

Japanese Buddhist Sect Dedicates a Huge New Temple

By RICHARD HALLORAN Special to The New York Times

New York Times (1857-Current file); Oct 2, 1972; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times

pg. 3



Members of the Soka Gakkai Buddhist sect in their new temple's plaza after dedication The Rev. Do'oo Hayase

Japanese Buddhist Sect Dedicates a Huge New Temple

By RICHARD HALLORAN
Special to The New York Times

FUJINOMIYA, Japan, Oct. 1 —With the sonorous recitation of the prayer "Nam-myohorenge-kyo," 6,000 believers in the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist sect dedicated their huge new main temple today at the foot of Mount Fuji.

The worshipers convened in the airy, modern High Sanctuary of the Daiseikiji, or Great Stone Temple, the headquarters of the sect, which is better known in the West by the name of its lay affiliate, the Soka Gakkai, or Value Creation Society.

At noon, the Rev. Do'oo Hayase, the high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, and Daisaku Ikeda, the president of Soka Gakkai, led the congregation in bowing their heads, rolling their rosary beads between the palms of their hands and droning the prayer, which means approximately "All devotion to the Lotus Sutra."

Then, after welcoming remarks by Mr. Hayase and Mr. Ikeda, there were congratulatory messages read from Vice President Agnew, Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau of Canada. Others were received from Governors Ronald Reagan of California, John A. Burns of Hawaii, Reubin Askew of Florida, George C. Wallace of Alabama and Kenneth M. Curtis of Maine.

Music and Fireworks

After the ceremony, the sect's adherents roamed about to inspect the temple and its vast plaza and leaping fountain, to celebrate with mounds of Japanese and Western food and beer and sake rice wine, and to listen to music punctuated with exploding fireworks.

Soka Gakkai asserts that the new temple is the largest religious structure in the world, exceeding St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican in height, width and floor space. Beyond that, the Daiseikiji complex here has 32 other meeting halls, lodges for pilgrims, administrative buildings and social centers, some traditional and others modern, on its grounds.

There were bands on hand for today's ceremony—a brass band of men in white trumpeting "Anchors, Aweigh" and other military airs, a concert orchestra in full dress playing a hymn that was sung by men in morning coats and women in flowing white dresses, an all-girl fife and drum corps, another all-girl military-style band, plus majorettes twirling hoops and flags and pom-poms.

The High Sanctuary comprises four elements: the Garden of the Law, a plaza capable of accommodating 60,000 people; the Pavilion of Perfect Harmony, in which worshipers may gather under five soaring umbrella-shaped towers; the Temple of Purification, a hall

in which believers may compose their minds; and the Mystic Sanctuary, where 6,000 seated members may worship before the Dai-Gohonzon, the tablet on which Saint Nichiren is said to have inscribed the "Nam-myohorenge-kyo" prayer in 1279.

The Dai-Gohonzon is enshrined atop a high altar in a circular, golden sanctuary. The huge bronze doors of the altar roll open with the touch of an electric switch and the golden screen inside slides up with the touch of another.

Many Japanese have asserted that "we are not a religious people." That may be true, in the Western sense of organized religion and regular services in churches and synagogues on the sabbath. But the teachings of Buddhism, which reached Japan from India and China in the fifth century, and of Shinto, Japan's national religion, pervade the lives and ethics and values of the Japanese.

Soka Gakkai, however, is somewhere between traditional Japanese and Western religions. It is highly organized and ex-

treinely active—some say militant—in social welfare and politics.

Nichiren Shoshu is the religious component of the society and Komeito, or the Clean Government party, is its political arm. However, Komeito, now the country's third strongest political force, has been trying to secularize itself and to attract support from outside Soka Gakkai.

Soka Gakkai also differs from traditional Buddhism and from many Western religions in that it emphasizes the here-and-now far more than a preparation for an afterlife. As a Soka Gakkai publication puts it:

"The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin [Saint Nichiren] does not profess belief in a God of Buddha transcending the realm of man. Rather, it is a religion that expounds how man should live a most humanistic life as a human being. It is a Buddhism that deals not with the usual concept of life after death, but with a wider meaning of life past, present, and future."

Soka Gakkai was founded in

1930 but did not attract many adherents until after World War II under the leadership of Mr. Ikeda, a quietly dynamic man who was clearly the center of attention today. Its appeal has been largely to the alienated, the disadvantaged, the despairing and the physically handicapped.

Soka Gakkai has provided them with social activities, recreation, help in finding jobs, assistance in illness, high schools and a university, and perhaps most of all in giving members the sense of identification and community that is so important in the group-oriented society of Japan.

In return, the members are reportedly generous in their contributions to the society. All are asked to subscribe to the Seikyo Shimbun, Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, which is said to have a circulation of 4.2 million. Soka Gakkai said the members contributed \$115.3-million, which together with \$43-million in the interest that earned, to pay for the \$158-million temple, which took four years to build.