

**SGI President Ikeda's Essay
Friendship Over Nationalism
By HO GOKU**

This year marks the start of my next 10-year goal (from age 70 to 80) for completing the foundation for worldwide kosen-rufu. After taking my first step toward that objective by visiting the Philippines and Hong Kong, I went directly to Okinawa.

At our Okinawa Training Center, a fortress of peace, I was greeted by the blue coral seas, the beautiful tropical blossoms and the warm smiles of our brave Okinawan members.

Okinawa is a port of departure for the propagation of Buddhism throughout Asia and the entire world. It is also where the Japanese spring begins. That is why I decided to visit Okinawa and from there again rouse the fresh spring breezes of kosen-rufu.



While I was there, the members of Miyakojima — one of the islands that make up that southern archipelago — presented me with materials about their local history. Among them was a book by Captain Eduard Hearnheim about his ship being wrecked off the coast of Miyakojima. There are several accounts of Okinawans assisting foreign ships that drifted to their shores, but the story recounted in this book is in many ways symbolic.



In July 1873, the German merchant vessel *R.J. Robertson* was sailing from China to Australia, when it was struck by a typhoon, tossed onto a coral reef in the waters off Miyaguni, part of Miyakojima's Ueno Village, and shipwrecked. The local inhabitants witnessed the ship's plight, but the sea's wild fury prevented any rescue attempt.

Night fell. The villagers kept a large bonfire burning on the beach to give courage and hope to the shipwrecked sailors. When dawn broke, they paddled out into the crashing waves in their canoes, risking their lives to save the survivors.

The ship's captain was among those rescued. He returned home to Germany and reported the bravery of the villagers to his emperor, who immediately dispatched a frigate to Miyakojima to thank them, present them with gifts and build a memorial to commemorate the event.

Today there is an Ueno German Culture Village, its purpose to pass this story of human kindness on to future generations, to promote international exchange. Okinawa has a long tradition of valuing friendship that transcends the narrow interests of nationalism.



In June 1995, a monument to those who died in the Battle of Okinawa was dedicated in the Memorial Peace Park of Itoman City on the main island of Okinawa. The monument is engraved not only with the names of Okinawan citizens and Japanese army soldiers who were killed but also the names of the more than 10,000 U.S. servicemen who died in the fighting there.

Okinawa, which was sacrificed by the Japanese army to prevent a ground assault on Japan's main islands, experienced casualties on an unprecedented scale. Yet, on this monument, the Okinawans have commemorated the deaths of countless soldiers of its former enemy, the United States. I can think of no other monument in the world like this.

Title: Friendship Over Nationalism

Subject: World Tribune 05/22/98 n.3192 p.9 WT980522p09

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: Essays Friendship Guidance History Human Ikeda January June Nationalism Over President Revolution Series Tribune World

I am particularly struck by the fact that the monument not only seeks to pass on the names of these victims of war but to be a lasting reminder of the horror and evil of war. It is infused with the passionate commitment to build peace.



Okinawans have always turned their gaze to the world. Kyuzo Toyama, a native of the Okinawan town of Kin who pioneered Japanese emigration to Hawaii, composed the poem:

*Let's go forth into the world
And live on the five continents
With sincerity and strong determination
Remembering the stone monument of Kin*

The Soka Gakkai members in Okinawa have demonstrated this same spirit, making their way boldly into the world with the compassionate philosophy of the Daishonin's Buddhism deeply engraved in their hearts.

Many of those who have pioneered the way of kosen-rufu around the world originally hailed from Okinawa. In South America, they have included such people as the late SGI-Peru General Director Kensei Kishimoto, SGI-Bolivia General Director Takeshi Kamiya and SGI-Chile General Director Yoshimasa Chinen. In Africa, we have had SGI-Zambia Headquarters Women's Division Chief Hatsuko Kalabula. Many, many other members from Okinawa are active throughout the globe, including in the United States, in Europe and in Southeast Asia.

I call this spirit of international citizenship, this pioneering humanism so vital among the Okinawan people, the Okinawa spirit.

It is also the spirit of the Soka Gakkai.



Precisely because Okinawa has experienced the bitterness and pain of war to the worst degree, it is essential that the islands of Okinawa become isles of happiness in the 21st century.

To accomplish that, I urge the members of Okinawa to bring the Okinawa spirit to all their endeavors, to challenge their human revolution, to illuminate their communities with the bright light of their character and humanity. I ask them to extend their circles of friendship and shared faith and thereby build a model of kosen-rufu on those beautiful isles.

And I call on the members of Okinawa to join me, their hearts filled with pride in what they are accomplishing, to send forth the pioneering light of victory from these shores to the rest of Japan and the entire world.

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