YOUR letter indicates that you have forwarded an unlined robe made of thread spun from bark fiber, a gift from the wife of your elder brother. It also notes that Jirō Hyōe of Owari passed away on the twenty-second day of the sixth month.

In the Buddha’s Successors Sutra, the Buddha describes how his teachings will be handed down in the years following his demise. In this work, the Buddha explains that in the thousand years following his death, the period known as the Former Day of the Law, he will send his envoys one after another to transmit the teachings.

The first of these successors will be the Venerable Mahākāśyapa, who will transmit the doctrine for twenty years. The second will be the Venerable Ānanda, who will transmit it for twenty years. The third will be Shānavāsa, who will transmit it for twenty years, and so on down to the twenty-third successor, the Venerable Āryasimha.

The Buddha, speaking of Shānavāsa, the third successor, made the following prediction. The name Shānavāsa refers to a type of robe. A miraculous event will take place, for this person will be born wearing a robe.

Of the six paths of existence, persons born into the first five, from the realm of hell to that of human beings, are all invariably born naked. Only those who are born into the sixth path, that of heavenly beings, are born wearing a robe. Thus, no matter what kind of sage or worthy person one is destined to be, so long as one is born as a human being, one invariably comes into the world naked. Even Bodhisattva Maitreya, who will succeed Shakyamuni in the future as a Buddha, was born in this way, to say nothing of other types of persons.

Despite this fact, however, this man Shānavāsa was born wearing a wonderful robe called shāna. This robe of his was not stained by blood or other impurity. It was like a lotus flower that grows up out of a muddy pond, or the wings of a mandarin duck that are not wet by the water.

Moreover, as Shānavāsa grew older and larger, the robe bit by bit expanded in size. In winter it was thick, in summer thin; in spring it was green in color, but turned white in autumn. Since Shānavāsa was a man of wealth, he lacked for nothing, and in time he came to fulfill all the predictions that the Buddha had made concerning him. Thus he entered the Buddhist Order and became a disciple of the Venerable Ānanda. At that time, this robe that he had been wearing changed into monk’s robes of five-, seven-, and nine-strip widths.

The Buddha explained these won-
drous events by saying that innumerable kalpas ago, in the far distant past, this man had been a merchant. In company with five hundred other merchants, he set out by ship upon the great ocean in search of trade. At that time on the seaside there was a man suffering from a grave illness. The man was a pratyekabuddha, a person worthy of high esteem, but perhaps because of some deed in his past, he had fallen victim to illness. His body was emaciated, his mind distracted, and he was covered with filth. The merchant, taking pity on the man, nursed his illness with great care and brought him back to health. Washing away the filth, the merchant placed a robe of coarse plant fiber around the sage.

The latter, moved to joy, said, “You have aided me and covered the shame of my body. I promise you that I will wear this robe in this existence and in existences to come.” Then the man at last entered nirvana.

Because of the merit gained by this act, during countless kalpas in the past, each time that the former merchant was reborn in the realms of human or heavenly beings, this robe was always wrapped around his body and never left him.

In a time to come, explained the Buddha, after he himself has passed away, this man will be reborn as a sage named Shānāvāsa and will become the third successor to the teachings. He will build a great temple at Mount Urumandā in the kingdom of Mathurā and will labor for twenty years, converting countless persons and propagating the teachings of the Buddha.

Thus, as the Buddha made clear, all the joys and wondrous events associated with this monk named Shānāvāsa came about as a result of this robe that he gave to the sick man.

I, Nichiren, am a man of the country of Japan in the southern continent of Jambudvīpa. This country is a small, faraway island nation situated in the midst of the ocean some two hundred thousand nī or more to the east of the country where the Buddha made his appearance in the world. Moreover, 2,227 years have gone by since the Buddha passed away. The people of India and China no doubt look upon the people of this country of Japan much as the people of Japan look upon the inhabitants of the island of Ōshima off the Izu Peninsula or the Ezo people who reside in the eastern part of Mutsu.4

I was born in Japan in the province of Awa. The son of commoner parents, I left my family, shaved my head, and put on clerical robes. At that time I was determined to make use of this present lifetime to plant the seeds of Buddhahood and to do what I could to remove myself from the realm of birth and death. My aims being the same as all other people of the time, I trusted in Amida Buddha, and from the time I was a child I recited his name. But as a result of some minor affair, I came to have doubts about the efficacy of this procedure. Therefore I conceived the following resolve.

I thought that I would try to acquaint myself with all the various Buddhist sutras that have been transmitted to Japan, as well as with the treatises of the bodhisattvas and the commentaries written by the teachers of the doctrine. I also considered that there are many different schools of Buddhism such as the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, True Word, and Lotus Tendai schools,5 as well as the Zen and Pure Land schools. Though I could not acquaint myself with all the details of doctrine associated with each school, I felt that I would like to learn something of their essentials.

Therefore, for a period of some twenty years, from the time I was
twelve or sixteen until I was thirty-
two," I traveled from province to prov-
ice, from temple to temple, visiting
Kamakura, Kyoto, Mount Hiei, Onjō-
ji, Mount Kōya, and Shitenno-ji and
studying their doctrines. At that time
I became aware of one very strange
thing.

When we approach the subject with
our limited mental powers, we tend to
feel that the Buddhist teachings repres-
ent a single truth. We believe that
from whatever angle one may approach
that truth, if one applies one's mind to
the matter, studies it, and truly desires
to achieve success, one will be able to
break away from the realm of birth and
death. But in fact if one approaches the
Buddhist teachings and practices them
incorrectly, then one is likely to fall
into the great pit known as slander of
the Law.

We speak of the ten evil acts and the
five cardinal sins, but someone who
slanders the Law is worse than one
who day and night kills, steals, engages
in sexual misconduct, lies, or commits
others of the ten evil acts, or worse
than an evil man who murders his par-
ents or carries out others of the five
cardinal sins. There may be sages and
worthy men, persons who have be-
come priests and nuns, who scrupu-
losely observe all the two hundred and
fifty precepts and store up in their
minds the eighty thousand teachings.
They may go through their entire lives
without committing a single wrong
act, may be looked upon as Buddhas by
other people, and may be convinced
that they themselves could never fall
into the evil paths of existence. And
yet they fall into hell more certainly
than do the perpetrators of the ten evil
acts or the five cardinal sins. For long
ages they dwell in the great citadel of
the Avīcī hell and cannot find their
way out.

By way of an analogy, let us suppose
that there is a man who, thinking to
make his way in the world, enters the
service of his sovereign. Though he
commits no outright fault, there is a
certain lack of care in his thinking, and
from this arise errors in his behav-
ior. He himself is not aware that he
has offended, and his companions do
not look on his actions as particularly
strange. In the presence of the ruler's
consort he is guilty of no overt mis-
deed, and yet somehow his behavior
just naturally tends to be faulty. If such
a man once arouses the suspicion of his
sovereign, he will find himself blamed
for greater error than an outright plot-
ner of rebellion. And if he himself falls
into erroneous ways, then his parents,
his brothers, and his followers likewise
will be led into errors that are by no
means trifling.

The crime of slandering the Law is
one that the perpetrator himself is not
aware of, and those around him do not
look upon it as a fault. All think that
so long as the person is devoting him-
self to the Buddhist teachings, he is to
be regarded with respect. Thus both
the person himself, as well as the disci-
iples and lay followers who support
him, all in the end fall into the hell of
incessant suffering.

Such was the case with the monks
known as Superior Intent and Shore of
Suffering. They scrupulously observed
the two hundred and fifty precepts and
never once violated any of the three
thousand rules of conduct, and yet they
fell into the great citadel of the hell of
incessant suffering, and no term was set
for their release. Moreover, the disci-
iples and lay supporters who had gath-
ered around them, in numbers greater
than the dust particles of the land, like-
wise fell into hell, where they suffered
torment along with their teachers.

These persons had had no other
thought in their minds but to practice
good deeds for the sake of their future
existence. And yet they met with mis-
fortunes of this kind!
Having realized these things, I made a rough examination of the sutras and treatises, and came to the conclusion that Japan at the present time is in quite a similar situation. Since we are living in a latter age, there are imperfections in the way the affairs of government are conducted and the times are fraught with peril. But in Japan, unlike the case in other countries, the Buddhist teachings are widely propagated and we might suppose that a condition of relative peace and order would prevail. In fact, however, although the Buddhist teachings are widely propagated, we find that the age is one of marked decline and that there are many persons who fall into the evil paths of existence.

The reason is that although in Japan we find more Buddhist halls and pagodas than we would in the lands of India and China, the great majority of these are halls dedicated to Amida. In addition, each family fashions a wooden image of Amida Buddha or makes a painting of him, and each person recites the Nembutsu sixty thousand or eighty thousand times. Moreover, even in the eyes of the most ignorant persons it is considered laudable to abandon all thought of other Buddhas and to fix one's hopes upon the western region of Amida. Even wise men all agree that such conduct is admirable and join in praising it.

Moreover, in the reign of Emperor Kammu, the fiftieth sovereign, a sage known as the Great Teacher Kōbō was born in Japan. He studied and introduced from China the new and unusual teachings of the True Word school, served as a teacher to Emperors Heizei, Saga, and Junna, and founded the temples of Tō-ji and Mount Kōya. In addition, the sages known as the Great Teacher Jikaku and the Great Teacher Chishō studied and spread abroad the teachings of the same school, propagating them at Mount Hiei and Onjō-ji, until all the temples throughout Japan came to be centers of these same True Word teachings. Even today the True Word doctrines are practiced, bells are tinkled, and prayers are offered up for the courtier and warrior families. This is done by the superintendents in charge of Nikai-dō, Ōmi-dō, and Wakamiya. Such prayers were relied upon in earlier times, and they are likewise relied upon by the sovereigns of our present age, who look on them as equal in importance to the pillars of a house, to the sun and moon in the heavens, to a bridge across a river or a ship to carry one over the sea.

Again, in the case of the Zen school, observers of the precepts have been appointed to positions of honor in Kenchō-ji and other Zen temples, where they are treated with greater respect than people's own parents and relied upon more fervently than the gods themselves. As a result, ordinary people all bow their heads before them and join hands in reverent salute.

In an age such as this, we find that for some reason, strange occurrences take place in the heavens, comets trailing across the sky to east and west, or there are prodigies of the earth, the great earth heaving as though it were a ship on the ocean that was encountering fierce winds and was being overturned by huge waves. Strong winds blow, parching the plants and trees, famines occur year after year, plagues and diseases arise month after month, and terrible droughts dry up all the rivers and ponds, the paddies and farm fields.

In this way the three calamities and the seven disasters have continued for several decades on end, and half the people have been wiped out. Those who remain are parted from their parents, their brothers and sisters, or their wives and children, and cry out in voices no less pitiful than those of autumn insects. Family after family has
been scattered and destroyed like plants and trees broken down by the snow of winter.

And when we examine the sutras and treatises and ask why these things should happen, we find the Buddha predicting that when people slander the Lotus Sutra and fail to heed his words, the country where this takes place will suffer in this way. And this prediction of the Buddha has been fulfilled without the slightest deviation.

Then, in a spirit of doubt, I said to myself, are there really persons in Japan who slander the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni Buddha? And I also said, given perhaps that there were a few persons who slander them, the majority might believe in them.

And yet, as I have said, here in Japan everyone constructs halls to Amida Buddha and recites the Nembutsu. And when I search for the source of these practices, I find that they spring from the pronouncements of three men, the Meditation Master Tao-ch’o, the Reverend Shan-tao, and the Honorable Hōnen. They are the originators of the Pure Land school and the teachers of the people of today.

When these three men spread the practice of the Nembutsu, they declared that “not a single person has ever attained Buddhahood” by practices other than this, that “not even one person in a thousand” can be saved, and that one should “discard, close, ignore, and abandon” all other teachings. This means that those who put their trust in Amida Buddha should cast aside all other sutras, all other Buddhas, all deities, and address Amida Buddha alone, repeating the words Namu Amida Butsu [Hymn to Amida Buddha].

In particular, these men urge people to abandon the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni Buddha. And since that is easy enough to do, first one person and then another, never stopping to consider, does so. First one person goes along with these teachings, then ten thousand do so. Ten thousand do so, and then the whole population, from the ruler and his great ministers down to the common people, all do so without exception. And thus, contrary to what one might expect, the people in this country of Japan have become enemies of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra.

Shakyamuni Buddha has declared, “Now this threefold world is all my domain, and the living beings in it are all my children. Now this place is beset by many pains and trials. I am the only person who can rescue and protect others.” For this reason, Shakyamuni acts as the sovereign for all the living beings in this country of Japan, as their teacher, and as their parent.

The seven reigns of the heavenly deities, the five reigns of the earthly deities, and the ninety reigns of human rulers of Japan—all these deities and rulers have been followers of Shakyamuni Buddha, to say nothing of the retainers of these deities and rulers. All the land of this present-day country of Japan, its mountains and rivers, its oceans, its plants and trees are all the treasures of Shakyamuni Buddha. There is not a single jot of them that belongs to the Buddhas of other worlds such as Medicine Master or Amida. Moreover, the heavenly deities, the earthly deities, and the ninety reigns of human sovereigns of Japan, along with the common people, the cows and horses, and in fact every living being that is born, is a child of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. In addition, the fact that the heavenly and earthly deities, human rulers, and the common people of Japan can make the proper distinctions regarding heaven and earth, water and fire, parents, sovereign, men and women, wives and children, black and white, is due entirely to the fact that Shakyamuni
Buddha, the lord of teachings, has been their teacher. It is in no way due to the teachings of any of the other Buddhas such as Medicine Master or Amida.

Therefore we owe a great debt of gratitude to this Shakyamuni Buddha, a debt more weighty than the great earth, broader than the sky, and higher than the heavens. When it comes to such a Buddha as this, both sovereigns, ministers, and common people should honor him more highly than they do their own fathers or mothers, should pay him greater reverence than they pay to the gods. And if they do that much, then even if they should commit some grave offense, heaven will protect them and will not cast them aside, and the earth will not display anger toward them.

Nowadays, however, from the ruler on down to the common people, everyone builds Amida halls and enshrines images of Amida Buddha in them as the object of devotion. This is the reason, it seems, why heaven and earth display their anger. Suppose, for example, that persons in this country of Japan should feel themselves attracted to the rulers of China or Koryō. If they then proceeded to turn their backs upon the ruler of Japan, they could not expect to escape harm for long. But now all the people in Japan behave in this very manner. They feel themselves attracted to Amida Buddha, the sovereign of the Western Paradise, and this leads them to turn their backs upon Shakyamuni Buddha, the sovereign of their own country. That is the reason, in my opinion, that the gods who protect this country of Japan are moved to anger.

The people of this country give all their thought to fashioning images of Amida Buddha made of gold, silver, or bronze, or making wooden or painted images, and pay reverence to them. When they make copies of the Lotus Sutra or images of Shakyamuni Bud-
are graver than the five cardinal sins, yet they do not even know they are offending.

These grave offenses continue to pile up until we have cases like that of the eighty-second sovereign, known as the Retired Emperor of Oki, and the Retired Emperor of Sado.\(^\text{15}\) Not only was their power wrested from them by Yoshitoki of Kamakura in Sagami Province, whose family had not even been among their retainers in generations past, but they were banished to their respective islands, where they were left to lament. In time they died in their island exiles and their souls turned into angry ghosts and fell into the region of hell.

The great ministers and other officials who served under them had their heads cut off or perished in water or fire, their wives and children worried themselves to death, or their wives became the wives of commoners. Over fifty years have passed since then, and their descendents are treated like members of the common people.

All of this came about because they put their trust in the True Word and Nembutsu teachings and acted as implacable enemies of the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni Buddha. Because they did so, they were cast aside by the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, and the other deities of heaven and earth, and by the three treasures of Buddhism in the ten directions. While alive, they were attacked by those who should have been their followers, and after death, they fell into hell.

Moreover, after the center of power shifted to the east\(^\text{16}\) and the years went by, many of the leaders of the True Word school who had caused the sovereigns of the country to perish made their way to Kamakura, where they ingratiated themselves with the men of the Kamakura shogunate. Because they had originally been priests of high standing in their original areas, they were able to practice various deceptions to gain favor and to have themselves appointed superintendents of various temples in Kamakura. In addition, the Nembutsu priests, taking advantage of their position as counselors to those in power, became chief priests of Daibutsu-den, Chôraku-ji, Goku-raku-ji,\(^\text{17}\) and other temples, while persons of the Zen school came to be respected as chief priests of Jufuku-ji, Kenchô-ji, and other temples.

Thus in Kamakura offenses were committed that were a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times graver than that which brought about the fate of the Retired Emperor of Oki. And because of these grave offenses, the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, and the other deities of heaven and earth, along with Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions joined in meting out punishment. For this reason, a sage of a neighboring country, realizing the wishes of these deities and Buddhas, instructed its great king,\(^\text{18}\) who was engaged in rallying soldiers from countless different countries, to inflict punishment upon the ruler, the high ministers, and the common people of Japan. I, Nichiren, through my study of the sutras and treatises, have already predicted that this would happen.

But if I were to state these predictions honestly, then the ruler of the country would grow angry and the common people would refuse to listen to me. Not only that, but the Nembutsu believers, the Zen and Precepts priests, and the True Word teachers would undoubtedly become enraged and in their resentment would speak slanderously of me to the ruler and his ministers. I myself would face great difficulties, and my disciples, my lay supporters, and those who showed me the slightest degree of sympathy would be accused of crimes. My safety would
be endangered, and the peril would perhaps extend even to my life.

Unless I had some astute plan in mind, it seemed best to remain silent and not to speak out. And yet in the classics of non-Buddhist literature it is said that if a worthy man knows that the world faces destruction and fails to speak out, then he is a mere toady, a sycophant, a person with no sense of obligation. Therefore the worthy men Kuan Lung-feng and Pi Kan spoke out fearlessly on matters that concerned the safety of the nation, even though it meant that Kuan Lung-feng’s head was cut off and Pi Kan’s breast torn open.

Turning to Buddhist literature, we find that the Buddha has warned that, if a person sees an enemy of the Lotus Sutra but fails to speak out against him because of fear of the world, then he is a foe of Shakyamuni Buddha. No matter how wise or good he may be, he will assuredly fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Such a person is like a son who sees someone about to kill his parents but fails to warn them, or a minister who sees someone bringing ruin on his sovereign but, fearful of the world, does not speak out in reprimand. Such behavior the Buddha prohibits.

For this reason, Bodhisattva Āryadeva, who was an envoy of the Buddha, was killed by a follower of the non-Buddhist teachings; the Venerable Āryasimha had his head cut off by King Dammira; the Chinese priest Chu Tao-sheng was driven into exile in a mountain in Su-chou; and the priest Fa-tao was branded on the face. All these men met with such fates because they honored the Buddhist teachings and did not quail before the authority of the ruler.

Thus in the reign of a worthy ruler, if there is a sincere desire to strengthen the Buddhist teachings, then the ruler will give heed to both sides of a debate and will take as his teachers those wise men who put forth the most compelling arguments. In this way the nation will be assured of peace and security. So we see that the rulers of the Ch’ên and Sui dynasties in China summoned the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai Chih-che and set him to debating with the leaders of the various schools of northern and southern Buddhism,19 and Emperors Kammu and Saga in Japan arranged for the Reverend Saichô to debate with fourteen Buddhist leaders of Nara, the southern capital.20 Depending upon who was the winner in such debates, the rulers then established temples and set about propagating the correct teaching.

But other rulers such as Kings Mihirakula and Udayana in India, Emperors Wu-tsung and Ch’in-tsung in China,21 and Emperors Kimmmei and Yômei in Japan22 paid honor to evil spirits or non-Buddhist teachings, were followers of the Taoist priests, or worshipers of the gods. For that reason, they were implacable enemies of Shakyamuni Buddha and brought destruction upon themselves and disquiet to the world. During their reigns Buddhist sage priests encountered great difficulties.

Japan has by now become a country in which slanders of the correct teaching are taking place to a large degree, and it would appear that it is ripe for invasion by foreign lands.

If one is aware of this fact but fails to speak out about it, then although one may enjoy peace and security in one’s present existence, one will surely fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering in the existence to come. On the other hand, if, out of fear of that fate, one does speak out, one must be prepared to suffer exile or the death penalty.

With this in mind, in the time of the Bunnô era [1260] I submitted a petition to the late lay priest of Saimyô-ji. However, my advice was not heeded.
At that time the Nembutsu believers, hearing of what I had done, conspired with their followers in high and low positions and attacked me with intent to murder, though they did not succeed in their objective.

[The regent Hōjō] Nagatoki, the governor of Musashi, who was a son of the lay priest of Gokuraku-ji temple and aware of his father’s feelings in the matter, quite unreasonably had me exiled to the province of Izu. As anyone can see, the result is that the lay priest of Gokuraku-ji, Nagatoki, and their relatives perished.

Sometime thereafter, I was summoned back from exile. Once more I spoke out as the sutra dictates, this time with more force than ever, and once more, on the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun’ei [1271], I was exiled, this time to the island province of Sado. As I predicted at the time I incurred official displeasure, the members of the ruling clan who condemned me to exile then fell to quarreling among themselves. Perhaps because of fear of this situation, I was recalled from exile once again. However, my counsels were not heeded and the common people more and more gave themselves up to ill will.

Though one may risk one’s life in offering admonitions, if the rulers of the nation do not heed them, then there can be no doubt that the nation is destined for destruction. However, if the rulers fail to take heed even after one has pointed out their errors, then the fault does not lie with the admonisher. With this thought in mind, I left Kamakura in Sagami Province on the twelfth day of the fifth month in the eleventh year of Bun’ei [1274]. From the seventeenth day of the sixth month of that same year I have been residing deep in the mountains here, and for five years now have not ventured a hundred meters beyond the gate.

I come originally from the province of Awa. A steward in the province, Tōjō Saemon-no-jō Kagenobu, spurred on by the lay priest of Gokuraku-ji, the lay priest Tōji Saemon, and all the Nembutsu believers, had from time to time brought lawsuits against me. In the end, he launched hostilities against me, and thereafter the supporters of the lay priest of Gokuraku-ji succeeded in twisting the law so that the area of Tōjō Kagenobu’s jurisdiction was closed to me and I was not allowed to enter it. Hence it has been many years since I have been able to visit the graves of my father and mother.

In addition, I have twice incurred the displeasure of the rulers of the country. The second time, it was formally announced that I would be condemned to exile in a distant region, though in private the word went out that I was to be beheaded. On the twelfth day of the ninth month, at the hour of the ox [1:00 to 3:00 A.M.], I was led to Tatsunokuchi in Kamakura to be executed. Then for some reason or other an object like a moon came flying up from the direction of Enoshima and hung over the executioner’s head. He was too terrified to carry out his task, and meanwhile various circumstances developed, so that that night I escaped being put to death.

Later, after I had been exiled to the province of Sado, there was another attempt to behead me, but as I have stated earlier, contention broke out among the parties in Kamakura and a messenger was hurriedly sent to Sado, so I escaped beheading. In the end I was pardoned, and now live alone in the mountains.

When I was in the province of Sado, I lived in a graveyard called Tsukahara, at a place between the meadows and the mountains that was far removed from human habitation. I lived in a small hut built with four posts. The roof boards did not shut out the sky.
and the walls were crumbling. Rain came in as though there were no roof at all, and the snow piled up inside. There was no image of the Buddha, and no trace of matting or other floor covering. But I set up the figure of Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, that I have carried with me from times past, and held the Lotus Sutra in my hand, and with a straw coat around me and a straw hat on my head, I managed to live there. Four years passed, during which no one came to visit and no one brought me food. I was like Su Wu, held captive for nineteen years in the land of the northern barbarians, wearing a straw coat and eating snow.

And now I have lived for five years in this present mountain home. To the north is Mount Minobu, like a ladder reaching to the heavens. To the south is Takatori, like Mount Kukkutapāḍa; to the west, Shichimen, like Iron Gate Barrier; and to the east, Mount Tenshi, which is like the crown prince to Mount Fuji's emperor. These four mountains are ranged around like tall folding-screens.

To the north is a large river called Haya, swift as an arrow. To the south is a river called Hakiri, which can tumble huge rocks along as though they were tree leaves. To the east the Fuji River flows from north to south with a force like a thousand halberds thrusting forward. Along its course is a waterfall called the Falls of Minobu, like a strip of white cloth dangling from the sky.

In the midst of these mountains and rivers is a narrow plot of land where Nichiren has his dwelling. It is so deep in the mountains that even at noon one cannot see the sun, and at night there is no moon to compose poems to. On the mountain peaks monkeys like those of the Pa Gorges in China chatter away, while in the valleys the sound of the river waves is like the pounding of drums. The ground is strewn with countless large stones, and the mountains are made of nothing but rocks and gravel.

I am hated by the rulers of the country, and none of the common people come to visit me. In winter the trails are clogged with snow, and in summer they are overgrown with grass. Far off I hear the sad crying of the deer, and the cicadas make a din in my ears. No one comes to visit me, and it is hard for me to sustain life. I have no robes in which to clothe myself, and therefore you can imagine how welcome was the gift of the robe that you sent.

Even those who have known me or heard of me in the past no longer take pity on me, and the disciples and hired hands that have been with me up to now have all deserted me. How amazing it is, therefore, that someone like you, whom I have never even heard of or seen, should display such kindness! I cannot help wondering if you are not a reincarnation of my departed parents, or perhaps a manifestation of the ten demon daughters!

In the reign of Emperor Tai-tsung of the T'ang dynasty in China there was a military leader named Li Ju-hsien, the son of a man known as the Tumbleweed General. Li Ju-hsien was commanded by the emperor to attack the barbarian region of the north, but his force of several hundred thousand mounted soldiers was overwhelmed by the barbarians. Li Ju-hsien was taken prisoner and spent the following forty years in the barbarian land. During that time he took a wife and she bore him children. According to the custom of the barbarian land, a captive who was taken alive was obliged to wear garments of hide and a sash of felt. Only on the first day of the first month was Li Ju-hsien permitted to put on Chinese robes and hat. Thus, once every year he recalled his homeland and wept in his bitterness and longing.

Later, when the T'ang armies
marched forth and T'ang troops attacked the barbarian region, Li seized an opportunity to steal away, abandoning his wife and children among the barbarians and fleeing. But the T'ang troops took him captive as though he had been one of the barbarians and were about to behead him.

Eventually he was brought before the ruler, Emperor T'e-tsong, but no matter how he pleaded, the emperor refused to listen, and he was condemned to exile in the southern region of Wu and Yüeh.

Li Ju-hsien lamented his fate, saying, "I am not permitted to go forward and journey to my native region of Liang-yüan, nor am I allowed to retire and join my wife and children in the barbarian land." He had abandoned his wife and children among the barbarians, he was unable to see his homeland in China again, and then he was exiled to a quite different region. He had shown the utmost loyalty, yet ended by lamenting in this way.

I, Nichiren, have done likewise. I spoke out because I thought I could help my native country of Japan. But now I am forced to live apart from the province where I was born and the province where I was exiled. For some time now I have secluded myself deep in this mountain, my fate much like that of Li Ju-hsien. I have no wife and family, either in my native region or in the land where I was exiled, and on that score I need not lament as he did. But I cannot help thinking about the grave of my father and mother and wondering how the people I used to know are faring.

There is one thing, however, that makes me happy. The warriors, true to their training, took the lead in crossing the Uji and Seta rivers in the cause of their lord, and, though many of them may have perished, their names will be known in ages to come.

In the case of the Lotus Sutra, I have repeatedly been driven from my dwelling and faced armed attack, and I have suffered wounds on my hand. My disciples have been killed, I have twice been exiled to distant regions, and once I was almost beheaded. All this I bore solely for the sake of the Lotus Sutra.

In the Lotus Sutra the Buddha states that some two thousand, two hundred and more years after his passing, in the last five-hundred-year period, when efforts are made to propagate this sūtra throughout the land of Jambudvīpa, the heavenly devil will take possession of people and attempt to prevent the dissemination of the sūtra. It will happen then that those who have faith in the sūtra will be cursed and attacked, driven from one place to another, and perhaps even killed. At that time, those who stand in the vanguard will win benefit as great as though they had given offerings to the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions. And the Buddha has also promised that he will transfer to such persons the benefits resulting from his own trials and ascetic practices. (I have summarized the meaning of the sūtra passages.)

In the past there was a bodhisattva named Never Disparaging who worked to propagate the Lotus Sutra. Monks and nuns who were outstanding in wisdom and eminent monks who observed the two hundred and fifty precepts gathered and conspired with laymen and laywomen to curse and beat Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. But because he showed no weakening of his resolve and went on spreading the teachings, in the end he became a Buddha. The person who formerly was Bodhisattva Never Disparaging is now Shakyamuni Buddha.

The eminent monks and others who envied and attacked him all fell into the Avīci hell for a period of a thousand kalpas. Those persons had recited
the Meditation Sutra, the Amida Sutra, and several thousand other sutras, they recited the name of Amida Buddha and pronounced the names of all the other Buddhas, and day and night they read the Lotus Sutra. But because they showed enmity toward the true votary of the Lotus Sutra, their recitations of the Lotus Sutra and the name of Amida Buddha and their observance of the precepts did not help them, and they fell into the Avīci hell for a period of a thousand kalpas. These monks and nuns at first manifested hatred toward Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, but later they underwent a change of heart and in the end served Never Disparaging as faithfully as any lowly servant serves his master. And yet they were not able to escape the hell of incessant suffering.

Nowadays I am hated by the people of Japan in much the same manner. And yet there are ways in which my case is different from that of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. He was cursed and beaten, but he was not condemned to exile by the rulers of the nation. He was attacked with sticks and staves, tiles and stones, but he was never wounded or threatened with beheading. I have been subjected to ceaseless defamation and attacks with sticks and staves for a period of over twenty years. I have been wounded, condemned to exile, and threatened with beheading. My disciples have been deprived of their fiefs or thrown into prison, exiled to distant places, driven from their hometowns, or stripped of their fields. They have been treated more severely than one would treat night raiders, thieves, pirates, mountain bandits, or plotters of rebellion. And all this has come about because of the accusations of the eminent priests of the True Word, Nembutsu, andZen schools.

The errors committed by those persons are weightier than the earth itself. Therefore the earth quakes and trembles as though it were a boat on the ocean being tossed by a great wind. The eighty-four thousand stars in the sky blaze forth their anger, and day and night the heavens show strange manifestations. In addition, the sun and moon show numerous peculiarities in their behavior.

Already 2,227 years have passed since the demise of the Buddha. In India King Mihi rakula burned down the temples of the five regions of India and beheaded the monks in sixteen great states. In China Emperor Wu-tsung destroyed the temples of Chinese Buddhism and smashed their Buddha images, while in Japan Moriya, kindling a fire of charcoal, melted down the bronze-gilt image of Shakyamuni Buddha and attacked and harassed the priests and nuns, forcing them to return to lay life. Yet when these events were taking place in India, China, and Japan, there were no comets or great earthquakes such as we see now.33

The people of today are a hundred, thousand, ten thousand times more evil than those men in the past. In the past it was simply a case of the ruler alone having evil designs; his high ministers and the others under him did not share his passion for destruction. Moreover, the destructive efforts of the rulers were directed at provisional Buddhas and provisional sutras, and the priests they attacked were not the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

But now this great animosity is directed toward the Lotus Sutra, and arises not from the ruler alone, but from the hearts of wise men throughout the country and the mass of common people.

It is like the case of a woman possessed by jealousy. A great fire burns within her breast, and as a result her whole body turns red. The hair on her body stands on end, her entire body quivers, and the flames ascend to her face until it has become crimson. Her
eyes are as round as those of a cat about to pounce on a mouse, and her hands tremble like oak leaves tossed in the wind. When bystanders observe her, she looks no different than a demon.

The rulers of Japan and the various priests and nuns are like that jealous woman. I, Nichiren, have declared that the Nembutsu, the invocation of Amida’s name, which these rulers and priests rely upon, is a practice that will condemn one to the hell of incessant suffering. I have said that True Word is the doctrine that will ruin the nation, and that the keeping of the precepts is the work of the heavenly devil. When they hear these pronouncements of mine, they count their prayer beads and grind their teeth in rage, ring their little bells while shaking their heads in anger. Though outwardly they observe the precepts, they harbor hearts of evil.

So the Sage Ryōkan of Gokuraku-ji, that “living Buddha,” hurries with petitions to the government offices to bring charges against me, the Sage Dōryū of Kenchō-ji mounts his palanquin and goes to plead with the magistrates, and the lay nuns who observe the five hundred precepts present offerings and documents of accusation. All of this has come about because they read the Lotus Sutra but do not really read it, because they hear its words but do not really hear them, because they are drunk on the sweet old sake of the assertions by Shan-tao and Hōnen that “not even one person in a thousand” can be saved, or by Kōbō and Jikaku that doctrines other than the True Word are all “merely childish theory,” or by Bodhidharma that Zen represents a “separate transmission outside the sutras.” They have been driven mad by this sake.

To read the passage of the Lotus Sutra that says, “Among those sutras the Lotus is the foremost,” and yet declare that the Mahāvairochana Sutra is superior to it, to assert that the Zen school represents the highest of all Buddhist teachings, that the Precepts school is worthy of true honor, that the Nembutsu is the only practice truly fitted to our capacities—what are these but the ravings of a person who is drunk on sake? They look at the stars and declare them superior to the moon, look at a stone and say it is more valuable than gold, look at the east and call it the west, the sky and call it the earth. And then on the basis of these idiocies they proceed to rage at persons who declare that the moon and gold are superior to stars and stones, who say that the east is the east and the sky is the sky. Are we to go along with such persons simply because they are numerous? Are they not merely a great gathering of idiots? How sad it is to think that all the useless men and women who base themselves upon delusions of this kind are destined to fall into hell.

In the Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha tells us that in the Latter Day of the Law, those who slander the Lotus Sutra and fall into hell will be more numerous than the dust particles of the land, while those who believe in it and attain Buddhahood will be fewer than the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail. We should give careful thought to this pronouncement. Are the inhabitants of Japan to be compared in number to the specks of dirt on a fingernail? Is this one man, Nichiren, to be compared to the particles of dust in all the ten directions?

But leaving that aside, I wonder what karma from a previous existence has led you to send this gift of a robe to me. Do you perhaps intend to be numbered among those who are “fewer than the specks of dirt placed on a fingernail”?

The Nirvana Sutra tells us to imagine a needle placed upright in the earth and a strong wind blowing. Then we are to imagine that under such circumstances, a thread is lowered straight
down from the Brahma heaven and an attempt made to pass it through the eye of the needle. It is easier to accomplish this feat, we are told, than to encounter a votary of the Lotus Sutra in the latter age.  

Again, the Lotus Sutra says that there is a turtle living at the bottom of the ocean. Once every three thousand years the turtle rises to the surface of the sea, and if he can encounter a floating piece of sandalwood with a hole in it, he can rest himself there. But this turtle has only one eye, and the vision in that eye is distorted, so that things to the west of him appear to be in the east, and things to the east of him to be in the west. This simile indicates how difficult it is for men and women born in this evil world of the latter age to fit themselves into the “hollow” that is the Lotus Sutra and Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.  

In view of these difficulties, I wonder what bond of karma from the past has inspired in your heart the determination to communicate with a person like me?  

If we examine the Lotus Sutra, we find it stated that, in cases like these, Shakyamuni Buddha enters into a person and inspires such determination in that person’s heart. It is like someone who, with no particular thought in mind, drinks sake and becomes intoxicated. After he is intoxicated, a quite unexpected desire arises in his heart and he is inspired to give away his belongings to other people. Although the person has all his life been stingy and greedy and is destined for rebirth in the realm of hungry spirits, because of the effect of the sake, he is able to enter the realm of a bodhisattva.  

If a jewel is placed in muddy water, the water will become clear, and if a person gazes at the moon, his heart will be filled with nostalgia. A picture of a demon can be frightening even though we know it is not alive, and a picture of a beautiful woman can make a wife jealous even though she knows the picture cannot steal her husband away from her. If a brocade bed mat is woven with a pattern of snakes, no one will want to lie down on it, and if one’s body is overheated, one will find a warm breeze distasteful. Such is the nature of the human heart.  

So when a person like yourself feels drawn in your heart toward the Lotus Sutra, I suppose it must be that, since you are a woman, the dragon king’s daughter has taken possession of you.  

I come now to the matter of Jirō Hyōe-no-jō of Owari, whom I met in the past. Unlike most people, in the course of spreading these doctrines of mine I, Nichiren, have occasion to meet with a great many persons. But there are fewer than one in a thousand who impress me as truly admirable. Jirō Hyōe was not inclined to heed my teachings, yet as a person he was quite without offensive manners and in fact was a man of compassion and goodwill toward all. I cannot of course vouch for his inner feelings, but when I met him he struck me as a straightforward person.  

His wife is a believer in the Lotus Sutra and therefore, although he may not have thought that it is the true sutra, it seems unlikely that he himself was completely opposed to it. This is a cause for hope. On the other hand, he put his faith in the Nembutsu and the Nembutsu believers, who disparage the Lotus Sutra, and was probably a Nembutsu believer himself, so I have doubts as to what kind of existence awaits him in his next life.  

It is like the case of those who take service in the palace of the ruler and labor diligently there. Some are rewarded by the ruler’s favor and some are not. But if any of them commits the slightest error, it is quite certain that that person will be punished. It is the same way with the Lotus Sutra. No
matter how fervently a person may appear to put faith in it, if, knowingly or unknowingly, he has dealings with the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, he will undoubtedly end up in the hell of incessant suffering.

But whatever may happen to Jirō Hyōe, I cannot help feeling pity when I think of the grief his wife must be suffering. She must feel like a wisteria vine in full bloom that has twined itself around a pine tree, but finds to her consternation that the pine has suddenly toppled over, or like ivy on a fence when the fence has collapsed.

She enters her home, but there is no husband there; it is as though the house were destroyed and had lost its pillar. Visitors appear, but there is no one to step forward and greet them. In the dark of night her bedroom is bleak and lonely. When she visits the grave, she sees the marker on it but hears no familiar voice.

Again, when she imagines her departed husband, she wonders who is accompanying him as he travels past the mountains of death and over the river of three crossings, or whether he is weeping as he makes the journey all alone. Is he wondering why his wife and children who have remained behind have sent him all alone on this journey, is he protesting in his grief that this is not in accord with the promises they made?

As the autumn night wanes away and the sound of a winter storm comes to her ears, the wife’s sorrow must grow heavier than ever. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Nichiren

The sixth day of the ninth month in the first year of Köan [1278],
cyclical sign tsuchinoe-tora
To the lay nun Myōhō

Background

Nichiren Daishonin, having received from the lay nun Myōhō an offering of an unlined robe, a gift from her elder brother’s wife, and a report about Jirō Hyōe’s recent death, sent this reply to the lay nun. It is dated the sixth day of the ninth month in 1278. The lay nun is thought to have lived in Okamiya in Suruga Province. Her husband had died of an illness in the seventh month of the same year.

The Daishonin begins this letter by expressing his appreciation for the offering and closes it by expressing sympathy for Jirō Hyōe’s wife. Concerning the robe given in offering, he cites the Buddhist story of the monk Shānavāsa, the third in the line of Shakyamuni Buddha’s twenty-three successors, who in a previous existence offered his robe to an ailing sage. Explaining the profound benefit that derived from this offering, the Daishonin speaks of the even greater benefit that will arise from offering a robe to him, the votary of the Lotus Sutra.

Next, he recalls major events of his life dedicated to spreading the Lotus Sutra, beginning with his resolve to grasp the essential doctrines of the various Buddhist schools. He realized that, though people believed any Buddhist teaching could save them from the sufferings of birth and death, “in fact if one approaches the Buddhist teachings and practices them incorrectly, then one is likely to fall into the great pit known as slander of the Law.” Though unaware of the negative consequences of such slander, they suffer them nonetheless.

The Daishonin then addresses the
source of this slander, the great support and respect given to the leaders of the Pure Land, True Word, and Zen schools. Because these schools slander the Lotus Sutra, which represents the enlightenment of Shakyamuni Buddha, belief in their teachings has brought about the three calamities and seven disasters. The Daishonin cites the prayers of the misguided True Word priests that resulted in the exile of the Retired Emperor of Oki, and expresses his belief that the same prayers conducted in his time will bring about the destruction of Japan by a neighboring country. Therefore he submitted a petition to the lay priest of Saimyō-ji, or Hōjō Tokiyori, entitled ‘On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.’ When his repeated remonstrations were unheeded, however, he left Kamakura to live in seclusion at Minobu.

The Daishonin describes the harsh conditions that beset him at Minobu, where this letter was written, as well as his situation of being estranged from both his home province and the land of his exile where he had gained followers.

He then compares himself with Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who also spread the Lotus Sutra. While the Daishonin was wounded, condemned to exile, and nearly put to death, the bodhisattva was merely cursed and beaten. The people who persecuted him, the Daishonin says, are doomed to the hell of incessant suffering. In contrast, to have encountered the votary of the Lotus Sutra and presented him with offerings is a cause for great benefit.

Finally, concerning the death of Jirō Hyōe, apparently a Pure Land believer, the Daishonin expresses his sorrow and sympathy for the wife’s loss and endeavors to alleviate her grief.

Notes

1. Probably a samurai (d. 1278) in Owari Province in central Japan, but little is known about him. Judging from the closing part of this letter, he was a confirmed Pure Land believer and his wife was a follower of the Daishonin.

2. Also known as A History of the Buddha’s Successors. A record of the twenty-three monks in India said to have successively inherited Shakyamuni Buddha’s teachings and propagated them.

3. Maitreya is said to have been reborn in the Tushita heaven, where he teaches the heavenly beings. He is to reappear in the world 5,670 million years after Shakyamuni Buddha’s death, attain Buddhahood, and save the people in his stead.

4. Mutsu is the northern part of Japan. For Ezo people, see Glossary.

5. The Lotus Tendai school is another name for the Japanese Tendai school, which made the Lotus Sutra central to its doctrine.

6. In 1233 at the age of twelve, Nichiren Daishonin entered a nearby temple called Seichō-ji, where he studied both Buddhist and secular teachings, and at the age of sixteen, he was formally ordained. In 1253 at the age of thirty-two, he first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and proclaimed his teachings.

7. Nikai-dō refers to Eiuku-ji temple of the Tendai school in Sagami Province, built by Minamoto no Yoritomo, the founder of the Kamakura shogunate, in 1189. Ōmi-dō refers to Shōchōju-in temple in Sagami Province. Minamoto no Yoritomo built it for his deceased father Yoshitomo in 1184. Neither temple exists today. Wakamiya refers to Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine in Kamakura, founded by Minamoto no Yoritomo in the late twelfth century.

8. The Collected Essays on the World of Peace and Delight by Tao-ch’o.


10. The assertion of Hōnen in The Nembutsu Chosen above All, though he did not use these four words in this particular form.

11. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

12. The seven reigns of the heavenly
deities and the five reigns of the earthly deities refer to deities who were said to have ruled Japan before Emperor Jimmu, the legendary first human sovereign. The ninety reigns of human rulers refers to the successive emperors from Emperor Jimmu.

13. “Second-rate importance” refers to the idea developed by Jikaku that the Lotus Sutra and the Mahāvairochana Sutra are equal in terms of doctrine because they share the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, but that the latter is superior in practice because it expounds mantras and mudras, which are lacking in the Lotus Sutra. “Third-rate importance” refers to the idea of Kōbō in his Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind, in which he classified the various Buddhist teachings as corresponding to ten stages of the mind’s development and ranked the Lotus Sutra eighth, the Flower Garland Sutra ninth, and the Mahāvairochana Sutra tenth or the highest.

14. This statement is based on a passage in A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism that states that Shakymuni and Mahāvairochana are two entirely distinct and separate Buddhas, and that Mahāvairochana is the Buddha of the Dharma body who personifies the unchanging truth of all phenomena and is the source from which all Buddhas spring, and Shakymuni is the Buddha of the manifested body who appears in this world as a human being in response to the people’s desires.

15. The Retired Emperor of Oki refers to Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239), and the Retired Emperor of Sado to Emperor Jun-toku (1197–1242). In 1221, Gotoba, Jun-toku, and others joined in an attempt to overthrow the military government in Kamakura. Their forces, however, were defeated by those of the Kamakura regent Hōjō Yoshitoki. Gotoba was exiled to the island of Oki and Jun-toku, to Sado Island.


17. Daibutsu-den was a temple known as Kōtoku-in of the Pure Land school, built to house a great statue of Amitā Buddha. The temple named Chōraku-ji no longer exists; it was a large temple of the Pure Land school and one of the seven major temples in Kamakura. For Gokuraku-ji, see Glossary.

18. “Great king” here refers to the Mongol ruler Kubilai Khan. In addition to their victories in Central Asia and Europe, the Mongols overran northern China and Korea and were in the process of subjugating southern China as well when Japan engaged their attention. In 1268, Kubilai Khan sent the first of a succession of envoys to Japan to demand that it acknowledge fealty to him.

19. The rulers of the Ch’én and Sui dynasties refer to Ch’én Shu-pao, the fifth and last sovereign of the Ch’én, and Emperor Yang Ti, the second sovereign of the Sui, respectively. The various schools of northern and southern Buddhism refer to the three schools of southern China and seven schools of northern China (see Glossary).

20. On the nineteenth day of the first month in 802, Emperor Kammu paid a visit to the temple at Mount Takao. He summoned more than ten eminent priests from the six schools and seven major temples of Nara, including Zengi, Shōyō, Hōki, Chōnin, Kengyoku, Amano, Gonsō, Shauen, Jikō, Gen’yō, Saikō, Dōshō, Kōshō, and Kambin, to come to the temple to debate with Saichō. But they were defeated by Saichō. Saichō is also known as the Great Teacher Dengyō. In 823, Emperor Saga, the fifty-second sovereign and the second son of Emperor Kammu, gave the name Enryaku-ji to the temple founded by Saichō on Mount Hiei.

21. Wu-tsung was the fifteenth emperor of the T’ang dynasty. He initiated a nationwide persecution of Buddhism in 845. But he was never able to put down the resulting uprisings and died in agony shortly after. Ch’in-tsung was the ninth emperor of the Northern Sung dynasty. He was captured by the Jurchen, a nomadic people of Manchuria, who established the Chin dynasty in northern China.

22. In the reign of Kimmei, the thirteenth emperor, Buddhism was first introduced to Japan by King Syōngmyōng of the Korean kingdom of Paekche. During the thirty and more years following it, however, the emperors, including Kimmei and his fourth son and the thirty-first sovereign, Emperor Yōmei, paid no reverence to Buddhism. Not until the time of the thirty-third ruler, Emperor Sushun, did Buddhism come to be honored by the Japanese court.

23. The lay priest of Gokuraku-ji refers to Hōjō Shigetoki (1198–1261), a high offi-
CONDOLENCES ON A DECEASED HUSBAND

24. This refers to the rebellions hatched by Hōjō Tokisuke, an influential commissioner in Kyoto, to overthrow the regent Hōjō Tokimune, his half brother, in 1272. Tokisuke’s coconspirators in Kamakura were killed by government forces, while Tokisuke himself was attacked and killed in Kyoto.

25. Little is known about him except that he was a retainer of Hōjō Shigetoki, the lay priest of Gokuraku-ji.

26. This refers to the Komatsubara Persecution of 1264, when the Daishonin was ambushed by Tōjō Kagenobu and his men at Komatsubara. He received a sword cut on his forehead and had his hand broken.

27. Kukkutapāda is present-day Kurkihar in India, located about thirty kilometers northeast of Bodh Gaya. Mahākāśyapa is said to have transmitted the teachings to Ananda and to have died on this mountain.

28. The barrier at Kesh in Central Asia, which was as impregnable as iron, surrounded by steep mountains.

29. Gorges in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River.

30. The story of Li Ju-hsien and the Tumbleweed General derives from a poem by Po Chü-i (772–846) entitled Fu jung-ju or “The Barbarians in Bonds” in his Hsin Yüeh-fu or “New Yüeh-fu.” “New Yüeh-fu” is a series of poems in yüeh-fu or ballad form criticizing social and political ills of the time.

31. The Uji River refers to the middle reaches of the Seta River, which originates at the southern edge of Lake Biwa and flows through Kyoto Prefecture, eventually emptying into Osaka Bay. In ancient times, it marked the southeastern line of defense for Kyoto, the capital, and was the site of several famous battles. Because of its strategic importance, whether or not one succeeded in crossing the Uji River determined the victory or defeat of one’s troops.

32. “Eighty-four thousand” is a figure used in Buddhist texts to represent a large number, or a quantity that is immeasurable or all-inclusive.

33. This last is a reference to the great earthquake of the Shōka era that devastated the Kamakura area in the eighth month of 1257 and the huge comet of the Bun’ei era that appeared in the seventh month of 1264.

34. This statement appears in Kōbō’s Precious Key to the Secret Treasury.

35. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

36. The exact quotation has not been found in the Nirvana Sutra, but a similar statement appears in its second volume.

37. Chapter twenty-seven of the Lotus Sutra says, “Because encountering the Buddha is as difficult as encountering the udumbara flower. Or as difficult as it is for a one-eyed turtle to encounter a floating log with a hole in it.” The story referred to here is found in the Miscellaneous Ágama Sutra.

38. Jewel here refers to a wish-granting jewel, which, if placed in muddy water, will make it transparent.