

Refuting Ryōkan and the Others



RYŌKAN, Dōryū, the Sage Higan,¹ and others founded such temples as Gokuraku-ji, Kenchō-ji, Jufuku-ji, and Fumon-ji,² actions indicating contempt for the ordination platform of the great precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment of Mount Hiei. They are thus first of all guilty of the offense of causing disruption in the Buddhist Order.

Second, they are guilty of having drawn blood from the body of the Buddha. These days the Nembutsu believers and the members of the other schools of Buddhism have taken the fifteenth day of the second month, when Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, entered nirvana, and declared it a day dedicated to the Buddha Amida, and have made the eighth day [of the fourth month], when Shakyamuni Buddha was born, into the day of the Buddha Medicine Master.

The priests of the True Word school all pay homage to the Thus Come One Mahāvairochana and declare that Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, is a Buddha who is still wandering in the region of darkness³ and is “not worthy even to tend our sandals!”⁴ In the end, they conduct their ceremony of anointment, stepping on the head of Shakyamuni Buddha.⁵ The priests of the Zen school declare that their teachings represent a “separate transmission

outside the sutras,” regard all the various sutras as of less worth than waste paper, and boast that “we ourselves surpass the Buddha!” Persons such as these are descendants of the Great Arrogant Brahman of southern India, in the class of those who “draw blood from the body of the Buddha.”

The third of the grave offenses, [that of killing an arhat, was committed by Devadatta] when he struck and killed the nun Utpalavarnā, who was a foster mother of the Buddha⁶ and had attained the rank of arhat. This occurred at the time when King Ajātashatru rejected Devadatta and allied himself with the Buddha. Devadatta’s breast was consumed with the fires of anger, and unable to restrain himself, when he chanced to meet the nun Utpalavarnā, out of spite he struck and killed her.

And now the Nembutsu believers and the men of the other schools, because I have refuted the Nembutsu, Zen, Precepts, and True Word doctrines to the point where they could not argue back, in the end have taken their case to their lay supporters. My disciples have been killed, I have received a wound on the head, have been slandered and twice sent into exile, and they even plotted to have me beheaded. Not only have they contrived to have dozens of my disciples put in prison,⁷ but they set fires here and there in

Kamakura and tried to make it look like the work of my disciples, hoping to deprive me of every last one of them.

As we have seen, Devadatta committed three grave offenses.⁸ But when he drew blood from the body of the Buddha, it was from the Buddha of the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra, not the Shakyamuni who attained enlightenment in the inconceivably remote past. When he killed an arhat, it was an arhat of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, not a votary of the Lotus Sutra. And when he disrupted the harmony of the Buddhist Order, it was the Order that observed the pre-Lotus Hinayana precepts, not the Order of the great precepts of the Lotus Sutra, of perfect and immediate enlightenment. Though the earth opened up and Devadatta fell into the hell of incessant suffering,⁹ since he did not commit these three grave offenses against the Lotus Sutra, his punishment was not all that severe. Therefore in the Lotus Sutra it is predicted that he will become a Buddha named Heavenly King Thus Come One.

But now the True Word priests, the Nembutsu believers, and the followers of the Zen and Precepts schools, along with the emperor, the shogun and his family, and all the other people of Japan, both high and low, who support their doctrines, not only act as powerful enemies of the Lotus Sutra but on top of that bear great enmity toward the votary of the one vehicle. And since they do so, though they might gain an understanding of all the various sutras, pay homage to the Buddhas of the ten directions, build temples and pagodas throughout the whole country, and show compassion toward all living beings, still, just as all the many streams flowing into it are flavored by the salt of the great sea, as all the birds that approach Mount Sumeru take on the same golden color as the mountain,¹⁰ so all their great good deeds will be

changed into great evil, and the seven blessings will give way to the seven disasters.¹¹ In their present existence, before their very eyes, they will see the forces of a foreign country coming to attack them, they will be crushed by its warriors and their wives and children will be seized by the enemy; and in their next existence they will fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering.

In view of all this, even if the late Yashirō had been guilty of some major offense, it could certainly not surpass the offenses committed by Devadatta. In comparison to those, it must have been a very minor offense. And because he had faith in the Lotus Sutra, there can be no doubt that "then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood."¹²

Question: You say that the True Word priests of today are destined to fall into the hell of incessant suffering, but I find that difficult to accept. The True Word priests of today all trace their descent back to four great teachers of the past, the Great Teacher Kōbō, the Great Teacher Dengyō, the Great Teacher Jikaku, and the Great Teacher Chishō. If these men did not fall into hell, then why should the True Word priests of today be destined to do so?

Answer: There are 136 hells.¹³ Into 135 of these hells people fall like raindrops, for it is easy to commit the kind of offenses that cause one to do so. But it is rare that a person falls into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. This is because it is rare for anyone to commit any of the five cardinal sins that condemn one to this hell.

Before the Buddha appeared in the world, there were no five cardinal sins, but only the two sins of killing one's father and killing one's mother. And in the time before the Buddha even these two cardinal sins, killing one's father and killing one's mother, never destined one to fall into the hell of

incessant suffering. They were simply regarded as two sins that might be committed by a beast.

Now, however, the people of Japan no longer fall into the 135 other hells. The people of Japan, though differing from one another in appearance, are all alike in being slanderers of the Lotus Sutra. Though the people of Japan differ from one another, they are all alike slanderers of the Lotus Sutra because their principles can be traced back to the three great teachers other than Dengyō.

Question: What are the principles of these three great teachers?

Answer: The principles of these three great teachers, Kōbō and the others, differ from one another, but they are all alike in that they slander the Lotus Sutra. They are the erroneous principles put forth by the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei, the Tripitaka Master Chin-kang-chih, and the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung that slander the Lotus Sutra.

Question: What proof do you have that these three great teachers fell into hell?

Answer: The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei is the founder of the True Word school in China and Japan. This man died suddenly and was brought before Yama, the king of hell, for reprimand. He met with reprimand for no other fault but the fact that he insisted that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Mahāvairochana Sutra. And since Jikaku and Chishō, not realizing that this is an error, propagated his doctrines, how could they escape going to hell?

If we inquire into the reason why the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei was berated by King Yama, then we will as a matter of course understand the destiny of these three great teachers. The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei himself, in *The Annotations on the Mahāvairochana Sutra*,¹⁴ records the fact that at that time he was bound with seven

cords of iron. Moreover, in Japan these events are depicted in the Yama Hall of Daigo-ji temple [in Yamashiro Province] and the Yama Hall of Kamakura in Sagami Province.¹⁵ So we know that Jikaku and Chishō subscribed to erroneous teachings.

Question: To determine the relative superiority of the Lotus Sutra and the three sutras of the True Word teaching,¹⁶ the Mahāvairochana Sutra and the others, what sutra passages can be cited?

Answer: The Lotus Sutra states, "Among the sutras, it holds the highest place."¹⁷ This means that the Lotus Sutra represents the very peak of the teachings expounded in all the various sutras. The seven volumes of the Mahāvairochana Sutra, the three volumes of the Diamond Crown Sutra, the three volumes of the Susiddhikara Sutra—in all these thirteen volumes there is not a single sutra phrase or verse that says that these sutras are superior to the Lotus Sutra.

To be sure, there is a passage in the Susiddhikara Sutra that states that, among the three True Word sutras, this sutra is king.¹⁸ But this simply means that, of the Mahāvairochana Sutra and the other two sutras, this one is king. It does not in any sense mean that this is the "great king" among all the sutras preached in the course of the Buddha's lifetime. It is like the ruler of our own country, who is called a "great king." But this means he is the great king over all the country of Japan, not in any sense that he is a great king who is superior to all the kings of China and India.

The Lotus Sutra, however, is not only the king among all the sutras preached by the Buddha in the course of his lifetime. It is the great king among all the sutras expounded by all the Buddhas of the three existences of past, present, and future, and of the ten directions.

We might, for example, compare it to the heavenly god Brahmā, a great king who is superior to all other kings, the lesser kings, the wheel-turning kings, the four heavenly kings, King Shakra, and the devil king. The Diamond Crown Sutra is the loftiest king of the True Word teaching, and the Sovereign Kings Sutra is a great king among the sutras dealing with non-Buddhist teachings and their deities and ascetics. But they are in no sense the loftiest kings among all the various sutras. It is the Lotus Sutra that is the highest jewel among all the sutras. If one will set aside the pronouncements of the scholars and teachers of Buddhism and rely solely upon the sutra texts, one will see that this is so.

But after the founding of the T'ien-t'ai school, sutras and treatises were brought from India, and the founders and patriarchs of the various other schools of Buddhism established in India and China, motivated by their asura nature,¹⁹ read their own words into the sutras and treatises, attributing them to the Buddha and to the Indian sutras, or with their own writing brushes inserted their interpretations in the sutras, claiming that such passages were spoken by the Buddha. Thus the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei, comparing the relative worth of the Lotus Sutra and the Mahāvairochana Sutra, declared that the two sutras are alike in principle but that the latter is superior in matters of practice.²⁰

Such a declaration does not represent the Buddha's true intentions in the matter. If we go by the Buddha's own words, the Mahāvairochana Sutra was expounded during the first forty and more years of his preaching life. And even among the sutras expounded during those forty and more years, it cannot compare to the Flower Garland Sutra or the Wisdom sutras. It is only slightly superior to the Āgama sutras of the Hinayana teaching.

The Great Teacher Jikaku and the others, however, because they failed to understand this fact but simply trusted the opinion of the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei, accepted this declaration—that the two sutras are alike in principle but that the Mahāvairochana Sutra is superior in matters of practice—as the truth.

The Great Teacher Kōbō was a man of perverse opinions who cannot even compare to the likes of the Great Teacher Jikaku and the others. He declared, for example, that the Lotus Sutra is not only inferior to the Mahāvairochana Sutra, but to the Flower Garland Sutra as well.²¹ And in order to make people believe these false doctrines of his, he asserted that he had received the teachings directly from the Thus Come One Mahāvairochana himself, or stated that he had personally been present at the assembly on Eagle Peak, or boasted of how his teacher, the Reverend Hui-kuo, had praised him, or claimed that he had thrown his three-pronged diamond-pounder²² from China to Japan. He invented various wild tales such as these, which even today are believed by ignorant persons.

The True Word priests of the Tendai school in Japan trace their teachings back to the Great Teacher Jikaku. Thus not only do the three thousand priests of Mount Hiei put faith in these teachings, but generation after generation of the worthy rulers of our nation²³ accordingly proclaim them to the world in the form of imperial edicts. These edicts state in effect that the Lotus Sutra and the Mahāvairochana Sutra are both comparable to the flavor of ghee, that they are like the two wings of a bird or the left and right eyes of a human being. And among all the True Word priests of the world today, there are none who question these pronouncements. Such assertions are in fact like saying that the light of a firefly

outshines that of the sun or moon, or that the dirt piled up by an earthworm looms taller than Mount Hua.²⁴

Furthermore, when all the various True Word priests perform what is known as the ceremony of anointment, they paint an image of Shakyamuni Buddha in what is called a mat-type mandala and have the disciple undergoing initiation trample on it with his foot. Or in their writings they assert that the Buddha of the Lotus Sutra is still in the region of darkness, that among human beings he is comparable to the Ezo barbarians,²⁵ that he is not even worthy to tend the sandals of a True Word priest. And the True Word priests of today take such writings as their basic commentaries, day and night debating as to their meaning, using them when they conduct prayers for the courtiers and warriors, thereby obtaining various grants of land and hoodwinking the lay followers who support them.

When we examine the matter, we see that these True Word priests are no different from the Great Arrogant Brahman or the Scholar Vimalamitra. They are the sort of persons who are destined for the great fires of the Avīchi hell in their present existence. Because they have no powerful opponents, they are able to go on in this fashion, though there are perfectly clear indications as to where they are headed.

The Jikaku and Chishō factions war with each other incessantly; the latter-day followers of Kōbō in the head temple on Mount Kōya and those of Shōkaku in Dembō-in [on Mount Negoro],²⁶ Mount Hiei and Onjō-ji temple, wrangle back and forth like asura demons, fight like so many monkeys and dogs. Is this not what comes of Jikaku's dream in which he shot down the sun with an arrow,²⁷ or of the fallacious words spoken by Kōbō when he was in the world?

The Buddha foretold that in the latter age, those who slander the correct teaching will be more numerous than the dust particles of the land, while those who uphold the correct teaching will be fewer than the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail.²⁸ How true are these words of the Buddha! The situation in Japan today exactly fits this prophecy.

As you are well aware, from the time I was young I have had my heart set on learning, and in addition I prayed before the statue of Bodhisattva Space Treasury²⁹ that I might become the wisest person in Japan. I was twelve then, and had various reasons for offering such a prayer, but I will not go into them here.

After that, I lent my ear first of all to the teachings of the Pure Land and Zen schools, and later I traveled to Mount Hiei, Onjō-ji, Mount Kōya, and various other places in the capital and the countryside, carrying out religious practice and studying the doctrines of the various schools of Buddhism. But I found it difficult to resolve my doubts.

When I offered up my original prayer, I vowed that I would approach the various schools of Buddhism without prejudice or partiality regarding any particular one, but would judge them on the basis of proofs to be found in the Buddha's own words and the light of reason. I would rely not upon the writings of the scholars, the translators, or the teachers of doctrine, but solely upon the sutra texts themselves.

Moreover, in matters pertaining to the teachings, I would not be swayed even if the ruler of the nation should bring pressure to bear on me, much less if lesser persons should do so. I would not heed the pronouncements of parents or teachers or elder brothers, would take no notice of whether others believe me or not, but would speak out as the words of the sutras

dictate—such was the vow I made.

As for Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school, Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland School, and Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school, T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyō have already refuted them, pointing out that their errors condemn them to the hell of incessant suffering. But as yet no one has attacked the perverse views of the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei and the Great Teachers Kōbō, Jikaku, and Chishō of the True Word teaching. In the last part of volume ten of *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,"* the Great Teacher Miao-lo has pointed out how Shan-wu-wei, Pu-k'ung, and others abandoned the True Word school and embraced the doctrines of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, and the Great Teacher Dengyō records the same fact in his work *A Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine.* But because the true situation is not well understood, latter-day followers of Dengyō's line continue to adhere to the erroneous views of Jikaku and Chishō, which is why I press my attack so strongly.

Thus when I was thirty-two, from around the spring of the fifth year of the Kenchō era [1253], I began criticizing the Nembutsu and Zen schools, and later I attacked the True Word school as well. At first the Nembutsu followers regarded me with disdain, saying, "However clever Nichiren may be, he can hardly surpass the priest Myōen, the Administrator of Priests Kōin, or the chief priest Kenshin [of Mount Hiei].³⁰ These men at first attacked the Honorable Hōnen, but later they all capitulated and became his disciples or followers of his teachings, and Nichiren no doubt will do likewise." One after the other, they sought to disprove my words.

When persons in past times criticized Hōnen's teachings, they did not

at the same time criticize those of his predecessors Shan-tao and Tao-ch'ō, nor did they try to distinguish between provisional sutras and those that are true, and as a result the Nembutsu believers only became more self-confident than ever.

But now I, Nichiren, have shown that Shan-tao and Hōnen have fallen into the hell of incessant suffering, and have driven home my criticisms by comparing the three Pure Land sutras with the Lotus Sutra, which is like comparing the light of a firefly with that of the sun and moon or the waters of a small stream with those of the great ocean. Moreover, I have demonstrated that the Nembutsu is a mere doctrine of childish theory that the Buddha expounded as an expedient, one meant for a time only. To expect such a doctrine to free one from the sufferings of birth and death is like building a ship of stone and hoping to cross the vast sea with it, or loading a mountain on one's back and attempting to go over a steep pass. Such is the nature of my criticisms, and not a one of the Nembutsu believers has been able to refute them.

Later the Nembutsu believers talked to persons of the Tendai school, attempting to set them against me, but these efforts came to nothing. In fact, among the persons of the Tendai school, the more thoughtful of the lay believers and members of the clergy, responding to my attacks on the Nembutsu and Zen school teachings, gave up their belief in such teachings. The Nembutsu followers and priests of the Zen and Precepts schools, lacking the wisdom to refute my arguments, then began going among the members of the other schools and spreading all sorts of slanderous tales about me.

The lay believers, questioning the truth of such tales, turned for advice to the priests they customarily relied upon, True Word priests, Nembutsu

priests, priests of the time-honored Tendai school or of the Zen or Precepts schools, coming with them to the place where I was living or summoning me to their residence. [But when I confronted them in debate] they were hardly able to say a word or two. I refuted them as Kātyāyana did the non-Buddhist believers, as Bodhisattva Gunamati bested Mādhava;³¹ they had no strength to stand up before my arguments.

Perhaps because so few of them were men of wisdom, in the end the Nembutsu priests and the others, unable to match me in debate, enlisted the aid of certain samurai who were all boast and no understanding, or wealthy lay believers who were intrigued by the affair but unaware of the ins and outs of it, and roused them to action against me. In some cases they privately used violence against my supporters, drove them from their homes, seized their lands, or brought charges against them, all this in instances too numerous to count.

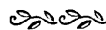
Although petitions were submitted to the ruler asking him to take steps against me, perhaps because of the merit he had acquired by observing the precepts or the good fortune and virtues he had accumulated [in his past lifetimes], he perceived hidden intentions behind these requests and declined to give serious heed to them. Such being the case, certain influential persons banded together and, gather-

ing a crowd of townsmen about them until they numbered several tens of thousands, came in the night to attack and put an end to me.³² But, perhaps because the ten demon daughters had planned it that way, I was able to escape from danger.

The officials of the two provinces of Sagami and Izu, having failed in their attempt to kill me, then brought charges and had me exiled to the province of Izu. But the lay priest of Saimyō-ji alone, believing that there were extenuating reasons in my case, hastily set about arranging to have my period of exile brought to an end.

Not long after that, the lay priest of Saimyō-ji passed away. I could see that things would become difficult for me, and I thought that I would do well to make haste and withdraw from worldly affairs. I did not do so, however, but continued in a vigorous manner to champion the Lotus Sutra, determined that, if the worst should come, I would sacrifice my life for that cause.

The number of those bringing slanderous charges against me continued to increase, until all persons of both high and low station were attacking me as though I were the sworn enemy of their fathers and mothers or some vile courtesan. The situation was exactly like that in the latter age after the time of the Buddha Awesome Sound King, when everyone attacked Bodhisattva Never Disparaging.



Background

The opening and concluding portions of this letter are missing, so it contains no date or name of a recipient. Because in it Nichiren Daishonin makes reference to “the late Yashirō,” however, it is thought to have been written to the

late Yashirō’s mother, the lay nun Kōnichi, a believer who lived in Amatsu of Awa Province, near Seichō-ji temple where the Daishonin studied as a youth. And because he alludes to events connected with Yashirō’s death

in 1274, and writes that he has been “twice sent into exile,” it is thought to have been written at Minobu after his pardon from exile in Sado.

Few details are known about the lay nun Kōnichi. She was from the same area as the Daishonin. Her son, Yashirō, first took faith in the Daishonin’s teachings and then persuaded his mother to do so. When the Daishonin was exiled to Sado, she sent him a gift of a robe. She received from him four extant writings in addition to this one, *The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra*, *Letter to Kōnichi-bō*, *Reply to the Lay Nun Kōnichi*, and *Reply to the Honorable Kōnichi*.

In this letter the Daishonin compares the so-called “three cardinal sins” committed by the Buddha’s archenemy Devadatta and offenses of a similar nature committed in his own time by the leaders of Buddhist schools in Japan. While Devadatta’s actions were directed at Shakyamuni Buddha before the Buddha revealed, in the Lotus Sutra, that he had been enlightened since the remote past, the Buddhist teachers of the Daishonin’s time disparage the Lotus Sutra and bear enmity toward its votaries, the Daishonin and his disciples. Therefore, their offense is far more serious than Devadatta’s. Yashirō, the late son of the lay nun Kōnichi, as a samurai had become caught up in a situation that culminated in a confrontation in which he was killed. Even though his offense may have been serious, the Daishonin says, it was small compared to Devadatta’s and, because he was a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, it would not prevent him from attaining Buddhahood.

Through a question-and-answer format, the Daishonin then examines the errors of the True Word teachers and their doctrines with regard to the relative superiority of the three True Word sutras and the Lotus Sutra, and addresses the negative results such er-

rors will bring about. Kōbō, founder of the True Word school, and Jikaku and Chishō, advocates of the esoteric, or True Word, tradition within the Tendai school, were together guilty of disparaging and slandering the Lotus Sutra and therefore destined themselves for the hell of incessant suffering along with all who followed them.

Shan-wu-wei, who brought the True Word teachings from India to China, initiated the error of holding the Mahāvairochana Sutra above the Lotus Sutra but later repented of it, describing in his writings how he was judged by the king of hell on that account. The Daishonin cites Miao-lo, who wrote that Shan-wu-wei came to uphold the teachings of T’ien-t’ai based on the Lotus Sutra. The True Word teachers of Japan, however, ignored this fact and adopted and promulgated Shan-wu-wei’s errors. How, then, the Daishonin asks, could they avoid the consequence of being judged in hell for the same mistake?

Pointing out that there is no documentary evidence to support the claim that the Mahāvairochana and other True Word sutras are superior to the Lotus Sutra, he establishes with textual references that the Lotus Sutra is to be regarded as the king among all the sutras. He points to the lies and fabrications of Kōbō, such as his story of having received the teachings directly from the Thus Come One Mahāvairochana himself, as well as to the disparaging claims of Jikaku and Chishō with regard to the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni Buddha.

Nichiren Daishonin then explains that the discord and wrangling that exist among the schools founded by these men are a result of their slander of the Lotus Sutra, an indication that they are destined in the end for hell. He then reflects on his own experience that led to his establishment of his teaching, and how he has endeavored

to refute the errors of the various Buddhist schools since then. He tells of persecutions that he and his followers have faced as a result, in particular the mass attack on his dwelling at Matsubagayatsu and his subsequent exile to Izu. He closes by stating his resolve to continue on his chosen path even if it should cost him his life.

Notes

1. Higan, also known as Rōyo (1194–1277), was a priest of the Rinzai school of Zen. According to *The Biographies of Eminent Priests of Japan*, he studied the Zen teachings under Eichō, who founded Chōraku-ji temple in Serata in Kōzuke Province. During the Shōgen era (1259–1260), he moved from Chōraku-ji to Jufuku-ji in Kamakura, and in his later years returned to Chōraku-ji.

2. Fumon-ji temple is thought to have been founded by Higan. According to *The Chronicle of the Hōjō Family through Nine Generations*, Fumon-ji burned down in 1310. Nothing remains of it today, and little else is known about it.

3. This statement appears in Kōbō's *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*.

4. *The Rules of Rites for Revering the Buddha's Relics* by Kakuban, the precursor of the New Doctrine branch of the True Word school. It reads, "The figure worthy of true respect is the Buddha of the Non-dual Mahayana [Mahāvairochana Buddha]. The three-bodied donkey- or ox-Buddha is not even fit to draw his carriage. The truly profound doctrines are the teachings of the twofold mandala. The teachers of the four doctrines of the exoteric vehicles are not worthy even to tend the sandals of those who teach the mandala!" The three-bodied donkey- or ox-Buddha refers to Shakyamuni Buddha, whose teachings are described as exoteric in contrast to the esoteric True Word doctrines.

5. The ceremony of anointment refers to the True Word consecration ceremony in which water is poured over the head of the initiate. At this ceremony, the True Word priests spread out a mandala with representations of Shakyamuni and other Buddhas. "Stepping on the head of Shakyamuni Buddha" presumably refers to one of

The title of this writing was assigned later, and is taken from the first line of the existing text. While this is the only place in the extant copy where Ryōkan is mentioned, he played a central role among those who contrived to have the Daishonin and his disciples persecuted.

the rites performed during this ceremony, but exactly what it involved is uncertain.

6. The source of the statement that Utpalavarnā was Shakyamuni's foster mother is uncertain. Mahāprajāpatī is generally known as the foster mother of Shakyamuni.

7. For example, during the Tatsunokuchi Persecution of 1271, five of the Daishonin's disciples, including Nichirō, were confined in a dungeon.

8. The three grave offenses are "the three cardinal sins" (see Glossary) against Buddhism committed by Devadatta, referred to up to this point and subsequently.

9. This statement is found in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*.

10. A similar statement is found in *Great Perfection of Wisdom*.

11. For seven disasters, see Glossary. The "seven blessings" means the averting or eradication of the seven disasters.

12. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

13. The expression "136 hells" is used to describe the array of hells in Buddhist cosmology, this number representing the eight hot hells, each with its sixteen subsidiary hells.

14. A compilation by I-hsing (683–727) of the lectures Shan-wu-wei gave on the Mahāvairochana Sutra. In Japan, this commentary, which was brought to Japan by Kōbō, became the major textbook of the True Word school.

15. It can be assumed that pictures of King Yama berating Shan-wu-wei bound with iron cords were hanging on the walls of these temples.

16. The Mahāvairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras.

17. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

18. The Susiddhikara Sutra states, "Among the teachings concerning the three divisions, this sutra is king." "The

three divisions” refers to the Buddha, Lotus, and Diamond divisions of the Womb Realm, depicted in the Mahāvairochana Sutra. They refer to the Buddha’s great enlightenment, compassion, and wisdom, respectively.

19. The nature of asuras, contentious demons mentioned in Buddhist scriptures. It is a nature characterized by haughtiness and a constant desire to surpass others.

20. According to Shan-wu-wei’s interpretation, both the Mahāvairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra reveal the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, and therefore these two sutras are equal in terms of principle; however, because the Mahāvairochana Sutra contains descriptions of mudras (hand gestures) and mantras (mystic formulas), it is superior to the Lotus Sutra in terms of practice.

21. In his *Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind*, Kōbō 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.

22. A ritual implement used in esoteric Buddhism, symbolizing the adamant resolve to attain enlightenment, which can destroy any illusion. *The Biography of the Great Teacher Kōbō* states, “On the day when he set out by ship from China . . . he faced in the direction of Japan and threw the diamond-pounder up into the air,” and “He journeyed to the foot of Mount Kōya and determined to establish his place of meditation there . . . and later it was discovered that the three-pronged diamond-pounder that he had thrown out over the sea was there on the mountain.”

23. A reference to the fifty-fifth emperor, Montoku (r. 850–858) and the fifty-sixth emperor, Seiwa (r. 858–876).

24. Mount Hua was one of the five sacred mountains in China.

25. The “Ezo barbarians” refers to the people of northern Japan.

26. The head temple on Mount Kōya is Kongōbu-ji. In 1131 (or 1132) Shōkaku-bō founded the temple Dembō-in on Mount Kōya. He concurrently became the chief priest of Kongōbu-ji. This incurred the enmity of the other priests of Mount Kōya,

and in 1140 he and his followers were forced to flee to Negoro. His followers founded the New Doctrine branch of the True Word school in the late thirteenth century, in opposition to the traditional teachings of Mount Kōya.

27. According to *The Biography of the Great Teacher Jikaku*, when Jikaku had doubts about whether or not his works such as *A Commentary on the Susiddhikara Sutra* accorded with the Buddha’s intent, he placed them before the object of devotion in the temple where he resided and offered up prayers. On the fifth day, he dreamed that he shot an arrow at the sun and caused the sun to roll over and over. He looked upon this as an auspicious dream. Kōbō claimed that, in the spring of the ninth year of the Kōnin era (818), when he was praying for an end to the great epidemic, the sun came out in the middle of the night. Regarding the Daishonin’s refutation of these claims, see I, p. 721.

28. This statement is based on a passage in the Nirvana Sutra that describes the rarity of encountering the Buddha’s teachings and attaining Buddhahood.

29. Bodhisattva Space Treasury was the original object of devotion at Seichō-ji temple, where Nichiren Daishonin studied Buddhism in his boyhood.

30. Myōen (n.d.) is thought to have been a priest of the Tendai school. Details about him are unknown. Kōin (1145–1216) was a priest of Onjō-ji, the head temple of the Temple branch of the Tendai school. Kenshin (1130–1192) was the sixty-first chief priest of Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Tendai school.

31. According to *The Record of the Western Regions*, Gunamati, a fifth-century monk of the Consciousness-Only school in southern India, and Mādhava, a non-Buddhist scholar famed for his learning, debated each other in the presence of the king of Magadha. Mādhava was defeated and died six days later.

32. This refers to the Matsubagayatsu Persecution of 1260, when, infuriated by Nichiren Daishonin’s refutation of the Pure Land school in his *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, a group of Nembutsu followers attacked his dwelling at Matsubagayatsu in Kamakura.