If we consider the matter carefully, we find that Japan is also known by the name Mizuho-no-kuni [Land of Vigorous Rice Stalks], as Yamato, as Akitsushima [Dragonfly Island], and as Fusō [Sun Tree]. Made up of sixty-six provinces and two islands, it contains a total of sixty-eight provinces. It is over three thousand ri from east to west and of undetermined length from north to south.

Among the various provinces are the five provinces of the capital region and those that make up the seven circuits or marches.

The five provinces of the capital region are Yamashiro, Yamato, Kawachi, Izumi, and Settsu. The seven circuits are the fifteen provinces of Tōkaidō, the eight provinces of Tōsandō, the seven provinces of Hokurikudō, the eight provinces of San’indō, the eight provinces of San’yōdō, the six provinces of Nankaidō, and the eleven provinces of Saikaidō, which is also known as Chinzei or Dazaifu. These are the provinces of the land.

Coming now to the sovereigns of the land, we find that in the age of the gods there were twelve reigns, those of seven heavenly deities and five earth deities. The first of the seven heavenly deities was Kuni-no-tokotachi-no-mikoto and the seventh was a couple, Izanagi-no-mikoto, the husband, and Izanami-no-mikoto, his wife. The first of the five earth deities was Amaterasu Ōmikami, or the Sun Goddess of the Grand Shrine at Ise, who was the daughter of the deities Izanagi and Izanami. The fifth of the five earth deities was Hiko-nagisa-takeugaya-fuki-aizu-no-mikoto. He was the son of the fourth earth deity, Hiko-hohodemi-no-mikoto; his mother was the daughter of a dragon. These are the five reigns of the earth deities, which with the earlier reigns make up the twelve reigns of the age of the gods.

As for the human sovereigns, there have been perhaps a hundred reigns. The first of the human rulers was Emperor Jimmu, who was the son of Hiko-nagisa. Skipping now, we come to the fourteenth ruler, Emperor Chūai (the father of Hachiman), the fifteenth ruler, Empress Jingū (the mother of Hachiman), and the sixteenth ruler, Emperor Ōjin, son of Chūai and Jingū, who is now known as Great Bodhisattva Hachiman. The line continues down to the twenty-ninth ruler, Emperor Senka. Up to this time, though the teaching of the Buddha already existed in India and China, it had not yet been introduced to Japan.

The thirtieth ruler, Emperor Kimmei, was the son and heir of the twenty-seventh ruler, Emperor Keitai; he ruled for thirty-two years. On the
thirteenth day (cyclical sign kanoto-tori) of the tenth month of the thirteenth year of his reign (the year with the cyclical sign mizunoe-saru [552]), King Syǒngmyǒng, ruler of the kingdom of Paekche, presented to the Japanese court a gilt-bronze statue of Shakya-muni Buddha. It is the image that at present is known throughout Japan by all people, high and low alike, as Amida Buddha.

The memorial accompanying it reads: "Your servant has heard that, of all the ten thousand doctrines, the doctrine of the Buddha is the finest. In dealing with worldly affairs as well, the Buddhist doctrine is most superior. Your Imperial Majesty too should practice it. Therefore with all due respect I have entrusted to my envoy this Buddhist image, the sacred writings, and Buddhist teachers, and present them herewith. I urge Your Majesty to put faith in them."

During the thirty and more years that made up the reigns of the three rulers, Emperors Kimmei, Bidatsu, and Yǒmei, however, no reverence was paid to Buddhism. Among the various things that happened during that period, there were strange and unusual occurrences in the heavens and on earth much like those we see in our own time, though those we witness today are far worse by comparison.

From the time of the thirty-third ruler, Emperor Sushun, Buddhism came to be honored by the people of the country, and in the time of the thirty-fourth ruler, Empress Suiko, it flourished greatly.

At that time the schools known as the Three Treatises and the Establishment of Truth schools were first introduced. This Three Treatises school represents the first school of Mahayana doctrine to make its appearance in India, in China, and in Japan, and hence may be said to be the parent of all the Buddhist schools.

In the reign of the thirty-sixth sovereign, Empress Kögyoku, the Zen school was introduced, and in that of the fortieth sovereign, Emperor Temmu, the Dharma Characteristics school. In the reign of the forty-fourth ruler, Empress Genshō, the Mahāvairochana Sutra was first brought to Japan, and in that of the forty-fifth ruler, Emperor Shōmu, the Flower Garland school was widely propagated. In the reign of the forty-sixth sovereign, Empress Köken, the Precepts and Lotus schools were introduced, but of these two, only the Precepts teachings were widely propagated, while those of the Tendai Lotus school were not.

In the reign of the fiftieth sovereign [Emperor Kammu], there lived a sage named Saichō. He selected the Lotus school as his own, and on that basis proceeded to criticize the teachings of the six schools of Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, and Flower Garland. In addition, having learned of the existence of the Mahāvairochana school3 in China, he journeyed to China and there received instruction in the teachings of four schools, those known as the Lotus, True Word, Zen, and Mahayana Precepts. On his return to Japan, however, he did not propagate the teachings of the Zen school, but only those of the Lotus and Precepts schools.

He deleted the word "school" from the term "True Word school," but gave permission for the priests of the seven major temples of Nara to take part in the True Word anointment ceremony. The ordinary people of the time, however, not being familiar with the facts of the matter, supposed that when Saichō was in China, he made a thorough study of the Lotus school, but did not become thoroughly familiar with the teachings of the True Word school.

During the same reign [that of Emperor Kammu], a priest named Kīkai
journeyed to China and there studied the teachings of the True Word school. He did not return to Japan during Emperor Kammu’s reign, however, but in the following reign, that of the fifty-first sovereign, Emperor Heizei. In the time of the fifty-second sovereign, Emperor Saga, on the nineteenth day of the first month in the fourteenth year of the Kōnin era [823], the year with the cyclical sign mizunotou, Tō-ji temple was presented to Kūkai to be the place of practice for the True Word school, the temple being given the name Gokoku Kyō’ō-in [Temple for the Defense of the Nation through the King of Doctrines]. It was one year after the death of the Great Teacher Dengyō.

In the reign of the fifty-fourth sovereign, Emperor Nimmyō, the Reverend Ennin journeyed to China and there studied the teachings of both the Lotus and True Word schools and brought them back to Japan. In the reign of the fifty-fifth sovereign, Emperor Montoku, during the Ninju and Saikō eras [851–57], Ennin wrote his Commentary on the Diamond Crown Sutra and his Brief Commentary on the Susiddhikara Sutra, making up fourteen volumes in all, which, along with [Shan-wu-wei’s] Commentary on the Meaning of the Mahāvairocana Sutra, constitute the three basic texts of the True Word school. He also established Sōji-in temple on Mount Hiei for the propagation of the True Word school teachings, which began on Mount Hiei at this time.

Since the propagation of the True Word school had thus been authorized on Mount Hiei, Ennin, who was now chief priest there, studied and taught both the Lotus and True Word doctrines. However, because he declared that “the Lotus school is comparable to the moon, while the True Word school is comparable to the sun,” many people surmised from this that the True Word school was somewhat superior. But the chief priest himself studied and taught both doctrines, and therefore most of the priests of Mount Hiei did likewise.

During the same reign, a man named Reverend Enchin journeyed to China and there studied both the Lotus and True Word schools. He returned to Japan in the second year of the Ten’an era [858] of Emperor Montoku’s reign.

This man, when he was in Japan, not only made a thorough study of both the Lotus and True Word teachings under Gishin, the first chief priest of Mount Hiei, under Enchō, the second chief priest, under the Superintendent Kōjō, and under the third chief priest, Ennin, and others, but he also studied the True Word doctrines of Tō-ji temple. After he went to China, he completed his mastery of the Lotus and True Word teachings there. He is the man who is now looked up to as the founder of the Lotus and True Word teachings of the Onjō-ji temple line, the Great Teacher Chishō.

Above is an account of the four great teachers [Saichō, the Great Teacher Dengyō; Kūkai, the Great Teacher Kōbō; Ennin, the Great Teacher Jikaku; and Enchin, the Great Teacher Chishō].

All in all, in Japan there are eight branches within the True Word school. The five branches allied with Tō-ji temple regard the Great Teacher Kōbō as their founder. The three branches associated with the Tendai school regard the Great Teacher Jikaku as their founder.

The eighty-first sovereign was Emperor Antoku. His father was the eldest son of the Retired Emperor Takakura; his mother was Kenreimon’in, the daughter of the Grand Minister of State [Taira no Kiyomori]. On the twenty-fourth day of the third month in the first year of the Genryaku era [1184], the year with the cyclical sign
This ruler lost his life in the sea off the island of Yashima. He was attacked by the forces of the Shogun Minamoto no Yoritomo and obliged to become food for the fish of the sea.

The eighty-second sovereign [Emperor Gotoba] was later known as the Retired Emperor of Oki. He was the third son of Emperor Takakura. He ascended the throne in the first year of the Bunji era [1185], cyclical sign hineuma.

The eighty-third sovereign [Emperor Tsuchimikado], who was the eldest son of the Retired Emperor of Oki, was later known as the Retired Emperor of Awa. He succeeded to the throne in the second year of the Kennin era [1202].

The eighty-fourth sovereign [Emperor Juntoku], who was later known as the Retired Emperor of Sado, was the second son of the Retired Emperor of Oki. He succeeded to the throne on the twenty-sixth day of the second month in the third year of the Jōkyū era [1221], cyclical sign kanoto-mi. In the seventh month of the same year he was exiled to the island of Sado.

These three rulers, father and sons, the eighty-second, eighty-third, and eighty-fourth sovereigns, were all attacked by Hōjō Yoshitoki, a retainer of the General of the Right [Minamoto no Yoritomo] in Kamakura.

Here I, Nichiren, would like to raise a very important question. The being known as the Buddha is the ruler of the threefold world, the teacher, the sovereign, and the parent of the great heavenly king Brahmā, the devil king of the sixth heaven, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the wheel-turning sage kings, and all other rulers. All the rulers of the threefold world are apportioned their general territories and special territories by this Shakyamuni Buddha, and through him they become rulers of these lands. Therefore Brahmā, Shakra, and the others all fashion wooden statues or paintings of this Buddha and pay reverence to them.

If even for an instant they should turn their backs on him, then the Lofty Terrace upon which Brahmā stands would collapse, Shakra's palace Joyful to See would crumble, and the crowns of the wheel-turning kings would fall to the ground.

The beings known as gods likewise are honored and revered as though they were living embodiments of the deceased rulers of the various lands. To the rulers and inhabitants of these various lands they are like fathers and mothers, like sovereigns, like teachers. If even for a moment one should turn against them, there would be no more peace and safety in the land. But so long as one honors them, the land will be spared from the three calamities and will escape the seven disasters, its inhabitants will not be troubled by sickness but will live long lives; and in future existences they will be reborn as human or heavenly beings, as followers of the three vehicles, or as Buddhhas.

Our country of Japan is foremost in the entire continent of Jambudvipa, superior to India and China, a land surpassing all the other eighty thousand lands! I say this because, according to The Record of the Western Regions, although the Buddhist teaching of India prevails in some seventy or more Indian states, the other states are all given over to non-Buddhist beliefs.

The Buddhist temples of China number 108,040, but the temples here in our country number 171,037. In size our country, in comparison to India and China, is no bigger than the island of Ōshima of Izu when compared to Japan as a whole. And yet in the number of temples we far surpass both India and China. Moreover, in those countries some of the lands are dedicated to the Mahayana teachings, others to the Hinayana teachings, and even
those adhering to Mahayana teachings are all following the teachings of provisional Mahayana. Here in Japan, however, every temple studies one or the other of the eight or ten schools of Buddhism, and every family and every household reads and recites the Mahayana scriptures. In India and China, only one person in a thousand heeds Buddhist teachings. But in our country of Japan, not a single person follows non-Buddhist teachings.

Moreover, our gods include first of all, the Sun Goddess; second, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman; and third, Mountain King and the other deities of the three thousand and more shrines. Day and night they guard our land; morning and evening they watch over our nation. Furthermore, the Sun Goddess is worshiped in the imperial palace, where her form is reflected in the sacred mirror kept in the court ladies’ quarters, while it is reported that Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, having abandoned his sacred shrine, now resides on the head of the ruler of the nation.

But if this nation enjoys the protection of the Buddha and the watchfulness of the gods, then why were its rulers such as Emperor Antoku, the Retired Emperor of Oki, the Retired Emperor of Awad, and the Retired Emperor of Sado attacked by those who for generations in the past had been their followers, and why did they suffer death or exile to distant islands, or become angry spirits, or fall into a great hell?

When even the smallest Buddhist ceremony is performed at Mount Hiei, the seven major temples of Nara, Tō-ji, Onjō-ji, or any of the other 171,037 temples and mountain monasteries of the land of Japan, prayers are in all cases offered for “the continuance of heaven, the endurance of earth, and the peace and well-being of the imperial person.” In addition, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman specifically took a great vow to guard and protect the supreme rulers. Thus, in the reign of the forty-eighth sovereign, he entered the person of Empress Takano and announced: “In our nation since the time it began, no subject has ever been able to assume the position of ruler. Those who ascend the imperial throne must invariably belong to the line descended from the Sun Goddess.” And in addition, the great deity declared through the person of the priest Gyō-kyō: “I vow to guard and protect a hundred rulers.”

It follows, therefore, that the hundred rulers beginning with Emperor Jimmu and on down should never suffer any harm to their imperial persons, regardless of what might happen, and no one should be capable of overthrowing their rule.

It is said that a bodhisattva who is destined to succeed a Buddha in a future existence will never have his life cut short, and a sage never dies an untimely death. How is it, then, that these four rulers I have mentioned were not only driven from the throne and deprived of their kingdom, but were forced to give up their lives to the sea or to be exiled to one island or another? Did the Sun Goddess not enter into the imperial person? What happened to Great Bodhisattva Hachiman’s vow to protect a hundred rulers?

One should further note that in the reign of Emperor Antoku, Myōun, the chief priest of Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei, was relied upon as a teacher for the entire land. The Grand Minister of State and all the members of his family submitted a petition to the chief priest, saying: “Just as Kōfuku-ji temple serves as the clan temple for the Fujiwara clan and Kasuga Shrine serves as the clan deity for the Fujiwaras, so we request that Enryaku-ji temple be designated the clan temple of the Taira clan and Hie Shrine be
designated the clan deity of the Tairas."

At that time on Mount Hiei the chief priest Myōun and three thousand priests in his assembly carried out the great ceremony of the five altars.\(^{17}\) All the different branches of the Taira clan, from the Grand Minister of State on down, paid reverence to the Honored Victorious dhārani\(^{18}\) and to the wisdom king Immovable, offerings were made to the various temples and mountain monasteries, and no great ceremony or secret ritual [of the True Word teachings] was left undone.

Again at the time of the Jōkyū Disturbance, Jien, the chief priest of the Tendai school; the prelate of Ninna-ji temple; and the high-ranking priests of Onjō-ji and other temples joined together in carrying out all sorts of great ceremonies and secret rites that had been brought to Japan. In the third year of the Jōkyū era [1221], cyclical sign kanoto-mi, on the nineteenth day of the fourth month, the fifteen ceremonies were performed.

The chief priest of the Tendai school conducted the one-character gold-wheel ceremony.\(^{19}\) On the second day of the fifth month the prelate of Ninna-ji temple performed the ceremony of the wisdom king Craving-Filled of the wish-granting method\(^{20}\) in Shishinden Palace. And on the eighth day of the sixth month the prelate conducted the ceremony of the Protection Sutra.\(^{21}\) The above ceremonies were carried out by forty-one of the most renowned priests. This was the second time that these fifteen major ceremonies were conducted in Japan.

The Acting Administrator [Hōjō Yoshitoki] had no knowledge of these religious ceremonies, and he himself conducted no ceremonies to bring about the defeat of his opponents. Indeed, even if he had conducted such ceremonies, he could not have carried out any that would have matched the various rites of his opponents or competed with them in terms of the number of persons involved.

One side had the power of Buddhist ritual and the authority vested in the ruler, who was the sovereign of the nation, guarded and protected by the various rulers of the threefold world. On the other side, a subject of the Japanese nation, barely watched over by a few paltry spirits, whose family for reign after reign had acknowledged fealty to the sovereign, for generation after generation had been retainers to the Minamoto family. If someone wielding the ruler’s authority should attack one of his subjects, it would be as if a hawk were seizing a pheasant, a cat devouring a mouse, a snake swallowing a frog, a lion slaughtering a rabbit. Why need one so hastily call upon the gods of heaven and the deities of the earth, or startle the Buddhas and bodhisattvas? When a lion, the king of beasts, seizes a rabbit, does it require such intense effort? When a hawk devours a pheasant, must it pray for help in doing so? When one is a mighty ruler, he requires no prayers whatsoever, but may kill one of his subjects as easily as a great quantity of water puts out a little fire or a great wind banishes a small cloud.

But, as though adding dry wood to a fire that is already roaring or a heavy rain to a river already mighty, to the power vested in the ruler was added the performance of these great ceremonies, so that the life force and spirit of Minamoto no Yoritomo and Hōjō Yoshitoki would be plucked out as though by the gods Brahmā and Shakra themselves. It was as though one were attacking a person already drunk on old wine, or as though a snake were drawing out the life of a frog. The lives and the personal and family names of Yoritomo and Yoshitoki were inscribed on paper and prayers were offered beseeching the honored ones and the gods to trample them underfoot. Sure-
ly that should have been more than enough to insure their destruction!

Why was it, then, that before a year or a month had passed, indeed, in a matter of a mere day or two, the imperial forces were defeated? Those who are rulers in lands where the Buddhist doctrines prevail should consider this matter with great care, and for the sake of their fate in future existences, should give thought to just what kinds of prayers they offer up.

Because I, Nichiren, have been so troubled by this question, from the time I was a young man I have studied both the exoteric and the esoteric teachings and have examined all the sutras of the various schools, sometimes doing so under the guidance of others, sometimes pursuing my own investigations, until I have come to understand the reason.

To examine one's face one has only to look in a clear mirror, and to understand the rise and fall of a nation's fortunes, there is no mirror more revealing than that provided by the Buddhist teachings.

When one examines the various Mahayana sutras such as the Benevolent Kings Sutra, Golden Light Sutra, Sovereign Kings Sutra, Protection Sutra, Nirvana Sutra, and Lotus Sutra, one sees that there are cases in which, by adhering to Buddhist teachings, a nation may prosper and its people enjoy long life, and others in which, while likewise adhering to Buddhist teachings, the nation is brought to ruin and its people's lives are cut short. It is comparable to the case of water, which is capable of floating a boat, but is also capable of capsizing it. Or it is like the five kinds of grain, which at times nourish human life but at other times may injure it.

Little waves and a slight wind can hardly do harm to a large ship, but high waves and strong winds can easily overturn a small ship. Similarly, slight irregularities in the secular rule of the sovereign are like little waves and a slight wind and can do little harm to a great nation or a great man. But errors in the application of the Buddhist teachings, like high waves and strong winds that overturn a small ship, can without doubt bring about the destruction of the nation.

The Buddha predicted that after he had passed away, in the latter age to follow, there would be evil teachings and evil persons who would destroy the nation. But though they might attempt to destroy the Buddhist teaching as well, they could never do so.

Though all the grass and trees in the major world system should be used as fuel in an attempt to burn down Mount Sumeru, one could never burn it down. But when the time comes for the kalpa of decline, then a flame no bigger than a soybean will break out at the foot of Mount Sumeru and burn the entire mountain. And the same kind of thing, said the Buddha, applies to the Buddhist teachings.

They will not be destroyed by evil persons, non-Buddhist teachers, the heavenly devil Pāpiyas, or wielders of the five transcendental powers. Rather it will be those who appear to be Buddhas or who appear to be arhats who possess the six transcendental powers, monks who observe the precepts, wrapping their bodies in the three robes permitted by monastic discipline and holding a begging bowl reverently before their eyes, high-ranking monks whose renown is like a great wind sweeping over the grass and trees—these it will be who will destroy the correct teaching of the Buddha.

When that time comes, the Buddha predicted, Brahmā, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings, angered by these events, will cause great changes in the heavens and portents on the earth to occur as a warning. And if these warnings are not
heeded, they will see that the seven disasters break out within the nation. Parents, siblings, ruler and subject, and the mass of common people will attack one another with great fury and, as if they were the owl that eats its own mother or the hakei beast that kills its own father, they will bring ruin upon their own nation, and in the end it will be attacked by enemy states from abroad.

Now I, Nichiren, use the sacred teachings of the Buddha’s lifetime as a bright mirror in which to observe the situation in this country of Japan. And this mirror reveals that without a doubt there are persons here who are enemies of the nation and enemies of the Buddha.

Among the sacred teachings of the Buddha’s lifetime, the Lotus Sutra is not only a bright mirror but a divine mirror. A bronze mirror will reflect the form of a person but it will not reflect that person’s mind. The Lotus Sutra, however, reveals not only the person’s form but that person’s mind as well. And it reveals not only the mind; it reflects, without the least concealment, that person’s past actions and future as well.

The seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra states: “After the Thus Come One has passed into extinction, this person will know the sutras preached by the Buddha, their causes and conditions and their proper sequence, and will preach them truthfully in accordance with principle. As the light of the sun and moon can banish all obscurity and gloom, so this person as he advances through the world can wipe out the darkness of living beings.”

The meaning of this passage is that a person who presumes to expound even one word or phrase of the Lotus Sutra must have a very clear understanding of the relative profundity of the various sacred teachings of the Buddha’s lifetime and of their proper sequence. The case is comparable to a calendar for a year with its 360 days: if there is a mistake in the numbering of even one day, then all the other days in the calendar will be thrown off. Or it is like the thirty-one syllables that make up a poem: if even one word or syllable is wrong or out of place, then the thirty-one syllables will not combine to form a poem.

And in the same way, though one may read and recite only one sutra, if one is confused or mistaken regarding the sequence in which the sutras were preached, beginning with that expounded at the Buddha’s place of enlightenment and ending with that preached at the very end when he lay between the sal trees, or if one does not understand their relative profundity, then, though guilty of none of the five cardinal sins, one will fall into the hell of incessant suffering, and the lay believers who rely upon such a person’s guidance will likewise fall into the great citadel of the Avichi hell.

How much worse is the situation, then, when a wise man appears on the scene who fully understands the relative merit and profundity of the various sacred teachings of the Buddha’s lifetime. At that time certain priests, handing on confused and mistaken doctrines inherited from the founders of their respective schools, become national teachers or teachers to important families and, distressed at the thought that their own shortcomings may be brought to light or that they may be despised by others, they proceed to slander the above-mentioned wise man to the ruler of the nation, or tempt others to speak ill of him. When that happens, the heavenly deities who guard and protect the nation will rain down destruction upon it like a fierce wind tearing the leaves of the flimsy plantain or great waves overturning a small boat.

The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra,
referring to sutras by name and by the period in which they were preached, makes clear that all the sutras expounded from the time of the Buddha's first preaching at the place of enlightenment up to the time of the Wisdom sutras are works in which the Buddha had "not yet revealed the truth."

The Nirvana Sutra was the last work expounded by the Buddha. It, like the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, makes clear that, of the various teachings set forth by the Buddha during the fifty years following his attainment of enlightenment, those preached in the first forty and more years are sutras embodying erroneous views, while it refers to the Lotus Sutra as its lord and sovereign.

In the Lotus Sutra itself, Shakyamuni Buddha makes a definitive pronouncement to the effect that the Lotus Sutra is supreme among the sutras he has preached, now preaches, and will preach. And Many Treasures and the Buddhas of the ten directions added the weight of their testimony to this pronouncement before returning to their original lands.

In India the twenty-four successors to Shakyamuni's teachings merely propagated the Hinayana or provisional Mahayana doctrines and did not expound the true principles of the Lotus Sutra. And in Japan, though there were persons such as Bodhisattva Gyōki or the Reverend Ganjin who were familiar with the principles of the Lotus Sutra, they did not work to propagate them.

In China the teachers who led the ten schools of Buddhism of northern and southern China did not in their minds truly understand the relative superiority and inferiority of the various Buddhist teachings, and in preaching them, they were confused as to which were of true profundity. Similarly, Chi-tsang of the Three Treatises school, Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school, and Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school were confused in their minds and misled in their preaching. Because they were men who were firm in their aspiration for the way, in the end they set aside their own fame and reputation and gave allegiance to the principles expounded by T'ien-t'ai. But whether the power of their repentance was sufficient to free them from the sufferings of birth and death, or whether, their sin of slandering the Law being weighty and their power of repentance slight, they in the end fell into hell like King Ajātashatru or the Scholar Vimalakirti, it is impossible to say.

All the True Word teachers agree in claiming that the three Tripiṭaka Masters Shan–wu–wei, Chin–kang–chih, and Pu–k'ung were fifth or sixth in the line of succession from the Thus Come One Mahāvairochana, and the fundamental teachers of the principle of the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form. But I, Nichiren, make so bold as to declare that they are the founders of the line of those who steal the Law, the fundamental teachers of thieving persons!

When these men came from India to China, they brought with them the Mahāvairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras. These sutras are not only inferior to the Flower Garland, Wisdom, and Nirvana sutras, but in comparison to the Lotus Sutra they are seven times inferior! One has only to look at the sutra texts themselves to see that this is clearly and patently so.

But when these men arrived in China and looked at the thirty volumes of writings by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, his Great Concentration and Insight and other works, they were shocked and racked their brains, for they realized that unless they could match such excellence, they could hardly hope to propagate the sutras they had brought
with them, and if they claimed that these sutras were superior in nature, this would be an obvious lie.

Pondering what to do, they decided to perpetrate a great deception. They took the thirty-one chapters of the Mahāvairochana Sutra and placed these side by side with a combination of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra and the three chapters of the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra. They claimed that both the Mahāvairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra are alike in embodying one of the three mysteries of body, mouth, and mind, namely, the mystery of mind. But they pointed out that the Mahāvairochana Sutra also includes mudras, which express the mystery of the body, and mantras, which express the mystery of the mouth. They therefore referred to the Lotus Sutra as an abbreviated expression of the truth and the Mahāvairochana Sutra as a broadened or expanded expression of it.

[And in reference to the Buddha’s declaration that, “Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand”], they declared that the Mahāvairochana Sutra does not fall into the category of sutras “I have preached,” of those “I now preach,” or of those “I will preach,” thus making it an equal of the Lotus Sutra and surmounting the difficulties posed by the Buddha’s pronouncement on the three categories of sutras. They then pointed to the fact that the Mahāvairochana, unlike the Lotus Sutra, includes mudras and mantras and used this as a reason for deprecating the Lotus Sutra, and on the basis of these assertions they established the True Word school.

They may be likened to the three women of antiquity who became royal consorts and thus brought about the downfall of the three rulers. This is what the ninth volume of the Nirvana Sutra, a work that is concerned with the propagation of the Lotus Sutra, means when it predicts that after the Buddha has passed away, evil monks will work to destroy the correct Law, and that they will be comparable to women.27

For this reason, the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei was at one point bound with seven cords of iron and hauled before Yama, the lord of hell. On that occasion, he was barely able to return to the land of the living. When he died a second time, however, it is recorded that the skin on his body turned black and the bones all became exposed, which was an indication that he would fall into the hell of incessant suffering. For it is clearly indicated in the sacred teachings of the Buddha’s lifetime that if, after a person dies, his skin turns black, this means that he will fall into hell.

From this we may also be certain that Chin-kang-chih and Pu-k’ung met with a similar fate. Though these men appeared to renounce their earlier teachings and admit their error, it would seem that their repentance was not truly deep or sincere. But the True Word teachers of the present time seem to know nothing of these matters. What has been said here also serves to explain why the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung of the T’ang dynasty came to such an unfortunate end.

In Japan Kōbō, Jikaku, and Chishō studied and transmitted this slander without either themselves realizing it or others suspecting it. For a time the members of the [Tendai] Lotus school debated and argued with them over the matter. But the Tendai school gradually declined, and in the period of Myōun, the fifty-fifth chief priest of Mount Hiei, who was active during the reign of the eighty-first sovereign, Emperor Antoku, and on, Mount Hiei became wholly dedicated to the teachings of the True Word school.

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The sixty-first chief priest, the Acting Administrator of Priests Kenshin, while having secured the name of chief priest of the Tendai school, not only shifted his allegiance to the True Word school, but later abandoned both the Lotus Sutra and True Word doctrines and became a disciple of Hōnen, whose teachings are utterly slanderous of the Law.

The eminent Administrator of Priests Jien, who led the prayers for the defeat of the Hōjō forces at the time of the Jōkyū Disturbance, held the post of chief priest of Mount Hiei four times, as the sixty-second, sixty-fifth, sixty-ninth, and seventy-first chief priest, and was the religious teacher of the Retired Emperor of Oki.

All these men once after another acted as vessels to receive the wisdom water of the True Word teachings set forth by the Tripitaka Masters Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung and by Jikaku, Chishō, and the others. Moreover, stealing the title of chief priest of the Tendai school, they took control of all the domains dedicated to the Lotus Sutra, became head of the three thousand priests of Mount Hiei, and acted as religious teacher to the nation. Following the True Word teachings, which are founded on the Mahāvairochana Sutra and are seven times inferior to the Lotus Sutra, they believed them to be eight times superior. Men such as these mistake heaven for earth, the common people for the sovereign. They not only mistake mere stones for jewels, but, faced with jewels, call them stones.

Persons such as these are not only the deadly enemies of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, and of Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions, but they snatch out the eyes of all living beings, close the gates leading to the three good paths of existence, and open the way to the three evil ones. Why should Brahmā, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and the other heavenly gods and benevolent deities not send down punishment on them? Why should they guard and protect the lay believers who honor such persons? Why should the Sun Goddess, who dwells within the women's quarters of the imperial palace, or Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, who has vowed to guard and protect a hundred rulers, remain faithful to their vows to protect the nation?

Ever since I became aware of the reason for this situation, moved by feelings of pity and compassion, I have explained the matter in no uncertain terms to all my followers who are qualified to receive such information, so that knowledge of it has gradually spread until it has even reached the ears of the ruler of the nation. The ruler should be a companion to reason and an enemy of what is wrong. But somehow he seems to have given ear to the slanderous reports of others and casts aside the advice that I alone give him.

In China the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai was hated by the priests of the northern and southern schools of Buddhism. But because he enjoyed the favor of two rulers of the Ch'en and Sui dynasties respectively, he did not have to face widespread animosity from others.

Here in Japan, the Great Teacher Dengyō was slandered by the leaders of the seven major temples of Nara. But because his advice was heeded by three sovereigns, Emperors Kammu, Heizei, and Saga, the people who hated him were unable to do him harm.

Now not only am I, Nichiren, faced by the enmity of the priests of the 171,037 temples of Japan, but the ruler of the nation likewise refuses to heed my advice, so that the common people hate me more intensely than they would an enemy of their own parents, more fiercely than they would a deadly
foe. As a result, I have twice been sent into distant exile, and once came near to having my head cut off. I face greater animosity than that directed at the monk Universal Practice in the Latter Day of the Law of the Buddha Great Adornment, when he alone was opposed by four other monks and an assembly of sixty-eight hundred thousand million nayutas of persons; the situation is direr than that in the Latter Day of the Law of the Buddha Lion Sound King, when the monk Superior Intent and his countless disciples attacked the monk Root of Joy. The monk Realization of Virtue was a target of attack, and the bodhisattva Never Disparaging had to endure sticks and staves. But there were limits to what they were called upon to bear, and I do not believe that their trials could have been any greater than mine.

If by some remote chance it should be true that I, Nichiren, am the votary of the Lotus Sutra, then in their next existence the people of this country of Japan are destined to the hell of incessant suffering. And during their present existence they will see their nation overthrown and seized by invaders from another country, as happened to Emperors Hui-tsung and Ch’in-tsung in China and was said to have been the fate of King Udayana and King Krita of India. And the other people of the nation will without doubt be stricken with white leprosy or black leprosy or various other grave maladies.

If, however, that does not happen, I, Nichiren, am not in fact the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Then in my present existence I will suffer from white leprosy or black leprosy or other grave maladies, and in my next existence will, like Devadatta and Kokālika, fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering.

When an asura demon shot arrows at the sun and moon, they turned around in midair and pierced him in the eye. When dogs bark at the lion, king of beasts, their own bellies burst open.28 King Virūdhaka, who killed members of the Buddha’s Shākya tribe, was swallowed up in a great fire in the midst of the river. Devadatta, who wounded the Buddha and caused him to bleed, was burned by the flames of the Avichi hell while still alive. Moriya, who burned the gilt-bronze statue of Shakyamuni Buddha, was felled by the arrows of the four heavenly kings. The lay priest Taira no Kiyomori, who burned down Tōdai-ji and Kōfu-ji temples, while still in his present existence was stricken with a disease that burned up his body.29

All these people committed serious offenses, but these are small in comparison to what has been done to Nichiren. If they suffered such a fate because of their small offenses, what immediate punishment must await those who have committed the great offense [of persecuting Nichiren]?

I am delighted to think that, trusting in what is written in the sutra, I am living in the fifth five-hundred-year period, when we may expect to see the widespread propagation of the Lotus Sutra. But I grieve that this is a period when “quarrels and disputes will arise”30 and this nation of ours will follow the path of the asuras, the path of anger and contention.

The lay priest Taira no Kiyomori and Minamoto no Yoritomo, leaders of the Taira and Minamoto clans respectively, have from the first fought one another like so many dogs and monkeys.31 Because the Tairas attacked Yoritomo, a man of lower station and little good fortune, in the end the entire clan of the lay priest, the sworn enemies of the Minamotos, were destroyed. And on top of that the ruler, Emperor Antoku, who was guilty of no offense, was doomed to drown in the western sea, a most pitiful event.

And I, Nichiren, the envoy of
Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, of Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions, though guilty of not the slightest secular offense, have not only been forced to face the enmity of the entire population of the country, but in addition have twice been condemned to exile, and have been paraded through the streets of Kamakura in broad daylight as though I were an enemy of the state.

And on another occasion the little retreat where I was living, where I had enshrined a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha as the object of devotion, and where I stored the texts of the various sutras, was attacked and destroyed, and the statue of the Buddha and sutra texts were not only trampled upon, but thrown into the mud and filth. And a scroll of the Lotus Sutra, which I had placed in the breast of my robe, was snatched forth and I was mercilessly beaten over the head with it. These heinous crimes were carried out not because of any ancient enmity harbored against me or because of any offense I had recently committed, but solely because I worked to propagate the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren turns his face to the heavens and pronounces these words: Examining the “Introduction” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, I see that Brahmā, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the dragon kings and asuras, the various beings of the two worlds and the eight groups, and the gods of countless different lands gathered together [on Eagle Peak]. And when they heard the Buddha declare that the Lotus Sutra is supreme among the sutras he has preached, now preaches, and will preach, they vowed that they too, like the boy Snow Mountains, would offer up their bodies, and, like Bodhisattva Medicine King, were prepared to burn their arms in the service of the Buddha. At that time, when Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, in the presence of Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions, exhorted each of them, saying, “Now in the presence of the Buddha let him come forward and speak his vow,” the members of the three assemblies at two places, as though propelled by a favorable wind, spoke in unison in a loud voice, declaring, “We will respectfully carry out all these things just as the World-Honored One has commanded.”

But what now has become of that vow? So long as it was in the presence of the Buddha, the vow was freely spoken. But since Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions returned to their original lands and Shakyamuni Buddha passed into extinction, much time has gone by, and now, though in this latter age and in a faraway country there is a votary of the Lotus Sutra, it would seem that Brahmā, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the others have forgotten their vow and will not protect and guard him.

If so, then I must breathe a sigh of sadness. Since time began, like a pheasant before hawks, like a frog before a snake, like a mouse before a cat, or like a monkey before dogs, I have suffered trials such as these. Ours is a world of dreams, and perhaps I have simply been duped by the Buddha, the bodhisattvas, and the heavenly deities.

But the greatest source of sadness to me is the thought that if Brahmā, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and the others should abandon the votary of the Lotus Sutra, who chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, now when he is in great distress, they will in their present existence lose their status as heavenly beings, the fruit of past endeavor, and, like petals scattering in a high wind or rain falling from the sky, will fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering;
for, as the sutra predicts, “When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avīchi hell.” This is what I find truly pitiful.

Though these beings should enlist the aid of all the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions and deny they have any knowledge of the matter, I will hold them strictly accountable. And if the Buddha is not entirely prejudiced in their favor, I know he will surely condemn Brahmā, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings to the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. If they fear my glance, then let them make haste and fulfill the vow they took in the presence of the Buddha. Nichiren’s mouth [text missing].

I have received one tub of barley, two thousand coins, and one bag each of wakame seaweed and kachime seaweed. I have also received one paper bag each of dried boiled rice and parched rice. I ought to write more to thank you for your kindness, but I have already written at such length about the Buddhist teachings that I will stop here. These are matters of grave concern, so do not spread word of them to anyone other than Nichiren’s followers.

Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this work at Minobu in 1275. It is not clear exactly to whom it is addressed. He opens with mention of the various names of the country of Japan, and the various provinces, marches, and islands that compose it. He then points out that Japan has always been considered to be a “land of the gods,” a country protected by an assortment of tutelary deities. He states that, when Buddhism was transmitted to Japan, Japan became foremost among the eighty thousand nations believed to compose Jam- 
budvīpa in terms of the protection it receives from the gods and Buddhas.

But the Daishonin raises the question of the downfall of the ruling Taira clan and the death by drowning of Emperor Antoku (1178–1185), whose maternal grandfather was Taira no Ki-yomori, the head of the Taira clan and Grand Minister of State. This occurred despite all sorts of prayers offered by the eminent priests of the True Word doctrine for the victory of the Taira over the Minamoto clan.

Then he cites the event known as the Jōkyū Disturbance, named after the Jōkyū era (1219–1222) when it occurred. This was an attempt by the Retired Emperor Gotoba to overthrow the Kamakura shogunate, established by the Minamoto clan and now ruled by the Hōjō clan. His attempted coup was quickly put down by the forces of Hōjō Yoshitoki, and Gotoba and his coconspirators, Juntoku and Tsuchimi-kado, both retired emperors, were exiled respectively to the island of Oki, the island of Sado, and the province of Tosa (later to the province of Awa in Shikoku). Emperor Chūkyō, a son of Juntoku, was dethroned after less than eighty days’ reign. The Daishonin states that these sovereigns had all relied on the priests of the True Word doctrine for their prayers for the defeat of enemies.

Why was it, then, that those sovereigns who should have been protected by the gods and Buddhas, despite prayers by the eminent priests, could meet such untoward fates? The Daishonin, born one year after the Jōkyū Disturbance, grew up among lingering
popular dismay over this unprecedented event. He had since his childhood sought to understand its basic cause and had arrived at the conclusion that it lay in belief in erroneous Buddhist teachings and opposition to the correct teaching, the Lotus Sutra. He points out that offering prayers based upon the erroneous doctrines of True Word invited retribution in the form of the downfall of the Taira clan and the exile of the retired emperors.

The Daishonin had been urging the people of Japan, as well as the regent of the Kamakura shogunate, to abandon the True Word and other misguided doctrines and to take faith in the Lotus Sutra. But neither the rulers nor the people paid him any heed, responding instead by attacking and persecuting him. In the end, he sternly rebukes the various gods and deities, indicating that they should fulfill the vow they made in the presence of the Buddha to protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra.

Notes

1. An ancient name for Nara Prefecture, “Yamato” was later also used to refer to the entire country of Japan. The actual origin and meaning of the name are unclear.

2. The eleven provinces of Saikaido are present-day Kyushu, Japan’s southernmost major island. The term “Dazaifu” originally referred to a local headquarters of the government established in Kyushu to regulate contacts with the China mainland and for defensive purposes. In the present context, it refers to the area of the eleven provinces of Saikaido.

3. The Mahavairocana school refers to the True Word school, which reveres the Buddha Mahavairocana.

4. Gokoku Kyodo-in is usually known as Kyodo Gokoku-in.

5. Actually Emperor Antoku died in the third month of the second (not first) year of the Genryaku era, which fell on the year with the cyclic sign kimoto-mi, or 1185. In the same year the name of the era changed from Genryaku to Bunji. Thus the first year of Bunji, when the Daishonin says Emperor Gotoba succeeded to the throne, is also 1185.

6. Actually Emperor Gotoba ascended the throne in the eighth month of 1183 when Emperor Antoku still held the throne. Therefore the two emperors existed simultaneously, but because Emperor Antoku died in the third month of 1185, it can be assumed that the Daishonin wrote that Emperor Gotoba succeeded to the throne after Antoku’s death in 1185.

7. Actually Emperor Tsuchimikado succeeded to the throne in 1198, but the Daishonin would have used reference materials that record the event as 1202.

8. Actually the third son.

9. The dwelling place of the god Brahman which is located in the Heaven of Brahman’s Aide, one of the eighteen heavens in the world of form.

10. The abode of the god Shakra located on the peak of Mount Sumeru.

11. The guardian deity of Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei, the head temple of the Tendai school, and the god to whom Hie Shrine, at the foot of Mount Hiei, is dedicated.

12. The court ladies’ quarters are called Naishidokoro in Japanese. Naishidokoro was originally the palace that enshrined the sacred mirror, one of the three sacred treasures of the imperial court. The sacred mirror was guarded by court ladies of rank called naishi. Later, Naishidokoro became another name for the sacred mirror itself.

13. Another name of the forty-sixth sovereign, Empress Koken, who abdicated but later ascended the throne once more as the forty-eighth sovereign Empress Shokotoku.


15. An eminent priest in the ninth century who built Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine in what is now Kyoto Prefecture.

16. One such bodhisattva is Maitreya, who is said to be Shakyamuni Buddha’s future successor.

17. A ceremony in the esoteric teachings, dedicated to the five great wisdom kings, or the five deities, Immovable, Conqueror of the Threefold World, Kundalī,
Great Awesome Virtue, and Diamond Yaksha. In this ceremony, images of the five great wisdom kings were enshrined in five altars and were worshiped.

18. The Honored Victorious dhāraṇī refers to the dhāraṇī that represents the benefit of an honored one known as the Honored Victorious Crown of the Buddha's Head, a deification of the crown of the Buddha's head. This honored one is believed to be supreme among the various deifications of the crown of the Buddha's head.

19. A ceremony in the esoteric teachings dedicated to an honored one known as One-Character Gold-Wheel, a deification of the crown of the Buddha's head.

20. A ceremony in the esoteric teachings, dedicated to the wisdom king Craving-Filled and carried out based on a ceremonial method known as the wish-granting jewel ritual.

21. A ceremony based on the Protection Sutra, whose full title is the Dhāraṇī for the Protection of the Sovereign of the Nation Sutra.


23. Ibid., chap. 10. The exact words are as follows: "Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand."

24. A priest of Yakushi-ji temple in Nara. In 745 Gyōki was appointed general administrator of priests. Because of his contributions to public welfare, people highly revered and respected him, calling him Bodhisattva Gyōki.

25. See three schools of southern China and seven schools of northern China in Glossary.

26. Mo Hsi, Ta Chi, and Pao Ssu, who were regarded in China as classic examples of evil women. They were the favorites of, respectively, King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty, King Chou of the Yin dynasty, and King Yu of the Chou dynasty, and are said to have led these men astray into dissipation and misrule.

27. The women mentioned in the Nirvana Sutra are milkmaids who add a great deal of water to the milk they sell.

28. Source unknown.

29. According to The Tale of the Heike, which chronicles the Taira clan's rise and fall from power, Kiyomori died of an extremely high fever in the second intercalary month of 1181, only a few months after burning down these temples.

30. Great Collection Sutra.

31. The expression "dogs and monkeys" in Japanese corresponds to "cats and dogs" in English.

32. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

33. Ibid., chap. 22.

34. Ibid., chap. 3.