

“Admonishing the State” in the Nichiren Buddhist Tradition

—The History and Significance of *Kokka kangyō*—

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In spreading Buddhism across East Asia, monastic leaders sought support from kings and emperors. Without the ruler’s backing the saṃgha could not prosper; persecution by heads of state inimical to the dharma at times threatened its very existence. One survival strategy, seen for example in the so-called “nation-protecting sūtras” such as the *Golden Light* (*Jingguangming jing* 金光明經) and *Humane Kings* (*Renwang jing* 仁王經) sūtras, was to promise peace and prosperity for those countries whose kings protect the true dharma and to threaten disaster—famines, epidemics, invasion, and revolt—for those countries whose sovereigns permit the true dharma to be slighted or maligned. Where rulers opposed Buddhism, prominent clerics sometimes risked their lives to speak out in protest.

In Japan, such cases were rare, as the court had embraced Buddhism since the time of its introduction in the sixth century. By the medieval period, the normative concept of state-saṃgha relations had become “the mutual dependence of the king’s dharma and the buddha-dharma” (*ōbō buppō sōi* 王法仏法相依), a relationship often likened to the two wheels of a cart or the two wings of a bird.¹ In exchange for the patronage of ruling elites, clerics of leading temples representing the Tendai, Shingon, Hossō, Zen, and other Buddhist traditions provided protective rites and religious legitimation that sustained the system of rule. A striking exception was the priest Nichiren 日蓮 (1222-1282), who in the thirteenth century challenged this system by calling upon leaders of the Bakufu or shogunate to cease support for all other Buddhist forms and to

promote devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra* alone as the only teaching efficacious in the present, degenerate Final Dharma age (*mappō* 末法). In admonishing the authorities in this way, Nichiren consciously emulated Buddhist heroes of the past, such as the Kashmiri monk Āryasiṃha 師子尊者 (d. 259) and Fadao 法道 (1086-1147) of the Northern Song, who were both martyred for opposing rulers hostile to Buddhism. However, the power-holders whom Nichiren addressed were not enemies but patrons of Buddhism; their error, in his understanding, lay in rejecting the Buddha’s supreme teaching in favor of incomplete, provisional ones. Nichiren did not deny the concept of the mutual dependence of state and saṃgha but held that it could work only when grounded solely in the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Nichiren’s *Lotus* exclusivism gave him an exterior ground upon which he could critique both the political and religious authorities of his day. After his death, his actions in remonstrating with government leaders were formalized by his disciples as the practice of *kokka kangyō* 国家諫暁, literally, “admonishing and enlightening the state.” The history of *kokka kangyō*, a unique institution of the Nichiren sect, provides a window onto shifts in relations between Buddhism and government as well as the competing claims of the dharma and worldly authority. This article first examines the basis of this practice in Nichiren’s own teachings and career. It then traces the history and reasons behind *kokka kangyō* from its flourishing in the medieval era through its suppression under the early modern Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868) and its occasional resurgences, in new forms, during Japan’s modern period (1868-1945).²

Nichiren as Exemplar

Long before Nichiren, the *Lotus Sūtra* was revered in Japan for its promise of universal buddhahood. The Tendai school, in which Nichiren had trained, held it to be the Buddha’s final, ultimate teaching. Where other teachings were

provisional and incomplete, the *Lotus* was true, fully instantiating the Buddha's awakened state. Nichiren too embraced this claim, but where Tendai sought to incorporate all teachings and practices as benefitting persons of different capacities, Nichiren insisted that, now in the Final Dharma age, only the *Lotus Sūtra* is profound and powerful enough to lead all persons to buddhahood. Nichiren promoted a form of *Lotus* practice accessible to all persons: chanting the sūtra's title or *daimoku* 題目 in the formula *Namu Myōhō-rence-kyō* 南無妙法蓮華經. The spread of this practice, he taught, would reverse the grim connotations of the *mappō* era, transforming the present world into an ideal buddha land. Yet on all sides, he saw growing rejection of the *Lotus* in favor of new Pure Land, Zen, and precept revival movements as well as both Tendai and Shingon esoteric teachings. In Nichiren's eyes, to set aside the *Lotus Sūtra*, the culmination of Śākyamuni Buddha's lifetime teachings, and cling to some inferior doctrine amounted to the gravest of sins: slandering or maligning the dharma (*hōbō* 謗法). "To be born in a country where the *Lotus Sūtra* has spread, and not to believe in or practice it, is to slander the dharma," he insisted.³ In Nichiren's understanding, this error would inevitably result in suffering for individuals and disaster for the country. Accordingly, of two dharma teaching methods set forth in sūtras and commentaries, he rejected the mild method of *shōju* 摂受, leading others gradually without challenging their present views, and adopted the aggressive method of *shakubuku* 折伏, or directly rebuking attachment to lesser teachings. Even if people were to reject it, Nichiren maintained, hearing of the *Lotus Sūtra* would implant the seed for future buddhahood in their hearts. "Admonishing the state" may be considered an act of *shakubuku* aimed specifically at the ruler or his representatives.

Nichiren's Three Remonstrations

Nichiren's first act of *kokka kangyō* took place in 1260, when he submitted an admonitory treatise titled *Risshō ankoku ron* 立正安国論 (Establishing the true

teaching and bringing peace to the realm) to Hōjō Tokiyori 北条時頼 (1227-1263), former regent to the shogun and the most powerful figure in the Bakufu. Nichiren was moved to compose this treatise by the suffering he witnessed following a violent earthquake in 1257 that devastated Kamakura where the Bakufu had its headquarters. Written in elegant literary Chinese in the form of a dialogue between a guest and his host, the *Risshō ankoku ron* argues that the country’s troubles have come about because people turn their back on the true teaching and embrace inferior ones; thus the guardian deities who protect the buddha-dharma have abandoned Japan, exposing it to the predation of demons.

In this early treatise, Nichiren confined his criticism to the exclusive *nenbutsu* (*senju nenbutsu* 専修念仏) movement deriving from Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212), founder of the Japanese Pure Land sect (Jōdoshū 浄土宗). Hōnen had taught that, in this degenerate age, traditional disciplines were beyond human ability to practice; salvation was to be achieved solely by trust in the buddha Amida 阿弥陀 (Skt. Amitābha, Amitāyus), lord of a pure land far away in the western quarter of the cosmos. By setting aside all other teachings and chanting Amida’s name (*nenbutsu* 念仏) as one’s sole practice in this lifetime, Hōnen asserted, one could be born after death in Amida’s pure land and achieve liberation there. Hōnen’s followers, who were active in Kamakura, targeted the *Lotus Sūtra* in particular as too profound for human capacity in the *mappō* era and urged that it be set aside. But for Nichiren, rejection of the *Lotus* could only bring misery in this life and frightful karmic retribution in the next. “In the end,” he wrote, “there was no choice but to compile a treatise of remonstrance, which I called *Risshō ankoku ron*....I did this solely to repay the debt I owe to the country.”⁴ In this treatise Nichiren exhorted Bakufu officials to withdraw support from priests promoting Hōnen’s doctrine. “Now with all speed you must quickly reform your faith and at once devote it to the single good of the true vehicle,” he urged. “Then the threefold world will all become the buddha land, and how could a buddha land ever decline?”⁵ Prompt action was needed

because, of the disasters predicted in the sūtras to befall a country where the true dharma is neglected, only two had yet to materialize: domestic strife and foreign invasion. Were slander of the true dharma—the *Lotus Sūtra*—permitted to continue unchecked, Nichiren warned, these too would also surely occur.

There is no record of the Bakufu's response. But the criticisms Nichiren voiced in the *Risshō ankoku ron*, coupled with his victories over local *nenbutsu* priests in doctrinal debate, seem to have provoked the *nenbutsu* followers as well as influential clerics and government officials. The submission of his treatise was soon followed by a night attack on his dwelling at Matsubagayatsu in Kamakura; the next year, he was arrested and exiled to the Izu peninsula, where he would remain for two years.

Over time, Nichiren's polemical targets broadened to include the Zen, Ritsu, and esoteric teachings. He "admonished the state" on two further occasions, in face-to-face encounters with Hei no Saemon-no-jō Yoritsuna 平左衛門尉頼綱, deputy chief of the board of retainers for the Hōjō shogunal regents. Once was in 1271, at the time of his arrest just prior to his second exile, to Sado Island in the Sea of Japan. The third time was following his pardon in 1274, when Yoritsuna had him summoned back to Kamakura to seek his advice on the impending Mongol attack. Mongol designs on Japan had become clear in 1268, when Kublai Khan's envoys arrived with a veiled demand that Japan voluntarily enter into a tributary relationship or be forcibly subjugated. In retrospect, Nichiren's warning of "foreign invasion" appeared prophetic. Tradition holds that Yoritsuna now offered him official patronage if he would conduct prayer rites, along with those of the other sects, for the country's safety, but Nichiren refused, reiterating his claim that relying on teachings other than the *Lotus Sūtra* had invited the foreign attack in the first place.⁶ At that point, he withdrew to the recesses of Mt. Minobu 身延山 in Kai province, where he devoted himself to writing and training disciples.

A surviving fragment of a letter from Nichiren, probably written just before

his departure from Kamakura, reads, “Although I have addressed myself [to the Bakufu], I have not yet admonished the emperor. But I have remonstrated on three occasions, and now it is time to stop. I must have no regrets.”⁷ This suggests that Nichiren had contemplated going up to Kyoto to memorialize the emperor but decided instead to use his remaining years to solidify his teaching for the future. Later he would express his decision by citing Chinese moral classics to the effect that that a minister who admonishes his sovereign three times and is not heeded should withdraw to a mountain forest.

Nonetheless, Nichiren did, in effect, address one further admonition to the authorities: the *Ryūsenji mōshijō* 滝泉寺申状, a petition of protest that he composed in 1279 together with his disciple Byakuren Ajari Nikkō 白蓮阿闍梨日興 (1246-1333). They wrote it under the names of two other disciples, Shimotsuke-bō Nisshū 下野房日秀 (d. 1329) and Echigo-bō Nichiben 越後房日弁 (1239-1311), who had been charged with crimes in connection with a local persecution of Nichiren’s followers at Atsuhara in the Fuji district of Suruga province.⁸ By that time, the Mongols had launched a preliminary attack, in 1274, and the Bakufu was mobilizing defenses against a second assault. The *Ryūsenji mōshijō* reasserts the argument of Nichiren’s *Risshō ankoku ron*, that the present crisis has arisen due to slander of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Unlike the *Risshō ankoku ron*, whose criticisms focused on Hōnen’s exclusive *nenbutsu*, this writing attacked the esoteric prayer rituals for Japan’s protection being sponsored by both court and Bakufu; the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sūtra*, it asserts, is the “secret art” for subduing enemies. Protesting the charges against his disciples and writing in their voice, Nichiren wrote:

Now we, Nisshū and others, have discarded those lesser sūtras and recite only the *Lotus Sūtra*, promoting it throughout the world, and chant Namu Myōhō-enge-kyo. Aren’t these acts of exceptional loyalty? Should questions remain about the details of these matters, then surely eminent priests should be summoned [to debate with us], so that the truth or falsehood of

our claims may be established.⁹

This passage touches on two points that Nichiren had stressed in connection with his prior remonstrations. One was that promoting exclusive faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* represents a higher form of loyalty, based on the dharma rather than worldly convention. The other was his desire to demonstrate the truth of his position in an officially sponsored religious debate—an opportunity he sought in vain throughout his life. The *Ryūsenji mōshijō* seems to have set the pattern for later *mōshijō* 申状 or admonitory petitions on the part of Nichiren's disciples.¹⁰

The Logic of *Kokka kangyō*

“[The ruler is] like a strong wind that sways the grasses and trees,” Nichiren wrote, “or the vast ocean that draws in the many streams.”¹¹ His intent in addressing Hōjō Tokiyori in his first remonstrations was at least in part pragmatic, in that the support of this most powerful figure would have vastly aided his propagation efforts. Nichiren was by no means the only Buddhist figure in medieval Japan to seek backing from power-holders in establishing new teachings. In that regard, his *Risshō ankoku ron* bears some similarity to the *Kōzen gokoku ron* 興禪護国論 (Treatise on promoting Zen to protect the country) by Eisai 栄西 (or Yōsai, 1141-1215) or the no longer extant *Gokoku shōbō gi* 護国正法義 (The meaning of the true dharma for protecting the country) by Dōgen 道元 (1200-1253), both submitted to the court in Kyoto. However, Nichiren's treatise differed from these in its focus on countering slander of the dharma, and his reasons for “admonishing the state” went well beyond an attempt to gain official support.

First, Nichiren represented his censures as an act of loyalty to both ruler and country. He invoked the examples of loyal ministers of China's remote antiquity who had admonished the misrule of their respective emperors and were executed in consequence: Bigan 比干, who rebuked the excesses of King Zhou

紂王 of the Shang dynasty, and Guan Longfeng 關龍逢, who admonished the corruption of King Jie 桀 of the Xia dynasty.¹² Nichiren also cited ancient Chinese writings on ethics, such the Xinxu 新序 (New arrangements), which states, “One who fails to admonish a ruler’s tyranny is not a loyal minister. One who fails to speak out for fear of death is not a man of courage.”¹³

What Nichiren was rebuking, however, was not misgovernment but slander of the dharma, in his eyes a far more serious offense that would not only bring misery to the populace but also block the path to liberation in both present and future lifetimes. To speak out in remonstrance thus fulfilled the more fundamental obligation of obedience to the Buddha, by correctly upholding his dharma. In the *Risshō ankoku ron*, Nichiren cited a passage from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, regarded in Tendai doctrinal studies as a sister-sūtra to the *Lotus*: “If a good monk sees someone acting in a way that is injurious to the dharma and decides to leave him be, rather than taking steps to have him reprimanded by temporary removal or censure, understand that [the monk who observes the misdeed but does nothing] is an enemy within the buddha-dharma.”¹⁴ Throughout his career, he often cited both this passage and a portion of its commentary by the Chinese Tiantai master Guanding 灌頂 (561-632), which reads: “If one befriends another but lacks the compassion [to reprove his errors], one is in fact his enemy. But one who reprimands and corrects an offender...is the Buddha’s true disciple. In removing the offender’s evil, he acts like that person’s parent.”¹⁵ Nichiren deemed *kokka kangyō*, like *shakubuku* more broadly, to be a compassion act.

“Admonishing the state” also protected its practitioners from tacit collusion in dharma slander, Nichiren said. He explained this idea by reference to “the offense of complicity” (*yodōzai* 与同罪), a term found in contemporaneous legal codes and warrior house rules. It designated those cases when, although not personally culpable, one has knowledge of treasonous or other criminal behavior and yet fails to speak out or to inform the authorities.¹⁶ Nichiren adopted

“*yodōzai*” to describe the conduct of *Lotus* devotees who kept faith themselves but failed to admonish the dharma slander of those around them out of fear of the consequences. To one follower he writes:

If you would escape the offense of dwelling in a country of dharma slanderers, then you should admonish the ruler, even though you may be exiled or killed. As the *Lotus Sūtra* states, “We do not begrudge our bodies or our lives. We value only the supreme way.” And [Guanding’s] commentary adds, “One’s body is insignificant while the dharma is weighty. One should give one’s life in order to spread the dharma.”¹⁷

Nichiren’s repeated remonstrations and attacks on other forms of Buddhism drew increasing opposition from leading prelates and government authorities. From the time of his banishment to Izu, he began to read this hostility as fulfilling the *Lotus Sūtra*’s prophecy that its votaries in an evil latter age will be persecuted by those in power. From this perspective, his harsh treatment at the hands of the authorities both established the truth of the *Lotus Sūtra* and legitimized him as its devotee.

In this way, for Nichiren, *kokka kangyō* held multiple ethical and soteriological meanings. It demonstrated loyalty to ruler and country, obedience to the Buddha’s command, bodhisattva-like compassion, and opposition to dharma slander; it also authenticated his practice of the *Lotus Sūtra*. The same would hold true for his successors.

Kokka kangyō in the Medieval Period

After Nichiren’s death, *kokka kangyō* continued without interruption, as seen from several extant *mōshijō* or admonitory statements by Nichiren’s second- and third-generation disciples. While their addressees are often unknown, these early *mōshijō* were likely presented to Bakufu officials or their local representatives. Acts of *kokka kangyō* quickly developed a formulaic pattern:

The remonstrator submitted a *mōshijō*, often accompanied by a copy of Nichiren’s *Risshō ankoku ron*, or less frequently, a work of his own composing; earlier statements of admonition written by others were also sometimes attached. A few surviving *mōshijō* allude to the writer’s prior acts of remonstrance, suggesting repeated efforts.¹⁸

Some acts of *kokka kangyō* were carried out to protest official orders that violated the sect’s teachings. Such was the case with Ben Ajari Nisshō 弁阿闍梨 日昭 (1221-1323) and Daikoku Ajari Nichirō 大国阿闍梨 日朗 (1245-1320), two of Nichiren’s senior disciples who headed communities of devotees in Kamakura. Although the second Mongol invasion attempt, in 1281, had failed, a third attack was anticipated, and in 1285, both Nisshō and Nichirō were ordered to join the priests of other Buddhist sects in performing prayer rites to subdue the enemy. From their standpoint, participating together with nonbelievers would be tantamount to slander of the dharma, and they both submitted letters of remonstrance arguing that only the *daimoku* taught by Nichiren could offer protection in the present age.¹⁹ However, their protests were denied, and they were ordered to join in the ritual defense; otherwise, their temples would be destroyed and all Nichiren devotees banished from Kamakura. Reluctantly, the two agreed. Their decision contrasts with the tradition that Nichiren rejected Hei no Yoritsuna’s offer of official patronage in exchange for prayers to defeat the Mongols. However, Nisshō and Nichirō had built up substantial communities, which they needed to protect. The question they grappled with—whether to insist on strict adherence to doctrinal principle, whatever sacrifice that might entail, or make pragmatic compromises to protect the community of devotees—would prove a divisive issue within the early Hokkeshū 法華宗 or “Lotus sect,” as Nichiren’s early followers called themselves.²⁰

After the fall of the Kamakura Bakufu in 1333, Hokkeshū leaders turned their attention to proselytizing in Kyoto, the capital, site of the imperial court and the headquarters of the new, Ashikaga Bakufu. The Muromachi period

(1336 to 1573), the era of Ashikaga rule, was the heyday of *kokka kangyō* activity, which was centered in Kyoto. Let us consider the activities of several representative figures who “admonished the state” during that period.

First Remonstrators in Kyoto

The first Nichiren priest to establish an institutional base in Kyoto was Higo Ajari Nichizō 肥後阿闍梨日像 (1269-1342), a native of Hiraga in Shimōsa province and a disciple of the above-mentioned Nichirō. Having vowed to propagate Nichiren’s teaching in the capital, Nichizō prepared himself for the hardships he anticipated by undertaking ascetic exercises. At the execution grounds at Yuigahama in Kamakura, where Nichiren had once nearly been beheaded, Nichizō recited the verse section of the “Fathoming the Lifespan” chapter—in Nichiren’s reading, the heart of the *Lotus Sūtra*—one hundred times each night for a hundred nights. He also made pilgrimages to sites associated with Nichiren: his birthplace at Kominato in Awa province; Kiyosumidera (or Seichōji) 清澄寺, where he had entered the priesthood; Sado Island, the place of his second exile; and Mt. Minobu, where he had spent his last years. Nichizō arrived in Kyoto in 1294 at the age of twenty-six.

Nichizō established a following among the city’s merchants as well as farmers in the surrounding areas.²¹ Urbanites would form the Hokkeshū’s major support base in the capital throughout the medieval period. Nichizō also won converts among court nobles and leading warriors, aided by Daigaku Myōjitsu 大覚妙実 (1297-1364), a ranking prelate with aristocratic connections who became his disciple in 1313.²² As summed up in the phrase “three exiles and three reprieves” (*sanchitsu sansha* 三黜三赦), Nichizō met repeated setbacks and difficulties, and was three times banished from the city, the first time to Tosa in 1307 by decree of the retired emperor. Nichizō did not in fact go to Tosa but fled to Yamazaki south of Kyoto and continued proselytizing among the peasants there. He was pardoned and returned in 1309 but was exiled again,

to Kii province, in 1310. Pardoned the next year, he returned to Kyoto, where he resumed his efforts. About ten years later, in 1321, he was banished yet again, but this time, the order was rescinded within little more than ten days. While the documentary record is silent on the matter, judging from later developments, Nichizō's repeated sentences of exile probably represent responses to complaints from Enryakuji 延暦寺, the powerful Tendai center on Mt. Hiei 比叡山, or other influential temples. The affairs of the mainstream Buddhist establishment, the so-called exo-esoteric temples (*kenmitsu jiin* 顯密寺院), were intertwined with those of the capital elites, whose interests they served and who supported their temples economically. These institutions were hostile to encroachment on their prerogatives by representatives of new Buddhist movements, such as Nichizō and other Hokkeshū priests, and also followers of Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1263), who were seen as intruders threatening the proper order of saṃgha-state relations. Throughout the medieval period, Hokkeshū temples in the capital suffered repeated attacks by the priest-militias of Mt. Hiei and its allies and affiliates.²³

At the same time, the brevity of Nichizō's sentences suggests support for him at court, and eventually, his persistence bore fruit. About twenty-eight years after launching his proselytizing efforts, Nichizō was given land in a neighborhood called Imakōji 今小路, where he established Myōkenji 妙顕寺, the first Nichiren Buddhist temple in Kyoto. Nichizō's greatest success occurred in 1333, when the prince Moriyoshi Shinnō 護良親王 asked him to conduct prayer rites for the return of his father, Emperor Go-Daigō, who had been exiled to the island of Oki following a failed attempt to overthrow the Kamakura shogunate. When Kamakura fell and Go-Daigo returned in triumph, Myōkenji was rewarded with three estates in Bitchū and Owari provinces, and in 1334 Nichizō received a personal edict (*rinji* 綸旨) from Go-Daigo naming Myōkenji an imperial prayer temple (*chokuganji* 勅願寺). In 1336, with the end of the short-lived Kenmu Restoration and the establishment of the Ashikaga Bakufu,

Myōkenji was named a prayer temple (*kitōjo* 祈祷所) for the Ashikaga shogunal family and a prayer center (*kiganjo* 祈願所) for retired emperor Kōgon of the Northern Court. Nichizō had won the Nichiren sect recognition by the highest political figures and firmly established his lineage in Kyoto.

What role did *kokka kangyō* play in his achievement? According to a much later account, Nichiren on his deathbed had entrusted Nichizō, then still a boy, with the task of proselytizing in the imperial capital.²⁴ This element in Nichizō's biography may be a retrospective invention, inserted into the historical narrative to foreshadow his accomplishment. Yet Nichizō did in fact “admonish the state” on at least one occasion, in the form of a surviving petition dated 1310, protesting his third sentence of banishment issued by the retired emperor. This may have been the first *mōshijō* ever submitted by a Nichiren priest in Kyoto. It states in part:

The prosperity or decline of the buddha-dharma rests solely on whether the ruler is wise or benighted. The righteousness or disorder of the ruler's law inevitably depends on whether true or false teachings are upheld. Although unworthy, I spread the unsurpassed dharma and privately offer prayers that heaven and earth may long endure, that the realm may be safe and at peace. Yet my loyalty is taken as disloyalty, and the true dharma is condemned as heretical.²⁵

Nichizō asserted that only the *Lotus Sūtra* leads to buddhahood in the present age and urged that eminent priests be gathered to investigate the truth of his claim.

Some scholars have criticized Nichizō for a readiness to compromise with worldly authority, as seen in his willingness to perform prayer rites for an emperor, and later a shogun, who were not *Lotus* devotees—unlike Nichiren, who had refused to conduct rites to defeat the Mongols unless all teachings other than the *Lotus Sūtra* were set aside.²⁶ In this, Nichizō's stance was closer to that of his teacher Nichirō, who had compromised on this point rather than

allow all Nichiren followers to be banished from Kamakura. Nichizō seems to have seen connections with the country’s rulers as essential to the spread of the sect; in the recurring tensions between Nichiren’s purism and the practical demands of institution building, he was especially sensitive to the latter. In any event, his achievements opened the way for all Nichiren lineages (*monto* 門徒) to establish themselves in Kyoto. *Kokka kangyō* would play a conspicuous role in their efforts.

Even as Nichizō was winning converts in and around the capital, other second- and third-generation disciples of Nichiren were also intent on proselytizing there. Notable among them for the sheer number of his remonstrations is Niidakyō Ajari Nichimoku 新田郷阿闍梨日目 (1260-1333), a native of Izu and a disciple of Byakuren Ajari Nikkō, mentioned above, one of Nichiren’s direct disciples. After Nichiren’s death, Nichimoku—who excelled in debate—proselytized in Kai province and in Ōshū, where his family had land holdings, and founded several temples. He accompanied his teacher Nikkō when the latter broke with Nichiren’s other leading disciples and established himself at Omosu near Mt. Fuji; Nichimoku would become a leading figure within the Fuji lineage of the Hokkeshū. Fuji tradition says that he journeyed repeatedly to Kyoto to appeal to the court and to Kamakura to admonish the Bakufu, remonstrating with officials on forty-two occasions.²⁷ Although the details are not clear, Nichimoku may have submitted an appeal to the emperor (*jōsō* 上奏); if so, he may have been the first Nichiren priest to do so.²⁸

In the winter of 1333, at age seventy-four, Nichimoku set out for Kyoto with two companions to admonish the newly restored Emperor Go-Daigo. However, he died en route at Tarui in Mino, exhausted by the rigors of the journey.²⁹ His *mōshijō* intended for Go-Daigo survives. Evidently, Nichimoku had intended to submit it together with a copy of the *Risshō ankoku ron*, as well as a prior letter of remonstrations authored by his teacher Nikkō in 1330 and an account of the order of dissemination of the Buddhist teachings through the True,

Semblance, and Final Dharma ages (*sanji gukyō shidai* 三時弘經次第). In his own *mōshijō*, Nichimoku noted that the sequence of propagation has been determined by the Buddha himself; ordinary people cannot alter it. Despite the immense support given to temples and shrines, because they embrace provisional teachings no longer suited to the times, disasters and rebellions merely increase, he said. The reference to “disasters and rebellions” was calculated to appeal to Go-Daigo, who had only just regained his throne after intense fighting. In this age, Nichimoku asserted, only the three secret dharmas of the origin section (*honmon* 本門) of the *Lotus Sūtra*—the object of worship (*honzon* 本尊), ordination platform (*kaidan* 戒壇), and *daimoku*—could bring peace to the realm.³⁰

As Nichimoku’s example shows, “admonishing the state” was by no means always a once in a lifetime affair, nor did it necessarily end with the three attempts that Nichiren’s example had established as normative. It also seems significant that, along with Nichiren’s *Risshō ankoku ron*, Nichimoku intended to submit an earlier *mōshijō* composed by his teacher Nikkō, who had just died that year. Nichimoku may well have felt that he would be memorializing the emperor in Nikkō’s stead. With some notable exceptions, those who “admonished the state” in the medieval period seem to have acted, neither as independent individuals nor on behalf of the entire sect, but as representatives of particular Nichiren lineages.

“Admonishing the State” and Self-Legitimation

At this point, leadership of the various Hokkeshū lineages began to pass to persons who had not known Nichiren personally. “Admonishing the state” served as one vehicle by which these new *monto* leaders established their credentials as qualified successors and lineage heads.

Notable among this generation was Jōgyōin Nichiyū 浄行院日祐 (1298-1374), third abbot of Nakayama Hokekyōji 中山法華經寺 in Shimōsa province. An

important Hokkeshū temple in the east, Nakayama Hokekyōji had been established by Nichiren’s disciple Toki Jōnin 富木常忍 (1216-1299; monastic name Nichijō 日常), who had taken the tonsure following Nichiren’s death. With the backing of its foremost patron, Chiba Tanesada 千葉胤貞, who was also his adoptive father, Nichiyū extended the reach of the Hokkeshū in Shimōsa and Hizen, in concert with his colleague Nichiju 日樹 (n.d.), abbot of Mama Gujōhi 真間弘法寺, also in Shimōsa and at the time affiliated with Nakayama. In 1334, the two resolved to go up to Kyoto to remonstrate with Go-Daigo. The *mōshijō* that they prepared represents them as carrying on the work of their teacher Nichiren, envoy of the Tathāgata, whose admonitions had gone unheeded but whose prophecies of disaster had proved accurate. It reads in part: “To correct evil and return to the right is the way of a sacred age of good government. To discard the provisional and enter the true is the right intention of all buddhas.” Like Nichiren, they urged that the provisional teachings of *nenbutsu*, Zen, Shingon, and Ritsu be abandoned and the *daimoku*, the heart of the *Lotus Sūtra*, alone be spread. Speaking “not for our own sake, but for the sake of the ruler and the realm,” they urged Go-Daigo to follow the wise precedents of the emperors Wen of the Sui dynasty 隋文帝, who had supported the Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), and Kanmu 桓武天皇, who had backed the Japanese Tendai founder Saichō 最澄 (766/767-822); specifically, they asked that he gather scholars of all sects to investigate the matter in debate with them. Once the correct verdict was reached, all wrong teachings prohibited, and the true dharma promoted, “malefactors will be utterly dispersed, and the realm will naturally become peaceful.”³¹ As with Nichimoku’s *mōshijō*, the wording here—“dispersing malefactors”—was no doubt intended to suggest the power of the *Lotus Sūtra* to subdue Go-Daigo’s enemies.

Nichiyū later wrote that he presented this statement to one Made no Kōji Fujifusa 万里小路藤房, head of the imperial police, and was immediately arrested. Although released three days later, Nichiyū gained considerable

satisfaction at having incurred opposition, even briefly, for the dharma's sake.³² Following the collapse of Go-Daigo's brief Kenmu Restoration and the beginning of Ashikaga rule, Nichiyū again went to Kyoto in 1340 to admonish the new power-holder, the first Ashikaga shōgun, Takauji 尊氏. He submitted a letter of admonition through an intermediary but received no clear response. The next year, he remonstrated yet again, this time in direct encounter (*teichū* 庭中) with the shogun, and was interrogated by one of his officials.³³ Once more receiving no clear response, Nichiyū departed Kyoto to return to his home temple, having re-enacted Nichiren's example in admonishing the ruler three times.

By the early fourteenth century, priests of the various Nichiren lineages were traveling frequently to Kyoto to study, to copy texts, to collect Nichiren's scattered writings, and to proselytize and establish temples. *Kokka kangyō* was part of this larger activity and seems to have been considered almost obligatory for lineage heads.³⁴ Nichiyū was one of the first leaders of a Hokkeshū lineage born too late to have known the founder Nichiren personally. 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 worthy dharma heir to Nichiren and to solidify his leadership of the Nakayama lineage.³⁵

Self-legitimation may also have played a role in the remonstrations carried out by Genmyō Ajari Nichijū 玄妙阿闍梨日什 (1314-1392), founder of the Myōmanji 妙満寺 lineage (today's Kenpon Hokkeshū 顕本法華宗). Originally a scholar-priest of the Tendai sect, Nichijū converted to Nichiren's teaching at age sixty-six, after a chance encounter with Nichiren's writings.³⁶ Initially he joined Mama Guhōji in Shimōsa, where he became head of doctrinal instruction, training priests from that temple as well as Nakayama Hokekyōji and also proselytizing in the area. In 1381, the hundred-year anniversary of Nichiren's death, Nichijū went to Kyoto to "admonish the state," acting as the representative of the Nakayama abbot, Nisson 日尊, who, along with the temple's

lay devotees, provided him with financial support. This detail suggests that ordinary practitioners, by their monetary contributions for travel and other expenses, might participate in the *kokka kangyō* efforts of activist priests. In Kyoto, Nichijū delivered statements of admonition to Nijō Morotsugu 二條師嗣, regent to Emperor Go-En'yū, and others, and in Kamakura, he admonished the shogunal deputy (*kubō* 公方), Ashikaga Ujimitsu 足利氏満; in both towns, he established temples and won converts. Gradually, however, Nichijū became estranged from the Nakayama abbot Nisson, to a point where the later confiscated thirty-six *kanmon* of coins that Nichijū had raised for another trip to Kyoto, his third. Nichijū went up to the capital anyway; on this trip, he proselytized as an independent agent and continued to remonstrate with nobles and ranking warrior officials. Nichijū carried out his most famous acts of *kokka kangyō* in the first and third months of 1391, when he twice directly admonished the third Ashikaga shogun, Yoshimitsu 義満. Yoshimitsu heard him out but replied that he could not establish the Hokkeshū alone and warned Nichijū on pain of punishment not to appeal again.

While overtly an attempt to convert the ruler and benefit the country, *kokka kangyō* simultaneously held up a mirror to the audience of fellow Hokkeshū priests. By this time, “admonishing the state” had come to carry implicit criticism of older, more conciliatory elements within the tradition. Such had in fact been one of Nichijū’s criticisms of the Nakayama abbot Nisson: “In the end he never appealed to the emperor, or even admonished [the shogun’s representatives] in Kamakura in the east but spent his life in vain.”³⁷ Nichijū’s own remarkable efforts in “admonishing the state” helped confirm his legitimacy as the founder of a new lineage and won him disciples. While he had not received a master-disciple transmission through any established Hokkeshū lineage, Nichijū’s practice of *kokka kangyō*, recapitulating that of the founder himself, helped bolster his claim to have received a direct transmission through Nichiren’s writings.

“Not Begrudging Body or Life”

Kokka kangyō could be a dangerous act. It brought the remonstrator—powerless in worldly terms and unarmed except for his faith—into direct confrontation with the ruler or other officials backed by the force of the state. Medieval instances of arrest and torture as a direct result of *kokka kangyō* are few, but they are especially celebrated in the annals of the Nichiren tradition as embodying the spirit of Nichiren himself and of the *Lotus Sūtra*’s words: “not begrudging one’s body or one’s life.”³⁸ They also seemed to bear out the sūtra’s prediction that its devotees in an evil latter age will be persecuted by the authorities. Here let us consider two such cases.

The first took place among Nichijū’s disciples. Himself having become head of a new lineage by an unconventional route, Nichijū departed from tradition and did not appoint a direct successor. Instead, he directed that, after his death, those disciples fully committed to *shakubuku* should share leadership of the proselytizing effort. This instruction inspired a fierce *kokka kangyō* campaign.³⁹ Resolved to continue their teacher’s remonstrations with the shogun Yoshimitsu, Nichijū’s leading disciples first launched a preparatory effort. In 1398, over a nearly two-month period, they submitted some twenty *mōshijō* to top officials, daimyō, literati, and other prominent figures, urging that these statements be shown to the shogun. Their action aroused consternation among the abbots of older, established Hokkeshū temples in Kyoto, such as Honkokuji 本国寺 and Myōhonji 妙本寺, who feared it might jeopardize their own hard-won acceptance in the capital or even provoke violence from Mt. Hiei or other mainstream temples. Mt. Hiei had attacked and razed Myōkenji, the temple founded by Nichizō, in 1387, and although Myōkenji had been rebuilt in 1393 (and renamed Myōhonji), this most recent attack must still have been fresh in mind. Fearing that opposition from older Hokkeshū temples might obstruct their plans, Nichijū’s disciples Saishō Ajari Nichinin 宰相阿闍梨日仁 (n.d.) and Yūsen-bō Ajari Nichijitsu 祐泉坊阿闍梨日実 (n.d.), accompanied by several supporters,

proceeded to admonish Yoshimitsu directly. Infuriated at their persistence despite his earlier order to their teacher Nichijū to desist, Yoshimitsu had six of the party, both priests and lay believers, arrested. According to the surviving account, Nichinin and Nichijitsu were beaten brutally, doused with boiling water, and subjected to other torments, all the while being ordered to recite the *nenbutsu*—perhaps the ultimate apostasy for a Nichiren devotee. But they refused to yield and continued chanting the *daimoku*, even under torture. Impressed in spite of himself, Yoshimitsu ordered them released. Severely injured and unable to stand, they were carried back to their temple by their lay followers; eventually they recovered and resumed their proselytizing efforts. Their act became the talk of Kyoto, and although it drew some criticism, on the whole it seems to have enhanced the prestige of their lineage. The cruel treatment ordered by Yoshimitsu, and the Myōmanji priests’ defiance, dramatically raised the stakes of *kokka kangyō* as an undertaking that could result in torture or even cost one’s life. We see this theme again in accounts of its most famous practitioner, Kuonjōin Nisshin 久遠成院日親 (1407-1488).

A charismatic preacher, over the over the course of his career, Nisshin founded thirty temples while proselytizing in the Kantō, Kyushu, and the capital region and also carried out eight acts of remonstrance with government officials.⁴⁰ Like Nichiyū before him, he belonged, initially, to the Nakayama lineage, and in 1433, the Nakayama Hokekyōji abbot dispatched him to Kyushu to lead Nakayama’s many branch temples in Hizen province. There, to his dismay, Nisshin found widespread accommodation to local religion, with images of bodhisattvas and deities utterly unrelated to the Nichiren sect enshrined in village temples. Such examples were not rare, as exclusive devotion to the *Lotus* was hard to institutionalize in a religious environment where eclectic practice was the norm, and some Nichiren priests felt it necessary to compromise. Nisshin, an unyielding purist, feared that the strict spirit of *shakubuku* was being lost. He ordered the offending images removed, angering

local devotees, and his repeated remonstrations with sect's leading lay patron and the Nakayama abbot himself for tolerating this state of affairs were poorly received. In 1437, he was expelled from the lineage. Thrown entirely on his own resources, Nisshin went up to Kyoto, where he established a base of propagation and resolved to work to purify the sect.

In 1439, Nisshin directly admonished the sixth shogun, Ashikaga Yoshinori 足利義教. Himself a former Tendai abbot of Mt. Hiei recalled to lay life in order to serve as shogun, Yoshinori was not favorably disposed toward an unknown cleric of the Hokkeshū. He was also preoccupied, having just managed to subdue a challenge to his rule led by Ashikaga Mochiuji, the shogunal deputy in Kamakura (the Eikyō Rebellion 永享の乱) and was still dealing with recalcitrant daimyō. By Nisshin's own account, Yoshinori had him detained and interrogated by officials of his *mandokoro* 政所 or administrative office, who ordered him—as Yoshimitsu had ordered Nichijū—not to appeal again, on pain of severe punishment.

Undeterred, Nisshin planned an audacious second attempt. In preparation, he authored a treatise of admonition entitled *Risshō jikoku ron* 立正治国論 (Establishing the true teaching and subduing the realm), closely modeled on Nichiren's *Risshō ankoku ron*. His idea was to accost Yoshinori directly during the upcoming thirty-third-year memorial rites for the third shogun, Yoshimitsu 義満 (1358-1408), who had ended the conflict between the Northern and Southern courts and solidified Ashikaga rule. Leading prelates of the major sects would be in attendance, along with ranking daimyō. Thus in addition to their pious purpose, the memorial rites were to be a major state affair that would demonstrate Yoshinori's restored command over his vassals and the support he enjoyed from the leading Buddhist institutions. Nisshin must indeed have been resolved to give up his life, as he could very well have been executed for disrupting such a weighty event. However, before he could finish making a clean copy of his treatise, he was arrested and imprisoned.⁴¹ He would not be

released until a general amnesty following Yoshinori's assassination, almost two years later. Nisshin wrote that he had been crammed with several others into a sort of cage, too narrow to sit down in and too low to stand upright, with spikes driven through the top; he was also “tormented by fire and water.”⁴² The tortures Nisshin endured while imprisoned were later elaborated in lovingly gruesome detail in the seventeenth-century *Nisshin Shōnin tokugyō ki* 日親上人徳行記 (Record of the virtuous deeds of Nisshin Shōnin).⁴³ This popular hagiography is the source of Nisshin's famous sobriquet, “the pot-wearing saint” (Nabekamuri Shōnin 鍋かむり上人), based on one episode in its narrative in which Yoshinori has an iron kettle heated red-hot and placed over Nisshin's head in a futile attempt to make him stop chanting the *daimoku*.

Nisshin's resumed his propagation efforts after his release and continued to admonish high officials, even submitting his *Risshō jikoku ron* through an intermediary to Emperor Go-Hanazono. There is no doubt that he saw himself as reenacting Nichiren's example and living out the *Lotus Sūtra*'s ideal of heroic bodhisattva self-sacrifice. Despite opposition from more conservative elements within the sect, Nisshin's strength of purpose won many converts and immense popular acclaim. To many, his ability to withstand horrific tortures suggested extraordinary spiritual power, and after his death, “the pot-wearing saint” was worshipped as a deity able to grant this-worldly benefits and protection.⁴⁴

Was Medieval *Kokka kangyō* Effective?

It is impossible to enumerate every Nichiren Buddhist priest who engaged in *kokka kangyō* during its high point in the age of Ashikaga rule. In the mid-fifteenth century, as shogunal authority unraveled, social disorder was compounded by natural disasters. In 1449, earthquakes shook the archipelago for a hundred consecutive days, while the late 1450s and 1460s saw repeated droughts, followed by famine and epidemics. Streams of refugees poured into the capital, and the dead piled up by the roadsides. Under such circumstances,

Nichiren priests redoubled their admonitions that faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* alone could stem disasters and bring peace to the realm.⁴⁵ Among them was Shinnyoin Nichijū 真如院日住 (1406-1486) of the temple Hongakuji in Kyoto and a veteran of two prior *kokka kangyō* attempts. In 1465 Nichijū presented an admonitory treatise titled *Myōhō jisei shū* 妙法治世集 (Collection on governing the age through the wonderful dharma), along with a summary statement (*meyasu* 目安), to the eighth shogun, Yoshimasa 義政.⁴⁶ By his own account, Nichijū accosted Yoshimasa en route to Rokuon'in 鹿苑院 (later Kinkakuji 金閣寺). Nichijū approached Yoshimasa's palanquin, and the shogun scanned his summary, raising it to his forehead in respect. He informed Nichijū that, although he had no bias toward any particular Buddhist sect, it was impossible to establish one sect alone.⁴⁷

Yoshimasa's words were telling. As noted above, the interests of the Bakufu, the court, and leading *kenmitsu* temples were inseparably intertwined; power-holders provided these temples with economic support in exchange for their ritual performance and religious legitimation. In this world, the Hokkeshū still remained something of an interloper. While local lords or officials in the provinces may occasionally have been converted by *kokka kangyō*, no head of state was in any position to grant the Hokkeshū's appeal to abolish all other teachings, even had he so wished. Why then did Nichiren priests persist in their admonitions?

First, the significance of *kokka kangyō* far outweighed its visible results. As a form of *shakubuku*, it was thought to plant seeds of buddhahood that would eventually sprout and flourish in the mind of the recipient. It was deemed an act of supreme loyalty and compassion toward both the ruler and the people, making clear the sole ground on which the realm could be made peaceful and prosperous. "Admonishing the state" also fulfilled the scriptural imperative to speak out against slander of the dharma and freed the remonstrator from complicity in that offense. It reenacted the example set by the founder, Nichiren,

and for that very reason was often undertaken by the founders of new lineages or those who had broken with older ones, enabling them to prove themselves as Nichiren’s successors. Though directed toward outsiders, *kokka kangyō* was also a reflexive act that communicated normative ideals within the sect. When remonstrations resulted in arrest, imprisonment, or torture, they also confirmed the *Lotus Sūtra*’s prophecy that its devotees in a latter evil age will be persecuted by persons in authority. If *kokka kangyō* could not succeed in instrumental terms, as a performative act, it could not fail.

Moreover, “admonishing the state” did achieve practical gains. As seen, for example, in the case of Nisshin, it served as a corrective within the sect to maintain Nichiren’s exclusivist “*Lotus* only” stance and provided a counterweight to excessive compromise with the eclecticism of local religious custom; thus it reinforced sectarian identity. *Kokka kangyō* provoked powerful rival institutions such as Mt. Hiei, and for that reason, leaders of the older Hokkeshū temples in Kyoto sometimes disapproved of it. But to lay followers, remonstrators were charismatic heroes. They aroused intense popular admiration and won their respective *monto* many converts. Those who undertook *kokka kangyō* tended to be especially active in the broader proselytization efforts that, especially after the Ōnin war (1467-1477), led to sect’s dramatic growth both in the provinces and in the capital. At the height of its flourishing, the Hokkeshū boasted twenty-one major Nichiren temples in Kyoto. The southern area of town where they were concentrated was dubbed “the *daimoku* district” (*daimoku no chimata* 題目の巷); wherever one went, one could hear the title of the *Lotus Sūtra* being chanted.

Early Modern *Kokka kangyō* and the *Fuju fuse* Controversy

During the Sengoku (Country at War) period—roughly the latter fifteenth through sixteenth centuries—power fragmented into competing factions, and

the practice of *kokka kangyō* declined. With the breakdown of central authority, the townspeople of Kyoto took increasing responsibility for self-governance; they also armed themselves to defend the city against the predations of rural peasant leagues and provincial warlords. Membership in neighborhood organizations substantially overlapped affiliation with Hokkeshū temples, whose Lotus exclusivism served to unite the *machishū* and promote their interests. When mobilized, the congregations of these temples were called Lotus leagues, or *Hokke ikki* 法華一揆. Between 1532 to 1536, the Nichiren sect maintained a de facto autonomous government in the capital, establishing its own police and judiciary organizations. This high point of *machishū* self-rule was abruptly ended when older, land-holding elites, represented by the forces of Mt. Hiei, attacked and burned every Nichiren temple in the city. Hokkeshū priests fled to the neighboring city of Sakai, where their lineages had branch temples. By 1542, they were allowed to return and rebuild, but the sect never fully regained its former strength in the capital.⁴⁸ The military campaigns of the three successive “unifiers”—Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1536-1598), and Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543-1616)—further eroded the influence, not only of Nichiren temples but of Buddhism more broadly. In their ambition to bring the entire country under their control, all three warlords sought to break the power of Buddhist institutions. The “mutual dependence of the king’s dharma and the buddha-dharma,” already in decline, now came to an end.

Beginning in Hideyoshi’s time, the Hokkeshū practice of “admonishing the state” was briefly revived. It was carried out in a defensive mode, as a form of resistance to policies designed to subordinate Buddhism to a new ideology of rule. It was also inextricably intertwined with the early modern Nichiren *fūju fuse* 不受不施 controversy.

Fūju fuse (“neither receiving nor giving”) means that priests of the Nichiren sect should not receive offerings from persons who do not embrace the

Lotus Sūtra, lay followers should not visit the temples and shrines of other sects, seek their religious services, or make donations to their priests. This stance derived to some extent from Nichiren himself, who had stressed the importance of denying material support to priests who slander the true dharma.⁴⁹ The question of whether or not to accept support from nonbelievers became an issue after Nichiren’s death, especially as the various lineages began to establish themselves in Kyoto and attract elite patronage. Initially, exceptions to the *furu fuse* restriction were often made for influential nobles and warrior officials; some Hokkeshū clerics even argued that accepting offerings from such persons could be an important means of leading them toward faith in *Lotus Sūtra*. From the mid-fifteenth century, however, attitudes within the sect had gradually hardened in the direction of growing exclusivism, strict *shakubuku* practice, and refusal to accept patronage from nonbelievers, even the ruler himself. On several occasions, Nichiren clerics were able to obtain formal statements from the Ashikaga shoguns exempting them from participating in Bakufu-sponsored ceremonies.⁵⁰ All that changed with the beginnings of early modern rule.

Nichiō and the Revival of *Kokka kangyō*

The *furu fuse* conflict that would split the early modern Nichiren sect was triggered in 1595, when Hideyoshi, then the retired imperial regent (*taikō* 太閤) and the most powerful figure in the country, ordered that each of the ten Buddhist sects provide one hundred priests to join in performing a series of memorial services for his deceased ancestors, to be conducted before a great buddha image he had erected at Hōkōji 方広寺 in Higashiyama, just outside Kyoto. Cooperation would clearly violate the *furu fuse* principle, as it would entail participating in a religious rite not based on the *Lotus Sūtra* (an act of complicity in “dharma slander”) and sponsored by a nonbeliever, Hideyoshi, along with accepting his offerings in the form of a ceremonial meal. Yet

Hideyoshi had warned the Hokkeshū that, even if participation went against their founder's teaching, their absence would not be tolerated. Fearful that Hideyoshi would destroy their temples if they refused, almost all the abbots of the Kyoto Nichiren temples agreed to participate.

A small dissenting minority centered around Busshō-in Nichiō 仏性院日奥 (1565-1630), chief abbot of Myōkaku-ji 妙覚寺. Loss of the temples could be remedied, Nichiō asserted, but once the sect's principle was broken, it could not easily be restored. Instead, he urged remonstrating with Hideyoshi:

If we now forcefully assert our sect's principle to the ruler, how could he not grant us an exception? Even if the worst happens, why should we grieve, in light of our teaching that one's body is insignificant while the dharma is weighty?... Even if our temples should be destroyed, because we uphold [our sect's] dharma-principle, we would [still be in accord with] the original intent and meaning of this sect. What could there be to regret?⁵¹

By this time, the practice of *kokka kangyō* in Kyoto appears to have lapsed for at least a century and a half.⁵² Nichiō was in effect calling for its revival. Over the next two years, he himself would reenact Nichiren's example and "admonish the state" on several occasions.⁵³ Immediately following his refusal to join in the memorial rites, Nichiō left Kyoto so as not to endanger his disciples and lay followers by his opposition. But before departing, he composed the *Hokkeshū kanjō* 法華宗諫状 (Admonition from the Hokkeshū) and addressed it to Hideyoshi. He intended to present it personally at Hideyoshi's headquarters at Fushimi castle, and nine of his disciples resolved to accompany him. However, Myōkakuji's influential lay supporters, fearing repercussions, dissuaded him from this direct approach. According to its colophon, the admonition was submitted through Maeda Gen'i 前田玄以 (1539-1602), one of Hideyoshi's senior councilors.⁵⁴ Nichiō stayed first at a Myōkakuji branch temple in nearby Kaide but, being now deemed a criminal, he was soon forced to leave and eventually settled at Koizumi in Tanba. There he continued writing and

travelling to preach the *fuju fuse* doctrine among Nichiren followers. While still at Kaide, he wrote a second admonition to Hideyoshi, this one occasioned by Hideyoshi's granting of a petition from the Pure Land sect to alter the seat ranking of priests participating in the thousand-priest memorial rites so as to place the Pure Land representatives above those of the Nichiren sect. In this document, Nisshin reasserted that the *Lotus Sūtra* is supreme among the Buddha's teachings and that to slight it in favor of provisional teachings is to slander the dharma. He urged Hideyoshi to set aside worldly affairs for a time and, with the aid of wise and educated persons, investigate the difference between right and wrong understandings of Buddhist doctrine.⁵⁵

The following year, 1596, a devastating earthquake destroyed both Fushimi castle and the great buddha image at Higashiyama. Since the time of the great Shōka-era earthquake of 1257 that had prompted Nichiren to compose his *Risshō ankoku ron*, major earthquakes had often provided an occasion for *kokka kangyō*, and this particular one, in toppling two symbols of Hideyoshi's power, could be readily be seen as karmic retribution rebounding on the ruler himself. Nichiō now composed another admonitory treatise for Hideyoshi and even risked returning to Kyoto to present it, again through the offices of Maeda Gen'i. However, Gen'i—both politically shrewd and protective of Nichiō—informed him that Hideyoshi was too preoccupied with affairs of state to attend to Buddhist matters. Why not, he suggested, send his treatise to Emperor Go-Yōzei instead? Nichiō accordingly revised and submitted his admonition to the throne through an intermediary, together with a copy of Nichiren's *Risshō ankoku ron* and his own explanation of that work, asserting its relevance to the present time.⁵⁶ Go-Yōzei asked the scholar-priests of the two leading Tendai centers—Mt. Hiei and Onjōji 園城寺—to investigate the doctrinal differences that Nichiō referred to between the Hōkōshū and other sects but received no answer. He then made the same request of Gen'i, who advised him that the effort was not worth the controversy likely to result.

Fearing Nichiō's growing support among the laity, opponents within his own sect petitioned against him to Tokugawa Ieyasu, then the "inner minister" (*naidaijin* 内大臣) and, following Hideyoshi's death in 1598, the de facto powerholder. In 1600, Ieyasu had Nichiō banished to the island of Tsushima. Nichiō's writings during his twelve years of exile, often drawing on Nichiren's own words, express his sense of exaltation at having lived up to Nichiren's example in "admonishing the state" on three occasions, thus escaping complicity in the sin of dharma slander, and at undergoing persecution for the dharma's sake, just as the *Lotus Sūtra* predicts.

Refusing the Ruler's Offerings

Following Ieyasu's military unification of the country and the establishment of his new Bakufu in Edo (today's Tokyo), the Nichiren sect became increasingly polarized over the *fuju fuse* issue. To refuse the offerings of a ruler who did not embrace the *Lotus Sūtra* was to invoke, as Nichiren had done, an authority transcending the state that had prior claim on one's loyalty. This did not accord well with the emergent policies of the Tokugawa Bakufu, whose architects sought to subsume Buddhist temples under their new ideology and administrative order, which they legitimized in absolute terms as "the way of heaven" (*tendō* 天道).⁵⁷ The sect quickly divided into a *fuju fuse* faction—those insistent on upholding the purity of Nichiren's exclusive *Lotus* devotion, whatever the cost, and their opponents, whom they dubbed *ju fuse* ("not giving but receiving"), and who maintained, in the interests of protecting their communities of followers, that the ruler should constitute a unique exception to the *fuju fuse* rule. The struggle between the two factions continued into the 1660s, when the *fuju fuse* teaching was decisively banned. The struggle to maintain the *fuju fuse* position gave new meaning to Nichiren's mandate to "admonish the state" in order to escape complicity in dharma slander. Let us look further at how Nichiō understood the connection between *kokka kangyō*

and the *fujū fuse* position.

Following the establishment of the Tokugawa Bakufu, the *fujū fuse* controversy focused increasingly on the status of temple lands. Those clerics within the sect advocating compromise insisted that the *fujū fuse* stance was contradictory, as the major Nichiren temples already accepted offerings from the ruler (that is, the Bakufu) in the form of tax exemptions and vermilion-seal land grants (*shuinchi* 朱印地). In addition, they maintained, since the land and its produce all ultimately belong to the ruler, when Nichiren priests, in travelling for propagation, walk the country's roads and drink from its wells, that too is accepting the ruler's dharma offerings. These were new claims. Since its early expansion in Kyoto, the Hokkeshū had considered official land grants and tax exemptions for temples as an ordinary function of benevolent government, not subject to the *fujū fuse* restriction.⁵⁸ Following his pardon and return from exile in 1612, Nichiō clarified this stance: “If [lands and titles] are given as worldly rewards, there is no need to refuse them,” he wrote. “But if they are offerings made for the performance of Buddhist rites, accepting them becomes slander of the dharma, and we must refuse them.”⁵⁹

In rebutting the charge that accepting official land grants already violated the *fujū fuse* principle, Nichiō strongly reasserted the importance of *kokka kangyō* as a requirement of Nichiren priests living under a ruler who does not embrace the *Lotus Sūtra*.⁶⁰ He developed his argument from two perspectives, worldly and transcendent. From the worldly perspective, Nichiō said, those who dwell in the ruler's realm receive their sustenance from the ruler's land, not unconditionally, but in exchange for their labor at their various professions. The carpenter, the wheelwright, the cart-maker, and so forth all eat by virtue of their labor. The same holds true for priests of the Nichiren sect, who, while living in the ruler's realm, are entitled to consume its fruits by the diligent “practice of our house.” That “practice,” Nichiō explained, is to rebuke the ruler's dharma slander, even at the cost of exile or other punishments, just as

Nichiren taught. In short, Nichiō reframed the economy of state-saṃgha relations in a *Lotus*-only mode: Nichiren priests are qualified to consume the produce of the land by virtue of practicing *shakubuku* and admonishing the ruler to embrace the *Lotus Sūtra*. Those priests of the sect who make no effort to rebuke the ruler's dharma slander are bandits and traitors, he said.

But that is only the worldly perspective. From the transcendent perspective, Nichiō continued, the ruler does not own the country. All sovereigns hold their lands in fief from Śākyamuni Buddha, who declared in the *Lotus Sūtra* that “this threefold world is all my possession.”⁶¹ Here Nichiō drew on Nichiren himself, who had described a cosmic hierarchy with the eternal Śākyamuni Buddha of the *Lotus* at its apex: Brahmā and Indra, the Indian world-ruling deities, hold their domains in tenure from Śākyamuni Buddha and protect his true disciples, the *Lotus* devotees. The four deva kings who guard the four quarters are gatekeepers to Brahmā and Indra, while the monarchs of the four continents are vassals to the four deva kings. “The ruler of Japan,” Nichiren had written, “is not equal even to a vassal of the wheel-turning monarchs who govern the four continents. He is just an island chief.”⁶² Connecting this hierarchy to the *fuju fuse* issue, Nichiō argued that Nichiren priests, being the disciples of the eternal Śākyamuni Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra*, are perfectly entitled receive the products of the land, as they come directly from that Buddha himself—again, provided that they uphold the sole truth of the *Lotus* and rebuke slander of the dharma.

In maintaining that the land ultimately belongs to the eternal Śākyamuni Buddha, Nichiō's transcendent perspective explicitly subordinates the ruler's authority to that of the *Lotus Sūtra*. In contrast, the *ju fuse* stance of his opponents, which exempted the ruler from the prohibition against accepting donations from nonbelievers, tacitly endorsed—or at least did not contradict—the Bakufu's own claims to absolute authority. From both worldly and transcendent perspectives, Nichiō saw *shakubuku* and, in particular, “admonishing the state,”

as a strict requirement for Nichiren priests. Few among them had ever asserted this position so categorically, or at a less propitious historical moment.

Protesting the “Offerings of Land and Water Edict”

The accommodationist argument—that their opponents were already accepting the ruler’s offerings in the form of temple lands—handed the Bakufu a means of suppressing the recalcitrant *fujū fuse* faction. In 1665, as part of the Bakufu’s tightening of religious policy, the temple and shrine commissioners (*jisha bugyō* 寺社奉行) reviewed and reconfirmed the vermilion-seal lands granted by the Bakufu to temples and shrines. This was not, as it first appeared, a routine bureaucratic procedure, as on this occasion they stipulated that these lands were the ruler’s dharma offerings and demanded written statements (*otegata* お手形) from each recipient *fujū fuse* temple acknowledging their receipt as such, in exception to the *fujū fuse* rule. For *fujū fuse* adherents, to accept the land grants was to betray their principle; to refuse them as offerings tainted by dharma slander was to be arrested and punished as an enemy of the ruler. Not even Nichiren temples without official land grants could escape this impasse, as they were targeted in the so-called “offerings of land and water edict” (*dosui kuyō rei* 土水供養令) issued the following year.⁶³ In language clearly informed by *ju fuse* arguments, this edict proclaimed that the earth one treads and the water one drinks are all the ruler’s dharma offerings, and demanded written acknowledgment of their receipt.

Edicts targeting *fujū fuse* temples elicited a wave of remonstrations, verbally and in writing, addressed to the commissioners of shrines and temples or to local officials.⁶⁴ Unlike medieval *mōshijō*, rather than underscoring the disasters certain to befall a country that slights the *Lotus Sūtra*, surviving examples from this period tend to stress the distinction between gifts of ordinary beneficence and dharma offerings and to reassert the sect’s rule of refusing dharma offerings from nonbelievers. Nonetheless, they are rooted in the same principle:

the sole efficacy of the *Lotus Sūtra* in the present, *mappō* era and the consequent mandate of its practitioners to rebuke attachment to provisional teachings. One striking example was composed by Ankokuin Nichikō 安国院日講 (1626-1698), a leading scholar-priest affiliated with a *fujū fuse* seminary (*danrin* 檀林) at Noro in Shimōsa. Ordered to provide a receipt for earth and water, Nichikō instead wrote a statement of admonition. “The ruler of Japan,” Nichikō insists, “is not a devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra*. But because our sect has believers among the people of this country, he supports it as a matter of [worldly] beneficence,” like the case of those emperors of Tang China who, while personally devoted to Confucianism, nonetheless funded Buddhist monasteries. Nichikō continues: “Before Buddhism arrived [in Japan], government comprised a single, [worldly] dimension. But after Buddhism was introduced, government acknowledged both worldly and Buddhist realms. How can the present government confuse the two?” He concludes:

If you assert that all things are [the ruler’s dharma] offerings, then what about my own person, which Buddhists term the result of past karma, and Confucians, the workings of the five elements? Is my own person, too, an offering from the ruler? ...If you insist that [all things] are the ruler’s dharma offerings, then I refuse the specific offering of temple lands, but I accept the general offering of water to drink and roads to walk upon, and I will use them to spread the [*fujū fuse*] teaching throughout the country.⁶⁵

Nichikō was charged with disobedience to the ruler and exiled to the remote province of Hyūga (Miyazaki prefecture) in Kyushu, where he would become a leader in the underground *fujū fuse* community.

When edicts promulgated in 1665 and 1666 effectively banned the *fujū fuse* faction, many priests and lay followers went over, at least outwardly, to the accommodationist, *ju fuse* side. Other priests chose to defy the government and accept arrest, imprisonment, or exile as martyrs for the *fujū fuse* principle. Some even went out of their way to remonstrate with officials, sustained by

Nichiren’s teaching that to meet persecution from worldly authorities for the *Lotus Sūtra*’s sake proves the righteousness of one’s faith and guarantees one’s future buddhahood. Other individuals committed suicide in protest. Still others went underground to live furtively as unregistered persons, subject at any time to arrest, followed by exile or execution were they to be discovered. *Fuju fuse* remained an underground religion until legalized in 1876, more than two hundred years later.⁶⁶

Kokka kangyō did not die out altogether. Periodically, young priests undergoing training in one of the Nichirenshū seminaries would happen to come across *fuju fuse* writings and be seized with a resolve to admonish the state—an act usually ending in their exile.⁶⁷ The possibility of defying worldly authority for the dharma’s sake was also kept alive in Nichiren Buddhist hagiographies, for example, in accounts of Nichiren’s own life and in such works as the *Virtuous Acts of Saint Nisshin*, which was published in a vernacular (*kanabun* 仮名文) version in 1704. In the collective memory of the Nichiren tradition, such narratives formed a topos or recurring scene in which a *Lotus* devotee, even with the agents of worldly power arrayed against him, stands unafraid—willing to give up life itself—in asserting the sole truth of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Kokka kangyō in the Modern Period

After the fall of the Tokugawa Bakufu in 1868, the new Meiji government initiated a separation of religion and state on the Western model. Meiji reforms had serious consequences for Buddhist institutions. Temples lost their government support, and Buddhism itself came under attack by Confucian and Nativist ideologues as an outmoded superstition. In the early 1870s, such criticisms triggered a short-lived but violent anti-Buddhist movement (*haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈) in which temple treasures were seized, icons destroyed, and thousands of monastics forcibly laicized. Christianity, the rival religion of the

globally dominant West, posed yet another threat. Even as Japan struggled to assume a place in the international arena on par with Western powers, Buddhist activists strove to demonstrate their tradition's relevance to an emerging modern nation. Transsectarian movements formed to join forces in the struggle for Buddhism's survival. Other innovations included new forms of religious organization, growth in lay leadership, and reinterpretations of tradition. Not all innovators, however, accepted the religious-secular divide, and among Nichiren Buddhists were some intent on realizing Nichiren's ideal of government based on the *Lotus Sūtra*. To my knowledge, prior scholarship has not addressed *kokka kangyō* as a theme in the context of the modern period. Nonetheless, attempts were made to revive it, although in ways very different from its premodern iterations.

Ogawa Taidō and the Revival of *Kokka kangyō*

Following the Meiji Restoration (1868), leading clerics of the Nichiren Buddhist mainstream initially supported transsectarian cooperation, continuing the moderate, *shōju*-oriented approach that had characterized the sect's doctrinal studies in the Tokugawa period. However, a significant number, many of them lay devotees, urged the revival of assertive *shakubuku*. Notable among them was the lay Buddhist scholar and activist Ogawa Taidō 小川泰堂 (1814-1878), known for his editing of the *Kōso ibunroku* 高祖遺文録 (Collection of the founder's works), the first modern text-critical edition of Nichiren's writings, and his *Nichiren Daishi shinjitsu den* 日蓮大士真実伝 (True account of the great bodhisattva Nichiren), arguably the most popular biography of Nichiren ever written.⁶⁸ Ogawa vehemently opposed the new transsectarianism. In 1870 he sent a memorandum to the clergy of his sect, urging immediate withdrawal from the Pan-Sectarian Buddhist Ethical League (Shoshū Dōtoku Kaimei 諸宗同徳会盟), an influential trans-denominational organization formed in 1868 to resist *haibutsu kishaku*, modernize Buddhism, and counter the Christian threat. Ogawa

acknowledged these as worthy goals but saw his sect’s participation as betraying the superior status of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Just when the nation faced a critical juncture where only Nichiren’s Buddhism could offer meaningful direction, taking part in the league on an equal footing with other sects was like joining a pack of howling dogs, he said. Rather than uniting forces with heretics, Nichirenshū should appeal to the imperial court to abolish other sects and adopt the *Lotus Sūtra* as its sole guiding principle. “If we miss this opportunity,” Ogawa demanded, “when will it come again?”⁶⁹ In other words, he urged the revival of *kokka kangyō*.

The sectarian leadership made no response, and in 1872, Ogawa himself began directly to address government officials via “proposals” (*kengensho* 建言書 or *kenbyakusho* 建白書). The Meiji government encouraged citizens to submit proposals on a range of social issues as a way of promoting modernization and civic awareness, and Ogawa addressed several to the newly established Ministry of Doctrine (*kyōbushō* 教部省) and other government officials. In one, dated 1872 and submitted to Ōe Taku 大江卓 (1847-1921), the newly appointed governor of Kanagawa Prefecture, Ogawa urged that the Meiji government abolish all other Buddhist sects, which are based on provisional teachings, and support the Nichiren sect as the sole Buddhism of the one vehicle. Here Ogawa reasserted the unity of *ōbō* and *buppō*; *ōbō* (by which he meant imperial rule) had now been restored but, owing to a confusion of true and provisional teachings, *buppō* was still in disarray. And with Buddhism in confusion, how could Christianity be resisted? Ogawa likened the Pure Land, Zen, and Shingon sects to treacherous vassals who overthrow their lord (*gekokujo* 下剋上) and usurp the position of the *Lotus*, the king of sūtras. Mixing these inferior, provisional teachings with the true teaching of the *Lotus*, he said, is like eating fish or chicken entrails along with the meat or a melon’s bitter rind together with its sweet flesh. Just as Nichiren had appealed to the Kamakura Bakufu six hundred years earlier, Ogawa urged that the leading scholar-priests of the

Nichiren sect, together with their counterparts in other sects, be summoned to debate in order to distinguish truth from falsehood in the reception of the Buddhist teachings.⁷⁰ In this way, Ogawa was convinced, the superiority of the *Lotus Sūtra* would inevitably become clear.

Writing at the very beginning of the Meiji period, Ogawa did not foresee the direction that religious policy would take. The Meiji Constitution (promulgated in 1889) guaranteed freedom of religion, to the extent not prejudicial to the duties of citizens. What could “admonishing the state” possibly mean when citizens were free to choose their own religious affiliation? That question was addressed by another lay Nichiren activist, Tanaka Chigaku 田中智学 (1861-1939), who explicitly sought to revive the practice of *kokka kangyō*, although in an altogether new form.

Tanaka Chigaku's *Kokka kangyō* Movement

Tanaka Chigaku is known as the founder of the Kokuchū Kai 国柱会 (“Pillar of the Nation Society, after Nichiren’s vow to be “the pillar of Japan”). He promoted what he termed “Nichirensugi” 日蓮主義 (“Nichirenism”), a lay movement of Nichiren Buddhism reformulated to address the pressing realities of modernizing and nation-building. Tanaka’s father had been a leading figure in the Kotobuki-kō 寿講, one of the many Edo-based Nichiren lay societies of the late Tokugawa period, and Tanaka (who would marry Ogawa’s granddaughter) inherited his father’s commitment to a strict *Lotus*-only stance. He appealed to the various branches of the Nichiren sect to return to *shakubuku*. In Tanaka’s view, the removal of earlier, Tokugawa-era strictures on proselytizing made his own historical moment the ideal time to realize Nichiren’s vision of worldwide propagation, and Japan was destined to lead the way. First, however, the nation would have to be converted. With a sufficient body of converts, Tanaka argued, Nichirensugi proponents could win a majority in the national Diet, convert the emperor, and repeal the Constitutional clause granting freedom of religion,

making Nichiren Buddhism the state religion. Once government was firmly grounded in the *Lotus Sūtra*, Japan could display its true potential as an ideal buddha land.⁷¹

In January 1905, in the midst of the Russo-Japanese War, Tanaka announced his plans to revive *kokka kangyō*, “a sacred task interrupted for nearly three hundred years.”⁷² Originally, Tanaka confessed, he had thought “admonishing the state” to be no longer relevant, because the nature of the state had changed so greatly since medieval times. But after long thought, he had concluded that *kokka kangyō* was still viable; it needed only to be reoriented toward modern realities. First, in an age when freedom of religion was guaranteed, the target of “admonishing and enlightening” must be, not government, but citizens at large. And when many citizens, intellectuals in particular, were distanced from religion, one could not succeed by immediately addressing them in terms of specialized Buddhist concepts such as “the *Lotus Sūtra*,” “the *Risshō ankoku ron*,” or “three thousand realms in a single thought-moment” (*ichinen sanzen* 一念三千). Rather, Tanaka declared, he would frame his admonitions in terms of “the nation” (*kokka* 国家), the issue at the forefront of public concern. He had just written a tract entitled *Chokugo gengi* 勅語玄義 (Profound meaning of the Imperial Rescript), which interpreted the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education (*kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語) from a Nichirenshugi standpoint. For Tanaka, the Imperial Rescript embodied the essence of the body politic (*kokutai* 国体), a key term in modern Japanese political discourse. The *kokutai* and the *Lotus Sūtra* were like body and spirit, he said; when the two were united, the buddhahood of the land would be achieved.

Tanaka’s first act of *kokka kangyō* therefore took the Imperial Rescript as its text, and its specific form was a mass dissemination of his commentary. However, it was impossible to reach the entire population at once. Tanaka accordingly targeted an elite audience, identifying more than two hundred thousand persons including government ministers, Diet members, military

officers, intellectuals, leaders of banking and industry, clerics of prominent temples and shrines, and influential local officials to whom he would send copies of his *Gengi*. Aided by a special committee of his organization formed for the purpose, Tanaka solicited sympathizers to aid in the mailing effort, and 2,088 persons responded. The effort was to be launched on July 16, the anniversary of Nichiren's submission of the *Risshō ankoku ron*, and coordinated so that all copies would reach their destinations on the same day. In the end, some 84,000 copies were distributed. In keeping with the tradition that one should remonstrate three times, Tanaka would launch two further "*kokka kangyō*" efforts, in 1911 and 1912, again involving nationwide disseminations of his writings to leaders in various fields, lecture tours, and mass meetings.⁷³

Tanaka's *kokka kangyō* efforts had the character of large-scale propaganda campaigns, distinguishing them from their medieval and early modern precursors. They lacked the element of direct confrontation with government authorities, traditionally a defining characteristic of "admonishing the state." To be sure, Tanaka's reformulation by no means erased the distinction between conventional and absolute registers, or between the buddha-dharma and worldly rule, on which *kokka kangyō* rests. For Tanaka, a committed Nichiren Buddhist activist, the state must be grounded in the *Lotus Sūtra*, without intense efforts to spread Nichiren's teaching, Japan's potential as an ideal buddha land and world spiritual exemplar could not be realized. This conviction raises Tanaka above the category of mere nationalist ideologue.⁷⁴ Yet his view of Japan as endowed with a sacred mission to unite humanity through the *Lotus Sutra* mapped smoothly onto Japan's armed expansion in the mid-twentieth century and lent the imperial project a sacred legitimacy. His organization accordingly declined in the postwar period. Nonetheless, Tanaka's innovative proselytizing techniques and his idea of citizens, rather than government, as the target "admonishing and awakening," helped shape postwar Nichiren Buddhist movements.⁷⁵

“Admonishing the State” in Wartime

Due to the efforts of Tanaka and other Nichirenshugi proponents, Nichiren Buddhism came to be widely seen as supporting the imperial project. But by the mid-1930s, government censors and right-wing watchdogs had begun to discern an oppositional strand in Nichiren’s writings and to realize that Nichiren had placed the authority of the *Lotus Sūtra* above that of worldly rule. Following attacks on liberal thought accompanying the “movement to clarify the *kokutai*” (*kokutai meichō undō* 国体明徴運動), official ideology increasingly emphasized the sacrality of the emperor and the Japanese *kokutai* as an absolute metaphysical essence. In this atmosphere, the Ministry of Education began to demand the deletion from Nichiren’s writings of passages deemed insulting to the dignity of the *kokutai* and the removal from Nichiren’s mandala of two *kami* or Japanese deities: Hachiman Daibosatsu 八幡大菩薩 and the divine imperial ancestor, the sun goddess, Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神.⁷⁶ Pressures mounted with the onset of the Pacific War. Right-wing ideologues launched vitriolic attacks on the Nichiren sect, calling for its dissolution as an enemy of the state: Nichiren’s mandalas should be seized, his writings banned, and his images destroyed.⁷⁷

Nichiren Buddhists fought back. Though they did not necessarily employ the term *kokka kangyō*, their resistance was very much in line with the tradition of confronting government officials in the name of the *Lotus*.⁷⁸ According to the records of the special higher police, they deluged government ministries with letters of protest. One Reverend Ōbori Gyōjun 大堀行順 of Ōita prefecture sent a petition to more than a hundred persons including cabinet ministers, superintendents of the various Nichiren denominations, and major newspapers. Drawing on Nichiren’s famous vow to be the pillar, eyes, and great ship of Japan, Ōbori declared that to censor Nichiren’s writings and alter the mandala would topple the pillar, gouge out the eyes, and sink the ship of the nation, dooming Japan to defeat.⁷⁹ A Reverend Komadani Gyōmyō 駒谷行妙 of

Kashiwakazaki, acting as representative for a number of Nichiren devotees, submitted a petition arguing that to censor Nichiren's writings and remove the national *kami* from the mandala would be disastrous. To overcome the crisis facing the country, the government should urgently reflect and withdraw the censorship demands.⁸⁰ Underlying such protests was the conviction, rooted in Nichiren's own teaching, that a country that "slanders the true dharma" will be destroyed. Unless grounded in the *Lotus Sūtra*, these activists believed, Japan's war effort was doomed to defeat.

One striking episode occurred in a courtroom during the appeal proceedings of Kariya Nichinin 刈谷日任 and Kabuhashi Taishū 株橋諦秀, two scholar-priests of the Nichiren denomination Honmon Hokkeshū 本門法華宗, who in 1941 had been arrested and imprisoned for *lèse majesté*.⁸¹ Their crime was including, in a textbook they had authored for seminary use, a "blasphemous" explanation of the two Japanese *kami* on Nichiren's mandala. The presiding judge deemed the appeal of sentences for thought crimes to be a frivolous waste of the court's time when the country was at war. It was fine, he said, to revere the teaching of a particular Buddhist sect, but the plaintiffs should take a broader perspective in terms of their identity as Japanese citizens. The two priests' rejoinder deserves to be called an act of *kokka kangyō* and merits quoting at length:

Your Honor, it is precisely because of our thorough reflection as Japanese, as *true* Japanese, that we are appealing our case. We are not thinking of our own guilt or innocence. But ultimately, it is Japanese Buddhism that will clarify the Japanese national essence (*kokutai*).... Not until Nichiren Shōnin made his advent did the Buddhism of Japan appear. For the first time, he clarified what *kami* are, what buddhas are, and manifested the totality of their integral relationship on a single sheet of paper, the great mandala. In the center of the mandala, the basis for clarifying the Japanese *kokutai* [that is, the *daimoku*] is displayed.... What are the *kami*? Unless this fundamental

matter is understood, with all respect, even if you enshrine Amaterasu in Manchuria or build shrines in Southeast Asia, this war will not accord with the *kami*’s will. If it does not accord with the *kami*’s will, then the *kami* will not lend us their divine assistance, and without their assistance, devils and demons will arise, and one can only predict defeat. Unworthy as we are, we have inherited the tradition of Nichiren, who with a passionate love of country held that no matter is graver than the destruction of the nation. Seeing the calamities around him, he was unable to contain his grief and anger and illuminated this matter in his *Rissho ankoku ron*. Your Honor, we entreat you again: We are not appealing for personal reasons. We wish only through this incident to clarify that source of the *kokutai* to which all peoples and countries can joyfully return and to save our own country in its hour of need.⁸²

The question that the two priests raise here—“What are the *kami*?”—refers to Nichiren’s claim that all *kami* are manifestations and protectors of the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sūtra*, a status indicated by their subordinate position on the mandala. Kariya and Kabuhashi argued a position common among wartime Nichiren Buddhist thinkers and articulated earlier by Tanaka: The Japanese imperial project could succeed, opening the way to happiness for all humanity, only if the *kokutai* were grounded in the wonderful dharma of the *Lotus Sūtra*. This stance conflicted with the official reading of the *kokutai*, which sought to subordinate Buddhism to the national *kami*. The stance of the Nichiren followers amounted to a competing absolute and could not be tolerated.

In this way, acts of “admonishing the state” were sporadically revived during the modern period, each time in connection with changed historical circumstances. Medieval Hokkeshū clerics had initiated *kokka kangyō* efforts with the establishment of new regimes, first at the time of the Kenmu Restoration (1333) and then with the founding of the Ashikaga Bakufu (1336),

in hopes that a new ruler might be receptive. In a similar manner, at the beginning of the Meiji period, Ogawa Taidō urged his sect to admonish the court and personally remonstrated with government officials via the medium of “proposals,” asserting Nichiren’s teaching to be the sole valid guide for Japan in the task of modern nation-building. Tanaka Chigaku, discerning that choice in religious matters now rested with the people, redefined *kokka kangyō* as a mass propaganda effort, specifically targeting leaders in education, public opinion, business, government, and the military. His campaigns of pamphleteering and public lectures lacked the element of confrontation with authority characteristic of premodern *kokka kangyō*. Rather, his incorporation of *kokutai* discourse into his reading of doctrine helped secure the Nichiren sect a reputation as an especially “nation”- and “Japan”-oriented form of Buddhism—an identity that many Nichiren devotees in the postwar period would struggle to overcome. *Kokka kangyō*, in the more traditional sense of devotees confronting agents of the state and asserting the sole power of the *Lotus Sūtra* to save the country, was revived in the early 1940s, when Nichiren Buddhism was targeted for censorship and suppression. At that time, government officials and *kokutai* ideologues discerned—as the Tokugawa Bakufu had before them—that Nichiren’s teaching demanded loyalty to a principle beyond the state and encouraged, even mandated, defiance when the two conflicted.

Summation

As a means of persuading power-holders to embrace Nichiren’s teaching, *kokka kangyō* was rarely successful. Yet that was never its sole or—arguably—even primary aim. It was an act of faith, and as such its effects were held to lie beyond what could immediately be seen. “Admonishing the state” meant confronting the most powerful representatives of worldly power to protest what Nichiren had deemed the most destructive of evils—slander of the *Lotus Sūtra*. As an attempt to redress that error and its fearful consequences, *kokka kangyō*

expressed loyalty to ruler and country and obedience to the Buddha himself. It was also deemed a practice of compassion, setting in motion the karmic causality that would guarantee both one's own and others' future buddhahood. *Kokka kangyō* conferred upon its practitioners a unique status; they were, so to speak, the sect's virtuosi of *shakubuku*, an ascetic elite embodying commitment to its teaching in an extraordinarily heroic mode. And when remonstrations resulted in imprisonment and abuse, they were seen as fulfilling the *Lotus Sūtra's* predictions that its devotees in a later evil age will be persecuted by those in power. This legitimizing function of meeting hostility at the ruler's hands seems at times to have spurred remonstrators to provoke that very outcome. For that reason, repeated *kokka kangyō* efforts were sometimes opposed by more conservative elements within the sect. Nonetheless, the ethos of “admonishing the state” has inspired in Nichiren believers the courage to confront and defy worldly authority when necessary to uphold their faith.

From a long-range historical perspective, despite its fierce resurgence at later moments, *kokka kangyō* declined after the medieval period. One factor in that decline was the breakdown of the “mutual dependence of *ōbō* and *buppō*,” first in the turmoil of the Sengoku period and then in the religious policies of Tokugawa Bakufu, which subordinated religious institutions to its own ideology and bureaucratic system. Another was the separation of religion and state in the Meiji period, when religion was excluded from government affairs and partitioned off as a private realm, apart from secular space. It is no accident that brief revivals of *kokka kangyō*, as we see with Nichiō and the *fuju fuse* movement, or with modern Nichiren devotees resisting wartime censorship, came about when government itself began to claim the absolute status of religious truth and to suppress Nichiren devotees in its name. Under a democratic, secular system, where religion is a matter of personal choice and excluded from government affairs, “admonishing the state” loses its rationale.

However, its history and spirit have by no means lost all relevance to the

contemporary world. Nichiren's injunction that one must disobey even the ruler if he goes against the *Lotus Sūtra* opened a moral space within which worldly authority could—indeed, sometimes must—be criticized and resisted. *Kokka kangyō* institutionalized the claims of the dharma over those of worldly power to a degree not found in other Buddhist schools. Nichiren's own example has inspired dissidents inside and outside his tradition. The economist Yanaihara Tadao 矢内原忠雄 (1893-1961), himself a Christian and a pacifist, forced to resign his professorship at Tokyo Imperial University over his criticism of wartime colonial policy, saw in Nichiren someone “who could stand face to face with enemies of the truth and say a resolute, ‘No!’ ... The fact that such a person existed in the Japan of old is of consolation for us all.”⁸³ There are times when the prevailing authority must be challenged, despite personal risk and even when failure is all but certain. The Nichiren tradition of *kokka kangyō* calls that moral obligation to mind.

Abbreviations

- BK* *Bandai kikyōroku* 万代亀鏡録. Ed. Ōsaki Nichigyō 大崎日行. 2 vols. Kyoto: Bandai Kikyōroku Kankōkai, 1931-1933.
- FFS* *Fuju fuse shiryō* 不受不施資料. Ed. Nichiren Fuju Fuse-ha Kenkyūjo 日蓮不受不施派研究所. Vols. 1 and 5. Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1981, 1983.
- FSY* *Fuji shūgaku yōshū* 富士宗学要集. Ed. Hori Nichikō 堀日享. 10 vols. Tokyo: Sōka Gakkai, 1974-1979.
- IJ* *Nichiren Shōnin ibun jiten* 日蓮聖人遺文辞典. Ed. Risshō Daigaku Nichiren Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo 立正大学日蓮教学研究所. Minobu-chō, Yamanashi-ken: Minobusan Kuonji, 1985.
- NJ* *Nichirensū jiten* 日蓮宗事典. Ed. Nichirensū Jiten Kankō Inkai 日蓮宗事典刊行委員会. Tokyo: Nichirensū Shūmuin, 1981.
- NST* *Nihon shisō taikēi* 日本思想大系. 67 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970-1982.
- NSZ* *Nichirensū shūgaku zensho* 日蓮宗宗学全書. Ed. Risshō Daigaku Nichiren Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo 立正大学日蓮教学研究所. 23 vols. Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1968-1978.
- T* *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924-1935.
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Notes:

- 1 Kuroda, “The Imperial Law and the Buddhist Law.”
- 2 For prior studies of *kokka kangyō* after Nichiren, see Watanabe, *Nichirensū shingyō ron no kenkyū*, 135-157, and Sasaki, “Nichiren kyōdan no kokka kangyō.”
- 3 *Kaitai sokushin jōbutsu gi* 戒体即身成仏義, *Teihon* 1:12.
- 4 *Ankoku ron gokan yurai* 安国論御勘由来, *Teihon* 1:422.
- 5 *Teihon*, 1: 226.
- 6 This appears in the *Goden dodai* 御伝土代 of Nichidō 日道 (1283-1341) (*NSZ* 2:250).
- 7 “Mikyō tenchō gosho” 未驚天聰御書, *Teihon* 1:808.
- 8 On the *Ryūsenji mōshijō*, see *IJ*, s.v. “Ryūsenji mōshijō,” 1186c-1187b, and Stone, “The Atsuhara Affair,” 161n5, 167, 173, 177. An alternative suggestion is that Nikkō first drafted the petition together with Nisshū and Nichiben and then sent it to Nichiren for his revisions (*NJ*, s.v. “Nikkō shisho” 日興賜書, 304a).
- 9 “Ryūsenji mōshijō,” *Teihon* 2:1680. The “Shijūkuin mōshijō” 四十九院申状, a statement of protest authored by Nikkō 日興 in 1278, also in connection with the Atsuhara persecution, makes a similar argument (*NSZ* 2:93-94).
- 10 Watanabe, *Nichirensū shingyō ron*, 136.

- 11 “Shijō Kingo-dono gohenji” 四条金吾殿御返事, *Teihon* 1:660-661.
- 12 For Nichiren’s treatment of these figures, see Sasaki, “Nichiren ibun ni okeru Chūgoku jinmei no bunpu,” 85-88.
- 13 Cited for example in *Yorimoto chinjō* 頼基陳狀, *Teihon* 2:1356.
- 14 *Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經, *T* no. 374, 12:381a12-13; trans. Blum, *The Nirvana Sutra*, 79, slightly modified.
- 15 *Da banniepan jing shu* 大般涅槃經疏, *T* no. 1767, 38:80b1-3; trans. Watson, *Selected Writings of Nichiren*, 146, modified.
- 16 *NJ*, s.v. “Yodōzai,” 413c-d, 740c-d.
- 17 “Akimoto gosho” 秋元御書, *Teihon* 2:1738. The quotes from the *Lotus Sūtra* and Guanding appear respectively at *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, *T* no. 262, 9:36c18, and *Da banniepan jing shu*, *T* 38:114b10-11.
- 18 Watanabe, *Nichirenshū shingyō ron*, 136.
- 19 *NSZ* 1:7-9, 21-24. See also *Zenshi*, 60-61.
- 20 In the Muromachi period (1336-1573), the terms “Nichiren following” (Nichirenshū 日蓮衆 or Nichirentō 日蓮党) and “Nichiren sect” (Nichirenshū 日蓮宗) were used pejoratively by persons outside the sect. However, from the late medieval era, that is, the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573-1603), both Nichirenshū (“Nichiren sect”) and Hokkeshū came to be used concurrently by Nichiren followers and others alike (*Zenshi*, 80).
- 21 Takagi, “Ryūge Nichizō no fukyō ni tsuite,” 194.
- 22 On Daigaku’s support of Nichizō’s efforts, see Kawauchi, *Nichirenshū to sengoku Kyōto*, 26-34, and *Zenshi*, 135-143.
- 23 Kawauchi, *Nichirenshū to sengoku Kyōto*, 39-45.
- 24 *Honge betsuzu busso tōki* 本化別頭仏祖統紀 13:280. This biographical collection, compiled by Rokuga’in Nitchō 六牙院日潮 (1674-1748), was completed in 1731.
- 25 “Sojō” 訴狀, *NSZ* 1:247.
- 26 Satō, “Shoki Nichiren kyōdan ni okeru kokka to bukkō,” 128-129. See also Hunter, “*Fuju Fuse* Controversy,” 92-94.
- 27 This appears in the *Gonin shoha shō kenmon* 五人所破抄見聞 (*NSZ* 2:518; *FSY* 4:11) attributed to Nichigen 日眼 (d. 1384) of Myōrenji in Suruga. However, Nichigen’s authorship has been questioned, and the work may date to at least a century later (*NJ*, s.v. “Gonin shoha shō kenmon,” 103d-104a).
- 28 Written statements on two mandalas inscribed for Nichimoku by his teacher Nikkō, dated 1324 and 1332 respectively, praise him as the first to appeal to the court (*Mandara wakigaki tō* 曼荼羅脇書等, *FSY* 8:206, 188).
- 29 *Soshiden* 祖師伝, *FSY* 5:34.
- 30 *NSZ* 2:201-202.
- 31 “Nichiyū Nichiju mōshijō” 日祐日樹申狀, *NSZ* 1:403-404.
- 32 *Ichigo shoshū zenkon kiroku* 一期所修善根記録, *NSZ* 1:447.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 447-448.
- 34 *Zenshi*, 114-115; Nakao, *Nisshin*, 64.

- 35 Nakao, *Nichirensū no seiritsu to tenkai*, 128-129.
- 36 On Nichijū, see *Zenshi*, 214-222; *NJ*, s.v. “Nichijū,” 608a-d; and Kubota, *Nichijū to deshitachi*, 10-62.
- 37 Quoted in Nakao, *Nisshin*, 64.
- 38 This phrase occurs several times in different contexts and with slightly different wording. See *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, *T* 9:16a15; 36c18; and 43b23.
- 39 *Monto koji* 門徒古事 (a.k.a *Nichiun ki* 日運記), *NSZ* 5:62-90; *Zenshi*, 222-223. *Monto koji* was compiled by Kyōbukyō Ajari Nichiun 刑部卿阿闍梨日運 (d. 1425) of Myōmanji, possibly based on material he had heard from Nichinin, mentioned below.
- 40 On Nisshin’s acts of *kokka kangyō*, see *Zenshi*, 267-270, and Nakao, *Nisshin*, 65-77.
- 41 Nisshin’s account says that Yoshinori accused him of fostering a son of the Iyo governor Isshiki Naokane 一色直兼, who had supported Mochiuji in his failed rebellion against Yoshinori. Prior to that event, Nisshin had possibly accepted a son of Naokane as a disciple. Nisshin wrote that his former abbot at Nakayama had informed on him (*Haniya shō* 埴谷抄, in Kanmuri, “Shiryō shōkai,” 5; *Zenshi*, 268).
- 42 Kanmuri, *Haniya shō*, p. 5.
- 43 In Washio Junkei, ed., *Kokubun tōhō bukkō sōsho*, series 1, 5:541-590; partially translated in Stone, “Priest Nisshin’s Ordeals.”
- 44 Nakao, *Nisshin*, 226-231.
- 45 *Zenshi*, 272-273.
- 46 These documents appear in *NSZ* 19:205-218, followed by three accounts of the affair, all titled *Kangyō shimatsu ki* 諫曉始末記: one by an unidentified author; one by Nichiin 日胤 of Ryūhonji 立本寺; and one by Nichijū himself (219-230). The *Myōhō jisei shū* is discussed in Takagi, “*Risshō jikoku ron to Myōhō jisei shū*” and compared with Nisshin’s admonitory treatise.
- 47 *Kangyō shimatsu ki* 諫曉始末記, *NSZ* 19:226; see also *Zenshi*, 271-273.
- 48 On the *Hokke ikki*, see Imatani, *Tenbun Hokke no ran*; Gay, *Moneylenders of Late Medieval Kyoto*, 177-184; and Kawauchi, *Nichirensū to Sengoku Kyōto*, 127-182.
- 49 For the background of *fūju fuse* ideas in Nichiren’s thought, see Miyazaki, *Genryū to tenkai*, 13-84, and Hunter, “*Fūju fuse* Controversy,” 19-86.
- 50 Miyazaki, *Genryū to tenkai*, 159-60, 177-80.
- 51 *Shūgi seihō ron* 宗義制法論, in Kashiwahara and Fujii, *Kinsei bukkō shisō*, *NST* 57: 265, 310.
- 52 Nichiō invokes the prior example of a thousand-priest ceremony sponsored in 1440 by Lord Fukōin 普広院殿 (Ashikaga Yoshinori), when the Hokkeshū successfully petitioned to be excused from participating. This may refer to the thirty-third-year memorial service for Yoshimitsu where Nisshin had planned to deliver his second admonition (ibid., 265 headnote).
- 53 Miyazaki, *Genryū to tenkai*, 220-221, 225-229.
- 54 *Hokkeshū kanjō* 法華宗諫狀, *FFS* 1:32-39; *BK* 1:1-9.
- 55 *Mappō sōō no honge shoryū no Hokkeshū hōmon no jōjō* 末法相應の本化所立の法華宗法門

- の条々, *FFS* 1:39-42; *BK* 1:9-13 (*yakubun*), 14-16 (*honbun*).
- 56 *Hokkeshū sōjō* 法華宗奏状 (*FSY* 1:3-23; *BK* 1:17-37) and *Ankokuron yurai ki* 安国論由来記, *FFS* 1:24-28; *BK* 1:38-41 (*yakubun*), 42-44 (*honbun*).
- 57 Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology*, e.g., 66-67.
- 58 Miyazaki, *Genryū to tenkai*, 172-177.
- 59 *Shūgi seihō ron*, *NST* 57:316.
- 60 The following discussion is taken from Nichiō's *Shūgi seihō ron*, composed in rebuttal to his chief opponent, Jakushōin Nichiken 寂照院日乾 (1560-1635), in 1616. Their entire written exchange is translated in Hunter, "Fuju fuse Controversy." Nichiō seems to have been formulating these ideas for some time before his engagement with Nichiken. See for example the fourth question and response in his *Shugo shōgi ron* 守護正義論, written just before his exile to Tsushima (*FSS* 1:105-108).
- 61 *Miaofa lianhua jing*, *T* 9:14c26.
- 62 "Hōmon mōsarubekiyō no koto" 法門可被申様之事, *Teihon* 1:448.
- 63 On the "land and water offerings edict," see Miyazaki, *Kinsei Fuju Fuse-ha no kenkyū*, 125-128. This edict was initially directed against seminaries in the eastern provinces that did not have land grants. How broadly it was applied remains unclear. It is mentioned, for example, in *Shushō gokoku shō* 守正護国章 (see n. 65) and *Kanbun hōnanki* 寛文法難記, in Nagamitsu, *Fuju Fuse-ha hōnan shiryōshū*, 8.
- 64 For an account of verbal remonstrations on this issue, see *Kanbun hōnanki* in Nagamatsu, *Fuju Fuse-ha hōnan shiryōshū*, 1-16.
- 65 *Shushō gokoku shō*, *BK* 2:219, 222.
- 66 *Fuju fuse* adherents were better equipped to survive underground than were the Christians, as they were able to maintain priestly leadership and extensive communication networks. See Miyazaki, *Kinsei Fuju Fuse-ha no kenkyū*, 143-156, 229-258.
- 67 Miyazaki, "Edo chūki ni okeru kangyō katsudō."
- 68 On Ogawa, see Ogawa Yukio, *Ogawa Taidō den*; Ishikawa, "Ogawa Taidō"; and Sutōn (Stone), "Ishin zengo no Nichirensū ni miru kokka to Hokekyō."
- 69 "Kengen yōgoku" 建言用極, *Ogawa Taidō zenshū*, 386.
- 70 "Kengi sho" 建議書, *Ogawa Taidō zenshū*, 456-459.
- 71 For Tanaka's vision of Japan and the world based on the *Lotus Sūtra*, see for example his *Shūmon no ishin* 宗門之維新 and also "Tōitsu jidai" 統一時代 in his *Nichirensūgi kyōgaku taikan* 日蓮主義教学大観 4:2267-2280; trans. Stone, "Tanaka Chigaku on 'The Age of Unification.'"
- 72 *Myōshū* 妙宗 7-11 (Jan. 1905): 2. The following discussion is based on Tanaka's essay in this issue and Ōtani, *Kindai Nihon no Nichirensūgi undō*, 126-128.
- 73 Ōtani, *Kindai Nihon no Nichirensūgi undō*, 179-181 (1911), 188-190 (1912).
- 74 On this point, see Nishiyama, "Kindai no Nichirensūgi," 239.
- 75 To give just two examples: In 1923, to help implement his goal of government based on the *Lotus Sutra*, Tanaka established a political party and ran candidates for local office; though unsuccessful, this effort set a precedent for the postwar entry of the Nichiren

Buddhist lay organization Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 into electoral politics on a national scale (Ōtani, *Kindai Nihon no Nichirenshugi undō*, 297-299, 322-329). In recent years, a style of *kokka kangyō* similar to Tanaka’s seems to have been adopted by the Nichiren Buddhist lay group Kenshōkai 顕正会, which in 1997 and 2004 launched *kangyō* movements in the form of mass dissemination of polemical essays by its leader, Asai Shōei 浅井昭衛, addressed to “the people of Japan” (*Nihon kokumin* 日本国民). More than ten million copies are said to have been distributed in the 2004 effort (Kose, “Kenshōkai kangyō sho,” 224-225).

76 On the mandala devised by Nichiren as an object of worship (*honzon* 本尊) for his followers, these two deities are positioned in the lower register, flanking the central inscription of the *daimoku*, where they represent its protective workings. Wartime critics of Nichirenshū saw this subordinate placement as blasphemous.

77 On the wartime censorship of Nichiren Buddhism, see for example Ishikawa, “Nichiren monka kyōdan to ‘fukei’ mondai”; Ono, “‘Shōwa Nichirenshū fukei jiken’ kō”; and Sutōn (Stone), “Senjika ni okeru Nichiren monka to ‘fukei’ mondai.”

78 Makiguchi Tsunesaburō 牧口常三郎 (1871-1944), founder of the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai 創価教育学会 (precursor to the postwar Sōka Gakkai), reportedly spoke of the need to “admonish the state” to protest the requirement that all citizens enshrine talismans of the imperial Ise shrine. Makiguchi may well have seen his response at the time of his arrest and interrogation as an act *kokka kangyō*. For Makiguchi’s interrogation, see *Tokkō geppō* 特高月報 8 (August 1943): 136-161, and also Miyata, *Makiguchi Tsunesaburō no shūkyō undō*, 209-244. Since Makiguchi’s example has been much publicized, I introduce other examples here.

79 *Tokkō geppō* 特高月報 (Sept. 1941): 27-28. Nichiren’s vow appears in the *Kaimoku shō* 開目抄, *Teihon* 1:601; Watson, *Selected Writings*, 138.

80 *Tokkō geppō* (Oct. 1941): 30, 31.

81 For a detailed account of the case against the two, see Ogasawara, *Mandara kokushin fukei jiken no shinsō*, esp. 51-158. Their sentence was reversed on appeal, but the prosecutors in turn appealed to the supreme court, which threw out the “not guilty” verdict and ordered the appellate court to retry the case. By then, it was March 1945. The day after the supreme court handed down its pronouncement, a B29 raid bombed the court buildings, destroying relevant documents. The case against Kariya and Kabuhashi was dismissed a few months after the surrender.

82 Ibid., 139-140.

83 Yanaihara, “Nichiren,” 90; Habito, “Uses of Nichiren in Modern Japanese History,” 433.

要 旨

日蓮宗における国家諫暁—その歴史と意義

ジャクリーン・I・ストーン

国家諫暁（国家を誡め諭す）とは、法華經の教えだけを信奉し他宗の信仰を捨てよう為政者に対して直訴する、日蓮宗の特有の実践である。これは、対象者を国主に特定した折伏の行為で、宗祖日蓮が1260年、『立正安国論』を鎌倉幕府に提出したことに由来する。その諫暁書の中には、当時日本で続発していた飢饉、疫病、地震等の災害の根本原因が、釈尊の最高の教えである法華經が捨てられたためであると挙げられている。日蓮は、末法、つまり彼の生きている墮落の時代には、法華經こそが一切衆生を成仏させ国土安穩をもたらす唯一の実教であり、他の教えは仮の教えで無役であるため、法華經を背いて権教に執着することは謗法に当たると主張し、そのような謗法を禁断するため三度にわたって幕府を戒めた。また、この国家諫暁により、国主の恩に報いて仏勅に答え、法華經に対する謗法の罪に関わること（与同罪）からも免れることができると述べた。法華經の中で、その行者は将来の悪世で権力者に迫害されると予言されているため、国家諫暁を行ったことにより、国主（幕府）から勘気を蒙ったことを日蓮はその予言の達成、及び自分の信念の権威付けとして受け取った。

日蓮滅後は、その弟子達が『立正安国論』の趣旨をまとめた「申状」を国主—つまり天皇、将軍、及びその他の役人や各地の為政者—に提出して、国家諫暁の展開をはかった。無論、最初から他宗を禁じて法華宗だけを支持するよう、権力者を納得させる見込みは殆どなかったであろう。しかし、こうした一連の国家諫暁は日蓮の教えた法華専修を維持し、中世日蓮教団のアイデンティティを固めるに至った。また、当時の最高権力者とさえ対峙するほどの、その勇ましさは、民衆の間に広く賞賛を引き起こし、信奉者を増す結果となった。そして、国家諫暁を行った法華宗の諸門流の指導者たちは、宗祖日蓮の行動を再現することによって自分の信念を正当化し、自らを日蓮の優れた後継者として証明していくのである。

本稿は日蓮宗における国家諫暁の歴史と、その展開を日蓮の時代から近代まで

辿った試みである。国家諫暁の最盛期は室町時代であり、主に中世的現象として扱われてきた。しかし、特に仏性院日奥（1565–1630）の例に見られるように、不受不施論争との関係から近世でも行われ、また近代に至っても国家諫暁というべき行動の例を幾つか見出すことができる。その中には建言書を通して諸宗を廃絶し、日蓮宗のみを近代国家の宗教的基礎として定めることを明治政府当局者に求めた在家居士、小川泰堂（1814–1878）や、日本各界のエリートを標的とした宣伝攻勢の形で国家諫暁を復興しようとした田中智学（1861–1939）の活動が挙げられる。さらに1940年代には、日蓮宗が不敬罪として集中非難的となり、戦時下の政府に抑圧されるが、日蓮宗の僧俗が一体となって行われた抗議活動も国家諫暁と言うべきものもあった。

法華経の真理は国主の権力を越えたものであると主張した日蓮の教えは、国家の権威を相対化し、また批判し、必要な場合にはそれに抵抗しなければならない根拠を与えた。信仰の自由が国民に保証され、宗教自体が政治から分離して私的領域に限定されている現在社会において、国家諫暁は弘教方法としては適していないと言えるであろう。それにも拘らず、超越的信仰対象の名で教団として国家権力にまで挑戦した例を日本仏教史に残し、宗門の内外問わず、権力に抵抗した個々人の士気を高めたことは注目に値するであろう。