Letter to the Superintendent of Daibutsu-den

In the first month of this year, on the eighteenth day, an official announcement arrived from the western barbarians, the great Mongol Empire. The announcement stated in essence: "The emperor of the great Mongol Empire sends this letter to the king of Japan. The great way of governing is vague in its principles, yet there can be no dispute over the fact that it includes the observance of good faith and the cultivation of harmonious relations. . . . [Written in] the third year of the Chih-yüan era [1266], cyclical sign ping-yin, the first month and day."2

If we are to go by this announcement, it is clear that, depending upon what kind of answer is sent, our country of Japan is likely to be the target of attack. All of this has come about just as I, Nichiren, predicted in the work On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land that I submitted to the authorities; there is not the slightest discrepancy.

You must take steps at once to deal with this threat. And you cannot do so if you continue to ignore Nichiren. Do away with self-pride and put your faith in Nichiren. If you allow your present life to go by in vain, it will be too late to regret it later.

I cannot explain this matter in detail here. I have sent letters to the above effect to various other parties. All of you should gather in one place and discuss holding a public debate in order to overcome and subdue the enemy.

Nichiren

The eleventh day of the tenth month in the fifth year of Bun'e [1268]

Respectfully presented to the superintendent of Daibutsu-den

Background

One of eleven letters of remonstrance, this is addressed to the superintendent of Daibutsu-den, whose name is unknown. Daibutsu-den, one of the seven major temples of Kamakura, was so called because it housed a daibutsu, or giant-sized statue of the Buddha Amida. Built in 1243, the temple enshrined an image carved from wood, but in 1252 it was replaced with a large bronze image of Amida. All that remains in existence today is the 11.5-meter high bronze statue of Amida upon its stone base.
Notes

1. The Chinese characters *ping-yin* are read in Japanese as *hinoe-tora*.

2. In late 1266, Khubilai Khan, ruler of the Mongol Empire, sent two emissaries to the capital of the Korean kingdom of Koryŏ. They carried imperial missives from Khubilai Khan, one to the king of Koryŏ, and one to the ruler of Japan. Two emissaries from Koryŏ then joined the Mongol emissaries to deliver the letter addressed to the "king of Japan" calling for Japan to pay tribute to the Mongols or face military invasion. Turned back by rough seas, however, the emissaries aborted their mission to Japan and returned to their respective capitals in early 1267. In the eighth month of 1267, the two Mongol emissaries again traveled to Koryŏ with a new letter from Khubilai. It instructed Koryŏ to send its own emissary to carry the Mongol letter to Japan. That emissary departed on the twenty-third of the ninth month, bearing the letter from Khubilai Khan dated the previous year and a letter from Koryŏ dated the ninth month of 1267, and arrived at Dazaifu, Japan's provincial government headquarters in Kyushu, in the first month of 1268.