

**THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
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Visiting the islands often kept Takashi Nogawa, the first chapter leader of Amami Oshima Chapter, away from home for a week or two at a time. 'When he left his house, he'd say, "See you soon!" without mentioning when he might return.'

Shin'ichi Yamamoto and the other leaders talked until the early morning, deciding finally to call the new organization Amami General Chapter and that it would consist of the chapters

Amami

Oshima, Naze and Koniya. It was also decided to appoint Takashi Nogawa, until then the leader of Amami Oshima Chapter, as the new general chapter leader, and Haru Fujisawa, the current chapter women's division leader, as the general chapter women's division leader.

Nogawa ran a general store on Amami Oshima. An earnest-looking man in his late 30s, he was straightforward and honest. Upon returning home after serving in the army during the war, his life on Amami Oshima under U.S. military rule was very hard, and he lived day after day in desperate poverty.

Eventually he opened the general store and got married, but just as business seemed to be taking off, he contracted tuberculosis. Both of his parents had died when he was a child, and his sister died at 16. Sensing that his entire family was fated to die young, Nogawa began to fear his own demise.

He grew thin from the disease, and his face became so pale that he had to put on rouge when he went into the store to meet with customers. It was around this time that he first heard about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. He was so moved by the confidence of the Soka Gakkai members who came to talk to him that he and his family decided to join in the hopes that the practice would cure him. They received Gohonzon in May 1957.

Determined to beat his illness, Nogawa devoted himself enthusiastically to Buddhist practice. Day by day, he began to feel better, and when he had an X-ray taken about a year later, not a trace of shadow was found on his lungs. The doctor was astonished. This experience gave Nogawa tremendous confidence in his faith, and he began to put even more energy into Soka Gakkai activities. He had experienced the power of Buddhist practice to change karma.

Three years after he had joined the Soka Gakkai, in October 1960, Koniya District of Kagoshima Chapter was formed, and Nogawa was appointed district leader. Ten months later, in July 1961, with the establishment of Amami Oshima Chapter, he was asked to become the chapter leader. He was troubled about whether he should accept the appointment, however. Though he would be head of Amami Oshima Chapter, in addition to his home island of Amami Oshima, the chapter included Kikaijima, Kakeromajima, Tokunoshima, Okinoerabujima and Yoronjima—all of the Amami Islands.

He knew full well that it would be impossible to fulfill his responsibilities as chapter leader unless he devoted himself entirely, day and night, to the good of the chapter members.

At the time, the roads on Amami Oshima were in extremely poor condition. Furthermore, the only way to travel to the other islands was by boat, which often involved many

transfers from one passenger ship to another, or making one's way in a small fishing vessel while being tossed about by the waves. It took 13-and-a-half hours by regular passenger boat to get from Naze on Amami Oshima to Chabana on Yoronjima, if all went according to schedule. The return trip took 18-and-a-half hours.

A chapter leader in those early days of the Soka Gakkai's activities in the Amami Islands would have to cut back on working hours in order to visit all the members. Nogawa knew this and was therefore hesitant to accept the position of head of Amami Oshima Chapter. His wife Yoshimi was also well aware of the weight of responsibility that would come with the post. If her husband accepted it, she knew that he would be virtually unable to work in the general store or contribute to taking care of the household. But she also understood that to transform the tragic karma of the Amami Islands and bring happiness to all of the people there, someone had to take on that burden, and so she made up her mind.

"We can do it. I'll take care of the store!" she told her husband. These words enabled Mr. Nogawa to make his decision. He felt that he owed his very life to his faith and it was therefore only right that he should devote that life to the spread of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

He was appointed as chapter leader at the Headquarters leaders meeting in Tokyo, and on that day he met President Yamamoto for the first time at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. Shin'ichi sincerely congratulated Nogawa on this new start for Amami Oshima Chapter, and expressed high hopes for him in meeting the bold challenges ahead.

After his appointment, Nogawa gave himself wholeheartedly to helping the members practice and to spreading the Daishonin's teachings throughout the Amami archipelago. It turned out to be just as challenging as he had anticipated—in fact, even more so.

Visiting the islands often kept Nogawa away from home for a week or two at a time. When he left his house, he'd say, "See you soon!" without mentioning when he might return. He simply couldn't say, mostly due to the unpredictability of the weather.

Some of the islands had no regular passenger ship service and the only way to reach them at all was on a fishing boat or by rowboat. When he went to Tokunoshima, the second largest of the Amami Islands, he would take a motorbike with him and use that to get around the island.

Nogawa was rarely able to sleep in his own bed. He always carried a raincoat on his travels, and when he became tired, he would put it on and sleep under the stars. While traveling very late one night, he was suddenly overcome with fatigue. He stopped his bike and lay down by the roadside. He awoke to the feel of something on his stomach. He opened his eyes and gulped. It was a *habu*, a poisonous snake native to the southern Japanese islands.

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the
novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto.
The events take place in 1963.