sōka Gakkai International Website

www.halcyon.com/Ichinet/menu.html

As advertised on the “Official” SGI website.

Victims of Sōka Gakkai Association

202.238.95.136/~toride/index.html (Japanese)

www.toride.org/Eindex.html (English)

Lists of quotes from SGI leadership, ex-members, journalistic accounts of Ikeda’s alleged wrongdoings.