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#### Hand of the Cause Miss Agnes B. Alexander (Circa 1900)

"Your name will forever remain associated with the rise of the Faith and its establishment in Japan and the record of your incessant and splendid endeavors will shed on its annals a lustre that time can never dim." (Shoghi Effendi, June 8, 1933)

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#### Introduction

As early as 1903 and for years thereafter, `Abdu'l-Bahá urged Bahá'ís to travel to Japan to spread the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. On occasion He said He Himself would like to go to Japan, and also to some other countries.

In 1908 `Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to an American believer, Mr. Howard McNutt\*, "A trip of the believers of God to the Orient is of the utmost importance and it will become the cause of great connection between the two regions... Perchance, God willing, in Japan, you may lay the foundation for the Kingdom!"

In 1910 He said to the first two Bahá'ís to visit Japan, "Blessed results will appear from the Holy Cause established in that land. I have sent your letter regarding the work in Japan to Mr. McNutt in New York, that he may spread the word for some of the American Bahá'ís to go to Japan, and there serve and teach the Cause. It is very good for teachers to travel, and, through the love of God, give life to the people. American Bahá'ís should go to Oriental countries as teachers."

The first Bahá'ís to make the long voyage, Mr. Howard Struven\*\* and Mr. C.M. Remey, 1909; Mme. Aurelia Bethlen, 1911; Mr. and Mrs. Dreyfus-Barney, 1914, stayed for brief periods of time and continued around the world. Dr. George Augur and Miss Agnes Alexander both arrived in 1914 — Miss Alexander shortly after Dr. Augur. They sailed to Japan with the intention of residing there for some time. All these believers traveled in response to the wishes of `Abdu'l-Bahá. Besides Japan, He also encouraged travel in those early days to China, India, Persia and other Asian countries.

In the Tablet of the Divine Plan written to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, Japan is mentioned six times and the Japanese language itself once. In those Tablets `Abdu'l-Bahá again urged travel. "How good would it be were there any possibility of a commission composed of men and women, to travel together through China and Japan..."

In 1919 `Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to Mr. Roy Wilhelm\*, "Attach great importance to the Japanese people. Mrs. Magee should continually communicate with them." And again, later in the year to the same believer, "Convey to Mr. Nasu\*\*\*, the Japanese, my greeting and say: The world of nature is darkness but the heavenly Sun dissipates by its light this darkness that prevails over the world. Likewise the world of mind and of souls is a dark one and nothing will illuminate it save

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\* Mr. McNutt, Mr. Wilhelm and Mr. Randall were staunch and devoted American Bahá'ís who tried to help the Faith in Japan as it was `Abdu'l-Bahá's wish.

\*\* Mr. Struven was designated as Herald of the Kingdom by `Abdu'l-Bahá.

\*\*\* Mr. Shiroshi Nasu, a professor of Tokyo Imperial University, was a friend of Mr. Wilhelm.

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the rays of the Sun of Truth. My hope therefore is that thou mayest be the cause of the shining of the Divine Teachings in Japan, that thou mayest vivify the dead. The people of Japan are intelligent but they are in need of a leader that he may awaken them. I hope that thou mayest be the cause of their awakening and may vivify them."

To Mr. William Randall\*, in 1920, He wrote, "The association which has been formed for promoting the relationship and love between America and Japan, will, God willing, be confirmed and assisted. This association is important. It will unquestionably, bring forth great results."

\*\*\* \*\*

"These are His very words, that still keep ringing in my ears: 'Japan will turn ablaze!'"

The title of this book was taken from `Abdu'l-Bahá's prophecy of the spiritual future of Japan as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, in his first letter to the Bahá'ís of Japan, January 26, 1922.

\*\*\* \*\*

We have taken the liberty of adding a few words, for the sake of continuity, and also that the reader, knowing something of the individuals and circumstances might better observe the creative power in the words of `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi as reflected in the lives and actions of the recipients.

For further information on the history of the Bahá'í Faith in Japan, we recommend to the reader History of the Bahá'í Faith in Japan 1914-1938 by Agnes B. Alexander, and Traces That Remain, (A Pictorial History of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Faith Among the Japanese) by Barbara R. Sims.

Barbara R. Sims

Tokyo, Japan 1992

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\* See footnote, previous page

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chapter 1

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