

## THE SILENCE OF THE GODS AND THE CONFUSION OF NICHIREN

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### I. Claims

As an example of how the phenomena of the universe perform the work of *devas* in response to intense meditation for a single instant (*ichinen* - 念) by the mind of the Original Buddha, we may take the occasion when a luminous object (*hikari-mono* 光物) protected Nichiren from execution at Tatsunokuchi [*Daiyaku Renge* No.394, Dec.1983].

This is part of the explanation by Sakuma Shō, Deputy Head of the Education Section of Sōka Gakkai, of a story widely circulated among members of the Nichiren Sect. (Soka Gakkai is a lay movement based partly on the "True" Sect of Nichiren - Nichiren Sho Shū.) It is often included in biographies of Nichiren (1222-82), without any hint that it may not be true. Some Japanese scholars have analysed the different accounts, but as I have not seen a detailed examination of their authenticity in English I have thought it worthwhile to bring the evidence to view, for his followers today are numerous, vocal and influential.

Nichiren had antagonised the Military Government in Kamakura (Bakufu) by his criticisms of other sects, and had finally been accused of harbouring outlaws, and of cursing Japan. He was sentenced to exile on the island of Sado, and on the way did apparently escape a covert attempt at execution. The account of the story of intervention by the *devas* (Indian deities) is found in *Shuju Ofurumai Goshō*, a work pieced together from four different sources. In this account Nichiren is portrayed as being quite in command of the situation, eager to lay down his life immediately for the *Lotus Sūtra*, and yet encouraging his disciples with promises of deliverance:

"Tonight I go to be beheaded. It is what I have desired for several years. In this *saha*-world, when I have been born as a pheasant I have been seized by a hawk; when born as a mouse I have been devoured by a cat; the number of times I have lost my life to the enemies of my wife and children is beyond calculation, like the dust of the earth. Not once have I lost my life for the sake of the *Lotus Sūtra*. . . . This time, by offering my neck to the *Lotus Sūtra* I intend to transfer the merit obtained to my parents, and any surplus merit to my disciples and supporters".

. . . Just as I was thinking, "This will be the spot", rowdy soldiers surrounded me, just as I had anticipated, and Saemon-no-jō sobbed "The time has come!". I said, "What dull-witted gentlemen you are! You must laugh for joy at this! How can the promise be broken?"

Just as I spoke, a moon-like object shot out like a shining ball from the direction of Enoshima, making a brilliant path from the south-east to the north-west. Normally, towards the dawn of the 12th night people's faces are not discernible, but this was like a moonlight night, with every face visible. The man holding the sword was dazzled and fell down in a daze; the soldiers were terrified, galloping away a hundred yards or more, or else dismounting to show their respect, or cowering on their mounts [*Shuju Ofurumai Goshō, Zenshū* 1369-70; *Goshō* 913-14].

Shortly after this we are treated to an astonishingly naive account of a second "divine intervention" - written, apparently, to satisfy the belief that the "three heavenly luminaries" (三天子) would come to Nichiren's aid. These were Candra, Lord of the moon-gods, Sūrya, Controller of the light-gods, and Venus. Sakuma Shō writes of these as the "three guardian deities of the *Lotus Sūtra*" [idem], but the expectations of their aid are found in a letter of very dubious authority:

Of the three heavenly luminaries, Candra appeared as a shining object to save me from execution at Tatsunokuchi; Venus came down four or five days ago and lighted on a plum tree to visit Nichiren; now only Sūrya tarries. I eagerly wait in confident expectation of his aid [*Shijō Kingo-dono Goshōsoku, Zenshū* 702-3, *Kubota* 161, *Goshō* 1114].

This does not even agree with the account in *Shuju Ofurumai Goshō*, where on the following night Nichiren is presented as censuring Candra for not having appeared yet to save him:

As it was the 13th of the 9th month, and a very clear moonlight night, we went outside into the courtyard and paid reverence to the moon. I read a little from the *jiga-ge* (about the eternity of Śākyamuni's buddhahood), then about the relative merits of the different sects, and about various texts in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Firstly I said that this Moon-deva now visible was no other than Divine Son Excellent Moon (Candra), who had been seated . . . before the throne of the *Lotus Sūtra* on the Vulture Peak, as recorded in the "Introductory" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* (TLS 31-32). He was among those in the "Precious Stupa" chapter who received the decree of the Buddha to "declare his vow" to "guard and keep, read and recite the sūtra [TLS 202]. He . . . vowed in the "Final Commission" chapter: "We will do all the World-Honoured One has commanded" [TLS 302]. . . . Now because these things have come to pass, this [Candra] should joyfully hasten to take the place of the devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and give evidence of his intention to fulfil his vow. I find the lack of such evidence strange indeed. . . . How can he shine forth over the land with such clear and joyous mien? In the *Great Collection of Sūtras* it is taught: "The sun and moon will not show their light" [T397/13/2/363b].

Then just as I was . . . bitterly reproaching Candra, there came down from heaven a great star like Venus (surely in answer to my prayers) and lighted on a plum tree in front [*Shuju Ofurumai Goshō*, *Zenshū* 1372, *Goshō* 915].

The plum tree was apparently unscathed, but the soldiers were suitably terrified, and there was a great "roaring in the sky" [idem]. However, in a much more prosaic account of Nichiren's arrest and punishment there is no mention of these heavenly visitations. It is addressed to a leading disciple, Toki-dono, dated 15th of 9th month, Bun'ei 8 (1271), and its authenticity is undisputed. As its aim is to encourage the beleaguered disciples, the absence of the "*hikari-mono*" story is remarkable: (Note also the date is different - "13th", not "12th" for the Tatsunokuchi episode):

The very fact of being punished by the authorities shows that I have believed the *Lotus Sūtra*. The moon waxes and wanes; the tide ebbs and flows without fail. Likewise, as there has been punishment so there must also be merit. Why should I weep about it?

I was sentenced by the Bakufu on 12th of this month, at about 8.00a.m., and under the custody of Musashi-dono left Kamakura on 13th, about 2.00a.m., to be cast onto the island of Sado. But for the time being — four or five days — I have been left in the custody of Umatarō . . . in the domains of Honma of Echi.

It is only natural for you to be sad, but I am not sad, having been prepared for this from the beginning. That I had not been beheaded up till now shows that I had not really been dedicated to the *Lotus Sūtra*. If I had, would I have been such a miserable person in this life? Also it says "Repeatedly shall we be driven out" [TLS 219]. Because I am being punished repeatedly and expiating my grievous sins, I shall attain buddhahood, for this is a voluntary penance [*Toki-dono Gohenji*, *Zenshū* 700-01, *Gosho* 950-51].

There is no hint that Nichiren knew why he had escaped execution. Which letter is to be believed? Authentic copies of *Toki-dono Gohenji* are held at Nakayama Shōkyōden, whereas there are none of *Shijō Kingo-dono Goshōsoku*. Further, in the latter the official sentence is implied to have been execution while "the [Regent] had ordered me secretly to Sado". This conflicts with *Shimoyama Shō* (authenticity undisputed) where the official sentence was exile, and the execution was to be secret [Tokoro 325].

More importantly, in *Hō-on Shō* (another major work whose authenticity is not disputed), Nichiren clearly admits that he did not know why he was not executed:

In Bun'ei 8, on 12th of 9th month, they were to have beheaded me at Tatsunokuchi, Sagami-no-kuni, but for some reason or other they postponed it that night and we reached a place called Echi. Again on the night of the 13th there was a commotion. I had been pardoned, but again for some reason or other we went as far as Sado. Four years passed under the daily threat of execution. Finally I was pardoned on 14th of 2nd month, Bun'ei 11 [1274], and on 26th day of 3rd month I entered Kamakura [Tokoro 289-90, *Zenshū* 1458, *Gosho* 322-23].

Judging by this, and by *Toki-dono Gohenji*, then, it was a subdued monk resigned to the workings of past *karma*, more aware of the indifference of Nature, and much less hopeful of worldly success, that set out for the bleak island of Sado. During his time there, and also during his ensuing retirement on Mt Minobu, Nichiren wrestled with the acute problem of desertion by the gods. Not only did he need to satisfy his own mind; he had to try to convince his disillusioned disciples as well, in order to rebuild his shattered following. It is his answers to their doubts, as well as to his own mind and to his enemies, that provide strong confirmation of the position taken here — that the stories of miraculous intervention are false.

But before looking at the way he tried to overcome his doubts, between 1271 and 1281, it is necessary to trace the events leading up to the second exile, and the reasons why he had come to expect divine intervention.

## II. Nichiren's Expectations and Interpretation of Divine Aid

It seems highly likely that Nichiren had been brought up to revere the native deities and spirits (*kami*) of Japan, especially the ancestral Sun Goddess (Amaterasu Ōmikami). This was despite his Amidist (Pure Land = Jōdo) upbringing. (Many Amidists tended to ignore the Shintō shrines.) He wrote that doubt about the ability of the *kami* to protect the land formed one of his motives for entering Kiyozumi temple [*Shinkoku Ō Goshō*, *Zenshū* 1338], and we do not have doubts about what we have never been taught to believe. The reasons for his belief in the *kami* were partly geographical. He had been born and bred in Awa-no-kuni (near the tip of the peninsular east of what is now Tokyo Bay in Chiba Pref.) and this province had been declared a tribute estate (*mikuriya*) of the Outer Shrine of Ise, by Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-99), founder of the Military Government in Kamakura. Nichiren was evidently proud of the fact:

What is more, I come from Anshū (= Awa-no-kuni) in the land of Japan. All that land is said to be the original dwelling-place of Amaterasu Ōmikami, and Awa-no-kuni is her *mikuriya*, sought out from all Japan. As it is such an important province, there must be a reason, for she is the compassionate father and mother of all the beings of this land. By what destiny was I born in this province? It is my chief reward from past *karma* [*Yagenta-dono Gohenji* (1274), *Zenshū* 1041-42; *Goshō* 1227].

Many times during his life, Nichiren claimed special protection from Amaterasu, and he believed that all the *kami* and *devas* (Indian deities) were especially indebted to him. Yoritomo had provided physical sustenance for the Ise Shrine, as a result of which "it pleased Ōmikami so much that Yoritomo held Japan in the palm of his hand while he was Shōgun" [*Nitama Gozen Gohenji* (1275), *Zenshū* 1101, *Bunshu* 50-51, *Gosho* 906]. Awa-no-kuni, "land of the barbaric eastern samurai", had also benefited, for this remote place had become "like the centre of Japan, for Amaterasu Ōmikami manifested herself there" [idem].

But more important was the spiritual sustenance for the *kami*, and Nichiren believed that he alone was providing it. In Dual Shintō (a fusion of native Shintō and imported Buddhist beliefs) it was taught first that the native *kami* were guardians of the Buddha-Dharma, then that some (like Hachiman) were *bodhisattvas* on the way to buddhahood, or actual manifestations of the Buddha (such as Amaterasu). In any case, they needed the Buddhist *sūtras* to revitalise them. Nichiren came to believe that the only *sūtra* able to restore the vigour of the guardian deities was the *Lotus Sūtra* [*Kangyō Hachiman Shō*, Tokoro 355, *Zenshū* 1929]. However, because the *Jōdo* (Pure Land) *sūtras* had become so popular, the *Lotus Sūtra* was being neglected and the guardian deities were languishing and unable to protect Japan from natural disasters. Thus in 1259, when Japan was still reeling from a long series of terrible calamities, he wrote:

Because Amidists have induced people to abandon the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *devas* cannot listen to this marvellous Dharma, and because they do not taste the flavour of the Dharma they have no prestige or influence. The Four Deva Kings and their retinue have abandoned this land, and Japan's good guardian *kami* have also gone right away.

Consequently in Shōka 1 [1257] the earth was terribly shaken; in the spring of Shōka 2 floods washed away the riceplants; drought in summer withered the grass and trees; gales in autumn ruined the fruit crops. Famine struck, turning all the people into refugees, just as it is written in the text from the *Golden Light Sūtra* [*Shugo Kokka Ron*, Tok. 49-50].

Not content with personal practice and preaching and writing to his disciples, Nichiren added to his claims on the gods and buddhas by "three illustrious deeds" in warning the Hojo Regency [*Senji Shō*, Tok. 235, *Zenshū* 1237, *Gosho* 287]. The first of these warnings

was in the form of a memorial to Hōjō Tokiyori (1227-63), the retired Regent known by then as Saimyō-ji-dono. Using similar arguments to those in *Shugo Kokka Ron*, he urged the rulers to turn from *nenbutsu* (invocation of Amida Buddha) and to rid the land of Amidists. In 1268 he wrote to a steward in the Regent's house, explaining his action:

The ruler, taking fright (at the unabating disasters), ordered all sorts of prayers by those believing both Buddhist and non-Buddhist scriptures. However, it was all to no avail, Rather, the famines and plagues grew worse.

I, Nichiren, looked at the state of society, and having pondered nearly all the *sūtras* to discover why the prayers should be ineffective or actually aggravate the disasters, I finally obtained the reasons and the scriptural proof.

Eventually, as there was no other way, I composed a memorial which I entitled *Risshō Ankoku Ron*. At the hour of the dragon [about 9.00 a.m.], on 16th day of 7th month in Bun'ō 1 [1260], I entrusted it to Yadoya-nyūdō to present to the late Saimyō-ji-dono. My sole purpose was to pay my debt to my country [*Ankoku Ron Gokan Yurai, Zenshū* 617, *Bunshū* 15].

Nichiren also warned that two more disasters could befall Japan, and later treated this warning as a definite prediction of the Mongolian invasions:

Of the seven tribulations listed in the *Bhaiṣajya-guru Sūtra*, five have already occurred and two remain. These are "invasion by another country, and civil rebellion . . .". If these remaining tribulations arise together and race in as a punishment for the wicked Dharma, what will you do then?" [*Risshō Ankoku Ron, Zenshū* 409, *Bunshū* 199].

However, Nichiren's denunciations of the Jōdo and (later) other sects, only antagonised influential people. Already in 1253, when he began his mission, he had been driven out of his native district by the Steward Tōjō Kagenobu, and there is no suggestion of any divine aid at this time:

[Yoritomo] declared Tōjō-no-gō as the dwelling-place of Amaterasu Ōmikami. Does this not mean that Ōmikami is no longer at Ise, but resides in Tōjō-no-gō in Awa-no-kuni? . . . I began proclaiming this Right Dharma in Tōjō-no-gō, Awa-no-kuni, in the land of

Japan, out of all the countries of Jambudvīpa. Consequently, the Steward became my enemy. . . [Niitama Gozen Gohenji, Zenshū 1101, Goshō 906].

Nevertheless, it was not long after his expulsion that he took the name of Nichiren. (He had been called Renchō since ordination, and before that, Zennichimaro.) It signified his devotion to the Sun Goddess (*nichi* = sun) and to the Lotus Sūtra (*ren* = lotus). The interpretation he later placed on his name leaves room to wonder if and when he began to have delusions of grandeur:

Can anything surpass the sun and moon in brilliance?  
Can anything surpass the lotus in purity? It is because the Lotus Sūtra is the sun and moon and lotus that it is called the Marvellous Dharma of the Lotus Sūtra. I, Nichiren, am also like the sun and moon and the lotus [Shijō Kingo Nyobō Goshō (1271), Zenshū 683, Goshō 1109].

After his expulsion he worked in Kamakura, where the memorial was written, but failed to impress the Bakufu with his brilliance or pure motives. Instead of punishing Amidists, they banished Nichiren to the peninsula of Izu. Here, however, he received some tokens of the divine aid he thought was due to him. First he was rescued and succoured by a boatman, Yasaburō, and his wife, and this couple he regarded as heaven-sent:

More especially, in secretly taking me under your wing during the 5th month when rice must have been scarce, were you not as parents to me, reborn in Itō, Kawana, on Izu?

It says in the fourth roll of the Lotus Sūtra:

"[If anyone after my extinction is able to proclaim this sūtra, I will send him the four spirit groups of bhīkshus and bhīkshunis], Pure-minded men and women, to worship him as Dharma-teacher".

This means that if anyone would practise the Lotus Sūtra, the good heavenly deities will change their form into men or women in order to help him and to make various offerings. There is no doubt that this applies to you, Yasaburō, and to your wife, born as man and woman to make offerings to Nichiren, the teacher of the Dharma [Funamori Yasaburō No Moto Goshō (1261) Zenshū 435-36, Goshō 1445, quoting Threefold Lotus Sūtra (TLS), ch.10, p.193, T9/1/32-b].

About one month later, Nichiren was moved from Kawana to the small village of Itō. About that time the local Steward, Itō Hachirō-no-jō Tomotaka fell ill, and asked his prisoner to pray for his healing. Nichiren's faith was further strengthened:

. . . I regarded this as putting the *Lotus Sūtra* on trial. Thinking that the ten rakṣasa (demon guardians of the *Lotus Sūtra*) must also surely lend their aid, I addressed Śākyamuni, Prabhūtaratna, and all the buddhas of the ten directions in the *Lotus Sūtra*, as well as Tenshō (= Amaterasu), Hachiman and all the gods and spirits, great and small. I was sure they would hold a conference and reveal some sign. They could never desert Nichiren. Just as I was thinking they would meet the need exactly, as on a sore or itchy spot, the illness was cured.

It was because of this illness that he gave me an image of the Buddha, drawn from the sea with the fish and covered with scales. The merit from this will also accrue to you and your wife [*Funamori Yasaburō No Moto Goshō*, *Zenshū* 436, *Goshō* 1445-46].

### III. Expectations of suffering for the *Lotus Sūtra*

Despite these tokens of help, Nichiren had to convince both himself and his disciples that his sufferings did not disprove his claims, and it was to this theme that he turned in *Shi On Shō* (*The Four Obligations*), written during the first month of 1262, seven months after landing on Izu. He reasoned that his present sufferings were due not to wickedness in this life, but to his bad *karma* from previous lives, aggravated by the ever-increasing wickedness of this world (*sahā-loka*) and to the machinations of the devil (*Māra*):

The very thought that anyone who merely listens to a single sentence or phrase of the *Lotus Sūtra* can without fail attain buddhahood, vexes (*Māra*) so much that he contrives to make people renounce their faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*. However, while the Buddha was in the world, the five pollutions [fn.1] were only just beginning. . . . How much worse may we expect as the five pollutions gradually grow more rampant in the world! How much more may we expect, now that we have entered the Age of Decay, that people who believe on the *Lotus Sūtra* even for a little while should

often be envied and hated! So it says in the *Lotus Sūtra*: "[And the *Sūtra*] while the Tathāgata is still here has aroused much enmity and envy; how much more after his extinction!" When I first saw this text I wondered if this were so, but now I have personally experienced its truth, and know there is indeed no mistake in the Buddha's words [*Zenshū* 441-42, *Gosho* 936, quoting *TL* 190, T262/9/1/31-c].

Then he compared himself favourably with other monks, in his strict keeping of the Precepts, and assured his disciples that it was his very fidelity that had brought suffering. They should rejoice in it:

Now I, Nichiren, have neither taken a wife and begotten children, nor eaten fish or fowl. Only for the "offence" of wishing to spread abroad the *Lotus Sūtra* have I (without taking a wife) gained the name throughout the four seas of a Precepts-breaking monk. Though I have not killed so much as an ant or a cricket, libels have spread into the whole world. It is very much like the slander by the Pagans of the Honoured Śākyamuni during his time on earth.

The sole reason for this is that my faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* has been directed a little more than others' in accordance with the *Sūtra*. It seems that evil spirits have entered their bodies and they have become jealous. When I think on this I can hardly find words to express my joy that such a one as I - of mean status, ignorant and lacking in the Precepts - should be the one to fulfil the prediction of exile made by the Buddha over 2000 years ago and recorded in the *Lotus Sūtra* [*Shi On Shō*, *Zenshū* 442-43, *Gosho* 936].

Suffering for the *Lotus Sūtra* came to be regarded by Nichiren as "reading the *Sūtra* with the body", ( 身読 ) and this theme was repeated after his return from exile, following another attack by Kagenobu when he barely escaped with his life. Since none but him had suffered for the *Lotus Sūtra*, none but him could be the true devotee. In fact, by his devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra* he claimed to have gained enough clout to ensure faithful disciples a safe passage through the realms of the dead, when confronted by King Yama, Judge of the dead:

Only I have truly "read" the *Sūtra* by personal experience. This is what is meant by [the text] 'We will not love body and life, but only care for the Supreme Way'. That being so, I am the foremost devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra* in Japan. If you pass on before me you must say [so] to Brahma, Indra, the Four Deva Kings and also King Yama. Announce yourself as a disciple of Nichiren, the foremost devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra* in Japan. You may be sure they will not treat you unkindly. But if from fear of those listening you call on Amida one time and the *Lotus Sūtra* the next, your loyalties are divided and they will take no notice at all, even if you say you are my disciple. So don't blame me afterwards [*Nanjō Hyōei Shichirō-dono Goshō* (1264), *Tok.* 108, *Zenshū* 544, *Goshō* 1498, quoting TLS ch.13 p.219, T269/9/1/36-b].

#### IV. Divine Aid for the *Lotus Sūtra* Devotee: Fact or Fiction?

Although still unable to convince the authorities of his credentials, Nichiren had apparently been able to persuade several hundred followers that he would be vindicated at the critical moment by divine action to save him, even though in the meantime sufferings were the inevitable hallmark of the true devotee. If this had not been so, there would not have been attributed to Nichiren such stories of miraculous intervention as circulated later. These stories have already been refuted by referring to works by Nichiren of undisputed authenticity, but they are still repeated as true by those who wish to believe them. In particular, members of *Sōka Gakkai* like to compare Nichiren favourably with Jesus of Nazareth who, "though He saved others, could not save Himself" from crucifixion. In this section I wish to consider Nichiren's reaction to the events leading to the second exile.

#### The Oracle Ignored

Nichiren managed to antagonise Heizaemon-no-jō Taira Yoritsuna (?-1293), administrator of the main house (*tokusō*) of the *Hōjōs*, by challenging and ridiculing an eminent monk of the *Ritsu* (= *Vinaya*) sect, called *Ryōkan* (= *Ninshō*, 1217-1303) who had been asked by the *Bakufu* to pray for rain [*Shimoyama Shō*, *Tokoro* 317-18]. Nichiren had not been asked, and if the account

below is reliable, it was just a day or two (12th of 9th month 1271) after he had described with glee the humiliation of Ryōkan, that Yoritsuna arrested him:

During the 10th and 12th days [of 9th month of 1271] I had told Heizaemon in detail about the faults of the Shingon, Zen and Amidist sects, and how Ryōkan had failed to bring rain. But he either burst out laughing or got angry so often that I have not recorded all the details. The gist of what I said is that from 18th day of 6th month until 4th day of 7th month Ryōkan prayed for rain, but, hindered by me was unable to make it fall. The sweat poured down his face and nothing but tears rained down, while a contrary wind blew incessantly. This happened three times. If you send a messenger and he cannot cross a ten-foot moat, could he cross one of a hundred or two hundred feet? . . . But Heizaemon took Ryōkan's part . . . [*Shuju Ofurumai Goshō*, *Zenshū* 1367-68, *Goshō* 912].

It is possible that Ryōkan and Yoritsuna might have continued to regard Nichiren and his followers as an irritating nuisance best ignored, had not Nichiren kept armed soldiers about him, and had not a more terrifying menace - the Mongols - made the Bakufu determined to stifle all dissident voices, of which Nichiren's was but one.

The Mongolian threat was not new, and had loomed nearer in 1268 with the arrival of letters demanding submission. Nichiren had hoped that with his "prediction" of invasion nearer fulfilment, he might get a more attentive ear. So this time he wrote to Taira no Moritoki (father of Yoritsuna and director of the *samurai-dokoro* from 1258, when he succeeded his own father Moritsuna, until 1263, when he retired with the priestly name of Hōkan-bō). First he underlined his usual theme that ever since Emperor Gotoba's deception by the Amidist leader Hōnen (1133-1212), the government and people had betrayed their traditional loyalty to the Tendai-Lotus sect on Mt Hiei and so been abandoned by the guardian deities. Then he wrote of the subsequent "omens" and events which, he claimed, bore out his earlier warnings:

Afterwards, in Bun'ei [1264], on 5th day of 7th month, a comet came out of the east, extending its lingering light over most of the country. This ill omen has had no precedent since the world began. Neither Buddhist nor non-Buddhist scholars knew the origins of these ill-omens. I became more and more grief-stricken.

Further, nine years after I had presented my warning, in the intercalary month of the New Year, we saw the credentials of the Mongolian envoys. This tallies perfectly with what I had written. After having seen the great earthquake, typhoons and famine during Shōka [1257-58], followed by the great plague during the Shōgen era [1259], I wrote: "These are the portents of a foreign invasion that will destroy the land" [*Ankoku Ron Gokan Yurai*, 5th of 4th month 1268, *Bun.* 17-18, *Zenshū* 619-20, *Gosho* 35].

His actual "prediction" had been less precise, but the main aim of his letter to Hōkan-bō was to gain a directive to lead the official prayers against the Mongol invasion and other calamities:

Surely you will grant me an Imperial decree and a directive from the Shōgun to pray against these calamities. There is no doubt that the buddhas and *kami* are becoming more and more wrathful and will destroy the land. Nichiren knows how to deal with this. Apart from Mt Hiei, he is the only one who does [idem].

The contemptuous silence (or calm before the storm) did not deter Nichiren from trying again to convince the authorities that his powers were unique. In the 8th month he sent a reminder to Yadoya-nyūdō, the official to whom he had originally entrusted his memorial:

Since then, correspondence has ceased. It is quite incredible. . . . Nine years have passed, and this year everyone is talking about letters from Greater Mongolia. If the *sūtras* are right, an attack from that country is certain. Furthermore, in Japan the only person whose prayers can subdue the western barbarians is Nichiren [*Yadoya-nyūdō e no Gojō* (1268), *Zenshū* 620-21, *Gosho* 169].

However, although he urged Yadoya-nyūdō to hand on his letter to the Emperor, no one asked him to lead the prayers to subdue the Mongols just as no-one asked him to pray for rain. According to the account in *Shuju Ofurumai Gosho*, the monk from Awa-no-kuni took this as a slight to the guardian deities:

If there had been any men of wisdom in the land they would have marvelled and recognised that this was no ordinary affair, but a plan by Amaterasu Ōmikami and Shō Hachiman to save Japan by entrusting an oracle to this priest. But no, they either reviled this messenger

or deceived or ignored him. Either they failed to answer him or failed to pass on his message to the authorities [*Shuju Ofurumai Goshō, Zenshū* 1363, *Goshō* 909].

The officials to whom Nichiren had written were less impressed by his self-advertisement than by the fact that he was "harbouring outlaws" and asserting his "duty" to defend the Dharma with armed force [*Gyōbin Sojō Goetsū* (undated), *Zenshū* 696-97, *Goshō* 181]. Influential widows were pressing for his execution, on the grounds that he had cursed Japan and consigned the late Saimyō-ji-dono and Gokuraku-ji-dono to hell (a charge he denied) [*Hō-on Shō, Tok.* 289, *Zenshū* 1457-58, *Goshō* 322]. Their indignation would have confirmed the authorities' indifference to Nichiren's religious arguments.

The third Mongol envoy reached Dazaifu in Kyūshū on 1st of 8th month 1271. Six weeks later, on 13th of 9th month, as a precautionary measure, Tokimune ordered retainers in Kantō and Kyūshū to "suppress bands of men likely to cause trouble" [*Kantō Gokyōshō, in Kamakura Ibun Kobunshohen, Vol.114/300, Document* 10873]. But the day before this general order, Taira no Yoritsuna (Heizaemon), who was head not only of the Hōjō *tokusō* but also of the *samurai-dokoro*, made sure of his quarry by arresting Nichiren and imprisoning five of his disciples. It was only the beginning of the crackdown.

### The Failure of the Gods

The hour had come. The *kami* of Japan must now either publicly vindicate the *Lotus Sūtra* devotee and save him from humiliation, or else be humiliated also. Up till his arrest Nichiren had warned leaders and people that the guardian *kami* had allowed disasters by withdrawing their protection, and that unless the nation put exclusive trust in the *Lotus Sūtra* it would incur yet direr punishments (civil war and foreign invasion) from the superior Indian *devas* (especially Brahma, Indra, Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha). When interrogated by Heizaemon Nichiren repeated the warning and linked it specifically to their treatment of himself [*Shuju Ofurumai Goshō, Zenshū* 1366, *Goshō* 911].

However, after his sentence and exile it was the native *kami* which he began to threaten with punishments from the *devas*, for failing to defend him. (How they could defend him if they had left the land he did not explain.) The theory behind this threat he set out in a later work *Kangyō Hachiman Shō* (1280), in which he quoted some obscure *sūtra* as his authority:

If the *ujigami* (clan gods) do not punish (Māra of the sixth heaven, or any evil spirit entering the bodies of human beings or their subjects in order to harass disciples of the Buddha), then Brahma and Indra should punish the guardian *kami* [Tokoro 355, *Zenshū* 1930].

The *kami* that Nichiren held chiefly responsible were of course Amaterasu Ōmikami and Bodhisattva Hachiman, but the latter became the chief object of his ire, partly because he had boasted to his disciples that Hachiman now dwelt in the head of Nichiren, the only honest devotee of the only honest *sūtra*. No one could match the way he had honestly proclaimed the *Lotus Sūtra* without regard to personal safety:

For the sake of this teaching I have been driven from over twenty places, finally exiled, many times wounded, many times bereft of disciples. . . . If this is so, then if the Great Bodhisattva Hachiman departs from my head, in whose head will he dwell? [*Hōmon Mōsarubeki Yō no Koto* (1270), *Zenshū* 647-48, *Gosho* 1273].

It was all the more inexcusable then, that this great *kami* "whose mausoleum is second only to (that of Amaterasu at) Ise", and who had "made a vow to protect devotees", apparently forgot his vows and left the only true devotee in the lurch:

For several years, not only has he failed to punish the great enemies of the *Lotus Sūtra*, but also he has even failed to come to defend the devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra* that has happened to arise. Before his very eyes, the rulers have found it as easy to attack (me) as it is for a dog to bite a monkey, a snake to swallow a frog, a hawk to kill a pheasant or a lion to kill a rabbit. Yet (Hachiman) has not rebuked them even once [*Kangyō Hachiman Shō*, Tokoro 358, *Zenshū* 1933-34].

Hachiman had not even managed to get Nichiren a public hearing — something he had longed for:

Without hearing the rights and wrongs of the case (a sign that this is indeed "the defiled world") and without convening any court, they exiled me and went so far as to threaten my life [*Kaimoku Shō* (1272), *Bunshū* 231, *Zenshū* 788, *Gosho* 202].

Worst of all, Hachiman had let him be humiliated, and failed to administer any more than a token punishment on the offenders — some "in-fighting" among the *Hōjōs*. Tokisuke (1247-72), eldest

son of Tokiyori, opposed the appointment of his younger brother Tokimune as Regent, and was finally put to death by Tokimune for opposing his Mongolian policy, in 1272. Nichiren regarded this as fulfilment of his prediction of civil rebellion, but not as adequate compensation for having been "paraded round the narrow streets of Kamakura in broad daylight like a traitor" or for having his hermitage wrecked by rampaging soldiers [*Shinkoku Ō Goshō, Zenshū* 1344, *Goshō* 1525]. So he accused Hachiman:

On 12th of 9th month [1271] Nichiren was dragged before Great Bodhisattva Hachiman at the instigation of the ruler, and for no fault at all but that of (proclaiming) "*Namu-myō-hō-enge-kyō*" was made a laughing-stock by all the Dharma-slanderers of the land. Can Hachiman possibly be exonerated of a serious offence? The only form of punishment (on the rulers) was some in-fighting [*Kangyō Hachiman Shō, Tokoro* 360, *Zenshū* 1935-36, *Goshō* 582].

Hachiman's neglect was all the more painful to Nichiren when he recalled the story of how Wake Kiyomaro (733-99) had been saved from the would-be usurper priest Dōkyō in 769, and how Saichō (= Dengyō-daishi, 767-822), the founder of the Japanese Tendai sect, had been honoured by Hachiman with a purple surplice after expounding the *Lotus Sūtra*. The tirade below is supposed to have been directed against Hachiman as Nichiren passed his shrine "on the way to execution":

"Great Bodhisattva Hachiman! How can you be a true *kami*? When Wake Kiyomaro was about to be beheaded you appeared as a moon ten feet in length [and prevented his execution]. When Dengyō-daishi lectured on the *Lotus Sūtra* you presented him with a purple surplice. . . . All the gods should have made haste to come and fulfil your ancient vows, without being told to by Nichiren. Why have you not come down to meet me here? [*Shuju Ofurumai Goshō, Zenshū* 1368, *Goshō* 912].

### Expected Signs

Whether Nichiren was permitted to show such disrespect on this occasion, or whether the story was made up as a prelude to the "deliverance" at Tatsunokuchi, he did express the same sentiments in later works, especially *Kangyō Hachiman Shō* (1280). If it was true that the guardian gods had lost their power to defend

him then his anger was unreasonable, but in any case it shows us that no help had been given by Hachiman during the decade 1270-80, although signs from him had been expected.

There is also a lengthy discussion in the same work about the purple surplice. Nichiren was resentful that it had been passed on to masters who did not hold the *Lotus Sūtra* supreme, and that he himself had not received it [Tokoro 356-57]. As for evidence that he was looking for signs, there are many references to signs like the 1264 comet, while in *Kaimoku Shō* he wrote of the sign granted to King Chao of the Chou dynasty, announcing the birth of the Buddha during the 24th year of his reign:

A five-coloured light flashed across the heavens from south to north, making it bright as day [*Bunshū* 270, *Zenshū* 821, *Goshō* 225-26].

King Chao (1052-1001 BC) actually lived four centuries before Śākyamuni Buddha was born, but Nichiren accepted the date of 1029 BC for the birth of Śākyamuni, and the point here is that he and his followers were expecting some similar luminous object from heaven as a sign to their own generation. But according to the same work, when the storm finally broke over them, there was no sign, no intervention. Not only did the *kami* fail him, the *devas* did also, and the disappointment was crushing:

I had confidently expected the *devas* to plan some intervention on my behalf, but there was no sign of it. I am sinking under ever heavier punishments. In fact, when I consider all this, I have all sorts of doubts, and wonder if perhaps I am not a *Lotus Sūtra* devotee at all, or whether all the celestial beings and good *devas* have deserted the land and left [*Bunshū* 231, *Zenshū* 788, *Goshō* 202].

The words "no sign of it" are clear internal evidence that it was disappointed expectations based on legends, rather than facts that gave rise to the stories of supernatural signs. Nichiren was prepared to admit that no sign had been given, but some of his followers were not, and the stories of the luminous objects, found in *Shuju Ofurumai Goshō*, *Myōhō-ama Gohenji* and *Myōhō-bikuni Goshō* (none of which is totally reliable or available in the original) must be interpolations by people less honest than Nichiren.

Some biographers dwell on the Mongolian invasion and civil disturbances as the signs vindicating Nichiren. If these had occurred at the crucial time to save him from humiliation he might have deemed them sufficient, but they did not, and from other passages

it is evident that it was for some swift visitation of divine wrath upon their enemies that he and his followers had waited so eagerly and in vain. Time and again he reverted to the theme of their failure:

But why do the *devas* not help me? This is the question put by the world and by my own mind as well. . . If they have no obligation [to defend me], does this mean I am not a devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra*? As this question is the kernel of this essay, and the most important matter of these times, it is not enough to make occasional references to it. Rather, facing the difficulties squarely ("emphasising the difficulties"), I must answer carefully [*Kaिमoku Shō*, *Bunshū* 233, *Zenshū* 789, *Goshō* 203].

Then in a later section he quoted the jibes of his enemies that indicated more precisely the type of help he had expected, apart from luminous objects in the heavens:

Some people say . . . ". . . If you want to say you are a *Lotus Sūtra* devotee you are very mistaken. In this *sūtra* it says: "Young *devas* will be his servants; swords and staves will not be laid on him . . ." [*Bunshū* 277-78, *Zenshū* 828, *Goshō* 230, quoting ch.14 of LS, TLS 234, T262/9/39b].<sup>2</sup>

After quoting other passages to prove that a true devotee could not have been so poor or ugly or harassed, Nichiren's tormentors argued that not only had the *devas* and *kami* failed to avert the "swords and staves", but not even the ogre-like demons (*rakṣasa*) had bothered to give the aid promised in the "Dharanis" ("spells") chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*:

"Whoever resists our spell  
And troubles a preacher,  
May his head be split in seven  
Like an *arjaka* sprout" [idem quoting TLS 331, T262/9/59-b].

None of this was new to Nichiren. As we have seen, during his first exile on Izu peninsula he had explained his sufferings as "reading the *Sūtra* in the body". Then, six years after his second arrest, he argued that he had deliberately put these quoted promises to the test by placing himself in need of divine protection in his endeavours to spread the *Lotus Sūtra* faith:

Then I tried to force the fulfilment of the vows written in the presence of the Buddha [by] Brahma, Indra, Sūyraprabha, Candraprabha and the Four Deva Kings, not to leave unpunished even for a moment those who would harm the *Lotus Sūtra* devotee. Applying this

vow to myself I tried to find out the truth or falsehood of the kind assurances by Śākyamuni, Prabhūtaratna and the buddha-emanations of the ten directions, that they would dwell with me, or cover me with their garments, or protect me. Striving to increase my faith, I pursued my endeavours with no turning back, so that despite my innocence I was banished to Sado in Bun'ei 8 [1271], on 12th of 9th month. It was just as I had expected [*Shimoyama Shō*, Tokoro 325, *Zenshū* 1529, *Gosho* 356].

This work was a letter sent to the Steward of Shimoyama in defence of one of his vassals who had turned away from Amidism to the *Lotus* faith. It is not quite so surprising then, that Nichiren should seem to accuse even Śākyamuni and all the buddhas of failure to keep their promises, and moreover to say "it was just as (he) had expected". Perhaps he was not fully aware of the implications of his words, so eager was he to impress the Steward of Shimoyama with the image of a *samurai*-like devotee, steadfast and unperturbed throughout his ordeal. However, the account in *Shuju Ofurumai Gosho* betrays moments of panic. It also includes the significant passage:

During the ensuing days and months, as I pondered over what I had seen, [I thought]: "How fortunate to lay down one's life for the *Lotus Sūtra*! If this stinking head is severed, it will be like exchanging sand for gold, or trading stones for jewels!" [*Zenshū* 1367, *Gosho* 911-12].

In fact, it did take him days, and months, to recover from the shock of desertion by the gods and humiliation by the people of Kamakura. But what did he mean by trying to "force the fulfilment of the vows"? Could it mean that he had instructed his followers not to use their weapons to defend him? All agree that they offered no resistance to Heizaemon. Was this passivity due to his readiness to die for the *Lotus Sūtra*, as is usually claimed? Or did they simply watch bemused, waiting for some deity to turn away the swords and staves, or for some female demons to appear and spill their opponents' brains on the ground? Judging from the *sūtra* quotations we have seen, and their disappointment when nothing happened, it was just at this moment that they expected the gods to smite their foes. It was only "during the ensuing days and months" that Nichiren was able to rationalise their non-appearance.

It is not only the taunts of enemies, but Nichiren's later complaints and denunciations that show us the kinds of retribution he had envisaged. When he recalled how the soldiers had "trampled

the *sūtras* into the muck, and seizing (the roll of) the *Lotus Sūtra* kept under Nichiren's robe, beat (him) mercilessly on the head", he could not understand why the gods had not smitten them on the spot, with leprosy or other dread disease. After all, they had brought severe punishments on others for much less serious offences:

The *asuras* that shot at Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha were struck in the eye by their own arrows falling back; the dogs that barked at the king of beasts had their bellies torn open . . . (Taira no) Kiyomori-nyūdō, who had burnt down Tōdai and Kofuku temples, was afflicted with a burning disease of his body [*Shinkoku Ō Goshō*, *Zenshū* 1343-44, *Goshō* 1524-25].

Just a year earlier he had likened those who ridiculed his teachings to "filthy curs barking at a lion, the king of beasts, or monkeys laughing at Indra" [*Zenmui Sanzō Shō*, *Zenshū* 664, *Goshō* 890]. Judging by this he already believed himself to be "the father and mother of the present Emperor" [*Senji Shō*, Tokoro 206, *Zenshū* 1203] and superior to any person or *kami* in Japan. As he wrote *Shinkoku Ō Goshō* three years after these events, his eyes were still "grim" with anger at the unpunished disrespect shown him, and he could only console himself with the expectation that worse punishments were being stored up for the whole nation:

If Nichiren is a *Lotus Sūtra* devotee in even the minutest degree, all the people of Japan must suffer in this life when they lose their land and are captured by foreigners. . . . Besides this, can it be doubted that their bodies [will be afflicted with] white and black leprosy or other serious diseases in this life as well as [the pains of] the incessant hell in the next? If this is not the meaning [of the *sūtra*], then Nichiren is not a devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and he will be smitten in his body with serious diseases such as white and black leprosy and in the next life fall into the incessant hell [*Zenshū* 1342, *Goshō* 1524].

### V. Threatening the Gods and Reassuring Disciples

It was not only the rulers and people that would fall into Avfci hell; the *devas* and *kami* would also, having "in this life exhausted their karmic rewards that brought them into the heavens" [*Shinkoku Ō Goshō*, *Zenshū* 1345, *Goshō* 1526]:

Even if they said they knew nothing about it, and had all the buddhas of the ten directions to support them, I, Nichiren am their strong foe. If the Buddha is unbiassed he must consign Brahma, Indra, Sūryaprabha, Candraprabha and the Four Deva Kings to the incessant hell. Nichiren's eyes are grim with anger, so fulfil your vows with all speed. Nichiren has spoken [idem].

However, Nichiren's denunciations of rulers and deities did not prevent a wholesale desertion by his followers:

When I, Nichiren was sentenced, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand fell away [*Niama Gozen Gohenji* (1272), *Bunshū* 51, *Zenshū* 1102, *Goshō* 907].

(Did he have a thousand followers at the time? "Over two hundred and sixty" are mentioned in *Shuju Ofurumai Goshō*, [*Zenshū* 1372, *Goshō* 196].)

The position of those who remained loyal was indeed uncomfortable, especially for those with family responsibilities. Five were in prison, and many were being "cut down, expelled or fined countless times" [idem]. It was urgently necessary to persuade them that he was still the true devotee, and that his aggressive methods were correct. His arguments are different in different letters, but significantly, in no letter (except the three dubious ones already mentioned) did he claim divine intervention as evidence of his credentials. Rather, he reverted to arguments about the merits of suffering for the *Lotus Sūtra* as the way to "read it in the body" (*shikidoku* 体読) [*Sado Gokanki Shō*, *Bunshū* 23-24, *Zenshū* 717].

In *Nyosetu Shugyō Shō* he wrote:

Even if they saw off your heads, prod you with spears, fetter your feet and rub you with awls, if you . . . die chanting "*Namu-myōhō-renge-kyō*", then Sākyamuni, Prabhūtaratna and the buddhas of the ten directions will instantly come flying to take your hand and bring you safely to the Vulture Peak [*Tokoro* 164-65, *Zenshū* 980].

Only in a letter to Chikugo-bō (= Nichirō) who was then shivering in a dungeon, is the concept of *shikidoku* connected not only with suffering but with divine protection:

This (*shikidoku*) is none other than [what it written in Chapter 14 of the *Lotus Sūtra*]: "Young devas will be his servants, swords and staves will not be laid on him, poison cannot harm him" [*Tsuchirō Goshō*, *Zenshū* 706-07, *Goshō* 1213].

If this letter is genuine (it is said to be a rehash of *Gonin Tsuchirō Goshō*, written to all five in prison), then why should Nichiren promise to this disciple what had been withheld from himself and all the other disciples? When writing to his seniors at Kiyozumi temple about "reading the *Sūtra* in the body" he made no mention of heavenly guardians. Rather, "the way to become buddhas is always by laying down your body and life". It is when we encounter abuse and expulsion that "we have more and more confidence that we are truly "reading" the *Lotus Sūtra*, and we can be sure of the life to come" [*Sado Gokanki Shō* (10th month 1271), *Bunshū* 23-24, *Zenshū* 77].

### ***Teradomari Goshō***

At a later stage in his journey to Sado, Nichiren had the opportunity to set out more systematically the reasons why his disciples should stay loyal to him. They had reached Teradomari, a port on the western coast, opposite the southern tip of the island of Sado, and were waiting for favourable winds. Toki-dono, his supporter and disciple since 1254, had sent a lay believer to accompany him to Sado, but "this *nyūdō*" was sent back with a letter - the last to be written before reaching the place of exile.

First he hinted at the hardships endured during the journey overland, but hastened to assure his followers that this was no cause for alarm. Had not the scriptures foretold it all? On the question of divine intervention he was silent, but he presented three arguments - firstly that the very fact of being calumniated showed him to be the true successor to the Buddha in his age, and his disciples to be the only true Buddhists; secondly that Tendai-Hokke was the only true form of Buddhism, while Shingon was its chief enemy; thirdly that he was the Bodhisattva Never-Despise (*Sadāparihūta*) for the Age of Decay, and entitled to the protection of the *bodhisattvas* from the earth against Dharma-slanderers.

However, Nichiren's disciples had heard this all before, and were beginning to argue that his sufferings were the result of his poor teaching methods. He did not understand his audience. Those who suffer for the *Lotus Sūtra* (as described in Chapter 13), must be well-advanced on the way to buddhahood. Beginners like Nichiren should stick to the rules laid down in the next chapter (though there is nothing in Chapter 14 to suggest that its rules are meant for beginners). No doubt they were thinking of admonitions in Chapter 14 against "telling of the errors of the other *sūtras*" and "talking about the merits and demerits of other people" (TLS 226, quoted in *Bunshū* 29). But Nichiren avoided discussion of this chapter,

content to identify himself with the buffeted *bodhisattva* Sadāparibhūta of Chapter 20 [idem].

What troubled him most was that although it was now the age for countless *bodhisattvas* to appear and "publish abroad" the *Lotus Sūtra*, they had not yet appeared:

Although we have now come to this age, and the three kinds of enemies are here, not one of the eighty myriads of *nayutas* of *bodhisattvas* is to be seen. It is like a low tide that has failed to rise again, or a waned moon that has failed to wax full again. If the water is clear it will reflect the moon; if one plants a tree the birds will shelter in it [*Teradomari Goshō*, *Bunshū* 29, *Zenshū* 712, *Goshō* 954].

Nevertheless, as he sent back the messenger to Toki-dono, he assured them that ultimately he would be vindicated, as Wake Kiyomaro had been. The world had maltreated and ridiculed Kiyomaro, but his memory was now honoured while most of his enemies were forgotten. Nichiren's hopes still lay in future divine intervention, despite the lack of it up till then.

## VI. On Sado: Deprivations, Doubts and Deliverance

Despite his disappointment, the shock of a hitherto-unimagined bleak environment, and extreme hardships, Nichiren's faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* seems to have been unshaken on Sado. Indeed, if we were to believe all the following account, it was his fervent practice and nothing else that saved him from freezing or starving to death in the ramshackle meditation hall on the Tsukahara graveyard where he was housed:

There was one hall with one room and four walls falling into disrepair. The sky was visible through the ceiling, and rain poured in no differently from outside. Snow piled up inside. There was no Buddha-image and not even a single sheet of straw matting. However, I set up [an image of] the Honoured Founder, Śākyamuni, which I had brought from the Fundamental Hall on Mt Hiei. There I lived, clutching the *Lotus Sūtra* in my hand, wearing a straw rain-cape and putting up an umbrella. For four years no one appeared or gave me any food. . . . [*Myōhō-bikuni Gohenji*, *Zenshū* 1708; *Goshō* 1413].

There are some inaccuracies in this account. Nichiren spent only one year in Tsukahara, and in several letters he mentions with admiration some brave and kindly souls that secretly brought him food and money. But he also mentions others who "hated" him, and some of these apparently sent bad reports of him to the mainland, where they were picked up by Toki-dono and other disciples. These bad reports aroused more doubts in their minds, which Toki-dono brought to his master's attention.

Nichiren answered with contempt for the "uncouth" inhabitants of Sado. Who were they to judge him? Then he turned Toki-dono's attention to the "ominous events" since the Shōka earthquake — especially the threat of foreign invasion. These events he now saw not just as portents of national doom, but as pointers to the appearance of the *bodhisattvas* from the earth to propagate the *Sūtra*. In his mind was brewing the idea that he himself could be the leader of these *bodhisattvas* — Jōgyō Bosatsu (Viśiṣṭacāritra). But without making any definite claim he concluded the letter with an exhortation that suggests that his hopes were being transferred from this world to the next:

Do not grieve over my exile. As it is written in the "Never-Despise" chapter, and in Chapter 13, the thing to be desired is the Buddha-land [*Toki-nyūdō-dono Gohenji*, *Zenshū* 714, *Gosho* 955-56].

Toki-dono was not convinced. He and his wife had both inherited domains in adjacent provinces, and could have found Nichiren's continual clashes with the authorities and with other sects an embarrassment, though he had protected Nichiren on several occasions. He urged moderation and prudence, but Nichiren pointed out that many laid down their lives for lesser causes. Why should devotees of the *Lotus Sūtra* be less brave?

Warriors never become famous until they overcome strong opponents. The one who without fail attains buddhahood is the lion-hearted hero [who challenges] wicked rulers collaborating with heretical monks to destroy the Right Dharma. Someone like Nichiren. This is not boasting. It must be the strength and vigour of one who holds dear the Right Dharma [*Sado Gosho* (1272, 3/20), *Bunshū* 33, *Zenshū* 842, *Gosho* 957].

In this letter he also claimed that his prediction of internal rebellion had been validated during the second month that year, when the disaffected Hōjō Tokisuke opposed the Regent Tokimune's policy towards the Mongols (and was subsequently put to death). He

rejected Toki-dono's pleas for moderation, since it was necessary vigorously to expose error, especially within the community of monks, for Amidists and Shingonites were "like the devouring worms in the body of the lion", much more dangerous than external foes [idem].

But why should they believe Nichiren when the gods had deserted him? Was he not the worst "worm" of all? Could one who was not a saint lead them to buddhahood? Nichiren had two answers:

Although Nichiren is not a saint he is like one, for he receives and keeps the *Lotus Sūtra* just as it is taught. Also, it is commonly accepted that when someone's predictions concerning worldly matters are not mistaken, people should not doubt [his teachings about] the next world [idem].

"Commonly accepted" or not, this reasoning is not sound. Successful predictions in one field may increase our general confidence in the prophet's ability, but do not guarantee the validity of further predictions even in the same field, let alone a totally different one. As for keeping the *Lotus Sūtra* "just as it is taught", this was a claim that had to be defended in detail a year later in the work entitled *Keeping the Lotus Sūtra Just as it is Taught* (*Nyosetsu Shugyō Shō*). On this claim rested the claim to be "like a saint", and the more arrogant one of being "the pillar of Japan" without which the Hōjō administration must collapse:

Nichiren is the pillar of the whole house [of Hōjō] in Kantō. He is their sun and moon and their norm of conduct. He is their eyes. When Nichiren departs the seven calamities must inevitably befall. This is the meaning of what I loudly proclaimed last year when I was arrested on 12th of 9th month. Did not these things happen barely sixty days afterwards? This must be the flowering of *karma*. When the real fruit comes, can they expect anything but grief? [*Sado Goshō, Bunshū* 33-34, *Zenshū* 843, *Goshō* 957-58].

By "these things" he was probably referring to the arrival of the third Mongol envoy, and then Tokisuke's rebellion. He did not mention that the Bakufu withstood these shocks quite successfully. Concentrating more on *karma* than on divine aid, he assured his followers that while his enemies may gloat over him now, their grief would later be "no less than that of Nichiren and his disciples" [*Bunshū* 34]. They were like the enemies of Śākyamuni who afterwards fell into hell.

## Karma

Up till this point his answers had been predictable. *Karma* was stressed a little more, divine aid much less. But the reality of his harsh circumstances, the jibes of his enemies and the doubts of his disciples demanded a more satisfying answer. As during the first exile, the bravado gave way for a short while to humble modesty. Frankly discussing the meanness of his estate, he even accepted some of the blame for his misfortunes. In *Shi On Shō* (Sec. III) we saw how he admitted to crimes committed in past lives. This time he confessed even to erroneous religious practices during his youth in this life as well. His punishment was like that inflicted on his favourite *bodhisattva*, *Sadāparibhūta*. (*Viśiṣṭacāritra* did not give him any help here.)

Neither is it totally unrelated to *karma* from previous lives, that I am punished in this way. It says in the chapter "Never-Despise": "When his sins were expiated" [TLS 293]. The beatings and insults endured by *Bodhisattva Never-Despise* from numberless *Dharma*-slanderers must have resulted from previous *karma*. How much more so must it be for me! In this life I was born as a poverty-stricken, vulgar person from an outcaste family. Although my mind seems to have believed the *Lotus Sūtra*, my body is that of a man-like beast. A fish and a bird have been rolled into one, to make the two drops of red [blood] and white [sperm] in which the soul ( 神 ) is housed, like the moon reflected in muddy water, or gold wrapped in dung [*Sado Goshō*, *Bunshū* 34, *Zenshū* 844, *Goshō* 958, f.2].

Were his disciples also repelled by his mean physical endowment? Let them look for the "gold" wrapped inside. Only fools were deceived by outward appearances:

Because my body and mind are so incompatible it is not surprising that fools insult me [idem].

Then he speculated on what wicked things he might have done in previous lives to deserve such a fate, adding to theft, night-raids and rebellion the possibility that he had been one of those who had persecuted *Sadāparibhūta*, and been guilty of *Dharma*-slander. (If he had, he should be still agonising in *Avīci* hell, if the "thousand *kalpas* mentioned in the *Sūtra* are to be taken seriously.) However, he thought they should recognise his innocence in this instance, and the salutary effects of suffering:

The workings of *karma* are hard to assess. Iron becomes a sword when tempered and beaten. The wise and saintly are tested by insults. My incurring the wrath of the authorities this time has nothing to do with any fault on my part. It is simply that I may cancel in this life the grave sins from previous *karma*, and escape the three evil paths in later existences [Sado Goshō, *Bunshū* 35, *Zenshū* 844, *Goshō* 958].

As for the serious and regrettable errors of his early years in this life, he could not be held entirely responsible. After all, he had been born in Japan, where everyone had become a Dharma-slanderer, so how could he have escaped becoming an Amidist and committing Dharma-slander himself?

Whether he could have escaped this "sin" in his youth or not, his opponents could have pointed out that better-favoured contemporaries had a better claim to be the Buddha's messenger. Nichiren admitted that the retribution for his past sins had been "contempt, ugly and mean appearance, inadequate clothing, inferior food and drink, profitless pursuit of wealth, and being born in a family of mean estate or of perverse views" [Sado Goshō, *Bunshū* 36, *Zenshū* 846, *Goshō* 959]. He had already applied each phrase of the tale of woes to himself, in *Kaimoku Shō*. Nevertheless he denied that in his case such misfortunes were caused by the ordinary "fixed law of cause and effect". In the usual course of events it would have taken many lifetimes to get rid of all this bad *karma*, but he had brought all these punishments upon himself in one lifetime, and thus purged his bad *karma*, by attacking the enemies of the *Lotus Sūtra*. It was like having to pay off a debt, complete with interest, in one lump sum instead of having several years to pay by instalments [*Bunshū* 37]. Ironically then, he thanked his enemies for forcing such a rapid payment of his debts. It was they who were helping him to attain buddhahood, by making him suffer for the *Lotus Sūtra*, and thus truly practise it:

How can I fail to become Śākyamuni Buddha when I alone practise the same acts leading to buddhahood that Sadāparibhūta did? [idem].

By contrast, these enemies would take an incredibly long time to attain buddhahood. As for those disciples who had lost confidence in him, saying he was "too adamant", they were "like fireflies laughing at the sun and moon, or like anthills laughing at Mt Hua" [*Bunshū* 39]. Thus his brief spell of self-humbling ended abruptly in re-assertion of his claims.

### ***Kaimoku Shō: Confessions of an Isolated Devotee***

Early in the New Year of 1272, Nichiren enjoyed a victory in debate over some Amidists on Sado, and this seems to have increased his confidence and crystallised his thoughts sufficiently to sit down and compose his major work, *Kaimoku Shō* (*Essay on Opening the Eyes*). In *Shuju Ofurumai Goshō* we have the following explanation:

Then, after everyone had gone home I composed the work I had been thinking about since 11th month of the previous year — *Kaimoku Shō*, in two rolls. I thought that if I were beheaded the wonder of Nichiren would be preserved. The gist of this work is that on Nichiren depends the existence of Japan. As a house cannot stand without a pillar, and as a person without a soul is dead, so Nichiren is the soul of the people of Japan. Heizaemon has already felled the pillar of Japan [*Zenshū* 1377, *Goshō* 919].

However, as already noted [p.19], in the work itself the "kernel" is said to be the question "Why do the *devas* not help me"? [*Bunshū* 233, *Goshō* 203].

Before dealing with this question he confessed to several other difficulties that had been worrying him, such as how he could reject all the teachings of the Buddha except two chapters of the *Lotus Sūtra*. He was isolated by attitude far more than by geographical distance. But this very isolation he took as confirmation of his credentials, for had not Chih-i and Saichō been isolated also? If his friends were fewer and his enemies more numerous than theirs, this was but a sign of the Age of Decay, when suffering was the way to fulfil his role as the compassionate successor of the compassionate Śākyamuni. And yet, all this seemed like empty rationalisation, as the nagging doubt persisted: if Nichiren was truly preaching the Right Dharma, why did not the gods protect him? Again he presented some tentative answers, none of them new. Firstly he had inherited bad *karma*; secondly, his compulsion to speak out must bring him persecution during the Age of Decay; thirdly, the word of the Buddha predicting persecution must be fulfilled; fourthly, the *devas* and Hinayanists that had finally gained enlightenment through the *Lotus Sūtra* were failing in their duty to help him [*Kaimoku Shō*, *Bunshū* 227, *Goshō* 200]. But why were they failing? Could it be that:

. . . the devas, despite their vows before the Buddha, have failed to come down because they can see the fierce afflictions of this defiled world? [*Bunshū* 239, *Zenshū* 795, *Goshō* 207].

Perhaps they were afraid. But as he contemplated the worlds which he believed they governed, going on their way unperturbed by his sufferings, none of these explanations satisfied him:

The moon is in heaven. Mt Sumeru has not crumbled away. Tides still ebb and flow. The seasons still succeed each other in due course. Doubts pile up more and more as I wonder what could have happened [*idem*].

### Reasserting Claims

Nichiren then broke off for another long section on the eternity of Śākyamuni's buddhahood, and the reasons for believing that only in the last eight years of his life did the Buddha give his own teaching (the *Lotus Sūtra*), and that only then were his true disciples (the *bodhisattvas* from the earth) revealed. Then the deserted devotee again took up the cudgels against the gods and *bodhisattvas* for protecting the devotees of their own *sūtras* even while these devotees were opposing the supreme *sūtra*. They had failed to discern their highest loyalty, for they should all be protecting him "in the same way as the guardian *kami* of the Seven (Nara) Sects protected Dengyō-daishi" [*Bunshū* 255, *Goshō* 217].

Again confessing "deep anxiety" he said he must "once again ponder the *sūtra* texts and apply them to understand faults". However, the only faults brought to light during his wearisome repetition of familiar arguments, are those of other sects. Repeating the *Lotus Sūtra's* own claim to supremacy, he re-assured himself that he was the devotee of the ultimate truth, and warned his disciples not to be overawed by the extensive learning of more widely-travelled scholars. He had all the wisdom necessary "simply in knowing the relative merits of all the *sūtras*". He was superior to all the other masters because he followed "in the footsteps of T'ient'ai-ta-shih and Dengyō-daishi" [*Kaimoku Shō*, *Bunshū* 265, *Zenshū* 816-17, *Goshō* 222].

### Rival Candidates

Fearful that his disciples were still doubting his authority, Nichiren next considered the possibility that some other monk

might be the true devotee, or even that no devotee existed, seeing that no *devas* had come to his aid. This time he took the bull by the horns by arguing that if he had not been allowed to suffer he would not have qualified:

But as though the [Buddha's] golden words might perhaps be broken, there is no *Lotus Sūtra* devotee. How could this be? Tell me, who has been slandered and reviled by the mob? What monk has been smitten with sword and staff? What monk has been indicted before nobles and warriors for the sake of the *Lotus Sūtra*? What monk has been "repeatedly driven out" or exiled once and again? Apart from Nichiren, there is not one in all Japan whom one could nominate. [People say] Nichiren is not a *Lotus Sutra* devotee, having been rejected by the *devas*, but who else could there be in this world? [*Bunshū* 277, *Zenshū* 827, *Goshō* 230].

Had not other monks qualified equally by their sufferings? Not so, for their sufferings were just punishment for their crimes of burning temples and stupas, or for their detestable flattery of nobles and warriors. Only he was suffering because of the "three kinds of enemies of the *Sūtra*" — ignorant non-Buddhists, professing Buddhists and revered Buddhist teachers. (He seems to have forgotten his own advocacy of arson, and his previous arguments about suffering because of bad *karma* from crimes in previous lives.)

### **Are the Enemies to be Punished Now or Later?**

Apparently it did not seem strange to Nichiren that, having been the enemy of the *Lotus Sūtra* in previous incarnations, he should suddenly be born a devotee without first spending many *kalpas* in Avici hell, for this is the fate that he often presented to his enemies. The only problem that still worried him and his followers was that the divine guardians of the *Sūtra* had not immediately come to his aid. So, having renominated himself as the true devotee, he set forth once again some of the texts on this subject that people were using against him. His answers were different to those in *Sado Goshō*, written a month later when he heard of the internecine strife in Kamakura and the arrival of the Mongolian envoys, which gave him hope that help was already on its way. In *Kaimoku Shō* he had to think of different answers. Firstly, he said, it was not true that all those truly practising the *Lotus Sūtra* in this life must have been innocent of Dharma-slander in

previous lives. T'ient'ai-ta-shih and Sadāparibhūta were cited as examples of those who inherited bad *karma*. Secondly, he reasoned that his enemies were escaping punishment in this life because something worse was being stored up for them in the next:

Those who in the next life are destined to fall into hell, meet no punishment in the present, even if they commit serious crimes. These are the *icchāntikas* [*Bunshū* 279, *Zenshū* 829, *Goshō* 231].

In fact, "their offences were so grave that adequate punishment would have utterly destroyed the world", and it was for this reason that no sign had been manifested on behalf of true devotees [*Bunshū* 280]. Then it was with the courage born of despair that he reaffirmed his *bodhisattva* vow:

I shall affirm my original vow. [You may say to me if you will], the throne of Japan will be yielded to you, if you abandon the *Lotus Sūtra* and follow the Pure Land *sūtras* for a [happy] rebirth. . . . No matter how many great afflictions befall me I shall not heed you unless my doctrines are overthrown by a man of wisdom. . . . I shall be the pillar of Japan, the eyes of Japan, the great ship of Japan. This I vow, and the vow shall never be broken [*Kaimoku Shō*, *Bunshū* 280, *Zenshū* 830, *Goshō* 232].

### Single-Mindedness

Nichiren was sure that by enduring his miserable lot he would finish expiating his crimes of previous lives — of which he invented a few more, such as robbing countless devotees of food and clothing, fields, and of life itself. The punishment for these crimes "did not befall him while he was practising the provisional *sūtras*". His faults had not become apparent, for "without thorough tempering in the fire, faults do not become apparent" [*Kaimoku Shō*, *Bunshū* 282, *Zenshū* 832, *Goshō* 233].

This endurance he linked with compassion, using a parable from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* about a poor woman who lost her life in the Ganges after enduring much suffering, trying to save the life of her illegitimate child. Her single-minded compassion for the child was likened to "something like meditation", since this thought had become "her sole object of consciousness", and as a result she attained rebirth in Brahma-heaven even though she had not been seeking it [*Bunshū* 282-84, *Zenshū* 832-33, *Goshō* 233-34, quoting *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, T374/12/2/425c].

In the same way:

I and my disciples must spontaneously attain the Buddha-realm despite our many afflictions, if our minds do not doubt. Do not harbour doubts because of the lack of divine protection; do not grieve over the lack of tranquility [*Bunshū* 284, *Zenshū* 834, *Gosho* 234].

Thus he sought to reassure his disciples, but also upbraided those who were leaving him:

Though I taught my disciples every morning and evening, they have all started to doubt and are about to leave me. It must be the way of the cowardly to forget when the time comes [to perform] promises. They are probably mourning over partings in this life, out of pity for wives and children. Yet, during the course of many rebirths over long *kalpas* there must always have been these separations from those who have become dear to them — whether in mind, or for the sake of the Buddha-way. You must desire to lead them back to the Vulture Peak and not destroy your own faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* [*idem*].

### To Ichinosawa

A move to Ichinosawa in the spring of 1272 brought Nichiren some improvement in treatment from his custodians, and the opportunity to grow his own food. In *Kashaku Bōhō Metsuzai Shō*, the presence of seven or eight disciples is mentioned, and these presumably would have done the farming. (The authenticity of this work however, is doubtful [*Zenshū* III/225].) Despite this, the prevailing hostility of most inhabitants and the harshness of his surroundings combined to cause at least occasional bouts of despondency. In a letter to Shijō Kingo (dated simply Bun'ei 9), Nichiren described himself as "abandoned by the world, by the Buddha-Dharma, and by the devas — a reject". Although he had "received a commission from the Honoured Founder Śākyamuni, and come to this land" his enemies had "spared no secret design to afflict" him. His narrow escape from execution the previous year was again attributed merely to "some reason or other", and there were still no signs of divine aid [*Shijō kingo-dono Gohenji*, *Zenshū* 894-95, *Gosho* 1120-21].

The move to Ichinosawa did not immediately allay his fears of execution either, as he explained to Toki-dono, in his first letter after the move. Once again he found it necessary to explain the lack of divine aid, but this time he believed that not only had the

local *kami* lost their power, but that the greater *devas* had also, while the wicked ones had grown stronger:

However, as for the failure of the *devas* to protect me now, the first reason may be that the *devas* and good *kami* have left this wicked land. The second may be that the good *kami* have lost their grandeur and vigour. The third reason may be that great and wicked *devas* have entered the minds of the three kinds [of enemies] and that the power of Brahma and Indra is no match for them (*Toki-dono Gohenji*, 1272, 10th of 4th month, *Zenshū* 849, *Gosho* 962).

### Where are the *Bodhisattvas* From the Earth?

A year later, however, Nichiren expressed confidence that he would be helped not only by the *devas* and *kami*, but by Buddha's special messengers for the Age of Decay — the *bodhisattvas* from the earth (described in Chapter 15 of the *Lotus Sūtra*) [*Kenbutsu Mirai Ki*, Tokoro 170, *Zenshū* 983, *Gosho* 507. Dated 1273, 5th of 12th month].

This is quite different from claiming to be *Jōgyō* Bosatsu, the leader of these *bodhisattvas*, as he is often made out to be. Rather, he seems to have thought of himself as their forerunner, and whether or not these greater *bodhisattvas* rose up to "proclaim [the title of the *Lotus Sūtra*] far and wide", he must continue to do what was in his power:

Although *Bodhisattva Eminent Conduct* (*Jōgyō*) is said in the *Sūtra* to appear at this time of the Age of Decaying Dharma, to propagate this teaching, how is it? One may think that *Jōgyō* Bosatsu will appear, or will not appear. Regardless of this I have propagated it so some extent [*Shōji Ichidai Kechimyaku Shō*, *Zenshū* 762, *Gosho* 1338. Note that the authenticity of this work is disputed. (*Zenshū* III/206)].

## VII. Return to Kamakura and Retirement to Minobu

Nichiren continued to use similar arguments during his exile, but not always consistently. When Toki-dono tried to get him released he earned nothing but a rebuke for his pains, for Nichiren was hoping for a triumphant return. The *devas* had "hindered" his release, he wrote in *Shingon Shoshū Imoku* (1272, 5/5), *Zenshū* 868-69]. However,

towards the end of the same letter the *devas* are not said to have "hindered" release, but to have been powerless against the evil spirits that had used the monks of Japan to gain possession of the whole land. As for the puny *kami* of Japan, they were becoming ever more feeble, so the only ones able to prevail against those evil spirits were Sākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna, with the *bodhisattvas* from the earth. But while his own bad *karma* remained to be wiped out it was too early for these helpers to appear [*Zenshū* 872, *Gosho* 141].

Behind this brave front there was as usual much anxiety and pent-up frustration, to which he admitted four years later in a letter to a lay nun, Kōnichi-ama. He longed to visit his home district again, to visit his parents' grave. This emotion was then diverted into a familiar channel - vexation at the failure of the gods to vindicate him. For this failure he threatened them with limitless sufferings in hell, and demanded release:

So I climbed a high mountain and shouted: "If you think this is a fearful sin, hasten to give evidence of this to the nation, and let me return to my homeland" [*Kōnichi-bō Gosho* (1276), *Zenshū* 1388, *Gosho* 927].

When the letter of pardon reached Nichiren on 8th of 3rd month 1274, he attributed his release entirely to the goodwill of the Regent Tokimune, in *Nakaoki-nyūdō Goshōsoku* [*Zenshū* 1837, *Gosho* 1333], but on another plane he implied that it came as a result of his continuing tirade against the *devas* [*Kōnichi-bō Gosho*, *Zenshū* 1339, *Gosho* 928]. Favourable winds on the return journey must also have seemed auspicious, raising his hopes for recognition at last:

We made the crossing in three days, although in adverse conditions it could have taken a hundred or fifty days [*Shuju Ofurumai Gosho*, *Zenshū* 1379, *Gosho* 920].

### Hopes Dashed Again

It soon became very evident to Nichiren that the Kamakura government had no intention of changing its religious policies, although Heizaemon-no-jō Yoritsuna did grant him an interview. (Note also he has changed his mind again about the power of the *devas*.)

Now in Bun'ei 11, 2nd month, I was recalled from Sado-no-kuni, and on 8th of 4th month I was interviewed by Heizaemon. I explained in detail how unreasonable

my punishment had been, and also lamented the imminent destruction of Japan by a foreign country. Kingo asked me when the Mongols would attack. Although the *sūtras* do not indicate the exact year and month, I could see extraordinary hostility by the *devas* to this country, when I looked on their glaring countenance. I was sure they would attack that year, and that if they did, no one could withstand them, for it was the punishment of the *devas*. I said "Because you gentlemen do not heed me, your strength will not avail. You must never, never let Shingon masters conduct the prayers to subdue [the Mongols]. If you do, matters will get so much the worse". Then I left, but as before, neither nobles nor commoners seemed inclined to heed [*Shimoyama Shō*, Tokoro 327, *Zenshū* 1532, *Gosho* 327-28].

### The Last Hope

Deprived of the opportunity to show his powers against the Mongols (though the Bakufu probably thought that as the *devas* had not helped him much up till now, his powers were not very great), the disappointed devotee retired to a hut on Mt Minobu, to meditate and teach his disciples. He had washed his hands of his generation, but still longed for recognition. There remained only one hope — a devastating attack by the Mongols that would expose the futility of Shingon prayers, and wring recognition from his ungrateful countrymen. When they came in 10th month of that year his prediction to Heizaemon was partly borne out, but as the Mongols were repulsed by storms, only the islands of Iki and Tsushima suffered invasion. Nichiren was sure that the next time would be different, and expressed great sorrow at the coming destruction [*Senji Shō*, Tokoro 231]. However, the tangled strands of human nature being what they are, it is not so surprising to read a little further on in the same work, such expressions of eager anticipation of the honour awaiting him when the invasion occurred, that compel us to believe that he viewed the prospect of destruction with considerable relish:

When Japan is attacked by thousands of Mongol ships laden with soldiers, then all from the Emperor down to the common people will desert all the shrines and temples and chant "*Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō*". Clasp their hands in entreaty, surely they will cry "Nichiren-gobō! save us!" [*Senji Shō*, Tokoro 236-37, *Zenshū* 1234, *Gosho* 286-87].

Did he anticipate their immediate conversion and salvation? Not until he had enjoyed adequate recompense for their ill-treatment of him:

As those proud, insulting monks at first clubbed Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta, but later repented of their wrong-doing, hands joined in entreaty, so it will be then. Devadatta drew blood from the body of the Honoured Śākyamuni, but on the verge of death he chanted "*Namu*"! Although he would have escaped falling into hell had he only [completed the invocation with the name of] "Buddha", he failed to, because of the depth of his evil *karma*. [In the same way], though the high priests of Japan today may try to chant "*Namu Nichiren-shōnin*" (Adoration of St Nichiren!), they will be able to get only as far as "*Namu . . .*!" How pitiable! [*Senji Shō*, Tokoro 237, *Zenshū* 1234-35, *Gosho* 287].

Fortunately for Japan, the predictions were not borne out by events. Most of Japan was spared the ravages of invasion in 1281, for it was confined to northern Kyūshū, and instead of turning to him, temples and shrines clamoured for the credit of bringing the "divine wind" (*kamikaze*) which destroyed the Mongol fleet for the second time.

Unfortunately for Nichiren, he had pinned so much hope on this invasion that he could not admit that the gods had worked against him. His silence is the best evidence of this, but there are two works of disputed authenticity in which he forbade his disciples to talk about the matter to other people, except to challenge them to produce the severed head of the Mongolian leader. These are *Shō Mōko Gosho*, [Tokoro 383, *Gosho* 1284], and *Jōkyū Gassen no Aida no Koto*, [Tokoro 386, *Zenshū* 1976, *Gosho* 994] (In *Zenshū* and *Gosho* the title is different).

### ***Kangyō Hachiman Shō*: The Confusion of Nichiren**

Nichiren's failure to admit that Shingon prayers had apparently worked, and that the *devas* had not after all sent the Mongols to punish the whole of Japan and vindicate him, came only a year after reasserting his claim, in *Kangyō Hachiman Shō*, that he was the only honest devotee in whom dwelt the "honest *kami*", Hachiman. We have already seen how he had at times changed his explanations of divine inactivity without acknowledging he could have been mistaken. But in this work there are inconsistencies so glaring

as to invite the doubt whether he was any longer capable of honest argument, or whether his desire for recognition had made him blind to these inconsistencies.

To outline his argument: he first ridiculed Hachiman for his inferiority to the Indian *devas*, and his inability to defend his shrines. The great Tsuragaoka Shrine in Kamakura had just been burnt down during 11th month of 1280, and the Hakozaki Shrine in Kyūshū had been destroyed during the first Mongolian attack in 1274. Secondly he argued that this was just punishment upon Hachiman from the *devas* for failing to defend the devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and justified this argument by asserting that Japanese *kami* and rulers were inferior to Indian *devas*. But finally he turned round and claimed that Hachiman, the leading Japanese *kami*, who was the protector and indweller of the upright and honest, had rightly abandoned the emperors for the "honest" Hōjō regent Yoshitoki, and now dwelt only in the head of "honest" Nichiren. Further, he was the *suijaku* (manifestation) of Śākyamuni Buddha in Japan. Let us look more closely at Nichiren's sudden switch from intense anger to glorification of Hachiman.

The news of the Tsuragaoka fire came at a time when the Bakufu was making concerted efforts to prepare defences against the Mongols — not just by fortification, but by Buddhist and Shintō prayers. As Nichiren had never been invited to lead the prayers, this news was quite consoling to him. Although he had written in 1276 that "the internecine battles of 2nd month, Bun'ei 9 [1272], the gales of 4th month, Bun'ei 11 and the arrival of the Mongols in 10th month of the same year, were surely because of Nichiren "[Tokoro 276], he became more and more dissatisfied that this had been "the only form of punishment" on Japan, and that

. . . for several years [Hachiman had] failed to deal with those who oppose the *Lotus Sūtra* devotee and treat him as a traitor, the enemy of rulers, people and parents [*Kangyō Hachiman Shō*, Tokoro 355, *Zenshū* 1929, *Goshō* 578].

He goes on to ask:

Is this [not] why Hachiman had met this disaster, for his grave offence, as part of his punishment by Brahma, Indra, Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha? [idem].

To justify his reasoning, Nichiren drew on "a certain *sūtra*" (unnamed), which portrays these *devas* as a kind of international and interstellar police force, commissioned by the Buddha to oversee the guardians of the Dharma. If these policemen failed to discipline any lax guardians, they themselves were subject to punishment

from other spheres, and were liable to "lose their rank . . . and sink into the incessant hell" [idem].

Nichiren reminded Hachiman that during the Heike wars (1177-81) he had carried out his "police" duties against the erring *ujigami* of the Taira clan, and brought about the downfall of the Taira, whose leader Kiyomori had become "arrogant" [Tokoro 359]. Now, however, Hachiman's responsibilities were greater. Minamoto Yoritomo had made him a national deity in 1193 when he built his great shrine on Tsurugaoka, and now all the people of Japan were his *ujiko* ("clan children"):

Since ancient times, all the living beings of the three-thousandfold worlds had been the sons of Śākyamuni Tathāgata; more recently all the 4,994,828 people [fn.2] of Japan have become the sons of the Great Bodhisattva Hachiman. At present all the living beings of Japan rely on Hachiman and lionise him, while abandoning Śākyamuni. . . . The *honji* (Original Buddha) is Śākyamuni Tathāgata, who appeared in Yüeh-chih to expound the *Lotus Sūtra* which "frankly sets aside *upāya*" (= skilful means); the *suijaku* (Manifestation Buddha) is born in Japan to dwell in the head of the honest [Tokoro 368, *Zenshū* 1944, *Gosho* 588].

Despite his high position, Hachiman had been too indulgent to his *ujiko*, especially in forgiving the serious offences of the Hōjō family, at the expense of his vows before the buddhas [Tokoro 355]. How should he discipline them, to avoid further punishment on himself? Nichiren reminded him of some punishments that had been inflicted on the enemies of the Buddha in the past, especially during Kinmei's reign when "fire came down from heaven and consumed the Emperor's residence" and "more than half the population" died in a plague. Presumably he meant that any lesser punishment on present enemies of the Buddha would be quite inappropriate, for in opposing Nichiren who was "the eyes of the world for devas and men" Shingon masters in particular were "gouging out" the eyes of all. Hachiman was to blame for letting this happen, and there was no excuse for his allowing Nichiren to be humiliated by the authorities [*Kangyō Hachiman Shō*, Tokoro 359-60, *Zenshū* 1934-35, *Gosho* 581-82].

### The Kami: Masters or Servants?

Some disciples had become worried by Nichiren's irreverence towards Hachiman, even calling him an "enemy" of this august

deity. Nichiren answered with a story about a wealthy brahman, Nyagrodha, who threatened to burn the image of his god, a forest-spirit, unless that spirit granted his prayers for a son and heir. The result was entirely satisfactory, for after the terrified forest-spirit had appealed for help to the Four Deva Kings, who relayed the message to Mahābrahma, the brahman got a son, who became Kāśyapa, one of the leading disciples of the Buddha. So Nichiren concluded that "anger may be good or evil" [*Kangyō Hachiman Shō*, Tokoro 362-64, *Zenshū* 1938-39, *Gosho* 584 quoting from *Transmission of the Dharma (Fu-fa-ts'ang Yin-yüan)*, Roll 1, T2058/50/2/297b-c].

With such an example in mind, should his disciples find it unreasonable when he rebuked Hachiman so harshly? He had been like a "compassionate mother" in his untiring efforts over twenty-eight years, to "put the Sacred Title into the mouths of all the people of Japan", so his anger was quite justified [idem]. In any case, even a low-born, low-grade *bodhisattva* of the *Lotus Sūtra* like Nichiren was greater than the *kami* and rulers of "the small country of Japan", for in previous lives the latter had attained only to the inferior ranks of *bodhisattvas* of the Hīnayāna *sūtras*, which did not get them even to the "non-backsliding" stage, or to the second of the six stages to buddhahood in the *Lotus Sūtra* (where one understands that all living beings have the Buddha-nature). This second stage (*myōji-bodhisattva* 名字菩薩) was the one to which Nichiren had attained. So if the ruler did not heed him, he would "backslide and fall into Avīci hell for a long, long time" [Tokoro 355, *Zenshū* 1930, *Gosho* 578-79].

*Kami* of Japan were inferior not only to buddhas and *myōji-bodhisattvas*, but to deities of more powerful countries. Hachiman's position may be unsurpassed in Japan, but he could easily be defeated by Mongolian deities, so how could he escape punishment? His inferiority had already been exposed when he proved incapable of defending his shrine or of punishing the Mongolian soldiers in 1274. "The great ruler of that country is clearly superior to the *kami* of this country" [Tokoro 361, *Zenshū* 1936, *Gosho* 583].

### Nichiren: Dishonest or Deluded?

Having stressed Hachiman's inferiority and dereliction of duty, Nichiren then turns round to call him "this great *bodhisattva*", "the eight petals of the Lotus" (whose centre is Śākyamuni), and the very reincarnation of Śākyamuni Buddha [*Kangyō Hachiman Shō*, Tokoro 368, *Zenshū* 1944, *Gosho* 588]. The diversity of

manifestations of original buddhas (*honji*) is demonstrated in many *sūtras*, so how could Śākyamuni fail to be reborn in Japan?

[Now Śākyamuni] was born on 8th of 4th month, the day of the cock, and after eighty years died on 15th of 2nd month. How could the Founder fail to be born in Japan? It is written in the inscriptions on the stones of Shō Hachiman's shrine in Ōsumi (Kyūshū): "Of old I expounded the Marvellous *Lotus Sūtra* on the Vulture Peak; now I am in Shō Shrine revealed as the Great Bodhisattva" [Tokoro 367, *Zenshū* 1943, *Gosho* 588].

Furthermore, Nichiren defended Hachiman against the charge of breaking his vows to defend "the hundred sovereigns". The demise of the 81st, 82nd, 83rd and 84th emperors was just punishment for their espousal of Shingon. They had been false to the *Lotus Sūtra*, so had lost the protection of Hachiman, which was meant only for "the hundred honest sovereigns", and had been transferred to Hōjō Yoshitoki (1163-1224), leader of the Bakufu army against ex-Emperor Gotoba. He was responsible for exiling three emperors (reigning or cloistered), and was abhorred by those fighting to restore imperial power, but had a reputation for honesty. However, his honesty was in the secular realm, which Nichiren regarded as much less important than the Buddha Dharma [idem]. Moreover, the successors of Yoshitoki (especially Nagatoki) had favoured the enemies of the *Lotus Sūtra*, so Hachiman was no longer indwelling them. Where could he be, if not in the head of the *Lotus Sūtra* devotee?

Even if this great *bodhisattva* should burn his shrine and go up to heaven, he should dwell in the place of the *Lotus Sūtra* devotee, if there is one in Japan [Tokoro 368].

The change of attitude towards Hachiman is so remarkable that the words could have been penned by another. From being an object of abuse and scorn, a low-grade *bodhisattva* who had repeatedly failed in his duties, he is suddenly transformed into the epitome of reliable honesty, and reincarnation of Śākyamuni Buddha in Japan, and the one dwelling in the head of the "devotee of the *Sūtra* without falsehood". If Hachiman had proved so unreliable in defending him over the years, was it any advantage to Nichiren to have him dwelling in his head? If he was indwelling, was this the explanation for Nichiren's frequent changes of position? Similarly, if the deities were so unreliable, in what way did they manifest the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha (which they are said to do in the *honji-suijaku* theory)?

### Inconsistencies Summarised

As we have seen, this was not the first time Nichiren had been either dishonest or confused in his thinking. To summarise the instances noted in this paper (apart from the fabrications of his followers):

1. He changed his interpretation of "ominous events" from portents of doom to portents of hope, according to circumstances or stage of thought-development (p.22). (In fairness to Nichiren, however, we should note that these possibilities are not mutually exclusive.)
2. While he frequently consigned his enemies to many *kalpas* in hell for "Dharma-slander" he allowed himself the privilege of working off his own bad *karma* (including Dharma-slander) in one lifetime of suffering (pp.25-27, 30).
3. He often likened himself to *Sadāparibhūta Bodhisattva*, although his attitude to enemies was quite different (pp.26, 35).
4. He disqualified from the title of "*Lotus Sūtra* devotee" those monks who were suffering for crimes (such as arson), whilst claiming he had committed the same crimes in past lives, and advocating arson against non-Tendai temples (p.40).
5. According to his mood, he sometimes said the guardian deities had deserted Japan, or lost their power, or had just deserted him (pp.28-33, etc.). But in one work he writes the *devas* had hindered his release.
6. He rebuked Hachiman for faithlessness and said this *kami* was inferior to Nichiren, but claimed greatness from the indwelling of "this great *bodhisattva*", the manifestation of eternal Buddha in Japan.

### The Source of Confusion

I believe that the source of Nichiren's self-contradictions was his overweening desire for recognition. As a child he had had a fairly normal ambition to become "the foremost man of wisdom

in Japan" [*Zenmui-Sanzō Shō*, *Goshō* 888]; as a man his desire for recognition became an obsession. When the authorities failed to recognise that only he had the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha to save Japan, he readily endured sufferings but also reproached the deities with increasing bitterness for not delivering him and bringing him the status granted to his predecessors Chih-i and Saichō. Physical buffetings could be gloried in, but humiliation was unbearable. This was all the more so, after he had led his disciples to believe that the deities would rescue him at the critical moment. This expectation later gave birth to stories that he had indeed been miraculously saved from execution by "the three heavenly luminaries", but Nichiren rationalised the absence of such miracles in various ways according to circumstances. It did occur to him sometimes that perhaps he was not the true devotee, but it never occurred to him that none of the *sūtras* or deities on which he relied had any power to alter the course of nature to save him. His gods were too small, so he ended up being his own god, making extravagant and inconsistent claims, and being incapable of recognising or admitting any inconsistency.

## NOTES

- fn.1, p.9. The "five pollutions" of the present world are war and natural disasters, strong passions, heresies, physical and mortal weakness, and short life [*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, p.82].
- fn.2, p.18. I have substituted "young devas" for "heavenly cherubim" in TLS (天の童子). Cherubim are depicted as large and powerful guardian angels, symbolic of stormwinds, so the term hardly fits.
- f.3, p. 26. That the "two drops of red and white" refer to blood and sperm is seen from the following passage in *Shibun Jōbutsu Gi*: "We find that the sperm and blood of our parents combine like two drops of red and white [fluid] to form one body. It is the basis of evil, the fount of uncleanness . . ." [*Goshō* 983-84].
- fn.4, p. 38. Nichiren's population figures are close to the AD 610 census figure of 4,998,842. An estimate of 9,750,000 for 1185-1333 has been made by Yokoyama Yoshikiyo, based on recorded size of families and number of towns and villages [Taeuber, Irene B. *Population of Japan*, (p.20) Princeton U.P., 1958].

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

伝教大師(最澄)

Dengyō-daishi (= Saichō, 767-822). Founder of the Japanese Tendai sect.

道鏡

Dōkyō (? - 772 or 773). A Hossō priest who persuaded the retired empress Kōken to re-ascend the throne, as Empress Shōtoku. She made him Dajō-daijin-zenji (Prime Minister and Pres. of Supreme Council) in 765. When he tried to seize the throne in 769, Wake Kiyomaro withstood him with an unfavourable oracle from the Usa Hachiman Shrine. Dōkyō died in exile.

道善房

Dōzen-bō (? - 1276). Abbot of Kiyozumi-dera where Nichiren first studied.

御鳥羽天皇

Gotoba-tennō (1180-1239). 82nd emperor of Japan, 1183-98. In retirement tried to restore imperial power, but was defeated by Hōjō regents in Jōkyū war 1221. After exiled to Oki Is., known as Oki-no-hō-ō.

行敏

Gyōbin. Sent "four hard questions" to Nichiren.

平左衛門尉頼綱

Heizaemon-no-jō Yoritsuna (= Taira no Yoritsuna/Hei-no-tsuna, ? - 1293). Administrator of the Hōjō tokusō and Bettō of the samurai-dokoro.

北条重時(極楽寺殿)

Hōjō-Shigetoki (Gokuraku-ji-dono after retirement. 1198-1261). Rensho (Co-signer) to Tokiyori from 1256.

時宗

-Tokimune (1251-84). 6th Kamakura Shikken (= Regent). Organised defence against the Mongols.

時輔

-Tokisuke (1247-72). Eldest son of Tokiyori. Tried to displace younger brother Tokimune as Shikken, and opposed him when the

Mongolian Emperor threatened invasion in 1292. Killed by order of Tokimune.

時賴

-Tokiyori (= Saimyō-ji-dono, 1227-63). 5th Kamakura Shikken.

経時

-Tsunetoki (1224-46). 4th Kamakura Shikken, and Governor of Sagami.

泰時

-Yasutoki (1183-1242). 3rd Kamakura Shikken, from 1224. Shigetoki's elder brother.

義時

-Yoshitoki (1163-1224). Defeated imperial armies in Jōkyū war 1221.

法然(源空)

Hōnen (= Genkū, 1133-1212). Founder of Japanese Jōdo sect.

源賴朝

Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-99). Founder of Kamakura Shogunate.

妙樂大師

Miao-le-ta-shih (Myōraku-daishi). = Chan-jan.

湛然

蒙古

**Mongols (Mōko).** A group of nomadic tribes living mainly on steppes NW of China. United under Gengis (Chinggis) Khan in 1206; conquered N. China by 1227, Persia 1231, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Georgia and Baghdad by 1258, S. Russia and Korea by 1258. Empire collapsed mid 14th century.

良觀

忍性

Ryōkan (= Ninshō, 1217-1303). Ritsu monk. 1st Chief Priest of Kōsen-ji and of Gokuraku-ji, appointed by Tokiyori and Nagatoki. Well-known for social welfare activities.

釈迦牟尼

Sākyamuni (Shakamuni/Oshaka-sama, 565?-485? BC). The name of the historical Buddha.

平清盛

太政入道

**Taira Kiyomori** (= **Dajō-nyūdō**, 1118-81). C-in-C of Taira clan forces from 1253; Dajō-daijin (Prime Minister) from 1167. Established Taira ascendancy until defeated by Minamoto Yoritomo 1181.

天台大師 智顛

**T'ient'ai-ta-shih/Chih-i** (**Tendai-daishi/Chikai**, 538-97). 3rd patriarch of Chinese T'ient'ai, but generally regarded as founder of the sect, on Mt T'ient'ai. Wrote two commentaries on *Lotus Sūtra - Fa-hua Hsüan-i* (*Hokke Gengi*), *Fa-hua Wen-chü* (*Hokke Monku*) and *Mo-ho Chih-kuan* (*Maka Shikan*).

東条左衛門尉 景信

**Tōjō Saemon-no-jō Kagenobu**. Steward of Awa Nagasa-no-kōri, Tōjō.

和氣清麻呂

**Wake Kiyomaro** (733-99). Exiled to Osumi in 769 for transmitting Hachiman oracle unfavourable to Dōkyō, but in 670-71, after death of Emp. Shōtoku, pardoned and highly honoured.

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| 船守弥三郎許御書   | Funamori Yasaburō Moto Gosho                                |
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| 行敏許狀御絵通    | Gyōbin Sojō Goetsū  |
| 法門申さるべき様の事 | Hōmon Mōsarubeki Yō no Koto                                 |
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| 南目抄        | Kaimoku Shō   |
| 観心本尊抄      | Kanjin Honzon Shō   |
| 諫曉八幡抄      | Kangyō Hachiman Shō   |
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| 教機時国抄      | Kyōkijikoku Shō   |

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妙法比丘尼御返事	Myōhō-bikuni Gohenji
南条兵衛七郎殿御書	Nanjō Hyōe Shichirō-dono Goshō
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神国王御書	Shinkoku Ō Goshō

四恩抄	Shi On Shō
聖愚問答抄	Shōgū Mondō Shō
守護国家論	Shugo Kokka Ron
種種御振舞御書	Shuju Ofurumai Goshō
寺泊御書	Teradomari Goshō
富木殿御返事	Toki-dono Gohenji
土籠御書	Tsuchirō Goshō
善無毘三藏抄	Zenmui Sanzō Shō

## SŪTRAS, COMMENTARIES AND CLASSICS

觀無量壽經

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華嚴經

*Avatamsaka Sūtra (Kegon-kyō)*. Garland Sūtra, T274.

大船涅槃經

*Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra (Ta-pan-nieh-p'an Ching - Daihatsu Nehan-gyō, T374, 375)*. Great Nirvāṇa Sūtra.

大日經

*Mahāvairocana Sūtra (Dainichi-kyō)*. Great Sun Sūtra (Mahāvairocani-bhisambodhi Sūtra T848).

妙法蓮華經

*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra (Miao-fa Lien-hua Ching = Myōhōrenge-kyō, Kumarajīva's translation 400 AD, T262.)* Lotus Sūtra.

守護国界章

*Shugo Kokkai Shō*, by Saichō, 817 AD.

金光明最勝王經

*Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra (Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sattama-rāja S. (Konkōmyō Saishō-ō-kyō) T665)*. Golden Light Sūtra.

大方等大集經

*Ta-fang-teng Ta-chi Ching (Daihōdō Daijikyō, in 60 rolls, T397)*. Great Collection of Sūtras.

無量義經

*Wu-liang I Ching (Muryōgi-kyō T275)*. Innumerable Meanings Sūtra.

光耀天記

*Yōtenki*. Buddhist-Shintō teachings thought to have been compiled by Mt Hiei monks in 1223.

## GLOSSARY

阿梨樹

**arjaka (ariju).** A plant identified as *symplocos racemosa* by Kern (p.374), but as *ocinum gratissimum* by Kabutogi [*Hokekyō* III/379]. The former is a shrub; the latter has pale yellow flowers in 6-10 clusters.

阿修羅

**asura (ashura).** In Brahmanism and Hinduism these beings rivalled the *devas*, but were overcome by them. In Buddhism they came to be regarded as beings inclined to envy and aggression, in a place of existence between animals and humans.

阿鼻/無限地獄

**Avīci (abi; muken-jigoku).** The worst hell, where suffering never ceases.

幕府

**Bakufu.** Military government.

比丘

**bhikṣu (biku).** A monk, mendicant; a full-fledged member of the Sangha. In Nichiren's writings, often denoted lay followers who observed certain prohibitions.

比丘尼

**bhikṣuni (bikuni, ama).** A nun or lay nun.

地涌の菩薩

**bodhisattvas from the earth (ji-yu no bosatsu).** Hosts of *bodhisattvas* said to spring up from the earth at the behest of the Buddha to proclaim the *Lotus Sūtra* during the Age of Decay, in place of those previously enlightened.

梵天

**Brahma/Brahmadeva (Bonten).** According to some Hindus, the Creator and highest god. In Buddhism it is the first and lowest of the four heavens of meditation in the world of form. Beings there have no sexual desire.

旃陀羅

**Candala (Sendara).** Lowest Indian caste- fishermen, gaolers, executioners, slaughtermen.

<sup>月天</sup>  
**Candra-Soma (Gatsuten).** Guardian of NE or N. In later Sanskrit literature, identified or confused with the moon, and the draught of immortality. Lord of moon and stars.

<sup>月光</sup>  
**Candrapphā (Gakkō).** Light of the Moon Bodhisattva. Except in esoteric Buddhism, considered with Sūryaprabhā as attendant or attribute of Bhaiṣajya-rāja.

**Daishi** - see **Ta-shih**

<sup>天</sup>  
**deva (ten).** (a) Heaven; (b) a being in heaven; (c) a being with supernatural power. (Used in this work to denote spirit beings of the Indian religions, to distinguish from the Japanese *kami*.)

<sup>八幡</sup>  
**Hachiman (= Shō Hachiman).** A Japanese deity resulting from the union during 6th century of imperial and maritime clans of Usa, Kyūshū. Kyōto Iwashimizu Shrine built during latter 9th century. The deity suddenly rose to prominence just before the Daibutsu (Great Buddha) image was cast in the Tōdai-temple in Nara, and oracles were sought from its shrine concerning Dōkyō's attempt to seize the throne. From about 860 Emperor Ōjin was linked with Hachiman, whose shrine became second only to Ise. Later, the Minamoto clan made Hachiman its *ujigami*, and Yoritomo built his shrine at Tsuragaoka, Kamakura. His name was used in warriors' oaths to denote utter sincerity.

<sup>本土也</sup>  
**Honji.** Original Buddha, by contrast with *suijaku* (Manifestation Buddha).

<sup>本地垂迹</sup>  
**honji-suijaku.** Theory that *kami* are manifestations of the Original Buddha or of *bodhisattvas*; a "skill in means" to communicate the Dharma.

<sup>一念</sup>  
**ichinen** - the moment of a single thought; the functioning of the mind for a single instant; intense meditation; one invocation of the name of the Buddha; one moment of true faith.

一念三千

**Ichinen-sanzen.** 3000 worlds in a moment of thought; teaching of interpenetration as expounded by Chih-i.

帝釈天

**Indra (Taishaku-ten).** Indian deity characterised variously as Creator, a god of light, destroyer of the demon of darkness, and King of gods.

自我偈

**jīga-ge.** Verses in ch.16 of *Lotus Sūtra* in which Śākyamuni proclaims his eternal buddhahood.

觀世音

**Kannon/Kanzeon (Skt Avalokiteśvara).** "Regarder of the Cries of the World"; the Bodhisattva of Mercy, found in *Lotus Sūtra* ch.25.

業

**karma (gō).** Act giving rise to consequences according to the moral quality of the motivation.

大日如来

**Mahāvairocana (Dainichi Nyorai).** The Buddha expounding the *Garland Sūtra* and esoteric Buddhism.

曼荼羅

**maṇḍala (mandāra).** A cosmic diagram, used as an aid in meditation.

真言

**mantra (shingon).** A secret syllable, word or verse embodying a power said to effect spiritual and sometimes temporal results. In Shingon Buddhism, refers to truth distilled in a simple formula.

魔羅

**Māra (Mara).** The Tempter, and personification of evil and defilements hindering attainment of *nirvāṇa*. Dwells in the highest sphere of heavenly beings.

身延山

**Minobu-zan.** A mountain (1,148m) in present Yamanashi Pref., to which Nichiren retired 1274. Site of Kuon-ji, head temple of Nichiren Shū, whose buildings were founded by Nitchō, 11th Abbot of the sect.

法印/印相

**mudra (hōin/inzō).** Manual signs or gestures used in esoteric Buddhism to represent views on Buddha's enlightenment.

名字

**myōji.** Bodhisattva at 2nd of six stages to buddhahood in Mahāyāna Buddhism. A *myōji* realises the essential buddhahood of all beings.

南無

**namas (namu).** To revere, to pay respect to. Commonly used with regard to the Buddha or the Three Treasures of Buddhism.

奈良

**Nara.** A city in Yamato province south of Kyōto, and capital of Japan during the Nara era, 710-84.

日蓮正宗

**Nichiren Shō Shū.** HQ at Daiseki-ji, Fujinomiya City, Shizuoka Pref. Daiseki-ji formerly belonged to the Kōmon branch, but separated in 1900 to become the head temple of the Fuji branch of Nichiren Shū. In 1913, name of sect changed to Nichiren Shō Shū, on which Sōka Gakkai is based.

応神

**nirmāṇa-kāya (ōjin).** Manifestation body of the Buddha.

入道

**nyūdō.** One "entering the Way" a monk; in Nichiren's writings, a devout layman.

外宮

**Outer Shrine (Gegu).** Ise shrine honouring the cereal goddess Toyouke.

多宝如来

**Prabhūtaratna Buddha (Tahō Nyorai).** "Abundant Treasures" - an ancient buddha who appeared in a stupa alongside Śākyamuni

Buddha for the sake of people wishing to hear the *Lotus Sūtra* (Recorded in Ch.10).

羅刹

**rākṣasa (rasetsu).** An ogre, evil spirit with great strength and speed, able to entice and eat people.

律

**ritsu (Skt vinaya).** The rules of discipline laid down by Buddha for monks and nuns.

律宗

**Ris-shū.** Ritsu sect; one of the six Nara sects and one of the 13 Buddhist sects in Japan. Teaches observance of Mahāyāna Precepts as the way to buddhahood. Transmitted to Japan in 754 by Ganjin.

不輕菩薩

**Sadāparibhūta Bodhisattva (Fukyō Bosatsu).** "Never-Despise", a bodhisattva in ch.20 of *Lotus Sūtra*, who addressed all as potential buddhas and patiently endured abuse.

佐渡

**Sado.** Large island (circ. 217 km) off west coast of Japan; a province of Hokurokudō (now Niigata Pref.). Used as place of exile.

娑婆世界

**sahā-loka (shabā-sekai).** "The world to be patiently endured"; the world where we live and Śākyamuni Buddha preached, as distinct from other buddha-lands. The secular world.

僧伽

**Samgha/Sangha (sōgya).** Community of Monks.

侍

**samurai.** Warrior.

侍所

**samurai-dokoro.** An agency for controlling vassals of the Kamakura Bakufu.

山王

**Sannō.** Guardian deity of Mt Hiei.

色読

**shikidoku.** Nichiren's term for personal experience of the *Lotus Sūtra* (lit. "reading with the body").

神仏習合

**shinbutsu-shūgō.** Fusion of native Japanese deities and Buddhist entities.

真言宗

**Shingon Shū** (Chinese Chen-yen Ts'ung). Sect of esoteric Buddhism founded in China by Vajrabodhi, Subhākarasiṃha and Amoghavajra. Transmitted to Japan by Kūkai, who received its basic texts (*Mahāvairocana S.* and *Vajrasūktara S.*) from a disciple of Amoghavajra, then returned to Japan 809.

神道

**Shintō.** The Way of the Kami; Japan's native religion.

將軍

**Shōgun.** Military dictators from Kamakura to Tokugawa eras. (After Yoritomo, real power taken by Hōjō regents.)

垂迹

**suijaku.** Manifestation of buddha or *bodhisattva*. See *Honji*.

摩利支天

**Sūrya/Marici (Marishiten).** "One endowed with many rays". Regarded in Indian Tantrism as an emanation of Vairocana B. or as his consort. Worshipped in Japan by *samurai* as their spiritual protectress.

日光

**Sūryaprabha (Nikkō).** Light of the Sun *Bodhisattva*.

大師

**Ta-shih (Daishi).** Great Teacher.

得宗

**tokusō.** Stem family of the Hōjō clan.

氏寺

**ujidera.** Tutelary temple.

氏神

**ujigami.** Tutelary *kami* or shrine.

氏子

**ujiko.** "Children of the tutelary *kami*" — clan members who worship the *ujigami*.

方便

**upāya (hōben).** "Skilful means" of manifesting the Buddha-Dharma; convenient devices.

上行菩薩

**Viśistacāritra** (Jōgyō Bosatsu). "Eminent Conduct"; one of four leaders of the *bodhisattvas* from the earth of *Lotus Sūtra* ch.15.

夜摩天

**Yama, King.** Judge of the dead. In the Vedas, is loved as lord of the ancestors, dwelling in a realm of light. In post-Vedic mythology, is feared as a judge who punishes by holding up the mirror of conscience. Duality carried into Buddhism, where Yama is an emanation of Amitabha (= Amida) Bodhisattva, who transforms sufferings into a cleansing fire. Yama-deva (Yama-ten) is the benign ruler of Yama heaven; Yama (Emma-ō) is the judge.

