

# MEMORIES OF TALKS WITH THE GUARDIAN

by

a Japanese pilgrim, Mr. Hiroyasu Takano

(as related at

the 1980 Bahá'í National Convention of Japan)



*Haifa, February 1954. Hiroyasu Takano, on the right, with fellow pilgrims Loyce Lawrence and Maud and Albert Reimholz. From Haifa Mr. Takano returned to Japan, having spent a year in the United States, where he had been sent by his company. Loyce Lawrence, originally from the U.S.A., was a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh serving in the Lofoten Islands of Norway, beyond the Arctic Circle; the Reimholzes were living in the U.S.A. and later were pioneers in South Africa. The photograph was taken by another pilgrim, Irene Bennett, originally from the U.K. and a pioneer in Kenya and Uganda. Thus do pilgrims gather in the Holy Land from, and disperse to, all corners of the globe.*

*The above photograph is reproduced from the webpage [bahaihistoryuk.wordpress.com/2013/04/01/irene-bennett-pilgrimage-1954/](http://bahaihistoryuk.wordpress.com/2013/04/01/irene-bennett-pilgrimage-1954/). The webpage contains Irene Bennett's account of her pilgrimage, including several mentions of Mr. Takano—it seems the other pilgrims called him "Hero".*

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## Foreword

### Mr. Takano and his talk

Hiroyasu Takano was the only Japanese Bahá'í, other than Saichiro Fujita, to meet Shoghi Effendi. An electrical engineer, he became a Bahá'í in the United States of America, where he had been sent by his company for training and experience. Attendance at the May 1953 dedication of the House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois was apparently an impetus for his acceptance of the Faith. Mr. Takano applied for pilgrimage and, after a brief stint in West Germany, visited Haifa in late February and early March 1954 on his way back to Japan. He later served on the Tokyo Spiritual Assembly and was for many years the chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Japan. Among other achievements, he was largely responsible for the computerization of operations at the Bahá'í National Center. He passed away in 2011; in a posthumous message from the World Center, assurance is conveyed of the supplications of the Universal House of Justice “at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of [Mr. Takano’s] noble soul throughout the worlds of God.” (This too-brief biography is mostly based on information contained in the book *Unfurling the Divine Flag in Tokyo: An Early Bahá'í History* pp. 72-73.)

Although the subtitle of this document suggests the following text is a translation of a talk recalling his pilgrimage that Mr. Takano gave at the 1980 Bahá'í National Convention of Japan, there is reason to believe it is actually a translation of a cassette tape recording Mr. Takano made not long after the Convention, under the auspices of the Audio-Visual Committee, reprising a talk given at the Convention; this matter is addressed just below, under “The translation”. What follows, therefore, is not Mr. Takano’s pilgrim’s notes, per se, but rather a talk based on those notes. Perhaps in reviewing his notes to prepare for the talk Mr. Takano decided to redact some of their content, in that he does not mention remarks made to him by Shoghi Effendi as recounted by Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum in her book *The Priceless Pearl* p. 360:

I remember watching the face of the first Japanese Bahá'í pilgrim when Shoghi Effendi, with those wonderfully expressive eyes of his fixed upon him, said that as the majority of the human race was not white there was no reason why the majority of Bahá'ís should be

white. The emphasis and openness with which Shoghi Effendi stated this was clearly a revelation to this man from the Far East who was returning from a protracted stay in the United States.

A number of items among Mr. Takano's belongings have recently come into the possession of the National Archives Committee, following the passing of his wife, but, as of the writing of this foreword, these items have not been processed as a collection by the Committee. The original Haifa notes may be among these items.

Early in his talk Mr. Takano indicates that this is the second occasion his recollections of the Guardian's remarks have been recorded on tape by the Audio-Visual Committee. Through the kindness and efficiency of Ms. Tomo Fushimi, a member of the National Archives Cmte., the undersigned editor was able to listen to both recordings: one produced in 1980 and one in 1977 (the year being printed on each cassette). There is some material in the '77 recording not heard in the '80, and this is elaborated in Appendix 1.

The title given this document, presumably by the translator, is "Memories of Talks with the Guardian", but Mr. Takano himself in his recording does not give the talk any title nor does a narrator who speaks a few introductory lines at the beginning; the title as handwritten in Japanese on the Audio-Visual Cmte. cassette is 守護者会見記 高野博康氏 巡礼ノ一トより (shugosha kaikenki takano hiroyasu shi junrei nōto yori), which can be rendered as "Record of Interviews with the Guardian, from the Pilgrimage Notes of Mr. Hiroyasu Takano".

### The translation

The following text, including its title and subtitle, has been retyped by the undersigned editor from a typescript containing the English translation of Mr. Takano's original talk in Japanese. Concerning how the typescript became available to this editor, see the afterword.

While the subtitle of the translation typescript states that it is of a talk Mr. Takano gave at the 1980 Bahá'í National Convention of Japan, as mentioned above there are several points which together constitute reason to believe it is actually of a tape-recording made after that Convention: first, the translation both fully renders the content of the tape-recording and precisely follows the order or sequence of that content; also, early in the tape-recording and in the translation (see page 8 herein)

Mr. Takano says “this tape is the third time I am relating my experiences as a pilgrim”—which confirms that the translation is of a tape-recording—but the tape contains no applause or background sound one would expect at a Convention session; and finally, toward the end of the tape and the translation (see page 24 herein) Mr. Takano states that the particular matter he is discussing was not covered in his remarks at the Convention, which confirms that both the tape-recorded talk and the translation postdate the Convention. (Incidentally, if Mr. Takano spoke at the Convention about his pilgrimage, his experiences would have been related four times total, not three as he is quoted above saying.)

On the other hand, in places the translation contains text not spoken by Mr. Takano in the recording. Furthermore, that text has not been enclosed in brackets or otherwise distinguished by the translator in the typescript. Why this extra text exists is unclear: as far as this editor knows, he listened to a tape copied from the master tape, not an edited version missing parts of Mr. Takano’s talk, and thus presumably the editor listened to the same recording the translator worked from; it is also certain that the translation is not of the 1977 recorded talk.

A possible explanation for the extra content is that Mr. Takano may have spoken from the same script for the tape-recording as at the Convention—the above-mentioned introductory narration (which itself is not translated) states that the tape-recording reprises remarks Mr. Takano made at the Convention—but the script may have been pared somewhat for the recording, and the pared content then restored for the translation, perhaps at Mr. Takano’s request and perhaps for an expository purpose—the added passages often expound or summarize the points Mr. Takano is making on the tape. It is also possible that the passages in question are not from a talk given at the Convention but rather exclusive to the translation and inserted by the translator, either on his/her own (which seems unlikely) or at Mr. Takano’s direction. In any case, these extra passages have been identified by footnote herein. If the provenance of these added passages or if other information concerning the talk or the translation comes to be known, this foreword will be updated.

The translation itself, generally accurate and quite readable, uses here and there some rather colloquial or idiomatic expressions that convey the meaning but not the formal register of the original talk; further, Mr. Takano employs an honorific level befitting the stature of the Guardian

when speaking about him, a style that cannot be duplicated in English. The translator's name is not given on the typescript; the presence of colloquialisms makes it doubtful that Mr. Takano himself is the translator.

### Editorial matters

It would be easy to edit the translation here and there for style as well as delete the added content, but the text has been retyped precisely as it is for historiographical reasons (including that the translation text was apparently sent to the World Center; see the afterword). Nevertheless, one part of the text has been redacted by this editor for reason of sensitivity of subject matter (the number of readers of this account on the Bahá'í-Library website very likely being far larger than the number of listeners of the original talk); the location of the deleted text is marked by an ellipsis.

Editorial comments are placed in footnotes and editorial interpolations embedded in the main text in brackets; the afterword and appendices contain further editorial commentary. In the editorial matter, passages from works revealed by the Central Figures are italicized; passages from the messages and letters of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice are placed within double guillemets « » rather than quotation marks; and passages from letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi and written by the secretariat of the House of Justice are placed within quotation marks, unless the passages are given block form, in which case the marks are left off. Book citations are from editions that were readily available online. The translation text has a misspelling or is lacking capitalization usual in Bahá'í usage in a few places, and these have been editorially "sicced". Macrons signify long vowel sounds in the transliteration of Japanese text.

### Other bios

Following are brief notes on the only persons, other than 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, to be referred to individually in Mr. Takano's talk. Very early in the talk—the first page of the translation, or page 8 herein—reference is made to Agnes Alexander and Ikuo Mizuno. Ms. Alexander needs no note, but mention can be made of her distinction by name in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, her appointment as Hand of the Cause, and her being the first Bahá'í in the Hawaiian Islands, the second

to pioneer to Japan, and the first to teach the Faith in Korea. Shoghi Effendi once wrote to her (*Japan Will Turn Ablaze!* p. 9) that she was a «radiant herald» whose «glorious services in those remote regions of the earth are never to be forgotten.»

Dr. Ikuo Mizuno was a surgeon by profession, served for many years on the National Spiritual Assembly of Japan and as a member of the Auxiliary Board, and translated the Kitáb-i-Íqán into Japanese. He passed away in 1986 at the age of 91 years, and is fondly remembered for talks in which, as would be expected of a physician, he compared the structure and function of the Bahá'í Administrative Order to that of the human body. (See *Traces that Remain* pp. 202-203.)

### Caveat lector

The editor contacted the National Spiritual Assembly of Japan to express his wish to post this document online, and the Assembly's secretariat stated no objection in reply but advised it be clearly stated editorially that the recollections of pilgrims are not authoritative. And so the abiding advisory is reiterated here: The content of notes taken by pilgrims of the remarks of Shoghi Effendi—and perforce the content of talks based on such notes—is inherently limited in authority and veracity. Mr. Takano's recorded talk, and thus the translation, almost entirely summarizes Shoghi Effendi's remarks rather than attempting to directly quote them, and as such the reader should find it easier to resist the temptation—which readily arises with pilgrims' notes—to regard the content as a verbatim record of those remarks.

Sheridan A. Sims  
September 2016

**MEMORIES OF TALKS WITH THE GUARDIAN**  
**by**  
**a Japanese pilgrim, Mr. Hiroyasu Takano**  
**(as related at**  
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It was 25 years ago, in the year Showa 29\*, that is, in 1954‡, that, at the invitation of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, I had the honor of visiting Haifa as the first Japanese Bahá'í pilgrim, and there sharing intimate discussions with Shoghi Effendi.¶

After that, as soon as I got back to Japan, I related the things I had heard from Shoghi Effendi during my visit as a pilgrim, and at that time, some of my notes were translated into English by Agnes Alexander and passed out to some of the Bahá'ís of Japan. Also, more than 20 years later, [Dr.] Ikuo Mizuno came to me and suggested that I put these pilgrim notes in order. I did do this, and the resulting memoirs were distributed◇ by the Bahá'í Audio-Visual Committee in the form of a cassette tape bearing my name and entitled "Pilgrim's Diary". Thus, this tape is the third time I am relating my experiences as a pilgrim.

I'd like to tell you a little story as to why

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\* In Japan years can be reckoned by either the Gregorian calendar or the imperial era. "Shōwa" is the regnal name of the person and the era of Hirohito (r. 1926-1989).

‡ On the tape Mr. Takano does not say "that is, in 1954".

¶ The original Japanese (親しくお話を伺う shitashiku ohanashi wo ukagau) suggests listening to the remarks of the Guardian in a warm atmosphere or intimate setting.

◇ In 1977.



I'm putting this tape together at this time. You see, there was to be a teaching conference in the Kansai Area\* and there was a suggestion that, as one of the conference topics, I relate my impressions of the Guardian or some of the things he'd said to me. Unfortunately, I couldn't make it to that conference, and had to turn down this request at that time. But I took the opportunity to go over my pilgrim notes once more.

Also, I met a number of Bahá'í pioneers and foreigners who'd come to Japan, and each time I was introduced as the only Japanese pilgrim to have ever met the Guardian, I was asked, "What did the Guardian say?" So I decided for myself that I would like to put down on tape the things the Guardian talked about during my pilgrimage, and the result is this tape.

At any rate, since this was 26 years ago, when I went over these notes, I realized that some of the things were outdated and others were long passed. So there is one thing I'd like you to bear in mind as you listen to this talk. At the time I made my pilgrimage, there were only 12 N[ational] S[piritual] A[ssemblies] in the entire world. Now, I believe there are 150 or 160, but at that time, there were a mere 12. Also, at that time, the only areas in Japan that had been opened to the Faith were Tokyo, Yokohama, Kyoto, Osaka, Amagasaki, Kobe, Yanai, and the prefectures‡ of Nagasaki, Aichi, and Akita – a mere 12¶ in all. It was at such a time, then, that the Guardian talked with me about the

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\* The Kansai region includes the cities of Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe.

‡ A Japanese prefecture is analogous to a U.S. state. Yanai was the home of Saichiro Fujita, who in 1955 left Japan to return to the Holy Land.

¶ On the tape Mr. Takano says "ten".

things I'm going to relate to you on this tape. I'd greatly appreciate it if you would keep this in mind as you listen to my talk.

The first matters I should talk about, I suppose, are those that concern Japan. The Guardian said that, in the future Bahá'í world, the two areas in the world that would be most in the limelight were the continent of Africa and the area circling the Pacific Ocean. He went on to stress that Japan has an important role as one of the two centers in the Pacific Region. These two centers are Australia in the south and Japan in the north.

At this point, the Guardian said that there were two meanings to the word "center" as he used it here. One meaning is that of a center that could be compared to the poles of a magnet, a center of centripetal force that pulls in strength from its surroundings; the other meaning is that of a radiating center that gives off rays of light, that is, a source of illumination.\* He said that these two centers, Australia and Japan, must be centers in both of these ways. He stressed the fact that not only will they develop this way, but also, that we

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\* One of the definitions of "centripetal" given in a dictionary online is "moving or directed toward a center or axis." In a letter dated July 19, 1957 found in *Letters of the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand* pp. 134-140, Shoghi Effendi writes of «a spiritual axis, extending from the Antipodes to the northern islands of the Pacific Ocean—an axis whose northern and southern poles will act as powerful magnets, endowed with exceptional spiritual potency, and towards which other younger and less experienced communities will tend for some time to gravitate.» It would be interesting to know if "centripetal" is the actual word Shoghi Effendi used; on the tape Mr. Takano uses the Japanese equivalent of "centripetal" (求心 kyūshin). Concerning the axis and the "radiating center" see Appendix 2.

must work to make them this way.\*

By the way, the Guardian stated that, as Japan holds this important rank and shoulders such an important role in the Bahá'í world, he was confident that both Japan and the Japanese people have all the qualities necessary to fully measure up to this vital responsibility and to carry out this important mission. He said that the Japanese are qualified not only in terms of ability but also in terms of experience and trials.†

Let me give you the precise explanation of this matter that the Guardian gave to me: He said that, along with the Germans, the Japanese are the most industrious nation in the world; also, they have great capacity and are very spiritual. Japan has continuously had a very high level of culture since ancient times, and especially if one looks at the amazing development Japan has achieved since entering the modern age, one can say that the high level of ability of the Japanese people has been amply demonstrated. Moreover, if one also looks at Japanese art, one realizes that the Japanese people have an extremely great sense of balance. The Guardian stressed that these points demonstrate the ample ability of the Japanese people.

Secondly, the Guardian stated that the Japanese

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\* On the tape Mr. Takano does not speak this paragraph from “He said that these two centers” beyond. (On unspoken text see the foreword.)

† On the tape Mr. Takano does not speak this last sentence. In a letter to the Bahá'ís of Japan written soon after he became Guardian—see *Japan Will Turn Ablaze!* p. 73—Shoghi Effendi quotes ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: «Japan is endowed with a most remarkable capacity for the spread of the Cause of God! Japan, with (another country whose name He stated but bade us conceal it for the present) will take the lead in the spiritual reawakening of the peoples and nations that the world shall soon witness!»

had ample experience to fulfill their responsibility. As one example of this, he said that the previous examples showed that the Japanese are quite experienced in making organizations and accomplishing things through these organizations. Looking at Japanese society, one sees sufficient proof of this.

He added that the Japanese also had ample qualifications in terms of tests, since Japan is the only country in the world to have experienced the atomic bomb, and in this way, had experienced ample sacrifice.

These three things, then, Japan's great ability, its organizational experience and its severe trials, qualify it to be both a center of light and a center of centripetal force.\*

In saying this, the Guardian said that he felt that if we just looked at the amazing progress the Faith had made in Japan in the past two years, we would naturally agree with these statements.

The Guardian also said that, in order to carry out its functions, along with Australia, as one of the two centers, in both senses of that word, in the Pacific Region, the Japanese Bahá'ís themselves would first have to strengthen the center of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. The Guardian said that at

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\* While this one-sentence paragraph helpfully summarizes Mr. Takano's points, he does not actually speak this sentence on the tape. In the aforementioned July 19, 1957 letter to the N.S.A. of Australia, Shoghi Effendi writes of Japan as «a country which by reason of its innate capacity and the spiritual receptivity it has acquired, in consequence of the severe and prolonged ordeal its entire population has providentially experienced, is destined to have a preponderating share in awakening the peoples and races inhabiting the entire Pacific area, to the Message of Bahá'u'lláh . . .»

that time, what this actually meant was that an NSA would have to be established in Japan.

This is a bit of a digression, but the Guardian said that not only did Japan need to establish its NSA, but that he had such confidence that in the near future Japan would be added to the list of NSAs, which at that time included only 12 countries in the entire world, that he would entrust me with a present for Japan, even though he had never before done this unless an NSA was already established in a country. He said that this present was actually for Japan once it had established its NSA, but he gave it to me then, saying that he believed the NSA of Japan would be established in the near future.

This present is now hanging in the Tokyo Bahá'í Center. It is a piece of cloth that had lain directly on the body of Bahá'u'lláh. Actually, it is only half of this cloth. As I understood it at that time, the other half went to the other center in the Pacific Region, that is, to Australia. The Guardian said that this precious gift to the Bahá'ís of our area should be put in a frame and displayed for all to see in the national Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds. This has been done, and this cloth is still hanging in the Center in Tokyo.\*

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\* On the tape this paragraph, other than the first sentence ("This present is now hanging . . ."), is not spoken. In a March 2, 1954 letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tokyo, found in *Japan Will Turn Ablaze!* pp. 95-96, it is stated, "The beloved Guardian is so confident that the Faith will spread rapidly in Japan, and the believers will firmly establish the institutions of the Cause, that he has chosen to send to them for ultimate display in the National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds in Tokyo one of the very precious relics from the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. He has entrusted with our dear brother, Hiroyasu Takano, a very precious brocade, which has rested immediately over the remains of Bahá'u'lláh

What surprised me at the time was that this was done in spite of the fact that there were very few Bahá'ís in Japan at that time. I went back and looked at the records of Japan at the time, and found that there were only Bahá'ís in Tokyo and Yokohama in the Kanto area, and in Kyoto, Amagasaki and Kobe in the Kansai area, and perhaps only two or three LSAs, and yet at that point, Shoghi Effendi could confidently state that we would have an NSA. This really moved me. I believe that this fact will also help you understand how much the Guardian anticipated from, and trusted in Japan.\*

Now, as to the problem of what actual measures were needed to establish an NSA in Japan, the Guardian said in a country like Japan, strong Bahá'í communities should first be raised in areas like Tokyo and Osaka. Then, he said, from these strong communities, as many Bahá'ís as possible should be dispersed – “dispersed” is the word he used‡ – to

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in His glorious Shrine. It is very precious and very sacred. The Guardian is sending this to the Spiritual Assembly of Tokyo as a gift. The friends may wish to have it carefully and beautifully framed for display in the Ḥaḏíra, when it is acquired. Ultimately of course it is to be hung in the Ḥaḏíra of the National Assembly, when that great goal has been achieved by the Japanese believers.” For more on the brocade see Appendix 1. The Tokyo Ḥaḏíratu'l-Quds was acquired in December 1954.

\* Aside from the last sentence, this paragraph is not spoken on the tape. The Regional Spiritual Assembly of North East Asia, with its seat in Tokyo, was first elected in 1957; its jurisdiction was Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau, and its establishment fulfilled a goal of the Ten-Year Crusade (1953-63). In 1974 the Regional Assembly ceased to exist and the N.S.A. of Japan was elected for the first time: the culmination of a process in which, one by one, the North East Asia communities established their own Assemblies.

‡ On the tape Mr. Takano uses the English word “disperse” and then the

radiate out like light to\* nearby areas to serve as isolated centers.

He likened these isolated centers to the points of ink made as a pen hits a piece of paper in writing. When the pen moves, these points become lines and letters, then letters come together as words, and the words come together to form sentences. In this comparison, the sentences would be the NSAs. To make an NSA, you need as many points as possible, so he strongly emphasized that at first, what is important is the points, that is, the dispersed individuals.‡

He also said that the dispersed individuals should be like mercury, and hold themselves together in tight little balls. He admonished that it is very important to not be like jelly and collapse.¶

The Guardian always spoke in this kind of easily understood examples.◇

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Japanese equivalent.

\* On the tape Mr. Takano does not say “radiate out like light to”.

‡ Former Universal House of Justice member ‘Alí Nakhjavání refers to a letter written in Persian and dated Naw-Rúz 1954 (soon after Mr. Takano’s pilgrimage) in which Shoghi Effendi compares the isolated believer to a point, a group to a letter of the alphabet, a Local Spiritual Assembly to a word, a National Spiritual Assembly to a sentence, and the Universal House of Justice to the “Luminous Book”, further urging the Bahá’ís to achieve this progression during the Ten-Year Crusade: see the document “Shoghi Effendi: The Range and Power of His Pen”, p. 254 (PDF p. 265), available at [www.bahai-library.com/nakhjavani\\_range\\_power\\_pen](http://www.bahai-library.com/nakhjavani_range_power_pen); see also [www.american.bahai.us/news/2015/january-february-2015/the-ninth-cycle-of-the-bahai-calendar-and-its-relationship-to-the-teaching-work](http://www.american.bahai.us/news/2015/january-february-2015/the-ninth-cycle-of-the-bahai-calendar-and-its-relationship-to-the-teaching-work).

¶ On the tape Mr. Takano says neither “and hold themselves together in tight little balls” nor “and collapse”.

◇ On the tape Mr. Takano does not speak this sentence.

The Guardian stressed that once a community reached a good size, it should have a Bahá'í Center, a Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds, for that area. In regards to the importance of the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds, he emphasized that it is not just the seat of the center of Bahá'í administration, but that it is also very important since it is a center of worship and a center of spiritual unity as well. He said that on the national level, there would eventually be a House of Worship, but that on the local level, the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds should function in these three ways: as a spiritual center, an administrative center and a center of worship. In this way, the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds is not just a physical thing, and it is very important to have such centers in the strong communities throughout Japan.\*

As an illustration of this point, Shoghi Effendi gave the example of some country or other in which, for some reason or other, the Faith was outlawed and Bahá'í meetings were banned. In this case, the Bahá'ís felt it their duty to maintain the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds, and later on, when the oppression ended, this became the driving force in the rebuilding of the Bahá'í community. From this story, we can see how important it is to have a Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds.

Now, I'd like to move on to a few general points that do not necessarily directly concern Japan or the Japanese. The first is the concept of the Bahá'í World Center that is to be built on the side of Mount Carmel. At the time I was there, the construction of the Shrine of the Báb had just been completed. According to the explanation of the

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\* On the tape Mr. Takano does not speak this paragraph from "He said that on the national level" beyond.



Guardian, the Shrine of the Báb is to house the spiritual center in the total World Center plan, and, with its completion, the spiritual center at the World Center had taken shape.

From that time on, we would enter the era for building the administrative center, he explained. The actual buildings in the administrative center will include the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, the office of the Hands of the Cause, and so on. And once this is completed, the center of worship at the World Center, that is, the House of Worship, will be built. When this is completed, the World Center will at last be complete, he said. But at that time, only one of these centers had been completed.\*

By the way, the person who [sic] indicated where the Shrine of the Báb was to be built was 'Abdu'l-Bahá,† and that was 60 years before the time of my pilgrimage. 10 years after that, that is, 50 years before my pilgrimage, construction began, but it took that next 50 years before the Shrine was finally completed. . . .¶

Because of this [i.e., the completion of the Shrine of the Báb despite many difficulties encountered], the Guardian had great confidence that anything that is truly necessary or desirable for the Faith, and that we really pray for from the

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\* On the tape Mr. Takano does not speak this last sentence.

† Perhaps there was a misunderstanding on the part of Mr. Takano, as "where" is the one matter concerning the Shrine of the Báb that 'Abdu'l-Bahá—or Shoghi Effendi after Him—did not decide: the site was selected by Bahá'u'lláh (see *God Passes By* pp. 194, 275).

¶ Several paragraphs concerning difficulties encountered in completing the Shrine of the Báb have been redacted by the editor (see the foreword).

bottom of our hearts, will inevitably come to pass. And this was not vain confidence; he told us that just this one example should be enough to make us understand such things clearly.

Next he talked to us about the pattern of all facets of Bahá'í development that can be seen in looking back at Bahá'í history. All development in the Faith follows the same pattern, starting from a small spark, which then becomes a flame, then a glowing light, and finally, an explosive force.\* The Guardian said that you can easily see this if you look at the examples of the number of languages into which Bahá'í literature has been translated, and the number of countries that have been opened to the Faith.

During the 75 years between the time of the Declaration of the Báb and the close of World War I, there were not even 40 countries that had been opened to the Faith. In the 25 years following, until the end of the second world war [sic], more than 40 countries were added to this list, more than doubling the number. But after that, in the nine years that passed until the year before my pilgrimage, another 50 were added; then, in the following one year alone, 90 more were added, so that, at that time, 218 countries‡ were opened to

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\* On the tape Mr. Takano gives the pattern or sequence, using the English words for the first three, as “spark”, “lamp”, “crystal globe”, and explosive force.

‡ Statistics recorded by Mr. Takano are given as they are. Sources such as *The Bahá'í World* volumes and *Bahá'í Faith, The: 1844-1963: Information Statistical and Comparative* contain authoritative information in this regard. The figure of 218 may refer to countries (i.e., sovereign states) and also—or more correctly—to territories, a term which is used in the Guardian's messages and in other Bahá'í sources and which

the Faith. In the future, this number would continue to grow until it becomes an explosive force, the Guardian said with firm conviction.

Next, I'd like to relate some of the things the Guardian said about Bahá'í teaching. He said that, in the first place, Bahá'í teaching is not done by the spoken word, it should be done through actions and character. If we first empty ourselves and then try to follow the teachings of God which were revealed to us through the Prophets\*, we will, according to the extent of our exertions, become exemplars of the divine nature of God. Because other people will become attracted to this divine nature, they will feel God, seek Him out and come to believe in Him.

To be able to teach through actions and character, the most important thing for us to do is study God Himself, as revealed through the Prophets\*, for ourselves. However, to do this, translations should be particularly emphasized in Japan, the Guardian said. First of all, such works as the *Gleanings*, the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, and *Some Answered Questions* by 'Abdu'l-Bahá should be translated into Japanese. Then, the Japanese should read them so thoroughly that they can recite all the important passages from memory, he said. This is the

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encompasses various polities and places such as dependencies, colonies, principalities, islands, and, depending on the passage, countries.

\* On the tape Mr. Takano uses the Japanese equivalent of "prophet(s)". The Japanese language does not distinguish between the singular and plural grammatical numbers by inflection, and as such it is possible all Prophets are referred to here, but it is likely the reference is actually to Bahá'u'lláh, in which case perhaps "Manifestation" would be a better choice in both languages.

start of teaching.\*

Next, I'd like to talk about the standards of Bahá'í behavior. The Guardian told us, in a humorous vein, that, very briefly, the way Bahá'ís should decide how to act is to do everything just the opposite of what the non-Bahá'ís are doing. For example, the present world is full of hatred, and war never ceases, so Bahá'ís should love one another, help one another and try to live even just a little bit more peacefully. Also, the whole world is leaning towards materialism, concentrating only on the large cities, and seeking only material comfort. Bahá'ís should go in the opposite direction, valuing spirituality, placing importance on the human heart, dispersing throughout the countryside, where there is more contact with nature, and seeking a lifestyle more befitting of man.

Also, the Guardian said that in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, it is emphasized that entertainment should be reduced, that we should go to bed early at night and wake up early in the morning, and that we should work hard.

Concerning the relationship between Bahá'ís and politics, the Guardian said that Bahá'ís should rigorously strive to remove themselves from politics and especially from political power. He emphasized that today's politics are way too full of hatred, too full of Machiavellian deception, and are also very devisive [sic], so it is also important to follow this law in order to escape from the influence of politics.‡

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\* On the tape Mr. Takano does not speak this last sentence.

‡ On the tape Mr. Takano does not use the term "Machiavellian"; also, he does not say "law" but rather "thing" or "matter", the referent of which is

Moreover, he said that it is not only all right for Bahá'ís to explain this Bahá'í position to governments that have political power and to opposition parties seeking political power to make sure that they understand this principle, but that it is actually important that Bahá'ís take positive steps in this direction.\*

However, even though we say that the Bahá'í world is strictly a spiritual realm, when time has passed and at last the whole world has become Bahá'í, of course, the political affairs of the whole world will be carried out according to the Bahá'í order, being brought before the local house of justice [sic] and handled there.†

This could be taken as meaning that the fact that we must separate ourselves from political affairs is just a matter of convenience, and that Bahá'í is actually a political group, a group with political motives. However, the Guardian said that it must be realized that the Bahá'í administrative

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the principle of non-involvement in politics mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph.

\* There are many sources that have compiled from the messages and letters of the infallible authorities the formal Bahá'í perspective on politics: see, for example, the volume *Lights of Guidance* and the document available at [www.bahai-library.com/khan\\_political\\_noninvolvement\\_obedience](http://www.bahai-library.com/khan_political_noninvolvement_obedience).

† On the tape Mr. Takano says “Bahá'í administrative order” (バハイ行政秩序 bahai gyōsei chitsujo), not simply “Bahá'í order”; further, he says “the House of Justice at each level” (各層の正義院 kaku sō no seigiin), meaning either (i.e., as appropriate) the local, national, or universal, not simply “Local House of Justice”. Also he uses the English term “political affairs” before giving the Japanese equivalent. (In the context of the future Bahá'í Administrative Order, of course, “political affairs” does not mean partisan political issues but rather the general affairs of the polity.)

order cannot be understood using existing political concepts and notions.

For example, some may take the existing political concept that is most similar to Bahá'í, namely, democracy, and, seeing that the two concepts resemble each other, decide that they are almost the same. However, he explained that they are decidedly different in at least the following two respects.

The first difference is that, whereas democracy is a concept that starts from the premise that there are differences of opinion and conflicts of interest rooted in fundamentally different viewpoints and ideologies, and which tries to achieve a balance of power between these, the fundamental concept on which the Bahá'í administrative order is founded is that it is basically impossible to have conflicts of interests and differences of opinions.

The second point of difference lies in the fact that, whereas democracy solves problems arising from conflicts of interest and opinion that can't be resolved in any other way by appealing to the people and deciding according to majority opinion, in the Bahá'í world, if, unfortunately, it should happen that conflicting or differing opinions should arise, it is said that the solution should be entrusted to the House of Justice. Thus, in these two ways, the Bahá'í order is fundamentally different from democracy. So, the Guardian strongly warned that, even if it is similar externally, the Bahá'í order should not be identified with politics or political power.\*

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\* In a number of the Guardian's works, such as in the compilation volume *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 18ff. and 152-154, the Bahá'í Administrative Order is contrasted with various secular forms of government and ecclesiastical organizations.

Finally, the Guardian also said that the history of all true religions follows the same basic principle, that is, that all new religions, when they are first brought into the world, have life and are the driving force behind a culture. They also serve as the force that sets a standard for human life. But, as time passes, before one is really aware of it, they lose their power, and gradually, they become a social or material force, their spirituality wanes, and finally, even their life as a religion is lost. Then, the birth of a new divine religion is awaited in this world to take the place of the old one. This is the Bahá'í outlook on the religions of the past as well as on the history of the Faith itself.\*

Finally, the Guardian said that someone had called the Guardianship the fruit of the Bahá'í Faith, but the Guardian said that this is a mistake. If the Prophet is compared to the root and the Master to the trunk, then the Guardianship is the branches. The branches actually raise the height of the whole tree, and make it visible from afar, but are different from the actual goal or purpose of the tree. The purpose of this tree is world order, and in that respect, the administrative order can be compared to the tree's blossoms. Thus, when the world order, which is the fruit of the tree, appears the Bahá'í civilization will also come into being.

In comparing the Bahá'í civilization to

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\* On the tape Mr. Takano does not speak this last sentence but rather says, "Religions have this sort of fundamental principle" (宗教は斯う言う風な一つの原則を持っている shūkyō wa kōyūfū na hitotsu no gensoku wo motteiru)—viz., the principle, borne out in the history of religion, of decline and birth anew. Shoghi Effendi treats this theme formally in a number of his general letters.

civilizations up until now, he said that we will find two decided differences. First, he said that in the Bahá'í civilization, emphasis will be placed on the spirit. Secondly, the Bahá'í civilization will be universal in nature, not at all localized.

And finally, I would like to include a point I did not actually cover at the Convention. I'd like to add one remaining point the Guardian made about Japan. When the Japanese Bahá'ís spread the Bahá'í Faith in Japan, he said they must take great care in building up the organization, since the organization is very important. Also, he said that the Japanese Bahá'ís should not be in too much of a hurry to spread the teachings. For example, in securing new members, he said that we should make sure not only that they are sincere, but that we should also select people of good character. He also said that if we are in too much of a hurry and unconditionally accept people, even if they're not of good character, eventually this will come close to obstructing the development of the Faith itself in Japan.

Also, he said that Japan, at the same time that it must become a center for teaching to Soviet Russia, it would also, in the future, come to bear the responsibility of sending pioneers to the islands in the Pacific Ocean, to Taiwan, China, Manchuria, Mongolia, Sakhalin and other areas.

Even now, the words of the Guardian continue to move me, so I've taken this opportunity to put them down on tape once more. Thank you very much for your time.\*

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\* On the tape Mr. Takano does not speak this final paragraph but rather employs a short expression commonly used in Japanese to signal the end of a spoken or written matter. The talk ends here.



## Afterword

It seems the English-language translation of Mr. Takano's talk was sent to the World Center, the following being the acknowledgment, dated August 12, 1980, addressed by the secretariat of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Japan, found in the volume *Selected Communications from the Universal House of Justice Concerning the North East Asia Area Including Japan* p. 23. The translation was probably sent to the World Center by then-member of the Asian Board of Counsellors, the late Rúḥu'lláh Mumtází, in whose personal archive the editor (who was looking there with the permission of his daughter) found the copy of the translation typescript that was used for this PDF document.

Through the courtesy of the Counsellors of North-eastern Asia the Universal House of Justice has just received a copy of an English translation of the pilgrim notes made by Mr. Hiroyasu Takano concerning his visits with the beloved Guardian in 1954. The House of Justice was very much impressed with the loving spirit with which Mr. Takano relates his pilgrimage experience and the manner in which he expresses his impressions of what Shoghi Effendi said to him.

We have been asked to say that, as you know from this and other sources, the Guardian held the Japanese people in high regard, and he foresaw the important part the Japanese believers would play in the unfoldment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Many of the things anticipated in the statements attributed to Shoghi Effendi in these notes have already come to pass. The high endeavors of the Japanese friends, reinforced by the divine confirmations which these efforts will attract, will no doubt pave the way for the fulfilment, in the not-too-distant future, of all the aspirations of the beloved Guardian for the Japanese community. It is the hope and prayer of the House of Justice that the account of his experience given by Mr. Takano at your last Convention will have a profound effect on the friends and inspire them to labour indefatigably for the progress of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, and that the Japanese Bahá'í community will become an ever-stronger centre of attraction and illumination to the peoples of Asia and the Pacific.

The “attraction” and “illumination” in the last sentence of the Secretariat’s letter correspond, respectively, to the centripetal force and radiating light of which Mr. Takano states Shoghi Effendi spoke (see page 10 herein). Also, the letter acknowledges receipt “of an English translation of the pilgrim notes made by Mr. Hiroyasu Takano” and refers to “the account of his [Haifa] experience given by Mr. Takano at your last Convention”, but the editor assumes that what was sent to the World Center is the translation of the post-National Convention tape-recorded talk—i.e., the translation contained in this PDF document—and not that of notes taken in Haifa or of the Convention talk. (Concerning the translation see the foreword.)

## Appendix 1: 1977 Recollections

The following describes content in Mr. Takano's 1977 tape-recorded pilgrimage recollections (see the foreword) that is not heard in the 1980 tape-recording and does not appear in the translation herein; i.e., content that is exclusive to the '77 recording. While much of the two recordings is identical or very similar, the '77 talk is somewhat longer.

First Mr. Takano gives historical background and context to the sites in the Holy Land, quoting from the Japanese edition of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, and describes Haifa. He states he arrived at Haifa on February 22, 1954; stayed at the Western Pilgrim House; attended dinner meetings with the Guardian at the Pilgrim House on the 22nd, 25th, 26th, 27th, March 1st, and 2nd; visited the Shrine of the Báb on the 23rd, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 1st, and 2nd; visited the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí and the other holy sites in 'Akká and vicinity on the 23rd and the 24th, having spent the night at Bahjí, and once again on the 3rd; and departed for Japan on the 3rd. Although their periods of stay did not entirely coincide with his, he mentions fellow pilgrims Loyce Lawrence, Maud and Albert Reimholz, and Irene Bennett, pictured on the title page of this PDF document. (Incidentally, Ms. Lawrence's given name is correctly "Loyce", not "Joyce" as it appears in some Bahá'í sources. It is listed as "Loyce" on the Roll of Knights of Bahá'u'lláh and is so pronounced by Mr. Takano.) He also refers to a dinner for diplomats based in Haifa given by Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum on the 24th, to which the pilgrims were invited, and comments admiringly on her abilities as a hostess.

Concerning the Guardian's remarks on Japan, Mr. Takano recalls him stating that Japan, in addition to functioning, together with Australia to the south, as both the pole of a magnet and a radiating center for the Pacific region, should also, together with Germany to the west, America to the north, and India and Iran to the south, function in the same two ways for the Soviet Union. Also, until such time as the National Spiritual Assembly is elected (which happened in 1957), the Tokyo Spiritual Assembly should function, de facto, with national responsibility, its committees, such as the translation, education, and dispersing (sic), having national purview. (Mr. Takano says "disperse committee", using the English word "disperse", about which see page 14 herein.)

Mr. Takano stresses, in both the 1977 and '80 talks, that some of

the issues the Guardian raised in 1954 may, by 1977 or '80, be considered outdated. He does not give examples, but the reference to the national responsibilities of the Tokyo Assembly would be so (and also, from a current perspective, the reference to the Soviet Union—if perhaps not the now-independent countries which at that time constituted its republics).

On more general matters, Mr. Takano recalls the Guardian saying that all things should be in moderation, not taken to extremes. For instance, patriotic sentiment must not become nationalism, nor religious belief fanaticism.

Finally, Mr. Takano speaks about the precious cloth he was presented by the Guardian. This matter is mentioned more briefly in the 1980 talk, although the translation of the talk (see page 13 herein) goes into more detail on its own. While in the translation Australia is identified as the country which received another piece of the same cloth, in neither the original 1977 or '80 talks does Mr. Takano name the country. In the '77 talk Mr. Takano states that the cloth was divided in two and he thinks the other piece presented to the N.S.A. of a country with a historical relationship with Japan, but that he cannot remember what country it was. The two-piece cloth is mentioned in published Bahá'í works on Japan, such as *Traces that Remain* (p. 135), but the other recipient national community is not named, and it would be interesting to know the source for this information in the translation.

## Appendix 2: Geo-spiritual Motifs

Shoghi Effendi in his messages, and more informally in his table talks, has propounded several what might be called geo-spiritual motifs, which can be defined (quite unrigorously, not having been thoroughly thought through by this editor) as passages in which spiritual themes are expressed in geographic terms or in which geographic loci are associated by symbol, metaphor, or anagogue with spiritual verities. The nine concentric circles centered on the Holy Land are a prime example, as described in *Citadel of Faith* pp. 95-96:

«For, just as in the realm of the spirit, the reality of the Báb has been hailed by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation as “*The Point round Whom the realities of the Prophets and Messengers revolve,*” so, on this visible plane, His sacred remains constitute the heart and center of what may be regarded as nine concentric circles . . .

The outermost circle in this vast system, the visible counterpart of the pivotal position conferred on the Herald of our Faith, is none other than the entire planet. Within the heart of this planet lies the “Most Holy Land,” acclaimed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as “*the Nest of the Prophets*” and which must be regarded as the center of the world and the Qiblih of the nations. Within this Most Holy Land rises the Mountain of God of immemorial sanctity, the Vineyard of the Lord, the Retreat of Elijah, Whose return the Báb Himself symbolizes. Reposing on the breast of this holy mountain are the extensive properties permanently dedicated to, and constituting the sacred precincts of, the Báb’s holy Sepulcher. In the midst of these properties, recognized as the international endowments of the Faith, is situated the most holy court, an enclosure comprising gardens and terraces which at once embellish, and lend a peculiar charm to, these sacred precincts. Embosomed in these lovely and verdant surroundings stands in all its exquisite beauty the mausoleum of the Báb, the shell designed to preserve and adorn the original structure raised by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the tomb of the Martyr-Herald of our Faith. Within this shell is enshrined that Pearl of Great Price, the holy of holies, those chambers which constitute the tomb itself, and which were constructed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Within the heart of this holy of holies is the tabernacle, the vault wherein reposes the most holy casket. Within this vault rests the alabaster sarcophagus in

which is deposited that inestimable jewel, the Báb's holy dust. So precious is this dust that the very earth surrounding the edifice enshrining this dust has been extolled by the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, in one of His Tablets in which He named the five doors belonging to the six chambers which He originally erected after five of the believers associated with the construction of the Shrine, as being endowed with such potency as to have inspired Him in bestowing these names, whilst the tomb itself housing this dust He acclaimed as the spot round which the Concourse on high circle in adoration.>> [Italics added.]

Another example of a geo-spiritual motif is the Pacific axis. As suggested herein in the footnote on page 10, the center of centripetal force or attraction Mr. Takano states Shoghi Effendi spoke of is a reference to this axis, a motif introduced by Shoghi Effendi in the passage from the July 1957 letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia quoted in the footnote («an axis whose northern and southern poles will act as powerful magnets, endowed with exceptional spiritual potency»), but perhaps first alluded to in an October 1953 message to the Asian Intercontinental Teaching Conference held in New Delhi—see *Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950-1957* pp. 163-169—where the Pacific polarity of Japan and Australia is pointed to:

«These opening stages in the evolution of His Faith in the Asiatic continent were followed, while the first and Apostolic Age of His Dispensation was drawing to a close, by the opening of the islands situated in the Pacific Ocean, Japan in the north, and the Australian continent in the south.»

Another geo-spiritual motif is the light of Revelation and its continental and oceanic loci—cf. the center of radiating light or illumination Mr. Takano states Shoghi Effendi spoke of—as elucidated in the letter “America and the Most Great Peace” and found in the compilation volume *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* pp. 78-79 (and also treated separately in *God Passes By* p. 253), where Shoghi Effendi brings together two originally separate verses of Bahá'u'lláh:

*“In the East the light of His Revelation hath broken; in the West the signs of His dominion have appeared.” [And] “Should they attempt to conceal its light on the continent, it will assuredly rear its head in the midmost heart of the ocean, and, raising its voice, proclaim, ‘I*

*am the life-giver of the world!”*

While in “America and the Most Great Peace” (also in *God Passes By*) Shoghi Effendi associates the phrase from the former verse, “*in the West the signs of His dominion have appeared*”, with the establishment of the Faith in North America, the Universal House of Justice has stated—see *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973* pp. 74-75; *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1986* pp. 564, 635—that the latter verse (“*Should they attempt . . .*”) holds a «promise of Bahá’u’lláh» and has related the phrase “*midmost heart of the ocean*” generally to the islands of the Pacific region mentioned in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, has related it particularly to the Samoa House of Worship, has indicated that the fulfillment of this promise of the Pacific is an ongoing process, and has further forecast

«a brilliant future in the Pacific for His Faith, whose quickening light is casting its rays on the peoples of this vast ocean.»

In the pilgrim’s notes of Núru’d-Dín Mumtází—online at [www.bahai-library.com/mumtazi\\_twin\\_pilgrimages](http://www.bahai-library.com/mumtazi_twin_pilgrimages)—Shoghi Effendi is quoted, in remarks to a group of Persian pilgrims including Mr. Mumtází, specifically identifying the referents of the phrases “*light on the continent*” and “*midmost heart of the ocean*” as Írán and Japan, respectively. (Mr. Mumtází was a pioneer in Japan; his son was Counsellor Rúḥu’lláh Mumtází, mentioned in the afterword.) The following is Núru’d-Dín Mumtází’s original English-language recollection, from his above-mentioned online notes pp. 127-128:

In the afternoon of 27th December [1955] our beloved Guardian came toward the gardens of the [Eastern] Pilgrim House and called us into his presence. We now had the privilege of walking with him. [He said to us,] “The Faith of God will make great progress in Japan as Bahá’u’lláh has promised us. He [Bahá’u’lláh] said, ‘If you cover the light in the middle of the earth it will come out from the middle of oceans and seas and it will speak unto you saying, “Behold, I am the light and the savior of the world!””

Our beloved Guardian then explained what this meant: “By the middle of the earth,” he said, “Bahá’u’lláh meant Írán, which is in the middle of Asia; by the middle of oceans and the seas He meant Japan, which is an island among the ocean[s] and seas.” He [the Guardian] then added that if they would try to hide the Faith of God

in Persia it will appear and come out from Japan saying, “I am the true light and the savior of mankind!”

In both the “America and the Most Great Peace” and the pilgrim’s notes quotations, the Revelation seems more to have been zoomorphized than geographicalized, as if it were a loving, luminous Godzilla, suppressed in the Asian heartland and instead rising and shining out of the Pacific Ocean, roaring and radiating redemption.

Further to the motif of the locus of radiating light, it is noteworthy that in a message—see *Japan Will Turn Ablaze!* p. 80—to the first Convention of the Bahá’ís of North East Asia, held in Tokyo in April 1957 and at which the first Regional Spiritual Assembly of North East Asia was elected, Shoghi Effendi states

«I particularly welcome the establishment of this highly important institution in the capital city of Japan, as it affords a splendid opportunity for the diffusion of the Lights [sic] of the Faith . . .»

Lastly, although it may often be too generalized to qualify as geo-spiritual, a term recurring in the messages and letters and talks of Shoghi Effendi is the center, with many different nuances of meaning or applications: in Mr. Takano’s account, alone, one can find the centripetal center, the radiating center, the isolated center, the Bahá’í Center, the World Center, the spiritual center, the administrative center, the center of worship, and the center for teaching. (Of course it is possible some of these are Mr. Takano’s expressions rather than terms Shoghi Effendi actually used in his remarks.)

Surely the theme of the center is deserving of diligent study, but an elaboration here would be beyond the scope of this document (and the capabilities of this editor). Any such study would have to consider the intriguing references made by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (Himself the Center of the Covenant) to the “collective center”, found in *Tablets of the Divine Plan* pp. 101-102, 105-106 and in talks He gave in North America—a concept which seems to have both ontological and sociological ramifications.

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