

An aerial photograph of a mountain valley. A village with many small buildings is situated in the center of the valley, following a winding road. The surrounding hills are covered in dense green forest. In the foreground, a cable car is visible on a line extending across the forested slope. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

NICHIREN SHU

日蓮宗



A service in Tokyo commemorating the 700th anniversary of St. Nichiren's death.

NICHIREN SHU

The Nichiren Shu is a Buddhist Order founded by the religious prophet and reformer, Nichiren Shonin (1222-1282). He espoused the doctrine that the Lotus Sutra (*Saddharma-Pundarika-Sutra*) represents the embodiment of the genuine teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, the Saviour of this world.

Our belief in this doctrine is affirmed by our chanting of the *Odaimoku* (Sacred Title) : "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo," that is, "Adoration to the Scripture of the Lotus of the Perfect Truth."

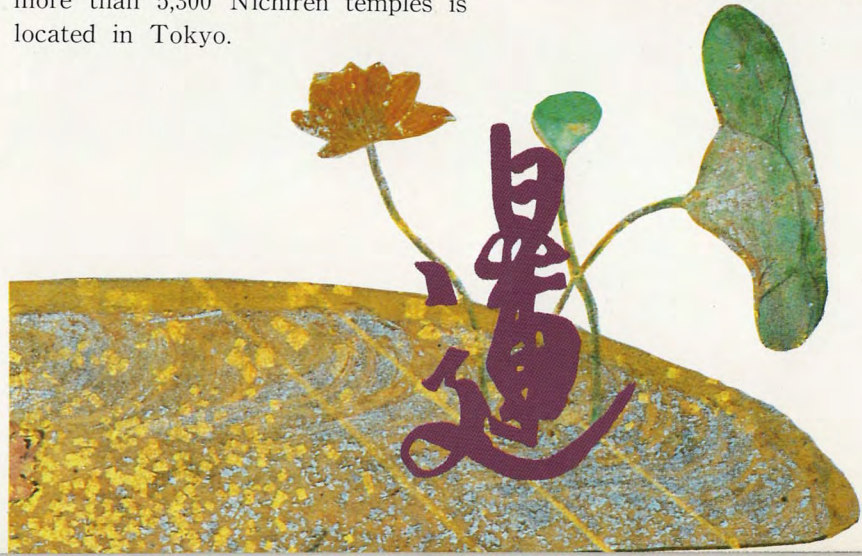
We believe that Nichiren Shonin was the messenger of the Buddha who has guided us in cultivating our Buddha-nature, a quality inherent in all beings, and establishing a way of life consonant with the eternal truths preached by the Buddha.

We vow to the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin that we will strive to engender peace within ourselves and throughout the world by disseminating the teaching expounded in the Lotus Sutra.

Minobusan Kuonji Temple, established by Nichiren Shonin in 1274, is the Head Temple of the Nichiren Shu. It is the most sacred place of worship for followers of the order and is located in Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan. The administrative headquarters of the order which governs more than 5,300 Nichiren temples is located in Tokyo.



A portrait of Nichiren Shonin.



*Priests descend from
SHISHIN-KAKU near the top of
Mt. Minobe.*



身丈山
山頂
思親閣標高
一、一五三米

左側通行

御印札

祖師堂 参道

ENLIGHTENMENT

Sakyamuni Buddha stresses in numerous sutras that all living beings possess the Buddha-nature, one's true nature. Accordingly, everyone has the potential to attain Buddhahood or enlightenment. All human beings, regardless of apparent differences in faith, difference in nationality, race or color, are Buddhas in essence. To achieve enlightenment is then to live according to one's true nature.

The Buddha states in the Lotus Sutra: "This is my domain and all the living beings in this world are my children." "I shall guide the living to enter the unsurpassed Way and to quickly become Buddhas."

Stimulated by such compassion, Nichiren Shonin dedicated his life to cultivating the Buddha-nature in all beings. The key to this salvation he believed was to be found in the Lotus Sutra.



覚
見

NICHIREN SHONIN

Nichiren Shonin, the founder of the Nichiren Shu was born on February 16, 1222 in Kominato, in what is now Chiba Prefecture, Japan. At age eleven, his parents sent him to a monastery to study. From an early age, he began to wonder why there were so many schools of Buddhism, while the Buddhism expounded by Sakyamuni Buddha was but one? He was ordained a priest at Seichoji Temple at the young age of fifteen. After considerable study of all the Buddhist schools, Nichiren Shonin concluded that the Lotus Sutra indeed represented the perfect culmination of the true teaching of the Buddha.

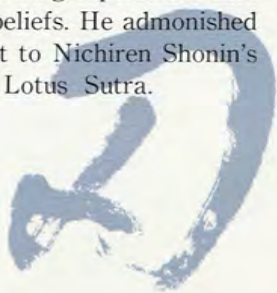
Following a period of intense prayer during seven days of seclusion, he found that he was now ready to embark on his plan of reformation and proclamation of his new gospel. His grand declaration with a resounding cry of the *Odaimoku* took place atop the summit of a hill overlooking the wide Pacific; it was in the early morning as the sun broke through the morning haze. This was Nichiren's proclamation of his gospel to heaven and earth with the all-illuminating sun as his witness. The date was April 28, 1253.



The persecution at Tatsunokuchi.

Soon after, he left for Kamakura, then the seat of the government, and began preaching the Lotus Sutra. Discord prevailed among the governing clans and rumors were widespread predicting impending political coups. In addition, the people were suffering from a series of natural calamities; typhoons, flooding and earthquakes; and fear-provoking comet-sightings compounded the impact of these events amidst famine and rampant plague. All of these occurrences drove the citizens into panic.

Witnessing these disasters Nichiren Shonin was motivated to write the *Rissho Ankoku Ron*, (*Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing Righteousness*). In it he attributes the disasters to the foolishness of the government and the degeneracy of the people who were following superstition and misguided religious beliefs. He admonished the people to convert to Nichiren Shonin's faith based on the Lotus Sutra.



立国安国論

據客來言云日自道年近近日
天震地交飢饉疫癘遍滿天
下廣道地上牛馬驚走巷巷皆
死路在死之華既起太平不悲之
族故元一人然問或專利則即
是之文唱聖教主之名或將異
病恙淫之願誦東方如來果經
或作病即消滅不亦不死之願
學佛法率真言之妙文或信七難
即滅七福即生之句調百座百講
之儀有目私寔真言之教澤立
瓶之水有人坐坐禪入定之儀

A part of the "Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing Righteousness" (*Rissho Ankoku Ron*).

如來藏之三音屬於觀摩等法
本朝佛道是也

摩訶薩觀摩等法
夫一心見于法界不可法界又具于法界
百法界一由具三千法界世間百法界
即具三千法界世間此三千法界一人心
之中心而已介中有心具三千法界乃
至能以種種不可思議諸法在
於此也
花世間
問曰云云觀摩等法三千法界三千法界
妙樂之不明觀摩等法三千法界
二千法界妙樂之不明觀摩等法三千法界
如何答曰至本三千法界三千法界
心觀一二三四五六七八九十
法界元之問曰云云觀摩等法三千法界
法界元之問曰云云觀摩等法三千法界

A part of "The Spiritual Introspection of the Supreme Beings" (*Kanjin Honzon Sho*).

A copy of the treatise was presented to the government authorities and the message of that work was repeated in his preachings on the streets. The work drew a very hostile reaction from those people criticized by Nichiren Shonin. Fueled by the rage of the religious authorities whom Nichiren Shonin accused of false teachings, the treatise triggered a succession of persecutions. Notable among these punishments were the persecution at Matsubagayatsu, the exile to Izu peninsula, more persecution at Komatsubara and Tatsunokuchi and the nearly three years of lonely exile to Sado Island.

法

*KONPON-JI Temple on SADO
Island which was built to com-
memorate Nichiren Shonin's exile.*



Throughout these adversities, Nichiren Shonin's missionary zeal was unrelenting. His subsequent writing of four more major works demonstrates his resolve. While in exile on Sado Island, Nichiren Shonin completed two works. The *"Kaimoku Sho"* (*Opening the Eyes*) expressed Nichiren Shonin's state of mind as a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. In the *"Kanjin Honzon Sho"* (*The Spiritual Introspection of the Supreme Beings*), he expounds on the idea of unity between the Eternal Truths and the Eternal Buddha. To underscore this thesis introduced in this latter work, Nichiren Shonin shortly thereafter rendered a graphic representation of his underlying theology. This representation is the *Mandala Gohonzon*.

In 1274, Nichiren Shonin entered Mount Minobu, which was to be his home of voluntary exile during the last nine years of his life. It was a period dedicated to the consummation of his mission and perpetuation of his religion. Two more major writings were created during this period.

In his work entitled the *"Senji Sho"*, (*Selection of Time*), he affirmed the righteousness of his propagating the Lotus Sutra and predicted the victory of his convictions. In March 1276, his old master, Dozen died. In his memory, Nichiren Shonin wrote the *"Hoon Jo"* (*Recompense of Indebtedness*).

Wracked by failing health, in September 1282, Nichiren Shonin left his beloved Mt. Minobu with the intention of visiting a hot spring for its recuperative effects. His failing health, however, caused him to stop short of his destination. On October 13, 1282 at Ikegami, Tokyo, Nichiren Shonin, surrounded by his disciples and followers, ended his 60 years of eventful life. His will, "please build my grave on Mt. Minobu where my heart resides forever," was faithfully carried out.

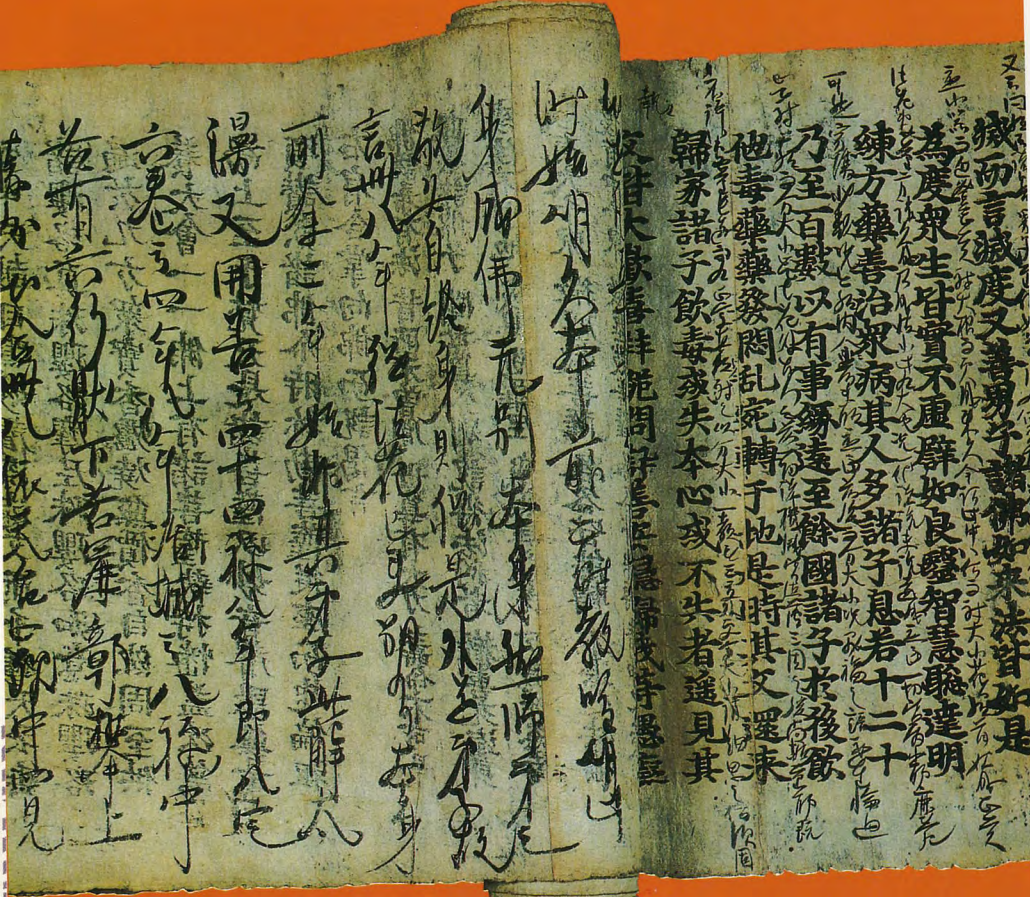


The wooden pillar which Nichiren Shonin leaned against while giving his last sermon (DAIBO HONGYO-JI Temple).



THE LOTUS SUTRA AND BUDDHA

The Buddha appeared in this world to purify all beings by having them open the treasury of the Buddha-wisdom which they are unaware of possessing within themselves. The Buddhas appeared in this world to show the Buddha-wisdom to them. The Buddhas appeared in this world to have them understand what the Buddha-wisdom is. The Buddhas have appeared in this world to lead them into the path of the Buddha-wisdom.

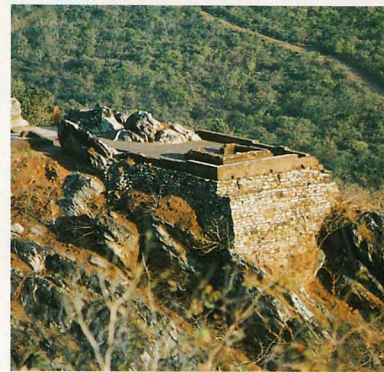


A copy of the Lotus Sutra on which Nichiren Shonin wrote a commentary between the lines.

The Lotus Sutra is composed of twenty-eight chapters which the faithful believe “transmit the Law” representing the culmination of the essence of the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha. The Law is transmitted in beautiful prose and verse in terms of humorous parables, allegories, metaphors, fantastic descriptions of supernatural visions and metaphysical discussion. This panoramic totality gives it dimensions of cosmic proportions in space and time. The variegated nature of the Lotus teachings is associated with Sakyamuni’s inclination to exercise “tactfulness” and “expedience” to accommodate all manner of capacities and temperaments that exist among his listeners. Ultimately these different gateways lead to the Path.

Two broad themes reveal themselves in the Lotus Sutra. The first, developed over the first fourteen chapters, is the reality of intrinsic commonality that prevails in the nature of all human beings. Achieving Enlightenment consists of awakening this seed of Buddhahood in an individual.

The other broad theme, expounded over the remaining fourteen chapters is the eternalness of the Buddha. That the historical Sakyamuni Buddha, born and attaining enlightenment in India, was but a temporal form of the primeval Buddha who was enlightened in the remotest past and lives on eternally with no birth or death. Regardless of the age we live in the Buddha is always among us and points to the Path of Buddhahood.



Mt. Grdhrakuta, the place where Sakyamuni Buddha taught the Lotus Sutra.

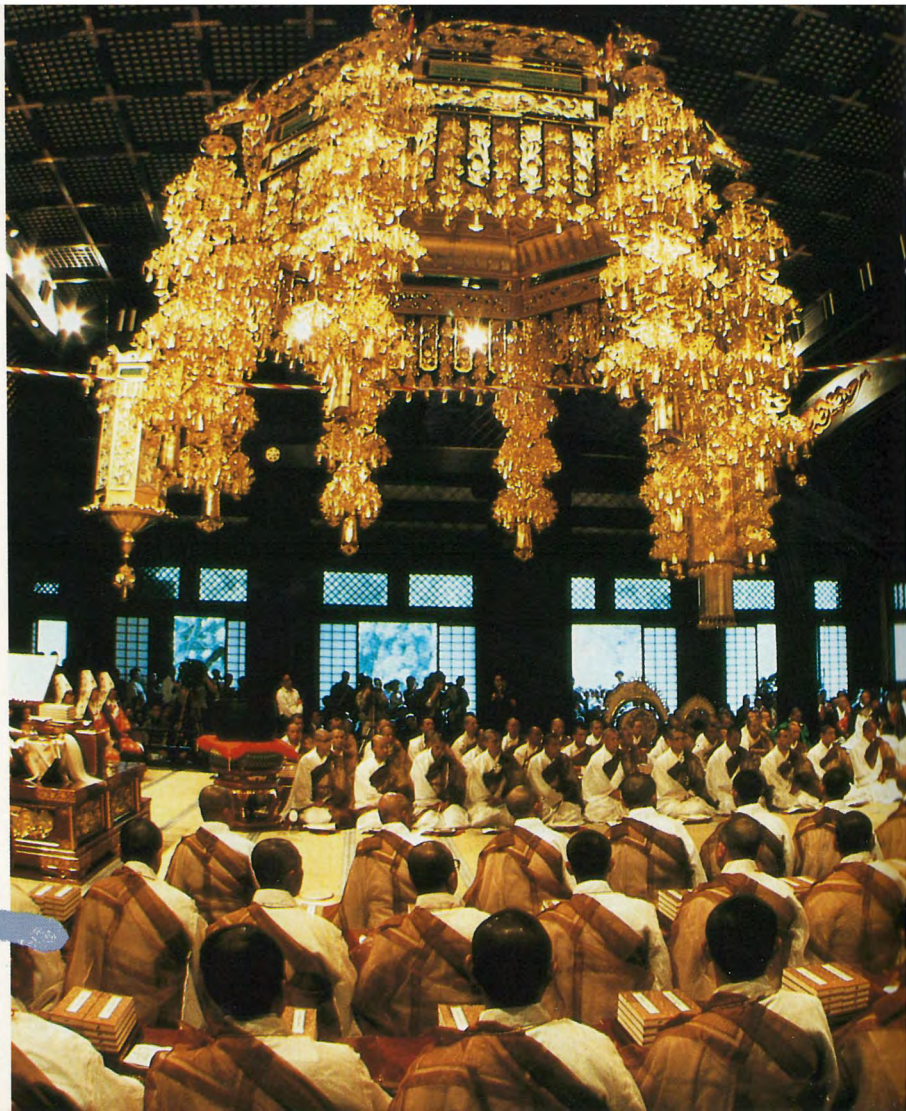


THE ODAIMOKU

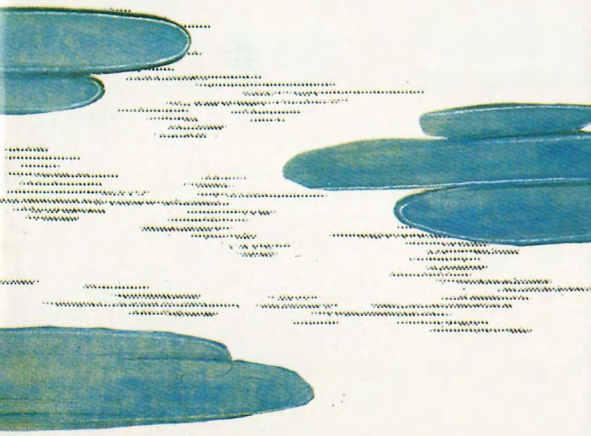
The form of worship instituted by Nichiren Shonin is the repetitive recitation of the Scriptures' Sacred Title or the Odaimoku : "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo," that is "Adoration to the Scripture of the Lotus of the Perfect Truth."

南無

*Kuonji the main temple
on Mt. Minobu.*



His profound understanding of theology caused him to see the need for a simplified practice of affirming our affinity to Buddha and his true teachings. The answer he asserts is found in uttering the *Odaimoku*. According to Nichiren Shonin, the *Odaimoku* is not a mere representation of Buddha's Truths. Rather it is the embodiment of Buddha's Truths when the formula is uttered with a firm belief of the truths contained in the Lotus Sutra and with full acceptance of Buddha as the Saviour.



A famous BON festival called DAIMONJI-YAKI held in Kyoto every August 16th. The picture shows the character MYO in MYO-HO-REN-GE-KYO made by hundreds of torches lighted on a hillside.



Kiyomizu Temple on Mt. Minbu

GOHONZON

The Great *Mandala*, is the *Gohonzon* for the faithful. Whereas the inspiration of the *Odaimoku* comes from a verbal display, the *Gohonzon* provides for a visual interaction as well. The *Gohonzon* is the graphical representation that expresses the oneness between the Great Truths (*Dharma*) and personage of the Eternal or Primeval Buddha.

Inspiration wells from a reverent gazing of the *Gohonzon* coupled with the chanting of the *Odaimoku*. For the faithful the experience is one of being bathed by the rays of wisdom and compassion that emanates from the Eternal Buddha. Thus are we embraced in the Buddha's realm of enlightenment and brought to a state of "*Kanno Dokyo*," a resonance between the Buddha's power and our spiritual receptivity.

南無妙法蓮華經



The great MANDALA by Nichiren Shonin.



Priests lined up in front of Kuonji Temple.

MINOBUSAN KUONJI-TEMPLE

Minobusan (Mt. Minobu) Kuonji Temple, founded by Nichiren Shonin, is the head temple of the Nichiren Shu and is the most sacred place of worship of followers of the order.

On May 17, 1274, Nichiren Shonin entered Mt. Minobu with the support of the lord of this area, Sanenaga Nambu. There he established the Kuonji Temple on June 17, 1274. Mt. Minobu was to be home for the last eight years of his life. During this period his missionary work for the Lotus Sutra was completed. He produced two major works during this period of his life.

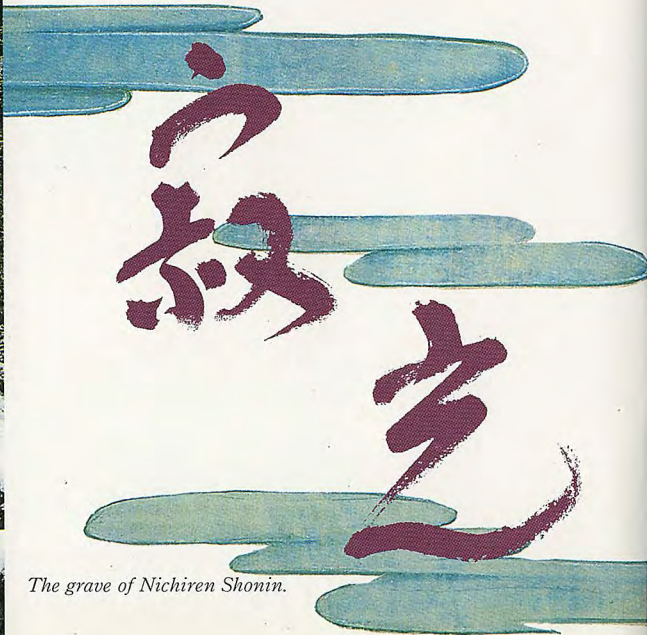


The ruins of the thatched cottage, in which Nichiren Shonin lived for eight years on Mt. Minobu.

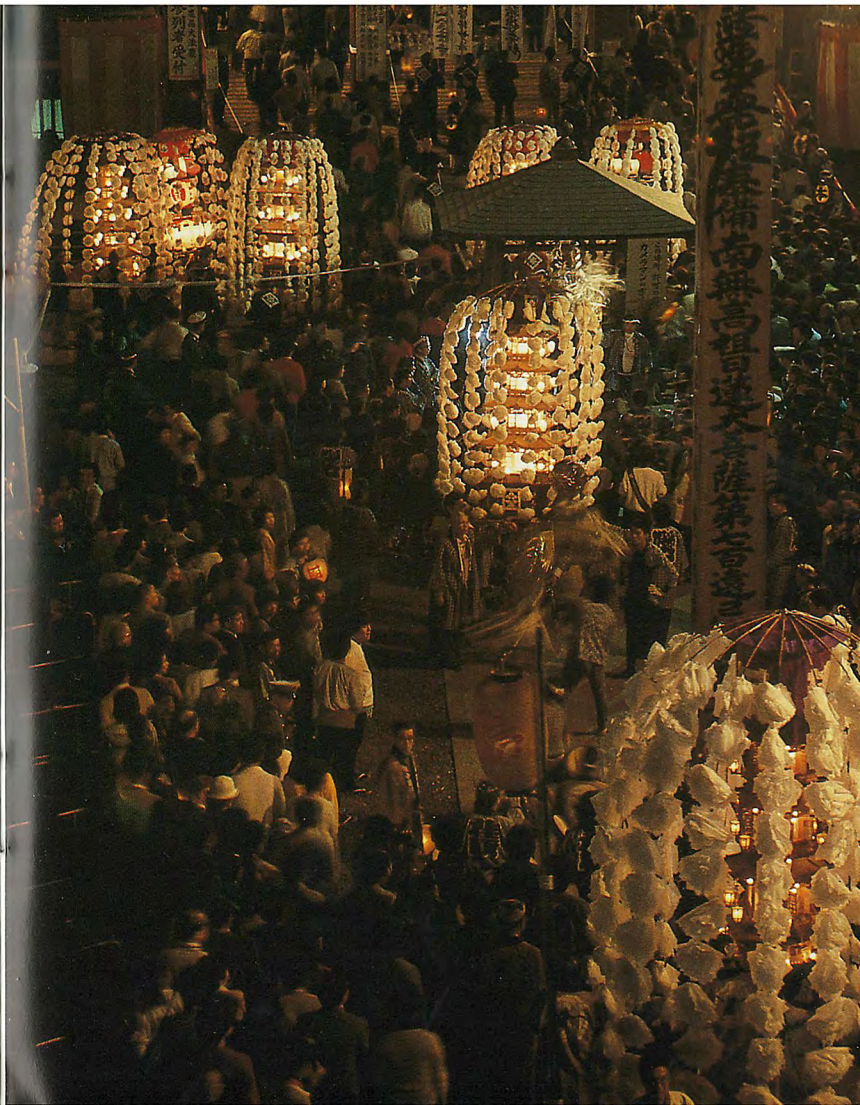
祖山



On September 8, 1282, Nichiren Shonin left Mt. Minobu for Hitachi Spa to cure his illness. But on the way, he passed away at Ikegami, Tokyo on Oct. 13, 1282. In accordance with his final wish, "Wherever I may die, please build my grave on Mt. Minobu where my heart resides forever", his ashes were brought back to Mt. Minobu and enshrined in a grave there.



The grave of Nichiren Shonin.



PRACTICE OF THE NICHIREN SHU

“Practice and study to strengthen your faith. Without practice and study, Buddhism cannot exist. To practice and to study are caused by your faith. Follow these yourself and influence others to do the same. Even if only a word or a phrase, spread it to others.”

◁*Shoho Jisso Sho* Nichiren▷

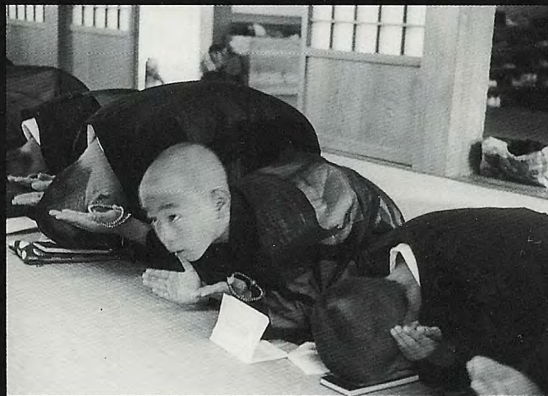
Nichiren Shonin’s faith was based strongly on his profound understanding and his practices in everyday living. He studied Sakyamuni Buddha’s teaching expounded in the Lotus Sutra, and he practiced His teaching in his life.

Buddhism is not merely theory nor knowledge. It is a living religion and becomes so when we practice its teaching in daily life.

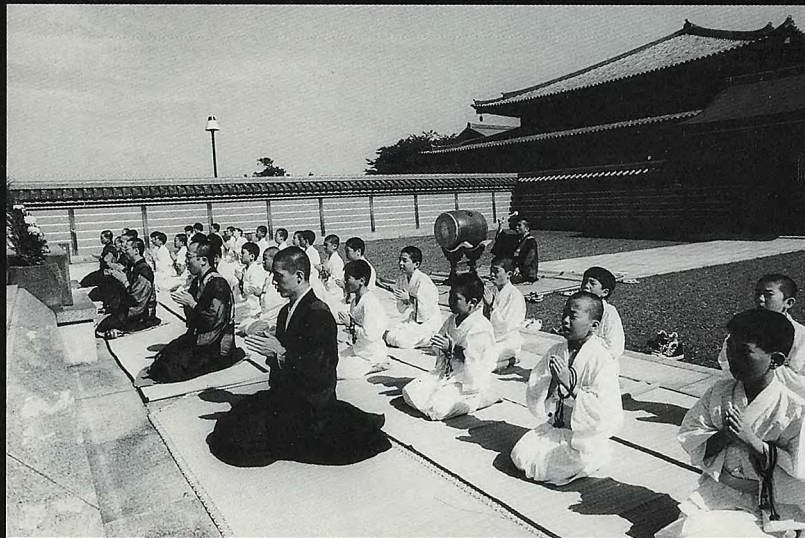
Practices of the Nichiren Shu introduced here are necessary for all followers of Nichiren Shonin to strengthen their faith.

*OESHIKI at IKEGAMI HONMON-
JI Temple held every year on October 12
to commemorate the death of Nichiren
Shonin.*

Boys undergoing training in RAIHAI (bowing and showing respect) at the DOCHO ceremony.



Boys who attend SHAMI-KO at IKEGAMI HONMON-JI Temple.



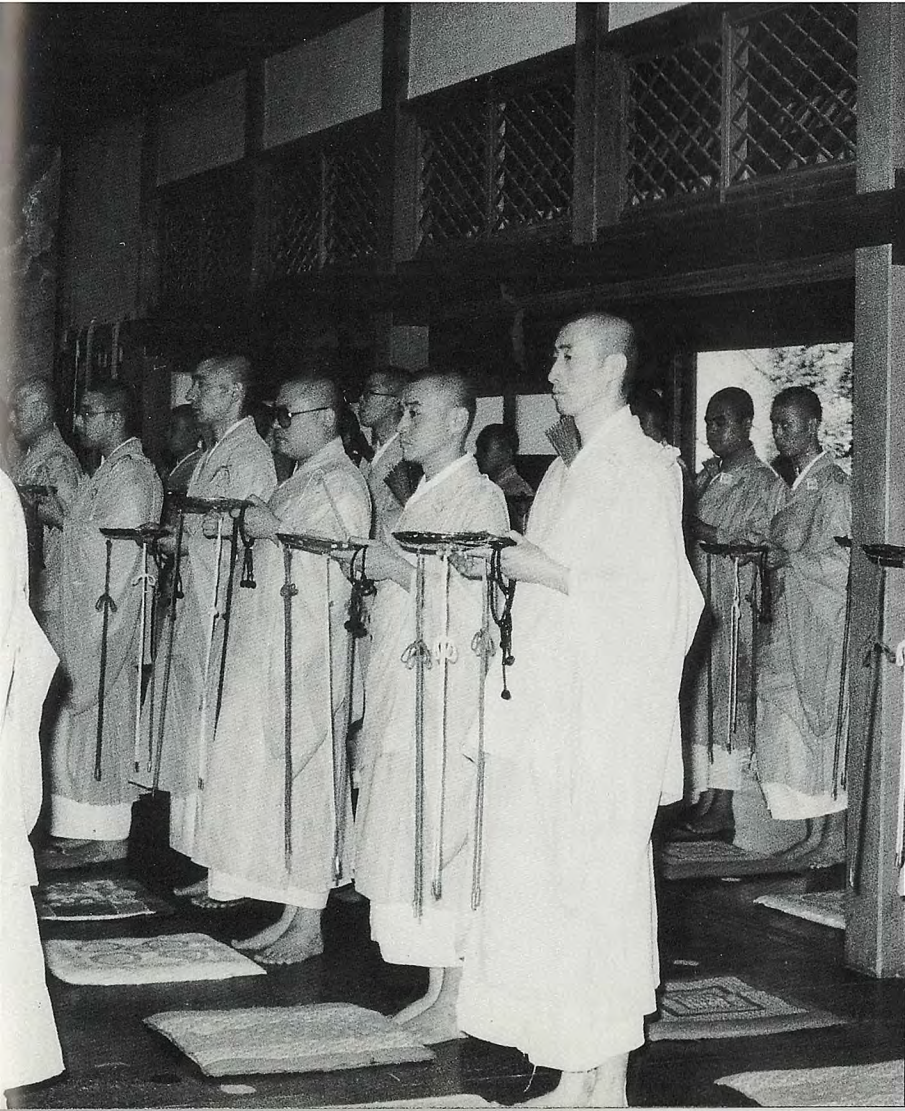
TOKUDO CEREMONY AND DOCHO CEREMONY

When one aspires to enlightenment by practicing the teachings of the Buddha as a priest or nun, a Tokudo Ceremony will be observed under one's master.

His or her name will be registered in the Nichiren Shu Headquarters at the Docho Ceremony, which is held at Seicho-ji Temple where Nichiren Shonin made the first vow to the Buddha.

SHAMIKO

Shamiko is a retreat for children, 10 to 15 years old, who will become future Nichiren ministers. Here they study the basics of the Nichiren Shu's teachings and practices. These retreats last one week in summer at large and famous Nichiren temples in Japan.



SHINGYO DOJO

Shingyo Dojo is a special training session at a monastery for those who want to become Nichiren priests or nuns. Here they train for advanced practices and seriously study Nichiren Buddhism for 35 days. Prospective priests or nuns cannot make outside contact during the training. These training sessions are held at the monastery at Mt. Minobu each spring and summer. After this training, they are recognized as Nichiren priests or nuns.

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Priests practicing a Buddhist service.



Priests pour water over themselves and purify their hearts and bodies.

ARAGYO

Aragyo is a very strict and austere ascetic practice of the Nichiren Shu. This special and demanding training lasts 100 days from November 1 to February 10 every winter for Nichiren priests.

Strict observances are held to cleanse the mind and body by throwing cold water over the body seven times a day. They spend all of their time chanting the Lotus Sutra and the *Odaimoku* from 3:00 A.M. until midnight.

*Priests coming out after the 100 day ARAGYO
(During ARAGYO they are not allowed to cut their hair or beard).*



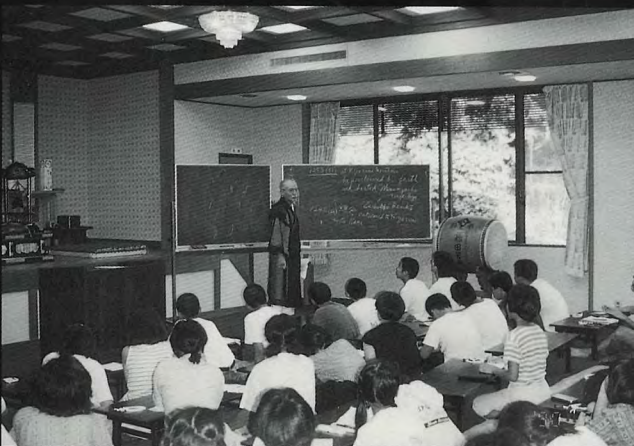
DANSHINTO KENSU DOJO

Danshinto Kenshu Dojo is the place for Nichiren believers to train and practice Nichiren Shonin's teaching. People who attend this training chant the Lotus Sutra and the *Odaimoku*, trace and copy the Sutra, and attend discussions about their faith from 4:30 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. for 3 days on Mt. Minobu.



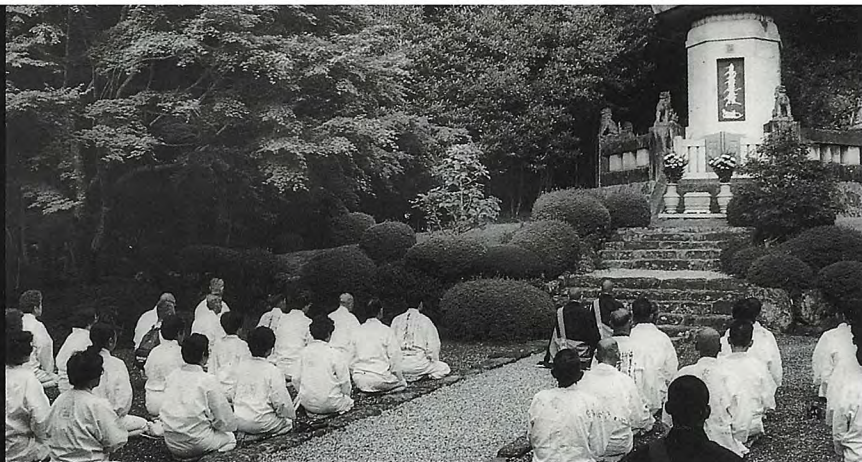
JAPAN-U.S.A. YOUTH EXCHANGE RETREAT

The purpose of this program is to provide for interaction between young Nichiren members in Japan and the U.S.A. Since 1987, the retreat has been held every summer in Japan or the U.S.A. to foster better understanding of culture and practices between our countries.



Students who trace and copy the Lotus Sutra.

Youth listening to lectures on Buddhism in English and Japanese.

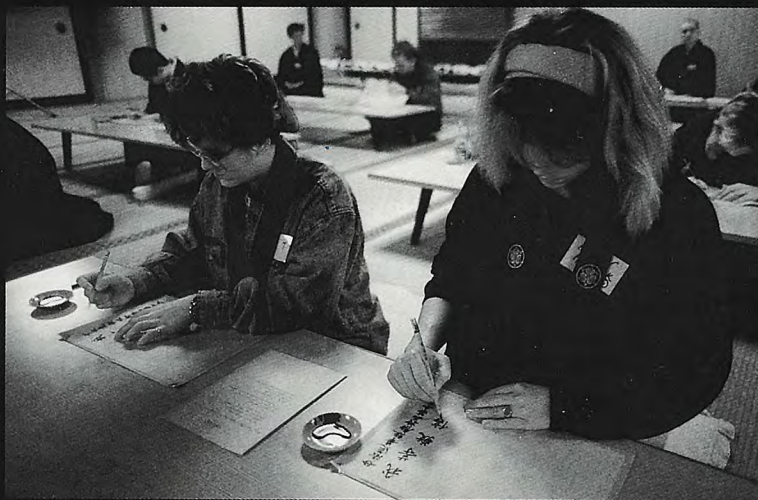


People reciting the ODAIMOKU after cleaning up around the grave of Nichiren Shonin.

RINBAN HOSHI

Rinban Hoshi is the practice of cleaning and caring for Nichiren Shonin's grave and reciting the Lotus Sutra and the *Odaimoku* before his grave at Mt. Minobu.

The six great disciples of Nichiren Shonin originated the practice of Rinban Hoshi when they established among themselves a schedule for taking care of Mt. Minobu.



American children practice SHAKYO.

SHAKYO

In the practice of Shakyō, through the act of copying passages from the Lotus Sutra, the faithful seek to cleanse their soul, pray in memory of their ancestors, pray for universal peace and happiness and ultimately discover the Buddha's true mind.

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HOKKE WASAN

Hokke Wasan are the songs in praise of Buddhism. These songs express teachings and pious acts of Sakyamuni Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Nichiren Shonin and famous Nichiren priests. Chorus group singing of Hokke Wasan is becoming popular in Japan.

A group beating drums and singing HOKKE WASAN.



HOLY DAYS OF NICHIREN SHU

I The Buddha's Nirvana Day, February 15

After 45 years of preaching, Sakyamuni Buddha entered into Nirvana, perfect tranquility, at the age of 80 in Kusinagara.

II Nichiren Shonin's Birthday, February 16

Nichiren Shonin was born on February 16, 1222, at Kominato, Chiba.

III Sakyamuni Buddha's Birthday, April 8

Sakyamuni Buddha was born in Lumbini, on April 8, 565 B.C., as a prince of the Sakya Clan.

IV Proclamation of the establishment of a new order, April, 28

Nichiren Shonin declared he would establish his faith in the Lotus Sutra at Seichoji Temple in his home town, Kominato on April 28, 1253.

V Exile to Izu Peninsula, May 12

In 1260 Nichiren Shonin presented his work, the "*Rissho Ankoku Ron*" and admonished the government against believing wrong teachings. On May 12, 1261, he was exiled to Izu Peninsula because of his admonition.



VI Matsubagayatsu Persecution August 27

The presentation of the "*Rissho Ankoku Ron*" caused rioters to attack Nichiren Shonin and they set fire to his hermitage at Matsubagayatsu on August 27, 1260.

VII Tatsunokuchi Persecution, September 12

In 1271 the government was displeased by Nichiren Shonin's propagating acts and he was arrested and exiled to Sado Island. On September 12 on the way to Sado, he was about to be executed at Tatsunokuchi, but his life was saved by a mysterious light from the sky.

VIII Sado Exile, October 10

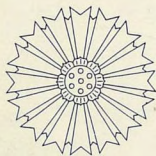
After Nichiren Shonin escaped execution at Tatsunokuchi, he was exiled to Sado Island on October 10, 1271. He was there for three years.

IX Oeshiki, October 13

On the way from Mt. Minobu to Hitachi Spa to cure his illness, Nichiren Shonin ended his 60 years of eventful life at Ikegami, Tokyo on October 13, 1282.

X Komatsubara Persecution, November 11

Nichiren Shonin and his disciples were attacked by the lord Kagenobu Tojo, and his conspirators on a path in the forest of Komatsubara in Tojo's territory on November 11, 1264. Nichiren Shonin was injured on his head and one of his disciples and one follower were killed.



NICHIREN SHU

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