

## Dai-Gohonzon Moved From the Sho-Hondo

By JEFF FARR, Associate Editor

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The announcement many had anticipated for months came April 5. Nikken, during the last service of the spring pilgrimage to the head temple, revealed that, as suspected, the Dai-Gohonzon would be transferred out of the Sho-Hondo (Grand Main Temple). Just a little more than an hour after his announcement, at 4:00 p.m., the Dai-Gohonzon was moved from the Grand Main Temple, where it has been enshrined for more than 25 years, to a close-by facility, the refurbished Hoanden.

Although the priesthood has in recent weeks claimed that the Main Temple is structurally unsound, in his April 5 sermon the only reason Nikken gave for the transfer was to “completely refute the great slander of [SGI President] Ikeda and others.” He took the opportunity to blame President Ikeda and the SGI for recent earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tidal waves in Japan. The Main Temple, which was completed in 1972, was made possible through the leadership of President Ikeda and the financial contributions of 8 million Soka Gakkai members in Japan and overseas.

On Feb. 16, 1965, High Priest Nittatsu was the first to state that the Main Temple was to be the High Sanctuary described in Nichiren Daishonin’s “Minobu Transfer Document,” “Ikegami Transfer Document” and other Goshos. Nikken, then the Study Department leader of Nichiren Shoshu, is on record endorsing Nittatsu’s view. The 8 million who donated approximately \$100 million for the structure (•35 billion at the 1972 exchange rate of approximately •360 per dollar) did so with the understanding that it was to be the High Sanctuary. It was in January 1991, after the priesthood launched its attacks on the SGI, that Nikken started refuting the position until then held by both the priesthood and the SGI.

Last November, rumors that the Dai-Gohonzon was to be moved and the Main Temple demolished began to circulate. *Kaikaku Jiho*, the reformist priests’ newspaper, was the first to predict, in its Nov. 28 issue, that the Dai-Gohonzon would be transferred from the 6,000-seat Main Temple to the approximately 3,200-capacity Hoanden (which has no seats). Also, *Kaikaku Jiho* reported that a construction company had already given Nikken an estimate to level the Main Temple.

But the Jan. 16 issue of *Emyo*, a Nichiren Shoshu publication, responded that the Dai-Gohonzon would not be moved nor the Main Temple closed. *Emyo* also denied that any estimate for the temple’s demolition had been made — at the same time, though, claiming that corrosive ocean sand had been used in mixing the temple’s concrete; that the concrete was now weakening the structure’s reinforcing bars; and that the roof might collapse at any time. Nevertheless, during the recent pilgrimage, temple members worshiped the Dai-Gohonzon again in the Main Temple.

Nikken announced the Dai-Gohonzon’s relocation at the end of the pilgrimage celebrating the completion of the priesthood’s new Grand Reception Hall, a three-year project that involved tearing down the original hall donated by Soka Gakkai members in 1964. Many SGI leaders feel that Nikken is systematically destroying all remnants of the SGI’s influence at the head temple, from the 300 cherry trees the Soka Gakkai donated to its largest contribution, the Main Temple.

Toward the end of his April 5 sermon, Nikken indeed hinted at such plans, calling the Main Temple “a useless ruin of gigantic stature.” He said that he would take “measures appropriate to the current circumstances” regarding the building and mentioned construction of a new temple, the Hoando, which will be “a far greater temple than the newly expanded Hoanden.”

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SGI-USA General Director Zaitso expressed his outrage that 8 million members have been betrayed, saying that “Nikken is again showing his true colors. He is going completely against the Daishonin’s spirit to cherish the people’s sincerity.”

But, Mr. Zaitso added: “Nothing can shake our faith in the Dai-Gohonzon, wherever it be enshrined. Destroying the Main Temple cannot destroy, or even influence, our faith. If Nikken does so, it will be a great crime. But he can never destroy the SGI. His destruction of a building cannot destroy our determination for kosen-rufu.”

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