THE SŌKA GAKKAI:
A SOCIO-POLITICAL INTERPRETATION

By James Allen Dator

I

Nothing in modern Japan is more remarkable than the Sōka Gakkai. As the largest voluntary-member religious group; as one of the largest organizations of any type in Japan; and as a significant social and political force with elected representatives in national and local assemblies, it is a social phenomenon which demands respect and consideration.[1]

Among the first questions which one seeks to have answered about the Sōka Gakkai is why, of all the hundreds of religious groups which struggled out of the ashes of the Second World War in Japan, the Sōka Gakkai has so magnificently flourished, while so many others (without overlooking the great growth of Risshō Kōsei-kai, Tenri-kyō, PL Kyōdan, and others in the same time) have not succeeded. More than this, in a culture which many have considered so remarkable for its religious apathy, why has such a vehement group as the Sōka

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1. The Sōka Gakkai was founded in 1928 by Tsunesaburō Makiguchi as a religiously oriented educational group. It has grown from a tiny organization, with an immediate post-war membership of about 1,000, to its present size of 5,500,000 households.

In politics, the Sōka Gakkai has 20 representatives in the Upper House of the National Diet, where it is the third largest party, 59 in prefectural assemblies, 946 in various city and ward assemblies, and 260 in town and village assemblies.

Gakkai been so successful ?[2]

Another major question concerns the Sōka Gakkai's entrance into Japanese politics. In a social environment which generally seems to favor the separation of religion and politics, why has the Sōka Gakkai entered the political arena, and why has it been so successful in its political endeavors?

Frame of Reference. Let me suggest some answers to these questions by examining the Sōka Gakkai as an *organized group;* specificially as a *value-creating group* (which is, indeed, what "Sōka Gakkai" means in translation).

To begin with, the following frame of reference may be developed.[3] We can assume that individuals live in groups primarily out of habit—they are born into a small group, the family—and are socialized primarily by the family and by other small groups. However, some groups are consciously formed or existing groups are entered into by individuals because

2. Concerning English-language data about modern Japanese religions, see Clark B. Offner and Henry Van Straelen, *Modern Japanese Religions* (New York: Twayne, 1963); Harry Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan* (Rutledge, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1963); and Raymond Hammer, *Japan's Religious Ferment* (London: SCM Press, 1961); and various articles published in this *Journal.* For social survey data about Japanese religions, see Joichi Suetsuna, *et al. Nihonjin no Kokuminsei* (Tokyo: Shiseidō, 1961), English résumè, p. 9.

3. The following analysis is based primarily upon the conceptualizations of small-group theory, organization theory, and personality theory. See, for example, Chris Argyris, *Personality and Organization* (New York: Harper, 1957); Dorwin Cartwright, ed., *Studies in Social Power* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute of Social Research, 1959); Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander, eds., *Group Dynamics,* revised edition (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1961); Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Farrar and Straus, 1941); Alvin Gouldner, *Studies in Leadership* (New York: Harper, 1950); Harold Guetzkow, *Groups, Leadership and Men* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1961); Paul Hare, *et al.* eds., *Small Groups* (New York: Alfred

groups also satisfy certain physical and psychological needs of the individual. Among the former are protection, exchange of goods services, and the like, while among the latter are the conflicting needs of freedom and order, self-expression and certainty, or change and continuity. It is admitted, moreover, that the individual seems to need, both physically and psychologically, the certainty that most things in life will be the same from day to day. He needs to know that when he awakens in the morning, the relationships between objects in the world that he knew when he went to bed will still be found. If a man is placed in an environment in which no stable relation among the objects in the environment can be found or created, he will soon take leave of his senses.

On the other hand, most people cannot tolerate a completely determined environment in which everything is exactly the same day in and day out, and in which there is no variation. While there will be differences in degree from time to time and person

A. Knopf, 1955) ; Eduard Heimann, *Freedom and Order* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947); Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer* (New York: Harper, 1951); George Homans, *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950); Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1955); Gardner Lindzey, ed., *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1954); James March and Herbert Simon, *Organizations* (New York: John Wiley, 1958); Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957); Muzafer Sherif and Hadley Cantril, *The Psychology of Ego-Involvements* (New York: John Wiley, 1947); Muzafer Sherif and Carolyn Sherif, *Groups in Harmony and Tension* (New York: Harper, 1953); Daniel Lerner and Harold Lasswell, eds., *The Policy Sciences* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1951); Robert K. Merton and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, eds., *Studies in the Scope and Method of " The American Soldier"* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1950); Herbert Simon, *Administrative Behavior* (New York: Macmillan, 1957); Sidney Verba, *Small Groups and Political Behavior* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961).

to person, normal individuals will seek some spontaneity and variety in their lives.

Thus neither an environment of utter rigidity or utter fluidity is tolerable. The normally-functioning person seeks to find some balance between these two opposing tendencies : he seeks to establish an environment in which his needs for both freedom and order are satisfied. However, it seems clear that the demands of order and certainty are prior to those of freedom and self-expression, both physically and psychologically, and that they must be satisfied before genuine psychic freedom can exist. Thus, if, in the real world, social structures do not exist to provide the required order, either because of the destruction of the old social order or the development of new situations which the old order cannot handle, the individual will endeavor to create satisfying structures through which he may adjust to and control his environment.

The structures which most successfully perform this function for the individual are the small face-to-face groups. Thus we very frequently find people in organizations — religious bodies, political parties, fraternal groups, etc.— not because they agree with the stated purposes of the organization, but because these groups are the only ones " available " to the individual, and because they satisfy basic needs which may be unrelated to the group's affirmed purpose. There is often a great gap between the top leaders' notions of the purpose of the organization and those of the members at the bottom.

Thus people in the United States, for example, may attend church services not because they believe in the Creed, but because they enjoy the companionship of the coffee-and-dough-

nuts hour later, or because they like to sing, or because they can look at attractively-dressed men and women. In England, working men may join Socialist clubs not because they necesrarily believe in Socialism, but because the beer is cheaper there, just as American men may join American Legions not out of belief in the larger aims of the Legion but to get away from the wife and to be able to play poker and slot machines free from police interference.

The point is, in trying to understand the successes or failures of any large organization, it is misleading to look only at the official structure and outputs. Instead, it is necessary also to see what the organization looks like from the point of view of the ordinary members. Thus we should focus also on the smallest units, those nearest the ordinary members, and not only on the largest units. Of course this does not mean that study of the official structure and output is unnecessary. It is only suggested that in order to understand why a group is successful or unsuccessful it is important to know what the group does or does not do for the individual.

Now, following this simple conceptualization, we may move further in the direction of answering the earlier questions about the Sōka Gakkai. In attempting to explain why the Sōka Gakkai has grown so rapidly and successfully since the war, it would seem that the following factors must be taken into account.

The Social Environment. First, in contrast to most Western societies, where, in groups, either majoritarian or authoritarian decision-making is the mode, observers have remarked that groups in Japan typically reach decisions on a consensual

basis.[4] The first function of any newly-formed group is to develop "we-feeling" or group consciousness by acts which may seem to be unrelated to or actually at cross-purposes with the stated goals of the group. After this group consciousness has been successfully formed, it is then possible to move on towards the accomplishment of the group's specific purposes and thus to reach group decisions on a consensual basis. Often, no one person in a group need assume "the leadership," a role which, in Western society, has often the primary function of securing at least a majoritarian decision and the near-total group compliance with the decision. Leadership in Japanese groups is often the function of the entire group rather than of any one person.

Decisions are thus reached by a process involving a great deal of mutual discussion, the final decision being, as much as possible, one that incorporates the wishes and excludes the dislikes of everyone. Of course, in a successfully integrated group, there will seldom be any individual who possesses a preference which is markedly different from everyone else's. That is, at the top of the value systems of most persons is the feeling that their own preferences are the same as those of the group. In the process of discussion, the individual thus at first expresses

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4. See William Caudill, " Japanese-American Personality and Acculturation," 45 *Genetic Psychological Monographs* 3ff (1952); William Caudill and George DeVos, " Achievement, Culture, and Personality," 56 *American Anthropologist* 1102ff (1956) ; Mary Ellen Goodman, " Values, Attitudes and Social Concepts of Japanese and American Children," 56 *American Anthropologist* 979ff (1959) ; Geoffrey Gorer, " Themes in Japanese Culture," in Douglas G. Haring, ed., *Personal Character and Cultural Milieu* (Syracuse University Press, 1956), pp. 273-291; Fred N. Kerlinger, " Decision-Making in Japan," 30 *Social Forces* 36-41 (October 1951).

his own tentative preferences, and then adjusts them to those of the group as a whole after hearing the preferences of others. Very seldom would a person prefer to have his own opinion prevail and thus lose the comfortable knowledge that his preferences and the group's are the same.

While such consentaneity is not lacking in Western groups, it does appear to be a higher value in Japanese groups, and to be a social characteristic of considerable antiquity.

In addition to this, although it is not possible to elaborate this point here, it is suggested that Japanese groups place greater emphasis on the order-certainty-continuity side of the continuum, mentioned above, than they do on values which encourage individual freedom, self-expression, or spontaneity. It further seems that this is a value-preference which has existed in Japanese culture for a long time, and into which Japanese children are socialized at an early age.[5]

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5. In addition to the articles mentioned in the above footnote, see also, C. G. Babcock, " Reflections on Dependency Phenomena as Seen in Nisei in the United States," in R. J. Smith and R. K. Beardsley, eds., *Japanese Culture* (Chicago: Aldine, 1963); D. C. Buchanan, " Japanese Character and Personality as Revealed in their Culture," in W. A. Parker, ed., *Understanding Other Cultures* (New York: American Council of Learned Societies, 1954); R. P. Dore, " The Ethics of the New Japan," 25 *Pacific Affairs* 147-159 (1952); R. P. Dore, *City Life in Japan* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957); Tadashi Fukutake, *Man and Society in Japan* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1962); Addison Gulick, " The Problem of Right and Wrong in Japan and Some of its Political Consequencies," 26 *Journal of Social Psychology* 3-20 (1947); Douglas Haring, " Aspects of Personal Character in Japan," in Haring, *op. cit.*, pp. 389-407; Iwao Ishino, " The Oyabun-Kobun," 55 *American Anthropologist* 695-707 (1953); Fred N. Kerlinger, " Behavior and Personality in Japan," 31 *Social Forces* 250-257 (1953); Robert Jay Lifton, "Youth and History: Individual Change in Postwar Japan," XCI *Daedalus* 172-197 (1962); Lawrence Olson, *Dimensions of Japan* (American Universities Field Staff, 1963); Mildred Sikkema, " Observations

Needless to say, the war, the defeat in the war, the occupa-
tion, and the aftermath of the occupation had profoundly dis-
integrative effects on Japanese social structure. But recent
behavioral research suggests that, though traditional structures
have changed, many traditional basic value preferences have
not.[6] Thus, for example, though the pre-war Emperor system
has hardly any chance for revival, there is a very keenly-felt
need to establish some appropriately modern, structurally and
psychologically satisfying vehicle to create and express Japanese
national consciousness.[7]

The point about the Sōka Gakkai is, and this may be taken as
a summary of what has been said above, that because the Sōka
Gakkai developed in an environment which is consensual in its
basic value preferences, and yet in which many of the tradi-
tional structures were demolished or discredited, with resulting
individual and social anomie, the individual Japanese is willing
to invest more of his self into a group like the Sōka Gakkai
than he would be in a society whose order was already es-
tablished (*i. e.* value-preferences and value-effecting and gratify-

on Japanese Early Child Training," in Haring, *op. cit.* pp. 590-600; Warren
W. Smith, *Confucianism in Modern Japan* (Tokyo: Hokuseidō Press, 1959);
AM Whitehead and S. Takezawa, *Cultural Values in Management-Worker
Relations in Japan: " Gimu " in Transition* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina:
University of North Carolina Press, 1961); Ezra Vogel, *Japan's New Middle
Class* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

6. For example see Chikio Hayashi, " Nihonjin no Dentō Ishiki," 17 *Ningen
no Kagaku* 55-60 (November 1964); Tsueno Muramatsu, *et al. Nihonjin*
(Tokyo: Reimei Shobō, 1963); Hirotatsu Fujiwara, *Gendai Nihon no Seiji
Ishiki* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1958); Suetsuna, *op. cit.*

7. It would be instructive to examine the Tokyo Olympics, attitudes towards
and the role of " foreigners," and the style and slogans of " anti-American "
demonstrations, etc., with this in mind.

ing structures are concomitant and mutually-reinforcing), and where the value of individual freedom and diversity was stressed.

Organizational Features. The structure of the Sōka Gakkai is beautifully designed to alleviate individual anomie and yet permit the organization to grow to mass size without the accompanying disadvantages and alienating effects which most mass organizations themselves produce.[8] This is because of its primarily cellular organizational basis. The smallest unit, the *kumi*, is always kept to a size which permits intense and constant face-to-face contacts, especially in the *zadankai* (discussion meetings) between a small number of members. When a *kumi* gets too large, it simply divides amoeba-like into two *kumi*, continuing the process as members enter into the organization. Thus at no time need the individual feel the alienating effects of bigness which is so much a feature of mass organization.

Moreover, the structure of the Sōka Gakkai is superbly designed to fix the individual in a web of interlocking small-

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8. On alienation and anomie, see Eric and Mary Johnson, eds., *Man Alone* (New York: Dell, 1962); Walter M. Gerson, "Alienation in Mass Society: Some Causes and Responses," 49 *Sociology and Social Research* 143-152 (January 1965); William Kornhauser, *Politics of Mass Society* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1959); T. W. Adorno, *et al. The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harpers, 1950); Gabriel A. Almond, *The Appeals of Communism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954); Hadley Cantril, *The Politics of Despair* (New York: Basic Books, 1958); David Riesman, *et al. The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950).

Examples of Japanese who are likely to be anomic are persons who have just moved from a tightly-knit rural community to a big city; middle-aged housewives whose children are grown and whose husbands neglect them; students of the "wrong" universities; persons in marginal occupations; persons who, while intelligent, have limited formal education, and the like.

group activities. There is first the structure based on conversion ties, viewed as a vertical organization. This stretches from the individual (considered theoretically and aspirationally as a household), to the *kumi* ("unit," 10 to 15 members), to the *han* ("group," 30 to 100 members), to the *chiku* ("district," 500-1,000 members), the *shibu* ("chapter," of which there are 1,205), the *sō-shibu* ("general chapter," 271 in Japan and 8 overseas), the *chihō hombu* ("local headquarters," 63 in Japan and 5 overseas), and the *hombu* ("central headquarters," located in Tokyo).

Since this vertical relation is based on conversion ties — a person is a member of the *kumi* of the person who converted him even after he gets his own *kumi* of persons whom he converted; *han* then are composed of members converted by the same group of people, etc. — in Japan's highly mobile society, it soon became evident that a Sōka Gakkai member who moved from one area to another could be living next door to another Sōka Gakkai member and never know it. Thus, a horizontal, geographically-based structure was also developed, called the "block system." This includes a series of geographical units, in size about the same as the vertical structure, which permits Sōka Gakkai members who live in the same area to be in close contact with each other.[9]

Finally, there is a system of interest or peer-group organizations, which can be conceptualized as a diagonal structure, which fixes the individual even more strongly in the organi-

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9. It should be pointed out that meetings are most frequently held in members homes rather than in Nichiren Shōshū temples, although temple services are by no means rare.

zation by satisfying his needs for interaction with persons of his own age, sex, and/or interest. Thus there is a youth group, one for young men (1965 membership : 1,700,000), and one for young women (1,500,000) ; a group for college students (75,000) ; a group for housewives ; meetings and other activities for leaders at the various organizational levels ; athletic groups ; a culture organization for music, drama, dance, etc., called *Min'on* (500,000 members) ; and a political party called the *Kōmeitō* which polled 5,097,173 votes, or 13.5% of the votes cast in the July 4, 1965, House of Councillors election. However, this political party has been structurally separate from the Sōka Gakkai since November 1964. There has been consideration given to establishing also a labor union, and perhaps other economically-oriented groups (members are encouraged to do business with other Sōka Gakkai members even now).

It can readily be seen that in a culture which emphasizes small-group cooperation and yet where there are many anomic individuals, the Sōka Gakkai is superbly organized to exploit these societal deficiencies and provide the individual with the physical and psychological certainties he seeks, and yet, because of its cellular structure, grow to be a mass organization.[10]

The " Spiritual Basis " of Other Successful Organizations. It seems important to stress that the Sōka Gakkai is not es-

10. For evidence that the Sōka Gakkai does in fact attract people in this category, see Fujio Ikado, " Komyuniti Chāchi to Taishū Soshiki no Mondai," *Shūkyō Kōron,* November 1961, p. 12f ; Hiroshi Suzuki, " Toshi Kaso no Shūkyō Dan," *Shakaigaku Kenkyū* (Tōhoku University), Numbers 22 and 24-25, 1963 and 1964; Tokyo Daigaku Shakai Gakka and Tokyo Joshi Daigaku Shakai Gakka, *Sōka Gakkai* (Mimeographed, 1963) ; Taijirō Hayasaka, *Shinkō Shūkyō ni Kansuru Shakai Shinrigaku-teki Kenkyū* (Mimeographed, 1965).

pecially different in the above respects from other successful large organizations in Japan. For example, it is instructive to compare both the structure and "spirit" of the Sōka Gakkai with that of the Honda motor company. In a tour through a factory of that company one is struck by many similarities between it and the headquarters of the Sōka Gakkai. Both are housed in modern, functional buildings, are staffed with many "bright" young men and women who seem to be happy and self-confident, and have a highly rationalized organizational structure. Moreover, though of large size, human relations among the members seem to be excellent in both organizations. This is no accident. The organizations of both are as carefully designed to facilitate good "we-feeling" as they are to produce good motorcycles or good values.

After a tour of the Honda factory, the guide was asked to explain why Honda employees have greater per capita productivity than do the employees of competing automotive firms. The guide, who was manager of the plant and had been a long-time employee of the company, quite seriously referred to the "correctness" of the basic principles, inscribed in Japanese and English on the walls of the reception room, which were written by Sōichirō Honda, and which provide the correct spiritual foundation for producing motorcycles.

Once again, the necessity of building group consciousness by the development of mutually acceptable inspiring principles is evident as a prerequisite for the successful accomplishment of group goals. From a practical American businessman's point of view, the purpose of a motorcycle factory is to make motorcycles, and in order to get workers to do this, one pays them

money. But within Japanese society, it seems that money is not enough to get people to work. It is far more important that psychological and esthetic personal needs be satisfied through a process of mutual activity, and that the transcendental value of producing motorcycles correctly be agreed upon.

It seems that an important conclusion can be derived from this : instead of viewing Japanese society as being apathetic to spiritual values, and instead of trying to show that the Sōka Gakkai is not " really " a religious organization at all (as some of its critics try to do), it might be better to start with the hypothesis that Japan is in fact very much spiritually-oriented to the extent that all successful groups in Japan are based upon mutually-formulated transcendental values, and that the Sōka Gakkai is thus successful largely because it has a satisfying spiritual basis and a structure which materializes and justifies it. Thus, for the individual member, the Sōka Gakkai is in fact what its name signifies : a value-creating society ; it is an organization which, among a people who are socialized to seek the primacy of transcendental values in their inter-personal relations (and perhaps for this reason tend to avoid casual inter-personal contact), and within a nation where most of the value-creating organizations were destroyed, does provide the individual both the desired values and a very modern structure for actualizing them.

Having made these general statements about the factors which have lead to the success of the Sōka Gakkai in Japan, we can turn to some even more specific points.

II

Some Factors Accounting for the Success of the Sōka Gakkai.
The Sōka Gakkai itself gives a simple theological explanation
for its success: Nichiren Shōshū, the Buddhist sect of which
Sōka Gakkai is a lay organization, is the only true religion,
and all other religions are false. Thus the promises of the
Sōka Gakkai are actually fulfilled and Sōka Gakkai members
attain genuine happiness, while other false religions must lie
and deceive their members and lead them from misery to
misery.

Now this is an explanation which may very well be true,
although I do not believe so, but there seems to be no way
that the truth or falsity of this point can be objectively and
scientifically proven. Thus, while the argument about the truth
or falsity of the Sōka Gakkai may be the most crucial ulti-
mately for the believer and non-believer alike, this question
should be put aside. Naturally, Sōka Gakkai members will
object to this approach because, to them, this question of faith
is crucial. In this respect, they are not different from other
religious and ideological groups — including some Christians,
Communists, and believers in Freudian psychology — who
insist upon a " faith commitment " as a necessary condition
for the true comprehension of their beliefs. But precisely
because all such groups make this insistence, it seems necessary
at the outset to avoid such an argument about the Sōka Gak-
kai.

Without going into the entire theological system, there are
certain points about the beliefs of the Sōka Gakkai, however,

which seem to help account for its appeal.[11]

1) The Sōka Gakkai offers *a simple but complete explanation of the entire world.* For every possible question, the Sōka Gakkai has a definite, easy-to-understand answer. Thus there is no ambiguity. For people who are bewildered by the complex modern world, the Sōka Gakkai provides an all-embracing explanation. Moreover, in keeping with the temper of the time this explanation is presented as being highly scientific and very philosophical. Thus, especially members who have not had much formal higher education can be assured that their beliefs are very modern and very profound.

In addition, the Sōka Gakkai *does not compartmentalize the world into sacred and secular.* It does not assume that some aspects of life are religious and some of no concern to religion. On the contrary, all of life must be based on correct religious principles. Then, following this reasoning, and the fact that Japan has a democratic form of government, the Sōka Gakkai insists that it must be concerned with politics. In a democratic society, defined simply as a government of, by, and for the

11. Concerning the theology of the Sōka Gakkai in English, see the various articles by Noah Brannen, especially " The Teachings of the Sōka Gakkai," III *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 247-263 (September 1962); " Sōka Gakkai's Theory of Value," V *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 143-154 (June 1964). See also Takaya Kudō, " The Faith of the Sōka Gakkai," II *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 1-12 (June 1961); " Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shō Sect," an Institute Study, I *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 55-70 and 48-54 (March and June 1960); Clark B. Offner and Henry Van Straelen, *op. cit.,* pp. 98-109; Harry Thomsen, *op. cit.,* pp. 81-108. Among the books in Japanese, the newest and best is Shigeyoshi Murakami, *Sōka Gakkai to Kōmeitō* (Tokyo: Nihon Bunka Sha, 1965). Sōka Gakkai itself has a book, *The Sōka Gakkai,* two newspapers, *Seikyō News* and *World Tribune,* and a monthly magazine, *Seikyō Times,* all in English. There are many tracts available as well, and the complete speeches of President Ikeda,

people, according to the Sōka Gakkai, it is natural that the only religion which understands the true way for the individual and for society to achieve happiness should try to send persons into the political world to enable people to attain their wishes. To refrain from doing so would be for the Sōka Gakkai to neglect its responsibilities, it feels.

2) The Sōka Gakkai offers *a Japanese explanation of the world.* This is very important. The Sōka Gakkai, unlike Christianity or Orthodox Buddhism in Japan is not an "imported religion." Thus, although Sōka Gakkai acknowledges that Nichiren Shōshū is a sect of Buddhism, it rejects the idea that Shakyamuni was the ultimate Buddha. Shakyamuni predicted that his powers would wane in the *Mappō* which would occur 2,000 years after his death, and that a new Buddha would be necessary. Hence the true Buddha for the present age is none other than Nichiren himself, who was, fortunately, a Japanese.

Of course the ·Sōka Gakkai is not merely a Japanese nationalist religious group. Sōka Gakkai is *internationalist in aspiration.* A great deal of time and effort is being made to convert foreigners, and considerable energy is being devoted to overseas missions.[12] One of the Sōka Gakkai's proudest slogans is "global racism" (*chikyū minzokushugi;* better expressed

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12. In mid-1965, there are said to be over 100,000 members of the Sōka Gakkai in foreign countries : 25,000 in the United States and Canada, 13,000 in South America, 11,000 in South East Asia, 1,000 in Europe, and 50,000 in Okinawa. Probably one-half to three-fourths of these are Japanese citizens living abroad or persons of Japanese descent. Nonetheless, in Japan, there are probably 500 non-Japanese members of the Sōka Gakkai, for the most part American military personnel married to and converted by Japanese members of Sōka Gakkai.

in English as "universal brotherhood"), and it aims at the conversion of the world through *kōsenrufu*, and not just of Japan.

Nonetheless, the Sōka Gakkai quite consciously uses traditional Japanese symbols such as the Rising Sun, the Japanese fan, and Mount Fuji, and its songs consistently emphasize such notions as that "with Japan as the base, we will throw a bridge to every nation on the earth." Also, Sōka Gakkai leaders frequently exhort the members to missionary activity because, since the Japanese are an advanced people with the true religion, they must assume the responsibility of saving the world. Unfortunately for the spread of true religion, some of the Sōka Gakkai's Asian critics find in its missionary enthusiasm much which reminds them of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Moreover, at the same time, while the Sōka Gakkai is eager to have foreign converts, it has considerable difficulty in assimilating them because of the Japanese culture-bound structure and modes of expression it uses to manifest the faith. Partly this may also be the fault of the foreign converts themselves, especially American members who are disposed to resist acculturation into Japanese society anyway, and who view the Sōka Gakkai very much as though it were a fundamentalistic Christian sect. Indeed, there appears to be a great deal of miscommunication between Japanese and American members of the Sōka Gakkai.[13]

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13. These comments are based upon an analysis of Sōka Gakkai English-language media, and participant observation within a Sōka Gakkai English-language unit. A fuller report of this study will be made later.

Partly because of this, and partly because of the dependency-oriented nature of many American members,[14] it is likely that the Japanese will remain in firm control of the organization and it is highly unlikely that a genuinely " international " Sōka Gakkai will develop in the near future.

All of these facts seem to indicate that the Sōka Gakkai owes part of its success to its ability to satisfy the natural feelings of national superiority in the Japanese consciousness. To have been defeated in war and yet to actually be the chosen people responsible for the spread of true religion must be a source of considerable satisfaction.

3) And yet at the same time, the Sōka Gakkai is *not a new sect.* While its phenomenal growth is post-war, and while its organizational beginning was just before the war, still it claims to be no more than a lay organization affiliated with the 700 year old Nichiren Buddhism. The Sōka Gakkai's source, then, is not an old lady, or a milkman, or some other person of dubious divinity ; it is the mighty Nichiren himself.[15] That

14. This point about Americans married to or living with Japanese was made by William Caudill in his extensive study of Japanese-American human relations near an American military base in Japan, reported in " American Soldiers in a Japanese Community," (Mimeographed, May 1958). I have found the same thing to be true of American Sōka Gakkai members that I have studied.

15. About Nichiren, See Masaharu Anesaki, *Nichiren : The Buddhist Prophet* (London : Oxford University Press, 1949). Its dependency on Nichiren is one factor which accounts for the relatively greater success of Sōka Gakkai over the " New Religions " which have less illustrious founders. Compared with the other sects of Nichiren Buddhism, Sōka Gakkai, as I have mentioned above, considers Nichiren to be *the* Buddha, while other Nichiren sects consider him to be just the greatest interpreter of Buddhism. Moreover, Sōka Gakkai has a doctrine of " Real Presence " concerning the *Gohonzon,* the *mandala* upon which Nichiren himself inscriped the essence of the Lotus Sutra. The *Gohonzon is* Nichiren, and Nichiren *is* the Buddha. Thus the *Gohonzon,* which is the major object of veneration for Sōka Gakkai members, is a source of very great power.

the Sōka Gakkai is both traditional and modern is a fact of no
small significance. It is a modern organizational interpretation
of a traditional religious faith.

4) The Sōka Gakkai is *practical and " this-worldly."* The
true purpose of religion, says the Sōka Gakkai, is to give each
person *immediate, worldly, personal happiness.* To tell people
to be patient and to await some future or heavenly happiness
or that since all are " sinners " nothing can be done, is the
way of false religion which *cannot* produce results because it
is false, it says.

And yet at the same time, the Sōka Gakkai insists that *mere
personal happiness is not enough.* It is a contradiction to assume
that the individual can be truly happy if the condition of society
is unsatisfactory or chaotic. Personal happiness in such a
situation is either illusory or selfish. Thus *society must be
perfected also.*[16] By the same token, it is not enough for one
nation to be saved ; all the world must be made happy as well.
These claims of immediate satisfaction of personal and societal
needs, especially when they are accompanied with the actual
realization of many of the claims—as they so often appear to
be—surely has appeal to persons dissatisfied with their current
status in life.

At the same time, the Sōka Gakkai *does not have a rigid
or unusually lofty moral code.* It does not require a radical
rejection of " this world," and the adoption of an anti-societal
ethic. Of course, if a person is a drunkard, an uncontrollable
gambler, a sexual profligate, or the like, he cannot expect to

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16. This is also the logic which leads the Sōka Gakkai into politics.

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be happy, and thus these excesses must be avoided. But the
Sōka Gakkai does not prohibit drinking, gambling, or sex.
Rather, it suggests a common-sense, "golden mean" type of
morality which is easily within the reach of a well-adjusted
person, and, as we have seen, it is precisely this "good ad-
justment" to life that the Sōka Gakkai seeks to effect.[17]

However, just as the Sōka Gakkai can hardly be called asce-
tic in its morals, *neither can it be called contemplative.* While
daily prayers and occasional pilgrimages to Taisekiji (Nichiren
Shōshū's main temple, near Mount Fuji) are expected of be-
lievers, the prayers are generally of a repetitive nature, and
while memorizing the Lotus Sutra may take some time, it and
the other prayers are relatively uncomplicated and mesmerizing.
Moreover, trips to Taisekiji can scarcely be called exercises
in ascetism. There is no more hardship involved than there
is in any trip in Japan, and the effervescent group spirit which
pervades the sojourn must be a source of considerable extra-
religious satisfaction for most members.

Another important point is that while the Sōka Gakkai stresses
the equality of all members in that all members are equal when
they enter the Sōka Gakkai and social position makes no dif-
ference within the Sōka Gakkai (thus the janitor of a bank
may be a teacher and the bank president his pupil), the Sōka

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17. It may appear that this emphasis upon "adjustment" is similar to the
"acceptance of one's station in life" which would lead to quietism or with-
drawal from the world. But such is not the case. The Sōka Gakkai, some-
what in the manner of Calvinistic Christianity, encourages a believer to be
a successful, functioning member of the society in which he finds himself.
In twentieth century Japan this is a paternalistic form of capitalism. Thus
Sōka Gakkai members are encouraged to be the "best of whatever you are
and can be," not merely "content with whatever you are."

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Gakkai provides for *intra-organizational ranking on the basis of individual effort.* For example, it provides persons with such titles as " Assistant Professor " or " Professor " and the like on the basis of difficult tests covering the doctrine and practices of Nichiren Shōshū. Thus persons who did not have the opportunity to receive a higher education are able to be " Professors " within the Sōka Gakkai.

There are many other ranks as well which are positions of leadership within the various organizational subdivisions of the Sōka Gakkai, as described above. Many of the Japanese names chosen to designate both the groups and the ranks are similar to those used by the military. Partly for this reason, the Sōka Gakkai is frequently alleged to be " militaristic." While there are militaristic, or rather authoritarian, elements in the youth group, this is not true as far as the Sōka Gakkai as a whole is concerned. The flow chart depicting the organization of the Sōka Gakkai looks as much like that of a business as it does of a military organization, and, as a matter of fact, the Sōka Gakkai quite consciously studied and adopted the most useful administrative structures and techniques of modern organizational theory when it made its major structural re-organization after the war.

But the major contention here about the ranks is that the primary function of ranking within the Sōka Gakkai is different from that of either a military or a business organization. In these latter organizations, the main function of ranks is to enable the higher to control the lower ; it is to see that top-level staff decisions are carried out by the line operatives. While this of course is not absent from the Sōka Gakkai by

any means, a main function of ranks within the Sōka Gakkai, from the individual member's point of view, is to give status to persons whom society has generally overlooked. Thus these ranks have more of a socio-psychological function than a military or controlling function. That is, the ranks also are value-creating for the individual member.

Moreover, all ranks are obtained on the basis of individual effort within the Sōka Gakkai rather than by seniority or by social prestige. This of course sets Sōka Gakkai off from most organizations in Japan where individual effort often counts for little (indeed, it may be negatively evaluated), and age is so important.

One of the most important activities which determines a member's rank is his effort to convert persons to Sōka Gakkai. Thus these conversion techniques, especially *shakubuku*, but also *shōju*, are very important in accounting for the success of the Sōka Gakkai, as well as for pointing out its greatest fault in the eyes of non-believers.[18]

Shakubuku is in some ways very unique and in others very typical of Japanese society. It is unique as a form of conversion to a religious group. As such it is shocking to many people. Because it involves extreme social pressure — the "encirclement," "capture" and "interrogation" of one non-believer by several believers, with insistent questioning and retorts, insults and flattery, angry and solicitously-sweet role

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18. For illustrations of *shakubuku*, see Alfred Bloom, "Observations in the Study of Contemporary Nichiren Buddhism," VI *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 58-74 (March 1965), and Noah Branner, "False Religions, Forced Conversions, Iconoclasm," V *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 232-252 (September 1964).

playing, deliberate lies and frank confessions, and the like —
it is a form of persuasion which many people find both difficult
to resist and thoroughly frightening.

Thus among a people who are noted for their ritual politeness
and reserve between friends and strangers alike, it appears to
be extremely atypical. But as a matter of fact, because Japanese
society also provides roles which allow persons to be utterly
irresponsible—children, old people, drunks, and students during
" political " demonstrations are permitted to be completely
insulting and offensive—it is possible that many non-members
are willing to accept and perhaps even admire the commit-
ment and devotion to principles which *shakubuku* represents.

As far as the Sōka Gakkai member himself is concerned,
however, since *shakubuku* and *shōju* are the major activity of
the Sōka Gakkai ; are the measure by which his merit as a
member is evaluated ; are an activity which requires him to
behave in a way which is contrary to that of his normal inter-
personal relations ; and are typically performed on strangers
with a small group of members (thus, as an act of small-group
solidarity, reinforcing him in the correctness of his activity),
shakubuku is as of much importance to the individual as it is
to the organization itself.

In summary then, the Sōka Gakkai can be characterized pri-
marily as *a value-creating action group*. While concern for
personal morals and the value of study and contemplation are
by no means lacking, as *shakubuku* makes especially clear, the
focus of the Sōka Gakkai is primarily upon *the creating of
individual value through group action*. The individual is
caught in a web of activities which give rise to and reinforce

his faith. Thus, the insistent " busyness " and the group nature
of the activities interact to confirm the believer in his faith
and to discourage objective or negative evaluation of it.

III

The Sōka Gakkai and Politics. Now we can turn to the
specifically political consciousness and activities of the Sōka
Gakkai. As we saw before, the Sōka Gakkai does not accept
the notion that politics and values (narrowly defined as " re-
ligion ") can be kept separate. Quite correctly, they see that
politics is indeed nothing more than the " authoritative alloca-
tion of values and costs for a society."[19]

Now, in a democratic society, it is the politician's function
to allocate values and costs hopefully according to the people's
expressed wishes, but at least according to what they think is
in the best interest of a majority of the people. A good poli-
tician is a person who conscientiously tries to discover what
the people's real wishes are and to realize them.[20]

The actual situation of the political world in Japan, says the
Sōka Gakkai—and a great many ordinary Japanese would agree
—is one of corruption. It says that politicians are not concerned
with the people but rather with enriching themselves and

19. This definition of politics was first suggested by the American political
theorist David Easton in his *The Political System* (New York: Alfred A.
Knopf, 1953).
20. Of course there is a great deal of unreality in this formulation because
political research since the war has shown that " the people " have no articu-
late wishes. The rational, politically-interested citizenry does not exist. For
a summary analysis of much of this research, see Robert Lane, *Political
Life* (New York: Free Press, 1959)

benefiting certain special interests. On the other hand, the Sōka Gakkai thinks it *does* know what the people want — what is good and true for each individual and for society as a whole —and it also feels it has persons who are willing selflessly to work for the happiness of the individual and the welfare of society.

The Sōka Gakkai's Political Alternatives. Following the logic of these two assumptions, the Sōka Gakkai has concluded that it must enter the political arena. But in actually doing so, the Sōka Gakkai has followed what seems to be a very prudent and effective course. Apparently recognizing that, though of large size, it is a minority group in Japanese society, it has used its power resources very economically.

In deciding how best to affect public policy in the Japanese political system, the Sōka Gakkai could have followed a number of different courses. A typical tactic in Japan is the political demonstration, but to the best of my knowledge, the Sōka Gakkai has never recommended that its members participate in such demonstrations. This seems to be very wise. Demonstrations are notoriously inefficient ways to affect policy. Except on very rare occasions, demonstrations have the effect only of alienating the larger public and consolidating the opposition to the change desired. Their primary value is that they relieve the frustrations of the demonstrators through exhausting physical exercise.

A second alternative the Sōka Gakkai could have followed would be to have become a pressure group—to try to operate through pressure on existing political parties and politicians. But because of the nature of the election system and the

factionalism (and other features) of the party system, this would not have been an effective method either. To have tried to ally with either the Liberal Democratic Party or the Socialist Party would have had distinct disadvantages, and the system does not normally permit a group to interact equally with both major parties.

Thus the best alternative left was for the Sōka Gakkai to form its own political group and to nominate and elect its own politicians. Even here they could have followed many paths. As one example, they could have operated like the Communist party in Japan, running candidates for almost every possible electoral office. But this would have had a demoralizing effect on Sōka Gakkai members who would have seen most of their candidates defeated, and would have established the impression in the public mind that the Sōka Gakkai was a weak and perhaps crackpot group.

The Sōka Gakkai's Political Strategy. Instead, the Sōka Gakkai has chosen to run candidates only where they have a good chance of winning (it is possible they learned this by experience after several early defeats). Moreover, they operated first on the local level before running candidates in national elections, and then they only ran candidates in multi-member districts (for the Diet and local assemblies) and not in single-member districts (such as for mayor or prefectural governor). In addition, in national elections, they concentrated first on the less " political " Upper House, and even then in national-constituency districts where their large membership could be directed to back certain candidates and not others, and in the largest urban areas where they possessed great numerical

strength. Finally, they have always sought to run candidates who would win by a wide margin in multi-member districts — who would, in other words, run at or near the top of a multi-member list. Thus on many occasions, for example, rather than nominate two Sōka Gakkai candidates who would be barely elected, they have chosen to nominate one candidate to be overwhelmingly elected.[21] All this combines to give the public and Sōka Gakkai members alike the impression that the Sōka Gakkai is very strong.

Moreover, both in name and policy, the Sōka Gakkai has chosen a course designed to give it the widest possible appeal. It has chosen to call its political action group first the " Clean Politics League " (*Kōseiren*, short for *Kōmei Seiji Remmei*) and now the " Clean Politics Party " (*Kōmeitō*). Because of

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21. The Japanese electoral system is one of multi-member districts rather than single-member districts as found in most Anglo-Saxon jurisdictions. That is, for national election purposes, Japan is divided into electoral districts from which in some cases as many as fifty, but usually three to five representatives are chosen. Thus, the three, four, five, or fifty candidates with the most votes are declared elected. This contrasts with the British and American methods by which each electoral district has only one elected representative.

The multi-member district system greatly aids the chances of minor parties in securing some representation in parliament, just as the Anglo-American single-member district system works against the rise of minor parties by requiring a candidate to obtain a majority, or strong plurality, of votes in order to win.

It is impossible to imagine the Sōka Gakkai becoming an effective political force under a single-member district system. Thus it is perhaps no coincidence that as the Sōka Gakkai is becoming more and more powerful, the Socialist Party is finally becoming warm to a long-standing Liberal Democratic Party proposal to replace the present multi-member district system with a single-member plan. Such a revision would doom both the Sōka Gakkai and the Communist Party, as well as the already rapidly-dying Democratic Socialist Party.

the notoriously "dirty" nature of Japanese politics, they have capitalized on a very appealing theme, especially since most Japanese themselves tend to be quite scrupulously honest in their personal and economic dealings.[22] Moreover, the Sōka Gakkai politicians themselves have apparently been able thus far to avoid succumbing to the temptations of elected office, and have been able to retain both the image and the fact of "purity."

In addition, and this is very important, the Sōka Gakkai has wisely chosen to concentrate on manageable *domestic* issues. Steering completely clear of the "ideological" battles of the Conservative and Socialist parties,[23] they have sought to solve the solvable problems of politics—schools, roads, water, prices —rather than the insoluble problems of ideology and international politics. Public opinion polls consistently show that the public is interested only in these immediate domestic issues.[24]

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22. It also has been accused of cashing in on the "Clean Elections Federation" (*Kōmei Senkyo Renmei Undō*) which was a ten year old public organization for the promotion of fair elections.

    The organization changed its name to "Bright Elections Movement" (*Akarui Senkyo Undō*) in February 1965 in order to avoid giving free publicity to the Sōka Gakkai. It is easy to see that the organization's original name, *Kōmei Senkyo Remmei*, and the original name of the Sōka Gakkai's political branch, *Kōmei Seiji Remmei*, would be confusing, and that the organization's slogan of *Kōmei Senkyo* (Clean elections) might give a boost to the *Kōmeitō* (Clean Politics Party).

23. This author has always felt that the imported 19th century European Left and Right Wing ideological politics made no sense to ordinary Japanese citizens and both caused and increased their alienation from the world of national politics.

24. For example, see any of the frequent polls by the Asahi Shimbun, Mainichi Shimbun, or Yomiuri Shimbun. In all of them, cost of living, problems of housing, lower taxes and the like rank ahead of traditional "ideological" issues or foreign policy.

The Sōka Gakkai is able to capitalize on this feeling. Critics, who have a narrowly ideological understanding of "politics," have accused the Sōka Gakkai of having "no policy" — and to meet this criticism, the Sōka Gakkai has developed a lengthy statement of its position on all current topics of ideological politics. But an analysis of the speeches of *Kōmeitō* members in the Upper House of the Diet and in local assemblies showed that the real focus of the party remains with those issues which are closest to the immediate concern of most of the ordinary people.

Also, because the *Kōmeitō* has a magnificient "grass-roots" structure in the constituent parts of the Sōka Gakkai, it is able to have a far better two-way flow of communication from constituents to representatives and back than can the ordinary member of other political parties. Because of this, the *Kōmeitō* has been able to disclose some land sale scandals, is on the spot with aid to local areas whenever disaster strikes, and "discovered" a "lost" water reservoir during a drought in Tokyo just at the time when the government was saying there was nothing that could be done about the lack of water until the typhoon season!

Sources of Danger to the Sōka Gakkai. Thus the future of the Sōka Gakkai itself seems bright. But there are several potential stumbling-blocks ahead for it.[25]

1) First, the Sōka Gakkai has an exceedingly bad reputation among the public at large. For example, a telepol interview conducted by NTV television in the spring of 1964

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25. In the discussion below, "Sōka Gakkai" is used sometimes to refer both to that organization itself and to the *Kōmeitō*.

showed that 42% of the 1,500 persons polled chose the word "fanatical" to describe the Sōka Gakkai. Moreover, the political branch of the Sōka Gakkai, then called the *Kōseiren*, ranked only slightly behind the Communist Party as the party most frequently named in reply to the question, "What party would you absolutely *not* vote for?" Indeed, only 2% of the persons interviewed indicated that they might vote for *Kōseiren* candidates.

In a 1964 semantic differential study, conducted by Professor Taijirō Hayasaka of Rikkyō University, of 129 Sōka Gakkai members and 155 non-members comparing the attitudes of Sōka Gakkai members towards non-members and of non-members towards Sōka Gakkai members, each group was found to have quite unfavorable evaluations of the other. Non-members considered Sōka Gakkai members to be overly active, noisy, aggressive, rigid, and restricted, while Sōka Gakkai members considered non-members to be too passive, inactive, old-fashioned, and elderly.

Finally, in a survey of 1,000 Tokyo voters conducted by this author in February, 1965, the Sōka Gakkai was invariably named in response to the question, "In your opinion, is there some religious organization too much concerned with politics, or not?" To the question, "Some people say the Sōka Gakkai is a dangerous religious organization and others say it is not. How about you, do you think it is dangerous or not?", an overwhelming majority agreed that it is a dangerous religious group. In addition, it should be pointed out that many of the people interviewed expressed the unsolicited response that religion and politics should be kept separate.

This very bad image which the Sōka Gakkai has and the fact that a sizable number of Tokyo residents (at least) are oppossed to a religious group (specifically the Sōka Gakkai) participating in politics seems to indicate that there is an upper limit to the growth of the Sōka Gakkai, both as a religious and as a political group. It is likely, however, that the Sōka Gakkai can double its present size and the number of representatives it has in national politics before this limit is reached.

2) A second major difficulty which the Sōka Gakkai may have to face is the likelihood of internal schism. The Sōka Gakkai prides itself on its internal unity in contrast to the squabbling of other religious and political groups. But such unity is relatively easy to maintain in a young, dynamic, and expanding organization. If the growth of the Sōka Gakkai should slow down or actually stop, it is likely that schisms will result as blame for the stagnation is placed, and revitalizing solutions are sought and tried.

The most likely source of schism at the present time, however, seems to be between the two main components of the Sōka Gakkai : the youth group and the women's group. The youth are, generally, very enthusiastic in support of its political activities, but many of the women seem to be cool, not to say opposed, to it. At the present time, the youth are in control, but there may be trouble in the future. Moreover, youth have a way of getting older, and there may be friction between the present top leaders when they get older and the new younger members. However, as long as the structure of the Sōka Gakkai permits a two-way flow of communication between those at the top and the ordinary member, and if the top leaders are

willing to modify their methods and appeals so that the state-ment of purpose of the organization from the leaders' point of view and the actual purposes of the organization from the members' point of view are the same or mutually reinforcing, internal dissension may be avoided.

3) A third major likely source of trouble is over-eagerness, which can take several forms. For one the Sōka Gakkai will have to resist the temptation of running candidates where they will lose. There are indications that grass-roots pressures to have a local Sōka Gakkai representative have already lead to some defeats (for example, in Kitakyūshū in 1965, and in Saga, Kagawa, and especially Akita Prefectures in 1963).

A connected danger is that, as the Sōka Gakkai runs more and more candidates, it may eventually put in people who will succumb to the temptations of political office and become in-volved in some scandal, thus marring the " pure " image of the Sōka Gakkai.

An even greater danger, however, is that, in its eagerness to gain control of some assembly, the Sōka Gakkai may adopt a style of politics too much like that of the other minor par-ties. The Sōka Gakkai came very close to doing this in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly crisis of this year when it joined with the Socialists in trying to prevent the Liberal Democratic Speaker of the House. from taking his chair. This sort of action destroys the impression that Sōka Gakkai members are " different " from ordinary politicians. To the extent that the Sōka Gakkai *does* have a favorable image among the popula-tion, it is in the belief that Sōka Gakkai politicians are not like the other " dirty " politicians. By adopting the usual

violent tactics, however, it will tarnish this image.

The Sōka Gakkai must remain aloof from Liberal Democratic-Socialist hostilities and retain its " purity " if it wishes to pick up votes from non-members, and the Sōka Gakkai cannot be really successful in politics until it secures a sizable number of independent votes.

4) In keeping with this, perhaps the temptation that the Sōka Gakkai will have the greatest difficulty avoiding is that of over-stressing its religious nature. From the Sōka Gakkai point of view, its political activities are the natural outcome of its religious beliefs. Hitherto the main, but not exclusive, source of its votes has been its own members, so that this focus has been satisfactory. But the Sōka Gakkai must in the future appeal to non-members for political support. It cannot continue indefinitely to grow merely by converting persons to Nichiren Shōshū first and then turning them into *Kōmeitō* supporters. If the *Kōmeitō* stresses its religious base too strongly, it will be doomed to a minority status permanently.

The Sōka Gakkai leaders will know this, and it is one reason why the *Kōmeitō* was made structurally separate of the Sōka Gakkai in 1964. It should also be noted that the parliamentary speeches of Sōka Gakkai members generally have *not* emphasized its religious beliefs as such. Thus the *Kōmeitō* presents two faces : one which it turns to its members, which stresses religion, and one which it turns to the public, which minimizes religion and stresses its purity and action. This is a wise tactic, and if the *Kōmeitō* wishes to grow, it must continue to stress its non-religious theme.

It should also be noted that since the time Daisaku Ikeda

became President of the Sōka Gakkai in 1960, the Sōka Gakkai has been gradually "domesticating." It has, in the typical terminology of religious sociology, been turning from a sect, with exclusive appeal, to a denomination, with more general appeal. This is especially evident since 1963 when considerable emphasis has been placed by the Sōka Gakkai media on the necessity of members being "socially responsible people." Oppressive methods of conversion have been criticized ; loud chanting of prayers at night, in trains, etc., has been condemned; extremely harsh and insulting evaluations of other religious groups has been toned down, but by no means eliminated, and in general, the Sōka Gakkai has been trying to rectify the negative image it has. But even this does not guarantee success, and is especially likely to cause schism between "orthodox" and "reform" positions within the Sōka Gakkai.

A Criticism of the Sōka Gakkai. Above an explanation of the function of the Sōka Gakkai in Japanese society was given. This is a necessary function, and in many ways, the Sōka Gakkai has performed this function well. But now should be pointed out what seems to be the major danger of the Sōka Gakkai itself.

The greatest danger is that the Sōka Gakkai may decide to follow its religious principles to their logical conclusion, instead of softening and becoming a genuine mass-appeal religious and political group.

Now it is clear that the Sōka Gakkai is not a Communist organization or a Communist front, even though a great many Americans, especially American military personnel, have been lead to think it is. In addition, the Sōka Gakkai is not a

Fascist organization either, although this appellation is fre-
quently used in the mass media in Japan and elsewhere.
Whether the Sōka Gakkai is democratic or not depends on
what one means by "democratic." Neither its internal struc-
ture nor its basic aims and methods are "democratic" ac-
cording to the Western liberal democratic model. But such
internal "undemocracy" is typical of almost all private organi-
zations, especially religious or ideological ones.[26] Moreover,
it was shown before that the Sōka Gakkai is "democratic"
to the extent that group decisions are not generally arbitrarily
made by superiors and imposed on inferiors, but are the product
of group discussion and consensual agreement.

However, the Sōka Gakkai's basic assertion that the cause of
all misfortune—personal, societal, and natural—is false belief,
and that if all persons in the world are members of Nichiren
Shōshū, we will have a completely happy and peaceful world,
cannot be admitted. This is as false as, and based upon the
same misconception as, Communist claims about the condition
of a future classless society. Judging from the Christian view-
point, the sin of man will persist in any social situation and
prevent the realization of any utopian society. Things may get
better, but they will certainly not become perfect. Liberal
democratic thought and institutions are based upon this notion.
As Reinhold Niebuhr has said, "Man's capacity for justice

26. See Oliver Garceau, *The Political Life of the American Medical Associ-
ation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941); Seymour Lipset,
Political Man (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1960), Part IV; Sey-
mour Lipset, *et al. Union Democracy* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1956); Paul
M. Harrison, *Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition* (Prince-
ton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959).

makes democracy possible ; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."[27] Liberal democracy is not a question of establishing government on some correct belief which will result in a utopian society. It is an institutional arrangement which tries to utilize the good in man while, through a system of checks and balances, and separations and divisions of political power, restrains the self-centeredness which is in all men, even the best.

The aim behind liberal democratic government, then, is to create institutions, attitudes, and patterns of actions which permit the government to serve as a neutral vehicle through which individuals and groups in a society can compete to have their values maximized and their costs minimized. Liberal democracy accepts individual and social conflict as a permanent fact of life and tries to build as good and orderly a society as is possible.

On the other hand, People's Democracy, Buddhist Democracy (the stated aim of the Sōka Gakkai), and other democratic aberrations deny the permanence of human conflict, elevate the value of order over freedom, and work for a completely peaceful, happy, and orderly society by the elimination of people, ideas, or institutions which they think are the cause of human misery. Hence they are willing to eliminate institutions which check and divide power. Thus, since the Sōka Gakkai defines democratic government simply as " government of, by, and for the people," and since it believes it knows what is correct for the people, it sees no need to have insti-

27. In Harry R. Davis and Robert C. Good, eds., *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1960), p. 186.

tutions which restrain its members from using any political methods necessary to achieve their goals. But the danger, as United States Supreme Court Justice Jackson has said, is that "Those who begin coercive elimination of dissent soon find themselves exterminating dissenters. Compulsory unification of opinion achieves only the unanimity of the graveyard."[28]

Of course, the Sōka Gakkai denies that it will ever resort to oppressive tactics. It also denies that it will ever seek to have Nichiren Shōshū become the state religion. Their present feelings may be sincere, but if the Sōka Gakkai were to gain political control, or become the religion of most Japanese, it would be difficult to avoid dealing harshly with those non-believers whose very existence is the cause of all misfortunes. These persistent non-believers would be considered a cancer which would have to be cut out. But then, if all of Japan — or all the world—were converted to Nichiren Shōshū, and yet misfortune continue—as it surely would—what could the Sōka Gakkai do but turn inward and purge those who apparently secretly persisted in false beliefs? In short, if the Sōka Gakkai acts according to its beliefs, and is successful in its conversion targets, the future is very bleak. At the present time, the Sōka Gakkai is an organization which performs a needed value-creating function for anomic persons in Japanese society. Whether it will take the road of domestication and softening in order to gain greater political support—a road down which it seems to be tentatively travelling now — or whether it will try to retain its ideological purity and actualize its totalitarian

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28. From Supreme Court decision in *West Virginia Board of Education* vs. *Barnette* 319 *US* 624 (1943).

beliefs, remains to be seen. For the present, it is a group which demands our continued objective and calm consideration. Its good qualities should be encouraged. Name-calling, which only makes Sōka Gakkai members firmer in their hostility towards the world, should be avoided. In the mean time, tolerance, and the respect for individual differences of opinion should be fostered in Japanese society as a whole, and a democratic attempt should be made to correct the imbalances in all socie-ties everywhere which drive men to seek simple totalitarian solutions of whatever kind.