

Dōryū of Kenchō-ji Temple



I WAS delighted at the arrival of your messenger, who came just when I was worrying about your daylong journey home. With regard to those affairs of yours, you will find more written in the letter from Hōki.¹

You mention that Dōryū has died and that his relics are being treated as if they were those of a Buddha. Well, the general public knows nothing at all about the truth of the matter, and because they refuse to consider it, it is useless for me to either question or discuss it.

Before the Buddha made his appearance in the world, there were ninety-five non-Buddhist schools. Their followers believed in their teachings and insisted that they themselves would become Buddhas. Then, just at the point when everyone believed this, the Buddha appeared in the world and taught that all the followers of the ninety-five schools had fallen into hell. The kings of the five regions of India and their ministers announced that the Buddha spoke nonsense. Moreover, the followers of the non-Buddhist schools, furious at hearing their teachers spoken of in that way, harbored ill intentions. That is why the members of a non-Buddhist group named Bamboo Staff killed the Venerable Maudgalyāna.

When the Buddha predicted that Painfully Acquired, a follower of the

non-Buddhist teachings, would within seven days die and turn into a vomit-eating spirit, Painfully Acquired was enraged. Within seven days, however, he did indeed turn into a vomit-eating spirit. The non-Buddhist followers immediately covered this up and told people that they had better purchase the relics of this practitioner who had attained the way.

There is no end to the number of strange incidents like this. But since I have not seen Dōryū's remains, I wonder what has become of them. Moreover, the teachings Dōryū has been spreading originate in the provisional teachings. But the fact that until now he had been saying that the true teachings of the Buddha were transmitted apart from the sutras shows that he himself had gone mad and that he himself had admitted that his teaching is non-Buddhist.

Besides, the situation at Kenchō-ji temple is plain to see this very moment. Though it can be said that Kenchō-ji is the enemy of all the monasteries and temples in Japan, since it hides matters under the cloak of authority, people are afraid and say nothing. The reason is that they place importance on their present existences and think lightly of future ones. Such being the case, in my present existence I have been saying that because of that

temple our present country will be brought to ruin. This has come true. My knowing about these things and time and again speaking out about the offenses of the priests and lay believers in Japan has invited calamity in this lifetime, but it means good fortune in my next.

Moreover, even though the priests and lay believers of Japan are aware of the conduct of Dōryū, still, because they are frightened of the authorities, they are outwardly respectful. But in their hearts, I think, everyone shuns him. Though due to their ignorance, they may not know what is correct or incorrect in the Buddhist teachings, I think they understand the affairs of the world since these are the facts before their very eyes.

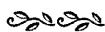
And though one may not follow Buddhist teachings, it is a simple enough matter to discover whether a person's bones have changed to a Buddha's relics. A Buddha's relics will neither be burned by fire nor dampened by water, and even when they are struck with a diamond hammer are uncrushable. Try just once to crush Dōryū's bones and see what happens. Nothing could be easier.

Kenchō-ji is comprised of men whose estates have been confiscated and who have nowhere else to turn. They became lay priests and, already forty, fifty, or sixty years old, went running to enter the temple, but they are virtually useless. They do no more than lead their lives under the cloak of Dōryū's authority. Though his vain and unworthy death is a matter that they cannot understand, they have spent some time spreading false stories about it in order to hide the truth. Also, perhaps they came up with this rumor in order to make people shun the teachings that I, Nichiren, embrace.

But because this plot is so outrageous, their falseness will in time be exposed. Just watch the situation patiently for a while. It is said that when the roots are laid bare, the branches will wither, and when the spring dries up, the river will cease to flow.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The eleventh day of the eighth month in the first year of Kōan [1278], the cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-tora*
To the lay priest Yagenta



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu on the eleventh day of the eighth month in 1278 to the lay priest Hōjō Yagenta, a samurai in Kamakura who belonged to the ruling Hōjō clan. Yagenta had written the Daishonin about the death of the Zen priest Dōryū of Kenchō-ji temple and the rumors that his bones had become a Buddha's relics. The Daishonin refutes this view and offers an example of a similar incident that occurred in India during the lifetime of Shakyamuni

Buddha. Shakyamuni had predicted that a follower of the non-Buddhist teachings named Painfully Acquired would die within seven days and become a vomit-eating spirit. That was exactly what happened, but other followers of the non-Buddhist teachings hid the truth and called his bones holy relics.

The Daishonin says that not only did Dōryū himself neglect the Buddha's sutras, but both circumstances at Kenchō-ji temple and Dōryū's personal

conduct are ample evidence that his bones cannot have become the relics of a Buddha. But the best way to establish the truth, suggests the Daishonin, is to see whether, like genuine Buddha's relics, Dōryū's bones are uncrushable. One blow will tell the story, he asserts.

Surely the reason Dōryū's followers have spread such lies, he says, is to cast doubt on his teachings. He urges Yageta to be patient, since the exposure of these lies will lead to the demise of their teachings too.

Note

1. Hōki is another name for Nikkō, Nichiren Daishonin's closest disciple and his successor.