

‘A Grand Stage for kōsen rufu in the Future’: Sōka Gakkai in Austria, 1961–1981

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1. Introduction

A flag bearer of global Engaged Buddhism, Sōka Gakkai (Value Creation Society) is Japan’s single largest religious organisation with affiliations ‘in 192 countries and territories worldwide’.¹ Today this international Buddhist network—operating since 1975 under the name of Soka Gakkai International (SGI)—reports a membership of twelve million people,² of which 8.27 million ‘households’ (*setai*) belong to the Japanese branch.³ Though

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Notes on Romanisation and Style: Japanese terms and names are romanised using the Modified Hepburn system. The romanisation of Chinese is in accordance with the *Hānyū Pīnyīn* system including tonal marks. The transliteration of Sanskrit follows the IAST. Japanese names are written according to East Asian custom: family name precedes personal name.

1 See <http://www.sgi.org/about-us/history-of-sgi/history-of-sgi.html> (accessed: April 12, 2014).

2 See <http://www.sgi.org/about-us/what-is-sgi.html> (accessed: February 6, 2014).

3 Traditionally, Sōka Gakkai counts its Japanese membership in households, which does not mean that all members of a family are indeed followers, but that at least one person in the respective household appears as such. The stated figure has remained unchanged for more than 20 years now—alongside a few ephemeral ones—which, given its constancy, suggests its overall unreliability; this is in addition to its general vagueness due to the fact that the category of household is in itself a very imprecise gauge. Unlike most other larger religious groups in Japan, Sōka Gakkai does not report its membership to the authorities, which publish statistical data in an annual report on religion, the *Shūkyō nenkan* (*Yearbook of Religions*). Instead, household statistics are given in the movement’s annual report. The figure provided for worldwide membership above must also be viewed with caution as it has been subject to frequent change in the recent past. In 1988,

these figures may be overstated, Sōka Gakkai is indubitably a sizeable presence within the global Buddhist community. Sōka Gakkai is known for its multi-ethnic makeup overseas and a this-worldly outlook, departing from a traditional Buddhist mind-set. A lay Buddhist movement in the spirit of Nichiren,⁴ Sōka Gakkai advocates the establishment of world peace (*sekai heiwa*) based on the promotion of culture (*bunka*) and education (*kyōiku*), axiologically and spiritually animated by devotion to the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the (textual) guidance of the third (1960–1979) and current International President, Ikeda Daisaku (b. 1928).⁵ Ikeda's leadership, which began in 1960, lastingly spread the Nichiren Buddhist message across the globe. In some countries Sōka Gakkai has already successfully entered the mainstream of the local Buddhist environment. In Austria *Österreich Soka Gakkai International – Verein zur Förderung von Frieden, Kultur und Erziehung* (SGI Austria – Association for the Promotion of Peace, Culture and Education), an association incorporated on June 3, 1991,⁶ was officially admitted as a Buddhist order within the Austrian Buddhist Society

for example, a Sōka Gakkai endorsed publication authored by the then-leader of SGI-UK indicated 20 million adherents (Causton 1995: 270).

4 Nichiren (1222–1282) was a reformist Buddhist monk during Japan's Kamakura period (1185–1333; *Kamakura jidai*), in which Buddhism entered an era of massive expansion and increasing diversity and doctrinal strife. Formally ordained at a Tendai (Chinese: Tiāntái) temple, he later turned into a strident critic of this and competing Buddhist traditions. After Nichiren's passing, his major disciples went on to establish their own schools based on his teachings, the sum of which is called Nichiren Buddhism (*Nichiren buppō*). For a comprehensive discussion of Nichiren, see, for example, Matsudo 2004.

5 Dating back to the first or second century CE, the *Lotus Sūtra* or *Sūtra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law* (Sanskrit: *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*; Japanese: *Myōhōrengekyō*, abbreviated *Hok(k)ekyō*) is likely to be the most seminal Mahāyānist sūtra, figuring prominently in East Asian Buddhism. By far its most popular and authoritative translation throughout more than 1500 years is the one by the Central Asian Buddhist monk Kumārajīva (344/350–409/413; Japanese: Kumarajū) into Chinese completed in 406. Hence, the Japanese *yomikudashi* (Hosoi 1961; see also Sōka Gakkai Kyōgaku 2002), that is, the traditional Japanese rendering from classical Chinese, as well as for example the commissioned English (Watson 1993 and 2009) and German translation (Deeg 2009) used by most Sōka Gakkai members today are based on Kumārajīva's Chinese version. The text of the *Lotus Sūtra* claims to contain the definite teachings of Śākyamuni, dismissing previous sūtras as merely provisional or 'skilful means' (Sanskrit: *upāyakaśālyā*; Japanese: *hōben zengyō*). An elaboration of the latter in various contexts and the disclosure of Śākyamuni's primordiality and immortality represent the core themes of the *Lotus Sūtra*. For a well-crafted introduction, including a list of available translations into English, French and German, see Teiser and Stone 2009.

6 Before that time Austrian Sōka Gakkai appeared under the label of 'Austrian Nichiren Shoshu' (*Österreichische Nichiren Shoshu*). See Section 3.2.

(*Österreichische Buddhistische Religionsgesellschaft*) on June 28, 2001.⁷ Ikeda’s stopover in Vienna 40 years earlier, whilst on a journey through Europe, heralded the inception of Sōka Gakkai in Austria. This inception was only very cautiously consolidated after almost ten years with the relocation of a Japanese immigrant and Sōka Gakkai member from Geneva to Vienna. Over the next four decades Sōka Gakkai, starting out with a single person, was to slowly but steadily grow in membership—as of December 2013, SGI Austria reports 853 members—having become today an integral part of the wider Austrian Buddhist community and recent Austrian religious history in general.⁸ In contrast to most other East Asian diasporic religious movements, there has been some country-specific research conducted on the development and state of Sōka Gakkai in Europe, such as in France (Hourmant 1999; Chelli and Hourmant 2000; Mathe 2005), Germany (Ionescu 2000 and 2001; Kötter 2006; Schweigkofler 2014), Italy (Maciotti 1996 and 2000; Barone 2007; and Berzano and Martoglio 2009), Sweden (Hultberg 1973), and the United Kingdom (Wilson and Dobbelaere 1994; Wilson 2000; Fowler and Fowler 2009). The position of Sōka Gakkai in Austria in the past and present, however, has been uncharted. This paper thus attempts to fill a lacuna. Yet, contrary to the majority of scholarship mentioned above, this paper is not concerned with mainly sociological issues. Instead it intends to provide a historical survey, drawing on a variety of sources gathered through copious archival research and the evaluation of questionnaires and semi-structured guided interviews with members of SGI Austria. A comprehensive study of relevant secondary sources has further helped to establish a sound contextual framework. The historical account in this paper will cover the years from 1961 to 1981, the latter date being a twofold caesura in the history of Sōka Gakkai in Austria. Firstly, it marks the year of Ikeda’s second of a total of three visits to Austria. Secondly, 1981 was a year in which the movement became an official member organisation of SGI. The period from 1981 to the present will be outlined in a separate publication. The next section will briefly introduce the general history and the main doctrinal tenets of Sōka Gakkai. Section 3 is divided into three subsections. The first part delineates the early contacts between Sōka Gakkai and Austria prior to the arrival of the first permanent practitio-

7 Officially recognised by the government in February 1983 (BGBl 33/1983), the Austrian Buddhist Society serves as the umbrella organisation for Buddhist groups across the country, irrespective of their denominational affiliation. Austria has been the first European country to officially acknowledge Buddhism as a religion, and thus to offer a range of state support benefits including, amongst others, religious school education.

8 Numbers provided by SGI Austria’s administration manager in a personal and e-mail correspondence on February 20, 2014.

ner and future founder of the Austrian movement in 1969. The second overviews major stages in the movement's development from 1969 to 1981. The third part succinctly discusses Ikeda's second visit to Vienna, after which the relationship with the Japanese headquarters was tightened, and the pace in terms of proselytisation accelerated. Section 4 contains the concluding remarks.

This paper offers the first thorough investigation into the formative history of a major East Asian neo-Buddhist movement in Austria, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the dynamics of religious pluralism in recent Austrian religious history.

2. Historical Overview and Main Tenets of Sōka Gakkai

The history of Sōka Gakkai goes back to the publication of the first volume of Makiguchi Tsunesaburō's (1871–1944) programmatic major work *Sōka kyōikugaku taikai* (*The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*) (Makiguchi 1965c and 1965d) on November 18, 1930.⁹ The publisher was listed as Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai (Value Creation Education Society), a loosely organised Tōkyō-based group of educators under Makiguchi which was formally constituted six years later on January 27, 1937. Himself an educator of some repute—mainly owing to his well-received 1903 monograph *Jinsei chirigaku* (*The Geography of Human Life*) (Makiguchi 1965a and 1965b)—Makiguchi became a follower of Nichiren Shōshū (Orthodox School of Nichiren) in 1928.¹⁰ Subsequently his initially rather secular doctrine of 'value creation' (*kachi sōzō*) gradually blended with religious elements. Within the first few years, Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai's growth was relatively moderate, comprising around 60 members at the time of its incorporation in

9 For Makiguchi's life and teachings, see Kumagai 1971 and 1994; Bethel 1973; Mori 1977. Sōka Gakkai considers this the official foundation date of its precursor.

10 Nichiren Shōshū is one amongst several schools crediting Nichiren's senior disciple, Nikkō (1246–1333), as the true inheritor of Nichiren's teachings. Nichiren Shōshū traces its origins to the founding of *Taiseikiji* (Great Stone Temple) in 1290, which has served as its head temple since then. The group took the name *Nichiren Shōshū* in 1912 and claims 432,000 members as of 2011 (Bunkachō 2012: 75). Its exclusivist doctrine differs in various respects from other (Nichiren) Buddhist schools, most notably in its view of Nichiren as a 'true buddha' (*honbutsu*) in the age of *mappō* (Chinese: *mōfā*; final dharma); hence the sobriquet *Daishōnin* (Great Sage). *Mappō* is the last stage in a tripartite eschatological concept crucial in East Asian Buddhism. In Japanese sources it commonly refers to a period of 10,000 or more years, having commenced in 1052, in which liberation is deemed impossible by traditional means (see Fischer 1976; Stone 1985a and 1985b).

1937 and between 300 and 400 by 1940. However, this growth picked up pace—and concomitantly attracted scrutiny from the regime—with the introduction of *shakubuku* (literally: break and subdue), that is, a method of conversion involving the refutation of existing beliefs,¹¹ as a new means of proselytising in 1941.¹² By mid-1943 membership was reported to have risen to 5000 people; however, in July the same year, the organisation was virtually disbanded overnight when Makiguchi and other leaders, including his closest disciple Toda Jōsei (1900–1958), were imprisoned for violating the Peace Preservation Law (*Chian iji hō*). They refused to comply with an enacted government directive which demanded all citizens and religious organisations to enshrine a Shintō talisman (*kamifuda*) issued by the Grand Shrine at Ise in symbolic support of State Shintō (McLaughlin 2012: 282). Makiguchi, unyielding in his religious commitment, died in prison of malnutrition on November 18, 1944. Toda too remained adamant and was released only shortly before the end of the war in July 1945. Having experienced ‘spiritual awakening’ whilst in detention, Toda dedicated himself thereafter to resuming the activities of Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai. He renamed the movement *Sōka Gakkai* in March 1946, which signified a henceforth more religious orientation coupled with a lessening of the hitherto pedagogical emphasis, culminating in Sōka Gakkai becoming a lay movement to Nichiren Shōshū. In May that year Toda was appointed ‘director general’ (*rijichō*), and from May 1951 until his death on April 2, 1958 he presided as second president of Sōka Gakkai. Under his presidency and driven by massive proselytising, Sōka Gakkai membership skyrocketed from 5700 (1951) to almost one million households (1958). The youth division in particular engaged in more fervent *shakubuku*, equipped with the *Shakubuku kyōten* (*Manual of shakubuku*) (Toda 1958), a handbook published in eight editions

11 In its early application, particularly after World War II with the *shakubuku daikōshin* (Great March of *shakubuku*), *shakubuku* was notoriously prone to—what is seen today as—malpractice as an acrimonious form of rebuking religious misconceptions in order to propagate Nichiren Buddhism. The situation eased slowly under the leadership of Ikeda. On *shakubuku* in the Nichiren Buddhist tradition, see Stone 1994.

12 *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism* elucidates: ‘[*Shakubuku* is a] method of expounding Buddhism, the aim of which is to suppress others’ illusions and to subdue their attachment to error or evil. This refers to the Buddhist method of leading people, particularly its opponents, to the correct Buddhist teaching by refuting their erroneous views and eliminating their attachment to opinions they have formed. The practice of *shakubuku* thus means to correct another’s false views and awaken that person to the truth of Buddhism’ (Soka Gakkai 2002: 580). In Sōka Gakkai terms, drawing on canonical sources, *shakubuku* contrasts *shōju* (literally: embrace and accept), a soft conversion technique by which members attempt to carefully guide without contesting the opposite’s unorthodox position. Today, *shakubuku* as well as *shōju* are often used synonymously with proselytising in general.

between 1951 and 1969, that largely explains how to convince and rebut objections of prospective converts, highlighting the absolute status of the Nichiren faith (Itō 2004). In particular the perceived missionary zeal of the 1950s and early 1960s, spurred by the phenomenal growth of Sōka Gakkai, imbued the Japanese collective memory with a negative image whose vestiges echo until today.

The demise of Toda gave way to his ‘closest disciple’, Ikeda Daisaku, who officially took the presidential reins after two years in 1960,¹³ navigating Sōka Gakkai on a more inclusivist and cosmopolitan trajectory. For the most part of his presidency, Ikeda sought to turn the tide in favour of a more positive public attitude towards Sōka Gakkai. The focus upon proselytising continued unabated, attaining the next level of global *kōsen rufu* (literally: to declare and spread widely), that is, promoting Nichiren Buddhism on an international scale. However, the rhetoric adjusted to fit a more mainstream language. *Kōsen rufu* was articulated as a worldwide peace mission, whose prospective success was evermore taken to be based upon wholehearted devotion to the promotion of culture and education, that is, the foundational pillars of Sōka Gakkai’s peace agenda. Soaring membership numbers, claimed to be more than five million households by 1965 (Dator 1965: 1), fuelled Sōka Gakkai’s political ambitions. These were first markedly voiced by Toda and put into action starting in the mid-1950s when members got involved in electoral politics. A flawless series of political victories and a declared intention to continue his teacher’s plea for *ōbutsumyōgō* (literally: wondrous fusing of the sovereign and the Buddha), that is, the implementation of the Buddhist spirit of harmonious self-development in public policy, had Ikeda further the movement’s political engagement. In November 1964 Sōka Gakkai established an independent political party called Kōmeitō (literally: Justice Party; Clean Government Party), which was to turn into an influential political force over the years.¹⁴ Toda’s erstwhile political aim to make Nichiren Buddhism Japan’s state religion was later gradually marginalised by Ikeda and finally dropped in response to ongoing public tension (Stone 2003: 207-211).¹⁵

13 This is according to the emic narrative. It is still debated why there was a two year gap between Toda’s passing and Ikeda’s inauguration, leading some scholars to suspect a power struggle from which Ikeda eventually arose victorious (Higuma 1971). It is also argued that it was a matter of age—Ikeda was only 30 years old when Toda died—or general reluctance on his part (Dehn 2011: 206).

14 Today, Kōmeitō is serving in a coalition government with the Liberal Democratic Party (*Jiyū-Minshutō*). Kōmeitō received more than seven million votes (11.9%) in the December 2012 General Election.

15 Sōka Gakkai cut all formal entwinement with Kōmeitō in 1970.

A prolific writer and avid traveller, Ikeda’s popularity rose steadily, elevating him to the position of undisputed leader and *the* Buddhist role model for Sōka Gakkai adherents. His writings and commentaries serve as inspirational moral and practical guidelines which, for practitioners, are no less important than the works of Nichiren (*Gosho*; literally: honourable writings) and the *Lotus Sūtra*. By virtue of his superior authority in the movement, Ikeda has been the mastermind responsible for the overall peace project, spearheading Sōka Gakkai’s expansion course. Notable related cultural and educational ventures comprise the *Minshu Ongaku Kyōkai* (Peoples Music Association), in short ‘Min-On’ (*Min-on*), launched in 1963; the ‘Tōkyō Fuji Art Museum’ (1983; *Tōkyō Fuji bijutsukan*) and Sōka University (1971; *Sōka daigaku*) both located in Hachiōji, Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo (2001),¹⁶ California; the ‘Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue’ (1993), formerly the ‘Boston Research Center for the 21st Century’, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, or the ‘Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research’ in Tōkyō and Honolulu (1996).¹⁷ Burgeoning internationally, Ikeda launched SGI in January 1975, which since then acts as the parent organisation for the global community and its national subsidiaries. Whilst he took the position of International President emphatically promoting international affairs—especially through involvement in the United Nations (UN) starting in the 1980s—rising tensions with Nichiren Shōshū led to his demission as National President of the Japanese branch in April 1979 ‘as part of the reconciliation process’ (Métraux 1994: 84).¹⁸ The alliance formed between the two organisations was uneasy from the outset, becoming more and more troubled throughout the 1970s and finally erupting in November 1991 with the formal excommunication of Sōka Gakkai. The reason for the frequently resurfacing conflict was a gradually diverging doctrinal and practical understanding of Nichiren Buddhism between the

16 In addition to its two universities, Sōka Gakkai maintains a number of kindergartens (also abroad), primary, middle, and high schools.

17 The economic dimension of Sōka Gakkai is also remarkable. The movement owns land and thousands of facilities across Japan and abroad, as well as numerous businesses, including, for example, one of Japan’s largest-selling daily newspapers, the *Seikyō Shinbun* (1951), with a reported circulation of six million copies. Levi McLaughlin goes so far as to characterise Sōka Gakkai as ‘a type of “adjunct nation” [...], a nation-like apparatus that replicates the morphological features of the modern nation within its own institutions’ (2012: 276).

18 Yet, Ikeda was made honorary president (*meiyo kaichō*) and did not forfeit his charisma and administrative power, which rendered his successors—Hōjō Hiroshi (1923–1981; fourth president: 1979–1981), Akiya Einosuke (b. 1930; fifth president: 1981–2006) and Harada Minoru (b. 1941; sixth president: since 2006)—his *de facto* local executives.

priesthood and the lay organisation. In contrast to what some scholarly observers surmised (see, for example, Bocking 1994), however, despite being stripped off its lay status,¹⁹ Sōka Gakkai has not only consolidated itself but has even grown stronger since the schism.²⁰ To this day Sōka Gakkai under Ikeda has retained its international profile, and has also kept its fruitful peacebuilding mission on track. The years of vigorous domestic growth are long gone; instead, membership figures are largely at a standstill,²¹ albeit at a very high level. Overseas, the situation is still more dynamic. Sōka Gakkai remains a key religious factor in contemporary Japan and a crucial element of the worldwide neo-Buddhist community.

In accordance with Nichiren's millenarian doctrine, Sōka Gakkai aims for the establishment of a harmonious and peaceful world by adhering to the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Plagued by ceaseless strife, poverty and suffering, our world is in a tragic state and, as such, is in dire need of a positive transformation. Nichiren Buddhism offers the salvific tools to achieve this formidable task, that is, to nourish one's inner transformation and subsequently to create world peace. According to Nichiren Buddhism, only individual self-cultivation can lead to global harmony; a causality that Sōka Gakkai bases on the Tendai notion of *ichinen sanzen* (three thousand realms in a single instant of thought; Chinese: *yīniàn sānqiān*).²² Salvation lies in the attainment of the 'realm of buddhas' (*bukkai*), the most exalted of the mutually containing 'ten realms' (*jikkai*). These are understood to be states of mind (Ikeda 2010b: 239), ranging from 'hell' (*jigoku*) or a condition of pure rage and utmost suffering, to the 'realm of humans' (*ninkai*) or a desire of self-improvement, to the 'realm of buddhas' or a condition of utmost

19 The split affected branches worldwide including Austria, where, as was the case across the global community, a small number of members staying loyal to Nichiren Shōshū broke off to form a separate group.

20 Stronger in the sense of successfully reaffirming its identity as a less strident exponent of worldwide Humanistic Buddhism. In this respect, criticism received by Ikeda throughout his career from political and religious opponents as well as parts of the media and the scholarly world lessened appreciably. Internationally, Ikeda became a well-respected leader as evidenced, for example, by the enormous number of academic honours he received, which rose from 12 in late 1991 to 345 honorary professorships and doctorates as of November 2013 (see <http://www.daisakuikeda.org/sub/resources/records/degree/by-date-order.html>).

21 This concerns the majority of established new religious movements in Japan, which entered a period of stagnation or even decline since the 1970s and 1980s.

22 At its core the concept of *ichinen sanzen* indicates that all *dharmas* or building blocks of compounded being are mutually inclusive, that is, everything in the universe is interpenetrating. In practical terms, this is taken by Sōka Gakkai that one's self-cultivation affects collective transformation since one's thoughts and actions (microcosm) impact one's environment and the cosmos itself (macrocosm).

wisdom and compassion.²³ The human condition is an assemblage of the ten realms with one always preponderant. In fact most people’s minds are controlled by one of the lower states, which puts humankind under the yoke of unhappiness (*fukō*) or suffering. Turning unhappiness to happiness (*kōfuku*) or Buddhahood is the goal of Buddhist practice. A buddha is the embodiment of the major Mahāyānist virtues of compassion (*jihī*) and wisdom (*chī*), a person that has completely unveiled his or her ‘Buddha nature’ (*bussō*) and lives for the sake of other people’s happiness.²⁴ Every human is endowed with *bussō* or the inherent potential to achieve enlightenment (*satori*) or—a term coined by Toda and predominantly used by Sōka Gakkai practitioners—‘human revolution’ (*ningen kakumei*). The process of human revolution, that is, working towards Buddhahood (Ikeda 2001a: 143), is unleashed and nurtured by studying and upholding Buddhist orthopraxis, including the ritual practices of *gongyō* (literally: assiduous practice) and *daimoku* (literally: title [of a *sūtra*]). In Sōka Gakkai the former depicts the recitation of portions of the second (*Skilful Means Chapter*; Japanese: *Hōben bon*; Chinese: *Fāngbiàn pīn*) and the sixteenth (*The Life Span of the Tathāgata Chapter*; Japanese: *Nyorai juryō hon*; Chinese: *Rúlái shòuliàng pīn*) section of the *Lotus Sūtra*. The *daimoku* refers specifically to the invocation of the title of the *Lotus Sūtra*—*namu Myōhorengekyō* (literally: homage to *The Sūtra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law*; Sōka Gakkai commonly uses the distinct rendering *nam-myoho-enge-kyo* in Western language publications)—which encapsulates the salvific essence of the entire *sūtra*.²⁵ Both *gongyō* and *daimoku*, the latter being of prime importance, are conducted in front of the *gohonzon* (honourable object of devo-

23 The first three realms—hell, the ‘realm of hungry spirits’ (*gakkai*) or a state of greed, and the ‘realm of animals’ (*chikushōkai*) or a state devoid of morality only guided by instinct—are called the ‘three evil paths’ (*sanakudō*). Together with the ‘realm of *asuras*’ (*shurakai*)—a Pāli and Sanskrit term literally meaning ‘nongod’ but usually rendered as ‘demigod’—or a condition of anger, they form the ‘four evil paths’ (*shiakudō*), characterising suffering. The next two emotional stages are the ‘realm of humans’ and the ‘realm of heaven’ (*tenkai*) or a state of joy. A person whose mind is dominated by one of the ‘six paths’ (*rokudō*) is susceptible to the stimuli of his or her changing environment. Transcending these emotional dependencies stand the last four realms, that of the ‘voice-hearers’ (*shōmon*), a condition in which one seeks to improve through learning, the ‘self-awakened ones’ (*engaku*), a state in which one discerns the impermanence of reality, the bodhisattvas (*bosatsu*) or a condition of compassion, and the buddhas (*butsu*).

24 Yet Buddhahood is also not an irreversible state of mind but can recede and be superseded by any of the other ‘realms’. Thus a person by dint of Buddhist practice has to constantly nourish his or her virtue.

25 *Daimoku* may also only stand for the title of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

tion),²⁶ a *maṇḍala* inscribed by Nichiren in 1279 which encloses Nichiren’s Buddhahood and the Buddhist dharma, respectively.²⁷ *Gohonzon* used by members are consecrated paper replicas of the transcription made by Nichikan (1665–1726)—*Taiseikiji*’s 26th chief-priest—in 1720 of the *Taiseikiji*-enshrined *Daigohonzon* (great honourable object of devotion). Performing *gongyō* and *daimoku* is the key means to human revolution, additionally entailing this-worldly benefits (*genze riyaku*) for the practitioner, such as improved health, social or financial well-being. In epistemological terms the *daimoku* in particular as the condensation of one’s utmost devotion to the dharma gradually unlocks *bushhō*, gently manoeuvring the believer towards the realm of buddhas. That is, it renders him or her happy and willing to do good in order to make others happy. Hence *kōsen rufu* is deemed a natural element of Sōka Gakkai orthopraxis, since propagating the teachings of Nichiren are held to bring happiness to the people and, subsequently, to the world (Ikeda 2010a: 186). This can be facilitated by antagonising ‘ignorance’ (*mumyō*), especially through the promotion of education and culture, which unites with Nichiren Buddhist practice itself as the vehicle for establishing world peace.

3. Sōka Gakkai in Austria

3.1. First Contacts

On May 3, 1960, Ikeda Daisaku was inaugurated as third president of Sōka Gakkai, expediting the internationalisation of the movement. Five months later, on October 2, 1960, he departed for his first overseas ‘peace journey’ (*heiwa tabi*), an event which marked the official beginning of *kōsen rufu* on a global scale. This date is thus celebrated today by members of SGI as World Peace Day (*sekai heiwa no hi*).²⁸ What the *Seikyō Shinbun* dubs the

²⁶ *Gongyō* and *daimoku* are often done twice a day but without a prescribed duration, which can lie between a few minutes to several hours. The cadenced chanting is performed at a very fast pace.

²⁷ It has inscribed at the centre *namu Myōhorengkyō* as well as Nichiren’s name, surrounded largely by a number of names mainly comprising of representatives of the ten realms. This signifies that every sentient being in the cosmos may achieve Buddhahood. The inscriptions are made in Chinese characters, except for two names, which are written in Siddhaṃ, an ancient Sanskrit script.

²⁸ World Peace Day is taken ‘to symbolize the shared commitment of SGI members around the world to creating a wave of positive change in society through promoting

‘first step’ in Ikeda’s ‘overseas guidance’ (*kaigai shidō no daiippo*) (Seikyo Online 2011) led him to the United States (Honolulu, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, New York, Washington D.C., Los Angeles), Canada (Toronto) and Brazil (São Paulo), where he appointed the first district leaders and, accordingly, formally launched the first overseas branches of what would subsequently become SGI.²⁹ From January 28 to February 14, 1961, aiming ‘to mark the first step towards “the return of the Buddhist teachings to the West” as predicted by Nichiren Daishōnin’³⁰ (Ikeda 2009c: 29), Ikeda visited Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, India, Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia.³¹ The next item on Ikeda’s internationalisation agenda was Europe,³² where at the time only a few scattered Japanese members in France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the UK were pioneering small-scale missionary activities. The 20-day journey to Europe Ikeda embarked upon on October 4, 1961,³³

nonviolence and working for the happiness of all humanity’; see <http://www.sgi.org/resource-center/study-materials/october-2-sgi-world-peace-day.html> (accessed: January 14, 2014).

²⁹ Sōka Gakkai has a particularly strong membership base in these three countries. For Sōka Gakkai in the United States, see, for example, Hurst 1992, Snow 1993, Hammond and Machacek 1999, Chappell 2000, Machacek 2000, and Machacek and Mitchell 2000; for Canada, see Métraux 1996 and 1997; for North America, see Geekie 2008; and for Brazil, see Pereira 2001 and 2008, and Bornholdt 2007. For an emic travelogue of Ikeda’s first international journey, see Ikeda 2009b. For a chronicle of Ikeda’s early-year activities including his many travels, see Nenpu: Ikeda Daisaku hensan iinkai 1988 (1949–1980) and Nenpu: Ikeda Daisaku hensan iinkai 1989 (1981–1988).

³⁰ 今回の山本伸一のアジア訪問の目的は、日蓮大聖人の御予言である、“仏法西還”の第一歩を印し。

³¹ For the expansion of Sōka Gakkai to various parts of Southeast Asia, see Métraux 2001. A detailed emic account of Ikeda’s Asia tour is given in Ikeda 2009c.

³² A major feature of Ikeda’s presidency is overseas expansion. For example, only two months after his appointment, he had established a special ‘overseas office’ (*kaigai-gakari*) on July 15, 1960 (Nenpu: Ikeda Daisaku hensan iinkai 1988: 125), whose activities Dator describes as ‘(1) to provide appropriate translated material; (2) to advise and guide members living overseas; and (3) to guide foreign members living in Japan’ (Dator 1969: 17).

³³ His itinerary is detailed in Ikeda 2009d and Ikeda 2009e. Collected chapters in German translation on Ikeda’s trips to Europe from the *Shin ningen kakumei* (*The New Human Revolution*), a novelised history of Sōka Gakkai launched in 1993, centring on and authored by Ikeda, can be found in Ikeda 2011a (1961–1963) and Ikeda 2011b (1964–1973). As of late 2013, the *Shin ningen kakumei* comprises 25 volumes, of which at present 24 have been translated into English (Ikeda 1995–2013) and eight into German (Ikeda 2003–2014). There are translations into multiple other languages as well. Based on the English translation, the Austrian group independently published the five chapters of volume 1 in five small booklets already in 1994 (Ikeda 1994a–e). The novels, which sequel the *Ningen kakumei* (*The Human Revolution*), a series like the former first published in the *Seikyō Shinbun* between 1965 and 1993 (Ikeda 2009a) and focusing on the

which took him to Copenhagen (October 5), Dusseldorf, Berlin, Cologne Amsterdam, Paris, London, Madrid, Geneva, Zurich, Vienna, Rome, and the Vatican (October 22), is viewed by members as the official kick-off to *kōsen rufu* in Europe. Ikeda mentions that

the purpose of the visit was, amongst others, to provide guidance to local members, to purchase construction materials and furnishings for the Grand Reception Hall,^[34] and furthermore, to inspect the situation of religion (Ikeda 2009d: 293).³⁵

From Zurich, Ikeda and his party flew to Vienna, arriving at midmorning on October 18, 1961.³⁶ The visit was anticipated to last for two days, during which Ikeda intended to ‘purchase chandeliers and other items for the Grand Reception Hall’³⁷ (Ikeda 2009e: 119; see Appendix, Figure 1). Vienna’s grandeur as a multi-cultural hotspot and rallying point of great cultural minds such as Haydn, Mozart, Brahms and in particular Beethoven, whom Ikeda admires,³⁸ would echo through the furnishings bought, imparting on the Grand Reception Hall a cosmopolitan aura (Ikeda 2009e: 120). Hence, the party spent their first day shopping in downtown Vienna. Ikeda

development of Sōka Gakkai under Toda Jōsei, have become bestsellers in Japan and serve as devotional literature for many adherents worldwide. To date the 12-volume *Ningen kakumei* series has been published in English (Ikeda 1994f). Based on the English version, four books have been published in a single volume in German (Ikeda 1989), an edition which is commonly not used by members today. Translations of parts of *Ningen kakumei* have also been published in various issues of the German SGI monthly *Forum*.

34 The Grand Reception Hall (*Daikyakuden*) at *Taiseikiji* and, at the time, the major pilgrimage site of Sōka Gakkai followers, was first built in 1465. Thanks to massive fundraising campaigns and generous members’ donations, in April 1964 a new Grand Reception Hall was inaugurated. Following the excommunication of Sōka Gakkai, Nichiren Shōshū had the structure demolished and rebuilt.

35 訪問の目的は、現地の会員の指導、大客殿の建築資材・調度品の購入、さらに、宗教事情などの視察である。

36 For the account of Ikeda’s flying visit to Vienna in the *Shin ningen kakumei*, see Ikeda 2009e: 119-137.

37 このウィーンの訪問の目的は、大客殿のシャンデリアなどの購入にあった。

38 When asked about Ikeda’s connections to Austria in personal conversations, members would normally highlight, on the one hand, his proclivity for classical music, and on the other hand, his dialogues with the half-Japanese Austrian-born politician and philosopher Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894–1972), the pioneer of the pan-European idea. Ikeda and Coudenhove-Kalergi first met in Tōkyō on October 30, 1967, and a few times thereafter in October 1970 also in Tōkyō. A collection of their dialogue was later published as a book (Karerugi and Ikeda 1972). Coudenhove-Kalergi’s Japanese mother, Mitsuko (1874–1941; née Aoyama Mitsu), was and still is a popular figure in Japan, as is her son.

apparently felt captivated by the city’s historic atmosphere, prompting a statement in the *Shin ningen kakumei*, in which he (in hindsight) envisioned a successful spread of Buddhism in Austria:

Kōsen rufu is a movement for the rise of human culture. A place of cultural fusion, Austria should become a grand stage for *kōsen rufu* in the future. Therefore, undoubtedly, numerous friends [i.e. bodhisattvas] of the earth are sure to appear in this place as well (Ikeda 2009e: 120-122).³⁹

The spirit of Nichiren Buddhism was yet to be disseminated,⁴⁰ however already at that time Sōka Gakkai was not completely unheard-of in Austria. As early as 1959 (dated June 15), the Vienna-based Austrian Catholic News Agency *Kathpress* issued a two-page report on Sōka Gakkai (*Kathpress* 1959) entitled ‘Soka Gakkai Wants to Become Japan’s National Religion’ (*Soka Gakkai will Japans Nationalreligion werden*).⁴¹ The reason for publication was the then recent success of Sōka Gakkai in the 1959 (June 2) Japanese Upper House elections, in which all of the six Sōka Gakkai candidates were elected.⁴² Overall the article promotes a very negative image of the movement, which is depicted as ‘a peculiar and, sometimes, downright bizarre [*abenteuerlich*] mixture of Shintoist, Buddhist and military elements’⁴³ (*Kathpress* 1959).⁴⁴ It is assumed that the ‘ideological vacuum’

39 広宣流布とは、人間文化の興隆の運動である。そうであるならば、文化の融合の大地オーストリアは、未来の広布の大舞台となるべき天地である。ゆえに、この地にも、幾多の地涌の友が必ず出現するはずだ。

40 In general, the emergence of (mainly Theravāda) Buddhism in Austria dates back to the late nineteenth century. On December 2, 1947, Buddhism was eventually recognised by the authorities as an association (*Verein*), namely the ‘Buddhist Society Vienna’ (*Buddhistische Gesellschaft Wien*). For a brief overview, see Hutter 2001.

41 The mouthpiece of the Austrian Bishops’ Conference (*Österreichische Bischofskonferenz*), the ‘Catholic News Agency Austria’ (*Katholische Presseagentur Österreich*) was founded in 1946 as *Katholische Pressezentrale* (‘Catholic Press Service’); hence the commonly used abbreviation *Kathpress*.

42 Sōka Gakkai’s involvement in Japanese politics commenced in the April 1955 local elections and has been relatively successful ever since. For the *raison d’être*, including some religious underpinnings, of Sōka Gakkai’s political aspirations, see Baffelli 2011, Fisker-Nielsen 2012: 56-60 and White 1970: 126-137. The latter also provides the movement’s election statistics until 1969 in an appendix (310-321).

43 ‘Immerhin jedoch gewann die Religionsgemeinschaft, die ein eigenartiges und manchmal geradezu abenteuerliches Gemisch aus schintoistischen, buddhistischen und militärischen Elementen darstellt, in den letzten Jahren immer mehr an Bedeutung’.

44 Other early *Kathpress* releases mentioning Sōka Gakkai are *Kathpress* 1962, 1965 and 1966, all three of which indicate the movement’s alleged radical exclusivism. The *Kathpress* report of April 9, 1962, especially, demonises Sōka Gakkai as a political movement pillared by a ‘fanatical and nationalistic Buddhist sect’ (‘Gakkai’ ist eine

(*weltanschauliches Vakuum*) after the de-deification (*Entgöttlichung*) of the Japanese emperor (*tennō*) following World War II has facilitated Sōka Gakkai's political achievements. The article especially stresses the movement's internal military structure, with the 'supreme commander' (*Oberkommandierender*) on top and 'squadrons' (*Schwadronen*), consisting of ten families each, at the bottom. Further, it criticises the 'liturgy', entailing the 'monotonous' recitation of a 'magic formula', that is, the *daimoku*, and leading to this-worldly benefits (*genze riyaku*):

Psychologists confirm that the recitation of the incantation could, in fact, lead to a mass hysteria, comparable to the St. Vitus' Dance in the European Middle Ages or the states of trance during the rituals of African Negroes (Kathpress 1959).⁴⁵

On the second day in Vienna Ikeda and his entourage enjoyed sightseeing, visiting the Zentralfriedhof and passing by the Danube River to collect stones, which were to be ritually buried beneath the Grand Reception Hall.⁴⁶ On the evening of that day—October 19, 1961—the group left for Rome by plane. Ikeda's brief and rather uneventful sojourn to Austria marked the first time Sōka Gakkai officially entered Austria, however it was to take

politische Bewegung, die von einer fanatischen, nationalistischen Sekte des Buddhismus getragen wird'), whose youth organisation is modelled on the Hitler Youth ('Ihre Jugendorganisation hat die Hitlerjugend zum Vorbild [...]'). The movement is held to employ fascist methods, which target its two main enemies, namely Communism and Christianity. Finally, the brief article warns that further growth of Sōka Gakkai would put an end to the religious peace in Japan (Kathpress 1962: 3). In the same vein the Kathpress report of May 27, 1966, reviles Sōka Gakkai as 'Japan's youngest and most intolerant Buddhist sect', which established a reputation for its 'large fellowship and excessive nationalist tendencies', as well as, especially, its anti-Christian and generally intolerant stance towards other domestic forms of Buddhism ('Der Sakagakkai [*sic*], Japans jüngste und intoleranteste buddhistische Sekte, die sich in den letzten Jahren ausser durch ihren großen Anhang und die übertriebenen nationalistischen Tendenzen vor allem auch durch antichristliche und intolerante Haltung gegenüber den anderen Formen des Buddhismus im Land einen Namen gemacht hat [...]'). The article refers to past grave concerns of an 'imminent overthrow of the government' (*bevorstehender Staatsstreich*) by Sōka Gakkai spurred through its political ambitions. It concludes with a more conciliatory remark, pointing to Ikeda's wish to henceforth 'engage in cordial relationships with other religions' ('Die Sekte wolle in herzliche Beziehungen zu den anderen Religionen treten [...]'). (Kathpress 1966: 3).

⁴⁵ 'Tatsächlich könnte das Absingen des Spruches zu einer Massenhysterie führen, bestätigen Psychologen, die etwa dem Veitstanz des europäischen Mittelalters oder den Trancezuständen der Tanzenden bei Festen der afrikanischen Neger vergleichbar sei'.

⁴⁶ See Ikeda 2009e: 122; 明くる日、山本伸一の一行は、大客殿に埋納するドナウ川の石を採取したあと、中央墓地に立ち寄った。

eight more years before a follower would finally settle in this country. In the meantime, word of Sōka Gakkai’s continuing growth and increasing political and societal significance in Japan, surprisingly, also reached the wider Austrian public in the form of a two-page article in the major daily newspaper, the *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, published in the Sunday issue of November 1, 1964 (Trost 1964; see Appendix, Figure 2). Based on the writer’s observations during a mass gathering of devotees at *Taisekiji*, the article portrays Sōka Gakkai as a Buddhist peace mass movement, with 15 million members and clear fascist tendencies⁴⁷ that ‘guarantees material success, a good life on earth. [...] “Material welfare is the foundation for spiritual fulfilment”’⁴⁸ (Trost 1964: 3). Although not overtly polemic, the article implicitly shapes a sinister image of Sōka Gakkai *qua* autocratic sect aiming at the ‘peaceful conquest’ of the world under the banner of a distorted form⁴⁹ of Nichiren Buddhism. The national (and significantly, to a greater extent international)⁵⁰ ‘bad press’ had no noticeable adverse effect

47 Labelling Sōka Gakkai as a (near-)fascist organisation connects to the ascription used in some parts of the Japanese media at the time.

48 ‘die Religion garantiert den materiellen Erfolg, das gute Leben auf Erden. [...] „Materieller Wohlstand ist die Grundlage zur geistigen Erfüllung“’.

49 ‘Der Sokagakkai kult ist um seine [i.e. Nichiren] Person und Lehre zentriert. Doch Nichiren Daishonin würde sich unter seinen modernen Anhängern sehr fremd fühlen’ (Trost 1964: 16).

50 Alongside various (mostly negative) international newspaper and magazine articles at that time—see, for example, Okamoto 1963 and Morris 1965 or, in German, Rassat 1962—there has been an increasing amount of scholarship published in languages other than Japanese from 1960 onwards, most of which has pictured Sōka Gakkai—very much like pertinent Japanese publications—in largely unfavourable terms, including widely received monographs on Japanese new religious movements such as McFarland 1967: 194-220 and Offner and van Straelen 1963: 98-109. A more moderate description is given in Kohler 1962: 203-235—excepting the concluding remarks—and Thomsen 1963: 81-108. The former represents a first monographic study of Japanese new religious movements including a more detailed chapter on Sōka Gakkai in German. An earlier German publication, Bairy 1959, though offering a systematic discussion of Japanese new religious movements, only very peripherally touches on Sōka Gakkai. Early critical articles include, for example, Kobayashi 1958, Moos 1963, Blacker 1964, Brannen 1964, Helton 1965, and Kamstra 1960; the latter provides a first more comprehensive discussion of Sōka Gakkai in German. Kamstra, like many other early observers of Japanese religion, writes from the perspective of a Christian missionary, branding Sōka Gakkai as the ‘most dangerous cult of Japan’ (*die gefährlichste Sekte Japans*). He concludes that the Church needs to withstand a sect, ‘die mit demselben ungeheuren Fanatismus wie der Islam im achten Jahrhundert den Tag der Ausrottung des Christentums in Japan näher und näher zu bringen sucht’ (Kamstra 1960: 106). More balanced early studies on Sōka Gakkai as well as its political activities are, for instance, International Institute for the Study of Religions 1960, Sheldon 1960, Brannen 1962, Ramseyer 1963, and Dator 1965. An early emic account in English (although with a critical foreword) can be found in

on the early Sōka Gakkai mission several years later (which is unsurprising given its reluctant start). However, it has certainly fortified a particular stereotypical notion within the Church, whose main monitoring institution, the ‘Department for Cults’ (*Sektenreferat*) of the Vienna Pastoral Office (*Wiener Seelsorgeamt*)—today’s Department for Questions about World Views of the Pastoral Office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Vienna (*Referat für Weltanschauungsfragen am Pastoralamt der Erzdiözese Wien*)—has garnered some initial attention as evidenced by my archival research.⁵¹ This is hardly surprising given that even the *Neue Kronen Zeitung* article highlighted the movement’s present outreach to Europe, noting Ikeda’s recent ‘return from a long trip to Europe’ where he had met local Sōka Gakkai branches.⁵² Ikeda’s European endeavour was slowly to prove relatively⁵³ fruitful, with membership rising in various countries, especially in France and Germany. When Sōka Gakkai in Germany was incorporated as an association under the name ‘German Nichiren Shoshu’ (*Deutsche Nichiren Shoshu*) on January 5, 1970, it already had more than 500 members (Kötter 2006: 24). In Switzerland, another largely German speaking country, around 30 members had been practising by mid-1969 (Personal Interview

Kudō 1961. Another more neutral early German article on Japanese new religious movements, including a brief mentioning of Sōka Gakkai, is Benz 1961. The comparatively fierce image created by the mainstream media and the majority of scholarly works particularly during the late 1950s and 1960s, was foremost based on a threefold allegation of aggressive proselytising (*shakubuku*), religious exclusivism, and craving for political power. This image has been cemented in many respects—considering, for example, the still prevalent negative perception in the Japanese general public—up until the present day.

51 The Pastoral Office was founded in August 1938 by the pastoral theologian Karl Rudolf (1886–1964), who went on to establish the *Sektenreferat* in 1953. Similar departments were instituted in other Austrian dioceses over the years, resulting in the formation of a national working group in 1962. The purpose of the *Sektenreferat* was to surveil and assess fringe movements, processing and providing relevant information for the Church and thus raising general awareness.

52 The article hints at Ikeda’s fourth journey to Europe from October 5 to October 18, 1964, where he visited Istanbul, Rome, Paris, Prague, Budapest, Zurich, Oslo and Copenhagen. In fact, the number of members in these countries at the time was still negligible or inexistent, putting the European expansion (as insinuated by the article) into a somewhat different perspective.

53 However, compared to the North (25.000) and South American (13.000) as well as the Southeast Asian (11.000) mission, the European (1.000) mission clearly lagged behind. The numbers in brackets show the roughly estimated membership in mid-1965 given by Dator (1965: 220). Even this low figure for the European members is likely to be an overestimate.

with Nakamura Yoshio: May 29, 2012),⁵⁴ whilst in Austria *kōsen rufu* had not yet taken root at all. This was to change the very same year when a young 27 years old Japanese graphic designer settled down in Vienna.

3.2. Humble Beginnings, 1969–1981

The actual beginning of Nichiren Buddhism in Austria dates back to October 1969 with the arrival of Nakamura Yoshio (b. 1942), who became the founder and long-time leader of the Austrian chapter of Sōka Gakkai. Born into a peasant family in Nagaoka, Niigata prefecture, Nakamura moved to Tōkyō in 1956. After completing vocational school he started to work as a graphic designer at a local company. In February 1962 a friend introduced Nakamura to Sōka Gakkai, inviting him to attend a discussion meeting (*zadankai*). These monthly gatherings have always served as the main forum for proselytising in Sōka Gakkai.⁵⁵ Usually hosted by an experienced member in his or her home, *zadankai* address those living in close proximity. The familial setting facilitates personal interaction. Participants chat informally, share everyday problems and experiences, and seek or offer guidance through Nichiren Buddhism. The majority of members found their way to Sōka Gakkai via these small group meetings, as indeed Ikeda himself did in August 1947 after listening to Toda. In the same vein Nakamura joined Sōka Gakkai only a day after attending a *zadankai* on February 19, 1962.

Nakamura recalls that he had been brooding over existential questions at the time he encountered Sōka Gakkai (Personal Interview: December 16, 2013),⁵⁶ which sparked his intellectual curiosity. Having no religious background—neither through his upbringing nor any previous formal affiliation—and only a slight knowledge of Buddhism, he quickly delved into the teachings cherished by Sōka Gakkai and became an enthusiastic follower. Over the next seven years he assumed various positions of increasing responsibility within the Young Men’s Division (*danshibu*)—Sōka Gakkai’s pillar organisation which united all male members until their late thirties—

54 The Swiss Sōka Gakkai (*Soka Gakkai Schweiz*), headquartered in Zurich, was formed as an association in 1989.

55 These household gatherings as an efficient means of proselytising are not a unique trademark of Sōka Gakkai but can be found elsewhere, especially in other *Lotus Sūtra*-based movements such as *Reiyūkai* or *Risshō Kōseikai*, where they are called *hōza* (literally: dharma sitting).

56 二十歳の時から「人は何のために生まれて来たのか」「生をどのようにい
きれば良いか」と自問自答するようになり。

serving as *kumichō* (unit chief), *hanchō* (group chief), *chikuchō* (district chief) and, finally, as *shibuchō* (chapter chief) with more than 300 members under his leadership.⁵⁷ Keen to prove his abilities overseas (Personal Interview: December 16, 2013), in early June 1969 Nakamura left Tōkyō for Europe, travelling via Moscow and Vienna to his final destination of Geneva. Immigration problems in Switzerland, however, forced him to move to Vienna in October 1969, first only temporarily with a view to returning to Geneva once the residence permit had been issued. This did not transpire, which is why he decided to make his sojourn permanent in February 1970.⁵⁸ Nakamura was the sole practicing member of Sōka Gakkai in Austria for more than one and a half years until in September 1971 he met Kawaike Yuzuru,⁵⁹ who had already been a follower in Japan⁶⁰. Two months later the two men started the first private meetings on a regular basis. They invited colleagues and friends, yet their outreach was very limited. Only after another year, in November 1972, did a third member join in; Nakamura's newlywed wife Yasue (b. 1942) who, along with her husband, would become the leading exponent of the Austrian group in the years to come. Born and raised in Sumida, Tōkyō, in a middle-class family with a Shingon Buddhist background, she became a member of Sōka Gakkai through her paternal grandmother at the age of 14. Indifferent at the outset, she became a staunch devotee in 1964, getting involved in grassroots leadership affairs as a *kumichō* two years later whilst working full-time at a travel agency. Following her marriage she quit her job to become a housewife and emigrated to Austria where she actively supported her husband 'for the realisation of a

57 Beginning with Toda's presidency up until 1970, Japanese membership was structured along 'vertical lines' (*tatesen*) in units of increasing size, ranging from *setai* (household), *kumi* (unit=up to ten households) and *han* (group=five to ten units) over *chiku* (district=five to ten groups) and *shibu* (chapter=five to ten districts) to *sōshibu* (general chapter), *honbu* (headquarters) and *sōgōhonbu* (joint headquarters). Today, Sōka Gakkai maintains a horizontal (*yokosen*) administrative system.

58 For the first months, he made a living by taking on various odd jobs before entering a local graphic design company in the summer of 1970. In 1982, after having being granted Austrian citizenship, Nakamura started his own import-export business before becoming a full-time employee of Sōka Gakkai in Austria with the opening of the new national centre in the premises of the historic Villa Windisch-Grätz in Linzer Straße 452, in Vienna's 14th district, in 1995.

59 A businessman, Kawaike moved to Germany for his company a couple of years later before returning to Japan after his retirement.

60 The large majority of Japanese practitioners joining the Austrian group were already practicing members of Nichiren Buddhism back home.

peaceful and happy future of this country’⁶¹ (Personal Interview with Nakamura Yasue: December 16, 2013).

Parallel to the situation in other European countries, the early movement in Austria only consisted of Japanese people, the majority of whom were students of music, cooks, and businessmen and their families. Nakamura was named by the Japanese headquarters as the main contact person in Austria. Japanese emigrants—who remained a minority group—as well as visitors would seek his apartment in Trubelgasse in Vienna’s third district (see Appendix, Figure 3) as a rallying point. Over the next years the inflow of (mostly temporary) Japanese practitioners gradually increased. To give some examples: in May 1973, four members from Vienna travelled to Paris to meet Ikeda on his eighth visit to Europe; in September 1974, 16 members attended the Sōka Gakkai-sponsored second European family festival also taking place in Paris; and about 16 followers went to see Ikeda during his stay in Paris in May 1975. In June 1976, 18 people participated in a Peace Festival in Frankfurt. In the same year Austrian followers attended the second European summer course held at the SGI training centre in Trets in South-Eastern France, which was inaugurated the year before and henceforth served as the venue for the annual summer courses. At that time Paris and to a lesser extent Frankfurt were the administrative hubs of Sōka Gakkai in Europe, the former led by Yamazaki Eiichi (1923–2000), the French and founding European chairman (*shodai Ōshū gichō*), who had lived in Paris since 1961. Yamazaki presided over the European Conference (*Yōroppa kaigi*) headquarters in Paris, which were established during Ikeda’s 1973 visit on May 13 with 13 initial member states—Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, West Germany, and Austria. The launch of this council was encouraged by Ikeda, who envisaged it as a ‘coalition of humanism’ (*ningen shugi no rengōtai*) and a ‘spiritual union’ (*seishin no ketsugō*), promoting *kōsen rufu* on a worldwide and European level (Ikeda 2010c: 314-315). The Austrian representative to this assembly was Austrian leader Nakamura Yoshio.⁶²

By the end of 1974, Sōka Gakkai in Austria comprised 15 adult members, all of them Japanese. With a slowly consolidating membership base

61 夫がオーストリアに永住することを決意していましたので、私もオーストリアの地で暮らすことになりました。夫はこの国の平和と幸福な未来の実現の為にここで生涯を掛けて活動することを願っていましたので、私も同じ決意をしました。

62 Up until May 1981 Nakamura carried no formal position, however as the first practitioner in Austria he was charged by followers with leading authority. In Japan, he was informally referred to as *shibuchō*, chief of the (Austrian) chapter.

and Japanese members settling into the local environment, the first Austrian acquaintances were to attend the group meetings from early 1975 onwards. The first native convert was Wolfgang H. in March 1975. By March 1976, the number of non-Japanese⁶³ adherents octupled but was largely to remain at this level for the next few years. In May 1981 internal records list 37 followers, of whom roughly a third were non-Japanese.⁶⁴ 15 to 20 were considered active (Personal Interview with Tsukui Kiyoshi: February 20, 2014). The formation of a stable core membership and a well-working community life is mirrored by a rise of joint activities⁶⁵ and by the organisation of general assemblies. The first of these was held on October 22, 1977 with 20 participants and the second on November 18, 1978 with around 25 participants, both taking place at the Hotel Ambassador on Vienna's Kärntner Straße, Ikeda's accommodation during his 1961 visit. Further general assemblies were to be held annually thereafter every November. The movement, though not yet legally instituted, took a clear organisational shape as 'Austrian Nichiren Shoshu' (*Österreichische Nichiren Shoshu*) at that time. Naturally, ties with the German movement developed closely;⁶⁶ study materials in German, especially copies of the magazine *Unser Forum* were gratefully received by the non-Japanese followers, once or twice a year the Austrian group welcomed Peter Kühn (1930–2011), the chairman of the German branch, and joint activities were launched, such as a training course for members held in German at the Sōka Gakkai headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tōkyō, in January 1979. In terms of membership Sōka Gakkai in Austria was still small compared to other European branches; however, the group cultivated a good relationship with Japan and the European leadership, which is evidenced by the annual visits of Yamazaki Eiichi, the European chairman and scattered visits of other high-ranking Japanese dignitaries. These visitors included Izumi Satoru (1912–2005), the erstwhile Sōka Gakkai vice president in 1976 (see Appendix, Figure 4), and Kawada

63 Alongside native Austrian and Japanese followers, starting early, the Austrian group frequently welcomed guest members from other European countries.

64 This ratio was to turn as many Japanese members returned home in later years, which is why the focus of proselytising shifted to a non-Japanese clientele. This development corresponds to that of the German branch, which Kötter (2006: 25) divides into a period of a Japan-oriented group (from its beginnings until the 1980s) and, what he calls the 'German time', when the rising influence of non-Japanese followers had customs, contents and rituals adjusted to the local context.

65 For example, the launch of separate gatherings for female Japanese members under the guidance of Nakamura Yasue starting in 1976. These meetings were extended to include female Austrian practitioners in 1987.

66 Despite Nakamura's early-day 'Swiss connection', the Austrian movement up to now hardly maintained any close contacts to Sōka Gakkai in Switzerland.

Yōichi (b. 1937), the vice chairman of the Sōka Gakkai Study Department (*Kyōgakubu*), later Sōka Gakkai vice president and current director of the movement’s ‘Institute of Oriental Philosophy’ (*Tōyō tetsugaku kenkyūjo*) in 1977.

The pivotal element of communal life was the monthly *zadankai*. Members usually met in the apartment of the Nakamuras, first in Trubelgasse and, from 1976, in Belvederegasse in Vienna’s fourth district. Vienna remained the sole area of activity of the Austrian movement until 1980 when a few small gatherings were held in Graz and Bruck an der Mur,⁶⁷ hosted by Tsukui Kiyoshi (b. 1949) and his wife Erika (b. 1955). Tsukui, a flutist and second generation Sōka Gakkai member with leadership experience as a *hanchō*, came to Vienna in September 1974 to study at the University of Music and Performing Arts. He quickly became a Japanese core member; others included the Nakamuras, Kimura Takuji (1945–2008), who brought the first Austrian follower, Mitsugi Toshiyuki (b. 1950) and Nakamura Hitoshi (b. 1952),⁶⁸ all of whom were appointed to official positions by Ikeda in May 1981.⁶⁹ Erika Tsukui, a flutist with a formal Lutheran background, came into contact with Sōka Gakkai through her husband Kiyoshi and joined the first *zadankai* in September 1977. In November 1978 she received the *gohonzon*, thus becoming one of the earliest non-Japanese members and the only Austrian follower from the 1970s still practicing today. To receive the *gohonzon* is to be ritually recognised as a member of Sōka Gakkai.⁷⁰

The structure of the usually two to three hours long *zadankai* held at that time was no different from today: the practitioners met on a weekend in the late afternoon, starting with casual discussions, followed by *gongyō* and chanting the *daimoku*. Thereafter, a more focused discussion based on the study materials would commence, concluding again with more casual discussions. Given the small number of non-Japanese participants, especially in the first few years, the gatherings were conducted largely in Japanese only. This was to change slowly with the rise of Austrian practitioners and

67 A little later, *zadankai* were also held in other cities such as Salzburg and Linz, initially mainly organised by newly arriving Japanese people.

68 Like the Nakamuras and Tsukui, Kimura (1973) and Nakamura Hitoshi (1976) came to Austria having already been Sōka Gakkai members in Japan; the former having served as a *chikubuchō*. Only Mitsugi (1973) joined Sōka Gakkai whilst in Austria.

69 See Section 3.3.

70 The *gohonzon*, which was supplied by the Japanese headquarters, was handed over in a brief ceremony in front of other practitioners. The decision to commit the *gohonzon* and thus to grant formal membership was normally taken by Nakamura after consultation with other leading members. The aspirant had to exhibit willingness and at least a very basic familiarity with Nichiren Buddhist practice and theory.

the growing German language proficiency of the Japanese adherents (Personal Interview with Erika Tsukui: February 20, 2014). Japanese members used study materials in Japanese which were either sent by relatives (for example, copies of the *Seikyō Shinbun*) or brought back from occasional trips home. In contrast, the non-Japanese participants could draw only on scarce textual resources, limited to the copies of the German member's magazine *Unser Forum* (before: *Wendepunkt*; later: *Forum*). As a result, without having sufficient access to learning materials, Austrian followers largely stressed practice over theory. Very much in line with *Sōka Gakkai* tradition in Japan, the main theme emphasised in discussions was that of individual happiness, which was recognised as substantial building block in the collective pursuit of world peace through *kōsen rufu*. Likewise, the *zadankai* was employed as the main platform for proselytising. Followers would regularly invite co-workers and friends to attend and experience 'Buddhist practice', which was still alien to most non-Japanese guests at that time. Hence, there was a constant coming and going, especially amongst the non-Japanese 'followers'. Members did not pursue any other means of proselytising such as proselytising on the street or handing out pamphlets. Invitation to the monthly gatherings was solely based on word-of-mouth recommendation within the practitioners' circles of friends and acquaintances. The occupational background of practitioners was twofold: whilst, as mentioned above, most of the Japanese practitioners were students of music or businessmen and their wives, the Austrian clientele consisted largely of people with various professional qualifications and hardly any students. In terms of social composition, the majority of practitioners throughout the 1970s and early 1980s belonged to the lower middle-class, which was in line with the contemporary situation in other overseas branches and in Japan, something which would gradually change in Japan and the West in the 1990s and 2000s with the emergence of a more upper middle class basis. The average practitioner of Nichiren Buddhism in Austria between the mid-1970s and early 1980s was in his or her mid-20s to late 30s. There were generally more female than male followers, which was also consistent with the situation in Japan and comparable Western branches.

In addition to the monthly *zadankai*, Japanese members in particular would meet more regularly for collective chanting—usually up to once, twice or even three times a week (Personal Interview with Nakamura Yoshio: October 17, 2013). Other than in the Nakamuras' flat, these additional meetings were occasionally held in the apartments of other senior members such as Kimura Takuji. Starting in 1979 and displaying a further consolidation of the membership base, a new annual community event was staged,

namely a summer course, the first arranged in Vienna (restaurant Müllerbeisl in the first district) in mid-July, the second over two days from May 31 to June 1, 1980, in Hinterbrühl near Vienna. Around 20 practitioners gathered on these ‘special’ occasions, which combined the regular *zadankai* with joint recreational activities such as picnics or hikes. By 1981, after more than ten years of Nichiren Buddhist presence in Austria, Nakamura Yoshio and his mainly Japanese co-religionists had created a sustainable foundation for further expansion. Financially the movement was still self-sufficient; no separate premises for religious practice had to be maintained, the costs of regular or special events as well as the few journeys abroad were covered by the participants and the hosts, respectively. There was as yet no proper donation system established, which could allow for the accumulation of assets to foster proselytising and thus precipitate growth. At the time Sōka Gakkai in Austria was at the crossroads of transforming from a more ethnically exclusive Japanese organisation, providing religious services largely for a Japanese minority, to an open, readily accessible group, adapting to the spiritual and ritual needs of the local (non-Japanese) clientele. Such metamorphosis would advance with great strides in the 1980s and 1990s, heralded by Ikeda Daisaku’s second visit to Austria and the official acknowledgement by and incorporation of the Austrian movement into SGI.

3.3. Ikeda’s Second Visit, 1981

1981 was not only a watershed in the history of Sōka Gakkai in Austria, but for the global movement and its course of internationalisation, which was elevated to new heights on entering the diplomatic arena. In April, Sōka Gakkai Japan was listed as an NGO in co-operation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and, following in December, registered as an NGO with the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), marking a development that epitomised SGI’s increasingly outward focus. The UN engagement, particularly throughout the 1980s, crystallised two main interrelated themes: nuclear disarmament and world peace. Part and parcel of the latter was *kōsen rufu*, Sōka Gakkai’s leitmotif to which Ikeda constantly referred in his writings and speeches. In early May 1981 his mission to foster European *kōsen rufu* (*Yōroppa kōfu*) led him yet again to an extended journey across Europe which included visits to the Soviet Union (May 9 to May 16), West Germany (May 16 to May 20), Bulgaria (May 20 to May 25), Austria (May 25 to May 28), Italy (May 28 to June 5), and France (June 5 to June 16). Beginning a day after Ikeda’s arrival in Frankfurt, on May 17, 1981, the German hosts mounted a

cultural gathering, attended by a group of 18 Austrian practitioners along with 800 other adherents from Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden to commemorate 20 years since the formal beginning of the European mission, that is, Ikeda's sojourn in 1961.

According to my interviewees, Ikeda's original itinerary had not involved a visit to Austria. However, when Nakamura Yoshio met with Ikeda in Frankfurt he allegedly petitioned the '*sensei*' (teacher)⁷¹ to return to Vienna at some point in the future. Ikeda consented and, coming as a surprise to his entire entourage and the Austrian members, declared that he was willing to make a stopover for a few days in the course of his current tour (Personal Interviews with Nakamura Yoshio: October 17, 2013; Erika Tsukui: February 11, 2014; and Tsukui Kiyoshi: May 22, 2012). Accompanied by several Sōka Gakkai staff members, the Austrian group returned home to quickly start the preparations for the visit, which was subsequently scheduled from May 25 to May 28, 1981. The Sōka Gakkai staff and the Austrian hosts devised a tight programme—liaising with the Austrian government and cultural institutions—spiritually backed by Austrian followers chanting for a successful preparation and the safe arrival of Ikeda (Personal Interview with Erika Tsukui: February 11, 2014). Ikeda and his attendance including, amongst others, Takimoto Yasunori, the director of the Nichiren Shōshū International Centre, Wada Eiichi, Sōka Gakkai vice president, Matsumura Kazuaki, the director of Min-On, and Takahashi Hideaki, one of Ikeda's secretaries and current SGI-Europe chairman arrived at Vienna airport at 4:00 p.m. local time, where they were welcomed by practitioners of the Austrian group and representatives of the Japanese embassy (Sasaki 1981d). The party, comprising more than 30 people, took accommodation at the Hotel Krainerhütte in Helenental, Baden, around 40 kilometres from Vienna (see Appendix, Figure 5). A *Seikyō Shinbun* journalist meticulously reported on Ikeda's activities throughout his stay in Vienna (see Sasaki 1981a-e). Ikeda spent the first evening casually in the hotel together with Nakamura and a handful of other members of the Austrian group. The next day involved two major events taking place in the hotel. Firstly, Ikeda's meeting with Bryan Ronald Wilson (1926–2004), a renowned British scholar of the sociology of religion based at the University of Oxford who travelled to Austria in order to continue their exchange on religious, political and social issues; an exchange which had started two and a half years earlier in Japan in December 1978, for a projected joint publication (Sasaki 1981b). The dialogue was eventually published in English in 1984 (Wilson

71 Honorific title commonly used by Japanese members for Ikeda; more formally, he is referred to as *kaichō* or 'President'. Similarly, non-Japanese followers usually call Ikeda 'President'.

and Ikeda 1984) with the Japanese edition released in two volumes a year later in 1985 (Ikeda and Uiruson 1985a and 1985b). Secondly, a round-table discussion attended by Ikeda, his major staff and local Sōka Gakkai followers. In the form of a master-disciple dialogue, questions were raised by the attendees, which were then answered by Ikeda. An article in the *Seikyō Shinbun* listing the conversation topics included a brief ‘summary’ of Ikeda’s responses, including one in which he apparently gave encouraging advice to and shared his modest expectations for the Austrian group:

In the Austrian organisation, I would like to ask that you consult about anything mainly with your chapter leader Mr. Nakamura. By the principle of the able minority, it is important that each of you demonstrates brilliant actual proof of your practice, physically, spiritually and socially. Never be impatient. Rather, with a limited number of members, I ask that for the next ten to twenty years you build a solid foundation for the longer future (Sasaki 1981c).⁷²

On June 27, Ikeda had to keep a tight programme in Vienna, involving various meetings and some sightseeing. Having paid respects at Beethoven’s gravesite on the Zentralfriedhof 20 years earlier, he now visited the Eroicahaus in Vienna’s nineteenth district, a memorial to Beethoven’s sojourn in the summer of 1803.⁷³ Another nostalgic return was his visit to the Hotel Ambassador, the venue of recent Austrian Sōka Gakkai general assemblies, but more importantly, Ikeda’s accommodation in 1961. In this respect the *Seikyō Shinbun* tells of an astonishing episode. Upon hearing of Ikeda entering the hotel, the then hotel manager, recalling his stay from 20 years before when he had been a mere apprentice, immediately offered free accommodation for Ikeda (Sasaki 1981e). Prior to this ‘astounding’ incident, Ikeda and a small attendance visited the Wiener Staatsoper for a courtesy visit to its then director, Egon Seefehlner (1912–1997). Mutual appreciation was shared concerning the State Opera’s large-scale tour across

72 オーストリアは中村支部長を中心に、なんでも相談していただきたい。少人数の精鋭主義で、一人一が身体的、精神的、社会的にも立派な輝く実証を示しゆくことが大切である。絶対に焦ってはならない。むしろ少人数で、長い将来の基盤を確実に築きゆく十年、二十年であっていただきたい。

73 A lengthy article in the *Seikyō Shinbun* (Sasaki 1981a) impassioned describes Ikeda’s visit and his emotive relation to his musical idol. Contrary to what the article suggests, however, this Eroicahaus was neither the summer residence of Beethoven—the actual building had been demolished long ago—nor the place where he composed his fifth and sixth symphony which, in fact, was the Pasqualatighaus on the Mölker Bastei in Vienna’s first district.

Japan, which was organised by Sōka Gakkai's Min-On the year before.⁷⁴ The crucial significance of cultural and educational engagement in Sōka Gakkai's worldwide peacebuilding mission was underlined in a related *Seikyō Shinbun* article, which reported that at the meeting 'President Ikeda said he would like to further thoroughly promote cultural exchanges to [the cause of] world peace through Min-On and alike'⁷⁵ (Sasaki 1981e). In a second brief courtesy visit that day, Ikeda met with Fred Sinowatz (1929–2008), Austria's vice chancellor and federal minister of education and arts, at the latter's ministerial office. As before, mutual gratitude was exchanged concerning past collaboration between Min-On and the State Opera with Ikeda, according to the *Seikyō Shinbun*, alongside wishes for 'further contributions to [the cause of] world peace through cultural and educational exchanges'⁷⁶ (Sasaki 1981e). Following his reception at the ministry, Ikeda was welcomed to participate in a gathering at the apartment of the Nakamura family in Belvederegasse. The attendees, including Ikeda, partook in collective chanting and casual talk. Before taking a commemorative group photo in the Belvedere garden, Ikeda officially appointed Nakamura Yoshio and his wife Yasue to Austrian *honbuchō* (headquarters chief). In so doing, he officially recognised the Austrian chapter as a fully-fledged member of SGI. In addition, Ikeda designated other long-serving local Japanese members to leadership positions, namely Kimura Takuji and Mitsugi Toshiyuki to *shibuchō*, and Tsukui Kiyoshi and Nakamura Hitoshi to *chikubuchō*. Given the small size of the Austrian group, these appointments did not result in a rearrangement of the structural composition compliant with inner-Japanese administrative divisions. Rather, they served as a formal acknowledgement, honouring past engagement alongside already exercised lines of seniority. The last item on Ikeda's itinerary was a trip to the Eroica-haus and its vicinity, followed by dinner with the Nakamuras. The *Seikyō Shinbun* concluded its coverage on Ikeda's stay in Austria with him gazing at 'the beautiful blue Danube, which resembled the stream of worldwide *kōsen rufu*'⁷⁷ (Sasaki 1981a). Early the next day Ikeda continued his journey

74 A previous major Austria-related sponsorship by Min-On involved the Japan tour of the Mozart Vienna Boys' Choir (*Mozart Knabenchor Wien*) in 1973.

75 SGI 会長はそのきい民音などを通し世界平和のため今後も徹底して文化交流を進めていきたいと語った。

76 SGI 会長は今後とも文化、教育の交流を通して世界の平和に貢献していきたいと述べた。

77 見学後、夕食をともにしたレストランからは、美しいウィーンの町並みと、美しく青きドナウが世界への広宣流布の流れにも似たはるかなる姿を見せていた。

to Italy and would only return again to Austria once, eleven years later in June 1992.

4. Concluding Remarks

The history of Sōka Gakkai in Austria in the 1970s is a silent history. Emerging as a diasporic movement with a clear japanocentric outlook, it passed largely unnoticed for more than a decade; unnoticed in particular by the religious establishment because of its lack of any public presence.⁷⁸ The circle of practitioners, that is, mainly Japanese people who came to Vienna temporarily—many already having some membership experience—never sought to incorporate as an association with the aim to legally register its religious status. The group remained essentially self-contained, mutually supplying spiritual and ritual necessities.

The language barrier as an impediment to adaptation and thus substantial expansion was only slowly overcome by individual adherents, enabling an increasing number of non-Japanese people to partake in the religious gatherings. Initially proselytising, albeit marginal at all times,⁷⁹ did rarely extend beyond the boundaries of the Japanese diaspora. Beginning in the second half of the 1970s,⁸⁰ this was to gradually change with the Austrian group becoming less culturally homogeneous in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Japanese core members, no more than five to ten people at any time, were actively involved in European community life. Along with the maintenance of closer contacts, especially to the European and, to a lesser extent, the Japanese headquarters, forged most notably by Nakamura Yoshio, the founder and leading figure of Sōka Gakkai in Austria, this helped to grant the movement some internal visibility despite its comparatively low

78 Whilst the activities of Sōka Gakkai in Austria were virtually untraceable until the early 1980s, specialised academics as well as the Catholic Church were well aware of Sōka Gakkai in general since at least the late 1950s and early 1960s. Scholars, Church-related monitoring institutions and, subsequently, the media were, if at all, mostly rendering a negative image based on the rather poor reputation the movement enjoyed in Japan owing to its enthusiastic proselytising and delicate political commitments.

79 ‘Street *shakubuku*’, which was conducted in some overseas branches, especially in the United States, was neglected. There have been no promotional campaigns whatsoever, such as circulating pamphlets or running advertisements. The word was only spread amongst family and friends. Joint religious activities were almost always limited to the members’ homes. Hence, religious performances in the public space have been avoided.

80 This time period coincides with what Hutter (2001: 102) perceives as a turning point in the general history of Buddhism in Austria when its expansion began to progress noticeably.

membership. This may have facilitated Ikeda's spontaneous decision to include Vienna into the itinerary of his European tour in 1981 at such short notice. Indeed, his visit ushered in a new period in the history of Sōka Gakkai in Austria which entailed accelerated growth and, concomitantly, the embracing of more and more native Austrian followers. The 1980s also witnessed the dissemination of the Nichiren Buddhist message to other parts of the country, the opening of a separate centre in Vienna, and rising domestic visibility in general. The UN-related activities of SGI, most prominently the 'Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World' exhibition in Vienna starting in September 1983, evidently contributed to this visibility.

Ikeda visualised Austria as a future 'grand stage for *kōsen rufu*'. The groundwork for the realisation of this scheme was laid in the 1970s and early 1980s and developed further at more pace thereafter. The pioneering period of Sōka Gakkai in Austria essentially revolved around a small number of Japanese immigrant families, who were religiously mainly engaged in a domestic—and occasionally European—diasporic context, and only slowly steered their proselytising efforts outwardly to a non-Japanese audience, giving way to a centrifugal development, and as such, in the long run, creating a new enculturated form of Nichiren Buddhism in Austria.

Appendix

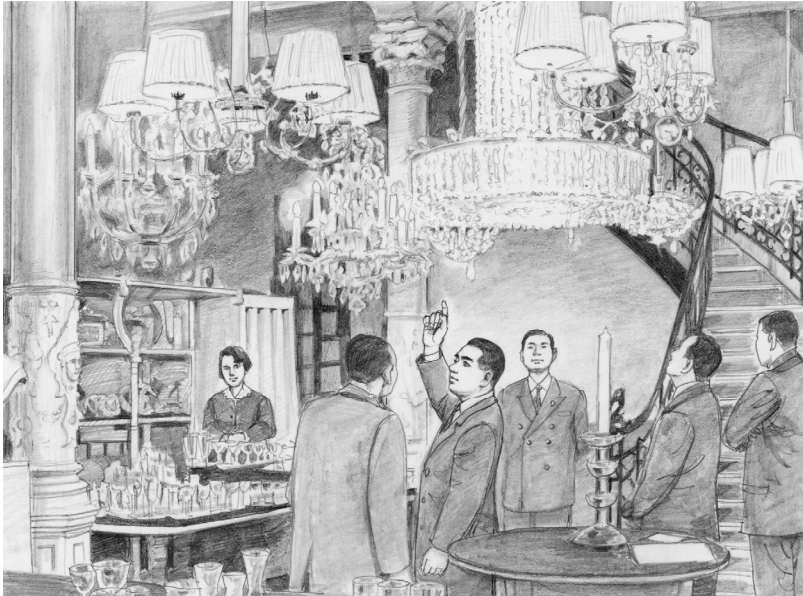


Figure 1: Ikeda choosing a chandelier for the Grand Reception Hall in the Lobmeyr store on Kärntner Straße 26 in Vienna's first district, during his first visit to Austria in October 1961. An artist's impression published in Ikeda's fifth volume of *Shin ningen kakumei* (Ikeda 2009e: 121)

Sokagakkei — die Religion vom Glück auf Erden

Eine Sekte als neue Kraft in Japan — Buddhismus und Politik — Heute 15 Millionen, morgen...

VON UNSEREM AUS TOKIO ZURÜCKGEKEHRTEN SONDERBERICHTERSTATTER ERNST TROST

Eine kleine Eisenbahnstation am Fuße des Fuji. Ein gewöhnlicher Wocheniar. Vom Abgang des heiligsten Berges von Japan rollt ein Sonderzug nach dem anderen ein. Zugweise, kompanieweise, spucken die Züge ihre Menschenlast aus. Männer und Frauen streng getrennt, formieren sich Tausende zu kleinen Marschkolonnen. Sie bewegen sich nicht im Gleichschritt, aber sie halten Disziplin. Sie schattnen nicht, wie das bei normalen japanischen Reisegruppen üblich ist. Keiner hat eine Kamera umgehängt, wie sie sonst jeder Untertan des Tenno als „drittes Auge“ auf einen Ausflug mitnimmt. Sie folgen gehorsam den Anordnungen der geschäftigen jungen Männer in den langen weißen Hosen und dunklen Sakkos mit gelben Armbändern. Ein Block nach dem anderen wird in Autobusse abgefüllt. Die Ordnung ist Routine. Denn hier treffen täglich 13 Sonderzüge ein mit 15.000 bis 17.000 Menschen. Hier ist der Rendezvousplatz einer neuen Kraft. Der Wallfahrtsort der Sokagakkei-Sekte.

„Sokagakkei.“ Als der Taxichauffeur diesen Namen auf dem Zettel mit der Adresse entziffert, lacht er wissend, nickt und sagt: „Ich weiß, wo das ist. Meine Frau ist auch ein Mitglied.“ — „Sokagakkei.“ Einen japanischen Journalisten gegenüber erwähne ich den Namen und er sagt gering-schätzig: „Die werden sich tot-laufen.“ — „Sokagakkei.“ — Ein Diplomat kommentiert: „Uns interessiert alles, was wir von dieser Gruppe hören. Ihr Wachstum in den letzten Jahren war so rapid, daß man sie im Auge behalten muß.“

Der Mann hat recht. Sokagakkei heißt wörtlich: „Werte schaffende Gesellschaft.“ Der Name sagt wenig. Sokagakkei ist eine der vielen buddhistischen Sekten Asiens. Doch in den letzten 15 Jahren hat sich Sokagakkei zu einer Massenbewegung entwickelt, die ein Faktor im politischen Leben Japans ist. „Unser Jugendfest am 8. November im Olympiastadion wird erfolgreich sein als die Olympischen Spiele“, brüstet sich der Führer der „Young Men's Division“, der Jungmännerabteilung, in einer Zeitung. Sokagakkei hat heute 15 Millionen Mitglieder, davon 2,5 Millionen unverheiratete junge Leute. Und die Zahl wächst von Tag zu Tag. Der Bekehrungseifer, die Gläubigkeit und die Disziplin der Sokagakkei-Anhänger rauben vielen traditionellen Politikern die Nachtruhe.

Denn Sokagakkei beschränkt

gestellt und ihn unterstützt hatte. Wo immer sich Koseiren-Politiker bisher den Wählern präsentierten, wurden sie auch gewählt. Im November wird aus der Wahlgemeinschaft eine politische Partei.

Beton, Architektur von heute mit antistichischen Elementen — das ist das Hauptquartier, nicht weit von einer der großen Bahnstationen, die Tokios Menschenzirkulation regulieren. Bevor ich in das Sprechzimmer geführt werde, muß ich die Schuhe ausziehen. Zwei höfliche junge Herren mit kreisrunden Abzeichen am Rückaufschlag empfangen mich. Sie gehören zur Public-Relations-Abteilung. Der jüngere ist Redakteur der englischsprachigen Zeitung. (Das japanische Sokagakkei-Blatt hat eine Auflage von 2,5 Millionen.) Wie er zu



Der „Führer“ — energischer Präsident Daisaku Ikeda

sprechen sollte, stotterte ich.“ Der junge Mann spricht besser englisch als die meisten Japaner, die ich in Tokio traf.

Die Geschichte des jungen Mannes ist typisch für alle Bekehrungsgeschichten. Sie birgt eines der Geheimnisse von Sokagakkei: die Religion garantiert den materiellen Erfolg, das gute Leben auf Erden. „Wir sollen uns am Leben freuen“ dozieren einer der Führer. „Materieller Wohlstand ist die Grundlage zur geistigen Erfüllung.“ Die Sokagakkei-Zeitungen sind voll mit Berichten von Mitgliedern, die durch die täglich zweimal vor-erschriebene Rezitation heiliger Schriften oder durch das Stoßbeten „Nam-myoho-enge-kyo“ sofortige Hilfe in Nötlagen er-

Fortsetzung auf Seite 16

sich nicht auf Wallfahrten und Gebet. Die Sekte hat soziale und politische Ziele. Im japanischen Parlament bilden die 15 Abgeordneten von Koseiren, der Wahlgemeinschaft von Sokagak-

Aus der neuen Herbst Kollektion:



Flanellwäsche - herrlich warm

Nachthemd 118.-
Pyjama 159.-

kei, die drittstärkste Gruppe. Der Gouverneur von Tokio (Bürgermeister) konnte die letzte Wahl nur gewinnen, weil Koseiren keinen Gegenkandidaten auf-

der Religion gestanden sei, frage ich ihn? „Als Student war ich Christ. Aber ich hatte große Schwierigkeiten. Ich hätte Thee und wann immer ich vor Men-



Religion der Massen — ekstatischer Redner bei einem Sokagakkei-Meeting

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SOKAGAKKEI

Fortsetzung von Seite 3
halten haben. Sokagakkei verlangt von seinen Anhängern Unterordnung unter die Gesetze des Bundes, aber die Moral des einzelnen interessiert nicht. Ich frage nach der Einstellung zu Scheidung, Strip-tease, Alkohol, Rauchen, Kino — zu all den Ausprägungen des modernen Lebens. „Das ist die Privatsache jedes einzelnen. Das sind viel zu mindere Dinge, als daß sich unsere Religion damit befassen sollte“, antwortet man mir. „Hauptsache, der Mensch ist glücklich.“

Diese Lehre vom Glück stammt von einem Samuraimönch namens Nichiren Daishonin, der vor 700 Jahren in Japan als eine Wiedergeburt Buddhas aufgetreten ist und damals viele Verfolgungen erdulden mußte. Der Sokagakkeikult ist um seine Person und Lehre zentriert. Doch Nichiren Daishonin würde sich unter seinen modernen Anhängern sehr fremd fühlen.

Denn Organisation ist bei Sokagakkei alles: riesige Meetings mit 10.000 und 20.000 Menschen, die zu marschartigen Hymnen rhythmisch in die Hände klatschen, zündende Reden, Sportfeste. Die Kindergruppen lassen einige der besten „Spielemännchen“ Japans paradien — in bunten Uniformen mit Trommeln, Pfeifen und Tambourmädchen in kurzen Röckchen. Dann die strafte lokale Einteilung in Chapter (Kapitel) mit zehn bis zwölf Distrikten, die wieder sechs bis sieben Gruppen umfassen. Eine Gruppe besteht aus sechs bis sieben Units (Einheiten), die je fünf bis sechs Menschen umfassen — also eine Art Zellen-system, das niemanden ohne Kontrolle läßt. Dazu kommt noch eine horizontale Gliederung in Kulturbüros, Studiendepartement, Finanzdepartement, Frauendepartement und Jugenddivision, die wieder in eine Jungmänner-, eine Studenten- und eine Mädchenabteilung gespalten ist.

Über allen steht der Präsident, der in der englischen Zeitung oft auch „Leader“ oder „Führer“ genannt wird. Eben ist er von einer langen Europareise zurückgekehrt, wo er sich mit lokalen Sokagakkeigruppen traf. Denn Ikeda predigt eine friedliche Erhebung der ganzen Welt. Er ist für Frieden und gegen Atomwaffen. Er wird den herrschenden Politikern größte Schwierigkeiten

machen, wenn sie die Verfassung ändern und Japan an Stelle der relativ schwachen „Selbstverteidigungskräfte“ eine richtige Armee haben wollten.

Faschismus — das ist ein Wort, auf das Sokagakkeipropagandisten allergisch sind. „Glauben Sie, daß wir eine faschistische Organisation sind?“, fragt mich mein Begleiter besorgt unter dem modernen Tempelbau aus Marmor und Beton, hinter dem an klaren Tagen der weiße Gipfel des Fuji aufragt. Vor einem halben Jahr wurde dieses Zentrum der Sekte eingeweiht: in der Haupthalle zeigt man uns Marmorblöcke aus Italien, Edelhölzer aus Taiwan, aus Kanada und Japan, einen Lüster aus der Tschechoslowakei usw. „Die ganze Welt soll hier vertreten sein. Wir nennen diesen Raum die große Empfangshalle, weil wir hier später alle großen Staatsmänner der Welt empfangen werden.“ Der Frage nach dem Faschismus habe ich mich mit einer ausweichenden Antwort entzogen und ich stelle eine Gegenfrage: „Wie ist das mit den jungen Männern mit den gelben Armbindern?“ „Sie sind nur Guides, die für den Transport der Pilger verantwortlich sind, sonst nichts.“

Eine halbe Stunde später, während aus dem alten Tempel hinter dem Neubau singende und betende Stimmen erschallen und Gong's dröhnen, frage ich einen Mann, der sich als bekehrter Kommunist vorstellt, noch einmal nach den jungen Leuten: „Auf diese Burchen sind wir stolz. Sie sind alle besonders ausgebildet, Judo, Fechten und so weiter. Vorläufig haben wir im ganzen Land etwa 50.000 davon. Sie sorgen bei allen unseren Treffen und Veranstaltungen für Ordnung.“

Aus dem Tempel ziehen wieder die Massen, ein Teil in die Schlafhäuser rund um den heiligen Bezirk, andere zu kleineren Meetings, bei denen sie auf dem Boden sitzend den feurigen Reden ihrer Führer lauschen, immer wieder in Beifall ausbrechen und Jaan und waaa Sprechchöre wiederholen. Aus einer der Hallen löst ein Marschlied — japanische Soldaten sangen es im Krieg — die Sokagakkei haben die Melodie mit einem anderen Text versehen. Und dann hören wir ihre neueste Hymne, die gerade propagiert wird: „Laßt uns den Buddhismus mit ganzen Herzen weitertragen, um die Welt zu retten...“

Vergessen

Wo zu Allerheiligen k



Grabstein als Tafel für Zeichenübung. Die Lebenden wurden vertrieben, die Toten sind rechts



Keine Ruhe für die Toten — aufgebrochene Gräber, geschleht leben in einem einst deutschen Friedhof in

ARI hat ein neues großes Herrenkleiderhaus im Herzen Wiens eröffnet
VIII, Lerchenfelder Straße 162, Ecke Blindengasse -
verlängerte Kaiserstraße (früher Horak)

Figure 2: Article in the *Neue Kronen Zeitung* from November 1, 1964



Figure 3: ‘New Year’s *Gongyō*’ of early members on January 1, 1974, at Nakamura’s apartment in Trubelgasse. Nakamura Yoshio is sitting in the middle (first row) with Kawaike Yuzuru, the second member of the Austrian group, behind him



Figure 4: Meeting with Sōka Gakkai Vice President Izumi Satoru (white shirt) and European chairman Yamazaki Eiichi (far right) at Hotel Ambassador in August 1976. The Austrian leader Nakamura Yoshio is standing

世界へ征く

池田SGI会長の平和旅から

第6回 | 大欧州の心臓・ウィーン



「善き市民の連帯を」とSGI会長が信頼した通り、オーストリアSGIは今、学術・文化の人材の宝庫に（1981年5月）

「この信仰で絶対に幸せになれるよ」

「慌ただしい一日だった。池田先生は、ウィーン国立歌劇場のゼーフェルナー総監督を訪ね、教育省でジノヴァツ副首相（後に首相）と会見された。20年前に宿泊されたホテルにも立ち寄られ、支配人と旧交を温められた。その後、私の家にも来てくださった。1981年の5月27日のことである。

ウィーン市中心街にある5階建ての古アパートの3階。エレベーターがないので階段で上がっていただいた。せめて、ここだけでも、ゆっくりしていただこうと思ったのだが、部屋が狭くて、人があふれてしまった。それでも、先生を中心に和気あいあいと語りが弾んだ。

そこに、見知らぬ若い女性が訪ねてきた。ウィーン大学の学生だった。外国でSGIメンバーになった姉から「池田先生という素晴らしい人がオーストリアを訪れるから会った方がいい」と勧められたという。ここに行けばいいかわからないので、人

Figure 5: First page of a brief article about Ikeda’s peace trips to Vienna in the Japanese monthly study magazine *Daibyakurenge* (*The Great White Lotus*) (Nakamura 2006: 3) written by Nakamura Yoshio, showing a group photo of Ikeda and Austrian followers in the garden of the Hotel Krainerhütte in May 1981. Ikeda is sitting in the centre with Nakamura Yoshio behind him. Tsukui Kiyoshi and his wife Erika are to the left of Ikeda

List of Abbreviations

BGBI	<i>Bundesgesetzblatt</i> [Federal Law Gazette]
CE	Common Era
IAST	International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SGI	Soka Gakkai International
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDPI	United Nations Department of Public Information
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Glossary

Akiya Einosuke	秋谷栄之助
Aoyama Mitsu	青山みつ
Harada Minoru	原田稔
Hōjō Hiroshi	北条浩
Ikeda Daisaku	池田大作
Izumi Satoru	和泉覚
Kawada Yōichi	川田洋一
Kawaike Yuzuru	川池襄
Kimura Takuji	木村卓司
Kumarajū (Kumārajīva)	鳩摩羅什
Makiguchi Tsunesaburō	牧口常三郎
Matsumura Kazuaki	松村和明
Mitsugi Toshiyuki	三樹寿幸
Nakamura Hitoshi	中村等
Nakamura Yasue	中村容枝
Nakamura Yoshio	中村嘉夫
Nichikan	日寛
Nichiren	日蓮
Nikkō	日興
Takahashi Hideaki	高橋英明
Takimoto Yasunori	滝本安規
Toda Jōsei	戸田城聖
Tsukui Kiyoshi	津久井清
Yamazaki Eiichi	山崎鋭一
Wada Eiichi	和田栄一
Bosatsu	菩薩
Bukkai	仏界
Bunka	文化
Busshō	仏性
Butsu	仏
Chi	智
Chian iji hō	治安維持法
Chiku	地区
Chikubuchō	地区部長
Chikushōkai	畜生界
Daibyakurenge	大白蓮華
Daigohonzon	大御本尊

Daikyakuden	大客殿
Daimoku	題目
Daishōnin	大聖人
Danshibu	男子部
Engaku	縁覚
<i>Fāngbiàn pǐn</i>	方便品
Fukō	不幸
Gakikai	餓鬼界
Genze riyaku	現世利益
Gohonzon	御本尊
Gongyō	勤行
<i>Goshō</i>	御書
Hachiōji	八王子
Han	班
Hanchō	班長
Hànyǔ Pīnyīn	汉语拼音 (漢語拼音)
Heiwa tabi	平和旅
<i>Hōben bon</i>	方便品
Hōben zengyō	方便善巧
<i>Hok(k)ekyō</i>	法華經
Honbu	本部
Honbuchō	本部長
Honbutsu	本仏
Hōza	法座
Ichinen sanzen	一念三千
Ise	伊勢
Jigoku	地獄
Jihi	慈悲
Jikkai	十界
<i>Jinsei chirigaku</i>	人生地理学
Jiyū-Minshutō	自由民主党
Kachi sōzō	価値創造
Kaichō	会長
Kaigai shidō no daiippo	海外指導の第一歩
Kaigaigakari	海外係
Kamakura jidai	鎌倉時代
Kamifuda	神札
Kōfuku	幸福
Kōmeitō	公明党
Kōsen rufu	広宣布布
Kumi	組

Kumichō	組長
Kyōgakubu	教学部
Kyōiku	教育
Mappō	末法
Meiyo kaichō	名誉会長
Min-on	民音
Minshu Ongaku Kyōkai	民主音楽協会
Mōfā	末法
Mumyō	無明
<i>Myōhorengkyō</i>	妙法蓮華經
Nagaoka	長岡
Namu Myōhorengkyō	南無妙法蓮華經
Nichiren buppō	日蓮佛法
Nichiren Shōshū	日蓮正宗
Niigata	新潟
Ningen kakumei	人間革命
Ningen shugi no rengōtai	人間主義の連合体
Ninkai	人界
Nyorai juryō hon	如来寿量品
Ōbutsumyōgō	王仏冥合
Reiyūkai	霊友会
Rijichō	理事長
Risshō Kōseikai	立正佼成会
Rokudō	六道
<i>Rúlái shòuliàng pǐn</i>	如來壽量品
Sanakudō	三惡道
Satori	悟り
<i>Seikyō Shinbun</i>	聖教新聞
Seishin no ketsugō	精神の結合
Sekai heiwa	世界平和
Sekai heiwa no hi	世界平和の日
Sensei	先生
Setai	世帯
Shakubuku	折伏
Shakubuku daikōshin	折伏大行進
<i>Shakubuku kyōten</i>	折伏教典
Shiakudō	四惡道
Shibu	支部
Shibuchō	支部長
<i>Shin ningen kakumei</i>	新・人間革命
Shinanomachi	信濃町

Shingon	真言
Shintō	神道
Shodai Ōshū gichō	初代欧州議長
Shōju	摂受
Shōmon	声聞
<i>Shūkyō nenkan</i>	宗教年鑑
Shurakai	修羅界
Sōgōhonbu	総合本部
Sōka daigaku	創価大学
Sōka Gakkai	創価学会
Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai	創価教育学会
<i>Sōka kyōikugaku taikai</i>	創価教育学体系
Sōshibu	総支部
Sumida	墨田
Taisekiji	大石寺
Tatesen	縦線
Tendai	天台
Tenkai	天界
Tennō	天皇
Tiāntái	天台
Tōyō tetsugaku kenkyūjo	東洋哲学研究所
Tōkyō	東京
Tōkyō Fuji bijutsukan	東京富士美術館
Yīniàn sānqiān	一念三千
Yokosen	横線
Yomikudashi	訓(読)み下し
Yōroppa kaigi	ヨーロッパ会議
Yōroppa kōfu	ヨーロッパ広布
Zadankai	座談会

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