TSUNESABURO MAKIGUCHI
FOUNDER OF SOKA: VALUE-CREATING EDUCATION
A REVOLUTIONARY WHO DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO THE HAPPINESS OF STUDENTS

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Introduction

When, on November 18, 1930, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda published the first volume of *Soka Kyoiku Taikei* (The System of Value-creating Pedagogy), the name Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-creating Education Society) was used officially for the first time as the pedagogy's publisher (Todai Hokekyo, 49). Thus, an organization, although only nominal at that stage, came into being. By 1941, the society, promulgating religious and educational reform, had a broad-based membership of 3,000 (Todai Hokekyo, 56). By the end of World War II, Makiguchi was dead and the organization was again nominal, consisting now of only Josei Toda. Fired by a fierce determination to realize his mentor's ideals and vision, Toda began the work of rebuilding the organization, which he renamed the Soka Gakkai (Value-creating Society). By the time of his death in 1958, Toda had constructed a vibrantly growing organization with a membership of more than 750,000 households. His successor, Daisaku Ikeda, expanded the scope of the organization's activities to the fields of culture, education and peace advocacy, while at the same time giving these an international dimension. At present, Soka Gakkai International members are active in 163 countries and territories.

Soka Gakkai members have designated November 18, 1930 as the founding date of the organization and thus the start of the movement's activities. They likewise look to the ideas and life of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi as inspiration, as an example of a dedicated educator, social reformer and committed Buddhist. An understanding of Makiguchi's philosophical outlook is essential to understanding the subsequent development of the Soka Gakkai in Japan and of the SGI worldwide.

Two years before the publication of the *Pedagogy* in 1928, two other important events occurred. First, Makiguchi was transferred from his post at Shirogane Primary to Niibori Primary, a school that was scheduled for closure the following year (Todai Hokekyo, 26). In this way Makiguchi, whose relations with the educational authorities had always been strained, was effectively driven from the arena of education. 1928 was also the year in which Makiguchi, impressed by his encounter with Sokei Mitani, decided to embrace Nichiren Buddhism (Todai Hokekyo, 42–43).

While Makiguchi must have regarded his forced retirement as a bitterly unfortunate event, this period of his life was a profound turning point for him and the beginning of the realization of his vision of a vast social reform.

Makiguchi's Legacy

One of the key features of the Soka Gakkai's interpretation of Buddhism is found in its this-worldly, pragmatic orientation. The movement encourages practitioners to be fully engaged in their daily reality, stressing that the purpose of Buddhist practice is to develop the wisdom, compassion, energy and courage to engage fully and creatively in the

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challenges and opportunities of daily life. It encourages the perspective that, rather than a transcendent escape from reality, the challenge of living lies in developing the kind of character and strength that can transform reality. These ideas can be traced back to Makiguchi's own philosophy of value creation, which deeply shaped his reception of Buddhist philosophy and religious practice. From this perspective, it is illuminating to explore the synergies between the development of Makiguchi's thought, his encounter with and reception of Nichiren Buddhism, and the subsequent development of the reformist philosophy that he created.

Long before his conversion to Buddhism, Makiguchi was deeply committed to educational and social reforms that would restore the focus of human endeavor to the happiness of real, living individuals rather than to the state or other abstract authorities or goals. The leadership of the Soka Gakkai has consistently asserted that Makiguchi's interpretation of Buddhism in a this-worldly orientation represents a return to its original spirit and goal of human empowerment and societal transformation. They have been especially forthright in asserting the unique contributions of the Soka Gakkai in reinvigorating Nichiren Buddhism and giving it relevance in the modern world since the organization's decisive split with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood in 1991.

Makiguchi's Early Life and Environment

Makiguchi was born on June 6, 1871, in a small, impoverished fishing village on the Sea of Japan, in isolated Niigata Prefecture. The name of his village, Arahama ("Desolate Beach") suggests the harshness of his early environment (Bethel, 1973, 26). Perhaps Makiguchi's most striking physical feature, from the existing photographs of him, was his stern countenance. However, those who knew him have described him as warm and compassionate. It is likely the difficulties he experienced in his youth and his long association with the less fortunate of Japanese society molded both these qualities in him.

Abandoned by his father at the age of three, he was taken to live with an uncle. The poverty of his adoptive family and the need to work to help support them forced him to give up his education after elementary school.

At the age of fourteen, Makiguchi set off by himself for Hokkaido, which was then a frontier region of Japan. Hokkaido was a center of progressive thought in Japan at that time. Several of the period's most open, internationally oriented thinkers, came from that region. Among them was the Christian pacifist Kanzo Uchi-mura (1861–1930) and Inazo Nitobe (1862–1932), who served as under-secretary-general of the League of Nations 1920–27. Makiguchi's thinking likewise bears the stamp of Hokkaido's open, frontier mentality, a strong and often conflicting contrast with the increasingly restrictive nationalism that came to predominate in Japan in the early years of the twentieth century (Yamashita, 148–57).

In Hokkaido, Makiguchi found work as an errand boy with the local police department and attempted to continue his education. Recognizing his talents, his co-workers collected enough money to enable him to enroll in the Hokkaido Normal School, a teacher's training college. Despite the lack of interim education, he graduated in 1893 at the age of twenty-two, and was offered a post in a primary school attached to the college. He held this position for eight years, becoming known for his dedication and approachability. Here he also became increasingly critical of the educational practices of the day, particularly to the extent that he perceived them to be stifling, rather than developing, the creative potential of children (Bethel, 1973, 32).

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The Backdrop of Nationalism

Three years before Makiguchi's birth, the Meiji era began and Japan entered a period of frantic learning and absorption from the West in an effort to reconstitute itself as a modern, industrial nation-state. Particularly after its victory in the Sino–Japanese War (1894–95), Japan pursued a national policy of imperial expansion, as expressed by the slogan "national wealth and military strength." This trend only accelerated with the Russo–Japanese War (1904–05). Throughout this period, education was integral to developing a sense of national identity and fostering citizens committed to realizing the goals of the state (Saito, 774–5).

The Imperial Rescript on Education, issued in 1890, provides an example of how the government actively enforced this political indoctrination. The document instructed Japanese subjects to cultivate loyalty and filial piety toward the imperial household. It portrayed Japan as a unique polity based on the historical bonds of its benevolent rulers and loyal subjects. Certified copies of the Rescript were distributed to schools throughout the country and ceremoniously read at all important school events. Students were required to study and memorize its text for their moral education classes. Kanzo Uchimura's refusal to show adequate respect to the Rescript and his resultant banishment from the teaching profession was an incident that sent shock waves through the world of Japanese education (Yamashita, 158).

Makiguchi's attitude toward the Imperial Rescript on Education was also less than reverential. In *The System of Value-creating Pedagogy*, Makiguchi describes the Rescript as providing only "a minimal moral principle." The context of rising nationalism is key to understanding Makiguchi's active endeavors as an educator and his desire to effect reform. As Bethel states: "Makiguchi's life and educational career must be seen and evaluated against the background of this debate [about education] and its outcome … his entire educational career was a protest against the production of subjects" (Bethel, 1973, 29).

The Geography of Life and the Idea of World Citizenship

Central to Makiguchi's educational philosophy was the recognition of the need to awaken in students a realization of their interconnectedness with society and the world at large. He posited a three-layered scheme of identity or citizenship, stating that education should develop a sense of belonging and commitment to the community, to the nation and to the world (Makiguchi, 1:227). He later wrote: "Unless the ultimate aim is established, intermediate aims cannot be fixed. Without perceiving the world, one cannot understand the nation. Unless the life of the nation is realized, individual livelihood cannot be secured. Therefore if we are to achieve stability of individual livelihood in every household, that of the nation must first be established. Without the well-being of the world, that of the nation cannot be assured" (Makiguchi, 10:7).

Makiguchi perceived that a key responsibility of education was developing global-minded, responsible people who, while rooted in the local community, could maintain an empathetic engagement with the world. Makiguchi was deeply interested in the study of geography. In particular his interest lay in the interrelationship of people with their physical environments and the effect of this on culture. He believed that by making the study of geography a central point around which the elementary school curriculum could be structured and integrated, many of the problems and shortfalls of education could be overcome (Bethel, 1973, 33).

Accordingly, he began work on a geography book for elementary school teachers. The

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outcome was the 1903 work, *Jinsei Chirigaku* (The Geography of Human Life). Two years earlier, Makiguchi had been forced to resign from the Hokkaido Normal School in Sapporo, having been held responsible for an apparent breakdown in discipline of a dormitory of boys. There is much reason to believe that Makiguchi, as a junior teacher, was forced to take responsibility for an incident in which he was at most marginally involved (Saito, 765). In any event, his resignation provided Makiguchi with a reason to move to Tokyo, the heart of Japan's intellectual life.

Makiguchi's book is filled with observations that can only be termed remarkable considering the historical setting in which they were written. As mentioned, a central concern of the book is the interrelatedness of human society and the natural world. As such, it has been hailed as a pioneering work of "social ecology" (Murao, 114). The *Geography* critiques many aspects of the nature of the Japanese state, which was increasingly sacralized in the person of the emperor. For example, Makiguchi clearly states his view that the purpose of the state is to enhance the quality of life of its citizens. Here again, we encounter the leitmotif of happiness as the genuine object of human endeavors.

Makiguchi further declares "the freedom and rights of the individual are sacred and inviolable" (Makiguchi, 2:339). Significantly, these are the same words used in the Meiji Constitution of 1889 to describe the person of the emperor. It is statements like this that caused social and literary critic Shoji Saito to describe Makiguchi as a "radical in the original sense of the word" (Saito, 757). It is also meaningful to note that Makiguchi published his ideals about the development of global citizens at the very time that other noted Japanese scholars were actively inciting public enthusiasm for open war with Russia.

The publication of Makiguchi's *Geography* was met with significant acclaim, becoming a standard reference for students preparing to take the government exam for teachers, but even this failed to raise either his material or social prospects.

In the Classroom

For the next few years Makiguchi struggled intensely against poverty and also serious illness. During this time he continued to grapple with the philosophical and pedagogical problems raised in *Geography*. He developed a deep interest in sociology and anthropology, particularly the works of the pioneering American sociologist Lester Ward. In 1912 he published his second book, *Kyodoka Kenkyu* (Research Studies in Folk Culture). His primary concern, once again, was with the educational implications of studying the folk culture of local communities. One of the distinguishing features of this book was its emphasis on direct, empirical observations of living conditions. In contrast, much of the energies of Japanese anthropologists were devoted to lyrical, semi-mythologized praise of the unique character and virtues of the Japanese people (Murao, 34–36).

In 1913, at the age of forty-two, Makiguchi returned to teaching as principal of a primary school in Tokyo. For the next twenty years, he served in this capacity at a number of Tokyo's public schools. Those who left accounts of him during this period remembered him as a stern and dignified man who was extremely industrious, and also as a person of great kindness who took an interest in the well-being of his students. One example of this comes from Makiguchi's period as principal of a primary school for mostly poor children. Using his own money, he prepared lunch boxes for children who could not afford them and, in order not to humiliate them, left these in the janitor's room for children to take freely (Todai Hokekyo, 24–25).

All of Makiguchi's educational efforts and his entire teaching career were centered on his

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concern to make the individual learner the center of educational theory and practice. As he later elaborated in *The System of Value-creating Pedagogy*, he saw the purpose of education as the lifetime happiness of the individual learner. He was deeply disturbed by the way in which children's creative potential and natural love of learning were being destroyed by prevailing pedagogical concepts and methods. At that time in Japan, education was seen as the transmission of knowledge from those who were perceived as the authoritative custodians of that knowledge, to learners, who were empty vessels to be inculcated with the necessary information through rote learning and repetition. Makiguchi argued that education "is not the piecemeal merchandising of information; it is the provision of keys that will allow people to unlock the vault of knowledge on their own. It does not consist of pilfering the intellectual property amassed by others through no additional effort of one's own; it would rather place people on their own path of discovery and invention" (Makiguchi, 6:285).

He called for teachers to "come down from the throne where they are ensconced as the object of veneration to become public servants who offer guidance to those who seek to ascend the throne of learning. They should not be masters who offer themselves as paragons, but partners in the discovery of new models" (Makiguchi, 6:289). Makiguchi describes his own sense of urgency in the preface to the *Pedagogy*. "I am driven by the intense desire to prevent the present deplorable situation — ten million of our children and students forced to endure the agonies of cutthroat competition, the difficulty of getting into good schools, the 'examination hell' and the struggle for jobs after graduation — from afflicting the next generation" (Makiguchi, 5: 8).

The determination with which he defended his principles led Makiguchi into conflict with educational authorities on a number of occasions, causing him to be transferred from school to school (Todai Hokekyo, 24–5). He particularly opposed the widespread custom of the time of granting special treatment to the children of well-to-do families. It was this refusal to pander to the powerful that eventually led to his forced retirement in 1929. While his principled stance angered authorities, it also won him the support and admiration of many fellow teachers. In fact, on one occasion when Makiguchi was transferred from Nishimachi Elementary School, a school boycott was organized in protest (Ikeda, 9). Chief among Makiguchi's supporters was a young educator by the name of Jogai (later Josei) Toda. Toda became such an ardent supporter of Makiguchi that when Makiguchi left Nishimachi, Toda resigned from the school. He later opened his own school in which he put Makiguchi's educational theory into practice with considerable success (Todai Hokekyo, 46-47). Toda and Makiguchi continued to work closely together until their arrest in 1943 for opposing Japan's militaristic policies.

The Character of Makiguchi's Thought and 'The System of Value-creating Pedagogy'

As Makiguchi's teaching career drew to a close, he began to prepare for the publication of the educational methods and ideas that he had developed during his teaching years. First, Makiguchi's thought was grounded in the intellectual paradigm of his time. He adopted a positivist view of reality, believing that conclusions should be based on scientific induction. He was particularly wary of accepting ideas that had not been validated as useful through experience and in actual practice. "Positivism says that we are to take the daily realities before us in education as our working knowledge, then wield the scrupulous scalpel of the scientist to dissect out educational theory; that is, to yield constant truths at the root of educational practice. Only then will education embrace an integrally

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systematized body of knowledge" (Bethel, 1989:7–8).

His thought can perhaps be categorized under two broad but interrelated themes. One is his effort to develop a scientific pedagogy grounded in a scientific, empirical approach to education. As the above quote makes clear, he felt strongly that, rather than the abstract pedagogical theories that were imported and translated into the Japanese setting, the actual experiences of teachers should be mined for their lessons and truths.

The other theme is the specific philosophical basis that supported his pedagogy but went beyond education to examine the meaning of human life. In this, his central concerns were values and the unique human capacity to create value. He considered the work of equipping young people to create value (happiness) throughout their lives as the true mission of education.

The System of Value-creating Pedagogy, elucidates these pursuits. These two themes or concerns were intimately related. Bethel writes that Makiguchi can be understood in terms of his search "for an underlying order, for common human values, for meaning and purpose," and it is this that led him "to formulate pragmatic conceptions of man and the world embodying the revolutionary implications of science and evolution" (*Bethel*, 1973:20).

From his early years as a teacher, Makiguchi had kept notes of his thoughts on education, becoming known for the pencil stub and note paper that he constantly carried with him to jot down his ideas as they occurred. Editing and organizing these into a presentable treatise was a mammoth task. In the introduction to the *Pedagogy*, Makiguchi expresses his regret that he previously had not had time to do this, together with his appreciation for his young disciple Josei Toda, who was unstinting in his support for this project. In 1930, the first volume of the *Pedagogy* was published. Originally Makiguchi envisioned publishing twelve volumes; in the end, however, only four volumes were produced.

At the heart of Makiguchi's *Pedagogy* is his theory of value. Real happiness, he concluded, arises through the creation of value. Human beings cannot create matter, but they do have the ability to create value; herein lies the unique significance of human life. In Makiguchi's own words, "The highest and ultimate objective of life is happiness...A happy life signifies nothing but the state of existence in which one can gain and create value in full" (Bethel, 1973:50). In the second volume of the *Pedagogy* he wrote that for more than ten years he had been "constantly thinking about the difficult issue of value," even comparing its presence in his mind to a kind of tumor.

He sought to make explicit what he meant by value by contrasting it with truth, substituting benefit (or gain) for truth in the neo-Kantian value system — dominant in Japan at the time — of truth, beauty and goodness. Truth is a matter of identification, an epistemological statement about an object or event. Value, on the other hand, relates the object to human life, it is a measure of the subjective impact of a thing or event on us and our lives. Value, therefore, can be increased or created, whereas truth cannot.

Life, Makiguchi wrote, "is a process of creating value, and education should guide us toward this end" (Bethel, 1989:56). Education, he believed, should unlock, foster and be based on the joy of learning and discovery that is native to children. It should inspire and empower them to continue to expand themselves.

His concern with the very practical challenge of realizing this objective with his students made him impatient with abstract theorizing. The following quote, for all its simplicity, says much about the nature of his concerns and approach: "What is the purpose of

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national education? Rather than devise complex theoretical interpretations, it is better to start by looking at the lovely child who sits on your knee and ask yourself: What can I do to assure that this child will be able to lead the happiest life possible" (Makiguchi, 4:27).

One could contend, therefore, that Makiguchi's approach to religion was an extension, as well as a result of, his efforts to understand and explain human happiness and values.

Makiguchi's Encounter With Buddhism

As mentioned at the outset, the publication of the *Pedagogy* also marked the birth of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value-creating Education), the educational reformist organization that gave rise to the postwar Soka Gakkai. One cannot understand the development of this organization without understanding the influence of Nichiren Buddhism on Makiguchi's thought.

As has been mentioned, Makiguchi was a committed ration-alist. He believed firmly in the value of experience and of extracting principles from actual observation, rather than attempting to impose theoretical structure onto obstinate reality. He believed in the value of the scientific method as a means of confirming observation and affirming the certainty of knowledge.

Against this background, his late-life (age 57) conversion to Nichiren Buddhism (Nichiren Shoshu) may seem anomalous.

As one considers the history and development of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (SKG) and the change from an educational research group into a religious organization, certain questions inevitably arise: How and when, precisely, did Makiguchi's conviction of the importance of religion develop? Did he perceive Buddhism as a kind of expedient, practical vehicle — congruent with his own philosophy — which could provide a more popular base for effecting social reform? Or did he perceive in Nichiren Buddhism something more complete and holistic than his ideas to that point — did he feel that this religion was the "underlying order" that he had been looking for? In short, what was the essential relationship, for Makiguchi, between the religion of Nichiren Buddhism and his own reformist ideas and activities?

Reviewing Makiguchi's writings at least as far back as *Mountains and Human Life* (1899), one discovers a remarkable consistency in his stance toward religion. In this essay, he describes the impact of mountains on the human spirit, writing that this enables us at once to commune with the cosmos and to become aware of our minuteness and fragility in the face of the vast forces of nature; and that such experience gives rise to religious interests (Makiguchi,7:344).

Likewise, in *The Geography of Human Life* (1903), he describes religious experience as the sense of awe inspired by those forces that exceed the scope of our individual lives as well as toward the underlying order within which we all exist (Makiguchi, 1:36).

While always skeptical of the claims of specific religions, and convinced that these must be subjected to careful scrutiny, he never denied the value of religion or religious experience per se.

From early in life, Makiguchi was exposed to a number of faiths. Although born into a Zen Buddhist family, his adoptive family practiced a form of Nichiren Buddhism, and he had many close Christian friends, including the famous diplomat Inazo Nitobe. Up until his conversion to Nichiren Buddhism, he continued to actively explore various religious practices. Summing up his experience with religious practices, Makiguchi states that "in none of them could I sense the power that could either overturn my scientific and

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philosophical orientation, or harmonize with it" (Makiguchi, 5:405). Koichi Miyata goes so far as to interpret Makiguchi's experience with religious faiths as a search for one that would meet his own stringent criteria (Miyata, 72).

In 1928, Makiguchi met Sotei Mitani, the principal of a vocational school and a lay practitioner of Nichiren Shoshu. Years earlier Makiguchi had attended a lecture on Nichiren Buddhism by the nationalist Chigaku Tanaka, but had been unimpressed by him. His encounter with Mitani had a completely different effect on him. He was deeply impressed with Mitani's explanation of how religion is integrated and concerned with the daily reality of people's lives. Mitani explained Buddhism from Nichiren's perspective that "'no affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality.' A person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs...." He explained the existence of an ultimate "Law" that is neither transcendent nor anthropomorphic, which does not exist above or beyond reality, but within it. (Later, Makiguchi would break with Mitani for personal, but also philosophical reasons. Mitani apparently insisted on what might be termed a "fundamentalist" approach to Buddhism, feeling that if the sacred texts described beings with human heads and animal bodies, these must exist. Makiguchi could not bring himself to accept such unscientific views.)

On beginning to study the Lotus Sutra, the key text of Mahayana Buddhism, and Nichiren's interpretation of it, Makiguchi was struck by how fully these accorded with his rationalist principles. "When, however, I reached the point of encountering the Lotus Sutra, I was astonished to discover that it in no way contradicted the scientific and philosophical principles which form the basis for our daily lives, and that it differed fundamentally from all religious and moral practices which I had studied to date. And just as I found myself moved by this discovery, I experienced a number of inexplicable phenomena in my daily life, which accorded precisely with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.... With a joy that is beyond the power of words to express, I have completely renewed the way of life I had pursued for almost sixty years" (Makiguchi, 5:36).

He further described his encounter with Buddhism as giving new life to his theory of value (Ikeda, 10). Thus, while Makiguchi makes no references to which aspects of his pre-conversion philosophy were "overturned" and which were "harmonized" with Buddhism, it seems clear that the experience was overwhelmingly one of harmonization. In Buddhism, he found a system of belief that re-energized and deepened his convictions about the central importance of empowering individuals. This is reflected in the gradual shift in the rhetoric of the organization he founded from a focus on educational reform to one of religious reform.

It does not seem unreasonable to speculate that Makiguchi's conversion represented a profound harmonization between the scientific-rationalist tradition of the West—in which he was steeped and to which he was committed—and the intuitive appreciation of the processes of the inner life that characterizes the religious tradition of Asia. Nor does it seem to go too far to suggest that it is in the pre- and post-conversion consistency of Makiguchi's thinking—particularly on the question of value—that the distinguishing aspects of the Soka Gakkai can be located. Makiguchi's pragmatic, this-worldly approach to religious practice—as a source of insight and energy through which people can create value amidst the needs and trials of daily living—has been carried forward by the subsequent leaders of the organization. It seems reasonable to speculate that this approach has played an important role in the degree of acceptance realized by the Soka Gakkai movement in late-twentieth century Japan as well as in cultural settings with scant prior

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exposure to Buddhism.

What then were the specific aspects of Nichiren Buddhism that appealed to Makiguchi? Miyata describes three characteristics that Makiguchi found especially attractive: 1) an emphasis on empirical experience and congruence with the scientific method; 2) The centrality of a universal law or principle as the focus of faith rather than an anthropomorphic being or deity; and 3) an emphasis on the identity of the secular and Buddhist realms, the stance of using religion's contribution to society as the gauge of its validity (Miyata, 75).

In the *Pedagogy*, Makiguchi further clarified his view on the value of religion. Rejecting the idea that "the sacred" represents an independent category of value, Makiguchi states that religion generates the value of benefit or gain only to the degree that it enhances individuals' lives. To the degree it contributes to the advancement of society it creates the value of good. Benefit, or gain and good, along with beauty, form the core of Makiguchi's system of value. As Ikeda has described it, Makiguchi's consistent contention was that religion must serve humanity; humanity does not exist to serve religion (Ikeda, 15).

The Soka Kyoiku Gakkai

Around the time of the publication of the *Pedagogy*, and with the freedom that his forced retirement now afforded him, Makiguchi began the work of organizing support for his vision of educational and social reform. This was the beginning of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (SKG), which after the war would be reconstituted as the Soka Gakkai. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the development of this organization at this point in its history is the dramatic shift it underwent, in only a few years, from being an organization for intellectuals interested in educational and pedagogical reform, to being a broad-based religious movement.

Unfortunately, information about the pre-war history of the SKG—the nature of its activities, the growth of its membership and particularly how the transition in its focus occurred—is limited. Much of what we know about it must be gleaned from the content of the organization's publications. It is apparent that, at its inception, the SKG embraced a distinctive pedagogical agenda. In the preface to the *Pedagogy*, Makiguchi writes: "There are many issues of urgency that we have to deal with in our movement for educational reform. Soka Kyoiku Gakkai aims to tackle these issues as a cooperative effort among those sharing the same aspiration" (Makiguchi 5;10). *Kankyo* (Environment), the first magazine that Makiguchi and Toda produced (in 1930), was published with the aim of providing educators with "teaching material related to daily living" and to encourage them to develop a more scientific or systematic pedagogy.

Thus, at the time of founding, the main emphasis of the organization was on social change through educational reform. The religious aspect that was to become prominent was at this point secondary, or at least of secondary visibility.

Bethel suggests that Makiguchi was motivated to shift emphasis toward religious reformation by a sense of frustration with the progress of his efforts to effect educational reform (Bethel, 1973:90). Makiguchi's own writings offer evidence supporting this view. In 1937, reflecting on the seven years since the first volume of the *Pedagogy* was published, Makiguchi noted that while this was perhaps the inevitable outcome of the fact that his pedagogy was built on a new theory of value, it was impossible not to be disappointed by the lack of response on the part of the national educational establishment (Makiguchi, 9:234).

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Whatever the motivation, by 1935 the evidence of this transition from an educational to a religious focus becomes apparent. *The Soka Kyoiku Gaku Taikei Kogai* (Synopsis of The System of Value-creating Pedagogy) is a pamphlet outlining the principles of Makiguchi's pedagogy published in that year. This espouses the goal of the SKG as educational reform based on Makiguchi's principles of value-creating pedagogy and includes a number of specific reform proposals and goals. In *Shinkyo* (New Teachings), the society's publication from 1935 to 1936, however, there appear many articles about the society's religious activities as well as slogans advocating religious reform on its cover (Miyata, 15).

It appears that the group also held discussion meetings where both religion and education were discussed. In August of 1935, the group held its first summer session at Taiseki-ji, the Nichiren Shoshu head temple (Todai Hokekyo, 50).

Likewise, the December 1935 edition of *Shinkyo* contains the following statement, which clearly reflects how Makiguchi saw the relationship between religion and other forms of institutionalized activity: "Reforms of worldly issues such as politics or economics are the trimming of branches and leaves while educational and religious reforms nourish the roots" (Todai Hokekyo, 51). He also stated that educational reforms should be based on religious reform and wrote that, without the fundamental inner transformation of human beings, the chaos plaguing human affairs will never be brought to an end (Ibid.). It seems therefore that, by 1935 at least, the organization included a significant religious focus.

In 1936, the platform of the organization was revised to "better reflect the reality of the movement" (Miyata, 15). It now gave specific expression to the religious focus of the organization, stating that, together with its aim of effecting national educational reform through "pedagogical studies centering on the system of value-creating pedagogy, it shall also aim at achieving religious revolution essential in realizing educational reform" (Ibid.).

In 1937, the group held a "founding meeting," with sixty people in attendance, at which Makiguchi was formally elected as the organization's president. The members continued to meet to report on their research programs and their personal experiences until the government disbanded the organization in 1943 (Bethel, 1973:97).

In 1939, as the world lay poised on the brink of total war, another general meeting of the SKG was held. The focus of this meeting was almost completely religious. In July 1941, the organization's new monthly periodical, *Kachi Sozo* (Value Creation), began publishing the organization's platform, rules and regulations, and purpose. It is clear from this that a dramatic change had occurred in the organization, and that its focus was now overwhelmingly religious.

In the fourth issue, the SKG's purpose was defined as scientific experimentation and demonstration of living with supreme value based on Buddhist practice:

> Our organization, consisting of those who embrace the Three Great Secret Laws, the essence of the Lotus Sutra, strives to achieve peace and tranquillity for all. It will be realized by putting their faith into practice in daily life to scientifically observe the relationship between religion and living, and being testimony to the presence and degree of value in that relationship. We have sought to achieve supreme results in education and life in general, and arrived at the fundamental causes to realize them. We have established a guidance-oriented teaching method, and used this method to scientifically test means of achieving greater happiness for all. For the past decade, we have set an example unprecedented in the world by demonstrating actual proof of the experiment thanks to our comrades' wholehearted commitment and practice. We

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have thus taken the initiative in breaking through the deadlock the world and our country are facing. (Miyata, 16)

This was followed by six concrete proposals: 1) Reform of educational methodology. 2) Reform of lifestyle. 3) Reform of research method. 4) Reform of morality. 5) Reform of philosophy. 6) Reform of religion (Ibid.).

The journal *Kachi Sozo* continued to feature articles on pedagogical issues. Increasingly, however, it featured mostly testimonials by members with no particular ties to the realm of education about the benefits they had received from the practice of Nichiren Buddhism (Bethel 1973, 97).

Kachi Sozo published for less than one year, from July 1941 to May 1942, when it was ordered to cease publication by the authorities. Its short life overlaps with a crucial period in the history of World War II, including the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, Hong Kong and Singapore. Makiguchi's writings through this period are informed by an escalating sense of urgency. It is clear that he was increasingly convinced that only the kind of fundamental, spiritual renewal that he had found in his own religious experience could enable Japan and the world to avoid the disaster toward which it was rushing.

This change in the organization's focus also began to be reflected in the organization's membership. More and more, the organization began to include people from a far greater spectrum of society who had been attracted by the broader religious issues that Makiguchi was now discussing, not only intellectuals interested in reform. No detailed demographic data exist that would offer a portrait of the organization's membership or its shift from one primarily of educators to one more reflective of the general population. However, in Toda's novelized history of the organization, *Ningen Kakumei* (The Human Revolution), Makiguchi is portrayed as engaged in propagation activities among Japan's urban proletariat and many of his converts are women seeking relief from the "karmic burden" of poverty and abusive relationships.

In terms of its size, the organization had increased from 500 people in 1940 to 3,000 the following year (Todai Hokekyo, 1:56). It is obvious that, from 1939, Makiguchi had initiated a much more broad-based social movement.

Arrest and Death In Prison

As Japan's drive toward war intensified, the government became increasingly wary and repressive of voices of dissent. As it concentrated its efforts to rally its subjects behind the cause of its expansionist war, it grew ever less tolerant of any expressions of independent thought.

In April 1939, the state enacted the Religious Organizations Law, which enabled it to disband any religious organization that contradicted the "Imperial Way." Likewise, in 1940, a new administrative body was established and for the first time, the promotion of respect for the Shinto gods became the official objective of the state. Miyata describes this as signifying the completion of the system of State Shinto (Miyata, 214).

According to this ideology, the emperor was, as a descendent of the sun-goddess, a living deity who should be worshipped by the populace. In this way, the state generated a powerful, unquestioning nationalistic patriotism in support of its policies. Each household, as well as all places of worship, were required to enshrine Shinto talismans. In 1941, the Peace Preservation Act of 1925 was revised, expanding its original focus to

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specifically prohibit, under penalty of death, any acts or even thoughts that demeaned the dignity of the emperor or of State Shinto. It was for violation of this law that the leaders of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai would be arrested in 1943.

During the 1930s, state authorities had already violently suppressed a number of sects, most notably the Omoto sect in 1935. The pressure to conform and accept the supremacy of State Shinto was felt by the entire religious community of Japan and, one after another, the various schools revised their teachings and practices to accommodate the demands of the state. For example, the various sects tracing their lineage to Nichiren, including Nichiren Shoshu, agreed to expunge from his writings those passages that place the authority of the Buddhist dharma above that of secular powers or that could otherwise be construed as blasphemous of the Emperor.

Within this context, Makiguchi remained outspoken. According to his indictment, during the two years prior to his arrest, Makiguchi attended more than 240 small-scale discussion meetings. (These meetings continue to be the principal venue for SGI membership activities worldwide.) Many of these meetings were conducted under the direct surveillance of the Special Higher Police. Participants recollect that Makiguchi would be cut short by the police as soon as the subject turned to the matter of State Shinto (Ikeda, 12).

Makiguchi expressed his views in writing also. For example, in the December 20, 1941 issue of *Kachi Sozo*, Makiguchi wrote the following: "We must strictly avoid following ideologies of uncertain origin that cannot be substantiated by actual proof — even if they may be the most time-honored tradition — and thereby sacrificing the precious life of the entire community of self and others. In this sense, the question of [compulsory worship at] Shinto shrines must be re-examined as a matter of great urgency" (Makiguchi, 10:26). The timing of this statement, only weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, suggests the courage required to express such views publicly. As mentioned, *Kachi Sozo* was forced to cease publication five months later, in May 1942.

In June 1941, Makiguchi was summoned to the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu. There, in the presence of the present and two former high priests, he was urged to accept the Shinto talisman and to encourage the members of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai to do the same. Makiguchi refused to accept this symbolic embodiment of the sacralized state. Writing after the war, Toda recalls him stating: "What are they [the priesthood] so afraid of? Now is the time to admonish the state" (July–August *Daibyakurenge*, 1951, "The History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai").

In July 1943, Makiguchi, Toda and nineteen other leaders of the SKG were arrested. *Tokko Geppo* (Monthly Report of the Special Higher Police) reports the arrest of Makiguchi: "The thoughts and beliefs of [Soka Kyoiku Gakkai] related persons centering on President Makiguchi manifest a number of subversive and seditious elements. Following secret investigations by the Police Agency as well as the Fukuoka Prefecture Special Higher Police Department, the Agency on the seventh day of this month arrested and interrogated Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and five other persons for suspicion of blaspheming the dignity of the Imperial Grand Shrine and lèse-majesté." Makiguchi was charged with expressing such opinions as: "The emperor is a common mortal"; "The emperor should not demand [people's] loyalty"; and "There is no need to worship the Grand Shrine of Ise" — a site with close ties to the imperial household (*Tokko Geppo*, July 1943, 27–28).

Makiguchi spent the rest of his life, some five hundred days, in prison, much of it in

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solitary confinement. He continued to express his religious and philosophical views, fully aware that continued adherence to these views would prevent his release. For the authorities, recantation followed by release was of course the preferred outcome when dealing with "thought criminals." They had techniques of applying physical and psychological pressure that produced an extremely high rate of recantation. Other than Makiguchi, Toda and one other person, all of the arrested leaders of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai recanted and were released. Makiguchi and Toda were among the few dissenting thinkers — the others were principally Christians and communists — who held to their beliefs to the very end.

An excerpted version of Makiguchi's written responses to his interrogators was published in *Tokko Geppo* (Monthly Report of the Special Higher Police) and is extant as are the letters he was permitted to write home once every ten days. These reveal Makiguchi as extraordinarily composed. In the interrogation record, for example, he repeats and elaborates those views regarding State Shinto and the emperor that had caused his arrest. There is an almost Socratic calm about the manner in which Makiguchi seized what he perhaps sensed was his last opportunity to give his ideas fuller expression.

He first describes the religious practice of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai as a fusion of the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin transmitted within Nichiren Shoshu and of his own theory of value. He then explains why he chose not to become a priest of Nichiren Shoshu but remain a lay believer. "If I were to become ordained and have a temple, I would be confined in my actions to the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu. It would hardly be appropriate for me to promote my theory of value at a temple. I believe that my real purpose is fulfilled in remaining a lay believer and introducing my theory of value into the faith principles of Nichiren Shoshu. This is where the unique characteristics of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai are to be found." (*Tokko Geppo*, August 1943:140).

Throughout the record, Makiguchi demonstrates an independence of thought and interpretation that underlines the distance and tensions with Nichiren Shoshu. Before its suppression, a number of articles in *Kachi Sozo*, not all necessarily of Makiguchi's authorship, had voiced criticism of the "old-style" faith of the priests and traditional parishioners of Nichiren Shoshu whose lack of enthusiasm for propagation activities was felt to reflect a selfish unwillingness to share the "great good" of Buddhism with others and society as a whole.

As Makiguchi makes clear in the record, the Buddhist Law is not something that can be owned by any individual or sect. For him, it is first and foremost a universal law of causality. "Buddhism is not something invented or created by Shakyamuni. Without beginning or end, it is a law governing and giving vitality to the constant flow of all phenomena since time without beginning. What is called Buddhism are simply acts and practices that accord with this already existing law or principle" (*Tokko Geppo*, August 1943:145).

He describes the ongoing war as a "national disaster" brought about by adherence to mistaken ideologies. (At the time, the war was almost universally described as a "holy war.") Makiguchi also repeated his assertion that the emperor is a common mortal and not infallible. He also declared that the emperor must obey the law of cause and effect and that if he would embrace Buddhism, "His Majesty would naturally develop the kind of wisdom that would enable him to carry out political policies without error" (*Tokko Geppo*, August 1943:152,156).

The letters that Makiguchi wrote from prison to his wife and daughter-in-law offer a

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portrait of a philosophic transcendence of his present difficulties combined with an unshaken commitment to pragmatic action. He compares life in his three-mat (approximately six by nine feet) solitary cell to "living in a small apartment where I can read books and lack for nothing." In the same letter, he writes: "Let us all make faith our first priority. We should strengthen our faith, aware that whatever trials we face are insignificant compared with those of the Daishonin. We live in the midst of limitless, boundless benefit and can in no way resent events such as the present ones. From past experiences it is clear that 'poison will turn to medicine' just as the sutra and writings of Nichiren Daishonin teach us" (Makiguchi, 10:278). In another letter he wrote, in a line scratched out by the censors, "Depending on our attitude, even hell has its pleasures."

Through these letters, Makiguchi tried to protect and encourage his family and fellow members of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai. He remained engaged in the problems and challenges of daily living to the very end. For example, in a number of letters, he scolds his daughter-in-law, Sadako, for her failure to date letters (so that he can judge how long the process of censorship takes) or to provide the kind of concrete, detailed information he required.

Makiguchi's last letter was dated October 15, a little more than one month before his death. It is a response to a letter from Sadako informing Makiguchi that his son (her husband) Yozo had been killed in battle. "I was shocked by this blow. But even more I was concerned how the two of you [Sadako and Makiguchi's wife, Kuma] were bearing up. I was relieved to learn that you are taking this with a firm determination…. Please inform only those who were close to him, not forgetting his aunt in Hokkaido." After encouraging them to take comfort in their faith, he concludes with a statement of confidence in his accomplishment and the validity of Buddhist teachings.

"I have been carefully rereading Kant's philosophy. It is clear I have been able to develop a theory of value that philosophers for the past hundred years have sought without success. At the same time, I have linked this to the faith of the Lotus Sutra, the truth of which has been proven by the experiences of several thousand practitioners. At the risk of sounding boastful, I find myself astonished at this. In this sense, it is no wonder that the three obstacles and four devils[1] have arisen to oppose us. It is just as the sutra teaches" (Makiguchi, 10:301).

1. Various obstacles and hindrances to the practice of Buddhism. Three obstacles are: 1) the obstacle of earthly desires; 2) the obstacle of karma, which may also refer to opposition from one's spouse or children; and 3) the obstacle of retribution, also obstacles caused by one's superiors, such as rulers or parents. The four devils are: 1) the hindrance of the five components; 2) the hindrance of earthly desires; 3) the hindrance of death, because untimely death obstructs one's practice of Buddhism or because the premature death of another practitioner causes doubts; and 4) the hindrance of the devil king.

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