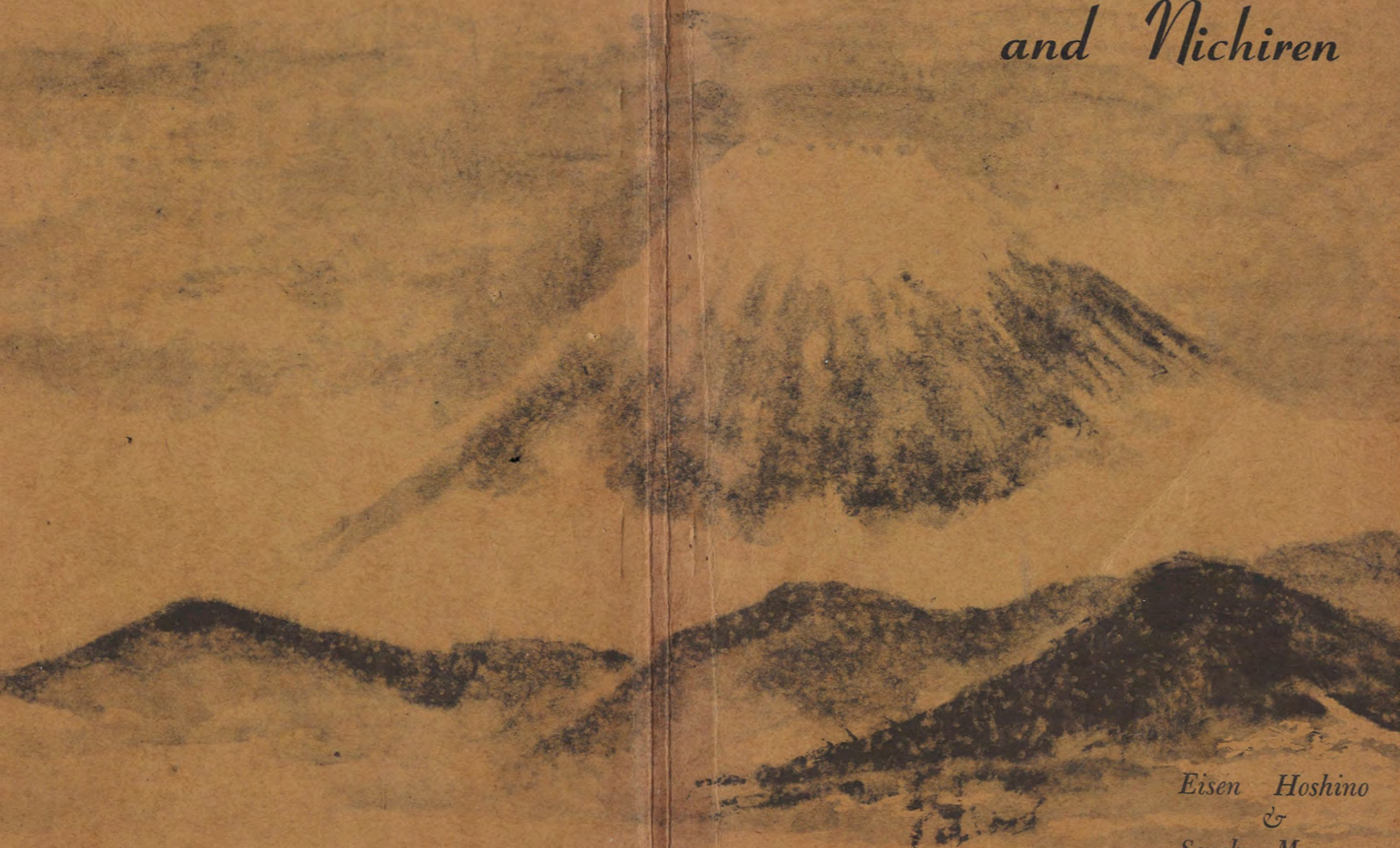


*The Lotus Sutra  
and Nichiren*



*Eisen Hoshino  
&  
Senchu Murano*

## THE LOTUS SUTRA AND NICHIREN

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## FOREWORD

The basic materials of this book were prepared by the Rev. Eisen Hoshino, 82 years of age, who is a well-known preacher on Nichiren Buddhism. He wrote this book for the purpose of propagating the teachings of Nichiren over the world. He collected quotations from Nichiren's writings as well as from other books. His original Japanese writing had 80,000 letters. I had to omit some of the quotations, however, which are not suitable for the readers outside Japan.

The difficulty in translating Japanese Buddhist classics lies in that some stock phrases, which were taken for granted by the writer as well as by the readers of the time, but are not intelligible to the modern readers, are exuberantly used therein. We can explain the meaning of these phrases, but cannot use the literal translation of them in the text without destroying the style and force of the writing. The translation of these phrases to be hoped for at most is a partial explanation of them at the sacrifice of the other meanings involved in the original words.

One thing I wish to call attention to in connection with this translation is that I did not italicize the word Lotus Sutra for the purpose of retaining the meaning of the word as interpreted by Nichiren. According to him, the Lotus Sutra is not only the name of a sutra. Sometimes it is treated as the name of the truth revealed in the sutra, and at other times it is personified or even deified.

We have very few materials for the study of Nichiren available in English, although many people wish to know about the first Japanese Buddhist monk to be persecuted because of his faith. My joy will be boundless if this book serves as a foothold for more study of Nichiren

Buddhism, which cannot be disregarded in the religious field of the world of today.

The Rev. Hoshino is very good at Japanese painting as well as Japanese ideography. The picture of the cover of this book is one of the masterpieces of his.

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## THE LOTUS SUTRA AND NICHIREN

### Chapter I. Tolerance and Intolerance

#### “To Sow the Seeds of Buddhahood”

Nichiren (1222-1282) devoted himself to the propagation of the Lotus Sutra. The original Sanskrit title of this sutra is Saddharma-pundarika-sutra, which was rendered into Chinese by Kumarajiva as Miao-fa-lien-hua-ching. The Japanese pronunciation of this rendering is Myohorengekyo. This title may be translated the “Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law”. According to Nichiren, this title is not only the name of a sutra but also a representation of the dharma expounded in the sutra. He prefixed the honorific *Namu* to the title, and made it the main object of worship of his religion. The Japanese word for title is *Daimoku*. In the usage of Japanese Buddhism of today, the word *Daimoku* or in its honorific form *O-daimoku* means specifically the title of the Lotus Sutra as interpreted by Nichiren. The *Daimoku* in this sense, that is, *Namu-myohorengekyo*, is usually translated Sacred Title. The Sacred Title is also a formula chanted by the Nichiren Buddhists. In this case the translation Sacred Formula may be preferred. Incidentally, the word *Namu* comes from the Sanskrit word *Namas*, which means, ‘Honour be to’.

The purpose of Nichiren’s religion is to save all living beings by “sowing the seeds of Buddhahood” in their minds. Nichiren says in the *Kyog yosho-gosho*:

“This age is evil and defiled. Many people do not believe the Lotus

Sutra but slander it. I am making efforts to sow the seeds of Buddhahood in their minds by causing them to chant Namu-myohorengekyo. The Namu-myohorengekyo is the essence of the Lotus Sutra."<sup>1</sup>

His missionary activities came out of his compassion towards all the people of Japan. He said in the *Kangyo-hachiman-sho*:

"I am only trying to cause all the people of Japan to chant Namu-myohorengekyo, just as a mother is trying to put her nipple into the mouth of her babe out of her compassion towards it."<sup>2</sup>

### Criticism on the Government

Nichiren lived in the midst of the Kamakura Period (1192-1333). The period was so called because during that time the city of Kamakura was the seat of the "military" government called Bakufu. The Bakufu was actually the government of Japan although the emperor regime was still maintained in the sense that the Shogun, the head of the government, decorated his inauguration with the formal appointment by the Emperor of Kyoto. Such a form of government had never been witnessed before. The first Shogun Minamoto-no-Yoritomo was labelled as a traitor by Nichiren.

The Minamoto family fell in 1218, and the reins of the government were transferred to the Hojo family. The head of the new government was called Shikken or Regent. The first Shikken was Hojo Yoshitoki.

The Emperor Gotoba abdicated from the throne in favour of his three-year-old son in 1198. The new infant Emperor was called Tsuchimikado. He transferred his throne to his younger brother in 1210. The new Emperor was called Juntoku. In 1221, the Emperor

1 *Showa-teihon-nichiren-shonin-ibun* (The Showa Edition of Nichiren's Works), p. 1480.

2 *ibid.*, p. 1844.

Juntoku descended from the throne in favour of his three-year-old son. The new Emperor was called Chukyo. The Ex-Emperors Gotoba and Juntoku attempted to recover their power and started to raise an army against the Hojos in the fourth month of 1221. However, on no later than the fifteenth of the sixth month of the year, the forces of Kamakura marched into Kyoto and the Imperial army was defeated. The Shikken Hojo Yoshitoki exiled the Ex-Emperor Gotoba to Oki Island, the Ex-Emperor Juntoku to Sado Island. The Ex-Emperor Tsuchimikado was not punished at first because he was not involved in the conspiracy, but was banished to the Province of Tosa by his own appeal to Kamakura that he would rather be exiled than stay in the troubled city of Kyoto. The Emperor Chukyo was dethroned and the nine-year-old son of the Ex-Emperor Tsuchimikado was put in throne under the name of the Emperor Gohorikawa. Tsuchimikado was moved to the Province of Awa in Shikoku the following year and died there in 1231. Gotoba died in the island in 1239, and Juntoku also in the island of exile in 1242. In this year Nichiren was twenty of age. He also called Yoshitoki a traitor. In the *Akimoto-gosho* he says:

"Japan had twenty-six traitors in history. The first was Prince Oyama-no-oji, the second Oishi-no-yamamaro, the twenty-fifth Yoritomo, and the last Yoshitoki. The first twenty-four traitors were punished to death. The last two suppressed Emperors and Ex-Emperors and took the reins of the government of Japan."<sup>3</sup>

### Criticism on Buddhism of the Day

The Shingon Sect was founded by Kobo Daishi (774-835) in 806. It was Esoteric Buddhism. Buddha Mahavairocana was worshipped

3 *ibid.*, p. 1732.

with more respect than Buddha Sakyamuni by the sect. The esoteric practices of the sect attracted the other sects. The Tendai Sect was so much influenced by Esoteric Buddhism that the Tendai masters Jikaku Daishi (792-862) and Chisho Daishi (814-891) created esoteric schools in their own sect. By the time of Nichiren the Tendai Sect was practically amalgamated with esoteric Buddhism.

The Jodo or Nembutsu Sect was founded by Honen (1133-1212). He professed a new faith in Buddha Amitabha in 1175. According to him, we are far from wise enough to attain enlightenment. The only way of salvation is to be reborn in the Pure Land of Buddha Amitabha by calling his name at every moment. His religion spread rapidly all over Japan, and many priests of the older sects stood against it. In 1205, a written protest against the Nembutsu Sect was submitted to the Regnant Ex-Emperor Gotoba by Kofukuji Temple of Nara. In this protest were pointed out the "nine faults" of Honen's followers: 1. They call their group a "sect" without Imperial permission, 2. They slander the other Buddhists, 3. They do not worship Buddha Sakyamuni, 4. They laugh at the practices other than the Nembutsu (the calling of the name of Buddha Amitabha), 5. They do not worship the Shinto gods, 6. They practise nothing but the Nembutsu, 7. They give up meditation and only utter the Nembutsu, 8. They do not observe the precepts, and 9. They are misleading the nation of Japan.

The Rinzaï Sect was introduced from China by Eisai (1141-1215). He entered into the monkhood at Hieizan in 1154 and studied the tenets of the Tendai Sect. He became an adept in the Tendai Esoteric Buddhism. When he went to China for the furtherance of his study of the Tendai Sect in 1168, he was for the first time interested in Zen.

His five months' stay in China was too short to study Zen. He went to China again in 1187, and met a celebrated Rinzaï Zen master. He studied Zen under him for four years. He returned to Japan in 1191 and propagated Rinzaï Zen. He held that the peace of Japan would be maintained only by the teachings of the Zen Sect because only the power of Zen would dispel all evils. He said:

"The Zen Sect does not resort to letters. It has been transmitted from the Buddha without verbal expressions. Not the sutras, but the seal of the mind of the Buddha has been handed down to us. The Zen Sect leaves letters and annihilates words. It points directly to the springhead of the mind of a man and causes him to attain Buddhahood. The Law of the Buddha is called so because it is inexplicable. This is Zen. When the Law is explained at all, the people will be attached to the explanation, which has nothing to do with the Law itself."

The Shingon Ritsu Sect was founded by Eizon (1201-1290). He was primarily a Shingon priest. In 1236, he resolved to restore the Ritsu Sect. He lectured on the Ritsu at many temples in the Kansai District. A nobleman called Fujiwara-no-Sadatsugu built him Jojuji Temple near Kyoto in 1261. In 1262, Hojo Sanetoki, the nephew of the Ex-Regent Tokiyori, invited him to Kamakura. Many of the members of the Hojo family, including Tokiyori, vowed to observe the precepts before him. Soon after that he returned to Kansai. His sect was called Shingon Ritsu Sect.

Nichiren criticized these sects in his *Shimoyama-gosbosoku* as follows:

"In the reign of the eighty-second Emperor Oki (Gotoba), the Zen and the Nembutsu Sects rose. This reminds us of the saying that one misfortune is followed by another. Zendo (Shan-tao) said that in the Age of Degeneration even one out of a thousand

people will not be saved by the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Honen said that the Lotus Sutra must be thrown away. The Zen priests disregard the Lotus Sutra, saying that the true teachings of the Buddha have never been committed to writing. Because these wrong views are propagated in Japan, all the gods, including Brahman, Sakra, the Sun-god, the Moon-god, and the Four Quarter Kings, have ceased to protect our country. The Ex-Emperors were exiled to remote islands by their subjects and turned into particles of dust of those islands. Some priests of those sects came to Kamakura and are patronized by the government. New temples of the Shingon, Zen and Nembutsu Sects are built and the older temples are neglected. There is no wonder that many calamities come one after another."<sup>4</sup>

The Nembutsu was practised not only by the followers of the Nembutsu Sect but also by the followers of other sects. Nichiren said in his *Akimoto-gosho*:

"I am disliked more than anyone else because all the people of this country chant Namu-amidabutsu. They worshiip Buddha Amitabha, and wish to be reborn in the Western Paradise. Even the followers of the Tendai, Shingon, and Ritsu Sects, whether they are wise or not, think that the Nembutsu is the most important practice. They think that they can expiate their sin by chanting the name of Buddha Amitabha. Only I, Nichiren, say that the Nembutsu is the way to hell. I also say that the Zen Sect is an invention of maras, that the Shingon Sect will destroy our country, and that the Ritsu Sect is hazardous to the State. So all the people of Japan eye me as the enemy of their parents or the enemy who has been against them

4 *ibid.*, p. 1329.

since their previous existence. They think that I am more dangerous than a traitor or a burglar. They are afraid of me, speak ill of me, or beat me. A samurai who abused me was given land by the government, and another who praised me was exiled. I have been punished twice so far. No one has been punished like me for the past more than seven hundred years since Buddhism was introduced to Japan."<sup>5</sup>

### Tolerance and Intolerance

Nichiren was sometimes tolerant, at other times not. He said in his *Kaimokusho*:

"Intolerance is opposite to tolerance just as fire is to water. We can be tolerant of the people who are ignorant and immoral. But we must be intolerant of the people who have wrong views and slander the Lotus Sutra."<sup>6</sup>

We must be intolerant of wrong views. He says in the *Nyosetsu-shugyo-sho*:

"The teachings of the Lesser Vehicle and of the provisional Mahayana were valid only for the people who lived during two thousand years after the extinction of the Buddha. We are living in the first five hundred years after the beginning of the Age of Degeneration. Now is the time to propagate the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra is the Pure Law, the Perfect Law, the One True Teaching. According to the *Daijikkyo Sutra*, in the first five hundred years after the beginning of the Age of Degeneration, people resort to fighting, and the right teachings of the Buddha are forgotten. In these years the provisional

5 *ibid.*, p. 1731.

6 *ibid.*, p. 606.



teachings are mistaken for the true teachings. Now the teaching of the One Vehicle should be propagated. Criticize the provisional teachings. What we should do is to criticize the wrong views.”<sup>7</sup>

He went on to say in the same writing:

“I have appeared in Japan in this time of emergency by the order of the Buddha. I dare say that I am not fortunate. However, the order of the King of the Law is categorical. Therefore, according to the Lotus Sutra, I raise the army of the true teaching against the forces of provisional teachings, wear the armour of patience, take the sword of the Wonderful Law, bend the bow of the Revelation of the Truth, fix the arrow of honesty, ride in the white bullock-cart of equality, break the gate of provisional teachings, and hurl criticism at the followers of the Nembutsu, Shingon, Zen, Ritsu, and other sects. Some of them run away or withdraw, while others are captured and become my disciples. I will repeat the offensive. I will march on, although they are many and my friends are few.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 735.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 733.

## Chapter II. The Risho-ankoku-ron

### Prophecy of Foreign Invasions

Nichiren was always thinking of his country. His patriotism may be expressed well in his *Moko-tsukai-gosho*, in which he says: “The worst thing for us is the downfall of our country.”<sup>9</sup>

For several years from 1257, Japan was frequently visited by various calamities. Great earthquakes and droughts took place in 1257; long rains, droughts, typhoons, floods, and pestilences came in succession in 1258 and 1259. Pestilences still raged in 1260.

In 1260, Nichiren wrote the *Risho-ankoku-ron*, or “Establish the Right Teachings and Save Our Country”, in which he said that the disregard of the right teachings of the Buddha would bring not only more calamities, but also civil wars and foreign invasions. He presented this writing to the Ex-Regent Hojo Tokiyori through the hands of Yadoya Saemon-no-jo, a personal secretary to Tokiyori. Tokiyori resigned from regency in favour of his father’s cousin Hojo Nagatoki in 1256, but was still holding the reins of the government.

In this treatise, Nichiren first describes the calamities. Then he quotes from the *Konkomyo-saisho-o-kyo Sutra*, implying that the Hojo Government is responsible for the sufferings of the people. The quotation runs:

“(The four quarter kings said to the Buddha:) If a king does not wish to read this sutra or to respect the persons who keep this sutra, men will decrease in number because we will cease to protect him and his kingdom. All the gods including us will leave his country.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1112.

Then the king will be dethroned; all the people will be corrupt; pestilences will rage; the earth will quake; winds and rains will be untimely; famines will break forth; and the country will be invaded by a foreign army."<sup>10</sup>

Then he quotes from the *Daijikkyo Sutra*:

"When the teachings of the Buddha are forgotten in a country, the earth will quake; the waters will be dried up, and the people will be corrupt."<sup>11</sup>

He also quotes from the *Ninno-bannya-haramitsu-kyo Sutra*:

"A country, which is put into disorder, will be invaded by a foreign army; friction will be seen among the king, crown prince, other princes, ministers, and officials; the sun, the moon, and the stars will move irregularly; and civil wars will break out. Saints and sages will leave the country, and the seven bad things will take place."<sup>12</sup>

He says that, according to the *Yakushi-nyorai-bongan-kudoku-kyo Sutra*, the seven bad things for a king will be "pestilences, foreign invasions, civil wars, irregularity of the movement of stars, irregularity of the eclipses of the sun and the moon, untimeliness of winds and rains, and droughts."<sup>13</sup> In connection with this, he also quotes from the *Nin-nokyo Sutra*:

"Every king is afraid of having seven dreadful things: irregularity of the change of the seasons, irregularity of the movement of stars, conflagrations, inundations, storms, droughts, and foreign invasions."<sup>14</sup>

The bad things may be three in number. He quotes from the *Daijikkyo Sutra*:

10 & 11 *ibid.*, p. 210.

12 & 13 *ibid.*, p. 211.

14 *ibid.*, p. 211.

"The king who does not follow the teachings of the Buddha will see his country visited by three unhappy things: famines, fightings, and pestilences. Then the people will not obey the king; the country will be invaded by neighboring nations; conflagrations, storms, and inundations will follow one after another; and some relatives of the king will rise against him."<sup>15</sup>

Nichiren says that the people of today are suffering from many calamities because they give up the right teachings of the Buddha and follow Honen. Nichiren's view may be summarized as follows:

"Honen says that the worship of any other Buddha than Amitabha and the reading of any other sutra than the canonical sutras of the Pure Land School are not the right practices. This teaching of his is so popular all over Japan that the people have forgotten Sakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra. It says in the Lotus Sutra, 'Those who do not believe but slander the teachings of the Buddha expounded in this sutra will destroy the seeds of Buddhahood of all living beings in the world. They will go to the hell of incessant suffering in their next lives.' Therefore, the followers of Honen will go to hell. The gods have already left this country, giving up protecting the people of Japan from famines and pestilences, because the people follow Honen and disregard the right teachings of the Buddha. In order to recover the right teachings of the Buddha, we should stop supporting the priests of the Nembutsu Sect. Now five of the seven bad things referred to in the *Yakushikyo Sutra* have already come out. The two other things, that is, civil wars and foreign invasions will soon take place. Two of the three unhappy things predicted in the *Daijikkyo Sutra* have already been seen. Why will the third one, that is, fight-

15 *ibid.*, p. 212.

ings, not come in the near future? If our country falls and our homes are destroyed, where shall we go? If you think of the safety of yourself, you should pray for your own country. It says in the *Ninnokyo Sutra*, 'Those who violate the teachings of the Buddha will not be able to have obedient sons or the peace of their families. They will be ill in health, have many misfortunes, and go to hell or the world of hungry spirits or of animals in their next lives. Even if they come to the world of men again, they will be killed in action.' It says in the *Nebangyo Sutra*, 'Those who avoid good friends and do not hear the right teachings of the Buddha will go to the hell of incessant suffering.' Convert yourself to the One Good of the True Vehicle. Then the triple world will be the world of the Buddha. The world of the Buddha will be immune from decay. The worlds of the ten quarters will be the land of treasures. The land of treasures will be free from destruction."<sup>16</sup>

16 *ibid.*, p. 214ff.

### Chapter III. Persecutions

#### **The Hermitage Burnt**

The government leaders must have thought such an obscure priest like Nichiren to be too arrogant to criticize their religious beliefs and national policy. The response from the government came to Nichiren in the form of persecutions. About a month after his presentation of the *Rissbo-ankoku-ron*, his hermitage was burnt by an unidentified army most probably instigated by Hojo Shigetoki. Shigetoki was the younger brother of Yoshitoki. He cooperated with his brother in defeating the Imperial army in 1221. He was also a devout Nembutsu believer. He built Gokurakuji Temple in Kamakura and enshrined Buddha Amitabha therein. The temple was associated with the Shingon Ritsu Sect when Shigetoki invited the celebrated Shingon Ritsu priest Ryokan to that temple in 1259.

When the hermitage was attacked, a monk called Shoubo beat Nichiren with the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra. The fifth scroll includes a chapter in which it says that the keeper of the sutra will be beaten. Nichiren later described this incident in his *Ueno-dono-gobenji* as follows:

"I was beaten by Shoubo with the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra. In the fifth scroll it says that the keeper of this sutra will be beaten. How wonderful it is that the prophecy of the Buddha has come true! Shoubo beat me in the presence of tens of people because I keep the Lotus Sutra. I am far from a saint. I was driven by the intention to snatch and break the thing with which I was beaten, but seeing that the thing was the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra, I stopped doing so.

I knew that Shoubo showed me that the prophecy of the Lotus Sutra was true. He is really my teacher in this respect. How can I forget his kindness in showing this to me? If I become a Buddha, it will be entirely owing to his favour. How could I snatch and break the fifth scroll with which he beat me?"<sup>17</sup>

### The Exile to the Province of Izu

On the twelfth of the fifth month of 1261, Nichiren was exiled to the Province of Izu by an official government order. He was marooned on the beach of Kawana of that province, when a fisherman called Funamori Yasaburo came to his rescue. The fisherman and his wife took care of him. Nichiren later sent him a letter of thanks, which runs:

"On the twelfth of the fifth month I was marooned on a beach of which the name was unknown to me. I suffered much and you came to my rescue. What was the relation between you and me in our previous existence? Did you practise the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in your previous life? You are a man, and a man can be courageous. I was surprised that your wife was as brave as you in serving an exile. She gave me food, water and any other necessaries. You and your wife took faith in the Lotus Sutra and made offerings to me for more than thirty days. The people of the village hated me more than the people of Kamakura. In and around the fifth month rice is less, but you served me with much of it. Are you two the reincarnations of my parents? Did my parents reappear at Kawana in the Province of Izu in the forms of you two?"<sup>18</sup>

17 *ibid.*, p. 1635.

18 *Funamori-yasaburo-moto-gosho. Showa-teihon*, p. 229.

### The Komatsubara Incident

Nichiren was released from his exile early in 1263. He visited his home province in 1264. On the eleventh of the eleventh month of the year, he and his party were surprised by Tojo Kagenobu and his men at Komatsubara in that province. Tojo Kagenobu was a local government officer, and hostile to Nichiren partly because Nichiren's family was connected with the landlord of an old manor in that district and partly because of different faith. Nichiren later wrote about this incident as follows:

"When I and my party came to Matsubara in Tojo of the Province of Awa on the afternoon of the eleventh of the eleventh month of this year, we were waylaid by hundreds of the Nembutsu followers. We were about ten in number, of whom only three or four were strong enough to fight. Arrows flew like a rainfall, and swords sparked like lightnings. One of my disciples was killed, and two others wounded seriously. I had cuts and blows but fortunately managed to be survived. In the Lotus Sutra it says, "Many people are against this sutra." Many people are beaten because of adultery or theft, but no one is killed because of belief in the Lotus Sutra. I must say that I am the first-ranked practiser of the Lotus Sutra in Japan."<sup>19</sup>

19 *Nanjo-hyoe-shichiro-dono-gosho. Showa-teihon*, p. 326.

## Chapter IV. Kublai Khan

### Temples of Kamakura in the Time of Nichiren

Minamoto-no-Yoritomo attended the ceremony of celebrating the completion of the repairing of the Great Buddha of Nara in 1195. It is said that at that time he had a hope to have a Buddha-image of similar size in Kamakura to show his own political power. After his death, Idano-no-Tsubone, one of his mistresses, appealed to the Kamakura government for the permission to collect funds for the making of a Great Buddha in Kamakura in order "to fulfill the will of the late Shogun". The government officials, who had wished to decorate the new political center by some means, willingly granted her request. With the cooperation of a priest called Joko, she collected funds from among the public. With this money and government subsidy, a wooden image of Great Buddha was completed in 1243. A hall to enshrine the image had already been completed in 1241. In 1248, however, both the image and the hall were destroyed by a storm. The reconstruction work started at once, and another image, made of bronze this time, was completed in 1252. Judging from the finger-signs, this Great Buddha is undoubtedly Buddha Amitabha. It does not mean, however, that it belonged to the Jodo Sect from the beginning. In those days, as it is today, Buddha Amitabha was worshipped not only by the Jodo Sect but also by some other sects. Most probably Kotoku-in Temple, which is the name of the temple of which the Great Buddha is located in the precincts, was primarily a Shingon temple. Now it is a Jodo one.

Chikei, a disciple of Ryukan, founded Chorakuji Temple in Kama-

kura. This temple is now out of existence. Ryukan (1148-1227) was a disciple of Honen. Shin-a of Chosai's school founded Jokomyoji Temple in Kamakura in 1251 under the patronage of Hojo Nagatoki. Chosai was a disciple of Honen. This temple now belongs to the Shingon Sect.

Ryokan (1217-1303) came to the Kanto district from Nara in 1252. He stayed at Shoryo-in Temple in the Province of Hitachi and propagated the Ritsu Sect. He was invited to Kamakura by Hojo Shigetoki in 1259. At that time Shigetoki was living in the precincts of a temple called Gokurakuji at Fukasawa in Kamakura. The temple was dedicated to Buddha Amitabha, in whom Shigetoki was a fervent believer. It is said that he invited Ryokan in order to ask for his advice about a place to which the temple was to be moved, and that the temple was moved to the present site according to his advice. We do not know whether Ryokan continued to stay in Kamakura from then on. Shigetoki died at the new temple in 1261, and Ryokan was appointed the first chief priest of this temple in 1267. On this occasion the temple was affiliated to the Shingon Ritsu Sect.

The first Zen temple in Kamakura was Jufukuji founded by Eisai in 1200. Soon afterwards, Jomyoji was founded by Gyoyu, a disciple of Eisai. Eisai and Gyoyu attracted the Kamakura government more by their esoteric practices than by their Zen teachings. In 1252 the Chinese Zen master Doryu (1203-1278) came to Kamakura. The Shikken Hojo Tokiyori built him Kenchoji Temple in 1253. Tokiyori converted himself to Zen, and the Zen Sect became the religion of the main family of the Hojos.

There were many other temples in Kamakura in the time of Nichiren, but none of them was mentioned in his writing except Tahoji,

which is now out of existence. We do not know anything about this temple except that it had some connection with Gokurakuji Temple.

#### Letter from Kublai Khan

On the eighteenth of the first month of 1268, the Korean envoy P'an-fu reached Dazaifu in Kyushu, carrying with him the credentials of the Kublai Khan of Mongolia and the King of Korea. In his letter Kublai expressed his wish to enter into diplomatic relations with Japan on condition that Japan would pay voluntary tributes to Mongolia. The letter was forwarded to Kamakura. The then Shikken Hojo Masamura forwarded the letter to the Imperial Court for consideration. The Emperor Kameyama discussed the matter with court officials, and two months later the conclusion was reached that no answer should be made. About this time the Regency of the Kamakura Government was transferred to Hojo Tokimune. The Korean envoy returned home with no result.

Hearing of the letter from the Mongolian Empire, Nichiren wrote to Hokanbo, probably the father of Hei-no-saemon-no-jo (Nagasaki Yoritsuna) on the fifth of the fourth month of the year. Yoritsuna was a personal secretary to the Shikken Hojo Tokimune. In his letter he said that his prophecy suggested in the *Rissbo-ankoku-ron* was coming true, and that his appeal should be heard at once in order to defend Japan. He also sent a letter of similar contents to Yadoya-saemon-no-jo, through whom he had presented the *Rissbo-ankoku-ron* to the then Ex-Regent Hojo Tokiyori in 1260. On the eleventh of the tenth month he sent letters to eleven persons representing the government and the Buddhist priesthood in Kamakura. The eleven persons addressed were the Shikken Hojo Tokimune, Yadoya-saemon-

no-jo, Nagasaki Yoritsuna, Hojo Yagenta, Doryu, Ryokan, and the chief priests of the Great Buddha Temple, Jufukuji, Jokomyoji, Tahoji, and Chorakuji. Hojo Yagenta was a member of the Hojo family and a sympathizer with Nichiren.

His letter to the Shikken Hojo Tokimune runs:

"I hear that a letter came from a barbarian country in the west called Great Mongolia on the eighteenth of the first month. I foretold in the *Rissbo-ankoku-ron*, which I wrote some years ago, that a foreign army would invade Japan. My prophecy has come true. I may not be far from a saint because I knew what had not yet happened. I will tell you again. Stop supporting the temples of Kenchoji, Jufukuji, Gokurakuji, Tahoji, Jokomyoji, and Daibutsu-den at once. Otherwise enemies will attack Japan from the four corners of the world. Defeat the Mongols and secure the peace of our country. I am the right man to pray for that. A country of which the government is ready to accept the remonstrance submitted by a subject is always just and righteous; a family which has a son courageous enough to advise his father keeps always the right way of life. The peace of a country depends on the righteousness of the administration of the country. The truthfulness of a Buddhist teaching is approved by the words of sutras. Japan is the country of gods. The gods do not receive discourtesy. The seven-generation gods of heaven, the five-generation gods of earth, and all the other gods of Japan are protectors of the One Vehicle. Their food is the Lotus Sutra; and their strength, righteousness. They will be angry if we give up the teaching of the One Vehicle. In the *Ninno-kyo Sutra* it says that the seven difficulties will take place when the saints take leave. Now Japan is about to be ravaged by the Mongolians. How lamentable! How dreadful! You

will regret unless you listen to me. I am the messenger of the Lotus Sutra. I also have written to some others. Collect them and have them discuss this matter. Stop requesting the other priests to pray. Collect the representatives of all sects, have them debate, and decide which teaching is right. A good carpenter finds the long pinewood lying in the bottom of a river. A wise man sees the beauty of brocade in the darkness. I do not say this for myself. I say this for the sake of the gods, for the sake of the country, for the sake of the Buddha, and for the sake of all the people of Japan."<sup>20</sup>

In his letter to Yadoya-saemon-no-jo he says:

"The prophecy which I made in the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* some years ago has turned out true. I hear that a letter came from a barbarian country in the west called Great Mongolia on the eighteenth of the first month. Judging from this, I may be a saint. But I have not yet received any response to my appeal. Stop following the other priests, and convert yourself to the Lotus Sutra. Otherwise you will regret later. I wrote to eleven persons altogether."<sup>21</sup>

His letter to Nagasaki Yoritsuna runs:

"I want to say something about the letter which came from Mongolia. The prophecy which I made in the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* some years ago has come true. You are the leader of the people of Japan. You know that Japan is now about to be destroyed. Be quick in expelling the enemies, in suppressing the slanderers of the right teachings of the Buddha. The Lotus Sutra reveals the One-Vehicle, the truth attained by the Buddhas. It provides food for the gods. When you receive this sutra by faith, the seven difficulties and the three ca-

20 *Yo-hojo-tokimune-sho. Showa-teihon*, p. 426.

21 *Yo-yadoya-nyudo-sho. Showa-teihon*, p. 427.

lamities will be eliminated. I told this to you before, and you exiled me. It is natural that the sun, the moon and the stars should punish this country. Banish the priests you are following, and the gods will protect you. I wrote to eleven persons: Kamakura-dono (Hojo Tokimine); Yadoya-nyudo-dono; the chief priests of the temples of Kenchoji, Jufukuji, Gokurakuji, Daibutsuden, Chorakuji, Tahoji, and Jokomyoji; Yagenta-dono, and you. Discuss the matter with them, and reply. I do not say this for myself. I say this for the sake of the gods, for the sake of the Emperor, for the sake of the Buddha, and for the sake of all the people of Japan."<sup>22</sup>

He wrote to Hojo Yagenta as follows:

"All the people of Japan were surprised at the news that a letter came from Mongolia, but no one knows why. I already knew this long ago. I wrote a treatise about it and submitted it to the government. Coming events cast their shadows before. The earthquake which took place on the evening of the twenty-third of the eighth month of the first year of Shoka was a warning against the Mongolian invasion. Stop supporting the other sects and receive the Lotus Sutra by faith. Japan is about to be destroyed by the teachings of the Jodo, Shingon, Zen, and Ritsu Sects. Collect the representatives of those sects and decide which sutra is best. Defeat the Mongolian army and secure the peace of our country. Anyone who slanders the Lotus Sutra is the enemy of the Buddhas. The letter has come from Mongolia probably because the gods Tensho Daijin and Hachiman Daibosatsu ceased to protect our country. You may be captured and enslaved by the Mongols."<sup>23</sup>

22 *Yo-hei-no-saemon-no-jo-yoritsuna-sho. Showa-teihon*, p. 428.

23 *Yo-hojo-yagenta-sho. Showa-teihon*, p. 429.

To Doryu of Kenchoji Temple he wrote:

"Nowadays Buddhist temples are built side by side, and sutras are heard at every household. Buddhism prospers in Japan more than in India or China, and the priests behave themselves like the Arhats of India. But they do not know which sutra is the most excellent. They do not know that Buddha Sakyamuni is our lord, teacher and parent. They worship some other Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. The Nembutsu Sect is the way to hell; the Zen Sect is an invention of maras; and the Ritsu Sect is hazardous to our country. I wrote the *Rissbo-ankoku-ron* in the first year of Bunno and submitted it to the late Saimyoji-dono (Hojo Tokiyori) through the hands of Yadoya-nyudo. I wrote in this treatise that disasters took place one after another because the people of Japan believed in the teachings of the Nembutsu, Shingon, Zen, and Ritsu Sects and that Japan would be invaded by a foreign army for the same reason. A letter came from Mongolia on the eighteenth of the first month of this year. This shows that my prophecy has come true. Are the Mongols coming because the prayers of the priests became less effective or because their teachings are wrong? Now the people of Kamakura respect you like a Buddha. They honour Ryokan-Shonin like an Arhat. The chief priests of the temples of Jufukuji, Tahoji, Jokomyoji, Chorakuji, and Daibutsu-den are arrogant. They should not pray for the defence of our country against the great army of Mongolia. If they do, the people of Japan will be captured. Those priests will destroy Japan and go to hell after their death. I already wrote to Kamakura-dono, Yadoya-nyudo-dono, and Hei-no-saemon-dono that they would regret unless they accept my advice. Collect those priests and discuss the matter with them. This is not my personal opinion, but a conclusion arrived at by the words

of sutras and commentaries. I hope I can tell you more when I see you again."<sup>24</sup>

His letter to Ryokan of Gokurakuji Temple runs:

"I already wrote to Kamakura-dono and others about the letter from the Great Mongolia, a barbarian country in the west. My prophecy which I made in the *Rissbo-ankoku-ron* in the first year of Bunno has come true. Stop mocking at me. Follow me at once. You being a high priest submitted a false report on me to the government. This is what you should not do. It is presumptuous of you to do this. You are a traitor. You will go to hell in your next life. If you feel sorry for that, follow me. The best way to decide which view is right is to have a public debate. To compare the teachings of the Lotus Sutra with those resembling the Lesser Vehicle is to compare the Yang-tze River with small streams or to compare Mt. Sumeru with small mountains. You should know how to pray for the victory over Mongolia. I am the first-ranked practiser of the Lotus Sutra in Japan. I am the head of the army to defeat Mongolia."<sup>25</sup>

A Mongolian envoy came to Japan in 1268 soon after the return of the Korean one. He returned home empty-handed, so did the second one who came in 1269. At the end of the year, Nichiren wrote a post-script to the *Rissbo-ankoku-ron*, which runs:

"I began to write this treatise in the years of Shoka and completed it in the first year of Bunno (1260). Eight years after that, that is, on the eighteenth of the first leap month of the fifth year of Bunnei, a letter came from the Great Mongolia in the west. It says in the letter that the army of that country will attack our country. Another

24 *Yo-kenchoji-doryu-sho. Showa-teihon*, p. 430.

25 *Yo-gokurakuji-ryokan-sho. Showa-teihon*, p. 432.



letter of the same contents came this year. My prophecy given in the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* has come true. I think I can make more prophecies hereafter. This treatise is approved by facts. I wrote this not by my own power but by my faith in the Lotus Sutra. I write this postscript on the eighth of the twelfth month of the sixth year of Bunnei."<sup>26</sup>

About this time Nichiren was troubled more and more by the priests and laymen of other sects. He describes this in his autobiography:

"The Nembutsu, Ritsu, and Shingon priests realized that they were not intelligent enough to debate with me, and that, to their disappointment, their appeal to the government against me was not heard. Now they approached the ladies of high officials and made a false report on me to them. They said, 'Nichiren says that the late Saimyoji-nyudo-dono (Hojo Tokiyori) and Gokurakuji-nyudo-dono (Hojo Shigetoki) are now in hell. He says that the temples of Kenchoji, Jufukuji, Gokurakuji, Chorakuji, and Daibutsuden should be burnt and that Doryu and Ryokan should be beheaded.' How could it be that I was not to be punished."<sup>27</sup>

26 *Ankokuron-okugaki. Showa-teihon*, p. 442.

27 *Shuju-on-furumai-gosho. Showa-teihon*, p. 962.

## Chapter V. The Tatsu-no-kuchi Incident

### Interview with Nagasaki Yoritsuna

On the tenth of the ninth month of 1271, Nichiren was called by Nagasaki Yoritsuna. His autobiography goes on:

"I was called to the court and asked whether I had said this or not. I replied that I had never said that the late Saimyoji-nyudo-dono and Gokurakuji-nyudo-dono were in hell but that I had said some of the other things. I said to Hei-no-saemon-no-jo, 'I said all this for the sake of our country. If you want to secure the peace of our country, call those priests and have them debate with me. If you do wrong by following their advice, you will regret later. To punish me means to ignore the messenger of the Buddha. If you banish or kill me, all the gods including Brahman, Sakra, the Sun-god, the Moon-god, and the Four Quarter Kings will blame you, and some members of the Hojo family will revolt against the government and our country will be invaded from all sides, especially from the west within a hundred days, a year, three years, or seven years."<sup>28</sup>

Two days later Nichiren sent a letter to Nagasaki Yoritsuna, in which he said:

"Nowadays the people of Japan are following the Government of Kanto (Kamakura) and respect samurais. I was born in this country. How can I do without thinking of my country? I wrote the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* and submitted it to the late Saimyoji-nyudo through the hands of Yadoya-no-nyudo. Recently the western barbarians have been disturbing the peace of our country. This shows that my pro-

28 *ibid.*, p. 962.

phesy told in that treatise is coming true. An excellent statesman knows what is to take place in his country in the future. A person who propagates the Lotus Sutra is the messenger of the Buddhas. I am fortunately endowed with the privilege of reading the Lotus Sutra and of understanding the teachings of the Buddha. I made a prophecy according to the sutra, and the prophecy is proving true now. I may not be so great as the sages in ancient times, but am convinced that I am among the few persons to appear in the future. I think I deserve praise because I know the Dharma and think of my country, but the reality is that I am reported falsely to the government by the people of wrong views. For a long time I have vainly making efforts to do something for my country. Worse still, I had to have an unpleasant interview with you the day before yesterday. I am afraid that it is quite difficult to improve the situation. We do not know how high the heaven is unless we climb up the top of the highest mountain. We do not realize how thick the earth is unless we go down to the bottom of an abysmal glen. I now submit to you a copy of the *Rissho-ankokuron*. I wrote in this treatise only a small portion of what I am thinking of. You are the leader of the people of Japan. How can you miss able men in this country? Be quick in taking measures to dispel the enemies. To practise loyalty to our country means to secure the peace of our country. I say this not for myself but for the sake of the Emperor, for the sake of the Buddha, for the sake of the gods, and for the sake of all living beings in our country.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Issakujitsu-gosho. Showa-teihon, p. 501.*

### Nichiren Arrested

The arrest of Nichiren on that day must have been a purge political as well as religious, which the government deemed necessary in order to control the nation in emergency because the following day a government order was issued to despatch the warriors of Kamakura to the west.

How he was arrested is described in his autobiography as follows:

“I was arrested on the twelfth of the ninth month of the eighth year of Bunnei. The arrest seemed quite unusual and unlawful. Hei-no-saemon-no-jo came with hundreds of armed men. With the glaring eyes and harsh voice, he had me arrested. I thought, ‘This is what I have been thinking of for a long time. How happy I am that I am now going to give up myself for the sake of the Lotus Sutra! To exchange my stinky head with the Lotus Sutra is to buy gold with sand, or to trade stone for treasures. Shoubo, an attendant of Hei-no-saemon-no-jo, came running to me, and took a scroll of the Lotus Sutra before me, and beat me with it three times. Some other soldiers trampled on the other scrolls or scattered them over the floor. I said in a loud voice, ‘How interesting! Look! Hei-no-saemon-no-jo has got crazy. He is now felling the pillar of Japan.’ Hearing this, they were put in dismay because they did not think that I was so calm at the punishment. They lost colour. They must have realized that they did wrong.”<sup>30</sup>

On the way to the execution-ground, Nichiren commanded the God Hachiman to protect him. He described this in his autobiography as follows:

“I was put on horseback. On my way to Tatsu-no-kuchi, where I was to be beheaded, I reached the Wakamiya-koji Street. I said to my

<sup>30</sup> *Shuju-on-furumai-gosho. Showa-teihon, p. 963.*

guards, 'I am getting off for nothing but to say a few words to the god Hachiman Daibosatsu. Do not be excited!' Then I alighted from the horse, and said in a loud voice, facing the Hachimangu Shrine, 'Hachiman Daibosatsu! Are you really a god? When Wake-no-Kiyomaro was about to be beheaded, you transformed yourself into a shining thing ten feet long to save him. When Dengyo Daishi expounded the Lotus Sutra, you offered him a purple robe. I am the greatest practiser of the Lotus Sutra in Japan. I have no fault with me. The people of Japan are now slandering the Lotus Sutra. Because of this, they will go to the hell of incessant suffering in their next lives. All I say is for the purpose of saving them. If the forces of the Great Mongolia invade our country, how will it become of you and Tensho Daijin? Will you be still peaceful at that time? When Buddha Sakya-muni expounded the Lotus Sutra, all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and gods of the worlds of the ten quarters came to him. It is needless to say that the Buddhas included the Many-Treasures Buddha, and that the gods included those of India, China, and Japan. Buddha Sakya-muni requested them to protect the practisers of the Lotus Sutra. All of them vowed to do so. Be quick in fulfilling your vow. Why do you not appear now? I am going to be beheaded tonight. When I go to the Pure Land of Mt. Sacred Eagle, I will report to Buddha Sakya-muni that you and Tensho Daijin did not keep their vow. If you do not want to be reported so, do something quickly.'<sup>31</sup>

Shijo Kingo was a devout follower of Nichiren. Nichiren sent for him on his way to Tatsu-no-kuchi. The autobiography runs: "I proceeded with my guards along the Yuigahama Beach, and reached the front of the Goryosha Shrine. I despatched a boy called

31 *ibid.*, p. 965.

Kuma-o to Nakatsukasa-saburozaemon-no-jo (Shijo Kingo) who lived in the neighbourhood. Nakatsukasa hurried to me with his three brothers. I said to him, 'I am going to Tatsu-no-kuchi to be beheaded tonight. This is what I had supposed for years. A pheasant is killed by a hawk, a rat by a cat. Many people die in order to protect their families or properties, but no one dies for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. I am too poor to help my parents or to serve my country. I shall be given some merits when I offer my head to the Lotus Sutra. If so, I will offer a portion of the merits to my parents and distribute the rest of them among my followers.'<sup>32</sup>

Nichiren referred to this also in his letter to Shijo Kingo:

"I cannot forget that you wept holding my horse when I was on my way to the execution-ground of Tatsu-no-kuchi. If you go to hell in your next life, I also will go there with you. Even if Buddha Sakya-muni invites me to his world, I will not go there."<sup>33</sup>

Nichiren reached Tatsu-no-kuchi. It says in the autobiography: "I reached the place as I had thought it to be. Many soldiers stood around me. Saburozaemon-no-jo wept, saying, 'Now I must part with you.' I said, 'What a fool you are! Rejoice! This is my greatest pleasure. Why do you break your promise?' No sooner than I had said this, a ball of light as bright as the moon flew from the Enoshima Island to the southeast, and all the people became visible although the moon of the twelfth day already set. The executioner got dizzy and fell to the ground, and the soldiers ran away a hundred yards. Some of them got off their horses, and the others prostrated themselves on horseback. I said, 'Why do you run away? You think I am a felon.

32 *ibid.*, p. 966.

33 *Sushun-tenno-gosho. Showa-teihon*, p. 1394.

Come!' But no one came. I said again, 'Behead me quickly! When the day breaks, it will not be good to see me beheaded.' But no one answered. After a while I was told to go to Echi in the Province of Sagami."<sup>34</sup>

To Nichiren, Tatsu-no-kuchi was the Pure Land of Buddha Sakyamuni. In his letter to Shijo Kingo he says:

"Tatsu-no-kuchi in the Province of Sagami is the place where I gave up my life. How can it be inferior to the Buddha-world? For the cause of the Lotus Sutra my life stays at Tatsu-no-kuchi, Katase, the Province of Sagami, Japan, in the Saha-World. Therefore, it may be called the World of Tranquil Light."<sup>35</sup>

Nichiren reached Echi. The autobiography runs:

"I reached Echi at noon that day, and was put in the house of Homma-rokuro-zaemon. I treated my guards to some drinks. When they were leaving, they drooped their heads before me and said, 'We hated you because you spoke ill of Buddha Amitabha whom we worshipped. But now we know that you are quite a saint. We have now given up the chanting of the Nembutsu.' Some of them took the rosaries of the Nembutsu from their fling-bags and threw them away."<sup>36</sup>

When Nichiren was arrested, his disciple Nichiro was also arrested and put in a dungeon. Nichiren was told to be exiled to Sado Island. The day before his departure for Sado, Nichiren wrote to Nichiro as follows:

"I, Nichiren, am now leaving for the Province of Sado tomorrow. It is cold tonight. You being put in the dungeon must be suffering

34 *Shuju-on-furumai-gosho. Showa-teihon, p. 967.*

35 *Shijo-kingo-dono-goshosoku. Showa-teihon, p. 504.*

36 *Shuju-on-furumai-gosho. Showa-teihon, p. 968.*

from severe cold. I am sorry for you. You are reading the Lotus Sutra with your mind and body. So you will be able to save not only your parents and relatives but also all the other living beings. Some people read the Lotus Sutra only orally, not with their minds. Others read it with their minds, but not with their bodies. You did with both of them. You are excellent. In the Lotus Sutra it says, 'He will not be cut with the sword or beaten with a stick or poisoned.' Nothing particular will happen to you. When you are released, come to see me as soon as possible. I shall be glad to see you again."<sup>37</sup>

37 *Tsuchiro-gosho. Showa-teihon, p. 509.*

## Chapter VI. The Exile to Sado Island

## A Civil War

Nichiren reached Sado on the first of the eleventh month. He was put in a cemetery hall at Tsukahara. Around this time he seemed to have the conviction that he found himself different from what he had been before the persecution at Tatsu-no-kuchi. In the second month of 1272, he wrote the *Kaimokusho*, in which he says:

"A man called Nichiren was beheaded at midnight on the twelfth of the ninth month of last year. The writer of this article is the soul of the man. His soul came to this Province of Sado and wrote this article in the snow of the second month of this year. This is to be sent to my disciples. This is an extraordinary writing. The readers will be shocked at this."<sup>38</sup>

In the letter addressed to his followers he says:

"Nothing is more valuable than life. Therefore, you will be able to become a Buddha when you study the teachings of the Buddha at the cost of your life."<sup>39</sup>

On the sixteenth of the first month of 1272, the priests of other sects living in the island came to assault him only to give him a chance to propagate the Lotus Sutra. His autobiography runs:

"I debated with the priests of other sects. I explained the faults of the founders and other leaders of those sects to them. Some of them abused me. Others shut their mouths or lost colour. Some said that the Nembutsu was wrong, and vowed that they would never chant

the Nembutsu any more, throwing their robes and rosaries away."<sup>40</sup>

On this occasion he said to the Government Officer Homma Rokuro-zaemon that a civil war would break out in the near future. This came true. Hojo Tokisuke, the elder brother of the then Shikken Hojo Tokimune, was suspected of conspiracy and killed by the order of the Shikken on the fifteenth of next month. Hojo Tokiaki and his brother Noritoki were also killed by the same suspicion. The news reached the island to the surprise of the government officer. Nichiren's autobiography runs:

"Rokuro-zaemon joined his hands together towards me, saying, 'Your prophecy of the sixteenth of the first month has come true. Your prophecy about the Mongolian invasion will also turn out true in the future. Judging from this, I believe that the followers of the Nembutsu will go to hell as you say. I shall never chant the Nembutsu any more.' I said to him, 'Unless Sagami-no-kami-dono (Hojo Tokimune) accepts my advice, the people of Japan will not follow me. Unless they follow me, Japan will be destroyed. I am just an insignificant monk, but since I am propagating the Lotus Sutra, I am the messenger of Buddha Sakyamuni. Tensho-Daijin and Sho-Hachiman may be important gods in this country, but when compared with Brahman, Sakra, the Sun-god, the Moon-god, or the Four Quarter Kings, they are just petty gods. Since I am the messenger of the Lord Teacher Sakyamuni, Tensho-Daijin and Sho-Hachiman should bow to me, join their hands together towards me, and prostrate themselves before me. I am the practiser of the Lotus Sutra. I am guarded by Brahman and Sakra on the left and right, and by the Sun-god and the Moon-god in front and the rear. But if you respect me in a wrong

38 *ibid.*, p. 590.

39 *Sado-gosho. Showa-teihon*, p. 611.

40 *Shuju-on-furumai-gosho. Showa-teihon*, p. 974.

way, you will destroy Japan. The civil war which has now taken place is a punishment brought by the Buddha on the too obstinate government. Until now Japan has barely maintained peace because I appealed to the gods for their leniency. If I did not, this country must have already been destroyed because the government had allowed hundreds of people to hate me, and banished me as often as twice. If the government does not accept my advice this time either, the Great Mongolia will send forces and Japan will be ruined. This is the trouble Hei-no-saemon-no-jo likes to have. You will not be peaceful then. This island will not be either."<sup>41</sup>

Nichiren advised his followers that they should keep the Lotus Sutra in spite of persecutions. He says in the *Shijo-kingo-dono-gohenji*:

"Many people hear this sutra, but few keep it when they are persecuted. It is easy to receive it, but difficult to keep it. If you wish to become a Buddha, you should keep it. Bear in mind that you will be persecuted when you keep it. To keep this sutra means to chant Namu-myohorengekyo. The Namu-myohorengekyo is the most important Law of the Buddhas of the past, present, and future."<sup>42</sup>

#### **The Disciples of the Original Buddha**

Those who propagate the Lotus Sutra in the Age of Degeneration are the disciples of the Original Buddha. He says in the *Shobo-jisso-sho*:

"Those who propagate the Myohorengekyo in the Age of Degeneration are the Bodhisattvas from underground, that is, the disciples of the Original Buddha, whether they are men or women. It is difficult for the people other than the Bodhisattvas-from-underground to

41 *ibid.*, p. 976.

42 *ibid.*, p. 894.

chant the Sacred Title. At first the Sacred Title was chanted by me only. Now more and more people are chanting it. I am sure that all the people of Japan will chant Namu-myoho-enge-kyo in the future."<sup>43</sup>

43 *ibid.*, p. 726.

## Chapter VII. The Go-honzon

### The Eternal Buddha

We should worship the Original Buddha Sakyamuni who declares his eternity in the Lotus Sutra. He says in the *Kaimokusho*:

“All the sects except the Tendai Sect worship wrong objects. The Kusha, Jojitsu, and Ritsu Sects worship Buddha Sakyamuni regarded as the person who eliminated illusions and attained enlightenment for the first time under the Bodhi-tree. They are as wrong as a crown prince who thinks that he is the son of a subject. The Kegon, Shingon, Sanron and Hosso Sects are Mahayana. The Hosso and Sanron Sects worship Buddha Sakyamuni as defined in the provisional Mahayana. They are as wrong as a crown prince who thinks that he is the son of a military officer. The Kegon and Shingon Sects despise Buddha Sakyamuni and worship Buddha Vairocana. They are as wrong as a prince who deserts his father and follows another king of unknown ancestry. The Jodo Buddhists hold that Buddha Amitabha is their Buddha, and do not worship Buddha Sakyamuni. They do not know that Buddha Amitabha is one of the manifestations of Buddha Sakyamuni. The Zen Buddhists are like a man of low birth who criticizes his parents when he gets some position in society. They despise the Buddhas and sutras. All these sects worship wrong objects. In ancient times people did not know their fathers. They were like birds and beasts. The sects who do not know the Chapter of the Duration of the Life of the Tathagata in the Lotus Sutra are like beasts. They do not know the favours of Buddha Sakyamuni.”<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 578.

### The Pure Land of the Eternal Buddha

This Saha-World is the Pure Land of the Eternal Buddha Sakyamuni. In the *Kanjin-honzon-sho* it says:

“During the fifty years of his teaching from the time of his enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree till his Parinirvana under the Sala-tree, the Buddha expounded many sutras. In these sutras he described a wide variety of pure lands, such as the Pure Land of Flower-Store, the Pure Land of Esoteric Adornment, the Pure Land of Three Transformations, the Pure Land of Peaceful Life, and the Pure Land of Emerald. These pure lands are either the abodes of the followers of the Lesser Vehicle, or of the partially-enlightened Bodhisattvas, or of the perfectly enlightened Bodhisattvas. These pure lands are, however, impermanent. They are established only in the kalpa of composition. The expounder of these sutras is the historical Buddha, and the Buddhas of these pure lands are the manifestations of the historical Buddha. Therefore, when the historical Buddha enters into Parinirvana, the Buddhas of these pure lands pass away, and their pure lands also disappear. But the Saha-World of the Original Buddha is the eternal pure land, free from the three calamities and the four kalpas. In this eternal world the Buddha never disappeared in the past, nor is to appear in the future. All living beings under him are one with him because they have the wisdom of the Buddha in their minds.”<sup>45</sup>

### The True Object of Worship

To Nichiren's eyes, in this Pure Land of the Eternal Buddha Sakyamuni, all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas gather centering around the

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 712.

Sacred Title. The congregation in this arrangement should be the Honzon, or the true object of worship. He says in the *Kanjin-honzon-sho*:

“A stupa of treasures is hanging in the sky above the Saha-World of the Eternal Buddha. The letters of *myoborengekyo* are seen in the center of the stupa. On either side of the letters are seen Buddha Sakyamuni and the Many-Treasures Buddha. Buddha Sakyamuni is accompanied by the four Bodhisattvas headed by Superior-Practice. Another team of four Bodhisattvas including Manjusri and Maitreya are sitting in the lower seats. All the other Bodhisattvas, including those taught by the historical Buddha Sakyamuni and those who have come from the other worlds, are sitting on the ground. The Buddhas who have come from the worlds of the ten quarters are also on the ground. This shows that these Buddhas are the manifestations of the Eternal Buddha Sakyamuni and that the worlds of theirs are the manifestations of the Saha-World of the Eternal Buddha Sakyamuni. We should worship all these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in this arrangement. This is the Honzon, or the true object of worship. This Honzon was not revealed during the lifetime of the Buddha except when he expounded the eight consecutive chapters (XV to XXII) of the Lotus Sutra.”<sup>46</sup>

Nichiren sent the *Kanjin-honzon-sho* to Toki Tsunenobu with the following words:

“I wrote a little about the introspection of our mind. I am sending this writing to you, Ota-dono, Kyoshin-gobo, and others. This is of vital importance to me. Do not tell this to others carelessly. You can tell this only to your confidential friends. This article carries many

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 712.

questions and few answers. This kind of writing has never been seen before. This will surprise the readers. You can show this to some one else, but should not read this in the presence of as many as three or four people. This has not been written for the past two thousand two hundred and twenty and odd years since the extinction of the Buddha. I do not mind if I be persecuted by the government. I say this because the present time is in the period of the fifth five hundred years after the extinction of the Buddha. I hope that by reading this you will be able to go to the Pure Land of Mt. Sacred Eagle with me and see Buddha Sakyamuni, the Many-Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten quarters.”<sup>47</sup>

The Honzon is in more detail described in Nichiren's letter to Nichinyo-gozen:

“The five letters of the title of the Lotus Sutra are placed in the center. The Four Quarter Kings are on the four sides of the stupa of treasures. Buddha Sakyamuni and the Many-Treasures Buddha stand side by side with the Four Bodhisattvas who are the disciples of the Eternal Buddha Sakyamuni. The Universal-Sage, Manjusri, and other Bodhisattvas take the lower seats together with Sariputra, Maudgalyayana, and other Sravakas. The Sun-god, the Moon-god, the Mara-king of the sixth heaven, the dragon-kings, and the asuras take their positions in the north and the south together with the Acala-king and the Raga-king. The wicked Devadatta and the little daughter of the dragon-king sit in a corner. The Mother-of-devils and the ten raksasis, who can kill all the people of the world, are also present. The tutelary gods of Japan, that is, Tensho-Daijin, Hachiman Daibosatsu, the seven-generation gods of heaven, the five-gener-

<sup>47</sup> *Kanjin-honzon-sho-soejo. Showa-teihon*, p. 721.



“Believe in this Go-honzon, and you will be able to enter the stupa of treasures of this Go-honzon.”<sup>52</sup>

The Go-honzon is, to tell the truth, not a thing made of ink and paper existing outside our mind, but an expression of the conditions of the spiritual world within ourselves. The same article runs:

“This Go-honzon can be found in the heart of the person who keeps the Lotus Sutra and chants Namu-myohorengekyo. His heart is the abode of the ninth consciousness, that is, of the ruler of the mind. Do not seek it elsewhere.”<sup>53</sup>

The Go-honzon will protect you, and make you happy. It says in the same writing:

“Make offerings to this Go-honzon, and you will be happy not only in your present life but also in your next one. This Go-honzon will protect you just as a torch in the night or a carrier in the mountain does.”<sup>54</sup>

Accordingly, one who chants Namu-myohorengekyo is a Buddha. In his *Myoho-ama-gozen-gobenji* Nichiren Says:

“The person who chants Namu-myohorengekyo is a Buddha. His body is the dharma-body of the Buddha; his mind, the reward-body of the Buddha; and his behaviour, the manifestation-body of the Buddha.”<sup>55</sup>

According to the discourses of the Eternal Buddha given in the Lotus Sutra, one can become a Buddha at once without any transformation. In the *Myoichinyo-gobenji* it says:

“According to the Lotus Sutra, one can become a Buddha im-

52 *ibid.*, p. 1376.

53 *ibid.*, p. 1376.

54 *ibid.*, p. 1376.

55 *ibid.*, p. 1526.

mediately. There are two ways of attaining Buddhahood abruptly. In the discourses of the historical Buddha of the Lotus Sutra, one can become a Buddha at once by transforming oneself into a Buddha. In the discourses of the Eternal Buddha of the sutra, one can become a Buddha at once without any transformation.”<sup>56</sup>

Those who act according to the Lotus Sutra are Buddhas, and their abode is the Pure Land of the Eternal Buddha Sakyamuni. In the *Hokkesbu-naisho-buppo-kechimyaku* it says:

“In this Age of Degeneration, the place where the Lotus Sutra is placed, or where the practisers of the Lotus Sutra are living, be they monks or laymen, men or women, noble or humble, is the Pure Land of Tranquil Light. Since the abode is the Pure Land, how can it be that the inhabitants are not Buddhas? Because the Law is wonderful, the keepers of the Law are honorable. Because they are honorable, their abode is admirable.”<sup>57</sup>

### Nichiren Pardoned

Nichiren was pardoned by the government on the fourteenth of the second month of 1274. His autobiography runs:

“The Nembutsu priests in the island met and discussed the matter. They said, ‘We shall die from hunger unless we do something. How can we expel Nichiren? What shall we do?’ Three priests: a leader of the Nembutsu Sect called Yui-Amidabutsu, a leader of the Ritsu Sect called Shoyubo, and a disciple of Ryokan called Dokan, hurried to Kamakura, and said to Musashi-no-kami (Hojo Nobutoki), ‘If Nichiren stays in that island any longer, all the temples will be destroyed

56 *ibid.*, p. 1798.

57 *ibid.*, p. 694.

and all the priests will die from hunger. He burns the image of Buddha Amitabha or throws it into a river. He climbs up the high mountain every day and night, and curses the government facing the sun and the moon. His loud voice can be heard everywhere in the province.' Hearing this, Musashi-no-zenji (Hojo Nobutoki) said, 'I do not think it necessary to report to the government. My private order will be enough. Banish or imprison the followers of Nichiren.' Many followers of mine were put in prison or banished or deprived of their wives and children on the ground that they had walked passing me or given me something. But a letter of pardon dated on the fourteenth of the second month of the eleventh year of Bunnei reached me on the eighth of the third month."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *Shuju-on-furumai-gosho. Showa-teihon*, p. 977.

## Chapter VIII. The Mongolian Invasions

### **The Return to Kamakura**

He returned to Kamakura on the twenty-sixth of the third month. He says in his autobiography:

"The Nembutsu priests said, 'Nichiren is the enemy of Buddha Amitabha. He speaks ill of Zendo Osho and Honen Shonin. Now he is pardoned. It is not good to let him return alive.' They prepared to kill me. I was lucky that the wind was favourable for my ship. I safely crossed the sea. I left the island on the thirteenth of the third month and reached Kamakura on the twenty-sixth of the same month."<sup>59</sup>

He visited Nagasaki Yoritsuna on the eighth of the fourth month. The autobiography goes:

"On the eighth of the fourth month I visited Hei-no-saemon-no-jo. His attitude towards me was quite different from what he had showed me before. He and the people around him were gentle and polite. A priest asked me about the Nembutsu. Another priest asked me about the Shingon. Saemon-no-jo asked me whether one can attain Buddhahood by the teachings of the sutras expounded before the Lotus Sutra. I answered them by quoting from many sutras. Saemon-no-jo behaved himself like a messenger of the Emperor, and asked me when the forces of the Great Mongolia would come to Japan. I said, 'They will come this year. You do not follow my advice. If a physician treats a patient without the knowledge of the cause of the disease, the patient will not get better but worse. If you have the

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, p. 978.

Shingon priests pray for victory, Japan will be defeated. Do not request the priests of the other sects to pray, either. I say this because I think you know the teachings of the Buddha. It is strange that you accept the advice of others but not mine. I say what will come out true later. Oki-no-ho-o (the Ex-Emperor Gotoba) was an emperor. Gon-no-tayu-dono (Hojo Yoshitoki) was a subject. Emperor and subject are like father and son. How can the god Tensho-Daijin be lenient to a son who is hostile to his father? How can the god Sho-Hachiman protect a subject who stands against his king? But why was the Imperial army defeated? It was because the priests who prayed for the victory of the Imperial army were the followers of Kobo, Jikaku and Chisho. The warriors of Kamakura in those days did not know the teachings of the Shingon Sect. They did not request the Shingon priests to pray for victory. Therefore, they won the war."<sup>60</sup>

#### **The Seclusion in Mt. Minobu**

He secluded himself into Mt. Minobu on the seventeenth of the fifth month. To him, Minobu was the mountain where Buddha Sakyamuni expounded the Lotus Sutra. In the *Nanjo-byoe-shichiro-donogobenji* he says:

"I received the One Great and Secret Truth from Buddha Sakyamuni on Mt. Sacred Eagle. I keep this truth in my heart. Therefore, my heart is the place where the Buddhas enter the samadhis. The Buddhas turn the wheel of the Law on my tongue, manifest themselves in my throat, and attain enlightenment in my mouth. I am the practiser of the Lotus Sutra. I am now living in Minobu. How can it

60 *ibid.*, p. 979.

be that this place is inferior to the Pure Land of Mt. Sacred Eagle?"<sup>61</sup>

Through the efforts of Nichiren and his followers, the chanting of the Sacred Title was now beginning to be popular among the people. In 1279 Nichiren wrote:

"Namu-myohorengekyo was chanted by me for the first time. At that time no one else chanted it. The people who heard me chanting it covered their ears, glared at me, curled their lips, swang their hands, and ground their teeth. My parents, brothers, masters and friends stood against me. So did the governor. All the people of Japan were frightened and excited. In the course of time, some of them imitated my chanting of the Daimoku; others chanted it just for the purpose of kidding me, or by faith or for the purpose of slandering it. Now the one tenth of the population of Japan chant it, and the other people chant both the Nembutsu and the Daimoku or do not chant either, or chant the Nembutsu only."<sup>62</sup>

#### **The First Mongolian Invasion**

By the order of Kublai Khan, the King of Korea mobilized 30,500 ship-carpenters early in 1274, and built 900 warships by the end of the fifth month of the year. The Mongolian forces 25,600 strong, including 5,600 Koreans, set sail from the coast of Korea on the third of the tenth month, and occupied the Island of Tsushima on the fifth day and the Island of Iki on the fourteenth of the month. Five days later they marched into the Bay of Hakata, and landed at Imazu, Momohibara, and Hakata the following day. The Japanese forces had to withdraw from Hakozaki to Dazaifu on the evening of the day.

61 *ibid.*, p. 1884.

62 *Nakaoki-nyudo-goshosoku. Showa-teihon*, p. 1714.

The City of Hakozaiki was ravaged and the Hakozaiki Hachiman Shrine burnt.

The reason why the Mongolian forces went back on board on that evening is not clear. According to the Korean records, the embarkation order was issued immediately after a Mongolian general was wounded and returned to his ship. About midnight a violent storm raged and most of the ships were wrecked. It was reported that 13,500 men were missing when the Mongolian forces reached the coast of Korea on the twenty-seventh of the eleventh month.

#### **The Second Mongolian Invasion**

In 1275, a Mongolian envoy and his party came to Kamakura. The Shikken Hojo Tokimune killed them at Tatsu-no-kuchi to show his resolution to fight against the Mongols again.

Kublai Khan, who overthrew the South Sung Dynasty in 1279, utilized the military power of the fallen dynasty to attack Japan. Generals of the defeated army were appointed military advisors of the Mongols, and some of them were sent to Japan to persuade her into surrender. Warships were constructed at the ports of the Yang-tze River as well as of Korea.

The Mongolian forces 40,000 strong loaded in 900 warships started from the coast of Korea on the second of the fifth month of 1281. They occupied the islands of Tsushima and Iki, and invaded the Island of Shika-no-shima in the Bay of Hakata.

On the sixteenth of the sixth month of the year Nichiren wrote to his followers as follows.

“The forces of a small country called Mongolia are now coming to the Great Japan. My disciples and lay followers! You should not

discuss this among yourselves or with others carelessly. If you do, you shall be excommunicated.”<sup>63</sup>

It should be noted here that Nichiren called Japan the Great Japan, and Mongolia a small country.

Another host of the Mongolian forces 100,000 strong loaded in 3,500 warships set sail from Ning-po and landed on the Island of Hirato late in the sixth month of the year. The two detached forces joined at the Island of Takashima in the Bay of Imari late in the following month. On the night of the first of the eighth month a great storm arose and most of the ships were capsized. The Mongolian forces lost almost eighty per cent of their power by the storm. The surviving soldiers returned to Korea fruitlessly.

Nichiren was not optimistic about the news of the defeat of the Mongolian forces. On the twenty-second of the tenth month of the year, he wrote to Toki Tsunenobu as follows:

“I hear that the priests of those sects boast that the generals of the Mongolian forces were captured because of their prayer. The reality is that a few warships of the enemy were damaged by an autumn wind. Ask them whether the head of the Mongolian king was brought to Kamakura or not. Do not answer any question asked by them.”<sup>64</sup>

63 *Sho-moko-gosho. Showa-teihon*, p. 1871.

64 *Toki-nyudo-gohenji. Showa-teihon*, p. 1888.

## Chapter IX. The Salvation of the World

## Advices to His Followers

It is regrettable that few enter the true Way. Nichiren wrote to Matsuno-dono:

"A fish lays many spawns, but few of them are hatched. An amra-tree puts forth many flowers, but few of them bear fruit. The same can be said of men. Many people aspire for enlightenment, but few enter the true Way. Ordinary men are not constant in pursuing enlightenment. They are retarded by bad environments. Many soldiers are armoured, but few of them are brave."<sup>65</sup>

In the same letter he criticizes idle priests, saying that they are beasts in priestly robe:

"If you are too poor to offer anything to the Buddha, and if you have an opportunity to attain Buddhahood by giving up your life, study the teachings of the Buddha at the cost of your life. Your body will change into earth some day. Why do you grudge it? We cannot live for a hundred years. Our life is just a dream. It is difficult to be born as a man. Some monks study the teachings of the Buddha, but do not criticize the slanderers of the right teachings of the Buddha. They just pass time in playing and chattering. They are beasts in priestly robe. They are in the form of priests, but not priests at all. They are thieves because they steal the name of priests. You are a layman. You should chant Namu-myohorengekyo with your whole heart, make offerings to priests, and expound the sutra as far as you can."<sup>66</sup>

65 *Matsuno-dono-gohenji. Showa-teihon*, p. 1269.

66 *ibid.*, p. 1272.

Practice and Study are the two most important things for Buddhists to do. Nichiren says in the *Shobo-jisso-sho*:

"Believe in the most excellent Go-honzon in the world. Have faith in it, then you will be protected by Buddha Sakyamuni, the Many-Treasures Buddha, and the other Buddhas in the worlds of the ten quarters. Practise and study, or the teachings of the Buddha will be out of existence. Do yourself, and also tell others to do so. Practice and study come from your faith."<sup>67</sup>

Be brave and do not be coward in propagating the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren says in his autobiography:

"If you are a follower of Nichiren, do not be coward. Do not think of your parents, wife, child, or property. Many people have given up their lives for the sake of their parents, wives, children, or properties, but no one has for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. Some followers of mine believed in the Lotus Sutra and practised the teaching of it, but gave up their faith when I was persecuted. Make up your mind! To exchange your body for the Lotus Sutra is to trade stone for gold or to barter dirt for rice. The five letters of *myo, ho, ren, ge, and kyo* have not yet been propagated for the past two thousand two hundred and twenty and odd years since the extinction of the Buddha. The five letters were not propagated by Kasyapa or Ananda or Asvaghosa or Nagarjuna or Nangaku or Tendai or Myoraku or Dengyo. These letters are the essence of the Lotus Sutra, and the eyes of all the Buddhas. The present time is the beginning of the Age of Degeneration. The five letters should be propagated now in this world. I have begun to propagate them. You young men follow me and surpass Kasyapa, Ananda, Tendai and Dengyo."<sup>68</sup>

67 *ibid.*, p. 728.

68 *Shuju-on-furumai-gosho. Showa-teihon*, p. 961.

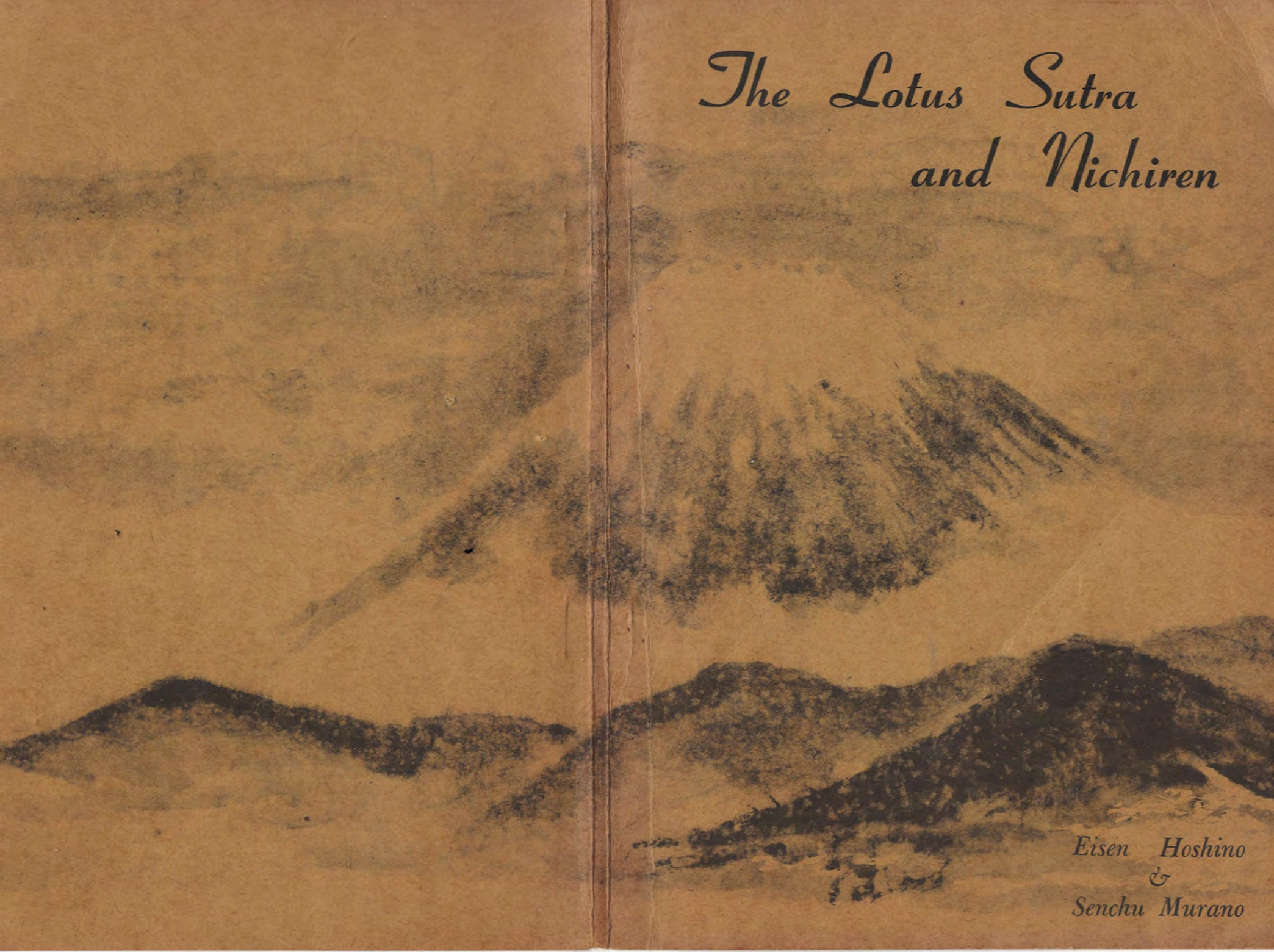
Our aim is to see that all the people of the world will respect the True Law, that is, the Law expounded in the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren says in the *Sbonin-gohenji*:

“My wish which I have been keeping for a long time may be fulfilled in the near future. The prophecy of the Buddha for the events to take place in the fifth five hundred years after his extinction has come true. Collect the priests of the Shingon, Zen and the other sects who slander the right teachings of the Buddha. Debate with them, and have them decide whether I am right or not. Then all the people of Japan will follow me, and my disciples will become the teachers of the Emperor and Ex-Emperors, and my lay followers will be given high positions of the State. Furthermore, all the people of the world will respect this Wonderful Law.”<sup>69</sup>

69 *ibid.*, p. 1479.

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