A Visit as Rare as the Udumbara Flower

We must congratulate each other on the happy occasion of the arrival of spring. Your visit to me here last year was an event as rare as the blossoming of the udumbara flower. I am still wondering if perhaps it was something I merely dreamed or imagined.

And now at the beginning of this year your messenger has journeyed to this remote mountain, to my dwelling here in the snow, traveling through numerous provinces to do so, making his way over mountain paths, and I realize to my surprise that your visit last year was indeed a reality, it was indeed a reality!

Other minor matters you will find dealt with in the letter of Echigo-bō.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The fourteenth day of the first month

Reply to the lay priest Naiki Sakon

POSTSCRIPT: Echigo-bō will speak to you about the utensil that you kindly sent. Please convey my deep gratitude to Utsubusa.

Background

This letter indicates the recipient, Naiki Sakon, and the month and day, but not the year, of its writing. One view regards it as 1282. Little is known about the lay priest Naiki Sakon other than his acquaintance mentioned here with the woman named Utsubusa, a follower of Nichiren Daishonin who lived in Ihara District of Suruga Province and also received a letter (I, p. 1061) from the Daishonin. Sakon may have lived in the same area.

The Daishonin acknowledges receipt of a utensil, and states that the priest Nichiben, referred to in the text as Echigo-bō, will relay the Daishonin's message concerning it. Nichiben was a priest of Ryūsen-ji temple in Atsuhara, who had been converted by Nikkō to the Daishonin's teaching. The Daishonin then praises the uncommon sincerity of Sakon, who visited him the previous year and at the turn of the New Year sent a messenger to him at Minobu.