

The last day of my pilgrimage. It was now early December, and the skies were still dark and cold at six in the morning.

*Hastening to the Holy Shrine
as dawn approaches --
a shawl to keep warm in.*

Having said prayers of gratitude and farewell, I left the Shrine of the Bab. Suddenly, tears were streaming down my cheeks. I covered my face with my shawl and stood motionless. A young German woman in our group of pilgrims was on her way to the Shrine. Seeing me, she stopped and quietly stroked my shoulders. Feeling the warmth of her hand, I thanked her with my eyes, then stood listening to the sound of the pebbles under her feet as she made her way to the Shrine.

*Prostrated
in prayers
and lamentations
and whiteness of breath.*

UNESCO and the Bahá'í Faith

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Abstract

This presentation reviews the development of the UNESCO organization in Japan, and analyzes some of the difficulties which the movement has experienced. The first UNESCO group was founded in 1947. Only one year later there were 50 local groups, and by 1957, there were 70 local groups. This rapid growth was due to the fact that the aims of UNESCO -- the establishment of world peace and fellowship -- coincided with the philosophy of the new Japanese constitution and the sentiments of the Japanese people. Those who started the groups had experienced war and wished only for world peace. Given this background, we must ask why UNESCO has not played a more significant role in post-war Japan. Perhaps one explanation is that the different groups developed according to the ideas of their founders. However, when younger members took over, they did not have a strong sense of the groups' purpose or function. Consequently, the groups tended to lack vitality and did not serve as sources of new plans for future activities. It is suggested that local UNESCO groups must generate ideas and plans, and present them at the national congress. The national organization should then synthesize a dynamic general plan which can have an impact on Japanese society.