

Letter to Hōjō Yagenta



WHEN you came to visit me last month, I was sorry that you had to hurry back to your home so quickly.

With regard to this official announcement that has arrived from the Mongol nation, everyone from the ruler on down to the multitude of common people has been thrown into a state of alarm, but no one yet understands why this has happened.

I, Nichiren, having been aware of the situation for some time, have in the past written a work and submitted it for the perusal of the authorities. In that work, I explained that certain portents will first appear, and thereafter disasters will inevitably follow.

In the past, in the first year of the Shōka era [1257], the year with the cyclical sign *hinoto-mi*, on the twenty-third day of the eighth month, when the hour of the dog gives way to the hour of the boar [around 9:00 P.M.], there was a great earthquake. Is this not just such a portent?

The Lotus Sutra speaks of “appearance.”¹ The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai says, “When a spider appears, it means that some happy event is near, and if a magpie chatters, it foretells the coming of a guest.”² And *The Book of Changes*³ says, “Both good and bad fortune are brought about by the process of

change.” How could such fundamental texts as these be in error?

In essence, I explained in the work I submitted to the authorities that they should withdraw their support from the other schools of Buddhism and put all their faith in the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. The source of the downfall facing this land of Japan lies in the evil and erroneous teachings disseminated by the Pure Land, True Word, Zen, and Precepts schools. The leaders of these schools should be summoned to a debate so that the question of the relative worth of the various sutras may be clearly settled.

This matter is of particular concern to you, since you are of the same surname as the regent, the lord of Sagami. If the main branch of the family should face destruction, how could the lesser branches hope to prosper?

You must take steps as quickly as possible to overcome and subdue the Mongol nation and bring peace and security to our land. Those persons who slander the Lotus Sutra are the archenemies of the Buddhas of the three existences of past, present, and future. The Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, and the other deities have abandoned our nation, and that is why this announcement has

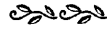
come from the great Mongol Empire. In the future, each and every one of us will be taken prisoner and made the slave of a foreign nation.

This is the warning that I have been so bold as to send to various other persons and that I now send to you.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The eleventh day of the tenth month in the fifth year of Bun'ei [1268], cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-tatsu*

Respectfully presented to the lay priest Yagenta



Background

One of eleven letters of remonstrance, this is addressed to Hōjō Yagenta, a government official and member of the Hōjō family, though his exact relation to the family is unknown. Most probably Yagenta, unlike the other recipients of the eleven letters, had been a follower of Nichiren Daishonin for some time. From the Daishonin's words "When you came to visit me last month, I was sorry that you had to hurry back to your home so quickly," it would seem that Yagenta called upon the Daishonin several times. In a reply

to Yagenta (date unknown), entitled *The Swords of Good and Evil* (I, p. 451), the Daishonin states, "Because I am the votary of the Lotus Sutra, I have suffered all manner of persecution at the hands of the three powerful enemies. How wondrous that you have, nonetheless, become a disciple and a supporter of such a person! There must be some profound reason for our relationship." Yagenta had made an offering of two swords to the Daishonin, and this was the Daishonin's reply.

Notes

1. The first of the ten factors of life revealed in the "Expedient Means" (2nd chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

2. The Daishonin slightly modifies the wording of the passage of *The Profound*

Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.

3. *I Ching*, one of the five Chinese Classics of Confucianism. For centuries, it has been used both as an oracle to predict the future and as a source of wisdom.