

The Moment of Death in Nichiren's Thought

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In 1278, while living at Mt. Minobu, Nichiren received news from his follower Nanjō Tokimitsu of the death from illness of Tokimitsu's niece, a young woman known simply as the daughter of Ishikawa no Hyōe no Nyūdō. Evidently she had passed away while chanting the *daimoku*, a death Nichiren praised as exemplary. Yet it also highlighted for him the great gap that existed between his own understanding of Buddhism and that of a majority of his contemporaries. As he wrote in his return letter:

Everyone thinks that those who chant "Namu-Amida-butsu" at the time of death are sure to achieve birth in the Pure Land, for such are the Buddha's golden words. And yet for some reason the Buddha regretted [having said this] and reversed [himself] saying, "I have not yet revealed the truth" and "honestly discarding expedient devices, [I will reveal only the unexcelled Way]." When I have declared this, people throughout the country of Japan condemn it as false and groundless....But if my teaching were in error, this nun could never have abided in right-mindedness at the moment of death.¹

As is well known, the Tendai Buddhist tradition in which Nichiren was schooled revered the *Lotus Sūtra* as supreme among the Buddha's lifetime teachings. Nichiren himself stressed exclusive devotion to the *Lotus*, asserting that now in the Final Dharma age (*mappō*), only the *Lotus Sūtra* leads to liberation. He invoked both scriptural proof texts and the Tiantai systems of doctrinal classification based upon them to argue that the "expedient devices" of the Pure Land teachings and other doctrines based on provisional sūtras had been superseded by the *Lotus Sūtra*. Yet as the above passage suggests, Nichiren's assertion of his *Lotus* exclusivism was not purely a matter of doctrinal categories but involved crucial matters of people's actual religious practice and hopes for the life to come. What the Pure Land teachings promised universally—to aristocrats, warriors, and humble people alike—was a good death, one that would free the practitioner from the sufferings of samsaric rebirth and instead lead to birth in the Pure Land. It was widely believed that those who chanted the *nenbutsu*, the name of the Buddha

Amida (Skt. Amitābha), on their deathbed would achieve a state of "right-mindfulness at the last moment" (*rinjū shōnen*) and be born in Amida's Pure Land of Bliss (Skt. Sukhāvati; Jpn. Gokuraku) in the western quarter of the cosmos. The *raigō*, the welcoming descent of Amida with his attendant bodhisattvas, Kannon (Avalokiteśvara) and Seishi (Mahāsthāmaprāpta), and his holy retinue to escort the dying person to his pure land, was represented in medieval art and reported in deathbed visions. Once having reached Amida's Pure Land, it was thought, one would not again fall back into the cycle of samsaric rebirth but would be assured of future enlightenment. In calling into question the efficacy of the Pure Land teachings, Nichiren had to argue, contra prevailing opinion, that this belief was misguided. This essay will briefly examine Nichiren's criticism of reliance on the *nenbutsu* or other provisional teachings to achieve right-mindfulness at the time of death, as well as what sort of instruction he gave to his own followers concerning life's final moments. It will also touch briefly on the development of formal deathbed practices that emerged within the Nichiren tradition in early modern times.

(1) Exposing inauspicious deaths

Today, generally speaking, the manner of a person's death is understood as a product of contingent physiological processes and is rarely seen as reflecting the moral or spiritual quality of the life the deceased has led. For us, what counts is solely how people have lived, not how they die. This is one of the major gaps that separates our present understanding from the religious consciousness of premodern people. For people of Japan's medieval period, as in premodern Buddhist cultures more generally, the manner of one's death was regarded both as a mirror of the virtue that person had cultivated while alive and also as an indication of his or her postmortem fate. The Tendai monk Genshin (942-1017), whose famous treatise *Ōjōyōshū* (Essentials of birth in the Pure Land) had introduced formal deathbed practices and the idea of deathbed salvation into the Japanese Buddhist world, had adumbrated a kind of moral physiology, according to which the death process actually

differs according to the merit of the dying person. "When those who do evil are about to die," he had written, "the wind and fire elements depart first, so they are restless and feverish, and suffer greatly. When those who do good are about to die, the earth and water elements depart first, so they are tranquil and experience no pain."² To die calmly, chanting the *nenbutsu* or the mantra of some other Buddha or bodhisattva, was deemed a sign that one would surely achieve birth in a pure land (*ōjō*). Medieval *ōjōden*, hagiographical accounts of individuals said to have achieved birth in the Pure Land of the Buddha Amida, almost invariably include a description of their subjects' ideal death and the auspicious signs accompanying it. As an indication of their approaching *ōjō*, the men and women in these stories know their time of death in advance, bathe and don clean clothes, and die calmly, in a state of meditation or chanting the *nenbutsu*. Often their bodies do not decay but emit fragrance for several days. On the other hand, to die in delirium or wracked by pain was seen as indicating that one would fall into the hells or other evil realms of transmigration. The appearance of the corpse was subject to similar interpretation. A light color of the skin and pliability of the limbs in the deceased were read as signs of accumulated virtue and as prognosticating good rebirth or attainment of the Pure Land, while darkening of the skin and pronounced rigor mortis were seen as ominous indications. Early medieval texts of instruction for ritualized deathbed practice (*rinjū gyōgisho*) show a great concern with the physical signs manifested by dying persons, as an index to whether or not they had achieved birth in the Pure Land or fallen into the evil realms. Canonical sources interpreting the corporeal signs manifested by the dying were much quoted. For example, the Chinese esoteric scripture *Shouhu guojiezhū tuoluoni jing* (Sūtra of the *dhāraṇī* for protecting the ruler of the realm) enumerates fifteen signs that the dying will fall into the hells (such as crying aloud with grief or choking with tears, urinating or defecating without awareness, refusing to open the eyes, foul breath, or lying face down); eight signs that the dying will fall into the realm of hungry ghosts (such as burning with fever or suffering from hunger or thirst); and seven signs presaging a descent into the bestial realm (such as contorting of the hands and feet, foaming at the

mouth, or sweating from the entire body).³ This passage drew the attention of such diverse authors of deathbed ritual texts as the Shingon teachers Jichihan (c. 1089-1144) and Kakuban (1095-1143) and the third patriarch of the Chinzei lineage of the Pure Land sect, Nen'a Ryōchū (1199-1287).⁴

Nichiren also shared the belief of his contemporaries that the manner of a person's death and the condition of the body reveal something about the spiritual status of the individual concerned. He was familiar with the canonical literature on the subject and referred to it in letters to his followers. For example, to Myōhō-ama, he wrote:

The *Lotus Sūtra* states, "[The true aspect of the dharmas] is like such from their appearance...to their ultimate equality from beginning to end." The *Da[jidu]lun* states, "A darkening of [skin] color at the time of death indicates that one will fall into the hells." The *Shouhujing* says that [at death] there are fifteen signs of falling into the hells, eight signs of birth in the realm of hungry ghosts, five signs of birth as an animal, etc. The Great Teacher Tiantai [Zhiyi]'s *Mohozhiguan* says, "When the body turns a darkish color, that indicates descent into the hells".... Tiantai says, "Light color represents the heavens." The *Dalun* says, "Those whose color [at death] is pink or light and whose bodies are properly composed will obtain birth in the heavens." The account of the Great Teacher Tiantai's last hours says, "His color was light." The description of the death of the Tripiṭaka master Xuanzang says, "His color was light." The Buddha's lifetime teachings agree that black deeds cause one to remain in the six realms [of saṃsāra], while white deeds lead to the four holy states.⁵

Or to Sennichi-ama, personalizing the teaching for her as a woman:

At the time of death, if a person is destined to fall into the hells, he will turn dark, and his body will become heavy, like an immense stone. But in the case of a good person, even a woman seven or eight *shaku* in height, her color will change in death and become bright, and her body become as light as goose feathers and as pliable as cotton.⁶

Thus, Nichiren did not reject the premise that a good death

reflects the individual's religious merit and attainment of a favorable state in the life to come. What he did reject was the widespread claim that invoking the name of Amida was the most effective way to ensure the goal of a good death. By his time, the chanted *nenbutsu* had become the practice most commonly employed in the deathbed setting, with the aim of achieving right-mindfulness at the last moment.⁷ In his critique of the Pure Land teachings, Nichiren therefore did not confine himself to doctrinal argument but also directly contradicted the central claim of that tradition, that devotion to Amida and the chanting of the *nenbutsu* would ensure a good death leading to liberation from saṃsāra. In fact, Nichiren asserted, the very opposite was true. In the most graphic way possible, he turned the promise of the Pure Land tradition against it by claiming that people who rely on the *nenbutsu* die bad deaths.

This sort of polemic can be found quite early in his writings. For example, in 1264, in conveying to the monk Jōen-bō in Awa Province his criticism of contemporary Pure Land teachings, Nichiren wrote:

The four kinds of people in the country of Japan [monks, nuns, lay men and lay women], though differing in form, in mind all alike aspire to birth in the western Pure Land by practicing a single teaching [i.e., the *nenbutsu*]. This appears to be a country where Buddhism is flourishing, and yet, I have a serious doubt. One sees and hears that, for those men of wisdom who should serve as guides and mirrors for the Pure Land sect, and for those both prominent and obscure who become its great lay patrons and virtuous followers, in the majority of cases, matters do not go as they wish at the moment of death. We find in the writings of the Venerable [Chinese Pure Land master] Shandao that ten out of ten devotees will achieve birth in the Pure Land, and that all who chant the *nenbutsu*, whether a mere ten times or throughout their lifetime, will certainly achieve birth in the Pure Land, without a single exception. Yet the manner of these people's deaths and the interpretations of Shandao are as different as water and fire....[If we go by Shandao's interpretation,] then even if nine out of ten persons were to achieve the Pure Land while just one person failed to do so, that would still be

cause for suspicion. How much more so, when one hears or learns that leaders of the *nenbutsu* sect such as Zenne, Ryūkan, Shōkō, Sashō, Namu and Shinkō all at the end broke out in evil sores or contracted other grave illnesses, and died with a deranged mind! And countless numbers of their less prominent followers have also died insane....Yet one hears that those practitioners of the *Lotus* and the esoteric teachings—[of whom Shandao] said that “not one in a thousand” [can achieve the Pure Land]—generally die in a state of right-mindfulness.⁸

Similarly, Nichiren charged that among the followers of Hōnen (1133-1212), founder of the independent Jōdoshū or Pure Land sect: there are some who have died without [auspicious] signs appearing [even] in two weeks' time, or who have broken out in evil sores, or spit blood, or had hot sweat pour from their entire bodies. In general, of Hōnen's more than eighty disciples, not one has died a good death.⁹

This was not, in Nichiren's view, because of personal moral failing or lack of religious sincerity on the part of these individual Pure Land devotees, but rather represented a shortcoming inherent in the Pure Land teachings. Adherence to Pure Land teachings amounted in his view to slander of the Dharma (*hōbō*), because it required that one set aside the “true teaching” (i.e., the *Lotus Sūtra*) in favor of provisional ones. Nichiren's early works refer to the argument of contemporary Pure Land teachers who asserted that the *Lotus Sūtra* was too profound for the limited capacity of benighted beings in the *mappō* era: This being the case, they said, it would be better to set aside the *Lotus Sūtra* for the time being; practice the *nenbutsu* teachings, which are suited to ignorant persons of the last age; and thereby achieve birth in Amida's Pure Land, where practice of the *Lotus Sūtra* would then be possible.¹⁰ But for Nichiren the *Lotus Sūtra* was the “straight path” of attaining Buddhahood for all persons; precisely because people of the last age are of limited capacity, only the *Lotus Sūtra*, the supreme teaching of the Buddha's lifetime, could benefit them. Discarding the *Lotus Sūtra* in favor of lesser teachings amounted to disparaging the true Dharma, an offense which, according to the *sūtra* itself, leads to countless kalpas of successive rebirths in the Avici Hell. “That the *nenbutsu* practi-

tioners of today as well as others who appear to be men of great wisdom cannot meet death as they wish, is due to their great Dharma slander,” he wrote.¹¹ Nichiren's conviction that reliance on the Pure Land teachings leads to the Hell without Respite (*nenbutsu muken*) was demonstrated in his eyes, not only by scriptural proof texts but also by evidence of inauspicious deaths among Pure Land practitioners.

The notion that a bad death might reflect a flaw in the doctrine taught or upheld by the individual concerned was not unique to Nichiren but appears in other writings of the time. For example, the eminent Tendai prelate Jien (1155-1225) cast doubt on the legitimacy of Hōnen's exclusive *nenbutsu* teachings by criticizing the manner of his death, saying, “People gathered there [at Ōtani], saying over and over that he had attained the Pure Land, but it is by no means a certain thing. There was nothing remarkable about his deathbed observances, as there was in the case of Zoga Shōnin and others.”¹² Similarly, the treatise on poetics *Nomori no kagami*, attributed to Minamoto no Arifusa, criticized the death of the Jishū founder Ippen (1239-1289):

Beforehand, people insisted that [when Ippen died,] purple clouds would rise and lotus blossoms would fall [from the skies], but when the time actually came, there was no sign of Amida's descent. His body was in such a state that his disciples' expectations that he would achieve the Pure Land were completely thwarted, and they had to hurry to cremate him before others could see it.¹³

In claiming that people who upheld the Pure Land teachings died badly, Nichiren had to counter a widespread impression to the contrary. Why was this not more generally known? In a letter to his follower, the nun Myōhō-ama, addressing the subject of right-mindfulness at the last moment, Nichiren suggests that bad deaths were often covered up by family or disciples of the deceased out of a misguided sense of loyalty or concern for appearances, an act that could only increase the dead person's suffering:

When it appears that [the deceased] will fall into the hells or [be reborn in any other of the six paths] up to the human or heavenly realms, people in the world conceal how their teachers

or parents looked in death and say only that they achieved birth in the western Pure Land. How sad! When a teacher falls into the evil paths and is beset by unendurable sufferings, his disciples detain him there by praising his manner of death, increasing and prolonging his sufferings in hell. It is like gagging a criminal and then interrogating him, or failing to open an abscess so that the illness continues to fester!¹⁴

From Nichiren's perspective, then, both compassion for the individuals involved, as well as concern for establishing the difference between truth and error in Buddhist teachings, dictated that inauspicious deaths should be exposed. Thus, calling to mind prominent monks he had known while living at Kiyosumidera in Awa Province, he wrote:

People all wonder why anyone should heed someone [like myself] who speaks ill of Kōbō [Kūkai], Jikaku [Ennin] and other [eminent monks of the past]. While I don't know about people elsewhere, those living in the eastern and western districts of Awa Province should believe what I say, for the evidence is right before their eyes. Inomori no Endon-bō, Saigyō-bō and Dōgi-bō of Kiyosumi, and Jitchi-bō of Kataumi were all highly revered monks. But one should inquire into their last moments....But for me, people would probably think they had achieved Buddhahood. By extension, you should know that, although Kōbō, Jikaku and their like died miserably, their disciples concealed it, not informing even the nobility. Thus, in this latter age, they have come to be ever more revered. And without someone to expose [the truth], such a state of affairs would go on for countless kalpas into the future.¹⁵

In Nichiren's understanding, it was simply not possible that someone guilty of the grave slander of upholding provisional teachings at the expense of the *Lotus Sūtra* could have a good death. We see this, for example, in the concern he expressed for the fate of his former teacher Dōzen-bō, who had never quite brought himself entirely to abandon the *nenbutsu*:

Although the late monk Dōzen-bō was my teacher, because I upheld the *Lotus Sūtra*, he feared the local steward, and though inwardly sympathetic, outwardly he treated me hostilely, as

though I were an enemy. Later I heard that he had developed some degree of faith, but I wonder what his manner of death was like. It is very dubious. While he cannot actually have fallen into hell, one can hardly imagine that he has managed to escape the realm of birth and death. I am grieved to think that he may be wandering in the interim state (*chūū*).¹⁶

As is well known, Nichiren wrote his famous *Hōon shō* (Repaying debts of gratitude) on behalf of his late teacher, and sent it to his former associates at Kiyosumidera, the monks Jōken-bō and Gijō-bō, with the request that they have it read as an offering at Dōzen-bō's grave. In a more critical vein, Nichiren dismissed out of hand reports that relics had been found among the ashes following the cremation of the Zen master Lanxi Daolong (1213-1278) of Kenchōji in Kamakura, whom Nichiren regarded as an adversary. It was altogether impossible, he asserted, that the body of someone who had alienated people from the *Lotus Sūtra* with his teaching of "a separate transmission outside the scriptures" would have produced relics.¹⁷

This perspective, that those guilty of slandering the Dharma cannot die well, led Nichiren not only to question the deaths of contemporary clerics but also, on occasion, to reinterpret the hagiographical accounts of eminent teachers of the past. We find two such instances in his writings. The first concerns the Pure Land master Shandao (613-681). Among the teachings of Chinese Pure Land figures, Nichiren singled out those of Shandao for particular criticism, because of his claim that "not one [person] in a thousand" can achieve liberation through practices not specifically directed toward the Pure Land, and also, presumably, because of his immense influence on Hōnen. As is well known, in establishing an independent Pure Land sect in Japan, Hōnen accorded Shandao a prominent place in his lineage and even regarded the Chinese patriarch as a manifestation of Amida Buddha. Nichiren's critical account of Shandao's death appears in two of his writings. The first, the *Nenbutsu mugen jikoku shō* (The *nenbutsu* leads to the Hell without Respite), written in 1255, states that Shandao became insane as a result of his slander of the Dharma; therefore,

[Shandao] climbed a willow tree in front of the temple where he

was living, hung himself there by the neck and leapt, and so he died. But there was no reversing the curse of his false teaching. Here we can see the subtle retribution [that awaited him]. Before his death, he said, "This body is to be abhorred; it accumulates countless pains, without a moment's respite." Thereupon he climbed the willow tree in front of the temple where he lived and, facing west, prayed, "May I be seized by the Buddha's awesome power; may [the bodhisattvas] Kannon and Seishi come to save me." Having uttered this, he flung himself from the top of the willow tree and died. It was on the seventeenth day of the third month that he hung himself from the neck and leapt. Perhaps the rope broke, or perhaps the willow branch broke, but he fell to the drought-hardened earth and fractured his pelvis. For seven days and seven nights, until the twenty-fourth, he lingered, crippled, crying out and fainting from agony... This matter [of Shandao's denigration of the *Lotus Sūtra* and his resulting miserable death] is in no way a slander put forth by other sects or the false words of the *Lotus* adherents, but is taken from the various writings of Master Shandao himself and from the biographical accounts of him.¹⁸

A very similar account appears in *Shimoyama goshōsoku* (Letter to Shimoyama), which Nichiren wrote more than two decades later in 1277. Here Nichiren again asserts that, because of his slander of the *Lotus Sūtra*,

[Shandao] while still alive went mad and flung himself from the top of a willow tree. Landing on the hard earth, he was unable to die [immediately] but lingered in agony, fourteen days, from the fourteenth through the twenty-seventh, and finally died insane.¹⁹

The similarity of these two recountings suggests that Nichiren's understanding of Shandao's death and the causal principle underlying it remained constant throughout his career.

Accounts of Shandao's act of religious suicide (*jigai ōjō*) appear in Jiezhu's *Jingtu wangsheng zhuan* (Accounts of those who achieved birth in the Pure Land), compiled in 1064, and in a number of subsequent Song-period hagiographies.²⁰ As Nogami Shunjō has noted, these accounts postdate Shandao by several centuries and may

reflect the ambience of Song Pure Land devotion more than the biographical facts of Shandao's life.²¹ All of them, however, valorize Shandao's act as a heroic expression of his resolve to reach the Pure Land. It was Nichiren's innovation to depict it as a failed suicide, stemming from insanity and resulting in a painful, lingering death. In considering the version given in *Shimoyama goshōsoku*, Takagi Yutaka has noted that some Chinese biographies, such as those contained in *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* and *Xinxiu wangsheng zhuan*, give the day of Shandao's death as 3/14, while others, such as the *Diwang niandailu*, give it as 3/27; he suggests that Nichiren may have read into this two-week discrepancy in dates a protracted and miserable death, reflecting the karmic retribution for the Dharma slander of which Nichiren believed Shandao to be guilty.²²

Parenthetically, in discussing Shandao's death, Nichiren also offered some caustic remarks by way of criticizing the practice of *jigai ōjō* or religious suicide valued by certain Pure Land ascetics. "Surely those who embrace the Pure Land teachings and follow in the footsteps of their teacher ought to meet their end as Shandao did, by killing themselves! Are not those *nenbutsu* practitioners who fail to hang themselves guilty of the offense of betraying their teacher?"²³ Or, "The *nenbutsu* sect is a great evil that will destroy the country. At the time of the battle [with the Mongols,] no doubt many people committed suicide. Because the foolish monk Shandao killed himself after he began to spread [the *nenbutsu*], those who chant the *nenbutsu* in earnest give rise to thoughts of suicide."²⁴ Nichiren, who believed that one should unhesitatingly give one's up life if needed for the *Lotus Sūtra*'s sake, was no admirer of religious suicide aimed at birth in the Pure Land.²⁵

A second example of Nichiren's creative rereading of hagiography concerns Shanwuwei (637-735), or Śubhakarasiṃha, an Indian patriarch of the esoteric teachings instrumental in winning their acceptance in China. Of Shanwuwei's death, Nichiren writes:

His disciples gathered around his deathbed and praised the remarkable way in which he died, but in fact he fell into the great citadel of [the Hell] without Respite. You may ask how I know that this is so. I would reply that, if you examine his biography, you will find it stated, "Now when one looks at

[Shanwu]-wei's remains, [one can see that] they are gradually contracting, the darkish skin is shrinking, and the bones are exposed." His disciples did not know this for a sign that he would fall into hell and thought to praise his virtue, but the brush that wrote this revealed [Shanwuwei's] guilt, recording that after his death his body gradually contracted and became small, his skin was blackish, and the bones showed through. The Buddha's golden words make clear that when a person's skin turns black after he dies, he has committed some action that destines him for hell.²⁶

The biography that Nichiren cites here is the account of Shanwuwei given in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* (Biographies of eminent monks of the Song), which was completed in 988 by Zanning (919-1001). This was of course long after Shan-wu-wei's death in 735. And in context, the passage that Nichiren quotes is describing the appearance, not of Shanwuwei's body at the time of his death, but of his mummified remains, as observed more than two centuries later, which were revered as holy relics able to grant prayers. In fact, a passage from the account immediately prior to the portion Nichiren quotes describes Shanwuwei as dying an ideal death, in the same posture as the Buddha: "Lying with his right side down and two feet overlapped, he died quietly....Being imbued with meditation and wisdom, his body did not decay."²⁷ By citing out of context the description of Shanwuwei's mummified body, Nichiren conveys the impression that his death was an extremely terrible one.

While it would be easy enough to dismiss these readings of the death of Shandao and Shanwuwei as mere falsification of sources, Nichiren's interpretation probably reflects a more complex hermeneutical operation, something akin to an interpretation from the standpoint of "mind-discernment" (*kanjin*).²⁸ In both cases, he insists that he is following traditional biographies, which, he must have realized, were at considerable variance with his interpretation. It may have been that, in light of his exclusive devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra* and implacable opposition to "Dharma slander," he was convinced that he saw through a literal reading of his sources to a perspective ultimately more real than their surface meaning, a perspective from which an enemy of the *Lotus Sūtra* simply could not

die a good death.

In writing to his follower Myōhō-ama to express his sympathy on the death of her husband, Nichiren once wrote:

Since childhood, I studied the Buddha-Dharma with one desire. A person's life is impermanent; the outgoing breath does not await the incoming one. Not even dust blown before the wind will suffice to illustrate [such transience]. Wise or foolish, old or young, life is uncertain for all. Thus I resolved that I should first learn about the moment of death, and then learn about other things.²⁹

The phrase "first learn about the moment of death" in this famous passage has long been taken as expressing in retrospect the acute sense of impermanence that had led Nichiren, from a very young age, to take monastic vows and seek the truth of the Buddhist teachings.³⁰ While this may indeed be the case, it would seem, both from the context of the entire letter to Myōhō-ama as well as Nichiren's writings as a whole, that his resolve to "first learn about the moment of death" voices, not only an awareness of death's inevitability and a consequent desire to seek liberation, but also a more literal concern with the manner in which people die, as an index to the soteriological power of the teachings they have embraced. This concern seems to have engaged Nichiren throughout life. The medieval hagiography *Nichiren Daishōnin chūgasan* by Enmyōin Nitchō (1441-1510) suggests that Nichiren first began to doubt the Pure Land teachings during his early studies in Kamakura, when he learned that the Pure Land master Daiamidabutsu, a disciple of Hōnen, had died shrieking in agony.³¹ While any connection between Nichiren and Daiamidabutsu is probably a later invention, Takagi Yutaka has suggested that, even prior to developing his doctrine of *Lotus* exclusivism, Nichiren while still very young may have conceived an aversion to the Pure Land teachings by seeing some *nenbutsu* devotee close to him die unpleasantly.³² If so, it is possible that the individual's manner of death remained for Nichiren, throughout life, a direct reflection of the efficacy of that person's religion. Nor did he regard himself as an exception. Shortly before his own death, he wrote, "While I may be a base person [in the world's estimation], if I achieve Buddhahood, that will display

the *Lotus Sūtra's* power. But if I die badly, it will disgrace the *Lotus Sūtra*. And in that case, though they [already] say that I am base, I would be base indeed."³³

(2) The moment of death for *Lotus* devotees

What then did Nichiren teach his own followers about the moment of death, and about how they should face it? First of all, we note his assurances to his followers that their relatives who had maintained devout faith in *Lotus Sūtra* to the very end had surely died in a state of right-mindfulness and achieved the Pure Land of Eagle Peak (*ryōzen jōdo*, of which more will be said below). For example, to a woman of the Nanjō family, he wrote: "There can be no doubt that the one who is ill shall die in a state of right-mindfulness and reach the Pure Land of Eagle Peak—no doubt at all."³⁴ Or to Nanjō Tokimitsu, "Your late father was a warrior [and thus an evil man], but because he wholeheartedly revered the *Lotus Sūtra*, he died in a state of right-mindfulness, as I have heard."³⁵ Or to Myōhō-ama, in the letter just mentioned:

You say in your letter that [toward the end] your husband chanted Myōhō-enge-kyō day and night, and when [the moment of death] approached, he chanted it twice in a loud voice. You also say that his color appeared lighter than when in life, and that his body was not contorted....because he chanted Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō at the last moment, his evil deeds of this lifetime, as well as since the beginningless past, were transformed into the seeds of Buddhahood. This is what is meant by the doctrines of the worldly passions being none other than enlightenment, saṃsāra being none other than nirvāṇa, and the attainment of Buddhahood in this very body.³⁶

He also assured his followers that, through their connection to him as the *gyōja* or votary of the *Lotus Sūtra*, they would be protected during the dangerous liminal period of the interim state (*chūū*) between this life and the next. To Nanjō Tokimitsu, he wrote, "Though one cannot know when oneself or others will die, without fail I will come to meet you at the hour of your death, in the interval between this life and the next (*shōji no chūgen*),"³⁷ or, to Myōshin-

ama, concerning her dying husband, "No matter what may happen on the road between this life and the next (*chūū no michi*), he should announce himself to be Nichiren's disciple....Whatever vile demons may wait there, they can scarcely claim to be ignorant of my name [and will retreat accordingly]."³⁸ Nichiren also highly praised the manner of death of those among his followers who died chanting the *daimoku*, such as the daughter of Ishikawa Nyūdō, mentioned at the beginning of this essay: "Perhaps because of her karma from prior lives, this person was able to chant Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō at the moment of death. It is as rare as a one-eyed turtle finding a hollow [just the right size to hold him] in a floating log, or a thread lowered from the heavens finding its way through the eye of a needle on the ground. How marvelous!"³⁹ Yet nowhere in his writings do we find any indication that he considered chanting the *daimoku* at the moment of death to be an absolute requirement of postmortem salvation, or that he recommended any particular ritualized form of deathbed practice at all.

Formalized practice explicitly for life's last hours had been introduced into Japanese Buddhist circles by Genshin in his *Ōjōyōshū*. Drawing on Chinese sources, Genshin recommended removing the dying person to a separate room or practice hall to minimize the attachments aroused by the sight of familiar possessions. There, a Buddha image should be enshrined, with a five-colored cord tied to its hand; the other end would be held by the dying person, as though to be drawn up into the Buddha's pure land. Those in attendance were to scatter flowers and burn incense, keep away those who had recently drunk alcohol or eaten meat, minimize desultory conversation, chant the *nenbutsu*, and do everything in their power to aid the dying person's contemplation of the Buddha.⁴⁰ Genshin had cast his instructions in an Amidist mode, but in subsequent centuries, the basic thrust of his deathbed instructions had been appropriated across sectarian boundaries and assimilated to a range of practices and doctrinal interpretations.⁴¹ By Nichiren's time, the *Lotus Sūtra* had long been employed in a number of formalized *rinjū gyōgi* or deathbed practices. For example, the Kōfukuji monk Tanshū (1066-1120?), author of one of the earliest *rinjū gyōgisho* or texts of deathbed ritual instruction to be written after Genshin, recommends,

among other practices, that someone versed in the *Lotus Sūtra* should expound its meaning for the dying person.⁴² Based on the evidence of *ōjōden* from the Heian period, Takagi Yutaka has determined that the *Lotus Sūtra*, or individual chapters or verses from the sūtra, were often recited as a deathbed practice, though not as frequently as the chanted *nenbutsu*.⁴³ The *Shuzenji-ketsu* ([Doctrinal] decisions of Xiuchansi), a medieval collection of Tendai oral transmissions retrospectively attributed to Saichō (767-822), contains a section recommending the chanting of the *daimoku* as a form of the “threefold contemplation in a single mind” (*isshin sangan*) especially suited to the time of death.⁴⁴ No doubt because of its reference to the *daimoku*, the portion of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* dealing with deathbed practice was even independently transmitted as a work of Nichiren’s.⁴⁵ Whether or not the *Shuzenji-ketsu* preceded Nichiren, and if so, whether or not, or to what extent, it may have influenced his thinking concerning the *daimoku*, are issues that have been much debated.⁴⁶ In any event, there was ample precedent for ritualized use of the *Lotus Sūtra* or *Lotus*-based practices at the time of death. Judging from his authenticated works, however, Nichiren did not establish a specific form of ritualized deathbed practice. In a very early writing, arguing that the *Lotus Sūtra*, even more than the *nenbutsu*, offers an “easy” practice for persons of the last age, he wrote:

For those who have faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*, in the hour of death, even if they do not mentally contemplate the Buddha, verbally recite the sūtra, or [physically] enter the practice hall, they will without intent illuminate the dharma realm and without making an utterance, recite all sūtras; without taking up the scriptural rolls, they have the merit of clasping all eight scrolls of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Is this not a vastly easier practice than attempting--as devotees of the provisional teaching of the *nenbutsu* do--to chant ten *nenbutsu* on one’s deathbed in the hope of achieving right-mindfulness?⁴⁷

“Ten *nenbutsu*” was widely regarded as the minimum number necessary to chant on one’s deathbed, in order achieve birth in the Pure Land. This convention was based, on one hand, on the famous eighteenth vow of Amida, which promises birth in his Pure Land to

all who aspire to this goal with sincerity and call him to mind “even ten times”;⁴⁸ it also refers to a passage in the *Meditation Sūtra*, which, in describing the lowest of the nine levels of birth in the Pure Land, says that even an evil person, if he encounters a good friend (*zenchishiki*) who instructs him in the hour of death so that he is able to sustain ten thoughts of Amida, shall, with each thought, erase the sins of eight billion kalpas and be born in his Pure Land.⁴⁹ As the above passage suggests, Nichiren did not substitute for the “ten *nenbutsu*” any formalized requirement for deathbed practice; he did not claim, for example, as Genshin had done for the *nenbutsu*, that *daimoku* chanted on one’s deathbed was any more efficacious than at other times.⁵⁰ Nor did he think ritual purity was necessarily required at the last moment. “If you should unexpectedly feel death approaching, then even if you have been eating fish or fowl, if you are able to read the sūtra, you should do so, and also chant *Namu-myōhō-renge-kyō*.”⁵¹ Rather, he stipulated only that one must maintain faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* until life’s very end. Given that Nichiren was attempting to counter widespread belief in the efficacy of the *nenbutsu* to ensure right-mindfulness at the last moment and salvation at death through birth in the Pure Land, why, despite the existence of ample precedents, did he not substitute some form of ritualized deathbed practice based on the *Lotus Sūtra*? While no explicit answer to this question appears in his writings, two possible reasons might be suggested, both closely related to key elements in the structure of his thought.

(a) The last moment and the logic of single practice

We have seen that Nichiren, like his contemporaries, saw the manner of one’s death, whether composed or agonized, and the appearance of the corpse, whether peaceful or contorted, as indicating both that individual’s spiritual attainments and also his or her postmortem fate. In his particular view, however, bad deaths reflected, not comparatively minor, worldly evils and precept violations such as killing, theft, lying, etc. but the incomparably graver sin of slandering the *Lotus Sūtra*. As Okuno Hon’yō has pointed out, for Nichiren, the dichotomy of faith in the Dharma versus slandering it was what would determine the nature of one’s last moments.⁵² This

is consistent with Nichiren's broader understanding of liberation as depending, not on the accumulation of merit through moral observances and a variety of manifold practices, but on the single condition of faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*. As he wrote, "Disbelief is the cause of the *icchantika* and of slander of the Dharma, while faith is the cause of wisdom and corresponds to [enlightenment at] the stage of verbal identity (*myōji-soku*)."⁵³ An advocate of a single form of practice, Nichiren held that there is only one cause, devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra*, that can lead to enlightenment. Similarly, there is only one obstacle that can obstruct it. "Whether or not evil persons of the last age can attain Buddhahood," he wrote, "does not depend on whether their sins are light or heavy but solely upon whether or not they have faith in this sūtra."⁵⁴ This did not mean that those who were nominally his disciples would automatically die good deaths, as he deemed strong faith to be an absolute requirement. "Among my disciples, those with weak faith may at the time of death manifest signs of falling into the Avīci Hell. At that time, they should not bear a grudge against me."⁵⁵

Mainstream religious attitudes of the medieval period invested one's thoughts at the moment of death with an immense power to influence one's next life. Genshin himself had written that the power of one's last thought outweighs the actions of a hundred years.⁵⁶ In the eleventh century, commenting on the "deathbed practices" (*rinjū gyōgi*) section of Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū*, the monk Tanshū had stated, "Good or evil recompense [in the next life] depends on one's last thought. One who misses the opportunity of this moment is very close to hell."⁵⁷ From this perspective, one's deathbed thoughts exert a determinative effect on one's postmortem fate; by contemplating the Buddha at the time of death, even an evil person could, in theory, achieve birth in the Pure Land, while a virtuous person, by a single distracted thought at the end, could negate the efforts of a lifetime and fall back into the samsaric realms. Formalized deathbed practice was aimed at helping the dying to properly focusing their thoughts at the soteriologically all important final moment.

Yet, while medieval *rinjū gyōgisho* represent one's last thoughts as uniquely determinative, the logic of formal deathbed practice was in fact grounded in the belief that a number of factors could poten-

tially contribute to one's salvation or enlightenment, one's last thoughts simply being an extremely potent example—potent enough even to override the various evils committed during one's lifetime. If, however, enlightenment depends on only a single factor, such as faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*, then arguments for the special force of deathbed practice begin to break down. And indeed, prominent advocates of the single practice movements that appeared in the Kamakura period (1185-1333), such as Hōnen, Shinran, and Nichiren, did not place importance on formal deathbed ritual. Hōnen, founder of the exclusive *nenbutsu* movement, taught that salvation—birth in the Pure Land—ultimately depends, not one's own virtue, but on reliance on the "other power" (*tariki*) of Amida's vow. Since Hōnen saw the chanted *nenbutsu* as the sole practice corresponding to Amida's original vow, he denied the traditional view that *nenbutsu* chanted on one's deathbed possessed a particular efficacy that it did not have at ordinary times. "What difference could there be between the *nenbutsu* at ordinary times and the *nenbutsu* at the moment of death?" he wrote. "If one dies while chanting *nenbutsu* as one's ordinary practice, then that becomes one's deathbed *nenbutsu*, and if one's deathbed *nenbutsu* were to be prolonged, it would be the *nenbutsu* of ordinary times."⁵⁸ Especially in his later years, Hōnen was willing to abandon many of the conventions of formal deathbed practice.⁵⁹ A similar logic can be discerned in Nichiren's thought. No particular attitude or practice is required for the last moment other than the attitude and practice one is to cultivate all along, that of wholehearted devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra*. Several passages in his writings serve to illustrate this. For example, to Lord Matsuno, he wrote:

When the world makes you feel downcast, you should chant Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō, remembering that, if even the sufferings of this life are painful, those of the next life could be much worse. And when you are happy, you should remember that your happiness in this life is nothing but a dream within a dream, and that the only true happiness is that found in the Pure Land of Eagle Peak, and with that thought in mind, chant Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō. Continue your practice without retreating until the moment of your death, and [when that time

arrives,] observe! Quickly ascending the mountain of wondrous awakening and gazing around the four directions, you will be amazed to see that the dharma realm is all the land of tranquil light. The earth will be of lapis lazuli and the eight paths demarcated by golden ropes. Four kinds of flowers will fall from the heavens, and music will resound in the air. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas will be present in complete joy, caressed by the the breezes of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity. The times is fast approaching when we too will enjoy ourselves among their number. But if our faith is weak, we will never reach that wonderful place.⁶⁰

Here, maintaining faith and chanting the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sūtra* up until the very last moment of life are represented as the sole requirements of a good death.

The *Shōji ichidaiji kechimyaku shō* (Transmission of the sole great matter of birth and death) reads:

For one who arouses faith and chants *Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō* with the understanding that now is the last moment, it is expounded, "A thousand Buddhas shall extend their hands, causing him not to fear and not to fall into the evil paths." How joyful, that not just one Buddha or two, nor only one or two hundred, but a thousand Buddhas shall come to greet us, taking us by the hand! It is impossible to restrain our tears of rejoicing. But for one who does not believe in the *Lotus*, it is expounded, "That person, at life's end, shall enter the Avīci Hell." So surely the guardians of hell will come and seize him by the hand. How pitiful! No doubt the ten kings will pass judgment on him, and the deities who have accompanied him from birth will rebuke him. Now those of my disciples and lay followers who chant *Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō* should think of those thousand Buddhas extending their hands as melon [vines] or morning glories putting forth their tendrils.⁶¹

While some scholars question Nichiren's authorship of this work, the sentiments expressed in this particular passage are quite in accord with his authenticated writings: one's fate after death is determined solely by whether one has maintained faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* or slandered it. And, as illustrated by the phrase "now is the last

moment," the single factor on which enlightenment depends—devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra*—is the attitude required of the practitioner at every moment, no differently at the moment of death than during the lifetime preceding it.

Another telling passage in this regard appears in the *Nyosetsu shugyō shō* (On practicing as the sūtra teaches), written in 1273 while Nichiren was in exile on Sado:

Life is fleeting. No matter how many strong enemies may oppose us, never be minded to retreat or give rise to fear. Even if they should cut off our heads with a saw, impale our bodies with lances, bind our feet and bore them through with a gimlet, as long as we have life, we must chant "*Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō*, *Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō*." And if we chant up until the very moment when we die, then Śākyamuni, Many Jewels [Prabhūtaratna] and the other Buddhas of the ten directions will come to us immediately, just as they promised at the assembly on Sacred Eagle Peak. Taking us by the hand and bearing us on their shoulders, they will hasten with us to Eagle Peak. The two sages, the two heavenly kings, and the ten female *rākṣasas* will extend us their protection, while all the *devas* and benevolent deities will lift a canopy above us and raise banners; they will protect us and at once escort us to the jeweled land of tranquil light.⁶²

Here, continuing one's faith up until the last moment, even in the face of persecution, is stressed as the attitude leading to an enlightened death. This is the attitude expressed in the *Lotus Sūtra* by such statements as, "We do not cherish bodily life; we value only the supreme way." For Nichiren, the willingness to uphold faith in the sūtra even at the cost of one's life—during the entire course of one's lifetime as well as at the moment of death—was the single condition on which enlightenment depends. Where such commitment had been maintained throughout life, no particular ritualization of the last moment would be necessary.

(b) The Pure Land of Eagle Peak

Another reason for Nichiren's refusal to establish formalized deathbed practices may have had to do with his particular concep-

tion of the postmortem destination of *Lotus* devotees, the Pure Land of Sacred [Eagle] Peak (*ryōzen jōdo*).⁶³ At a theoretical level, his conception of this realm differed in significant ways from Amida's Pure Land of Utmost Bliss as understood by a majority of his contemporaries.

Nichiren's early writings evince little concern with what happens to devotees after death. He frequently stressed the immanence of the pure land in the present world, a doctrine of both the *Lotus* and esoteric teachings, as a basis for critiquing the Pure Land notion of achieving salvation in a world apart. For example,

Question: Toward which pure land should one who practices the *Lotus Sūtra* aspire? Answer: The "Fathoming the Lifespan" chapter, the heart and core of the twenty-eight chapters of the *Lotus Sūtra*, states, "I [Śākyamuni] have always been here in this *sahā* world." It also states, "I am always here." And again it states, "This, my land, remains secure and at peace." According to these passages, the Buddha of the perfect teaching in his original ground, enlightened since the remotest past, abides in this world. Why should one abandon this world and aspire to another land? Therefore, the place where one who practices the *Lotus Sūtra* dwells should be regarded as the pure land. Why be at pains to seek it somewhere else?⁶⁴

Nichiren's early writings occasionally invoke contemporary notions of the Pure Land as a postmortem realm posited over and against the present world, but only to assert that one is born there by virtue, not of the *nenbutsu*, but of faith in the *Lotus*. For example: "It is the *Lotus Sūtra* that is the primary cause whereby one may be born in the Pure Land from this impure world."⁶⁵

Shortly before his exile to Sado, however, Nichiren began to refer in his letters and other writings to the "Pure Land of Sacred [Eagle] Peak." These references increase during the Sado period and especially during Nichiren's retirement on Mt. Minobu. "Sacred Eagle Peak" is Kumārajīva's translation of *Gṛdhrakūta*, the name of the mountain in *Rajāgṛha* where the *Lotus Sūtra* is said to have been preached. This site had long been apotheosized as a "pure land" where the eternal Śākyamuni dwells. Various sacred sites in Japan, such as Mt. Hiei or the Kasuga shrine, had at times been identified

as the Pure Land of Sacred Eagle Peak.⁶⁶

Over the course of his life, in letters to his followers, Nichiren would express his understanding of the Pure Land of Eagle Peak in various ways: as a recompense for enduring persecution for the *Lotus Sūtra*'s sake; as the realm of enlightenment, accessed in the moment of faith and practice; as a realm where the dead and the living might communicate; or as the dwelling place of one dedicated to the *Lotus*. Most commonly, however, Nichiren, used the term "Pure Land of Eagle Peak" to indicate where believers in the *Lotus Sūtra* go after death, a place where those left behind can look forward to rejoining them in the next life. As others have suggested, Nichiren may have begun to preach to his followers about this pure land in response to the impending possibility of death, whether from the imminent danger accompanying the Mongol threat or the suppressions experienced by Nichiren and his community at the hands of the authorities.⁶⁷ Unlike the majority of those Heian- and Kamakura-period *Lotus* practitioners who recited the *Lotus Sūtra* in hopes of achieving Amida's western Pure Land, Nichiren had by this point so thoroughly rejected Amidism that he would not have been able to represent the next life in such terms. The "Pure Land of Eagle Peak" provided him with a needed alternative image, consistent with his *Lotus* exclusivism, for conceptualizing what happens to believers after death. During his reclusion on Mt. Minobu, as Nichiren himself grew older, he was also faced increasingly with the need to console followers who had lost parents, spouses and children; the promise of reunion in the Pure Land of Eagle Peak occurs frequently in his letters on such occasions. To cite several examples:

To his lay follower, Shijō Kingo, concerning his late mother: "Surely she is even now in the presence of Śākyamuni, Many Jewels, and the Buddhas of the ten directions, who are with one accord stroking her head and rejoicing, saying, 'This is the mother of Shijō Kingo,' while she is speaking to Śākyamuni of what an admirable son she has."⁶⁸

To Nanjō Tokimitsu, on the death of his father: "Even strangers, if they embrace this sūtra, will be born in the same [Pure Land of] Eagle Peak. How much more so, in the case of you and your father! Both believing in the *Lotus Sūtra*, you will both be born in

the same place.⁶⁹

To Sennichi-ama, concerning her deceased husband: "If one wonders where the late Abutsu-bō is now, ...he is within the jeweled stūpa of the Buddha Many Jewels on Sacred Eagle Peak."⁷⁰

To the mother of Nanjō Shichirō Gorō, who had died at the age of sixteen: "Because Śākyamuni and the *Lotus Sūtra* entered into his body, he died in an admirable manner. Now he is with his father in the Pure Land of Eagle Peak; how happy they must be to hold one another's hands and place their heads together."⁷¹

In all probability, many of Nichiren's lay followers understood the Pure Land of Eagle Peak in terms very similar to the way in which their Pure Land contemporaries understood Amida's Land of Utmost Bliss: as an ideal world to which the faithful would go after death and be reunited with those who had preceded them. It would have proved a compelling image, standing in contrast to the sufferings and inadequacies of the present world, especially those evoked by the fear of death or the sorrow of separation from loved ones. But from the standpoint of Nichiren's doctrinal writings, it becomes clear that the Pure Land of Eagle Peak is not merely the *Lotus* analogue of Amida's western paradise. It is not postulated in contradistinction to this world, nor must one die in order to "go" there at death; rather, it is the land of ever tranquil light (*jō jakkōdo*), the realm of the constantly abiding Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra*, as described in Nichiren's *Kanjin honzon shō*:

The *sahā* world of the present moment (*ima*), which is the original time (*honji*) [of the Buddha's enlightenment], is the constantly abiding pure land, liberated from the three disasters and beyond [the cycle of] the four kalpas [formation, stability, decline and extinction]. Its Buddha has not already entered nirvāṇa in the past, nor is he yet to be born in the future. And his disciples are of the same essence. This [world] is [implicit in] the three realms, which are inherent in the three thousand realms of one's mind.⁷²

This "constantly abiding pure land" is of course represented in the *Lotus Sūtra* by the assembly in open space (*kokūe no gishiki*), where Śākyamuni preaches to the assembled multitude from within the jeweled stūpa of Prabhūtaratna. This is the enlightened realm

depicted on the *daimandara* or calligraphic *honzon* that Nichiren devised. And the way of entering that realm, he taught, is to uphold the five characters *myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō* with exclusive faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*. As he wrote in a letter to a follower to whom he had sent such a mandala:

This *gohonzon* is contained solely within the word "faith." That is the meaning of "gaining entrance by faith." By believing undividedly in [the *Lotus Sūtra*, in accordance with its words,] "honestly discarding expedient devices" and "not accept[ing] even a single verse from other sūtras," Nichiren's disciples and lay followers shall enter the jeweled stūpa of this *gohonzon*. How reassuring, how reassuring!⁷³

The claim that faith affords entry, in the present moment, to the "constantly abiding pure land" of the eternal Buddha, is central to Nichiren's thought. In terms of the individual practitioner, it is expressed as "realizing Buddhahood with this very body" (*sokushin jōbutsu*). In collective terms, it is "bringing peace to the land by establishing the True [Dharma]" (*rishshō ankoku*), the realization of a peaceful and harmonious society through the spread of faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*. And in terms of the afterlife, it is "going to the Pure Land of Eagle Peak" (*ryōzen ōkei*).⁷⁴ According to the Pure Land teachings, one must first achieve birth in Amida's Land of Utmost Bliss, and only then can one go on to realize Buddhahood. In contrast, in Nichiren's teaching, one can access the enlightenment of the original Buddha in the moment of embracing faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* and chanting its *daimoku*. Eagle Peak as a postmortem destination, then, is not a place one "goes" to in order to realize Buddhahood, but the continuation, into the realm beyond death, of Buddhahood realized while alive. There is little dichotomous logic here of "loathing this defiled world and aspiring to the Pure Land" such as one often finds in Amidist teachings; the Pure Land of Eagle Peak is not ontologically different from the present world. Thus there is no transition out of saṃsāra at death, requiring ritual control to arrive at a separate, enlightened place. This concept of the believer's postmortem destination in Nichiren's thought—not as a realm apart but as a continuation of the same enlightenment of the

Lotus Sūtra that one realizes in life—may help serve to explain why he did not feel the need to establish a formalized deathbed practice.

As outlined above, Nichiren maintained the belief of his contemporaries that the moment of death represents the culmination of one's lifetime and that the manner of an individual's death reveals something about that person's spiritual status and postmortem fate. In particular, he deployed a contemporary discourse about the significance of corporeal signs displayed by the dying as a polemical strategy to counter the claims of Pure Land adherents that chanting the *nenbutsu* leads to a liberating death. In arguing the superiority of the *Lotus Sūtra*, however, Nichiren rejected the demand for ritual control of the last moment in order to escape *samsāra* and reach the pure land. This lack of concern with formal deathbed practice may have stemmed from his logic of single practice: Since the one and only cause that can effect one's liberation is exclusive faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*, what counts is maintaining such devotion up until life's last moment, and not how, or even whether, that particular moment is ritualized. Similarly, since the pure land as Nichiren conceived it is not reached after death but accessed already in the present world, he may not have considered a particular deathbed ritual aimed at reaching the pure land to be essential.

(3) Death ritual after Nichiren: The *rinjū* mandala

Nonetheless, for the *Lotus* practitioner, invoking the title of the *sūtra*, *Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō*, is the paradigmatic expression of faith; while Nichiren had not required formal deathbed practice as a condition of salvation, it is quite understandable that his followers would nonetheless wish to die chanting the *daimoku*, as Nichiren himself is said to have done. Moreover, ritual forms are not necessarily dictated by doctrinal content, and the fact that Nichiren himself had not prescribed any formal deathbed practice did not mean that his later followers would not find such practice desirable, especially when it came to be emphasized in the larger religious culture. By the early modern period, as Buddhist temples were incorporated into the administrative apparatus of the Tokugawa Bakufu and temple regis-

tration was required of all families, Buddhist observances permeated all social levels and became increasingly standardized across sectarian divisions. A prime example of this process can be seen in Buddhist funeral and mortuary rituals, which, while differently interpreted according to the doctrines of the various sects, were outwardly quite similar in form. Ritual assistance in deathbed practice, like the performance of funerals and memorial prayers, came to be one of the standard religious services provided by local priests to their parishioners. It was in this milieu that we first see the emergence of formalized deathbed ritual in the Nichiren sect. The present section of this paper will touch briefly on the distinctive aspect of Nichirenshū deathbed ritual, namely, the use of Nichiren's calligraphic mandala *honzon* in the deathbed context.

Nichiren himself is said to have had one of his calligraphic mandalas (*moji honzon*) enshrined at his deathbed. The first reference to this episode in his biography appears in a letter from Nichidai (1294-1394) to his fellow monk Nichigō (1293-1353), several decades after Nichiren's death.⁷⁵ It becomes a standard element in later biographies, such as the *Ganso kedōki* of Gyōgakuin Nitchō (1422-1500).⁷⁶ The mandala enshrined at Nichiren's deathbed is said to have been the so-called *rinmetsu doji gohonzon*, now held by Myōhonji in Kamakura.⁷⁷

No doubt on the basis of this hagiographical tradition, the custom arose in early modern times of enshrining at the deathbed of devotees the *rinjū mandara*, a form of Nichiren's calligraphic mandala *honzon* specifically designed for the deathbed setting. This version of the *daimandara*, thought to have first appeared in the Edo period, was inscribed with the name of King Enma (Skt. *Yāma*), the lord of the afterworld who judges the dead, and his five officials (*godō myōkan*), who preside over the five paths of transmigration. Matsumura Jūgon, who has done the foundational research on this topic, sees the inscription on the mandala of these figures as an attempt to enlist their powers on behalf of the welfare of the deceased.⁷⁸ The use of Nichiren's mandala in a deathbed setting is described in *Chiyomigusa*, a text of deathbed ritual instructions for Nichirenshū practitioners attributed to Shinshōin Nichion (1572-1642), but possibly of slightly later provenance.⁷⁹ The follow-

ing passage, asserting the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sūtra* to be the proper object of worship for the deathbed context, is probably referring to the *rinjū* mandala:

Question: It is said that at the time of death, if one reveres a Buddha image, that will promote faith. Isn't that something to be desired? What is your opinion?

Answer: The Sūtra of Achieving the Pure Land in Accordance with Vows (*Suiyuan wangsheng jing*) and the Sūtra of Impermanence (*Wuchang jing*) both teach that one should worship a Buddha image [at the time of death]. And according to transmissions, one should tie a five-colored banner to the hand of the Buddha [image] and have the sick person hold the other end during his last moments. That is because these are all teachings that seek to arouse the aspiration for birth in the Buddha's Pure Land (*ōjō*). [However,] the true aim of our sect is not birth in the Pure Land but the realization of Buddhahood with this very body (*sokushin jōbutsu*). If one focuses one's mind on a Buddha image, demonic influences will assume the Buddha's form and practice deceptions. In addition, foolish persons of the last age will be blinded by the gilt color of the image and arouse thoughts of attachment to the image. Seeing the Buddha image, they will think that the Buddha is good to look upon, beautiful in form, and entirely pleasurable, and they will desire to become like that. Then, because they are possessed by thoughts of attachment at life's end, it will go hard with them. But in joy or in suffering, in good times or bad, the *daimoku* is without name or form, beyond discriminative thought; because it is the Wonderful Dharma, the *honzon* revered by all Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time, there is nothing equal to the *daimoku*.⁸⁰

In these next passages, *Chiyomigusa* refers explicitly to the use of the *rinjū* mandala:

While the sick person is still able, he should perform the service for the time of death once daily. Those who have done so in advance will not be dismayed [when the moment comes]. It is best that they be accustomed to it and not be taken by surprise when the last moment arrives. The *honzon* should be hung

facing east, the sūtra placed on a table [before it], and incense, flowers, and lamps should be offered. Help the sick person to rise and wash his hands. Have him lean on something facing the *honzon* and place his palms together. Then those in attendance should ring the bell for a while, and when his thoughts have quieted, begin reciting the sūtra. Softly recite the ten suchnesses (*junyoze*) and the verse section of the "Fathoming the Lifespan" chapter (*Jiga ge*), or the chapters on "Fathoming the Lifespan" (*Juryō*) and "Supernatural Powers" (*Jinriki*), or the Dhāraṇī chapter, and lead him in chanting the *daimoku* as long as he is not tired. If the sick person is too exhausted to rise, hang the *honzon* to the north by his head, so that he faces it, and have him lie down facing west. This is the posture in which Śākya-muni entered nirvāṇa.⁸¹

[When the moment of death approaches,] give him the great mandala inscribed with passage "directly arriving at the place of enlightenment" and have him hold it firmly. Ring the bell a while, and when his thoughts have quieted and focused, chant the *daimoku* with him in rhythm with his breathing, neither too fast nor too slow.⁸²

According to Matsumura's research, the phrase "directly arriving at the place of enlightenment" (*jiki shi dōjō*) was frequently inscribed on the *rinjū* mandala.⁸³

A similar reference to the use of Nichiren's mandala at the time of death appears in a set of deathbed instructions by Kenjuin Nichikan (1665-1726) of the Taisekiji lineage of the Fuji school:

When you see that now is the last moment, bring the *honzon* before the sick person's face and speak next to his ear, saying, "Now is your last moment. Our revered teacher [Nichiren] will surely come to meet you, so chant Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō." And you should chant the *daimoku* in rhythm with his breathing, neither too fast nor too slow.⁸⁴

Matsumura has found references to the use of the *rinjū* mandala in the diary of Ankokuin Nichikō (1626-98), recording, for example, that he inscribed, at the request of her parents, a *honzon* for the "daughter of Yamaguchi Gon-no-tayū," who died in childbirth, adding the "words for guidance in the next world" (*indō no ku*) and

also inscribing a grave tablet (*ihai*) and *kyō-katabira* (1677); or that he inscribed a *honzon* at the request of one Taniguchi, who had become suddenly ill. This person died “without pain of illness, in a state of right-mindedness” (1688). For a certain Fujii Misa, who died when medical treatment proved unavailing, Nichikō inscribed a “*rinjū* mandala,” adding to its inscription the Dharma name that the man had requested shortly before his death in 1694.⁸⁵

There are also some indications from the medieval period and later that a copy of Nichiren's mandala was occasionally buried together with the dead person. The first reference to this practice, which harshly condemns it, occurs in a document of the Fuji lineage, a series of admonitory articles entitled *Fuji isseki monto zonchi no koto* (What adherents of the Fuji school should know), said to have been written by Byakuren Nikkō (1246-1333) but probably of later provenance. One of its articles, pointing to an area of controversy within the medieval Hokkeshū regarding the use of Nichiren's holographic mandalas, criticizes followers of other lineages for wrapping the mandala around the corpse of deceased believers prior to burial.⁸⁶ Among the various lineages of the Hokkeshū, the Fuji school from early on eschewed the use of images and regarded Nichiren's *daimandara* as the only valid object of worship; the author of *Fuji isseki monto zonchi no koto* clearly regarded burying a mandala with the corpse as inappropriate. The practice evidently continued, however, in other lineages. As Matsumura has noted, the diary of Ankokuin Nichikō records that on at least one occasion, in 1686, he inscribed a *honzon* to be placed in the coffin of one of his dying parishioners.⁸⁷ This practice calls to mind such passages from Nichiren's own writings as, “This mandala...will be a lamp on the dark path to the next world and a fine horse to carry you over the mountains of death,”⁸⁸ or “The *Lotus Sūtra* is the robe that will cover your nakedness in the next life. The sūtra states, ‘...like a naked person who obtains clothing.’ This *gohonzon* will be your clothing on the path of the afterworld.”⁸⁹ It also suggests that some of Nichiren's later followers may have thought that the mandala's physical presence would protect the deceased on the journey to the next existence.

Burial of the mandala with the body also appears to be con-

nected with the widespread use in later medieval and early modern times of the *kyō-katabira* or “sūtra robe,” a robe or shroud wrapped around the corpse and inscribed—depending upon the deceased's sectarian affiliation—with sūtra passages, *dhāraṇīs*, the name of Amida, or some other sacred text. Use of the *kyō-katabira* was supposed to ensure the dead person's release from sin, protection in the afterlife, and eventual attainment of Buddhahood. In Nichirenshū, the mandala in its entirety was inscribed on the *kyō-katabira*, together with the deceased person's Dharma name and date of death and also the names of King Enma and his five officials.

As mentioned above, Nichiren's *daimandara* represents in characters the assembly on Sacred Eagle Peak, the enlightened realm of the eternal Buddha—the realm to which, in the *Lotus Sūtra*'s words, one “gains entry through faith.” According to Nichiren's teaching, that realm can be accessed by the practitioner in the present moment through faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*; by maintaining such faith until the last moment, one would also be assured of that enlightenment in the life to come. Given this significance of the *mandala*, it is clear why its physical presence was desired not only for ordinary practice but also at the time of death. Enshrining it in the deathbed setting would have helped practitioners to meet death with a fearless and composed mind, while interring it with the body or inscribing it on the *kyō-katabira* would have been seen as providing talismanic protection in the transition from this world to the next.

Notes:

¹ “Ueno-dono gohenji,” *Shōwa teihon Nichiren Shōnin ibun* (hereafter *Teihon*), ed. Risshō Daigaku Nichiren Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo (Minobu-chō, Yamanashi Prefecture: Minobusan Kuonji, 1952-59; revised 1988), no. 282, 2: 1490, 1491-92. Dates of Nichiren's writings given in this article are those assigned to them in the *Teihon* collection.

² *Ōjyōshū*, in *Genshin*, ed. Ishida Mizumaro, *Nihon shisō taikei* 6 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), p. 53.

³ *T* no. 997, 19:574a.

⁴ A transcription of this passage accompanies an early extant copy of Jichihan's *Byōchū shugyō ki* (Ōtani Teruo, “Jichihan *Byōchū shugyō ki ni tsuite*,” *Bukkyō bunka kenkyū* 13 [1966], p. 44). The passage is quoted in Kakuban's

- Ichigo taiyō himitsushū, Kōgyō Daishi senjutsu shū*, ed. Miyasaka Yūshō (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1977; revised 1989), vol. 1, pp. 174-76, and in Ryōchū's *Jōdo taii shō, Jōdoshū zensho* (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1970-72) 10:720-21.
- ⁵ "Myōhō-ama gozen gohenji"(1278), *Teihon* no. 301, 2:1535, 1536.
- ⁶ "Sennichi-ama gozen gohenji"(1278), *Teihon* no. 315, 2:1599.
- ⁷ On the invocational *nenbutsu* as a deathbed practice, see Takagi Yutaka, *Heian jidai Hokke Bukkyōshi kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1973), pp. 451-56.
- ⁸ *Tōsei nenbutsusha muken jigoku ji*, *Teihon* no. 37, 1:312, 313. Shandao's assertions referred to in this passage are from *Wansheng lizhanjie*, *T* no. 1980, 47:439bc.
- ⁹ Fragment no. 200, *Teihon* 4:2925.
- ¹⁰ See for example *Shō Hokke daimoku shō* (1260), *Teihon* no. 23, 1:186.
- ¹¹ *Daimoku Mida myōgō shōretsū ji* (1264), *Teihon* no. 35, 1:296.
- ¹² *Gukanshō, Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 86, ed. Okami Masao and Akamatsu Toshihide, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1967), p. 295. The reason for the specific reference to Zōga is not clear.
- ¹³ *Nomori no kagami, Gunsho ruijū* 27:481a.
- ¹⁴ "Myōhō-ama gozen gohenji"(1278), *Teihon* no. 301, 2:1535-36.
- ¹⁵ *Shuju onfurumai gosho* (1275), *Teihon* no. 176, 2:983-84.
- ¹⁶ *Honzon mondō shō* (1278), *Teihon* no. 307, 2:1585-86.
- ¹⁷ "Yagenta Nyūdō-dono goshōsoku"(1278), *Teihon* no. 303, 2:1548-49. The tradition that Daolong's body produced "five-colored relics" is maintained in *Genkō shakusho* 6, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* (Tokyo: Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan, 1970-73; hereafter *DNBZ*) no. 470, 62:100b-c, and *Honchō kosōden* 19, *ibid.*, no. 472, 63:124a.
- ¹⁸ *Teihon* no. 6, 1:37-38.
- ¹⁹ *Teihon* no. 247, 2:1340.
- ²⁰ *Jingtu wangsheng zhuan*, *T* no. 2071, 51:119b. See also Zhipan's *Fozu tongji* 26, *T* no. 2035, 49:263b. This element in Shandao's biography may have its roots in Daoxuan's seventh-century *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, according to which, in his desire to reach the Pure Land, an unnamed devotee flung himself from a willow tree after hearing Shandao's praise of the *nenbutsu* (*T* no. 2060, 50:684a).
- ²¹ *Chūgoku Jōdo sansōden* (Kyoto: Bun'eidō Shoten, 1970), pp. 168-76.
- ²² *Nichiren to sono montei* (Tokyo: Kōbundo, 1965), pp. 87-88. Komatsu Kuniaki also adopts this explanation in his entry "Zendō" in *Nichirensū ibun jiten*, ed. Risshō Daigaku Nichiren Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo (Minobu-chō, Yamanashi Prefecture: Minobusan Kuonji, 1985), p. 632c.
- ²³ *Nenbutsu mugen jikoku shō*, *Teihon* 1:37-38.
- ²⁴ "Ueno-dono gohenji"(1274), *Teihon* no. 153, 1:836-7.

- ²⁵ In part, this was because, in Nichiren's view, the Pure Land teachings are provisional while the *Lotus Sūtra* is true; therefore only the *Lotus* merits the sacrifice of one's life. At the same time, however, he makes quite clear that practice should accord with the times, and that one should not give up one's life if the times do not require it. See for example "Sado gosho" (1272), *Teihon* no. 100, 1:612.
- ²⁶ *Hōon shō* (1276), *Teihon* no. 223, 2:1228; trans. Burton Watson and others, *Selected Writings of Nichiren*, ed. Philip B. Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 292-93, slightly modified. The biography quoted is *Song gaoseng zhuan*, *T* no. 2061, 50:716a.
- ²⁷ *T* 50:716a; trans. from Chou Yi-liang, "Tantrism in China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 8/3-4 (March 1945), pp. 270-271 and n. 107.
- ²⁸ On the significance of *kanjin* style interpretations in the medieval period, see my *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 156-67.
- ²⁹ "Myōhō-ama gozen gohenji"(1278), *Teihon* no. 301, 2:1535.
- ³⁰ See for example Takagi Yutaka, *Nichiren: Sono kōdō to shisō* (Tokyo: Hyōronsha, 1970; reprint 1985), pp. 17-18.
- ³¹ *Nichiren Shōnin denkishū*, p. 87.
- ³² *Nichiren: Sono kōdō to shisō*, pp. 22-23.
- ³³ "Nishiyama-dono goke-ama gozen gohenji"(1281), *Teihon* no. 422, 2:1903.
- ³⁴ "Nanjō-dono nyobō gohenji"(1278), *Teihon* no. 290, 2:1504.
- ³⁵ "Ueno-dono gohenji"(1274), *Teihon* no. 153, 1:836.
- ³⁶ *Teihon* 2:1535, 1537.
- ³⁷ "Ueno-dono gohenji"(1279), *Teihon* no. 330, 2:1637.
- ³⁸ "Myōshin-ama gozen gohenji"(1275), *Teihon* no. 191, 2:1104.
- ³⁹ "Ueno-dono gohenji," *Teihon* 2:1491.
- ⁴⁰ Genshin's instructions for deathbed practice appear in the "*rinjū gyōgi*" section of fascicle 2 of his *Ōjōyōshū* (*Genshin*, pp. 206-17). For a partial translation of this section, see "Genshin's Deathbed Nembutsu Ritual," trans. James C. Dobbins, in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, ed. George J. Tanabe, Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 166-75.
- ⁴¹ On deathbed practices after Genshin, see for example Kamii Monshō et al., *Rinjū gyōgi* (Tokyo: Hokushindō, 1993; reprint 1995); Miyake Moritsune, "Chūsei no rinjū gyōgi to Myōe," *Ōkurayama ronshū* 44 (Dec. 1999): 1-39; and my "With the Help of 'Good Friends': Deathbed Ritual Practices in Early Medieval Japan," in *Death Rituals and the Afterlife in Japanese Buddhism*, ed. Mariko Namba Walter and Jacqueline Stone, forthcoming.
- ⁴² *Rinjū gyōgi chūki*, *DNBZ* 49: 48b.
- ⁴³ *Heian jidai Hokke Bukkyōshi kenkyū*, pp. 456-63.
- ⁴⁴ *Shuzenji-ketsu*, in *Tendai hongaku ron, Nihon shisō taikei* 9, ed. Tada Kōryū et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), pp. 46-8; *Dengyō Daishi zensho*,

- ed. Hiezan Senshūin (Tokyo: Sekai Seiten Kankō Kyōkai, 1989) 5:74-6, 87. The latter passage, not included in those excerpts anthologized in *Tendai hongaku ron*, also occurs in the *Ichinen sanzen fukuchū* attributed to Ennin (794-864), which virtually duplicates *Dengyō Daishi zensho* 5:83-87. See *DNBZ* no. 233, 41:33-34.
- ⁴⁵ *Rinjū isshin sangan*, *Teihon* (zokuhen) no. 52, 3:2205-6.
- ⁴⁶ On these issues, see my "Chanting the August Title of the *Lotus Sutra*: *Daimoku* Practices in Classical and Medieval Japan," in *Re-vision-ing "Kamakura" Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), pp. 116-66, which summarizes the relevant Japanese scholarship.
- ⁴⁷ *Shugo kokka ron* (1259), *Teihon* no. 15, 1: 111.
- ⁴⁸ *Wuliangshou jing*, T 360, 12:268a.
- ⁴⁹ *Guan wuliangshoufo jing*, T 365, 12:346a.
- ⁵⁰ *Ōjōyōshū*, *Genshin*, p. 296.
- ⁵¹ "Gassui gosho" (1264), *Teihon* no. 34, 1:292-93.
- ⁵² "Nichiren Shōnin no rinjūkan," *Seishin* 53 (March 1981):129-44.
- ⁵³ *Shishin gohon shō* (1277), *Teihon* no. 242, 2:1296.
- ⁵⁴ "Hakii Saburō-dono gohenji" (1273), *Teihon* no. 127, 1:749.
- ⁵⁵ *Ken risshōi shō* (1274), *Teihon* no. 156, 1:842.
- ⁵⁶ *Ōjōyōshū*, *Genshin*, p. 214.
- ⁵⁷ *Rinjū gyōgi chūki*, *DNBZ* 49:48a.
- ⁵⁸ *Nenbutsu ōjō yōgi shō*, *Shōwa shinshū Hōnen Shōnin zenshū*, ed. Ishii Kyōdō (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1955; reprint 1974), p. 686. See also *Sanjin ryōkan oyobi gohōgo*, *ibid.*, p. 453.
- ⁵⁹ Hōnen did not go nearly as far as Nichiren did in minimizing the importance of deathbed practice. His teachings on this point are not entirely consistent; in some cases he is on record as approving the traditional accoutrements of deathbed ritual, such as the aid of a spiritual adviser (*zenchishiki*) or use of the five-colored cords. However, especially in the period of his life following the writing of the *Senchakushū*, Hōnen's declaration of the invocational *nenbutsu* as the only valid path of salvation in the Final Dharma age, he seems to have denied the need for such outward formalities. For Hōnen's understanding of deathbed *nenbutsu*, see for example Suzuki Seigen, "Rinjū gyōgi ni tsuite," *Jōdogaku* 27 (1960):393-419; Itō Shintetsu, "Jōdokyō girei to Hōnen Shōnin," in his *Nihon Jōdokyō bunkashi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Ryūbunkan, 1975), pp. 46-65; and Nabeshima Naoki, "Hōnen ni okeru shi to kanbyō no mondai" (1) and (2), *Ryūkoku Daigaku ronshū* 434-435 (1989):137-55 and 436 (1990):272-99.
- ⁶⁰ "Matsuno-dono gohenji" (1276), *Teihon* no. 231, 2:1273; trans. Burton Watson, *Letters of Nichiren*, ed. Philip B. Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 455, slightly modified. A nearly identical passage appears in another letter to Lord Matsuno dated 1277 (*Teihon* no. 261, 2: 1389-90).

- ⁶¹ *Teihon* no. 95, 1:522-23.
- ⁶² *Teihon* no. 124, 1:737-38.
- ⁶³ Here I have followed Leon Hurvitz and Burton Watson, translators of the *Lotus Sūtra* from Kumārajīva's Chinese version *Miaofalienthua jing*, in using "eagle" rather than "vulture" for the name of this mountain. The Indian name, Mt. Gr̥dhrakūta, undeniably refers to vultures; the Chinese Lingjiushan, however, is more ambiguous and will admit either translation. The Japanese expression *washi no miyama*, found in classical *waka* poetry, suggests eagles and indicates that the image of the sacred mountain where the *Lotus Sūtra* was expounded had been reconceived in a more poetic fashion.
- ⁶⁴ *Shugo kokka ron* (1259), *Teihon* no. 15, 1:129.
- ⁶⁵ *Daimoku Mida myōgō shōretsu ji* (1264), *Teihon* no. 35, 1:296.
- ⁶⁶ See Tsumori Kiichi, "Ryōzen jōdo shinkō no keifu," *Nichiren kyōgaku kenkyūjo kiyō* 15 (1988): 23-51. The term *ryōzen jōdo* may actually have been first used by Saichō, who employs it to refer to the dwelling place of Śākyamuni Buddha in his original ground, the land of ever tranquil light (*jō jakkōdo*), and as equivalent to "the truth that is the highest meaning" (*Naishō Buppō kechimiyaku fu*, *Dengyō Daishi zensho* 1:215).
- ⁶⁷ Kawazoe Shōji, *Nichiren to Mōko shūrai* (Tokyo: Shimizu Shoin, 1984; reprint 1988), p. 91; Komatsu Seikō, "Nichiren no ryōzen ōkei shisō," in *Nichirensū no shomondai*, ed. Nakao Takashi (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1975), pp. 101-18.
- ⁶⁸ "Shijō Kingo-dono gosho" (1271), *Teihon* no. 82, 1:495.
- ⁶⁹ "Ueno-dono gohenji" (1274), *Teihon* no. 153, 1:836.
- ⁷⁰ "Sennichi-ama gohenji" (1280), *Teihon* no. 371, 2:1761.
- ⁷¹ "Ueno-dono goke-ama gozen gosho" (1280), *Teihon* no. 379, 2:1794.
- ⁷² *Teihon* no. 118, 1:712.
- ⁷³ "Nichinyo gozen gohenji" (1277), *Teihon* no. 256, 2:1376.
- ⁷⁴ On the relationship of "realizing Buddhahood with this very body" (*soku-shin jōbutsu*) and "going to the Pure Land of Eagle Peak" (*ryōzen ōkei*) in Nichiren's thought, see for example Asai Yōrin, *Nichiren Shōnin kyōgaku no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1945; reprint 1980), pp. 485-99; Mochizuki Kankō, *Nichiren kyōgaku no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1958; reprint 1989), pp. 225-52; Komatsu Seikō, "Nichiren no ryōzen ōkei shisō"; Watanabe Hōyō, "Ryōzen ōkei to sokushin jōbutsu: Oboegaki," *Seishin* 52 (March 1980): 66-76; and Ueda Honshō, "Ryōzen ōkei," *Nichirensū jiten*, ed. Nichirensū Jiten Kankō Iinkai (Tokyo: Nichirensū Shūmuin, 1981), pp. 422a-423b.
- ⁷⁵ "Saishō Ajari gohenji," *Nichirensū shūgaku zensho* 2:235. A similar account appears in *Ryūzōtōji*, attributed to Hiraga Nichiden (*Honzonron shiryō*, part 1, pp. 115-16).
- ⁷⁶ *Nichiren Shōnin denkishū*, p. 58.
- ⁷⁷ *Gohonzonshū mokuroku*, ed. Yamanaka Kihachi (Tokyo: Risshō Ankoku-

kai, 1952; revised 1981), pp. 119-120.

⁷⁸ “Nichirenshū ‘rinjū mandara’ no seiritsu to tenkai,” in *Nichiren kyōgaku no shomondai*, ed. Miyazaki Eishū, Motai Kyōkō Sensei Koki Kinen Ronbunshū Kankōkai (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1974), pp. 413-40.

⁷⁹ See the entry “Chiyomigusa” in *Nichirenshū jiten*, pp. 275d-76a. The text itself appears in *Nihon shisō taikēi* 57, *Kinsei Bukkyō no shisō*, ed. Kashiwabara Yūsen and Fujii Manabu (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), pp. 397-453.

⁸⁰ *Kinsei Bukkyō no shisō*, pp. 424-25.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 440-41.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 448.

⁸³ “Nichirenshū ‘rinjū mandara’ no seiritsu to tenkai,” pp. 424, 436-37. The phrase itself is from the “Parable” chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*: “Mounting this jeweled vehicle, they will directly arrive at the place of enlightenment” (*Miaofalianhua jing* 2, T no. 262, 9:15a).

⁸⁴ *Rinjū yōjin shō*, *Fuji shūgaku yōshū* 3:265.

⁸⁵ See Matsumura, p. 422-24; *Setsumoku nikka*, *Nichirenshū zensho* 12:339 (Enpō 5/4/17); 404 (Jōkyō 5/8/3); 465 (Genroku 7/3/15).

⁸⁶ *Nichirenshū zensho* 2:124.

⁸⁷ *Setsumoku nikka*, *Nichirenshū shūgaku zensho* 12:389 (Jōkyō 3/4/8).

⁸⁸ “Myōhō mandara kuyō ji”(1273), *Teihon* no. 117, 1:698-99.

⁸⁹ “Jakunichi-bō gosho”(1279), *Teihon* no. 341, 2:1670.