

## Rebuking the Enemies of the *Lotus* Nichirenist Exclusivism in Historical Perspective

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*The Buddhist teacher Nichiren (1222–1282) has tended to be marginalized by many scholars of Buddhism as “intolerant” for his exclusivistic claim that only the Lotus Sūtra leads to salvation in the Final Dharma age (mappō). While the Nichiren Buddhist tradition has often been aggressive in asserting its exclusive truth claim and in opposing other forms of Buddhism, the label of “intolerance” does little to illuminate how this exclusivistic stance has functioned within the history of the tradition both as a unifying force and a strategy of legitimation. This brief historical overview first outlines the origins of “Lotus exclusivism” in Nichiren’s thought. It then goes on to discuss how this claim to represent the only true Buddha Dharma enabled early Nichiren communities to define and perpetuate themselves vis-à-vis more powerful institutions, and it shows how it has been repeatedly refigured from medieval times to the present in response to changing circumstances. The article also explores the issue of ongoing conflict within Nichiren Buddhism over whether, and to what extent, confrontation with other Buddhist traditions should be pursued.*

THE BUDDHIST TEACHER Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282) and the tradition he founded have long been marginalized in both Japanese and Western scholarship. Although this may stem in part from lingering wartime associations of certain strands of Nichirenist rhetoric with right-wing militarism, on a deeper level it reflects a fundamental discomfort with the Nichiren tradition’s often strident opposition to other religious forms. George SANSOM, for example, writes that Nichiren “broke the tradition of religious tolerance in Japan” (1952, p. 335), while WATANABE Shōkō states that Nichiren displayed “a self-righteousness unexampled in all of Buddhist history, and [when] viewed from the standpoint of Buddhist tolerance, we must say that it

is a completely non-Buddhistic attitude” (1968, p. 65). In Edward CONZE’s view, Nichiren Buddhism

differs from all other Buddhist schools by its nationalistic, pugnacious and intolerant attitude and it is somewhat doubtful whether it belongs to the history of Buddhism at all.... On this occasion Buddhism had evolved its very antithesis out of itself. (1980, pp. 113–14)

Such criticisms, however, tell us more about modern scholarly presuppositions than they do about the Nichiren tradition. It is true that many Nichiren Buddhists have displayed a fierce exclusivism (a word preferable in this context to “intolerance” because less burdened by associations with modern European religious history), but this exclusivism is a complex phenomenon worthy of study in its own right. The present paper will consider some of the ways in which Nichiren’s claim to represent the only true Dharma has functioned in specific social and historical circumstances, and how it has been adapted as those circumstances changed. It will also consider the recurring conflict within the tradition over whether, or to what extent, confrontation with other religions should be pursued.

### *Origins in Nichiren’s Thought*

First let us consider Nichiren’s foundational claim that only the *Lotus Sūtra* can lead to Buddhahood, or salvation, in the Final Dharma age (*mappō* 末法). Exclusive truth claims of this kind were not uncommon in late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Japanese Buddhism. For some time, the great Tendai institution on Mt. Hiei had been splintering into rival groups and lineages, each claiming unique possession of the most profound Dharma (HAZAMA 1948, vol. 2, pp. 241–44). The new schools of Kamakura Buddhism often committed themselves to a single form of practice, which thereby acquired absolute status. The first Kamakura Buddhist leader to formally articulate this notion was the Pure Land teacher Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), who emphasized the exclusive practice of chanting Amida’s name (*senju nenbutsu* 専修念仏). Nichiren—who, like Hōnen, was originally a Tendai monk—claimed that chanting the *daimoku* 題目 (the title of the *Lotus Sūtra*) in the formula *Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō* 南無妙法蓮華經 was the sole path to liberation; to combine the *daimoku* with other practices would, he wrote, be “like mixing rice with excrement” (*Akimoto gosho* 秋元御書 [Letter to Akimoto], RISSHŌ DAIGAKU NICHIREN KYŌGAKU KENKYŪSHO [RDNKK] 1988, vol. 2, p. 1730).

It is not altogether clear why these and other figures in the early medieval period abandoned what had been the traditional Japanese Buddhist position, in which a variety of teachings and practices were regarded as liberating “skillful means,” and insisted instead on the sole validity of a single path. It may have been, at least in part, a response to the social and political upheavals that accompanied the decline of aristocratic rule and the rise of warrior culture. Anxieties about the Final Dharma age also played a role. Nichiren was unique, not in making exclusivist claims per se, but in integrating confrontation with other Buddhist teachings into the formal structure of his thought, especially through his advocacy of *shakubuku* 折伏.

Buddhist canonical sources define two methods of teaching the Dharma: *shōju* 摂受, “to embrace and accept,” the mild method of leading others gradually without criticizing their position; and *shakubuku*, “to break and subdue,” the stern method of explicitly rejecting “wrong views.”<sup>1</sup> Nichiren’s rejection of the other Buddhist schools was summed up by his later followers in the form of the so-called four declarations (*shika kakugen* 四箇格言), drawn from various passages in his work: “Nenbutsu leads to Avīci Hell, Zen is a devil, Shingon will destroy the nation, and Ritsu is a traitor.”<sup>2</sup> Despite the simplistic nature of this slogan-like formulation, *shakubuku* as employed by Nichiren required considerable mastery of doctrine, since his criticism of other sects rested on detailed arguments based upon the sūtras and commentaries. Nichiren adopted the then widely accepted T’ien-t’ai/Tendai doctrinal classification that defined the *Lotus Sūtra* as the culmination of the Buddha’s preaching—the *Lotus* was the true (*jitsu* 実) teaching, and all others were provisional (*gon* 権). Nichiren drew also on certain hermeneutic trends within Tendai that increasingly regarded the *Lotus* not simply as an integration of all teachings but as qualitatively distinct from and superior to them.<sup>3</sup> In the Final Dharma age, Nichiren maintained, people no longer had the capacity to attain liberation through the various provisional teachings; these teachings were therefore “enemies” of the one vehicle and

<sup>1</sup> The *locus classicus* for these terms is the *Srimālā-devī-simhanāda-sūtra*, which speaks of the two methods as “enabling the Dharma to long endure.” Nichiren would have had access to the Chinese translation of this sūtra (for the passage in question, see *Sheng-man shih-tzu-hou i-ch’eng ta-fang-pien fang-kuang ching*, T # 353, 12.217c). He also drew on the works of the Chinese T’ien-t’ai master Chih-i (538–597), who explicitly connected *shakubuku* with the *Lotus Sūtra*. See *Fa-hua hsüan-i* 9a, T #1716, 33.792b; *Fa-hua wen-chü* 8b, T #1718, 34.118c; and *Mo-ho chih-kuan* 10b, T #1911, 46.137c.

<sup>2</sup> For textual sources of the four declarations see NICHIRENSHŪ JITEN KANKŌ IINKAI 1981, pp. 143–45.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of these trends and their origins, see HAZAMA 1948, vol. 1, pp. 193–219.

had to be sternly refuted through *shakubuku* (*Nyosetsu shugyō shō* 如説修行鈔 [On practicing as the sūtra teaches], RDNKK 1988, vol. 1, p. 735). Nichiren and his successors practiced *shakubuku* through preaching, debate, and submitting memorials to government authorities.

Nichiren did not, however, insist that *shakubuku* was appropriate for all times and places. While he believed *shakubuku* to be best suited to the Final Dharma age, he conceded that *shōju* could still be an appropriate teaching method depending upon the place and the people involved. Here he drew a distinction between “countries that are [merely] evil” (because their inhabitants are ignorant of the *Lotus Sūtra*), where *shōju* would be the proper approach, and “countries that destroy the Dharma,” where only *shakubuku* would suffice. Nichiren regarded Japan in his own time as belonging to the latter category (*Kaimoku shō* 開目抄 [Opening of the eyes], RDNKK 1988, vol. 1, p. 606). These qualifications allowed for flexibility of interpretation, but they also opened the way for doctrinal controversy among Nichiren’s later followers.

Several other interrelated aspects of Nichiren’s claim for the sole truth of the *Lotus* have had a great influence on the later tradition. First, Nichiren insisted that the consequences of accepting or rejecting the *Lotus Sūtra* were materially reflected in the world. The collective sufferings he saw around him—hunger, epidemics, the great earthquake of 1258 that leveled much of Kamakura, and especially the impending Mongol invasion—were in his eyes a proof of the widespread “slander of the Dharma” *hōbō* 謗法: the rejection of the *Lotus*, the one teaching that still led to Buddhahood in the Final Dharma age, in favor of Amidism, Zen, esoteric Buddhism, and other “misleading” practices. On the basis of this conviction, Nichiren in 1260 submitted his famous treatise *Risshō ankoku ron* 立正安国論 [Establishing the right teaching and bringing peace to the country] (RDNKK 1988, vol. 1, pp. 209–26; YAMPOLSKY and WATSON 1990, pp. 11–47) to the retired regent Hōjō Tokiyori, the most influential figure in the Kamakura bakufu, urging the rejection of Amidism and exclusive devotion to the *Lotus*.

Second, Nichiren believed that loyalty to the *Lotus Sūtra* should take precedence over loyalty to both ruler and country. In 1274, for example, he refused an official request to offer bakufu-sponsored prayers for the defeat of the Mongols, believing that it would be wrong to provide ritual services for a ruler who did not uphold the *Lotus Sūtra* and that the invasion might be a necessary part of awakening people from their neglect of its teachings. By thus according the *Lotus Sūtra* a transcendent priority, Nichiren established both for him-

self and for his later followers a source of moral authority for challenging the existing political order.

Third, to Nichiren, the persecution resulting from *shakubuku* assumed a legitimizing function. Nichiren's writings show a clear awareness that his repeated conflicts with the authorities, his exiles, and the attempts on his life stemmed directly from his own unrelenting criticism of other teachings; he even spoke of himself on this account as "the most perverse person in Japan" (*Yagenta-dono gohenji* 弥源太殿御返事 [Reply to Yagenta], RDNKK 1988, vol. 1, p. 805). But in his thinking, *shakubuku* was not a partisan self-assertiveness but the bodhisattva practice of the Final Dharma age, an act of both compassion and expiation. It not only served to awaken others to the fact that they were slandering the Dharma (an act that would land them in hell), but it also gave rise to the persecution that enabled Nichiren to atone for similar slanders that, he believed, he himself had committed in the past. Moreover, he was convinced that giving one's life for the *Lotus Sūtra* guaranteed one's future enlightenment. As he wrote to his followers from exile in 1273:

Life is fleeting. No matter how many powerful enemies oppose us, never think of retreating or give rise to fear. Even if they should cut off our heads with saws, impale our bodies with lances, or bind our feet and bore them through with gimlets, as long as we have life, we must chant *Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō*, *Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō*. And if we die chanting, then Śākyamuni, Prabhūtaratna, and the other Buddhas of the ten directions will come to us immediately, just as they promised at the assembly on Sacred Vulture Peak.... And all the devas and benevolent deities...will at once escort us to the jeweled land of tranquil light. (*Nyosetsu shugyō shō*, RDNKK 1988, vol. 1, pp. 737–38)

The *Lotus Sūtra* itself speaks of the trials that its devotees shall undergo "in an evil age" after the Buddha's nirvāṇa.<sup>4</sup> That he himself encountered such difficulties confirmed for Nichiren the righteousness of his position. This legitimizing function of opposition has played a profoundly ambivalent role in the history of Nichiren Buddhism. Some

<sup>4</sup> The verse section of the "Fortitude" (thirteenth) chapter, spoken by a throng of bodhisattvas in the Buddha's presence, is a vow to uphold and spread the *Lotus* in the face of specific hardships and persecutions (*Miao-fa lien-hua ching*, T #262, 9.36b–37a; HURVITZ 1976, pp. 204–207). These verses probably describe opposition from the older Buddhist establishment confronting the fledgling Mahāyāna community that compiled the sūtra. Nichiren read them as predictions being fulfilled in his own person.

adherents have found in it the courage to endure appalling persecutions; others, a reason to deliberately court conflict.

### *Early Compromises and Resulting Criticism*

Nichiren's courage in challenging the bakufu authorities and enduring the resulting persecution won him many admirers, especially among the middle-ranking samurai who came to form the core of his following. His emphasis on exclusive devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra* also facilitated the development of his community as a separate sect, independent of Tendai. However, his uncompromising purism was to prove difficult to institutionalize. Within a few years of his death his successors found themselves caught between the desire to remain loyal to Nichiren's rigorous exclusivism and their need to ensure the welfare of their religious communities. Thus was born a tension within the tradition between exclusivism and accommodation, one that continues to this day. To illustrate the dynamics of this tension, let us consider the circumstances surrounding two early instances in which Nichiren's successors found it necessary to compromise his principle that ritual services should not be performed for a ruler who does not embrace the *Lotus Sūtra*.

After a typhoon thwarted the Mongols' second attempt to invade Japan in the summer of 1281, the bakufu, anticipating a third attack, ordered all temples and shrines in Kamakura to offer prayers for the nation's safety. At that time Kamakura's Nichiren communities were under the leadership of two of Nichiren's immediate disciples, Ben no Ajari Nisshō 弁阿闍梨日昭 (1221-1323) and Daikoku Ajari Nichirō 大國阿闍梨日朗 (1245-1320), both of whom initially rejected the order. The bakufu then threatened to raze their temples and banish their clergy. When their protests proved unavailing, the two leaders, loath to see the destruction of their fledgling communities, agreed to perform the requested rites (RDNKK 1984, p. 60).

A second instance involved Nichirō's disciple Higo Ajari Nichizō 肥後阿闍梨日像 (1269-1342), the first person to preach Nichiren's teaching in Kyoto. Nichizō arrived in the imperial capital in 1294 and for years struggled against the opposition of older Buddhist sects. Three times he was banished from the city. He shrewdly backed Godaigo, however, agreeing to offer prayers for the exiled emperor's return to power. After the Kenmu Restoration Godaigo gave lands to Nichizō's temple, Myōken-ji 妙顯寺, and in 1334 he named it a *chokuganji* 勅願寺, or imperial prayer temple. This recognition opened the way for the various Nichiren lineages to establish themselves in the

capital, for Nichiren prelates to rise to high ecclesiastical office, and for influential nobles and warriors to be brought into the Nichiren fold (RDNKK 1984, pp. 109–14).

These two instances suggest that threats against Nichiren communities or opportunities to dramatically advance sectarian interests could cause the modification of the confrontational stance mandated by strict *Lotus* exclusivism, and thereby set precedents for more conciliatory behavior. This in itself is not surprising, but it is important to note that accommodations of this sort did not go unchallenged. Both of the above-mentioned instances drew scathing criticism from monks in the lineage of Byakuren Ajari Nikkō 白蓮阿闍梨日興 (1246–1333), another direct disciple of Nichiren, whose break in 1289 with the other leading disciples led to the first schism among Nichiren’s followers and the creation of the independent branch known as the Fuji school. Nikkō accused Nisshō and Nichirō of abandoning use of Nichiren’s name and assuming the protective rubric of “Tendai monks” so that they might escape persecution by offering prayers for the bakufu (*Honzon bun’yo chō* 本尊分与帳 [Record of distribution of the object of worship], RDNKK 1968, vol. 2, p. 112). Similar criticisms recur in documents of the Fuji school. Similarly, when Nichizō’s efforts resulted in the Myōken-ji being named an imperial prayer temple, Sanmi Ajari Nichijun 三位阿闍梨日順 (1294–1356), a disciple of Nikkō, wrote that Nichizō’s prayers amounted to slander of the Dharma and would only invite disaster (*Saija risshō shō* 摧邪立正抄 [On destroying error and establishing the right], RDNKK 1968, vol. 2, p. 354).

It is tempting to assume that the Fuji school critics, who were based in Suruga Province far from the major centers of political power, were simply unable to appreciate the challenges facing their counterparts in Kamakura and Kyoto. This is not quite the situation, however. In 1284, Nikkō had actually expressed sympathy for the leaders in Kamakura (*Misa-bō gohenji* 美作房御返事 [Reply to Misa-bō], RDNKK 1968, vol. 2, p. 145; 1984, pp. 60–62). It was not until well after the schism, in 1298, that he accused them of betraying Nichiren. Here we see the beginning of a pattern within the tradition, whereby individuals and groups would seek to establish their own orthodoxy vis-à-vis rival Nichiren lineages by reappropriating the exclusivistic position of their founder.

### *Admonishing the State*

To understand more clearly how the dynamics of confrontational exclusivism operated within the tradition, let us consider the practice

of “admonishing the state” (*kokka kangyō* 国家諫暁), an activity modeled on Nichiren’s memorializing of Hōjō Tokiyori via the *Risshō ankoku ron*. Throughout the medieval period, *kokka kangyō* represented, along with preaching and debate, an important vehicle for the *shakubuku* practice of the Hokkeshū (Lotus sect), as Nichiren Buddhism was then called. *Kokka kangyō* generally consisted of submitting letters of admonition (*mōshijō* 申状) to the ruler—the emperor or more frequently the shogun—or to his regional officials. Typically the *mōshijō* restated the message of the *Risshō ankoku ron*, urging the ruler to discard provisional teachings and take faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* alone so that the country might be at peace. Sometimes they requested sponsorship of a public debate with monks of other sects, in order to demonstrate the supremacy of Nichiren doctrine—an opportunity that Nichiren himself had sought in vain throughout his life. Often a copy of the *Risshō ankoku ron* itself was appended, or, less frequently, a work of the writer’s own composition setting forth a similar message. More than forty of these letters of admonition survive from between the years 1285 and 1596, with the great majority concentrated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (WATANABE 1976, pp. 135–40).

Going up to Kyoto to “admonish the state” is said to have been almost obligatory for anyone holding the office of abbot (*kanju* 貫首/貫主 or *bettō* 別当) of the head temple of a Hokke lineage in the Kantō area (RDNKK 1984, p. 115; NAKAO 1971, p. 64). Special respect seems to have accrued to those who made extraordinary efforts in such admonitions, or who, like Nichiren, incurred official displeasure in the attempt. Examples include Niudakyō Ajari Nichimoku 新田郷阿闍梨日目 (1260–1333) of the Fuji school, veteran of numerous debates and memorializings, who died at age seventy-four en route to Kyoto to admonish the emperor (*Soshi den* 祖師伝 [Biographies of the founding teachers], in HORI 1974–79, vol. 5, p. 34).

Jōgyōin Nichiyū 浄行院日祐 (1298–1374), of the Nakayama lineage in Shimōsa also journeyed to Kyoto in 1334 to present a letter of admonition to the newly reinstalled Godaigo, requesting imperial sponsorship for a debate between the Hokkeshū and other sects. He was arrested by the police upon presenting his letter and imprisoned for three days, giving him much satisfaction for having suffered persecution, even briefly, for the Dharma’s sake (*Ikki shoshū zengon kiroku* 一期所修善根記録 [Record of good deeds performed in a lifetime], RDNKK 1968, vol. 1, p. 447). Six years later he made the journey again to admonish the shogun, Ashikaga Takauji. Though his own writings make no mention of it, tradition has it that Nichiyū came close to being beheaded in the course of another remonstrance attempt in 1356 (*Dentō shō* 伝燈鈔 [Transmission of the lamp], RDNKK 1968, vol.



18, p. 54). Nichiyū was among the first leaders within the Hokke sect who had not known Nichiren personally. NAKAO Takashi suggests that his journeys to Kyoto to admonish first the emperor and then the shogun may have served to confirm him in his own eyes as a Dharma-heir to Nichiren and to solidify his leadership of the Nakayama lineage (1973, pp. 128–29).

The Ashikaga shoguns, while generally ready to allow the Hokke sect to preach and establish temples in Kyoto, sometimes punished repeated memorializing. This occasionally led to conflict, since Nichiren had set a precedent by making three admonitions. Genmyō Ajari Nichijū 玄妙阿闍梨日什 (1314–1392), founder of the Kenpon 顕本 Hokke school in Kyoto, remonstrated with the shogun, Yoshimitsu, twice in 1391, and was warned not to do so again. When his disciples Nichinin 日仁 and Nichijitsu 日実 memorialized Yoshimitsu again in 1398, they were arrested and tortured.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most famous case was that of Kuonjō-in Nisshin 久遠成院日親 (1407–1488) of the Nakayama lineage, who preached widely, founded thirty temples while based in Kyoto and Hizen, and memorialized high officials on eight occasions (*Honpō-ji monjo* 本法寺文書 [Documents of Honpō-ji], RDNKK 1984, p. 270). In 1439, Nisshin remonstrated with Ashikaga Yoshinori and was warned that a second attempt would be punished. His immediate response was to draft a memorial entitled *Risshō jikoku ron* 立正治国論 [Establishing the right teaching for governing the country] based on Nichiren's earlier treatise of similar name, intending to submit it on the thirty-third anniversary of the former shogun, Yoshimitsu's, death. But word leaked out, and before he could finish making a clean copy he was arrested and imprisoned, not to be released until Yoshinori was assassinated almost two years later. By Nisshin's own account (*Haniya shō* 埴谷抄 [Letter to Haniya]), he was placed with several others in a sort of cage, too low to stand upright in, with spikes driven through the top (KANMURI 1974, p. 5). Later hagiography has elaborated in lovingly gruesome detail on the tortures Nisshin endured in prison. He is often called Nabekamuri Shōnin 鍋冠り上人 (the pot-wearing saint) on the basis of the tradition that Yoshinori had a red-hot iron kettle placed over his head in a futile attempt to make him stop chanting the *daimoku* (*Nisshin Shōnin tokugyō ki* 日親上人徳行記 [Record of the virtuous deeds of Nisshin Shōnin], NAKAO 1971, pp. 71–77 and IMATANI 1989, pp. 27–31). Nisshin's writings make it clear that in rebuking “slander of the Dharma” in accordance with the

<sup>5</sup> For details of their activities see *Nichium ki* 日蓮記 [Record of Nichium] or *Monto koji* 門徒古事 [Former events of the school], RDNKK 1968, vol. 5, pp. 62–94.

strict practice of *shakubuku* he believed he was carrying out Nichiren's mandate to uphold the sole truth of the *Lotus Sūtra* even at the risk of one's own life (cf. NAKAO 1971, pp. 153–89).

The Ashikaga rulers generally tried to steer a neutral course amid sectarian conflicts, and were in no position to support Hokkeshū to the exclusion of other teachings even had they so desired (IMATANI 1989, p. 22). It seems likely, therefore, that "admonishing the state" was conducted for reasons other than the naive, literal expectation that these admonitions would be accepted. Viewed through the eyes of faith, admonishing the state may have seemed an act of bodhisattva-like devotion that established the karmic cause for one's own future enlightenment as well as that of the ruler and the people, and that freed one from the sin of complicity with slander of the Dharma. At times it could demand heroic courage and conviction. On a more pragmatic level, however, it seems also to have served as a way of demonstrating the sincerity of one or one's own lineage in upholding Nichiren's teachings, and thus of criticizing more accommodating Hokke lineages.

Men like Nisshin and other virtuosi of *shakubuku* may not have been altogether representative of medieval Hokkeshū leaders. In fact, evidence suggests that their confrontational approach was not always appreciated by Hokke temples that were already well established and had won patrons among the leading nobles and daimyō. Nichinin and Nichijitsu's memorializing of Yoshimitsu and other high officials was viewed with alarm by older Hokke temples in Kyoto such as Honkoku-ji and Myōhon-ji, who saw in it a threat to their security and reputation (RDNKK 1984, pp. 222–23). Nisshin, before coming to Kyoto, had actually been expelled from the lineage of his own temple, the Nakayama Hokekyō-ji in Shimōsa, after he had sharply and repeatedly criticized both the temple's abbot and its chief lay patron for tolerating herodox practices within the community (NAKAO 1973, pp. 268–70).

Nevertheless men such as Nisshin won the Hokke sect numerous converts, and they are celebrated as martyrs and exemplars in the annals of the Nichiren tradition. In maintaining the stance of confrontational *shakubuku* they kept alive the normative ideal of exclusive devotion to the *Lotus* and acted as a check on the accommodations made to secular authority by more conciliatory elements. Through the practice of "admonishing the state," Hokkeshū defined its still young tradition as sole possessor of the truth that could bring peace to the country, thereby preserving Nichiren's claim of access to an ultimate source of moral authority that transcended even that of the ruler.

*Lotus Exclusivism and the Rise of the machishū*

Beginning around the fifteenth century, *Lotus* exclusivism found increasing expression in the regulation of Hokke temple communities, or *monto* 門徒, especially in Kyoto. In 1413 Myōkaku-ji, representing one of the more radically exclusivistic Hokke *monto*, enacted a set of regulations that forbade temple adherents from worshipping at the halls and shrines of other sects, making donations to their monks, or receiving alms from those who did not follow the *Lotus Sūtra*. A man marrying outside the Hokke sect was to convert his wife within three years or both would be expelled. Some exceptions were made for court nobles or warrior officials who might have to violate such rules in the course of duty (*Myōkaku-ji hōshiki* 妙覚寺法式 [Regulations of Myōkaku-ji], RDNKK 1984, pp. 280–82). In 1451 Honnō-ji and Honkō-ji, both in the newly founded Happon lineage, adopted similar, even stricter regulations that further prohibited adherents from engaging the services of mediums (*miko*) or diviners (*kannagi*), attending the ceremonies of other sects, or making offerings at their religious events. All efforts were to be made to convert the spouses of sons and daughters as well as household servants (*Shinjin hatto ji* 信心法度事 [Regulations of faith], RDNKK 1984, pp. 283–84).

Such policies were initiated, at least in part, in reaction to a perceived tendency toward accommodation, especially among the Hokke lineages with older roots in the capital that had patrons among the aristocrats and ranking warriors and that supported themselves largely by providing ritual services for this clientele. In 1466 growing concern over threats from Mt. Hiei led to an accord, signed by almost every Hokke *monto* in Kyoto, that affirmed strict prohibitions against visiting the shrines and temples of those who “slander the Dharma” or receiving their alms. *Shakubuku* was to be practiced single-mindedly (*Kanshō meiyaku* 寛正盟約 [Kanshō-era accord]; see RDNKK 1984, pp. 301–303).

Historian FUJII Manabu sees this increasingly institutionalized exclusivism as the means by which the emerging Kyoto *machishū* 町衆 (townspeople)—largely composed of Hokke believers—asserted their independence from the older feudal authority represented by the major shrines and temples, especially Mt. Hiei (1960, pp. 45–46). From the time Hokke monks first began preaching in Kyoto in the early fourteenth century they had won ardent support from these largely mercantile communities, whose wealth, in turn, enabled the Hokke sect to flourish beyond any other sect in the capital. It eventually boasted twenty-one temples, the majority of which were in the lower city (*shimogyō* 下京), where the *machishū* were concentrated (FUJII 1972a, pp. 70, 71). As the *machishū* prospered, their interests came

increasingly into conflict with both the older landholding feudal powers, to whom they were liable for various rents and taxes, and the rural peasant leagues (*do-ikki* 土一揆), often organized under the banner of Ikkō or Shin Buddhism. After the Ōnin War (1467–1477), when the Ashikaga became too weak to police the city, the townspeople increasingly armed themselves against attack by the peasants and by warlords from the provinces eager to seize power in the capital. The major Hokkeshū temples were transformed into virtual fortresses. The exclusivistic stance of the Hokke *monto* as reflected in the 1466 accord was no doubt an expression of an urgently felt need for *machishū* solidarity as well as an effective means of bringing it about. In the opinion of IMATANI Akira, it was the Hokke sect, with its strong tendencies toward exclusivism and combativeness, that enabled the effective armed unification of the townspeople (1989, p. 71).

The extent of Hokkeshū-organized *machishū* unity was powerfully demonstrated during a threatened attack by Ikkō forces in the summer of 1532. For days, thousands of townsmen rode or marched in formation through the city in a display of armed readiness, carrying banners that read *Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō* and chanting the *daimoku*. This was the beginning of the so-called *Hokke ikki* 法華一揆 (Lotus Confederation, or Lotus Uprising). Allied with the forces of the shogunal deputy, Hosokawa Harumoto, they repelled the attack and destroyed the Yamashina Hongan-ji, the Ikkō stronghold. For four years the Hokkeshū *monto* in effect maintained an autonomous government in Kyoto, establishing their own organizations to police the city and carry out judicial functions. They not only refused to pay rents and taxes, but—according to complaints from Mt. Hiei—also forcibly converted the common people and prohibited worship at the temples of other sects (*San'in shugi shū* 三院衆議集, cited in FUJII 1972b, p. 95).

The older religious institutions resented the resulting erosion of their authority in the capital. In the spring of 1536 one Matsumoto Shinzaemon 松本新左衛門, a lay Hokke adherent from Mobara in Kazusa, challenged a ranking Tendai prelate during a public sermon, and the preacher proved unable to rebut him (IMATANI 1989, pp. 176–204). Infuriated by this humiliation, the monks of Mt. Hiei mustered allies, and in the seventh month of 1536 burned every Hokkeshū temple in Kyoto, laying waste to much of the city in the process. The *machishū* resisted bravely and many were killed. The Nichiren monks fled to Sakai, where the various *monto* had branch temples. The Hokke sect was permitted to reestablish itself in Kyoto in 1542, but its former power had been broken.

In this case, *Lotus* exclusivism helped define and unite a confedera-

tion of urban communities, the Kyoto *machishū*, and for a time served to advance their aspirations for political and economic independence. It also worked, in the end, to undermine the very successes they achieved. To say that exclusive commitment to the *Lotus Sūtra* served political ends is in no way to deny that it was, for many, a matter of deep and genuine religious conviction. It is important to note, however, that *Lotus* exclusivism has often been embedded in specific social and institutional concerns, as the *Hokke ikki* clearly shows.

*“Institutional Radicalism” and the fuju fuse Controversy*

We have already noted that *Lotus* exclusivism could take the form of resistance to the ruling authority. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the so-called Nichiren *fuju fuse* 不受不施 movement of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. *Fuju fuse*—“to neither receive nor offer”—refers to the principle that believers in the *Lotus Sūtra* should neither receive alms from nor bestow alms upon nonbelievers (even the ruler himself), whether in the form of material donations or religious services. Although, as noted above, occasional compromises had been made in the early history of certain Nichiren communities, this principle had been widely honored during medieval times. Under the Ashikaga, the Hokke sect several times sought and obtained exemptions from participating in bakufu-sponsored religious events (MIYAZAKI 1969, pp. 159–60, 177–80).

Matters had changed, however, by 1595, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi demanded that a hundred monks from each of the ten sects take part in a series of monthly memorial services for his deceased relatives, to be held before a great Buddha image he had commissioned at Hōkō-ji on Higashiyama. Although cooperation was clearly a violation of orthodox principle, involving participation in non-Hokkeshū ceremonies (an act of complicity in “slandering the Dharma”), the performance of religious services for the nonbeliever Hideyoshi, and the reception of his offerings in the form of a ceremonial meal, the Hokke sect was at the time in a poor position to refuse. It had never fully recovered from the blow dealt it in 1536 as a result of the *hokke ikki*, and had suffered further suppression by Oda Nobunaga (McMULLIN 1984, pp. 204–209; RDNKK 1984, pp. 470–93). A hastily gathered council of the leading Nichiren prelates in Kyoto agreed that refusing Hideyoshi would be dangerous, and decided to participate just once in deference to his command before reasserting the sect’s policy. In actuality, however, most of the Nichiren temples continued to participate for the full twenty years that the observances

continued (*Shūgi seihō ron* 宗義制法論 [Regulations based on our sect's teachings], cited in HUNTER 1989, p. 401).

Virtually the only dissenting voice was that of Busshō-in Nichiō 仏性院日奥 (1565–1630), abbot of Myōkaku-ji. Isolated at first by his refusal to participate, Nichiō was compelled to leave his temple and depart Kyoto. Years later, in response to criticism that Hideyoshi would have destroyed the Hokke temples had the sect failed to comply, Nichiō replied that the essence of the sect lay, not in its institutions, but in the principle of exclusive devotion to the *Lotus*:

Refusing to accept offerings from those who slander the Dharma is the first principle of our sect and its most important rule. Therefore the saints of former times all defied the commands of the ruler to observe it, even at the cost of their lives.... If we fail to defy the ruler's stern command, how will we meet great persecution [for the Dharma's sake]? If we do not meet such persecution, the sūtra passage "not begrudging bodily life" becomes false and meaningless.... If our temples are destroyed because we uphold [our sect's] Dharma-principle, that is [still in accord with] the original intent and meaning of this sect. What would there be to regret? (*Shūgi seihō ron*, in KASHIWABARA and FUJII 1973, pp. 309–10)

In time Nichiō's position began to win support, and the Nichiren sect became deeply divided between the proponents of *fujū fuse* and the supporters of *ju fuse* 受不施 (receiving but not offering), a conciliatory faction that maintained it was permissible to accept offerings from a ruler who had not yet embraced the *Lotus Sūtra*.

The controversy was enacted against the backdrop of the new Tokugawa government's efforts to consolidate its hegemony. Whether from fear for the sect's survival, alarm at losing parishioners to the *fujū fuse* movement, or a desire to gain influence for themselves, the *ju fuse* faction frequently appealed to the bakufu to suppress the *fujū fuse* movement, a course of action that coincided with Tokugawa interests as well. When the opponents of Nichiō sought to have him punished, Tokugawa Ieyasu summoned the two sides to debate in his presence, declared Nichiō the loser, and exiled him to Tsushima in 1600. In 1609 the *fujū fuse* advocate Jōrakuin Nikkyō 常樂院日經 and five of his disciples were arrested and paraded through the streets of Kyoto, had their noses and ears cut off, and were then sentenced to exile.

With the establishment of the new shogunal capital in Edo, the controversy shifted to the Kantō region. In 1630, at the instigation of the *ju fuse* side, the bakufu organized a debate between Hokke monks from the temples of Minobu, representing the conciliatory faction,

and Ikegami, representing the *fujū fuse* position, and decided in favor of the Minobu side. *Fujū fuse* leaders were exiled and their temples given to their opponents. Many of the major lineages signed agreements upholding the conciliatory position (KAGEYAMA 1959, p. 110). The *fujū fuse* movement itself was proscribed, along with Christianity, and an edict specifically designed to eliminate it was promulgated in 1665. Clergy and laity refusing to comply were imprisoned, exiled, or executed, while others committed suicide in protest (AIBA 1972, pp. 111–13; KAGEYAMA 1959, pp. 111–13). Sporadic arrests and punishments continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially in Kazusa and Shimōsa, where the *fujū fuse* movement had been particularly active. Small underground *fujū fuse* communities nevertheless managed to survive, resurfacing and gaining legal recognition in 1876. If *Lotus* exclusivism often invited persecution, there is no denying that it also instilled the courage to endure it.

Jeffrey HUNTER has appropriately termed the *fujū fuse* stance “institutionally radical,” because it “affirm[s] absolutely the claims of religion over the state, of its own truth over that of all other Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings, and of religious over secular imperatives in the lives of its monks and lay followers” (1989, p. 10). For *fujū fuse* proponents, as for Nichiren centuries earlier, the idea of the *Lotus* as a truth transcending all other claims provided a basis for resistance to ruling authority that was not otherwise available in the political theory of the times. This subversive potential of *Lotus* exclusivism is noted, obliquely, in the virulent anti-Nichiren polemics of Shinchō 真超 (1596–1659), a onetime Nichiren priest who converted to the Tendai sect:

In particular, the sacred deity revered in the present age is the great manifestation of the Tōshōgū [i.e., the deified Tokugawa Ieyasu], worshipped on Mt. Nikkō. However, the followers of Nichiren slander him, saying, “Lord Ieyasu rewarded the Pure Land sect but punished the Nichiren sect. His spirit is surely in the Avīci hell. [The authorities] have expended gold and silver in vain, causing suffering to the populace, to erect a shrine unparalleled in the realm that in reality represents the decline of the country and houses an evil demon.” ... Are they not great criminals and traitors? (SHINCHŌ 1654, 1, pp. 4–5)

Recognition of the *Lotus* as the final source of authority in effect created a moral space exterior to that of the ruler and his order, wherein that order could be transcended and criticized. Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, Ieyasu, and later Tokugawa shoguns—men who sought to bring the entire country under their rule—were not slow to perceive the threat, and took special pains to break the autonomy of the Nichiren sect.

This is not to suggest that Nichirenist exclusivism is *inherently* subversive of authority. For a counter-example one need merely look to the four years of Hokke *montō* rule in Kyoto, when they used their exclusive truth claim to justify imposing their own authority on others. Yet at those times when Nichiren followers have found themselves on the margins of ruling power structures, *Lotus* exclusivism has often provided a moral basis for challenging the authority of those structures. With the suppression of the *fūjū fuse* movement, that moral basis was obscured; Nichiren temples, like those of all Buddhist sects, were subsumed under bakufu control. Sectarian debate was forbidden by law, and confrontational *shakubuku* itself went underground. The Nichiren seminaries emphasized inclusive Tendai studies, and only the handful of students achieving the highest scholarly rank were permitted to study some of Nichiren's writings—probably, it has been suggested, to prevent youthful priests from becoming too enthused with Nichiren's passion for *shakubuku* (ASAI 1945, p. 84; KAGEYAMA 1965, p. 185).

#### *Shakubuku in the Modern Period: Critics and Proponents*

Some two hundred years later, amid the intellectual and social ferment that accompanied the decline of the bakufu and the entry of foreign influences into Japan, the conflict between accommodative and confrontational Nichirenist positions would reemerge. Attempts had already begun within the Nichiren tradition to codify doctrine based on Nichiren's writings, independently of the strong Tendai influence that had pervaded its seminaries during the Tokugawa period. Crucial to such reformulations was the question of what role *shakubuku* should play in the changing era.

A pivotal figure in this connection was the scholar Udana-in Nichiki 優陀那院日輝 (1800–1859), one of the pioneers of modern Nichiren sectarian studies. Nichiki argued forcefully for abandoning traditional *shakubuku* in favor of the milder *shōju*. Although influenced by the accommodative Nichiren scholarship of the Tokugawa period, Nichiki's position derived explicitly from Nichiren's admonition that the method of spreading the *Lotus Sūtra* should accord with the times. He was acutely aware of mounting anti-Buddhist sentiment, having studied the critiques of Tominaga Nakatomo (1715–1746) and Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843) (see KETELAAR 1990, pp. 19–36) and having personally witnessed the ruthless suppression of Buddhism in the Mito domain (MIYAKAWA 1977, p. 122). Nichiki saw clearly that Buddhism had long since lost its intellectual hegemony, and that the Nichiren



sect from then on would have to coexist, not only with other, more influential, forms of Buddhism, but with Confucianism, Nativism, and various European intellectual traditions.

In his *Gukyō yōgi* 弘經要義 [Essentials of disseminating the sūtra], Nichiki argued that *shakubuku* was inappropriate in an age when changing one's sectarian affiliation was prohibited by law. Criticizing other sects was also apt to provoke anger, making people adhere all the more firmly to their original beliefs and preventing them from learning the True Way. An effective expedient in Nichiren's time, *shakubuku* was now an outmoded approach that could only provoke contempt from educated people (JŪGŌEN 1975, vol. 3, p. 3). Elsewhere, Nichiki wrote that the *shakubuku* method was readily misused by those deficient in scholarship and patience, and that those attached to its form often lacked the compassion that represents its true intent. Moreover, their arrogant attacks on other sects could drive previously innocent people to commit the sin of slandering the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Shiku kakugen ben* 四句格言弁 [Discussion of the four declarations], JŪGŌEN 1975, vol. 4, p. 318).

In the *Shōshaku shintai ron* 撰折進退論 [The choice of *shōju* or *shakubuku*], Nichiki welded such arguments to a reinterpretation of traditional *mappō* thought. *Shakubuku*, he said, had been appropriate during the first five hundred years of *mappō*, a period defined in the *Ta-chi ching* [Great collection of sūtras] as the fifth of five five-hundred-year periods in the decline of the Dharma following the Buddha's parinirvāṇa (T #397, 13.363b). Calculating from the year 1052, which pre-modern Japanese scholars generally identified as the start of *mappō*, Nichiki concluded that this fifth five-hundred-year period, during which Nichiren had lived and taught, had ended in the year 1551 (JŪGŌEN 1975, vol. 4, p. 332). Moreover, in Nichiren's time Japan had been a country that slandered the Buddha Dharma, and so *shakubuku* was appropriate; now it was a country evil by virtue of its ignorance of Buddhism, so *shōju* was preferred. Nichiki listed several occasions after the supposed 1551 turning point when, in his opinion, blind attachment to *shakubuku* had needlessly brought down on the sect the wrath of the authorities (JŪGŌEN 1975, vol. 4, p. 336).

Nichiki even asserted that the *Risshō ankoku ron*, long regarded as the embodiment of Nichiren's *shakubuku* practice, no longer suited the times (*Kōjutsu zattō* 庚白雜答 [Answers to various questions in the year 1850], JŪGŌEN 1975, vol. 4, p. 372). MIYAKAWA Ryōtoku suggests that in rejecting the *Risshō ankoku ron* for its connection with *shakubuku*, Nichiki also rejected its premise that the tranquility of the nation depends on establishing the True Dharma (1977, p. 125). If so, this represents a far greater departure from Nichiren's teaching than

the mere adoption of a different form of propagation. It is ironic that in striving to implement Nichiren's admonition that propagation of the *Lotus Sūtra* should fit the times, Nichiki arrived at a concept of the religion considerably different from Nichiren's.

Nichiki's work has raised difficult hermeneutic questions about which elements define the Nichiren tradition and the extent to which they can be altered without compromising its integrity. Such questions are especially troubling for those involved in the formulation of normative doctrinal interpretations. Studies of Nichiki by Nichiren sectarian scholars today show a certain ambivalence, combining a frank admiration for his innovative attempts to meet the challenges of the Bakumatsu period with serious reservations about the extent to which he reread the doctrine (cf. ASAI 1958 and ONO 1977). Few if any Nichiren communities today engage in confrontational debate-style *shakubuku*, but there remains a general unwillingness to erase it from the rhetoric of orthodoxy in the explicit manner Nichiki proposed.

Nichiki's disciples were to play key roles in guiding the Nichiren sect through the turbulent years of the early Meiji period, when the promulgation of the Shinto-Buddhist Separation Edicts, aimed at disestablishing Buddhism and promoting a Shinto-based state ideology, sparked the brief but violent wave of anti-Buddhist persecution known as *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈. Foremost among these disciples was Arai Nissatsu 新居日薩 (1830–1888), who in 1874 became the first superintendent (*kanchō* 管長) of several allied branches within the Nichiren sect (the present Nichirenshū was officially incorporated under this name in 1876). Like many other Buddhist leaders during the persecution years, Nissatsu saw intersectarian cooperation as his sect's sole hope of survival, a view reflecting his teacher Nichiki's position on the inappropriacy of continued confrontation.<sup>6</sup> Nissatsu devoted much of his career to such cooperation, often in the face of criticism from within his own sect. Nissatsu was active in the Shoshū Dōtoku Kaimei 諸宗同徳会盟 (Intersectarian Cooperative League), organized in 1868 in an attempt to counter the Meiji government's anti-Buddhist policies.

Like thousands of other educated priests, both Shinto and Buddhist, Nissatsu was inducted into the Daikyōin (Great Teaching Academy), the administrative center of the Kyōbushō (Ministry of Doctrine), as a doctrinal instructor charged with disseminating the Shinto-derived "Great Teaching" that formed the new state orthodoxy. While there, he supported the efforts of the prominent Nishi Hongan-ji leader Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911) to have the

<sup>6</sup> The rhetorical strategies of transectarianism elaborated by Buddhist ideologues during this era are analyzed in KETELAAR 1990, especially pages 174–91 and following.

Great Teaching Academy dissolved in the name of freedom of religion. Nissatsu was also instrumental in launching intersectarian Buddhist social welfare projects on the Christian model, instituting a program of prison chaplaincy in 1873 and founding an orphanage in 1876. In 1877 he joined such noted Buddhist leaders as Shimaji, Shaku Unshō 釈雲照, Fukuda Gyōkai 福田行闈, and Ōuchi Seiran 大内青巒 in forming the Wakyōkai 和敬会 (Society for Harmony and Respect) to promote intersectarian understanding.

While still at the Great Teaching Academy, Nissatsu is said to have produced a curious, ecumenical rereading of Nichiren's "four declarations." As mentioned above, the four declarations are "Nenbutsu leads to Avīci hell, Zen is a devil, Shingon will destroy the nation, and Ritsu is a traitor." By assigning alternative readings to the characters and rearranging the syntactical markers that govern the Japanese reading of the text, Nissatsu produced: "Because we contemplate the Buddha, ceaselessly devils are quieted; because our words are true, traitors who would destroy the nation are subdued" (MAKINOUCHI 1937, pp. 66–67). Needless to say, this completely undercuts the critical intent of the original reading. That Nissatsu would so radically alter a statement long considered fundamental to the tradition suggests not only his commitment to Nichiki's nonconfrontational *shōju* approach but also his recognition of the difficulties posed by traditional *Lotus* exclusivism at a time when Buddhist leaders of all denominations saw the need to unite for their very survival.

The moderation adopted by Nichiki and his disciples differed somewhat from that seen in earlier Nichiren Buddhism in that it represented, not the complacency of established institutions, but an active, creative attempt to respond to changing times. Other Nichiren Buddhists, however, reacted in a quite different manner. One can point, for example, to a sudden rise of *shakubuku* activity on the part of many lay Nichiren Buddhists in the Bakumatsu period, often in defiance of bakufu authority. A certain Surugaya Shichihyōe, a secondhand clothes dealer active through his lay association in the study of Nichiren's writings, was banished from Edo and had his shop confiscated for practicing *shakubuku* against other sects. Akahata Jingyō 赤旗深行, the son of a pharmacist in Nihonbashi, was thrown in prison and poisoned for displaying a flag emblazoned with the four declarations and criticizing the bakufu policy prohibiting changes of sectarian affiliation (ISHIKAWA 1977, p. 79).

The reasons underlying this upsurge of *shakubuku* in the Bakumatsu period may perhaps be found in the writings of the Nichiren scholar and lay believer Ogawa Taidō 小川泰堂 (1814–1878), said to have been Akahata Jingyō's teacher. Ogawa's *Shinbutsu hōkoku ron* 信仏報國論 [On

having faith in Buddhism and repaying one's obligation to the country], written in 1863, compares the crises afflicting late Tokugawa Japan—crop failures, epidemics, earthquakes, internal unrest, and foreign interference—to the disasters that ravaged the country in Nichiren's day and that prompted his writing of the *Risshō ankoku ron*. Then as now, Ogawa declared, "The safety of the nation depends on the prosperity of the Buddha Dharma" (OGAWA 1991, p. 132). Ogawa was highly critical of those who advocated *shōju* as the appropriate practice for the age. Since only the *Lotus Sūtra* had the power to secure the peace of the nation, he argued, *shakubuku* was the essential way to repay one's debt to Japan. However, he went on, the contemporary situation differed from that in Nichiren's time in that there now existed a well-established Nichiren sect unfortunately marred by internal corruption. Thus *shakubuku* must now entail not only challenges to other sects but a rigorous internal purification. "The time has come when both the Dharma of the ruler and the Dharma of Buddhism must undergo reformation," OGAWA warned (1991, p. 138). For Ogawa, such reformation clearly did not include the early Meiji Buddhist transsectarianism. In an 1872 petition to Ōe Taku, governor of Kanagawa Prefecture, Ogawa asserted that Nenbutsu, Shingon, Tendai, and other forms of Buddhism did not accord with the principles of "revering the kami and loving the nation"; he urged that they be abolished by the imperial court and that Nichiren's teaching alone be endorsed as the true Buddhism (OGAWA 1991, pp. 456–59).

By the second decade of Meiji, when Buddhist organizations were recovering from the anti-Buddhist policies of the immediate post-Restoration years, certain Nichiren clerics and lay leaders began to reassert the tradition's exclusive truth claim in a more forceful manner, bringing them into direct conflict with the new rhetoric of inter-sectarian unity. Attacks appeared in several Japanese Buddhist journals after two prominent Nichiren prelates wrote to John Barrows, chairman of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, urging that "illegitimate" forms of Buddhism should not be represented at the Parliament (KETELAAR 1990, p. 160). Another, possibly related, incident involved the editing of the *Bukkyō kakushū kōyō* 仏教各宗綱要 [Essentials of the Buddhist sects] compiled by the Bukkyō Kakushū Kyōkai 仏教各宗協会 (Buddhist Transsectarian Committee), to which each of the major Japanese Buddhist traditions had been asked to submit an essay outlining its essentials of doctrine. Honda Nisshō 本多日生 (1867–1931), a prominent cleric of the Nichiren denomination Kenpon Hokkeshū, had been asked to edit the section dealing with the Nichiren tradition. Two subsections of his manuscript—one on the "four declarations" and the other on "admonitions against

slander of the Dharma”—were rejected by Shimaji Mokurai, chief of the editorial board, as obstructive to the aims of the Transsectarian Committee. The resulting disagreement not only delayed publication for some years but escalated into a major ideological controversy, in the course of which Nisshō filed suit in the Tokyo courts. Though ultimately unsuccessful in having the editorial decision reversed, Nisshō gained a great deal of publicity and used the opportunity to revive support for *shakubuku* within the Nichiren sect (ISOBE 1931, pp. 75–103; KETELAAR 1990, p. 198).

Along with the resurgence of hardline *Lotus* exclusivism, this period saw new forms of Nichirenist rhetoric linking *shakubuku* to militant imperialism. An early and influential example was Tanaka Chigaku 田中智学 (1861–1939). As a novice priest at the Nichiren Academy (Daikyōin 大教院), recently established under the leadership of Arai Nissatsu, Tanaka is said to have become disillusioned with the accommodating *shōju* approach of the new Nichiki-school orthodoxy, which he saw as contradicting Nichiren’s claim for the sole truth of the *Lotus*. The new Meiji era, when sectarian affiliation was no longer restricted by law, impressed Tanaka as the perfect moment for a revitalization of *shakubuku* (TANABE 1989, pp. 193–99). He left the academy and eventually became a lay evangelist of “Nichirenism” (*Nichirensugui* 日蓮主義), a popularized Nichiren doctrine welded to nationalistic aspirations. In Tanaka’s thought, *shakubuku* became the vehicle not merely for protection of the nation, but also for imperial expansion. In his *Shūmon no ishin* 宗門之維新 (Restoration of the [Nichiren] sect), published in 1901, he wrote:

Nichiren is the general of the army that will unite the world.  
Japan is his headquarters. The people of Japan are his troops;  
teachers and scholars of Nichiren Buddhism are his officers.  
The Nichiren creed is a declaration of war, and *shakubuku* is  
the plan of attack.... Japan truly has a heavenly mandate to  
unite the world. (translation from LEE 1975, p. 26)

Similar rhetoric, likening—even equating—the spread of the *Lotus Sūtra* through *shakubuku* with the extension of Japanese territory by armed force, recurred in Nichiren Buddhist circles up through WWII. It was linked to broader issues of modern Japanese nationalism, imperialist aspirations, and the position of religious institutions under the wartime government; Nichiren groups were by no means unique among Buddhist institutions in their support—willing or otherwise—for militarism. While such issues are too complex to be discussed here, it should be noted that the understanding of *shakubuku* proposed during the modern imperial period differed from that of any

other era in that it was aligned with, rather than critical of, the ruling powers.

*Postwar Shakubuku and Sōka Gakkai*

In the postwar period, among the many Nichiren Buddhist denominations, confrontational *shakubuku* was represented almost exclusively by the Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 (Value Creation Society), which began as a lay organization of Nichiren Shōshū. A descendent of the Fuji school, long isolated from major centers of political power, Nichiren Shōshū was able to maintain an identity as the most rigorously purist of all Nichiren denominations, an orientation the early Sōka Gakkai inherited. Sōka Gakkai was also one of very few Buddhist groups able to claim that it had, in a sense, resisted the wartime government: its first president, Makiguchi Tsunesaburō 牧口常三郎 (1871–1944), and twenty other leaders were arrested in 1943 for *lèse majesté* and violation of the Peace Preservation Act, charges stemming from their *shakubuku* activities and their refusal to worship Shinto deities. Makiguchi died in prison (HORI 1974–79, vol. 9, pp. 428–33).

Sōka Gakkai's reputation for aggressive proselytizing was forged in the 1950s, during the "great march of *shakubuku*" (*shakubuku no daikōshin* 折伏の大成) launched by its second president, Toda Jōsei 戸田城聖 (1900–1958), at his inaugural ceremony on 3 May 1951. It was on this occasion that Toda first made his famous declaration, "If I fail to convert 750,000 families through *shakubuku*, don't hold a funeral for me—just dump my ashes into the sea off Shinagawa." Members were armed with the *Shakubuku kyōten* 折伏教典 [Manual of *shakubuku*]. This handbook, liberally interspersed with quotations from Nichiren, set forth the essentials of the *Lotus Sūtra* and Nichiren's teachings and provided sample arguments for countering the objections of prospective converts. The chief forum for *shakubuku* was—and still is—the small neighborhood discussion meeting (*zadankai* 座談会). In addition, members of the youth division pressured Buddhist priests and the leaders of New Religions to engage with them in debate (MURATA 1969, p. 99). By the time Toda died in 1958 his goal had been exceeded. This was the period that laid the foundation for Sōka Gakkai's present status as the largest of the New Religions.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Since Sōka Gakkai began as a lay organization of a traditional Buddhist denomination, Nichiren Shōshū, the "New Religion" label may not be altogether appropriate. On the other hand, its ethos and organizational structure are strikingly similar to those of many so-called New Religions.

Explanations for Sōka Gakkai's startling postwar success include crisis theory, urban dislocation, the promise of worldly benefits, the opportunities for advancement that the organizational structure offered to those of low social status, and so forth. However, an equally important factor was the compelling way in which Sōka Gakkai refigured the central claim of Nichiren Buddhism for the exclusive truth of the *Lotus Sūtra*. In Nichiren's eyes, it had been slander of the Dharma—rejection of the *Lotus Sūtra*—that had brought Japan to the brink of destruction by the Mongols; the recent horrors of WWII and its aftermath could be attributed to the same cause. As the *Shakubuku kyōten* states:

Though this most secret and supreme True Dharma had already been established in Japan, for seven hundred years people did not see or hear it, were not moved by it, and did not seek to understand it. Thus they suffered collective punishment, and the nation was destroyed.... Just as the Japanese once trembled in fear of invasion by the Mongols, so are they terrified by atomic weapons today. (SŌKA GAKKAI KYŌGAKUBU 1968, pp. 265–66)

Specifics of the contemporary political situation were woven into such explanations. Nichiren, for example, had claimed on the basis of canonical sources that Brahma, the world-ruling deity in Buddhist cosmology, would punish a country that slandered the True Dharma; Toda apparently believed that General Douglas MacArthur had carried out Brahma's task, punishing Japan for its slanders and paving the way for the spread of the True Dharma by mandating freedom of religion (IKEDA 1965, pp. 132, 149, 152). In this way wartime and postwar sufferings, both individual and collective, were made comprehensible by bringing them within Nichiren's explanatory framework.

Sōka Gakkai's interpretation of events involved empowerment as well as explanation. If the war and the Occupation stemmed ultimately from "slander of the Dharma," then it was the ordinary men and women of Sōka Gakkai who, through *shakubuku*, were rectifying this fundamental evil once and for all. To quote the *Shakubuku kyōten* again:

You should realize that you were born into the Final Dharma age with this mission [i.e., to save all people through *shakubuku*].... If we really desire to rebuild a peaceful Japan and establish peace throughout the world, then, without begrudging our lives, we must advance *shakubuku* to convey the Wonderful Dharma [to all] as soon as possible, even by a single day or a single hour. (SŌKA GAKKAI KYŌGAKUBU 1968, pp. 393–94)

Thus *shakubuku* as reconstructed in the postwar Sōka Gakkai was not only a means of eradicating the “slander of the Dharma” that had led the country to war but also a noble mission that, by spreading faith in the True Dharma, would prevent such tragedies from ever occurring again. Wartime suffering and postwar proselytizing were subsumed within an unfolding global drama of human salvation in which Sōka Gakkai members played the leading role. The empowerment derived from the conviction that one’s personal efforts are directly linked to world transformation has no doubt been a major part of Sōka Gakkai’s appeal all along.

Although the earlier image of Sōka Gakkai as an aggressive, militant, even fanatical organization still persists, it is no longer entirely accurate—since the 1970s, explicit denunciations of other religions have increasingly given way to cultural activities and Sōka Gakkai’s peace movement (see MURATA 1969, pp. 124–29). In the process, the word *shakubuku* has undergone a semantic shift and is now frequently used as a simple synonym for proselytizing, without necessarily signifying the rebuking of “wrong teachings.”

These changes have come about for a variety of reasons. Mounting external criticism was one. Sōka Gakkai came under fire for its political involvement (such as its founding of the Kōmeitō, the Clean Government Party, in 1964) and for problems arising from over-zealous evangelizing (as when new converts would destroy ancestral tablets [*ihai* 位然] without the consent of other family members in the name of “removing slander of the Dharma” [*hōbō barai* 謗法払い]). Other factors contributing to the more moderate stance were a muting of the sense of urgency as the hardships of the postwar years receded, and, most fundamentally, an overall effort at “mainstreaming” as the organization became solidly established.

The shift away from confrontational Nichirenist exclusivism also played a role—though not a central one—in the 1991 schism between Sōka Gakkai and its parent organization, Nichiren Shōshū. While the roots of this struggle go back many years, the triggering event seems to have been a speech delivered by Ikeda Daisaku 池田大作 (1928–), Sōka Gakkai’s honorary president and de facto leader, at an organizational leaders’ meeting on 16 November 1990. Several of the points in this address that were deemed objectionable by the Nichiren Shōshū Bureau of Administrative Affairs were expressions of Ikeda’s desire to modify the confrontational stance of traditional *shakubuku*. Ikeda is alleged to have said, for example, that “[statements such as] ‘Shingon will destroy the nation’ and ‘Zen is a devil’ merely degrade the Dharma,” and that in today’s society Sōka Gakkai’s peace movement



and cultural activities represent the most viable means of propagation. On a later occasion Ikeda reportedly made remarks that unfavorably compared Nichiren's harsh public image with the gentler image of Shinran, and urged that Nichiren's compassionate side be emphasized as "a requirement of *shakubuku* from now on." The Nichiren Shōshū leaders countered that practitioners must follow Nichiren's teachings and not social opinion—the basis of spreading Buddhism in the Final Dharma age is to "repudiate what is false and establish what is right," as indicated in the *Risshō ankoku ron*. To select only the congenial aspects of Nichiren's teaching, they charged, is to distort it (NICHIREN SHŌSHŪ 1991, pp. 30–31).

This aspect of the present rift—only one of several—may be seen as yet another round in the struggle between confrontation and conciliation that has characterized the entire history of Nichiren Buddhism. Ironically, it is the once-confrontational Sōka Gakkai that has assumed the moderate position, while—at least on a rhetorical level—the traditional denomination, Nichiren Shōshū, has become re-radicalized.

### *Conclusion*

As this brief overview illustrates, Nichirenist exclusivism is far more complex than mere "intolerance." It has rarely been purely a matter of religious doctrine (although that too has played a role). At any given time it has been intertwined with specific social, political, and institutional concerns. It served to crystallize resistance to various forms of political authority throughout the medieval period; was suppressed under Tokugawa rule; was revived with a powerfully nationalistic orientation in Meiji; and has been refigured as the basis of a peace movement in the postwar years.

Although the claim to possess the sole Dharma leading to liberation in the Final Dharma age is integral to Nichiren doctrine, the Nichiren sect as an institution has rarely been monolithically committed to confrontational *shakubuku* practice. Rather, there has existed an ongoing tension between confrontational and accommodating factions, the boundaries between the two often shifting in the course of institutional development and social change. At times the two tendencies have held each other in balance, each checking the other's extremes; at other times the tension between them has produced some of the sect's worst internecine conflict. Rigorous exclusivism and confrontational *shakubuku* seem to resurface powerfully at times of social upheaval or perceived national danger, or when one branch of the sect feels a need to assert its own superior orthodoxy vis-à-vis others.

For, while *shakubuku* is a practice directed externally toward those who do not have faith in the *Lotus*, it is also a reflexive act, announcing to others within the tradition that those engaged in it are the ones being faithful to Nichiren's example.

It is extremely difficult to evaluate Nichirenist exclusivism in a univalent way. Historically, it has provoked conflict and even persecution; today it grates on pluralistic sensibilities. On the other hand, it has generally mobilized a greater degree of energy, devotion, and self-sacrifice than more moderate forms of Nichirenism, and, by instilling belief in the *Lotus* as a source of transcendent authority, has made it possible to both criticize and challenge the status quo.

Despite isolated voices urging a revival of confrontational *shakubuku* (e.g., ITÔ 1992), the moderates at present hold sway. It is their stance that better accords with the contemporary rhetoric of tolerance and pluralism. One also imagines that traditional debate-style *shakubuku* has been dealt a blow by modern critical Buddhist studies, which have demonstrated that neither the *Lotus* nor any other Buddhist sūtra can be strictly regarded as the Buddha's direct words, and that any debate about their relative merits must be based on grounds other than the position they were traditionally thought to occupy in Śākyamuni's preaching career.

Nevertheless, moderate Nichirenism faces a major challenge, one shared by other religions that make exclusive truth claims: how to cooperate with and respect other traditions, and yet preserve the integrity of one's own. One should also not discount the possibility that confrontational Nichiren exclusivism might reemerge in the future in some unexpected form. Since the thirteenth century, it has proven to be a charismatic idea, capable of being refigured again and again to meet new historical circumstances.

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