

The Acceptance of Nichiren Shōshū Sōka Gakkai in Mexico

ŌKUBO Masayuki
大久保雅行

In 1975 Sōka Gakkai established what might be called a “multinational religion,” Sōka Gakkai International, in the process of its overseas expansion. Ikeda Daisaku became its president, and it was reorganized with legally registered overseas religious bodies. In Mexico this religious organization was given the name Nichiren Shōshū of Mexico (hereafter, NSM). Sōka Gakkai, a development within the Nichiren tradition of Japanese Buddhism, is being accepted by Mexicans living in a Catholic culture. How is this foreign religious tradition understood and accepted by the people of Mexico? What attitudinal changes have occurred in converts to NSM? Also, what changes have occurred in the religio-cultural elements of Sōka Gakkai through its contact and encounter with Catholic culture?

Numerous studies have already treated such problems as the process of conversion to Sōka Gakkai in Japan or the way it is accepted overseas and the changes it undergoes through its contacts with foreign cultures (SUZUKI 1963–1964; SNOW and PHILLIPS 1980; DATOR 1969; ELLWOOD 1974; PARKS 1980; OH 1973). These studies have considered Sōka Gakkai in such wide-ranging concerns as social mobility, attitudinal and cultural change, and proselytization overseas, focusing on missionary types. While several studies have been published on the NSM, their research methods seem to me somewhat inadequate (INOUE 1985, 1981; NAKANO 1981; KASAI 1983).

In conducting my social-psychological survey of NSM members, I have largely adopted the method used by Inoue Nobutaka, Nakano Tsuyoshi, and others in their survey of Nichiren Shōshū of America; however, in order to gain a more adequate understanding, I made

* This article was abridged and translated into English from Japanese. It appeared originally as ŌKUBO 1987c.

several adjustments to suit the situation in Mexico and added some additional survey items. In an earlier study SNOW and PHILLIPS (1980) critically tested the conversion model of LOFLAND and STARK (1965) against cases from Nichiren Shōshū of America. Their study, however, focused on the process leading up to conversion and shed no light on the deepening of religious experience following conversion. While KANTER's commitment theory (1972) and Weber's ascetic types provide helpful frameworks for analyzing this latter point, they have their deficiencies when it comes to highlighting the special features of Buddhist movements. The analytical framework provided by ALLPORT's personality traits of egoism and altruism (1937) and TURNER's impulse liberation and altruism (1975) proved useful for overcoming these deficiencies. Drawing upon these theories I developed the attitudinal change model shown in fig. 1 (discussed in detail later).

Data collection for this study began in October 1981, when I first contacted several dozen members of the NSM in Tokyo and Taiseki-ji. I continued my study with participant observation in Mexico on two separate occasions, from July to August 1985 and from February to March 1987. During my first stay in Mexico, I entrusted approximately 400 copies of my questionnaire to executives of the NSM for distribution. A total of 190 were returned: 107 from the Guadalajara region, 40 from Mexico City, 19 from Veracruz, 18 from Mérida, and 6 from Nuevo León. With the cooperation of Yasumoto Masaya, I was also able to survey sixty Catholic university students. A seventy-year history of Japanese immigration to Mexico (TAKI 1968) and the results of a survey of Sōka Gakkai members in the Guadalajara region were also helpful in my study. On the basis of these materials I shall discuss the problem of the acceptance of the Sōka Gakkai and its subsequent transformation in Mexico.

Historical Development of NSM

The propagation of Japanese religion in Mexico goes back to 1897 when a group of Japanese settlers arrived under the leadership of Enomoto Takeaki. In the early years the central roles were performed by members of established Buddhist sects (even today there are about 400 families belonging to Honpa Hongwanji) or Shinto believers. The Zen sect has developed around a core of medical-care activity, as exemplified by the Ryōdōraku 良導絡. Proselytization activities of the older New Religions were most conspicuous before and after World War II, but today Tenrikyō numbers about 124 *yōboku* (staunch supporters), and a few Seichō no Ie followers exist, but it was impossible to find any Konkōkyō adherents. Of the more recent New Religions, Reiyūkai has gained approximately 1,500 members, and NSM has been accepted by four to five thousand native Mexicans; but Risshō Kōseikai is not present in

Mexico, and Sekai Kyūseikyō is developing as an aesthetic movement, through ceramic art, rather than as a religious movement.

Religio-cultural integration is strong in Mexico because of the long history of the Catholic Church; 94.7% of the population of 74 million are Catholic, and Protestants constitute only a small minority. When the results are compared with those in the United States or elsewhere, one can hardly describe religions from Japan as widely accepted in Mexico. My interest here is in the most successful, NSM.

For the sake of convenience I shall divide the expansion of NSM into four periods: up to the beginning of organized proselytization in 1965; from 1965 to the mid-1970s; from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, when proselytization grew more energetic in regions outside Mexico City and was accompanied by a notable increase in conversions among Mexicans, and finally, from the mid-1980s to the present, during which time the issue of indigenization has become increasingly apparent.

During the first period it is believed that there were a number of Sōka Gakkai members and related individuals scattered among the Japanese immigrants. Luis Sadakichi Iwatare, the first chapter chief, was one such person. Originally from Nagano Prefecture, Iwatare left Japan in 1924 and went to Tampico on the mid-eastern coast of Mexico. After trying farming for a while, he opened a grocery store in Cerritos in San Luis Potosi Province, but his shop was burned down by jealous owners of other shops. Despite the setback, he enjoyed excellent commercial success after that, and by 1932 had become the owner of a large grocery store in Cerritos and was active in community services. Besides the store, he ran a 400-hectare farm that produced tomatoes, cotton, wheat, etc. He also started up a sulfur mine on the outskirts of Cerritos, which he operated from 1934 to 1941; it began with twelve employees and expanded into a company with 450. With the onset of war between Japan and the United States, he left for Mexico City, where he engaged in flower cultivation and the operation of a farm, and then, from 1948, in running a grocery store again. In 1952, in a Japanese-Mexican partnership, he established a starch company and purchased 230 hectares of fertile land near Atlixco in Puebla Province, where Satsuma sweet potatoes were grown using the Japanese diversified farming technique, but in 1959 this company folded. In the midst of so many fluctuations in his life, Iwatare fell victim to diabetes in 1964, and his future looked bleak. In August of that year, however, a letter he sent a friend in Japan became the occasion for his becoming the target of *shakubuku* and persuasions of Sōka Gakkai members, and he became a convert (TAKI 1968). During this first period a Mexican group was provisionally organized as a part of the North American chapter, but it included only a few scattered members like Iwatare.

Shortly after his conversion, Iwatare was appointed chapter chief by

Ikeda Daisaku, and thus the Mexican branch was born in March 1965. In August the same year, when Ikeda Daisaku visited Mexico for the first time, Iwatare's wife, Machiko, was appointed chief of the Women's Division, and Tanaka Tsuneo (presently assistant chief at the headquarters office) chief of the Young Men's Division, and Mexico was divided into three districts.

The second period runs from the start of organized proselytization in 1965 following the formation of the Mexican chapter, up to the mid-1970s. The first general meeting of the chapter took place in June 1966, with approximately 130 people in attendance, and in 1967 this developed into a Full Chapter Meeting. At the Nichiren Shōshū of America general meeting in Hawaii in 1968, the chapter was promoted to a headquarters, and Iwatare was appointed the first chief of headquarters in Mexico.

It appears that in this period proselytization was concentrated heavily on people connected with Japanese immigrants. The conversion of the present chief of headquarters, Alfonso Eizō Mizuki, also occurred at this time. From Ukiha-gun in Fukuoka Prefecture, Mizuki was captured by the Russians in World War II and interned in Siberia, where he was indoctrinated in Marxism-Leninism; after his return to Japan, he worked as an automobile mechanic and devoted his spare time to the Communist movement. As the woman he eventually married, Tanaka Fusako, was a second-generation Japanese-Mexican, he migrated to Mexico with her in 1958 at the age of 35. They settled in Mexico City, but for about one year he was unable to gain employment. His wife became a secretary in the Japanese embassy, and he made use of his qualifications as a mechanic to work for the Mexico Nissan Motor Company. In 1963, after saving for five years, he had accumulated enough capital to set up an automobile repair company that eventually expanded into an enterprise employing eighty employees. Subsequently he added to this two automobile parts companies, becoming manager of three companies. In the meantime he was subjected to *shakubuku* from Iwatare and others, and in 1967 he became a convert so that he could return to Japan and visit Taiseki-ji, which he did in the autumn of that year. When he visited his home town he learned that some of his relatives were Sōka Gakkai members, and this deepened his convictions, so that since his return to Mexico he has been steadfast in his religious activities.¹

Others, like Suzuki Shigeyo, the present manager of the headquarters assembly hall (opened in April 1969), have also gone through a variety of life experiences after migrating and have become converts in order to solve economic difficulties. Proselytization among other people con-

¹ *Seikyō shinbun*, 11 March 1979, p. 7; 1 January 1980, p. 23.

nected with Japanese-Mexicans also expanded. In this period, preparations were being made for full-scale proselytization of native Mexicans. Meanwhile, Sōka Gakkai had created certain types of barriers to propagation within Japan and consequently were seeking opportunities for overseas proselytization.

From the mid-1970s proselytization in regions outside Mexico City and conversions among native Mexicans increased notably. In 1973, in Mexico's second largest city, Guadalajara, about 400 kilometers northwest of Mexico City, Minako Aratashi Nepper and Bob Williams arrived for the purpose of proselytization; she had been converted in Japan, he in the United States. In the same year Aurelio Hernandez, a Mexican who had been converted during his studies in the United States, returned to Mexico. These three formed the core of proselytization efforts in Guadalajara (ŌKUBO 1987a).²

Bob Williams, born in Oregon and a teacher of philosophy in a California university, became a convert in 1970; choosing Guadalajara as the place for proselytization, he took up residence there. He held a succession of jobs, among them that of English teacher and newspaper reporter; making use of his command of English, he expanded his proselytization activities, and was made the chapter chief. He had been converted in the period of intense proselytization in the United States known as "street *shakubuku*."

Minako Aratashi, on the other hand, had migrated to Mexico with her husband, a retired U. S. military general, and immediately began proselytization activities. They spread primarily within a circle of retired officers and Japanese immigrants, and her first success was the conversion of Sachiko Kita Holt, who had migrated there many years earlier as a war bride. The spacious Holt mansion then replaced the Williams residence as the base of operations.

Born in Nara Prefecture in 1930, Aratashi was raised in a family environment of Inari beliefs and Tenrikyō. After graduating from a nursing school, she worked in a U.S. military hospital in Sasebo in Kyūshū, then later in Yokohama, where she converted to Sōka Gakkai in 1961. The mental stress of marriage to and divorce from an American military officer awakened her to faith, and between 1964 and 1972 she visited Taiseki-ji 52 times and recited the *daimoku* several million times, while actively engaged in proselytization activities. She continued this combination of personal exercises of devotion coupled with proselytization activity when she moved to Guadalajara. She became chief of the Women's Division in the Guadalajara chapter and an assistant to Bob Williams. With the help of Williams for the English, Aratashi translated

² See also *Seikyō shinbun*, 25 March 1979, p. 7; 23 June 1982, p. 3.

Nichiren writings and directives from Ikeda Daisaku into English, and Hernandez translated from English into Spanish with a native speaker's feel for the language. As a result of this arrangement, native members who had a considerable grasp of English sprouted up around these three and came to exercise leadership—people like Hector, chief of the chapter's Young Men's Division, Teresa Zapata, former chief of the Young Women's Division, and Rosario Valenzuela (Chayo), chief of the district Women's Division. The rapid increase in conversions of native Mexicans took place from the mid-1970s, following the arrival of Aratashi and the others. The expansion of the fairly intensive proselytization activity of this period made a strong impact on Mexico City and other places as well.

In 1975 Samuel Kudamatsu (present chief of the San Francisco United Districts Office) replaced the aging Iwatara as chief of headquarters, but three years later Mizuki took over as the third chief of headquarters. During this time there was a notable increase in native converts in other regions of Mexico. Accompanying this increase in local members, however, was an intensification of problems associated with overseas proselytization, such as which language should be used in proselytization and religious education, problems related to native customs and practices, and communication problems between people of Japanese and non-Japanese descent.

In Mexico City native members and Japanese immigrants with certification as interpreters were involved in the production of the NSM newspaper, *Tribuna de México*; hence, personnel training was more advanced and solving the language problem was not that difficult. In Guadalajara, however, it became a serious problem. Minoru Yanome, who had become a convert in 1981, was a second-generation Japanese-Mexican who had been learning Japanese from his father, who had migrated to Mexico as a Seichō no Ie missionary; because of his background he was appointed to the Guadalajara training division. This move, however, led to lowering the relative position of people like Magda, who had occupied an important position because she could use both English and Spanish, and discord resulted. Apparently there were many native members who sympathized with Magda. She left the Guadalajara area and went to live in northern Mexico.

In the midst of problems such as these, Aratashi's form of religious practice was emphasized: recitation of one million *daimoku* and *shakubuku*. About 1980 she set her sights on inviting Ikeda Daisaku to Guadalajara, began to struggle to achieve her goal of one million recitations of the *daimoku*, and increased proselytization activities. While some native members went along with her zealous form of religion, the more recent members with a Catholic background seemed to experience

an internal resistance to even the recitation of the *daimoku*, a peculiar practice for them.

Japanese who became converts in Mexico knew very little about Sōka Gakkai in Japan and were trained as proselytizers who respected the native customs. In addition, however, there were proselytizers who had imbibed an ardent form of religion in Japan or the United States. The former we might call nativist proselytizers because they tried to accept a form of religion from Japan while assimilating native customs and practices. The latter we might call universalist proselytizers because they valued the theories and principles of the religion they acquired in Japan or the United States and tried to instruct native members in this form of religion. In any case, neither of these types were native Mexicans. It was not until the end of the 1970s and early 1980s that native members would be trained and come to the fore as proselytizers. By the middle of the 1980s one could see native members making an effort to accept an alien culture while at the same time placing a high value on Mexico's religio-cultural tradition. As a result this has brought out into the open discord among members who support indigenization, universalism, and nativism. This phenomenon foreshadows what the future task of NSM will be.

At this point, let us see what sort of native members have been produced by non-native proselytizers and how they have accepted the religious culture of a foreign country.

A Social-Psychological Analysis of NSM Members

In order to obtain a picture of the sociological characteristics of the native members who accepted a religion that had been brought over from Japan, let us begin by considering the results of a survey of Guadalajara members. This survey provided the names, addresses, telephone numbers, district and group affiliation, employment, place of origin, date of reception of the Precepts and the *gohonzon*, the number of visits to Taisei-ji, the name of the person(s) who applied *shakubuku*, and a report of activities for all *gohonzon*-holding members, up to the time of the survey in 1985. Surveyed were 220 *gohonzon* holders and twelve other related individuals. These 220 include 82 males (37.3%) and 138 females (62.7%). If family members are included, the total membership is 365, 136 males (37.2%) and 229 females (62.8%).

Those NSM members engaged in non-manual work add up to 110, or 50%, with the largest number of individuals (47) concentrated in marketing. Only 15, or 6.8%, are manual laborers. There are 59 housewives, and the fact that 63 (45.7%) of the women members are employed is a special feature. The figures for specialized, technical employment include the following (I mention only the major items, with numbers of

females in brackets): 9 teachers (8), 4 accountants (2), 4 artists (1), 3 nurses (3), 1 dentist (1), 2 dental technicians (2), 2 pharmacists (2), 3 architects, 1 karate instructor; for managerial work, 1 airport supervisor; for clerical work, 9 secretaries (9), 4 railway workers, 2 public servants (1); for those engaged in marketing, the figures include: 13 shopkeepers (7), 4 real estate agents (2), 12 employees (6), 7 singers (6). In addition there are 2 dressmakers, 4 hair stylists, and 2 domestic servants, all of them female.

Nearly all these people were converted through the proselytization of Bob Williams and Minako Aratashi from 1973 onwards. More than 70% of them converted after moving to Guadalajara from other regions.

Converts are formed into subgroups based upon age and sex and belong to one of seven groups in one of three districts. Because the groupings are arranged on the basis of the people who did the *shakubuku*, the geographical distribution of members extends to all areas of Guadalajara, and there are no biases of residential concentration.

With this as general background, we can move on to consider the results of the survey I conducted.³ For the purpose of comparative analysis I have separated questionnaires from Guadalajara and Mexico City into two groups.

Table 1 classifies the members from these two areas by gender and marital status. While married people form the majority in both areas, a considerable number of divorced, separated, and widowed people, and free-union partners, are also members.

TABLE 1. Marital Status

	Guadalajara						Mexico City					
	M	%	W	%	Total	%	M	%	W	%	Total	%
Unmarried	21	65.6	13	17.1	34	31.5	5	31.3	5	20.8	10	25.0
Married	7	21.9	32	42.1	39	36.1	8	50.0	8	33.3	16	40.0
Divorced	2	6.3	16	21.1	18	16.7	2	12.5	5	20.8	7	17.5
Separated	0	0.0	3	3.9	3	2.8	0	0.0	1	4.2	1	2.5
Widow[er]ed	0	0.0	4	5.3	4	3.7	0	0.0	5	20.8	5	12.5
Cohabiting	2	6.3	7	9.2	9	8.3	1	6.3	0	0.0	1	2.5
(Not stated)	0	0.0	1	1.3	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	32	100	76	100	108	100	16	100	24	100	40	100

³ This questionnaire was based on the one used by INOUE (1985) in his study of Nichiren Shōshū in the United States. I revised the questionnaire in Spanish to fit the situation in Mexico.

TABLE 2. Educational Background

Educational Level	Guadalajara	Mexico City	N S A
Primary not completed	1 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	—
Primary	27 (25.2)	8 (20.0)	3 (1.0)
Junior High	15 (14.0)	2 (5.0)	10 (3.5)
Senior High	3 (2.8)	3 (7.5)	110 (38.2)
Vocational school	18 (16.8)	7 (7.5)	63 (21.1)
University	9 (8.4)	9 (22.5)	67 (23.3)
Graduate school	1 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	24 (8.3)
Still a student	22 (20.6)	7 (17.5)	—
Others	8 (7.5)	2 (5.0)	10 (3.5)
(Not stated)	3 (2.8)	2 (5.0)	1 (0.3)
Total	107 (100)	34 (100)	288 (100)

TABLE 3. Problems Being Faced at Time of Conversion

	Guadalajara	Rank	Mexico City	Rank
Economic	60 (24.4) *(56.0)	1st	12 (16.4) (30.0)	2nd
Family	46 (18.7) (43.0)	2nd	16 (21.9) (40.0)	1st
Health	33 (13.4) (30.8)	3rd	11 (15.1) (27.5)	3rd
Psychical	28 (11.4) (26.2)	4th	9 (12.3) (22.5)	4th
Frustration/ loss of drive	27 (11.0) (25.2)	5th	9 (12.3) (22.5)	4th
Relations with outsiders	25 (10.2) (23.4)	6th	8 (11.0) (20.0)	6th
Other	18 (7.3) (16.8)	7th	5 (6.8) (12.5)	7th
(Not stated)	9 (3.7) (8.4)	8th	3 (4.1) (7.5)	8th
Total	246		73	
Number per individual	2.3		1.8	

* Figures in second column of parentheses indicate percentage of respondents (107 from Guadalajara, 40 from Mexico City).

Table 2 summarizes data on the educational level of NSM members. Those who have only graduated from primary or junior high schools total 40% in Guadalajara and 25% in Mexico City. A comparison with the 4.5% figure for the Nichiren Shōshū of America shows the tendency

for NSM members to include a large proportion from the less-educated strata of society.

The data presented in table 3 shows the problems faced by members at the time of their conversion. In Guadalajara, economic problems ranked first; in Mexico City, family problems. Compared with Inoue's results for the California region, where general frustration was the highest-ranking problem, our findings indicate the problem of general frustration is in a low fourth place in Mexico City and a fifth place in Guadalajara. Our findings also differ considerably from the Snow-Phillips survey of Nichiren Shōshū of America, which discovered that human-relations problems amounted to 20%, economic problems to 16%, and health problems to 13% of their sample.

TABLE 4. Circumstances Before and After Conversion (Guadalajara)

Reasons for Relinquishing Former Religion		Benefits Obtained after Conversion	
Mental frustration	40 (22.5) *(37.4)	Solution of family problems	52 (18.8) *(48.6)
Economic frustration	33 (18.5) (30.8)	Psychical solutions	48 (17.3) (44.9)
High hopes in NSM	29 (16.3) (27.1)	Altruistic/religious awakening	39 (14.1) (36.4)
Dissatisfied with Catholic teaching	27 (15.2) (24.3)	Economic solutions	38 (13.7) (35.5)
Dissatisfied with Catholic organization	26 (14.6) (24.3)	Human reform	25 (10.2) (27.1)
Moral/spiritual dissatisfaction	11 (6.2) (10.3)	Physical solutions	27 (9.7) (25.2)
Have not given up Catholicism	1 (0.6) (0.9)	Moral solutions	25 (9.0) (25.2)
(Not stated)	11 (6.2) (10.3)	(Not stated/others)	19 (6.9) (17.8)
Total replies	178	Total replies	277

*The first figure within parentheses represents the percentage of replies, the second figure the percentage of respondents from Guadalajara.

My survey also included open-ended questions, encouraging respondents to express in their own words what they sought from NSM. In Guadalajara, 40 people answered this question, in Mexico City, 13. In Guadalajara, 19 indicated they sought true or lasting happiness, 14 personal improvement, 8 world peace, 8 said a philosophy of life, 5 the enlightenment of others, and 14 gave such reasons as Nirvāṇa, seeking

after truth, or friendship. Similar responses were expressed by members from Mexico City.

I also asked what reasons they had at the time of conversion for leaving their former religion, and the kind of blessings and solutions to their problems they gained after conversion. These were answered in their own words, so I classified the results according to content. Table 4 presents the findings for the Guadalajara region.

Among the reasons given for relinquishing their former religion were: spiritual frustration and dissatisfaction with life, dissatisfaction with and criticism of the Catholic Church and its teachings. As for blessings and the solution of problems, they listed this-worldly solutions to the family, economic, and health problems they faced earlier. Ranking third among their reasons, however, is the awakening to an altruistic and religious destiny, and to the need for them and others to work for true happiness and world peace. A religious and altruistic awakening was given by 39 people, moral solutions by 27, personal reform by 25. These findings are related to the attitudinal changes that I consider later.

To a question regarding the attraction of NSM, a large proportion (see table 5) of the respondents gave such answers as education, philosophy, or its concrete, practical policies; these were followed by reform of the individual and direct benefits. This tendency differs from that of members in the United States. According to INOUE's study (1985) of Sōka Gakkai members in Hawaii and California, reform of the individual and direct benefits ranked high; consequently, this-worldly benefits were considered a special characteristic of Sōka Gakkai.

TABLE 5. The Appeal of NSM (Guadalajara)

Appealing features	# of replies	% of replies	% of respondents
Education/philosophy	48	32.4	44.9
Concrete practical policies	32	21.6	29.9
Reform of individual	18	12.2	16.8
Direct benefits	18	12.2	16.8
Contacts with members/solidarity	14	9.5	13.1
Life of Nichiren	3	2.0	2.8
The <i>gohonzon</i>	3	2.0	2.8
Others	4	2.7	3.7
(Not stated)	8	5.4	7.5
Totals	148		(107)

The probability is high that the reason for this difference is the influence of Sōka Gakkai's shift from an emphasis on material benefits under the second president, Toda, to an emphasis on culture and world peace under the present president, Ikeda. This shift is related to the fact that open proselytization in Mexico is restricted by the government's religious policies. Therefore, NSM headquarters is promoting their activities through the study of Buddhist philosophy and musical and cultural activities.

An NSM proselytizer shows the native Mexican a scroll with a mandala consisting of exotic script, tells the Mexican it is a religious object, and then makes a sort of prophetic promise that, if he or she chants *Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō* and reads the *Lotus Sūtra* and carries out *shakubuku* proselytization, all the troubles of this world will be solved and a life of happiness in the next world will be gained. To someone who has actual economic, health, or family problems, such prophetic promises offer prospects of a solution (SUZUKI 1963–1964). This prospect of a solution is presented over and over again through interaction between the proselytizer and the prospective convert, an interaction that is exhaustive and that can go on for several years.

In order to analyze the process of conversion, the questionnaire asked for: 1) time and place of first NSM meeting attended; 2) time and place chanting of the *daimoku* began; 3) time and place *gongyō* (reciting parts of the *Lotus Sūtra* and chanting the *daimoku*) began; 4) time and place *gohonzon* was received either by the family or the individual. For the sake of simplicity, I chose the first sixty-one questionnaires and tabulated the results. There were 26 people for whom all four steps took place within the same year and 11 who were unsure or who did not answer all four questions; for the remaining 24, the four steps ranged over a number of years.

Various pressures are put on a prospective convert by converts who have become independent proselytizers as well as by new members who are still in the process of conversion. Every new member has the potential to become a proselytizer; this is a feature of all Nichiren-derived New Religion groups, including NSM, that emphasize universal salvation. The ceremony for initiation into NSM, the reception of the Precepts, is performed by a Nichiren Shōshū monk before the *gohonzon* Buddha, and all who receive the *gohonzon*, *daimoku*, and Precepts, and who vow to practice personal religious activities and to save others, are regarded as potential proselytizers, whether they are laity or not. These actual and latent proselytizers make use of their networks of human relationships to expand proselytizing activity.

TABLE 6. People Who Exerted *Shakubuku*

Relationship	Guadalajara		Mexico City	
Father	6	(5.3)	2	(4.9)
Mother	18	(15.8)	4	(9.8)
Brother / Sister	2	(1.8)	7	(17.1)
Child	1	(0.9)	5	(12.2)
Spouse	6	(5.3)	1	(2.4)
Other family member	3	(2.6)	1	(2.4)
Friend(s)	24	(21.1)	9	(22.0)
NSM member(s)	51	(44.7)	10	(22.4)
Relative	2	(1.8)	1	(2.4)
Others	1	(0.9)	1	(2.4)
Totals	114*	(100)	41*	(100)

*Seven respondents in Guadalajara and one respondent in Mexico City had entries in two categories,

Table 6 shows the results of answers to a question regarding this point. As mentioned earlier, over 70% of NSM members (and 86% of their spouses, 82% of their fathers, and 79% of their mothers) in Guadalajara have moved there from other regions; they are people who are spatially on the periphery of the bonds of *compadrazgo*, a formal godparent relationship (NOMURA 1987, p. 60). Accordingly, most of the recruits were observed to be people who were separated from or were on the periphery of their territorial, consanguineal, and religious communities. Although there were some members who thought the interaction and unity of the members was an attractive feature of NSM (see Table 5), for people who have come from other regions, the intensive interaction with NSM members functions as a “co-suffering community” (YANAGAWA 1982, p. 52) that takes the place of the consanguineal, territorial, and pre-conversion religious community. If we put the survey results summarized in table 6 in the light of this background, it is clear that NSM members, rather than family members, relatives, or friends, were the compelling forces behind conversion.

Nor was the period leading up to conversion uniform for all. According to informants in those cities, sometimes several months, even years, of experimental practice intervened between contact with the NSM and conversion (LOFLAND and SKONOVD 1981), and those who did not fall by the wayside in the interval received the *gohonzon* and became NSM members. Because of family opposition or personal circumstances some did not receive the *gohonzon* but received only the Precepts and became “secret believers.” Whether members or “secret believers,” they attended

meetings or study sessions and performed *gongyō* and chanted the *daimoku*, and some took part in proselytization in the company of proselytizers.

The number of members gained as a result of proselytization was 1,014 households in receipt of *gohonzon* in 1985, and in 1986, 1,326 households, with a total of approximately 5,000 individual members. And in 1986 the ceremony of handing on the Precepts was performed by a visiting monk from the United States in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Veracruz, Mérida, Yucatán, Monterey, and elsewhere. In Guadalajara thirty households (55 individuals) received the *gohonzon* and became members, while about 40 people received only the Precepts.

Conversion to NSM involves several steps in moving from a traditional Catholic value system, including: experience of psychological helplessness, anxiety, frustration, and tension resulting from changes in the objective conditions that had been supporting the former value system. As a result of "intensive interaction" (LOFLAND and STARK 1965, SNOW and PHILLIPS 1980) with NSM proselytizers individuals become prospective converts and express a willingness to accept, experimentally, the promises presented by the proselytizer. As individuals then go on to perform *gongyō*, chant the *daimoku*, and take part in NSM organizational activities, some secure the realization of the promises that is called the merit (*beneficio*) of their first faith. Others, however, fail to secure the *beneficio* and they either try again or give up. In the survey of members, 25 people were thought to have given up, 19 were inactive; the total represented 20% of those who returned the surveys. Among those who did not give up but continued NSM activities, some were observed whose attitudes changed toward being proselytizers. If we regard the attitudinal change of the believer at an early stage who converts and accepts the promises experimentally as the first level, that of change of religion (*kaishū* 改宗), it is possible to regard the attitudinal change of the proselytizer who, while practicing the religion with self-motivation, awakens to his or her mission as a bodhisattva and works to bring about the well-being of others, as the second level, that of change of heart (*kaishin* 回心).

Attitudinal Change towards Becoming a Proselytizer

The promises made to the convert in times of personal problems (economic or health), interpersonal problems (at home or the workplace), or concerns over social or world problems, change from being an individual matter to a more specialized structure that includes otherness and a social orientation. In the process of change of religion, proselytizers present individualistic promises in the form of "if you chant *Namumyōhō-rengē-kyō* to the *gohonzon*, your prayers will all be answered,"

instead of talking of others, and the convert's interest is focused on this. But once a convert has become a member of NSM, he or she studies the teachings of Nichiren and the instructions of Ikeda Daisaku and others. The structure of the promises presented here is now different: in addition to one's own *gongyō*, *shakubuku*, or working for others, is stressed. Hence, while the structure of the prayers observed in the prospective converts is that of a magico-religious form of supplication that looks to a this-worldly, very personal fulfilment of desires, with the deepening of the faith after conversion through group education and individual guidance, the promises change qualitatively to prayer in the form of pledges for the sake of others' well-being and the achievement of one's mission.

We have seen in table 4 the results of the questionnaire regarding the blessings gained after conversion; these included responses concerning altruistic and religious awakenings that were of a different nature from the this-worldly benefits to the individual in regard to economic, health, or family problems. Some of these answers were expressed as follows: "Instead of thinking about myself I started chanting the *daimoku* for other people"; [I realized that] by fighting to gain true blessings I would be able to win the well-being of others"; "I feel a life force to fight for the proselytization of the faith and its acceptance by others"; "I have also improved in my attitude towards others." This way of being concerned with others, of creating one's own well-being by means of the well-being of others, can be called an altruistic attitude.

Something resembling this attitude may be seen in responses connected with human revolution or family relationships: "I myself have changed for the better in my temperament"; "reform in temperament"; "reform in life circumstances"; "in the middle of human revolution"; "betterment of the environment around me." These can be considered as aspirations for reform of this world.

This shift in attitude to self-reform and altruism is an aspiration that differs from the first-level attitudinal transformation in the process of change of religion, and such an aspiration can be regarded as that which characterizes the second-level attitudinal change, the change of heart, by which individuals become established as proselytizers.

If one designates Catholicism, with its eschatological conception of salvation and last judgment, as other-worldly and an ascetic denial of this world (see WEBER 1976), one can refer to NSM's first-level attitudinal change as one of this-worldly benefit or this-worldly reform, an orientation connected with a vitalistic conception of salvation (TSUSHIMA et al. 1979). The change towards being a proselytizer in the second-level process of change of heart can be said to have its own quite distinct vector of an altruistic aspiration. And so, as a working hypothesis for convenience' sake I intersected an axis between an other-worldly attitude and a this-worldly attitude with an axis between a self-interested

attitude and an altruistic attitude, to construct an attitudinal change model of the process of change of heart (fig. 1).

There is a completely opposite set of values at work in the offering up of one's life and in this-worldly gain or self-interested satisfaction of desires. One who causes others pain will suffer pain; one who helps others will be helped; one who serves others will in turn be served by others. This theory of reciprocity is developed as a theory of retribution for the past, present, and future; the notion that the performance, now, of *gongyō*, chanting, and *shakubuku* in order to save others is a good cause that will bring good effects upon oneself is stressed to members (IKEDA 1980, pp. 316-25; ŌKUBO 1986). By means of the concept of religious

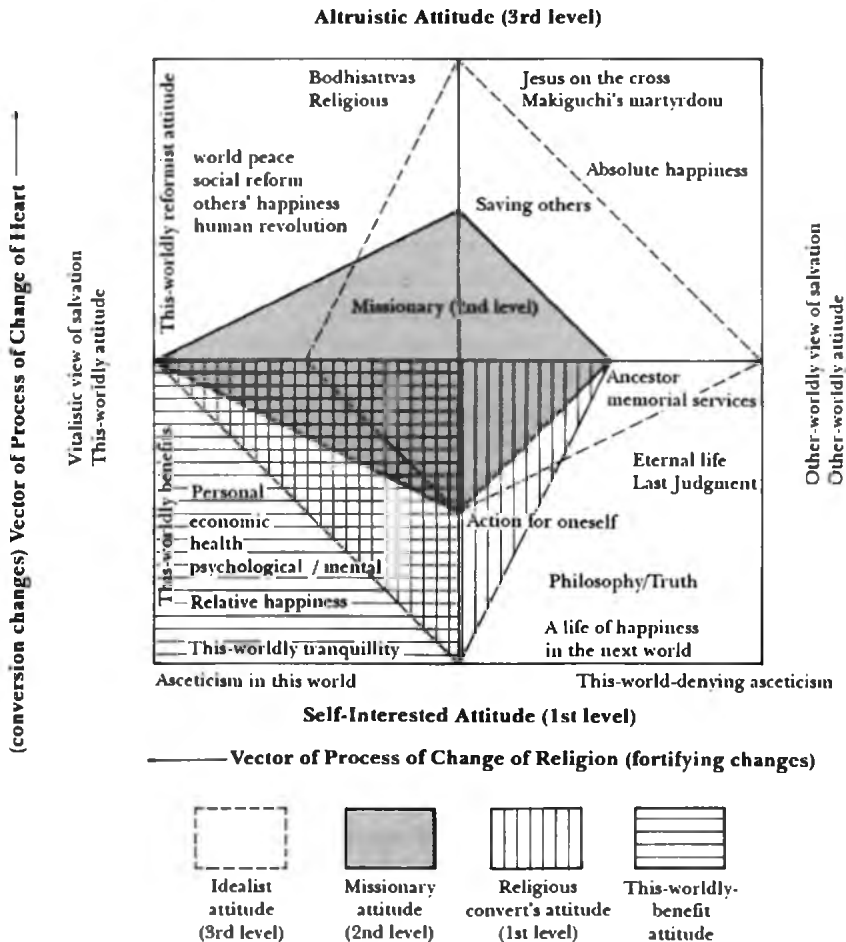


FIG. 1. Attitudinal Changes of NSM Members

reciprocity that is found in this view of service, the convert who aims at the solution of self-interested problems is motivated to add the idea of working for others through *shakubuku* to performance of *gongyō* and chanting, and unconsciously the convert's attitude changes towards one of altruistic values.

For example, Rosario, the chief of the Women's Division, became a convert because she was finding it difficult to repay a loan and she hoped to be able to overcome her economic crisis. Her change from a this-worldly profit and self-interested orientation to an altruistic attitude was observed in the answer she gave to Question 8:

At present my practice of *gongyō* and the *daimoku* and my attendance at discussion meetings and other meetings and my doing *shakubuku* are the offering of my life. In order to do *shakubuku*, in particular, I have to demonstrate that I have solved my economic and other problems by myself and have become happy. That is why I work hard [as a real estate agent], but working for the propagation of the faith and its acceptance by others would be my ideal work. I want to earn money and offer it for the building of an assembly hall in Guadalajara. I am also thinking of offering for the assembly hall the land I am now letting people use to practice for the music festival. Another important act of service would be a visit to Taiseki-ji.

Here we see a second-level change of opinion and attitude in which the first and third levels are sublated (ŌKUBO 1987b).

The first-level religious attitude is a characteristic in the believers being saved, the third level is a characteristic of the party doing the saving. The second-level religious attitude is a form midway between the self-interested value attitude on the first level and the altruistic value attitude on the third level. In the attitudinal change on the second level, there exists a composite of an altruism that is built around a core of self-interestedness, and a self-interested motivation that has awakened to altruism, and in the process of change of heart there seems to be a change towards being a proselytizer.

I was able to observe this kind of substitution by an attitude of religious sacrifice that had been linked to *shakubuku* in many of the NSM members who were interviewed (ŌKUBO 1985). This kind of sense of mission that has been given religious significance can be considered to be functioning as Max WEBER's "psychological motive power" (1969, p. 117) in the altruistic this-worldly reformist attitude, which differs from both the traditional life-orientation of Catholicism and the Protestant capitalistic spirit. This orientation seems to be similar in character, in a certain sense, with Tenrikyō's religio-social attitude of "*hinokishin*" and comparison with it is no doubt necessary (IIDA 1986).

Furthermore, the promise that absolute happiness will be realized if one practices *gongyō* so many times a day and *shakubuku*, reflects an orientation that differs both from the older Catholic traditionalism and Protestant asceticism. At the same time that this value attitude is one of this-worldly gain, it combines and sublates self-interestedness and altruism and presents the native members of NSM with a unique “psychological motive power.”

Changes in Religious Cultural Elements

When people accept elements from another culture as a result of cultural contact, it is not merely their attitude towards life that changes. The transmitted cultural elements themselves also undergo change (NOMURA 1987). In the powerful religio-cultural synthesis produced by Catholicism in Mexico, very different from the culture of religious pluralism found in the United States, the changes in NSM's religion are notable.

In Japan, the Sōka Gakkai's *shakubuku* rejected other religious beliefs as its practice expanded. In Mexico, too, the universalist proselytizers mentioned earlier went about gaining native members by means of exhaustive practice of *daimoku* chanting and rigid ideological disputation. In the beginning the native members accepted this form of proselytization, but opposition to this approach became apparent from the early 1980s. When at the time of the 1985 survey visits were made to the homes of Guadalajara individuals who were thought to have fallen away, it was discovered that quite a large number were actually practicing *gongyō* and chanting the *daimoku* in their homes and did not consider themselves as fallen away. One woman, M, for example, a former chief of the Young Women's Division of the chapter, had returned the *gohonzon* and refrained from NSM activities as a result of her family's strong opposition, but she still regarded herself as a Buddhist.

In contrast, the nativist proselytizers have responded rather tolerantly to the customs and practices of local members. One case was observed in which a member's younger sister was getting married, and since the groom was a Catholic the wedding had to be held in a church; the night before the wedding a festive banquet was held in the home of the member; and for the wedding the member arranged flowers in the church and paid for the cost of the carpet. The same was true for funerals: along with Catholic ceremonies members sometimes performed *gongyō* privately. Those members who so desire can, when the Buddhist monk comes for the annual visit, hold wedding or funeral services in the headquarters meeting hall, but it is left up to the individual members to decide.

There were quite a few Mexican members who had the perception

that to reject the existence of God in Mexican society, where Catholicism is strong, would be to make it difficult to carry on daily life in Mexican society as a whole, or that to slander Catholics meant, in Mexico, the rejection of others. As regards the concept of God and the concept of Buddha, as well, in the questionnaire a large number of people provided the eclectic interpretation that the Catholic God is an external being and Buddha is an internal being.

Several changes to the NSM due to Mexican customs or Catholic reverence for the Bible were observed. The Catholic “days for the dead” are observed on the 2nd and 3rd of November; the annual functions corresponding to the *obon* in Japan are performed in the NSM not in summer but on these “days for the dead,” in the assembly hall, members’ houses, cemeteries, etc.

Several instances were seen relating to the Blessed Mother, who is the object of Catholic religious reverence in Mexico; in one, on the wall of a firm operated by A, an NSM member, there was a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe, with a candle burning before it. In regard to other things, too, such as sexual habits or the use of alcohol or drugs, it is considered to be a matter of the individual’s way of life and something that has to be solved through the efforts of the individual through prayer to the *gohonzon*. As in the case of the parallel observance of Catholic weddings and funerals and Buddhist wedding and funeral rites, it is considered to be up to the personal decision of the member.

To respond to the customs and practices of the local people, representatives from North, Central, and South America at the first SGI Pan American National Congress, opened in Miami on 14 February 1987, adopted the “Miami Declaration.” Citing the concept of *zuihō-bini* 隨法毘尼 (expedient measures with regard to cases for which no specific provision is made in the code of Precepts) given in one of Nichiren’s writings (*Gosho zenshū*, p. 1202), according to which one is to proselytize with respect for local customs and practices so long as they do not run counter to the principles of Buddhism, the Declaration acknowledged the importance of respecting local customs and ways of doing things when engaging in overseas proselytization.⁴ When immediately afterwards I asked some native members of NSM in Guadalajara what they thought about the method of proselytization, they answered that *shakubuku* activities and education that respected local customs and practices was a good thing, and they had long been waiting for such a policy. Therefore I think it can be said that the results of the surveys show that religious change has gone a long way in the NSM.

⁴ *Seikyō shinbun*, 16 February 1987.

Conclusion

Although NSM appears to have been accepted by more Mexicans than other religions of Japanese origin, when compared with the results of Nichiren Shōshū of America one could hardly call its proselytization activities a success. The reasons for this are not easy to explain. Tenrikyō, for example, has only a handful of native members, and its religious activities are limited to the formation of communities among people of Japanese descent. NSM, in contrast, has tried intensive interaction with natives, native members become proselytizers and expand the front line of teaching and proselytization to their circle of human contacts. Also, it trains SGI-qualified interpreters and positively encourages proselytization through the native language, by making use, for example, of large numbers of young native members for the production of the newspaper *Tribuna de México*.

Despite all this, it seems the powerful religious cultural integration produced by Catholicism, the existence of *compadrazgo*, and the religious policies of the government function as solid barriers to proselytization, creating a very different situation from that of the religious pluralism of the United States. The fact that most of Guadalajara's members are situated on the peripheries of the religious bonds of *compadrazgo* and the like probably is a confirmation of this conclusion. This peripheral quality is strongly in evidence in the Mexican new religion called La Luz del Mundo; by forming their own special territorial communities they are able to avoid the pressures of Catholics. The NSM, in contrast, does not form territorial communities, but people who are trying to solve common problems, such as dissatisfaction with Catholicism or troubled situations, do form temporally and spatially limited co-suffering communities, and these function as support systems that take the place of *compadrazgo*.

Also, the fact that NSM's approach to problem-solving differs from the Catholic one provides its members who were unable to acquire an identity as Catholics (people like Hector) a formula for acquiring a different identity. In addition, the altruistic this-worldly reformist belief system of the NSM, which differs from both the Catholic and the Protestant orientations, offers native members a new "psychological motive power" and functions as a religio-cultural integration in the spirit of Nichiren. On the other hand, the powerful religio-cultural integration of Catholicism has forced NSM to accommodate to local customs and practices more rapidly and noticeably than is the case in Nichiren Shōshū of America.

REFERENCES

- ALLPORT, Gordon W.
1937 *Personality; A Psychological Interpretation*. New York: Henry Holt and Co.
- DATOR, James A.
1969 *Sōka Gakkai, Builders of the Third Civilization. American and Japanese Members*. Seattle/London: University of Washington Press.
- ELLWOOD, Robert S., Jr
1974 *The Eagle and the Rising Sun: Americans and the New Religions of Japan*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- IIDA Teruaki 飯田照明
1986 *Shūkyō to keizai – Tenrikyō no baai 宗教と経済 – 天理教の場合 [Religion and economics: The case of Tenrikyō]. Tenri Daigaku gakuho 天理大学学報 151: 15–38.*
- IKEDA Daisaku 池田大作
1980 *Shinpan Ikeda kaichō zenshū 10, Kōgihen 新版池田会長全集十, 講義編 [Collected works of President Ikeda, new edition, vol. 10, lectures]*. Tokyo: Seikyō Shinbunsha.
- INOUE Nobutaka 井上順孝
1981 *Ibunka no naka no shinshūkyō undō 異文化の中の新宗教運動 [New Religion activities within alien cultures]. Shūkyō kenkyū 宗教研究 249: 1–36.*
1985 *Umi o watatta Nihon shūkyō 海を渡った日本宗教 [Japanese religions overseas]*. Tokyo: Kōbundō.
- KANTER, Rosabeth Moss
1972 *Commitment and Community*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- KASAI Masahiro 笠井正弘
1983 *Mekishiko genchinin ni okeru Nihon bunka juyō no ikkeitai – Nichiren Shōshū dendō ni kansuru jirei kenkyū メキシコ現地人における日本文化受容の一形態 – 日蓮正宗伝道に関する事例研究 [One form of acceptance of Japanese culture among native Mexicans: A case study of Nichiren Shōshū proselytization]. Nanbu Mekishiko sonraku ni okeru Katorikku-kei bunka no kenkyū 南部メキシコ村落におけるカトリック系文化の研究 [Studies of Catholic culture in southern Mexican villages] 2.*
- LOFLAND, John and Norman SKONOVD
1981 *Conversion motifs. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 20: 373–85.*

LOFLAND, John and Rodney STARK

- 1965 Becoming a world-saver: A theory of conversion to a deviant perspective. *American Sociological Review* 30: 862-75.

NAKAMAKI Hirochika 中牧弘允

- 1977 Hawai Nikkei shūkyō ni okeru Nihon shikō to Amerika shikō
ハワイ日系人宗教における日本指向とアメリカ指向[Japan-oriented
and America-oriented religions of the Japanese Americans in
Hawaii]. *Shūkyō kenkyū* 234: 20-22.

NAKANO Tsuyoshi 中野 毅

- 1981 Amerika shakai to NSA—Hawai no baai アメリカ社会とNSA—
ハワイの場合 [NSA in American society—The case of Hawaii].
Kōza kyōgaku kenkyū 2.

NOMURA Nobukiyo 野村暢清

- 1987 Mekishiko Torahomuruko no Katorikku shūkyō bunka no
kenkyū メキシコ・トラホムルコのカトリック宗教文化の研究 [A
study of Catholic religious culture in Tlaxomulco, Mexico].
Nambu Mekishiko sonraku ni okeru Katorikku-kei bunka no kenkyū 4.

OH, John Kie-chang

- 1973 The Nichiren Shoshu of America. *Review of Religious Research*
14: 169-77.

ŌKUBO Masayuki 大久保正之

- 1982 Ueebaa ni okeru shūkyō-shakaigakuteki kenkyū no hōhō ni
tsuite ウェーバーにおける宗教社会学的研究の方法について [On
methods of religio-sociological studies in Weber]. In *Shūkyō no
kagaku to jissen* 宗教と科学と実践 [Science and practice of reli-
gion]. Fukuoka: Ashi Shobō.
- 1985 Nichiren ni okeru kuyō no mondai—Hokkekyō Yakuōbon o
sozai to shite 日蓮における供養の問題 — 法華経薬王品を素材として
[The problem of kuyō in Nichiren: A study of the Medicine
King chapter in the *Lotus Sūtra*]. *Tōyōtetsugaku kenkyūjo kiyō*
東洋哲学研究所紀要 1: 205-30 [also paginated (17) to (42)].
- 1986 Shūkyōteki kōkan riron ni kansuru isshiron—Shoki Nichiren
kyōdan ni okeru mandara to beisen kuyō no sōkan bunseki o
tōshite 宗教的交換理論に関する一試論 — 初期日蓮教団における
曼荼羅と米銭供養の相関分析をととして [An essay regarding a
theory of religious reciprocity: A correlative analysis of the
mandala and rice and money kuyō in early Nichiren groups].
Nishi Nihon shūkyōgaku zasshi 西日本宗教学雑誌 8.
- 1987a Mekishiko ni okeru SGI kannen fukugō juyō katei no shakai-
shinrigakuteki bunseki メキシコにおける SGI 観念複合受容過程の
社会心理学的分析 [A social-psychological analysis of the process

- of acceptance of SGI conceptual complexes in Mexico]. *Nanbu Mekishiko sonraku ni okeru Katorikku-kei bunka no kenkyū* 4: 92–123.
- 1987b *Mekishiko Nichiren Shōshū ni okeru kuyō-kan to shokugyōrōdō-kan ni tsuite* メキシコ日蓮正宗における供養観と職業労働観について [Views on *kuyō* and views on occupational labor in Nichiren Shōshū of Mexico]. *Nishi Nihon shūkyōgaku zasshi* 9: 19–27.
- 1987c *Ibunka ni okeru nikkei shinshūkyō no juyō to henyō* 異文化における日系新宗教の受容と変容 [Changing attitudes and the acceptance of Japanese New Religions in alien cultures]. *Shūkyō kenkyū* 273: 25–64.
- PARKS, Yōko Yamamoto
 1980 The Nichiren Shōshū Academy in America: Changes during the 1970s. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 7: 337–55.
- SNOW, David and Cynthia PHILLIPS
 1980 The Lofland-Stark Model: A critical reassessment. *Social Problems* 27: 430–47.
- SUZUKI Hiroshi 鈴木 広
 1963–1964 *Toshikasō no shūkyō shūdan – Fukuoka-shi ni okeru Sōka Gakkai* 都市下層の宗教集団 – 福岡市における創価学会 [Urban lower-class religious groups: Sōka Gakkai in Fukuoka City]. *Shakai-gaku kenkyū* 22: 81–102; 24–25: 50–90.
- TAKI Yasutarō 滝沢太郎
 1968 *Mekishiko kokujō taikan – Shokumin nanajūnenshi* メキシコ国情大観・植民七十年史 [An overview of the situation in Mexico: A seventy-year history of immigration]. Mexico City: Mehiko Shinpōsha.
- TSUSHIMA Michihito 対馬路人 et al.
 1979 *Shinshūkyō ni okeru seimeishugiteki kyūsaikan* 新宗教における生命主義的救済観. *Shisō* no. 665. [English version in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6: 139–61, titled “The vitalistic conception of salvation in Japanese New Religions: An aspect of modern religious consciousness”]
- TURNER, R. H.
 1975 Is there a quest for identity? *The Sociological Quarterly* 16.
- WEBER, Max
 1969 *Die protestantische Ethik*. Munich/Hamburg: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag.
 1976 *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.
- YANAGAWA Keiichi 柳川啓一
 1982 *Shūkyō riron to shūkyōshi – Sei to zoku no majiwaru sekai* 宗教理論と宗教史 – 聖と俗の交わる世界 [Religious theory and the history of religion: A world where the sacred and the profane intermingle]. Tokyo: Ōbunsha.