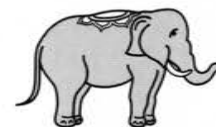


NICHIREN SHU  
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# Questions and Answers on Nichiren Buddhism

Senchu Murano  
1998



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on  
Nichiren Buddhism**

**Senchu Murano**

**1998**

## Preface

Nichiren Buddhism is one of the most outstanding religions in Japan. It is a collective name for all the Daimoku-chanting denominations: Nichiren Shu, Nichiren Shoshu, Nichiren Honshu, Kempon Hokke Shu, Hokke Shu Jimmon Ryu, Hokke Shu Hommon Ryu, Hokke Shu Shimmon Ryu, Hommon Hokke Shu, Hommon Butsuryu Shu, Nichiren Shu Fujufuse Ha, Fujufuse Nichiren Komon Shu, and many new religions whose names end with "Kai". Although all these organizations are independent of each other administratively, they are one in that they center around the personality of the founder Nichiren (1222-1282).

Born as son of a petty officer of a manor in the Province of Awa (Chiba-ken), Nichiren studied at the Hieizan Buddhist Institute under the patronage of the owner of the manor. He was a good writer. He had a vast knowledge of the history of Japan, China, and the neighboring countries including Western Turkistan. He contributed to the study of the history of Japan by recording several events which were not described in any documents other than Nichiren's writings. He was persecuted oftentimes because he bitterly criticized the chanting of the Nembutsu. But he was loved and respected by commoners. Within a few years after the proclamation of his new faith, he collected votaries numerous enough to make the Government careful of his faithful followers, who were misconstrued as dissidents to the Government.

Nichiren attempted to restore the dignity of Sakyamuni Buddha, who was almost forgotten under the popularity of other Buddhas and

Bodhisattvas such as Amida, Dainichi, Yakushi, Kannon, and so forth. According to the *Lotus Sutra*, Shakamuni is the Original Buddha, all the other Buddhas being his emanations. Shakamuni also is the Eternal Buddha, who is still now expounding the Dharma to save us.

I have had many chances to make contact with my friends overseas. They ask me many questions. Some of the questions are not asked in Japan because we take the matters just for granted. Thanks to the questioners abroad, I could re-study many things to prepare for my answers. The *Lotus Sutra* begins with the question asked by Maitreya Bodhisattva. There are many Maitreyas in the world. We must listen to them, understand what they want to know, and study the points in the light of the *Lotus Sutra* and the Gosho of Nichiren.

Here I have collected some questions and answers on Nichiren Buddhism from the letters exchanged between various persons abroad and myself. I shall be very glad if this collection will be able to conduce to the right understanding of Nichiren Buddhism.

Senchu Murano  
Kamakura, Japan

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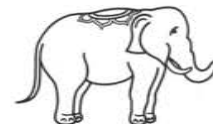
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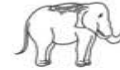
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# Questions and Answers on Nichiren Buddhism

## Chapter I. Buddhist Concepts



### Dharma

\*\*\*

**Montgomery** (September 17, 1986)

The word *dharma* is, indeed, full of problems. An article in the *Abington Dictionary of Living Religions* (a very good book, by the way) says: "Dharma: Hindu, Buddhist, and Japanese-Skt.; literally 'that which is established; law' (*dhr*-'support, bear'). Righteousness or duty; 'law' in the broadest sense, including natural order as well as the details of human propriety and personal, ethical norma. No other term in traditional Indian religious thought is more important, more complex in the variety of its technical usages from system to system, and therefore more difficult to translate simply than dharmas. In its most embracing sense, it describes proper order and defines and enjoins the principles of conduct to maintain

### Questioners (Alphabetical Order)

<b>Simon Continente</b>	Faithful Follower of Nichiren Shonin in England.
<b>Stephanie Maltz</b>	Faithful Follower of Nichiren Shonin in the U.S.
<b>Daniel B. Montgomery</b>	Author of <i>Fire in the Lotus: The Dynamic Buddhism of Nichiren</i> (London, 1991).
<b>Senkei K. Pieters</b>	Nichiren Buddhist Temple Hokkeji, Moorslede, Belgium.



it. Especially for Hindus and Buddhists dharma is, then, often equivalent to what is commonly meant by 'religion.' "

The word came into use in English after World War II ("dharma bums and beat zen") and is now found in most English dictionaries. In other words, it is now an assimilated English word, like so many other thousands of foreign words which have worked their way into the language. For this reason, and because it is so rich in meanings, I would agree with Professor Iida: the word should be left alone, any "translation" can give only a partial meaning.

A good example of the problems of translating this word is in the *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* by Soothill and Hodous. Soothill gives one set of translations in the body of the text. After Soothill died, Hodous completely rejected his colleague's version and wrote a correction: "Ho Dharma: (1) thing, object, appearance; (2) characteristic, attribute, predicate; (3) the substantial bearer of the substratum of the simple element of conscious life; (4) element of conscious life; (5) nirvana, i. e. dharma *par excellence*; (6) the absolute, the truly real; (7) the teaching, the religion of Buddha."

It is interesting to note that Hodous avoids the word "law" altogether, although Soothill had used it as one possible meaning.

In the *Translator's Note of the Lotus Sutra*, #4, you list the exceptions to Sanskrit words translated into Chinese. Among them is "Sutra, which is an accepted English word." True, but I think that "dharma" is just as accepted and perhaps wider known. To me, the term "Wonderful Dharma" is much more exciting than "Wonderful Law" since "Law" has such a negative sense to it. It reminds me of policeman and lawyers.

**Murano** (November 26, 1986)

I quite agree with you on the use of the Sanskrit original of the Dharma without rendering it to any English word. I thought that the law was well accepted in English because Kern rendered the *Lotus Sutra* as the Lotus of the True Law. We Japanese, who always see Dharma translated as *Ho*, while the other two of the Triratna: Buddha and Sangha, are not translated, feel that Dharma must be translated in any way. The fact that the "Law" is a one-syllable word just as *Ho* allures us to its acceptance because the transliteration of Buddha (Butsu or But or Bup) and Sangha (So) are also one-syllable words. Bup-po-so, not Butsu-dharma-so, sounds good to our ears.

We have the Japanese word *daruma*, which has nothing to do with the *Dharma* of the Buddha although it comes from dharma etymologically. *Daruma* is a contraction of Bodhidharma (Bodaidaruma), the name of the alleged founder of the Chinese Zen Buddhism, who came from South India to the Shorinji Temple in North China in 520 or 587. Legend says that he stayed there for nine years, facing the wall, sitting in meditation. He wished to go back to India. He reached Yu-men in South China, where he died in 528 or 536.

We have a doll called *daruma*. The doll has no limbs because, according to the legend, his limbs rotted away while he sat for nine years. The doll has a weight at the bottom so that it can rise after it tumbles. To be able to rise shows good luck, so the daruma-doll is made as a symbol of good luck.

## Truth and Law

\*\*\*

**Montgomery** (July 24, 1986)

What would you say about saying, "the highest Truth," instead of the highest Law? I know this raises a lot of questions, so I will not pursue it further. "Truth," to the modern ear, is something absolutely sacred and inviolable; a law, on the other hand, can be broken. In the Christian New Testament, the Law is always inferior to the Truth.

**Murano** (August 31, 1988)

I follow the example of the Four Noble Truths, and interpret a truth as a countable common noun, and treat the Law as the collective name for the various truths. This may be different from the usage of the Christian concepts.

## Sect (Shu)

\*\*\*

**Murano** (February 17, 1983)

The word *shu* is usually translated as "sect". I do not like this translation. Nor do I like "Order", either. "Denomination" may be better, but I have never found this word in the proper names of any religious organizations. What is the best word for *shu*?

**Montgomery** (March 11, 1983)

I agree with you that the terms "Sect" and "Order" are both inadequate. "Sect" has a derogatory connotation in English, as does "sectarian." "Order" implies a monastic order, one of many possible in a given church. "Church" would be the best translation for *shu*, were it not so intimately connected with Christianity. The Jews, who never use the term "church", use society, association, alliance, union, assembly, council or organization. These terms are also used by some Christians. Some Christians also use faith, conference, fellowship, congregation, movement, meeting, convention, unity, federation or synod. Episcopalians use episcopate. I agree that the term "denomination" might be the best translation for *shu*. It is a long and clumsy word, but it is specific and neutral. The use of the term implies neither approval nor disapproval, whereas "sect" has a rather unpleasant ring to it, implying a break-off from some larger body. To say Nichiren Denomination would be accurate, although perhaps in this country it might be better to add the word "Buddhist" for clarification: thus "Nichiren Buddhist Denomination."

## The Future Life

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**Pieters** (May 23, 1996)

What happens to a person who is not a Nichiren believer when he dies?

**Murano** (June 6, 1996)

He will be sent to an evil region. But if his friends chant the Daimoku

for his salvation, he will be saved from there, and sent to the Buddha-world.

**Pieters** (May 23, 1996)

What happens to us Nichiren Buddhists when we die?

**Murano** (June 6, 1996)

We can join the Sangha accompanying the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha, who is expounding the Wonderful Dharma on Mt. Sacred Eagle in the Purified Saha World. The Buddha says in the *Lotus Sutra* (Second edition of Murano's *The Lotus Sutra*, pp. 246-247) "When they see me seemingly pass away, make offerings to my sariras, adore me, admire me, become devout, upright and gentle, and wish to see me with all their hearts at the cost of their lives, I reappear on Mt. Sacred Eagle with my Sangha...." We can enjoy peaceful and eternal life in the Purified Saha World when we die.

## Tolerance and Intolerance

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**Pieters** (May 23, 1996)

Nichiren was intolerant towards the other Buddhists. Buddhists should be tolerant and gentle towards others. Why was Nichiren so intolerant?

**Murano** (June 6, 1996)

Nichiren was intolerant only towards the Buddhists who ignored the

Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha and slandered the *Lotus Sutra* in which the eternity of Sakyamuni Buddha is expounded. Very few worshiped the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha in the time of Nichiren. Even the adherents of the Tendai Sect worshiped the Buddhas other than Sakyamuni. Nichiren criticized the Tendai Sect of the day. Therefore, Nichiren was thought to be intolerant towards everybody. He was gentle towards the people who did not know of the *Lotus Sutra*. He kindly taught them with smiles and humor.

## Zazen (Sitting in Meditation)

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**Pieters** (May 23, 1996)

Why do Nichiren Buddhists not practice *zazen* whereas the Buddha recommends it to us in the *Lotus Sutra*?

**Murano** (June 6, 1996)

*Zazen* is a good practice. You can do *zazen*. But *zazen* needs a proper place and time. It is limited to selected people. Nichiren was always thinking of the people who were busy in the daily life. The 1964 Olympic Games were held in Tokyo. There was a Zen temple near the stadium. Some Americans tried to do *zazen* at that temple, but in vain. That temple had no room for *zazen*. Only 20% of the Zen temples have facilities for *zazen* while the smallest Nichiren temple is the proper place for chanting the Daimoku. I once visited a *danka* (member, supporter) of my temple for sutra-chanting. An old woman in the neighborhood happened to be



there. She complained that the priest of her temple would never visit her home for sutra-chanting. I asked her, "What sect is your temple?" She said, "Nembutsu". I asked her again, "What is the name of your temple?" The name of the temple given to me was a Zen temple. She did not know sect difference. Common people chant the Nembutsu at any temple except Nichiren temples. In the minds of the common people, there are only two sects: the sect of the Nembutsu and the sect of the Daimoku. Very few of the danka of Zen temples practice *zazen*. If you stick to *zazen*, you will lose the bulk of the people.

## Theravada and Mahayana

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**Pieters** (May 23, 1996)

Some say that the *Lotus Sutra* does not contain the true words of the Buddha, and that the Mahayana sutras were compiled by others later than the Buddha. What do you think about it?

**Murano** (June 6, 1996)

Theravada Buddhists say that the true words of the Buddha are contained in their canon only. This shows that they ignore the history of Buddhism. After the Parinirvana of the Buddha, his disciples met and compiled the words of the Buddha into sutras. The sutras were transmitted orally. Soon afterwards, heated controversies were raised as to the accuracy of some words of the Buddha. Buddhism split into twenty sects. About 400 years after the Parinirvana of the Buddha, these twenty sects

were rearranged into two divisions: Theravada and Mahasanghika. Theravada Buddhism stuck to formalism. Mahasanghika Buddhism developed spiritually, and established Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism promoted philosophical interpretations of the words of the Buddha. If Buddhism ceased to develop and confined itself in Theravada formalism, Buddhism would have died out long time ago, leaving only a historical record that there was once a local religion in India called Buddhism. Buddhism became a universal religion, thanks to the great Mahayana philosophers such as Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, and so on.

## Pancasila (The Five Precepts)

\*\*\*

**Pieters** (May 23, 1996)

Some say that Nichiren priests do not keep precepts; therefore, they cannot be called real Buddhists. What do you think of this?

**Murano** (June 6, 1996)

Very few of us are vegetarians. Vegetarianism is conceived in Japan differently from that in India. I visited India and saw that there were two kinds of restaurants: vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Vegetarianism in India allows the use of eggs and milk products while Japanese vegetarianism means food of plant origin only. There is a large Soto Zen temple called Sojiji in Yokohama. When the World Fellowship of Buddhists' Conference was held in Tokyo in 1952, many Theravada bhikkhus put up at Sojiji and were treated with vegetarian dishes without

eggs and milk products. Worse still, Theravada formalism prohibits taking food in the afternoon. They take their full day volume of food by noon. Japanese temples, however, do not have such a food supplying system. They complained of food shortage. A Theravada bhikkhu told me, "We are a pitiable minority."

Abandoning celibacy is a trend of Japanese Buddhism although some lamas and Korean priests marry. Some Japanese priests are celibates. Nipponzan Myohoji priests do not marry. Two Nichiren priests in Kamakura are celibates. The chief priest of Myogyoji at Baraki, Chiba-ken, does not marry. Some Japanese Zen priests are celibates. The late chief priest of Komyoji Temple of the Jodo Sect in Kamakura did not marry.

I think that the most interesting thing to the Buddhists outside Japan is that most of the Japanese priests are in laymen's attire in their everyday life. Theravada bhikkhus, lamas and Chinese priests wear priestly robes for 24 hours a day. Some new religion Buddhist priests in Korea wear laymen's attire, but all the other Korean priests are in priestly robes. On the contrary, most of the Japanese priests wear priestly robes only during ceremony. Many Japanese priests work outside temples in laymen's appearance. They work as school teachers, city office clerks or business company employees. When working outside temples, priests do not mind being treated as laymen. One who has been initiated into priesthood should be called Reverend even before he is ordained, but it is suitable for him to be called Mister when he works outside his temple.

## Sokushin-jobutsu, Chuko Tendai

\*\*\*

**Maltz** (April 2, 1995)

The *sokushin-jobutsu* concept, as Sokagakkai and Taiseikiji teach it, seems to derive from the ideas of the later Muromachi Period, when "Chuko Tendai" and "Original Enlightenment" ideas departed radically from the earlier concepts that Chih-i and Dengyo presented and that Nichiren seemed to uphold. These later "Chuko Tendai" ideas are still the tenets of Gakkai and Taiseikiji theology, and they have done much damage by obscuring the original intent of Nichiren's message. Even when a person departs from the obvious falsehoods of the "Ita Mandara" and the "Nichiren-as-True Buddha" beliefs, they are at all hampered by the Taiseikiji thinking processes that are steeped in "Chuko Tendai" concepts. This is illustrated by the misinterpretation of what *sokushin-jobutsu* really is. That is why I am asking you to clarify this concept for me.

**Murano** (April 19, 1995)

The expression *sokushin-jobutsu* was first used by Tan-jan (711-782), the sixth patriarch of the Chinese Tendai Sect. He used this word when he explained Chih-i's comment on the daughter of a dragon-king mentioned in Chapter XII of the *Lotus Sutra*. But that chapter does not contain the word *soku*. *Soku*, which is used in connection with the attainment of enlightenment, is found in Chapter X, and nowhere before or after this chapter. *Soku*, means "immediately". Kern puts "soon" instead of "immediately" in his translation of the Sanskrit text of the *Lotus Sutra*. In popular usage, *soku* is used in the following combinations: *sokuji* (instant), *sokuji-barai* (spot payment), *sokketsu* (prompt decision), *sokuseki-ryori*

(fast food), *sokkyo-shijin* (improvisator), *sokushi* (instant death).

Dengyo made a pains-taking, and as a result, somewhat humorous explanation of *soku*. He said that a lifetime is long, but that it can be called "short" when compared with a kalpa. He classified people into three headings, and said that the first class people can attain enlightenment after one birth (one birth-and-death, namely after the end of the present lifetime), the second class people can do so after two rebirths, and the third class people after three rebirths. The period of three rebirths is very long, but it is just a moment when compared with innumerable kalpas. He said that the period of three rebirths can be called "immediately".

Nichiren interpreted the sentence in Chapter X, saying, "If you hear it even for a moment [and begin chanting the Daimoku], you will immediately be able to enter the Way to perfect enlightenment."

*Sokushin-jobutsu* literally means "immediately-body-become-Buddha". Nichiren never said that he was a Buddha. He always said that he was a disciple of the Buddha. A disciple of the Buddha is a Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva is one who is seeking enlightenment, pursuing the Way, and is happy in pursuing the Way.

We bow to the Buddha, saying, "*Namu Kuon Jitsujo Honshi Shakamuni Butsu*." Nichiren Shoshu priests bow to the Buddha, saying, "*Namu Hommon Juryo no Kanjin no Montei Hichin no Daiho Honji Nanshi Kyochi Myogo Kuon Gansho Jijuyu Hoshin Nyorai*." There is no mention of Shakamuni Butsu. We bow to Nichiren, saying "*Namu Honge Jogyo Koso Nichiren Dai Bosatsu*." They bow to Nichiren, saying "*Namu Honimmyo no Kyoshu Isshin soku Sanjin Sanjin soku Isshin Sanze Jogo no Goriyaku Shushishin Santoku Daiji Daihi Shuso Nichiren Dai Shonin*." There is no mention of "Nichiren Dai Bosatsu".

Soka Gakkai says that Nichiren is the Buddha. Therefore, the seat of the

representative of the Sangha, which is one of the Three Treasures, is vacant. They put Nikko in the place. Pretty soon, Nikko will become obsolete, and will be promoted to the status of the Buddha. The seat of the representative of the Sangha will be again vacant. Who will occupy the seat?

*Soku* has another meaning. It means "to be equal to." This meaning creates many terrible equations. *Bonno-soku-bodai* (Illusions are enlightenment), *shoji-soku-nehani* (The world of birth-and-death is the world of Nirvana), *shaba-soku-jakko* (The Saha World is the Pure World of Tranquil Light) and so on. Chuko Tendai created these irrational, supernatural equations endlessly. "One is three," "Three are one" remind us of Omar Khayyam, who said, "He is they," and "They are he." This theory produces *hongaku-shiso* or "Original Enlightenment Philosophy." Those who hold this philosophy say, "You are Buddhas," "You do not have to study any more," "You need not train yourselves." In this way illusions, usurpation and secularization are justified.

## Soul

\*\*\*

**Pieters** (December 15, 1995)

The Buddha denies the existence of a soul. There is no self, ego, Anatman. I encounter the expression "the soul of Nichiren". Did Nichiren have a soul?



**Murano** (February 1, 1996)

I think that this expression is a translation of “Nichiren-ga-tamashii”. A soul is thought to be left over after one’s death. According to Buddhism, a soul transmigrates from one to another of the six regions, rambling around the world of birth-and-death. We never say “the soul of the Buddha”. The same should be said of Nichiren. *Tamashii* is usually translated as “soul”, but “soul” is in more cases a translation of *reikon*. *Yamato-damasii* means “the Japanese spirit”. We never say “Yamato-reikon”. “*Mitsugo-no-tamashii-hyaku-made-mo*” means, “The *tamashii* of a three-year-old child will not change even when it grows one hundred years old”. If you say “mitsugo-no-reikon”, you will make us to think that the child died when he was three years old. A soul is in popular usage not for a living person except a timid soul. “*Nichiren ga tamashii*” does not mean the soul of Nichiren. It means, “What I, Nichiren, have in mind”, or “My true intention”.

*Rei* or *reikon*, meaning soul, is more abusively used in Japanese than in English. When you want to dedicate a new book to the person who is already dead, you write in front page, “To the Memory of”. We write “To the Soul of”. On the monument to the war dead, we write “This monument is dedicated for the purpose of consoling the souls of the war dead”, while you write only “To an Unknown Soldier” at Arlington Cemetery. The name of *Reiyukai* is beautifully translated as “Spiritual Friends Society”, but the society was primarily organized in the notion of “The Society of Friends of Souls”. There is no word corresponding to the soul in the *Lotus Sutra*.

**Hyakumanben** (One Million Times)

\*\*\*

**Maltz** (September 6, 1996)

Jeffrey Hunter wrote a long thesis on the founder of the Fujufuse Sect, Busshoin Nichio (1565-1630). Nichio wrote the *Goengi* (Fortuitous vow) in 1608. It is a companion book to another, written earlier by Nichio, entitled *Shodai Kambotsu Sho* (Encouraging the chanting of the title of the *Lotus Sutra*). The *Goengi* is a vow to recite the Daimoku one million times. What do you know about this book? I am curious to understand what the significance of chanting one million daimoku was to Nichio.

**Murano** (October 26, 1996)

Chanting the Nembutsu one million times was recorded in Japan at the beginning of the eleventh century. Tens of men and women get together and chant every day for one week makes one million chantings. It was not so difficult as we imagine. Chionji of the Jodo Sect in Kyoto is nicknamed Hyakumanben (One Million Times) because the chief priest of the temple officiated at the Hyakumanben Ceremony at the Imperial Court in 1473. Chanting the Nembutsu or Daimoku one million times was not regarded as a special practice in the time of Nichio.

## The Three Bodies of the Buddha (Sanshin)

\*\*\*

**Pieters** (August 20, 1991)

What are the three bodies of the Buddha? These words are contained in the *Kaikyoge*.

**Murano** (September 11, 1991)

We say that the Buddha has tri-kaya (three-bodies): Sambhoga-kaya, Dharma-kaya, and Nirmana-kaya. When we say that the Buddha is one who has attained Buddhahood after performing the Bodhisattva practices, we say of the Sambhoga-kaya of the Buddha. When we say that the Buddha is the Dharma itself, we say of the Dharma-kaya of the Buddha. When we say that the Buddha is one who saves us, we say of the Nirmana-kaya of the Buddha. The Sambhoga-kaya tells us of the career of the Buddha; the Dharma-kaya, the truthfulness of the Buddha; and the Nirmana-kaya, the compassion of the Buddha.

The Dharma was personified from the outset of Buddhism. When the Buddha was about to pass away, he said to Ananda, "If you think that there will be no teacher after I pass away, you are wrong. The Dharma will be your teacher."

The Dharma was personified also in another way. The Buddha is one who knows the Dharma, not the creator of it. The Dharma exists first, and then the Buddha appears. Without the Dharma, the Buddha would not be able to attain enlightenment. Therefore, the Dharma is the teacher of the Buddha.

Shingon Buddhism separates the Dharma-kaya from the Sambhoga-kaya, and gives the name of Mahavairocana to the Dharma-kaya.

According to Shingon Buddhism, Mahavairocana Buddha is the Highest Buddha, Sakyamuni being only one of the four Buddhas under him. Nichiren was against Shingon on this point.

Pureland Buddhism establishes Amitabha Buddha as the savior, treating Sakyamuni only as the teacher, not the savior. The parable of *Niga-byakudo* (Two-rivers-white-road), which was told by Zendo, tells us of all this clearly. There is a river with two large whirlpools of fire and water, severed by a narrow white bridge. There is only one bridge on the river. Sakyamuni stands on this side of the river with people to be saved. He tells them, "Go ahead. Cross the bridge. Don't be afraid." On the other side of the river is Western Paradise with Amitabha Buddha as the lord. Amitabha, from afar with a loud voice, calls the people on this side of the river, "Come, and you will be saved."

## Two Sutras Prefixed and Suffixed to the *Lotus Sutra*

\*\*\*

**Montgomery** (March 11, 1983)

In Nichiren-shu, what importance is given to the *Sutra of Innumerable Meanings* and the *Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal-Sage*? Are they used at all for either doctrinal devotional purpose?

**Murano** (April 26, 1985)

The *Muryogikyo* ("The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings") was translated into Chinese later than the *Myoho-enge-kyo* by another person



than Kumarajiva. The original text was probably composed later than the *Myoho-rengo-kyo*. This sutra has a famous sentence, which Nichiren frequently quoted: *Shijuyonen miken shinjitsu*, which means, "I have not yet revealed my true teaching for the past forty odd years." But this saying can be read between the lines of Chapter XVI of the *Lotus Sutra*, as I inserted in my translation of the sutra. *The Kan-fugen-bosatsu-gyobo-kyo* ("The Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal-Sage") was also translated later than the *Lotus Sutra* and not by Kumarajiva. It was apparently intended to be a continuation of the last chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. This sutra carries *Jojakko* or "Eternally Tranquil Light" as the name of the world of Sakyamuni Buddha. We say that the world of Sakyamuni Buddha is called *Jakko-jodo* ("the Pure World of Tranquil Light"). The word *Jakko* is given only in this sutra, and in no other sutras. The setup of this triple sutra: The *Muryogikyo* as the opening sutra, the *Myoho-rengo-kyo*, and the *Kan-fugen-gyo* as the closing sutra, had been established long before the time of Nichiren. Nichiren sometimes called them *Hokekyo Jikkan* or the "Ten Volumes of the *Lotus Sutra*", but he usually used the expression: *Hokekyo Ichibu Hachikan Niju Happon*, which means "The *Lotus Sutra*, One Book, Eight Volumes, Twenty-eight Chapters." We usually put the eight volumes of the *Lotus Sutra* in front of the statue of Nichiren.

## *Ongi-kuden and Onko-kikigaki*

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**Montgomery** (February 6, 1986)

Are the *Ongikuden* and the *Onko-kikigaki* of any value or not?

**Murano** (February 24, 1986)

Recent investigations have reached the conclusion that the *Ongikuden* was written by a priest of the Nikko Monryu during the Muromachi Period (1392-1467). It stresses the importance of the *Hongaku-shiso* (the philosophy of original enlightenment). The *Hongaku-shiso* was naturalistic optimism, which flourished in those days of national disintegration. The logic favored by the philosophers was, roughly speaking, –we have the Buddha-nature—we are Buddhas in essence—we are already Buddhas—we do not have to practice anything. Thus, secularism was justified. The purpose of Buddhism became just to enjoy speculation by arbitrary self-will, ignoring the study of texts. Bold equations were endlessly created, such as –we are Buddhas–illusions are enlightenment–this world is the Buddha-land—one is three–three are one–etc., etc. These equations are fascinating, but produce no value. The *Hongaku-shiso* was advocated by the Medieval Age Tendai (*Chuko Tendai*), and many Nichiren Buddhists were also attracted to this philosophy. Even today, the impact of this philosophy is still found in the terminology of the liturgy of Nichiren Buddhism. The *Onko-kikigaki* was written probably by someone connected with the Itchi-ha, who attempted to cope with the *Ongi-kuden*, also during the Muromachi Period.

## Shonin Gonanji

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**Montgomery** (February 6, 1986)

Nichiren Shoshu places great emphasis on the Gohonzon written on October 12, 1279. They say that this is the only true Gohonzon. They say that the purpose of Nichiren's appearance in this world is to write this Mandala. They quote from the *Shonin Gonanji* (Persecutions Befalling the Buddha), "It took more than forty years for the Buddha to fulfill the purpose of his advent in this world. It took thirty years for T'ien-t'ai, twenty years for Dengyo, and twenty-seven years for me." In the *Shonin Gonanji*, however, Nichiren does not mention the Dai-gohonzon at all. What was he actually talking about?

**Murano** (February 24, 1986)

There is no Dai-mandala dated October 12, 1279, in the list of the Gohonzon written by Nichiren. The *Shonin-gonanji* was written on October 1, 1279. *Shonin* here means Nichiren. *Gonanji* means difficulties, hence persecutions. The title of this letter was given by a compiler of Nichiren's works, not by Nichiren himself. This letter was addressed to his believers in Kamakura in care of Shijo Kingo, not to the followers of Nikko. No mentioning of Gohonzon was found in it. "Twenty-seven years" means from 1253 to 1279. In the Japanese way of counting years, the first year of a period is counted one year just as the years A. D.

In September 1279, Atsuwara Jinshiro and 19 other farmers, who were followers of Nikko, were arrested on the false charge of stealing rice. They were sent to Kamakura for trial. The chief justice was the War Minister Hei-no-saemon-no-jo Nagasaki Yoritsuna, who was always attempting to

suppress Nichiren Buddhists. Yoritsuna did not investigate the case, but forced the accused to chant the Nembutsu. Jinshiro and others chanted the Daimoku instead. Jinshiro and two others were beheaded, and the rest were put in jail.

Every time such a persecution occurred, Nichiren quoted a passage from the *Lotus Sutra*: "Many people hate this sutra with jealousy even in my lifetime. Needless to say, more people will do so after my extinction." The Buddha says that one who practices of the *Lotus Sutra* will be persecuted. Nichiren says that he was convinced that he practiced the *Lotus Sutra* because he was persecuted so many times. Tendai and Dengyo had some troubles but not as many as Nichiren. Nichiren says in the *Shonin Gonanji*, "I can say that I am one who practices of the *Lotus Sutra*. You, too, have had many troubles. This shows that you are all ones who practice the *Lotus Sutra*."

## On the Death of a Young Girl

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**Montgomery** (February 6, 1986)

In the *Teaching Valid for the Latter Day*, which is a letter to Nanjo Tokimitsu dated April 1, 1278, Nichiren says, "Now in the latter day of the Law, neither the *Lotus Sutra* nor any other sutras lead to enlightenment. Namu-myoho-enge-kyo alone can do so." Is this an accurate translation? What does that mean?

**Murano** (February 24, 1986)

The *Ueno-dono-gohenji*, dated April 1, 1278, was a reply to Nanjo Tokimitsu, who had reported to Nichiren on the death of the daughter of Ishikawa. According to the report, she had been ill in bed for a long time, and chanted the Daimoku on her deathbed. The passage means, "Now is the Age of Degeneration. The chanting of the whole of the *Lotus Sutra* is no longer of any use in this age. Only the chanting of the Daimoku is helpful to you."

## Chapter II. The Mandala



### Nichiren's Mandala and Esoteric Buddhism

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**Montgomery** (June 28, 1985)

It says in the *Kan-fugen-gyo*, "Sakyamuni Buddha is called "Vairocana-Who-Pervades-All-Places...." Did Nichiren use the name of Vairocana to designate the Eternal Buddha? It says in the English Buddhist Dictionary by Soothill, "A of *Avam* is Vairocana's germ word in the Garbha-dhatu; *vam*, that in the Vajra-dhatu. Hence, *avam* includes both. *A-vam-ram-ham-kham* is the highest formula in the Shingon sect. It represents all the elements. It represents not only the corporeal parts of Vairocana but also his Dharma-kaya. *A-vi-ra-hum-kham*, the five syllables of the spell of Vairocana represent the five elements." Kukai writes extensively on *hum*. He breaks it down to *haum*. Nichiren was thoroughly familiar with the complexities of esotericism. Perhaps he wanted to write one mandala which would supersede both the mandalas of esotericism.

**Murano** (August 18, 1985)

*Vairocana* literally means "a thing which shines." It primarily meant the sun, and then the Buddha. It says in the *Kan-fugen-gyo*, Sakyamuni Buddha is called Vairocana, the One Who Pervades All Places. The abode



of the Buddha called Eternally Tranquil Light.” Nichiren never used Vairocana as an epithet of the Buddha because the Shingon Sect identifies Vairocana with Mahavairocana.

Nichiren did not worship Ragaraja or Acalanatha. He even criticized Acalanatha-worship in the *Kitosho*. Acalanatha by no means represents Vajradhatu. Ragaraja does not represent Garbha-dhatu, either. In Nichiren’s time, Acalanatha-worship was popular among the Taimitsu Esoteric Buddhists while Ragaraja-worship was popular among the Tomitsu Esoteric Buddhists. It seems that Nichiren put their bijas, which are not mentioned in the *Lotus Sutra*, to show that both Taimitsu and Tomitsu are under the umbrella of the *Myoho-rengo-kyo*. Nichiren never intended to unite the two mandalas of the Shingon Sect.

## Dai Mandala Gohonzon

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**Pieters** (March 20, 1995)

Please explain the Dai Mandala Gohonzon.

**Murano** (July 20, 1995)

Sakyamuni Buddha did what he had never done before at the beginning of Chapter XI of the *Lotus Sutra*. He produced innumerable Replica-Buddhas of his own from himself, told them to expound what he was going to expound from that moment, and dispatched them to the worlds of the ten quarters: the four quarters, the four intermediate quarters, zenith, and nadir. After he saw them having reached their assigned worlds,

Sakyamuni Buddha expounded the teaching of the One Vehicle, that is the *Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma*. Obedient to their Original Buddha, his Replica-Buddhas expounded the same teaching throughout the universe and as a result the universal validity of the *Wonderful Dharma* was revealed.

Prabhutaratna (Taho), a past Buddha of a world located far to the east, rejoiced at seeing all this. You should bear in mind that a past Buddha, who had already entered Parinirvana, can see, hear, speak, and let his stupa move at his will. When Prabhutaratna entered Parinirvana, his disciples enshrined him in his stupa, and shut the door of the stupa. Since then Prabhutaratna had been sitting in meditation in his stupa with no disciple-attendants. He had wished to expound the Wonderful Dharma by himself during his lifetime, but refrained from it because he thought that the Wonderful Dharma should be expounded by a Buddha whose emanations be the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten quarters to show the universal validity of the Dharma. Prabhutaratna himself had not such Replica-Buddhas, so he had waited for the advent of such a Buddha for so long a time.

Overjoyed with Sakyamuni’s expounding the Wonderful Dharma, Prabhutaratna caused his stupa to travel westwards through the skies of innumerable worlds. The stupa reached the sky below the Saha-world, passed the world from underneath, and stayed in the sky just above Mt. Sacred Eagle, where Sakyamuni Buddha was expounding the *Wonderful Dharma*.

Thereupon Prabhutaratna turned his stupa towards Sakyamuni, and

praised him from within the stupa. The congregation were astonished to hear the voice of a Buddha from within the stupa staying in the sky. They asked Sakyamuni, "Who is in the stupa?". Sakyamuni said that Prabhutaratna was therein. They asked Sakyamuni to open the door of the stupa so that they could see Prabhutaratna. Sakyamuni said that Prabhutaratna had made a vow to open the door of his stupa only when the expounder of the Wonderful Dharma would summon all his emanations to the front of his stupa. The congregation begged Sakyamuni to do so.

Thereupon Sakyamuni issued rays of light from himself to all directions. The light served as a sign of call-up. By the order of their Original Buddha, all the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten quarters came to Mt. Sacred Eagle. Seeing this, Sakyamuni went up to the sky and opened the door of the stupa. Prabhutaratna made a half-seat on his right, and invited Sakyamuni into his stupa. Sakyamuni sat by the right side of Prabhutaratna. It was taken for granted in India that the left seat is upper than the right one. Prabhutaratna took the upper seat because a past Buddha is senior to a present Buddha. Prabhutaratna did not yet know that Sakyamuni was older than he because Chapter XVI of the *Lotus Sutra* was not yet expounded. Sakyamuni took the lower seat with a smile.

The congregation wished to be in the sky high enough to accompany the two Buddhas. Reading their minds, Sakyamuni Buddha raised them up in the sky, and put them in the position of attendants. All the other Buddhas remained sitting on the ground.

Thereupon Sakyamuni addressed the congregation that his Parinirvana day was drawing near, and that he was going to transmit the Wonderful

Dharma to someone. Hearing this, many Bodhisattvas appealed to him for the transmission. Sakyamuni refused their appeal, however, saying that there were proper persons for that. And he issued rays of light from himself as a sign of call-up.

All of a sudden the earth quaked and cracked, and innumerable Bodhisattvas came from underground. To the astonishment of the congregation, those Bodhisattvas exchanged greetings with Sakyamuni Buddha. How strange! The congregation had never heard of them. Sakyamuni addressed the congregation, "I am older than any other Buddhas. All the Buddhas of the past, present and future are my emanations. Those Bodhisattvas who have arrived from underground are my disciples." Here it is revealed that the One Vehicle, that is the Wonderful Dharma, is universally valid not only spatially but also temporally.

Seeing all this, Prabhutaratna was shocked. He felt ashamed of his ignorance of the fact that the Buddha sitting next to him was his Original Buddha. He tried to change the seats, but Sakyamuni checked him, saying, "You are now the State Guest of the World-State of the Eternal Sakyamuni. You are now representing all the Buddhas of the past, present and future." Prabhutaratna understood Sakyamuni, and remained at his seat, motionless.

The Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha is no one else than the Historical Sakyamuni Buddha. Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment and became a Buddha. He was called Sakyamuni because he was the muni (sage) of the Sakya Clan. He had a birthday and Parinirvana day. All this



is a historical fact. But the same Buddha announced in Chapter XVI of the *Lotus Sutra* that he is eternal. He says that he appeared in this world as the Historical Buddha in order to save all living beings. The Eternal Sakyamuni is the name of the Historical Sakyamuni in his eternity. The Historical Sakyamuni is the name of the Eternal Sakyamuni in his historicity. To separate the Eternal Sakyamuni from the Historical Sakyamuni will destroy Buddhism. The fundamental teaching of Buddhism is that a human became a Buddha and that a Buddha was once a man. Christ worshiped God; Mohammed, Allah. But the Buddha worshiped no one but himself in his eternity.

You can become a Buddha provided that you are forever a disciple-Bodhisattva of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha in faith just as Nichiren is forever a disciple-Bodhisattva of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha in faith. You will be allowed to join the Samgha under the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha, who is still now expounding the Wonderful Dharma on Mt. Sacred Eagle. Jodo Buddhism puts Amitabha above Sakyamuni Buddha. Shingon Buddhism establishes Mahavairocana as the Eternal Buddha, not Sakyamuni as that.

You can buy a Buddha-statue and worship it as that of the Eternal Sakyamuni. But how can you tell others that the statue is that of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha? Something must be done to characterize it. Nichiren always carried a small statue of the Buddha with him, and worshiped it. He sometimes advised others to make a set of five statues: the Buddha and the four leading Bodhisattvas to characterize the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha. But to understand the meaning of this set of statues needs an elaborate study of the *Lotus Sutra*. Various Buddhist sects are busy arranging the statues of Buddhas and other Buddhist deities on the

altar according to the tenets of the sects. A Buddha accompanied by Avalokitesvara and Samantabhadra is Amitabha Buddha. A Buddha attended by Surya and Candra is Bhaisajyaguru Buddha. A Buddha attended by the four Bodhisattvas is what Buddha? This is a topic of quiz: Who am I? Scholastic complicacies weakened Japanese Buddhism. People are clever. They just call Buddhas and Buddhist deities "Nonosama" invariably and collectively, and chant the Nembutsu in front of any temple, disregarding the sect difference. What is more interesting to note is that no sect except Nichiren rejects the Nembutsu-chanting before their temples. They make flattering excuses. Tendai identifies the Buddha of Chapter XVI of the *Lotus Sutra* with Amitabha Buddha although such an identification is not mentioned in the sutra. Shingon enlists Sakyamuni Buddha in the four Buddhas under Mahavairocana. Zen sects do not care at all, saying that freedom is Zen.

Nichiren finally gave up idolizing the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha. Instead, he ideographically described the World of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha as his residence, and recommended it for worship. To worship the world of the Buddha means to worship the Buddha in his right position. The "Imperial Palace" alludes to the Emperor. The "White House" stands for the President. This description of the World of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha is called Gohonzon or the Great Mandala.

The fundamental idea of the Great Mandala was revealed in his *Kanjin-honzon-sho*, which he wrote three months before the description of the Great Mandala. It runs:

There is a stupa of treasures in the sky above the Saha World of the

Original Teacher. In the stupa of treasures is enshrined [the core of the sutra, that is, the five characters:] *Myoho Renge Kyo*. By either side of the *Myoho Renge Kyo* sit Sakyamuni Buddha and Prabhutaratna Buddha. Sakyamuni, the World-honored One, is accompanied by the Four Bodhisattvas headed by Visistacaritra. The four Bodhisattvas: Manjusri, Maitreya, [Samantabhadra and Bhaisajjaraja] sit on lower seats as the attendants on Sakyamuni Buddha. All the other Bodhisattvas, major or minor, who are either the disciples of the Historical Sakyamuni or the Bodhisattvas having come from other worlds, look up at the Buddha just as the subjects of a king sit on the ground and look up at nobles and dignitaries beside the throne. The Buddhas of the worlds of the ten quarters sit on the ground to show that they are emanations of Sakyamuni Buddha and that their worlds are manifestations of the world of Sakyamuni Buddha.

Here we see that the Daimoku, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, is made visible, and that the visible Daimoku is used as the symbol of the World of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha.

A symbol represents a thing. A national emblem is the symbol of a country. It represents anything and everything of the country. Without the Olympic flag, the games cannot be called Olympic. The army of the Emperor Gokogon was defeated, but the Emperor was saved because he had his Royal Standard.

When the Daimoku, which is the name of the Dharma by itself, is used as the symbol of the World of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha, it

represents not only the Dharma but also the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha and his Samgha residing in that world. In other words, the Daimoku as the symbol represents the Three Treasures of the *Lotus Sutra*.

The adoption of the Daimoku as the symbol was a great success because it can never be mistaken for the Nembutsu, and because Sakyamuni Buddha mentioned therein can never be mistaken for any other Buddha than the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha.

But here we have a problem. The names of Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna are put side-by-side. This juxtaposition reduces the dignity of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha greatly. He looks like one of the two pages serving a tablet on which the Daimoku is inscribed. There is another problem. If we write the Great Mandala according to the description given in the *Kanjin-honzon-sho* literally, we should put all the Bodhisattvas under Sakyamuni because they are his disciples. Therefore, the right (when we face the Mandala) column of the Mandala under Prabhutaratna would be blank because Prabhutaratna Buddha has no disciple-attendants. In order to keep the balance of the writing, Nichiren moved some Bodhisattvas from the left column to the right one to impress us as though Prabhutaratna had his own disciples. This reinforcement of the right column causes more reduction of the dignity of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha.

In order to recover the seemingly lost dignity of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha, some Nichiren Buddhists once again recommend the worship of the set of One-Buddha-Four-Bodhisattvas statues. But this set of statues fatally lacks the existence of the Daimoku, which is the life of Nichiren

Buddhism. We must say that, without the Daimoku, the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha would become homeless.

## The Eternal Buddha

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### Continente (August 18, 1995)

I have still doubts regarding the equality of the Mandala to a statue of Sakyamuni Buddha. How is it possible not to confuse the Buddha of the Juryo Chapter with the physical appearance of the historical Prince of the Sakya Clan? This is why I find more direct and perfect the Mandala which depicts exactly the Entity of the Eternal Buddha whose very heart contains all the worlds, and therefore depicts perfectly the Supreme Being.

### Murano (February 16, 1996)

I think you are asking me, "I do not understand that the Mandala is equal to a statue of Sakyamuni Buddha. The Buddha of Juryo Chapter cannot be confused with the Historical Sakyamuni Buddha. How is it possible? The Mandala depicts exactly the Entity of the Eternal Buddha. All the worlds are contained in the heart of the Eternal Buddha. Therefore, the Mandala depicts perfectly the Supreme Being. Am I right in saying all this?"

First of all, I do not know who says that the Mandala is equal to a statue of Sakyamuni Buddha. If anyone says so, he is wrong. The Mandala depicts the Pure World of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha. You can see the name Sakyamuni Buddha in the Mandala. He is the Eternal Sakyamuni

Buddha because he is accompanied by his four Bodhisattva-disciples: Jogyo, Muhengyo, Jogyo, and Anryugyo, in the Mandala. But the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha is in reality not different from the Historical Sakyamuni Buddha. The Historical Sakyamuni Buddha announced in the Juryo Chapter that he is eternal. The Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha manifested himself as the Historical Sakyamuni Buddha to save people from suffering. The Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha is the Original Buddha of all the other Buddhas of the worlds of the ten quarters in the past, present and future. All these Buddhas are emanations of the Original Sakyamuni Buddha. He is the Original and Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha. We simply call him the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha or Eternal Buddha.

You can worship a statue of the Buddha as the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha instead of the Mandala. Nichiren carried a small statue of the Buddha with him, and worshiped it as that of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha. But he created the Mandala afterwards to teach others because something must be done to differentiate the statue of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha from that worshiped by those who do not know the originality and eternity of Sakyamuni Buddha.

You can make a set of statues: a Buddha accompanied by four Bodhisattvas, and worship him because a Buddha accompanied by four Bodhisattvas is no one else than the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha. This arrangement of master-and-disciples is never revealed in any other sutra than the *Lotus Sutra*. But this set of statues is still insufficient to represent the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha because the statue of Sakyamuni Buddha is the same in appearance with that worshiped by those who do not know the Juryo Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*.

The most perfect way to represent the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha is to write his name in the depiction of his Pure World. Here the Mandala was



made.

You may ask me, "If the Mandala is the depiction of the Pure World of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha, why is the name Sakyamuni Buddha not put in the center? Since he is the Lord of his Pure World, his name should be placed in the center. The Daimoku is written in the center, instead. Is anything like a monument with the inscription of the Daimoku erected in the center of the Pure World of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha?"

Yes, to the eyes of Nichiren, inspirationally. According to the *Lotus Sutra*, Sakyamuni Buddha and Prabhutaratna (Taho) Buddha are sitting side by side in the stupa hanging in the sky. Don't be surprised at this fantasy. Taho is the representative of all the past Buddhas. The congregation is also staying in the sky below the stupa. All the present Buddhas of the worlds of the ten quarters are sitting on the ground.

Nichiren saw the Daimoku between the two Buddhas in the stupa. The Daimoku literally means "title." *Myoho Renge Kyo* is the title of the *Lotus Sutra*. But when it is placed in the center of the Mandala in the form of *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, it ceases to be merely the title of a book. It has become the Dharma itself, the Highest Teaching of the *Lotus Sutra* that the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha manifested himself as the Historical Sakyamuni Buddha to save people from suffering.

Nichiren furthermore established the Daimoku not only as the Dharma itself but also as the symbol of the Pure World of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha. The Pure World of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha is the Purified Saha World we live in. The Purified Saha World is the residence of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha. The Daimoku is the name plate put on the front door of his residence. The Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha is the King of the Dharma. The Daimoku is the Royal Standard fluttering on the roof of the Palace of the King of the Dharma. The Palace of the King of the

Dharma has all the windows open to us so that we can see who is where. The Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha is represented most perfectly in the Mandala having the Daimoku in the center. Without the Daimoku, he will be mistaken just for one of the present Buddhas by a careless Buddhist.

The existence of the writing of the Daimoku in the center of the Mandala is so important that, even when only the Daimoku is written without any other writing, we still call it *Ippen-shudai-no-gohonzon* or the "Mandala with the Daimoku Only." Because the Daimoku is the symbol of the Pure World of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha, it represents all the Three Treasures of the *Lotus Sutra*: the Buddhas (the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha and his emanation-Buddhas), the Dharma and the Samgha (congregation). A *Gendai-ki* or "O-daimoku Banner" should be regarded as a simplified Mandala. We should see the Buddhas and the Samgha in it. We see a *Gendai-seki* or "O-daimoku Stone Monument" at the entrance of a Nichiren temple. When you see a *Gendai-seki* at the entrance of a temple, you can say that the temple is unmistakably a Nichiren temple. Where there is an O-daimoku banner or an O-daimoku stone monument, there is the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha who manifested himself as the Prince of the Sakya Clan to save people from suffering.

## Dharma Worship

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**Continente** (January 16, 1996)

What does Nichiren Shonin actually mean when he says, "*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* is the True Buddha. Sakyamuni and Taho are his functions. I

have read this in a *Gosho* translated as the “True Entity of Life.”

**Murano** (February 16, 1996)

This is the translation of part of the *Shoho-jisso-sho*. One can define the Buddha from three angles.

1. The Buddha is the one who attained enlightenment by performing the Bodhisattva practices. From this definition, we call him Sambhoga-kaya or the Body of Reward.

2. The wisdom of the Buddha is the Dharma itself. From this definition, we call him Dharma-kaya or the Body of the Dharma.

3. The Buddha is the one who manifests himself in various forms to save people from suffering. From this definition, we call him Nirmana-kaya or the Body of Manifestation. These three aspects of the Buddha are called Tri-kaya or the Three Bodies of the Buddha.

If the Buddha of the *Juryo* Chapter speaks by employing the terminology of the Tri-kaya, he would say:

“I performed the Bodhisattva practices and attained enlightenment, that is to say, I obtained my Sambhoga-kaya. It was a long time ago, in the remotest past, not forty and some years ago as you think. When I became the Buddha, there was no other Buddha than I. All the other Buddhas of the worlds of the ten quarters in the past, present and future are my emanations. I am the Original Buddha of them all. I, the Buddha, who am speaking to you now, am the Nirmana-kaya of the Original Buddha. The Original Buddha should be called Sakyamuni because Sakyamuni is my name. I have no other name than Sakyamuni. I am the Historical Sakyamuni Buddha, the Nirmana-kaya of the Original Sakyamuni Buddha, who is my Sambhoga-kaya. I expound the Dharma. The Dharma is universal in space, eternal in time. My wisdom is the Dharma itself. I shall pass away soon, but the Dharma will remain because it is eternal. I

shall remain forever in my Dharma-kaya. I am the Eternal Buddha. To wit, I am the Original and Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha. You can call me simply the Eternal Buddha.”

Here we see that the Tri-kaya is told of in regard to the singular person of Sakyamuni Buddha. The expression “three bodies” was used figuratively to show the three virtues of the Buddha: practice, wisdom and compassion.

But once the word *kaya* was used, the meaning of the word as a physical existence overwhelmed the figurative use of the word, and the Buddha of the Three-Bodies-in-One came to erroneously disintegrate into three independent Buddhas to destroy the supremacy of Sakyamuni Buddha. Shingon Buddhism made the Dharma-kaya independent, and established Dharma-kaya Tathagata (Buddha) called Mahavairocana. According to Shingon Buddhism, Mahavairocana (Dainichi) Tathagata (Nyorai) is the Original Buddha, who is accompanied by four Buddhas, Sakyamuni being only one of the four.

You quote “*Myoho Renge Kyo* is the True Buddha....” from the translation of the True Entity of Life. The original word of “True Buddha” in the text is *Hombutsu*. *Hombutsu* should be translated as the Original Buddha, not as the True Buddha. We have no idea of “True Buddha” in Buddhism. But “True Buddha” is suitable to the Taisekiji theology because they say that Sakyamuni is a discarded, junk Buddha. Used cars can sell again, but junk cannot. They call Sakyamuni *Datsubutsu*. *Datsu* means to emancipate from suffering, but they interpret it as “to cast off the skin”. They say, “Sakyamuni is now out of use. He is just like the cast-off skin of a snake. He is a discarded junk Buddha. Nichiren is the True Buddha.”

Amitabha Buddhism separated the Sambhoga-kaya from the Buddha of



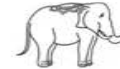
the Three-Bodies-in-One. According to Amitabha Buddhism, Amitabha Buddha is like God; Sakyamuni, like Christ. Amitabha Buddhism has some elements similar to the teachings of Christianity.

The fundamental teaching of Buddhism is that the Buddha was once a man, and that anyone can become a Buddha. You can become a Buddha. But wait. Since you are assured of your Buddhahood, you should be satisfied with that assurance. Nichiren was humble. He was satisfied with the post of the leader of the Samgha of the *Lotus Sutra*. He was glad to serve the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha as a member of the Samgha. He would not like to be called Buddha at all. You should join the Samgha, look up at your Compassionate Buddha, and serve him with your leader, Nichiren Shonin.

**Maltz** (March 7, 1996)

Thank you for your sending me a copy of your answer to the question by Mr. Contiente. It cleared up the most important point in understanding Buddhism. It is that the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha is not different from the Historical Sakyamuni Buddha. I thought that the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha was somehow a "transcendent Original Buddha who surpassed the Historical Sakyamuni Buddha in some mystical way even though the manifestation looks different to the human mind. When Westerners try to grasp Buddhism, they often fall into the patterns that are associated with previous Christian ideas. So, "transcendence" is more of a Christian concept.

## Chapter III. The Komon Ha and Taisekiji Temple



### Nichiren Shoshu Gohonzon

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**Montgomery** (June 28, 1985)

In the Nichiren Shoshu Gohonzon, the word "Nichiren" appears directly below "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" as if there were nine characters instead of seven. Is this the only Gohonzon which does this or do some others do it as well? The Nichiren Shoshu "Dai-Gohonzon" reads, "Na-mu-myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo-nichi-ren." They claim that it represents "the unity of the Law and the Person," thus proving that Nichiren is the Original Buddha.

**Murano** (August 18, 1985)

I think that you are talking about the Gohonzon of Nichiren Shoshu and have seen the Gohonzon written by Hosoi Nittatsu in 1966. Nichiren signed his name somewhere below the Daimoku. When it was put directly under the Daimoku, his signature was written smaller in size or some space was put between them to distinguish the signature from the Daimoku. But in a few cases the signature was written without any space

and directly below the Daimoku. In that case, it looks as if it were written in the form of na-mu-myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo-nichi-ren. Such a case is very rare.

## The Eight Komon Ha Temples

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**Montgomery** (February 6, 1983)

The book, "A History of Nichiren Buddhism in Hawaii" lists Hommonji, Kitayama, as being part of Nichiren-shu. I thought that it belonged to the independent Hommon-shu.

**Murano** (February 17, 1983)

Before 1876, the Nikko Monryu (Branch) had eight head temples: Taisekiji, Kitayama Hommonji, Nishiyama Hommonji, Koizumi Kuonji, Shimojo Myorenji (these five were called Fuji Five Temples), Yanase Jitsujoji in Tagata-gun, Shizuoka-ken, Hota Myohonji in Chiba-ken, and Yoboji in Kyoto. The Nikko Monryu changed its name to Komon-ha in 1876. The Komon-ha changed its name to Hommon-shu in 1899. Taisekiji seceded from Hommon-shu in 1900, and called itself Nichiren-shu-fuji-ha. The Nichiren-shu-fuji-ha changed its name to Nichiren Shoshu in 1912. Hommon-shu was amalgamated into Nichiren-shu in 1941. Yoboji seceded from Nichiren-shu and called itself Nichiren-honshu in 1950. Shimojo Myorenji and Hota Myohonji joined Nichiren-shoshu. Nishiyama Hommonji became an independent temple. Three temples: Kitayama Hommonji, Koizumi Kuonji and Yanase Jitsujoji kept their membership in Nichiren-shu.

## Gonin-shohasho

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**Montgomery** (February 6, 1986)

Did Nikko write the *Fuji Isseki Monto Zonji no Koto* and *Gonin-shohasho*? Or were these works written by his disciples?

**Murano** (February 24, 1986)

It is evident that the *Gonin-shohasho* and the *Fuji-isseki-monto-zonji-no-koto* were not written by Nikko. They were written most probably by Nichijun (1294-1354), a disciple of Nikko. Nichijun was a disciple of Jakusembo Nitcho. Jakusembo Nitcho was a younger brother of Iyoko Nitcho, who was one of the six senior disciples of Nichiren.

## Ita-honzon (Board Mandala)

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**Maltz** (May 25, 1994)

I've included a copy of a letter that I received from an SGI member. The letter makes mention of a book, "Counterfeit Wooden Gohonzon, printed in Japan during the 1950's". Can a copy of this book be obtained today? Even if it's in Japanese only, I love to get a copy if at all possible.

**Murano** (June 1, 1994)

I have sent to you by separate cover a copy of the *Ita-honzon-gisakuron* (Ita-honzon Is A Counterfeit) by Yasunaga Bentetsu. This was

published in 1989, but the materials were based on his own writings with the same title published in 1956. I think that this is the one that you call "*Counterfeit Wooden Gohonzon*, printed in Japan during the 1950's". This is written all in Japanese. It includes some insignificant parts which we do not have to translate for Westerners. The most interesting thing is that this book carries a photograph of the Ita-honzon, which is strictly prohibited from photographing by Taisekiji. Taisekiji itself knows quite well that the Ita-honzon is a counterfeit. It is a waste of time to argue about its credibility. Taisekiji was only once careless when it allowed Kumata Ijo to take a picture of the Ita-honzon. Kumata Ijo had visited Taisekiji to prepare for his writing of a biography of Nichiren. Kumata's *Nichiren Shonin* was published in 1911. The book bears the photograph of the Ita-honzon on its front page. The picture was reproduced in Yasunaga's book.

### *Taisekiji Owaku Kempon Sho*

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**Maltz** (September 6, 1996)

Nichijo, head priest of Kitayama Hommonji (died in 1493) and contemporary of Taisekiji's Nichi-u (the 9th abbot who presented the so-called Ita-mandara to the world) wrote the *Taisekiji Owaku Kempon Sho* (The Insane Revelation of the Original Buddha at Taisekiji). Are the contents worth translating since they attack the claims of Taisekiji at the time when these claims originated, i. e. late 15th century?

**Murano** (October 15, 1996)

The *Taisekiji Owaku Kempon Sho* was not written by Nichijo. It was written by a priest of Kitayama Hommonji around 1860. The name of the writer is unknown. The writer introduced some words of Nichijo in this book. Nichijo says, "Nichi-u carved an Ita-mandara, which had never been seen or heard of. Nichi-u disregarded the true intention of Nikko, the founder of Taisekiji. Nichi-u also created many forged writings to decorate himself." Nichijo was contemporary with Nichi-u. The other parts of the book have nothing to do with the Ita-mandara. This book is now preserved at Myoryoji of the Kempon Hokke Sect, Himeji-shi, Hyogo-ken. It was hand-copied by a priest of Myomanji in 1887.

### **Taisekiji Temple**

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**Maltz** (October 12, 1995)

Will you tell me an outline of the history of Taisekiji?

**Murano** (January 18, 1996)

Nikko (1246-1333) left Minobu, moved to Oishi-ga-hara, where there was his mother's old home, in 1288, and founded Taisekiji there in 1290. He founded another temple called Hommonji at Omosu, Kitayama, in 1298, and spent the rest of his life there. At his deathbed, he transmitted Taisekiji to Nichimoku (1260-1333), and Hommonji to Nichidai (1294-1384).

After Nikko's death, Nichimoku started from Taisekiji with Nichigo



(1272-1353) for Kyoto to convert the Emperor to Nichiren's religion, entrusting Nichido (1283-1341) with the care of the temple. Nichimoku died on his way to Kyoto, and Nichigo returned to Taisekiji only to find that the temple was occupied by Nichido. Nichigo vainly tried to recover the temple, and retired to Hota, where he founded Myohonji sometime between 1342 and 1344.

Nichidai of Hommonji was disliked by Ishikawa Sanetada, the patron of the temple. Nichimyo became the chief priest of the temple, and Nichidai retired to Nishiyama, where he founded Hommonji, the namesake of the temple at Kitayama, in 1343.

Nanjo Tokimitsu followed Nikke (1252-1334), another disciple of Nikko. After Nikke died in 1334, Tokimitsu remodeled his residence at Shimojo into a temple called Myorenji.

Myohonji at Hota succeeded in founding a temple at Koizumi in Fuji District as a stronghold against Taisekiji in 1406. The temple was named Kuonji, the namesake of the temple at Minobu.

Taisekiji, Kitayama Hommonji, Nishiyama Hommonji, Myorenji and Koizumi Kuonji were called the Five Fuji Temples of the Komon Ha or Nikko Monryu.

Nichizon (1265-1345), another disciple of Nikko, was very active in founding temples. He founded Jogyo-in in Kyoto in 1339. He transmitted this temple to Nichi-in. Nichidai (1309-1369, different in kanji from Nichidai of Nishiyama Hommonji), another disciple of Nichizon, complained of the transmission of Jogyo-in to Nichi-in, left the temple, and founded Juhonji in the same city in 1363.

Kuonji at Minobusan was merely a local temple until Nitcho (1422-1500) became the chief priest of the temple in 1462. Through his untiring efforts, Minobusan Kuonji rapidly grew up to become a large temple.

Seeing this, the Five Fuji Temples became nervous.

Nichigen (?-1486) of Nishiyama Hommonji wrote the *Gonin-shohasho-kemmon*, in which the "Nichiren-hombutsu-ron" (the identification of Nichiren with the Buddha) was established for the first time in the history of Nichiren Buddhism. The date of writing is not given. But since a political period called "Kajuji-Hirohashi-Ryoke-Buke-Denso", which existed from 1470 to 1479, was called "this period" in this writing, the date of writing cannot go back before 1470.

The second most important event which characterized the Komon-ha teachings was the publication of the *Hyaku-gojikka-jo*, in which the *Niko-sojo* or "Two Transfer documents" were mentioned. This book was written by Nikkyo (1428-1489-?), at Taisekiji in 1480. Nikkyo was primarily a priest of Juhonji in Kyoto. He was attracted by the Nichiren-hombutsu-ron, and moved to Taisekiji in or before 1480, and became a disciple of Nichi-u (1409-1482), the chief priest of Taisekiji. In those days Nichi-u was friendly with Nichigen of Nishiyama Hommonji.

The "Two Transfer Documents"; *Ikegami Sojo* and *Minobu Sojo*, were forgeries ascribed to Nichiren. In the *Minobu Sojo*, Nikkyo wrote that Nishiyama Hommonji was the right place where Hommon-no-Kaidai should be established. This offended Nichi-u. Nichi-u created the Ita-mandara to claim that Taisekiji was the only temple that received the Dharma directly from Nichiren, and that Taisekiji should be the right place for Hommon-no-Kaidan.

The Nichiren-hombutsu-ron, the Two Transfer Documents and the Ita-mandara are the three pillars which build up the Taisekiji theology. These three pillars were erected during ten years or so. Incidentally, the designation of Nishiyama Hommonji as the right place for Hommon-no-Kaidan is omitted in the explanation of the Minobu Sojo in the English

dictionary published by Nichiren Shoshu International Center.

Nichi-u died in 1482. Nikkyo moved to Hyuga Province (Miyazaki-ken) about 1483. Nichigen of Nishiyama Hommonji died in 1486. Nikkyo returned to Taisekiji in 1489, but soon afterwards moved to Kitayama Hommonji, not to Nishiyama Hommonji.

Taisekiji was included among the temples protected by Lord Imagawa Ujiteru of Suruga Province in 1529. The four other Fuji Temples were not. This shows that Taisekiji was the largest of the Five Fuji Temples at that time.

Jogyo-in and Juhoji in Kyoto were burned down by the Hieizan Monk Army together with nineteen other Nichiren temples in 1536. Nisshin (1508-1576), a priest of Juhonji, persuaded Nichizai, the chief priest of Juhonji, into reconciliation with Jogyo-in, and succeeded in uniting the two temples into a new temple called Yoboji in 1548. Nichizai died in 1555, and Nisshin became the chief priest of Yoboji that year.

Nisshin furthermore attempted to make peace between the other Komon-ha temples. Through his efforts, the priests of all those temples became friendly with each other except Nichi-in, the chief priest of Taisekiji.

Nisshin died in 1576, and Nichi-in died in 1589. Nisshu, who succeeded Nichi-in, was clever. He preferred material prosperity by depending on Kyoto temple subsidy to proud loneliness by sticking to an ideological product. According to the request of Yoboji, he shelved up the Ita-mandara question, and allowed Yoboji to control Taisekiji. He agreed that the next chief priest of Taisekiji would be appointed from among the priests of Yoboji. Nisshu died in 1617, and after that for as long as ninety years from 1617 to 1707, the chief priests of Taisekiji were imported from Yoboji. This change of policy brought a luck. At the request of Yoboji,

Lady Kyo-dai-in, the wife of Lord Hachisuka Yoshishige of Awa Province (Tokushima-ken), dedicated a magnificent Main Hall to Taisekiji with her own land revenue in 1632.

However, the financial power of Yoboji was weakened in the course of time just as that of many other Kyoto temples because the seat of the government of Japan had already been transferred from Kyoto to Yedo.

It was fortunate to Taisekiji that the temple could get in touch with the Tokugawa family. Kofu Tsunatoyo (1663-1713), Lord of Kofu in Kai Province (Yamanashi-ken), was a grandson of the 3rd Shogun Tokugawa Iyemitsu. He married Nijo Hiroko, a lady of Kyoto noble. When they were young, the couple lived in Yedo, and the wife happened to become a believer of Nichi-ei, the chief priest of Jozaiji in Yedo, a temple related to Taisekiji.

In 1707, the post of the chief priest of Taisekiji became vacant, and no more Yoboji priest was to be appointed. Backed up by the wife of Kofu Tsunatoyo, Nichi-ei of Jozaiji became the chief priest of Taisekiji.

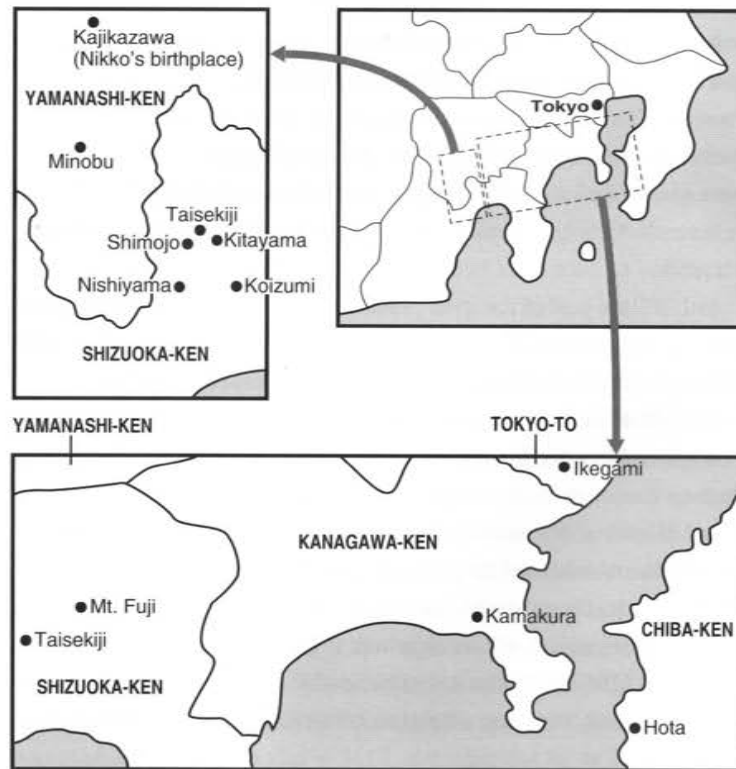
In 1709, Kofu Tsunatoyo became the 6th Shogun, changing his name to Tokugawa Iyenobu. In 1713 he died, and the widow, Ten-ei-in in her dharma-name, dedicated a gorgeous Temple Gate to Taisekiji. Now Taisekiji became a temple connected with the Tokugawa Shogunate. The Ita-mandara was housed deep into the store-house because the Tokugawa relationship had more advertising value than a plank inscription.

Taisekiji claims that Ten-ei-in was a daughter of the Emperor Go-mizuno-o (1596-1680). But it is unbelievable that the wife of the Shogun who was born in 1663 was a daughter of the Emperor who had his birth in 1596.

When the Meiji Era began in 1868, all the temples connected with the Tokugawa family lost power. Taisekiji brought the Ita-honzon to the front



for survival, and fomented absolute exclusionism which characterizes the Taisekiji theology.





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