

East Asia by the Book

CEAS Author Talks

Soka Gakkai's Human Revolution: The Rise of a Mimetic Nation

By *Levi McLaughlin*

*Associate Professor in Philosophy and Religious Studies,
North Carolina State University*

Soka Gakkai is Japan's largest and most influential new religious organization. It claims more than 8 million Japanese households and close to 2 million members in 192 countries and territories. The religion is best known for its affiliated political party, Komeito (the Clean Government Party), which comprises part of the ruling coalition in Japan's National Diet, and it exerts considerable influence in education, media, finance, and other key areas.

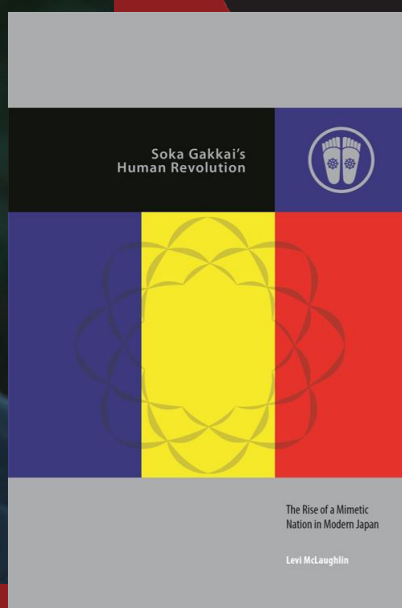
Levi McLaughlin's comprehensive account of Soka Gakkai draws on nearly two decades of archival research and non-member fieldwork to account for its institutional development beyond Buddhism and suggest how we should understand the activities and dispositions of its adherents. McLaughlin explores the group's Nichiren Buddhist origins and turns to insights from religion, political science, anthropology, and cultural studies to characterize Soka Gakkai as mimetic of the nation-state. Ethnographic vignettes combine with historical evidence to demonstrate ways Soka Gakkai's twin Buddhist and modern humanist legacies inform the organization's mimesis of the modern Japan in which the group took shape.

TUESDAY
MARCH 3

5:00PM

Discussant:

*Andrew Kunze, UChicago
PhD Candidate in Anthropology
& Sociology of Religion*



SEMINARY CO-OP
5751 S WOODLAWN AVE
CHICAGO, IL 60637

SEMINARY
CO-OP
BOOKSTORE



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

CENTER FOR EAST ASIAN STUDIES