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THE INNER BEAUTY OF HAKONIWA
20TH CONGRESS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR SANDPLAY THERAPY

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*In appreciation of
the organizing com-
mittee: Kazubiko
Higuchi, Yasuhiro
Yamanaka, Sherry
Renmu Shepherd,
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Hiroyuki Moritani,
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OPPOSITE &
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The Taiko drums vibrated a strong welcome to the 120 participants of the 2009 International Society for Sandplay Therapy Congress (ISST). The opening ceremony, which invited participation from the audience helped to facilitate a feeling of relatedness to Japanese culture and enthusiasm for the Congress. Kazuhiko Higuchi, a founding member of ISST, President of JAST, Vice President of ISST, Professor Emeritus and Former President of Kyoto Bunkyo University and Professor Emeritus of Doshisha University welcomed us and attentively met our needs as we transitioned into the congress. Dr. Higuchi emphasized the growing sandplay community in Japan. He enthusiastically reported that 600 of the 2000 Associate members would be attending the ISST/JAST event on the last day of the Congress.

In his opening address, *The Quality of Beauty in Sandplay Therapy in Japan*, Dr. Higuchi reminded us of the significant contribution of the esteemed ISST founding member Hayao Kawai in recognizing *Hakoniwa* — box gardens. Dr. Higuchi emphasized beauty in emptiness and space, as “the full potential.” Sandplay therapy “has been accepted as the most developed psychotherapy, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in Japan” (Congress Program, 2009, p.28).

In her opening address, *The Inner Beauty of Hakoniwa*, Ruth Ammann, President of ISST reflected on beauty from the unconscious and consciousness to the

inner and outer beauty perspectives and the importance of being present to the process.

Sachiko Taki-Reece's keynote address was entitled *Ah, Hakoniwa (Sandplay!)*. *Sand, Pebbles and Bottle Caps Shine Brightly under the Southern Cross*. Through the use of her 31-syllabled Tanka, "Sand, pebbles and bottle caps shine brightly under the southern cross," Taki-Reece described her work with children and youth in a shanty town in South Africa. The children used sand, aluminum cans, bottle caps, figures made out of wire, pebbles and stones to do "psyche's work" (ISST Congress Program, p.32).

Yasuhiro Yamanaka's keynote address, "*Beauty in Sandplay*," explored varying expressions of emotion in sandplay, with the suggestion that "therapists ought to doubt 'false beauty' when it occurs, since socially desirable products are not something to be looked for in therapy" (p.34). He communicated his excitement about the international reach of sandplay, and shared the Avatamsaka Sutra: "All is one and one is all."

Eva Pattis-Zoja's keynote address, *The Good and the Beautiful*, offered reflection on whether beauty and goodness or morality are connected. She gave examples of her work in China, South America and Africa with her suggestion that beauty is a necessary experience of the human psyche and that one's aesthetic sense comes in childhood before morality. She recognized Japanese culture as aesthetically superb and with exceptional beauty that seems spiritual.

My experience with the ISST congress was significantly impacted by the opportunity to stay in three Buddhist temples, immersed in the rhythm, prayers and housing of the monastery. Sleeping on tatamis, sitting at low tables, sharing the public bath and smelling the incense created a total Japanese immersion for me.

Having the opportunity to meet with fellow sandplay therapists from all over the world was especially enriching both professionally and personally. Attendees' level of training in sandplay therapy ranged from "the masters" to those who have only recently become interested in sandplay therapy. However, what was especially moving was that the enthusiasm for the work was the same whether attendees were "old" or "new" to sandplay.

I developed a new depth of appreciation for the international experience – for ISST being *an international* society. Each presentation revealed a significant contribution to healing. The national societies that are members of the International Society for Sandplay Therapy are collaborating in research, development and clinical study. This interplay between national societies can only impact the global climate for healing. I am again reminded of The Avatamsaka Sutra, shared by Yamanaka is as an indication of what I believe to be an evolving, integrated body of ISST, as it moves into its 25th year.

All is one and one is all.

