

Nichiren's Problematic Works

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It has long been acknowledged that some works in the Nichiren corpus were not written by Nichiren but attributed to him retrospectively by later disciples. Those texts widely agreed by scholars to be apocryphal are included in a separate volume of the critical edition of his writings. The problem lies with those writings where Nichiren's authorship is disputed and whose authenticity can be neither established nor disproven. This study suggests a new method for dealing with this problematic material. It focuses on the Sandai hihō shō (On the three great secret Dharmas), a writing long controversial within the Nichiren tradition for its advocacy of an imperially sponsored ordination platform, and on essays written to the monk Sairenbō, which are important in assessing Nichiren's appropriation of original enlightenment (hongaku) thought.

Keywords: *hongaku* — Nichiren — authentic works — original enlightenment — *Sandai hihō shō*

NICHIREN, WHO WITH HŌNEN, SHINRAN, AND DŌGEN is regarded as one of the representatives of Kamakura “new Buddhism,” did not concentrate on producing a large work such as Dōgen’s *Shōbō genzō* 正法眼藏 or Shinran’s *Kyōgyō shinshō* 教行信証; nonetheless, he left quite a number of writings, including letters to his disciples. Those followers who succeeded to Nichiren’s belief and who later created the Nichiren sect made an effort to collect and edit his writings. The result of such efforts first appeared as a collection called the *rokunai gosho* 録内御書 (catalogued writings) about a century after Nichiren’s death, and was followed within roughly the next two hundred years by another collection called the *rokuze gosho* 録外御書 (uncatalogued writings). The most rigorously edited and reliable collection of Nichiren’s writings is the *Shōwa teihon Nichiren Shōnin ibun* 昭和定本日蓮聖人遺文 (STN), edited and published after World War II by RISSHŌ DAIGAKU NICHIREN KYŌGAKU KENKYŪJO (1988).

The most difficult problem in dealing with Nichiren-attributed works

is that not a few of them are of doubtful authorship—doubtful because their ideas are sometimes not altogether clear and even contradict statements in Nichiren’s authentic writings. The question of forgery with respect to some writings had already been raised in the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), but it was after the Meiji period (1868–1912) that modern and scientific examination of his writings began. Yamakawa Chiō (1879–1956) was the pioneer of this new trend, but the most systematic method of examining authorship was established by Asai Yōrin (1883–1941). Asai’s chief method was to examine the writings attributed to Nichiren from the viewpoint of whether or not they include elements of *hongaku* 本覚 (original enlightenment) doctrine. According to Asai, those which are acknowledged to be Nichiren’s authentic writings do not include the ideas of *hongaku* doctrine, although such ideas were popular in the Kamakura period. For this reason, Asai asserted that those works that include elements of *hongaku* doctrine are of questionable authenticity. Asai’s criterion was adopted with some revision by other scholars who wanted to examine Nichiren’s works critically, such as Tamura Yoshirō (1921–1989).

Another problem with Nichiren’s writings is how to understand his political attitude, which was interpreted in nationalistic terms by the movement of ultranationalistic Nichirenism that arose in prewar Japan.¹ After World War II, this tendency was criticized, and Nichiren’s view of the nation was reexamined. The most controversial work in this regard proved to be the *Sandai hihō honjō ji* 三大秘法稟承事 (or *Sandai hihō shō* 三大秘法抄), which seems to assert the unification of politics and religion. Those scholars who criticized ultranationalistic interpretations of Nichiren repudiated this text and asserted that it was forged. Tokoro Shigemoto (1911–1977) was the most representative scholar of this movement, and his views were carried on by Tamura Yoshirō and others.

In this way, modern philological investigation has a tendency to regard as forgeries those writings containing ideas that seem to contradict Nichiren’s major works. Only a few scholars, such as Hanano Michiaki, have expressed opposition to this attitude. However, this situation has recently begun to change. Jacqueline STONE (1990) has examined Nichiren’s problematic works in detail and proposed their reevaluation. MATSUDO Yukio (1994) has developed the idea that the ordinary person is the original Buddha (*bonpu honbutsu* 凡夫本仏), on

¹ Nationalistic interpretations of Nichiren exerted a great influence upon the nationalistic and ultranationalistic movements of modern Japan. The most representative group among such movements is Kokuchū-kai 国柱会, established by Tanaka Chigaku 田中智学 (1861–1939) in 1914. Ultrnationalists like Kita Ikki 北一輝 (1883–1937) and Ishihara Kanji 石原莞爾 (1889–1949) also had faith in Nichiren.

the basis of Nichiren's problematic writings. Among these new tendencies in reevaluating Nichiren's questionable works, the most sensational result was published by Itō Zuiei (1997). Itō examined the *Sandai hihō shō* using computer analysis in cooperation with a statistician and as a result claimed that it can be accepted as Nichiren's authentic work. While his findings are far from certain, we can no longer dismiss the text as a forgery without examining it in detail.

In this situation, we have to change our attitude toward questionable works. It is true that there are works in the Nichiren collection that most scholars regard as forgeries. They are contained in the supplement (*zokuhen* 続篇) to the *Shōwa teihon* collection. The problem is how to treat those works that are contained in the main part (*seihen* 正篇) but whose authenticity has been questioned by critical scholars. For the sake of convenience, I divide Nichiren's works into three groups:

Nichiren A: Nichiren's authentic writings.

Nichiren B: those writings that cannot be determined as Nichiren's or not; in other words, some scholars regard them as authentic while others do not.

Nichiren C: those writings that are regarded as forgeries.

The criteria of Nichiren A are as follows:

1. A writing that has or is definitely known to have had a holograph—that is, which exists or is known to have existed in Nichiren's own handwriting—belongs to Nichiren A.² Those writings that belong to Nichiren A sometimes contradict one another. In such a case, the reason for the contradiction is assumed to be the fact that they were written during different stages of his life or addressed to different kinds of followers.
2. Among those writings for which no holograph survives, those that do not contradict writings now or formerly existing in a Nichiren holograph can be regarded as authentic.

Nichiren C contains those writings that are generally thought to have been written not by Nichiren himself but by his later followers. Nichiren B constitutes an ambiguous group between Nichiren A and Nichiren C. The writings belonging to Nichiren B are included in the *seihen* division of the *Shōwa teihon* collection, and they are not separated from those of Nichiren A. It was mainly owing to the critical studies following Asai that Nichiren B emerged as a large category distinguished from Nichiren A. Today, in the light of more recent scholar-

² The *seihen* of *STN* includes 434 writings, of which 121 exist or are known to have once existed in Nichiren's holograph.

ship, any clear-cut division between Nichiren A and Nichiren B has become difficult, and we have to inquire again into the relation between the writings belonging to the two categories. However, this does not mean that the category Nichiren B disappears and merges with Nichiren A. Even positive findings from statistical research using computer analysis do not absolutely guarantee the authenticity of the work in question.

In this situation, the most practical way to deal with Nichiren's works is to admit category Nichiren B alongside that of Nichiren A and ask how we would change our interpretation of Nichiren's ideas if we were to add the works in Nichiren B to the corpus Nichiren A.

This article will first examine the *Sandai hihō shō* and then writings sent to Sairen-bō 最蓮房, a Tendai monk who became a disciple of Nichiren. The writings addressed to Sairen-bō are critical in this context, because they contain ideas quite similar to *hongaku* doctrine, and their authenticity has been questioned on that account.

The Sandai hihō shō

The full title of the *Sandai hihō shō* is *Sandai hihō honjō ji*, or "Treatise on the transmission of the three great secret Dharmas." The three great secret Dharmas are the *honzon* 本尊 (principal object of worship), *daimoku* 題目 (title of the *Lotus Sūtra*), and *kaidan* 戒壇 (ordination platform) revealed in *honmon* 本門 (the "original gate," that is, the latter half of the *Lotus Sūtra*). The colophon says that it was written to Ōta Kingo 大田金吾, an earnest lay adherent of Nichiren, on the eighth day of the fourth month of the fourth year of Kōan (1281). This was the year before Nichiren's death, when he was sixty years old. It is extant as an old manuscript copy made by Nisshin 日親 in 1442.

The *Sandai hihō shō* consists of six questions and answers. The first question concerns the essential point of the *Jinriki-bon* 神力品 (chapter on supernatural powers) of the *Lotus Sūtra*. The answer is that it is nothing but the *honzon*, *daimoku*, and *kaidan* taught in the *Juryō-bon* 寿量品 (chapter on fathoming the Tathāgata's lifespan), which had not been revealed even in *shakumon* 迹門 (the "gate of traces," that is, the first half of the *Lotus Sūtra*), much less in other sutras. The Buddha did not deliver them even to great bodhisattvas such as Fugen 普賢 and Monju 文殊 but instead summoned Jōgyō 上行 and his other three companion bodhisattvas and taught the three Dharmas to them. These four bodhisattvas are the leaders of the bodhisattvas who emerged from beneath the earth (*jiyū no bosatsu* 地涌の菩薩) in order to hear and transmit the *honmon* teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra*. This fact

shows the ultimate importance of the three Dharmas. The Buddha who taught them was not the mortal Buddha but the Buddha who possesses the “originally existing and unproduced three bodies” (*honnu musa no sanjin* 本有無作の三身) and dwells in the originally existing Land of Tranquil Light (*jakkō honnu no kokudo* 寂光本有の国土).

The second question asks when the teaching of the three great secret Dharmas will spread in the world. The answer is that they will spread in the time of decline, the Final Dharma age (*mappō* 末法), during the fifth five hundred years after Buddha's death when people do nothing but fight and the white (true) Dharma (*byakuhō* 白法) disappears. The third question is whether Buddha's mercy is not partial if the three secret Dharmas spread only during the Final Dharma age. The answer is that the teachings of the Buddha correspond to the ability of sentient beings; only the teaching of the Chapter on Lifespan is the viable way to free oneself from birth and death during the Final Dharma age. The fourth question and answer deal with proof texts supporting this assertion.

The most essential problem is discussed in the fifth question and answer. The question asks for a clarification of the three great secret Dharmas, and the answer explains them in sequence.

As for the *honzon*, the author explains that it is Śākyamuni Buddha, lord of the teachings, who exists originally and possesses the unproduced three bodies, and who has had an intimate relation with this world for countless kalpas, numerous as particles of dust (*gohyaku jindengō* 五百塵点劫).³

As for the *daimoku*, the author says that the *daimoku* for the time of the Final Dharma age is different from that of the True and Semblance Dharma ages. The latter is practice in terms of principle (*nigyō* 理行) only for the benefit of oneself, while the former is chanting “*Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō*” 南無妙法蓮華經 (homage to the sutra of the lotus blossom of the wonderful Dharma), which benefits not only oneself but also others. The five characters “myō,” “hō,” “ren,” “ge,” and “kyō” correspond to the five profound meanings of the *Lotus Sūtra* set forth by the Tiantai founder Zhiyi 智顛 (538–597), that is, its name, essence, gist, function, and teaching.

The explanation of the ordination platform is the most problematic. This is the only passage in the Nichiren collection that explains the *kaidan*, while the *honzon* and *daimoku* are explained in other writings

³ *Gohyaku* stands for five hundred [thousand of myriads of millions of *nayutas* of *asaṃkhyeyas*], *jinden* means particles of dust, and *gō* means kalpa(s). *Gohyaku jindengō* means a very long time, a detailed explanation of which can be found in the “Fathoming the Tathāgata's Lifespan” chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

such as the *Senji shō* 撰時抄. The explanation of the *kaidan* is as follows:

The *kaidan* will be established when the dharma of the ruler (*ōbō* 王法) becomes one with the Dharma of the Buddha (*buppō* 仏法), when the Buddha Dharma is united with the dharma of the ruler, and the ruler and his vassals all maintain the three great secret Dharmas of *honmon*, so that the relationship existing between King Utoku 有徳 and Monk Kakutoku 覚徳 in the past is transplanted to the future in this impure and evil Final Dharma age. At that time, the ruler should issue a command to seek out the most superlative site, resembling the Pure Land of Eagle Peak, and there establish the ordination platform. We should await the appropriate time. This [ordination platform] will be the [establishment of] the dharma of the precepts in actuality (*ji* 事).... After this dharma of the precepts has been established, the ordination platform at Enryaku-ji 延暦寺 [on Mt. Hiei] will become useless, because it pertains only to the precepts in terms of principle (*rikai* 理戒) of *shakumon*. (STN 2: 1864-65)⁴

Here the text clearly asserts the unity of the ruler's dharma and the Buddha Dharma, or the unity of religion and politics. This is the reason why this passage became a main source of textual support for the modern political movement of Nichirenism, including the activities of ultranationalism in the prewar period and of the Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 in postwar society.

After explaining the three great secret Dharmas one by one, the text summarizes them and says that the three great secret Dharmas are what Nichiren, as the chief of the bodhisattvas who appeared from beneath the earth, received by oral transmission from Śākyamuni Buddha.

In response to the sixth and last question, the author cites passages from the Skillful Means and Fathoming the Lifespan chapters supporting the theory of the three thousand realms in one thought-moment (*ichinen sanzen* 一念三千). At the end of the text, Ōta Kingo is instructed to keep the text secret.

In this way, the passage where the ordination platform is explained is very controversial. It may even be the most controversial passage in all of Nichiren's writings.

⁴ The *Sandai hihō shō* was translated in its entirety by DEL CAMPANA (1971). STONE (1999, pp. 289-90) gives a preferable translation of this part, which I have consulted in making my own translation.

CONTROVERSY OVER THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE *SANDAI HIHO SHO*

The authenticity of the *Sandai hihō shō* was already questioned by some Nichiren sectarian scholars in the Edo period. Opinion on both sides was linked to political attitudes. While those scholarly monks who aimed at establishing a national ordination platform (*kokuritsu kaidan* 国立戒壇) affirmed the text's authenticity, those who retreated from such political involvement claimed it was a forgery. In the modern period, Yamakawa Chiō was the first scholar who discussed the problem in detail. He was a leading member of the Kokuchū-kai, a nationalistic lay organization of Nichirenism, and supported the authenticity of the text. He says:

The ideas of the unity of the ruler's dharma and the Buddha Dharma and of the national ordination platform truly mean the perfect conversion of the nation to religion, a unique and great idea not found anywhere in the cultural history of the world [except in Nichiren's teaching]. (YAMAKAWA 1929, p. 429)

In this way, claims for the authenticity of the *Sandai hihō shō* bore a close relation to the political movement of nationalistic Nichirenism. And for this very reason, its authenticity came to be questioned after World War II by scholars who criticized the nationalistic attitude of prewar Buddhists and sought a democratic and pacifistic form of Buddhism. Tokoro Shigemoto, one of the leaders of this movement, criticized the idea of the unity of nation and religion in the *Sandai hihō shō* most severely. He even titled the chapter of his book (1965) where he discussed this problem "The *Sandai hihō shō* which disgraces Nichiren (*Nichiren o kegasu Sandai hihō shō* 日蓮を汚す三大秘法鈔)." Tokoro clearly pointed out the close relation between the ultra-nationalistic Nichirenist movement of the modern imperial period and claims for the *Sandai hihō shō*'s authenticity:

So far those who have interpreted Nichiren's assertion of the ordination platform of *honmon* as meaning a national ordination platform established by permission of the emperor (*tennō* 天王) have also asserted the authenticity of the *Sandai hihō shō* almost without exception. It is needless to say that those ultra-nationalists who wanted first to convert the emperor to the *Lotus Sūtra* and then to realize the conversion of the whole nation to the same faith with his authority have also supported the authenticity of the text. (TOKORO 1965, p. 152)

Tokoro's expression of opposition to such tendencies was quite passionate and forceful:

Although the assertion that the *Sandai hihō shō* is a forgery is not new, the claims for its authenticity have been predominant, not because of scholarly reasons, but because of political reasons.... Adherents of Nichiren Buddhism must voluntarily renounce the *Sandai hihō shō* as an extremely impure forgery that distorts Nichiren's religion. (TOKORO 1965, p. 166)

A similar assertion that the *Sandai hihō shō* is apocryphal was also made by TAMURA Yoshirō. He too pointed out that nationalistic Nichirenists placed great importance upon this text and concluded that we can clearly pronounce it a forgery (1967, p. 144).

There is another factor that has complicated the situation. In 1964 the Nichiren-based lay movement Sōka Gakkai established a political party called Kōmeitō 公明党 and launched a great campaign for the establishment of an ordination platform on the basis of the description in the *Sandai hihō shō*. From the 1960s on, Sōka Gakkai abandoned its earlier use of the term "national ordination platform" (*kokuritsu kaidan*) and said that it aimed instead at establishing the ordination platform of *honmon* (*honmon no kaidan* 本門の戒壇), which was to be erected, not by imperial command, but by the will of the people. Nevertheless, largely because of the existence of Kōmeitō itself, Sōka Gakkai's efforts were still seen by many as a challenge to the postwar social system of the separation of politics and religion. Under these circumstances, the problem of the *Sandai hihō shō* could not be discussed as an impartial scholarly subject and became taboo for conscientious scholars. Itō Zuiei broke this taboo and thrust the problem onto the stage of the scholarly world.

How do Nichiren scholars who reject the idea of a national *kaidan* interpret the ordination platform of *honmon*, which is mentioned, although without elaboration, in Nichiren's authentic works? TOKORO says that, from the subjective viewpoint, the ordination platform of *honmon* is the place where a practitioner of the *Lotus Sūtra* lives, and, from the objective viewpoint, it is the realization of the idea of establishing the true Dharma and bringing peace to the nation (*risshō ankoku* 立正安国) (1965, pp. 157-58). His view represents the assertion of the *ridan* 理壇 (the ordination platform in terms of principle) and opposition to the assertion of the *jidān* 事壇 (the ordination platform in actuality), that is, to the idea that the ordination platform of *honmon* should be established in a specific place.

However, claims contrary to Tokoro's, for the authenticity of the *Sandai hihō shō*, have always been linked to the assertion of the *jidān*. This is true even in the case of the most recent assertion of the *Sandai hihō shō*'s authenticity put forward by Itō. Itō clearly asserts that the

ultimate aim of the Nichiren sect should be the establishment of the *jidān*. He also asserts that the nation should become an institution of the true Buddha Dharma (ITŌ 1997a, p. 135). This is clearly an assertion aimed at the unification of politics and religion, even though Itō does not use the term “national ordination platform.” Parenthetically, the *Nichiren-shū dokuhon* (Nichiren sect reader), which expresses the sect's quasi-official view, also adopts the assertion of the *jidān*, although it avoids any expression of the unity of nation and religion (RISSHŌ DAIGAKU NICHIREN KYŌGAKU KENKYŪJO 1982, pp. 166–69).

In this way, the controversy over the authenticity of the *Sandai hihō shō* is not a purely scholarly problem but is closely intertwined with political issues. This makes the problem quite complex.

An Examination of the Sandai hihō shō

THE THEORY OF THE UNPRODUCED THREE BODIES

Beyond the issue of the national ordination platform, there is another reason why the authenticity of the *Sandai hihō shō* is questioned. This is the use of the term *musa sanjin* 無作三身 (unproduced three bodies). The term is used twice in the text, in passages referred to above, and also appears in the writings sent to Sairen-bō and in other works of Nichiren B and C. The texts belonging to Nichiren A do not use it. It is one of the terms often used in the medieval Tendai texts that develop *hongaku* doctrine. Saichō 最澄 (767–822), founder of Japanese Tendai, first used the term in the *Shugo kokkai shō* 守護国界章. He says:

The recompense-body Buddha following cause and effect is a provisional effect achieved in a dream, while the unproduced three bodies are the true Buddha [who appears] in front of one who has realized awakening (*kakuzen jitsubutsu* 覚前実仏).

(T. no. 2362, 74.222c)

According to Saichō, “the unproduced three bodies” are nothing but suchness following conditions (*zuien shinnyo* 隨緣真如), which manifests as the phenomenal world. In the works of medieval Tendai that develop *hongaku* doctrine, the term *kakuzen jitsubutsu* was interpreted as the true Buddha before (i.e., without) enlightenment. There it expresses the idea that the true Buddha is nothing but the ordinary person as such, without realizing enlightenment. The idea of the unproduced three bodies in this sense first appears in the *Sanjū-shi ka no kotogaki* 三十四箇事書 (Notes on thirty-four articles), one of the representative transmission texts of Tendai *hongaku* doctrine. The anonymous author of the text criticizes the “ordinary interpretation,” i.e.,

that the “unproduced three bodies” refers to the three bodies manifested when the Buddha first attained enlightenment, and proposes his own interpretation, namely that all phenomenal things are the Buddha’s three bodies originally, without beginning (TADA 1973, p. 173). The “ordinary interpretation” referred to here is actually further from the *hongaku* position than Saichō’s meaning, because the former admits the personal body of the Buddha at the time of enlightenment, while the latter identifies it as impersonal suchness.

Parenthetically, one of the greatest medieval Tendai scholars, Shōshin 証真 (fl. 12th cent.) criticized the idea that the unproduced three bodies were what the Buddha realized at the time of his original enlightenment in the remote past, as described in the teaching of *honmon* (*Hokke gengi shiki* 法華玄義私記 7, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書 21: 288ff.). In other words, Shōshin’s target of criticism was rather similar to the “ordinary interpretation” mentioned in the *Sanjūshi ka no kotogaki*.

Now let us examine the use of the term “unproduced three bodies” in the *Sandai hihō shō*. There it refers to the Śākyamuni Buddha who realized enlightenment in the remote past, countless dust-particle kalpas ago, and means neither an ordinary person nor all phenomenal things. This usage is different from that of *hongaku* doctrine, but is rather similar to the “ordinary interpretation” referred to in the *Sanjūshi ka no kotogaki* and which is criticized by Shōshin. This view of the Buddha in the *Sandai hihō shō* is not so different from that in the *Kanjin honzon shō* 観心本尊抄 (Treatise on the contemplation of the mind and the object of worship), one of the main works of Nichiren. The latter says that Śākyamuni Buddha within one’s own mind has manifested the three bodies since the remote past, countless dust-particle kalpas ago, and is the old Buddha without beginning (*STN* 1: 712).

Thus, although the term is the same as that used in the texts of the Tendai *hongaku* doctrine, the meaning of the unproduced three bodies as employed in the *Sandai hihō shō* does not contradict the view of the Buddha in the writings of Nichiren A.

THE UNITY OF THE RULER’S DHARMA AND THE BUDDHA DHARMA

Now we can examine the political view implicit in the *Sandai hihō shō*. It has been widely accepted in the scholarly world recently that Nichiren was not a nationalist, as he has often been misunderstood to be. He consistently placed the Buddha Dharma above the dharma of the ruler and maintained a critical attitude toward the political power of his time. Although his later works sometimes express aspiration toward the Pure Land of Eagle [or “Vulture”] Peak (*ryōzen jōdo* 靈山淨土), the ideal world of the eternal Śākyamuni Buddha to be achieved after

death, this does not mean that he abandoned the ideal of transforming this present world into a Buddha land. As SATŌ Hiroo has pointed out (1977), the exaltation of Śākyamuni Buddha to the status of an absolute existence in Nichiren's later works led him to oppose the existing situation in Japan even more relentlessly than in his younger days. Achieving birth after death in the Pure Land of Eagle Peak presupposes the activity of refuting wrong teachings in this present life.

When compared to this critical tendency in Nichiren's later works, some ideas in the *Sandai hihō shō* appear contradictory. In particular, the idea of the unification of religion and politics does not seem to conform to his placing of the Buddha Dharma above the dharma of the ruler. The statement that the ruler should issue a command to find an ideal site similar to the Pure Land of Eagle Peak and there establish the ordination platform is even susceptible to interpretation as expressing the superiority of worldly power over religious authority.

Nevertheless, detailed investigation makes clear that here again, the fundamental idea in the *Sandai hihō shō* is not so different from that of Nichiren's authentic works (Nichiren A). Here we should note the mention in this text of the story of King Utoku and Monk Kakutoku. This story first appears in the Mahāyāna *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* (T. no. 374, 12.384a). In the story, apostate monks attack Monk Kakutoku when he preached the true teaching in a past time. To protect Kakutoku, King Utoku fought the apostate monks and was killed. Kakutoku praised Utoku and guaranteed that he would be born in Akṣobhya Buddha's world.

This story is also cited in the *Risshō ankoku ron* 立正安国論 (STN 1: 222). If the author of the *Sandai hihō shō* thought that worldly authority is superior to that of the Buddha Dharma, or that they have equal value, it is strange that he should refer to the story of a king who died protecting the Buddha's true Dharma. On the contrary, the very mention of this story means that the author believed in the superior authority of the Buddha Dharma over that of worldly rule, as is the case in the *Risshō ankoku ron* and other works of Nichiren A.

According to the *Sandai hihō shō*, the establishment of the ordination platform will be realized at some time in the future, when "the ruler and his vassals all maintain the three great secret Dharmas of *honmon*." Related to this point, it is worth noting the future ideal situation that Nichiren sometimes predicted in his latter works, for example in the *Nyosetsu shugyō shō* 如説修行抄:

When all people throughout the land enter the one Buddha vehicle and the Wonderful Dharma alone flourishes, because the people all chant *Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō* as one, the wind

will not thrash the branches nor the rain fall far enough to break clods. The age will become like the reigns of [the Chinese sage kings] Yao and Shun. In the present life, inauspicious calamities will be banished, and the people will obtain the art of longevity. When the principle becomes manifest that both persons and dharmas “neither age nor die,” then each of you, behold! There can be no doubt of the sutra’s promise of “peace and security in the present world.”

(STN 1: 733; trans. from STONE 1999, pp. 291–92)

Nichiren’s *Shonin gohenji* 諸人御返事 also describes a future time when the ruler and his vassals have been converted to the *Lotus Sūtra* (STN 2: 1479). In this way, again, the ideas in the *Sandai hihō shō* are not extremely different from those in the texts of Nichiren A. Although the *Sandai hihō shō* still remains in the Nichiren B category and cannot be declared authentic with certainty, there exists the possibility that it may be authentic.

How, then, can we evaluate Nichiren’s political ideas, taking the *Sandai hihō shō* into consideration? The main political idea of the text is that the ruler of a nation must lead the nation under the guidance of true religious ideas. The idea of the national ordination platform symbolizes the realization of this ideal situation. It does not mean the superiority of politics over religion or the equality of politics and religion. Religious value is always held to be superior to politics. From this point of view, the postwar interpretation of Nichiren’s political ideas is correct, even if we take the *Sandai hihō shō* into consideration. The problem is how to evaluate Nichiren’s idea of the superiority of religion to politics.

From the historical point of view, Nichiren’s idea of the superiority of religion over politics was very fresh in the medieval period. The stance of established Buddhism was to place politics and religion side by side on the same level. Hōnen’s standpoint was to separate religion from politics and concentrate only on religious problems. Nichiren’s standpoint is different from either of these two and was quite new. From this perspective, it is difficult to put him together with Hōnen in the category of either “new Buddhism” or the “heterodox” (*itan-ha* 異端派), over and against the *kenmitsu* 顯密 system. Rather, he is the pioneer of a new attitude toward politics from the religious standpoint, and his stance was inherited by the Ikkō Ikki 一向一揆 and Kirishitan (Christianity) in the later medieval period.

If we consider the problem in terms of the contemporary situation, it is even more complex. When the idea of the superiority of religious over worldly authority becomes a principle of criticism against an

obstinate establishment, it will work as an effective motive for resistance. On the contrary, if it becomes a principle for oppression of the opposite party or of different religious sects, it will be very dangerous. Were a national ordination platform to be realized, it would be nothing but a terror for those who have different beliefs from those of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Nichiren's political idea contains this ambivalence, whether we take the *Sandai hihō shō* into consideration or not.

The Writings Given to Sairen-bō

NICHIREN AND HONGAKU DOCTRINE

Ideas related to *hongaku* doctrine occur frequently in the works of the Nichiren B and C categories, while they are rare in the works belonging to Nichiren A. We have already examined the case of the “unproduced three bodies.” Asai Yōrin established the method of judging the authenticity of Nichiren-attributed writings by examining whether or not they contain terms and ideas related to *hongaku* doctrine (ASAI 1945). Asai thought that the writings containing terms and ideas related to *hongaku* doctrine are not Nichiren's authentic writings, but forgeries.

Asai's criterion cannot be applied consistently, because in his youthful days Nichiren made a transcription, which still survives, of the *Entaragi shū* 円多羅義集, a work attributed to the Tendai master Enchin 円珍 (814–891) but actually a later work containing some elements of *hongaku* doctrine and exhibiting the influence of esotericism (*mikkyō* 密教). Because of the existence of this transcription, researchers after Asai made some revisions of his criterion. TAMURA Yoshirō, for example, thought that Nichiren was under the influence of *hongaku* doctrine when he was young but emerged from this influence in his later days (1967). According to Tamura, those authentic works that show the influence of *hongaku* doctrine are limited to Nichiren's early writings, while works dating from a later period that have elements of *hongaku* doctrine are of dubious authenticity. Despite their differences, however, the method of both Asai and Tamura is in effect to strictly determine the range of Nichiren A and reconstruct Nichiren's ideas from the works of this rigidly defined range, without taking the works of the Nichiren B and C categories into consideration.

Although the ideas of Asai and Tamura have exerted a great influence, their criteria seem too simple and rigid to analyze complex elements of the Nichiren corpus, and some scholars have opposed their ideas. One of the representative scholars arguing against them is Hanano Michiaki. He proposes that we should acknowledge that contradictory ideas are found in even Nichiren's authentic works, and tries

to find a unified interpretation drawing on all Nichiren-attributed works, except those that are obvious forgeries (HANANO 1975). In terms of my categories, he lumps Nichiren A and B together and regards all of the works included in them as authentic. His method represents an extreme opposite approach from that of Asai and Tamura.

The method that I propose is different from both extremes. I think it is necessary first to recognize the category of Nichiren B, which includes those works whose authenticity cannot be determined one way or another, at least not in our present state of scholarship. Then the next step is to investigate what relation the ideas of the writings of Nichiren B have to the ideas of Nichiren A.

Representative among the writings of Nichiren B are those sent to Sairen-bō, because they contain important ideas similar to *hongaku* doctrine and have a slightly different style from Nichiren's authentic writings.⁵ Sairen-bō was a Tendai monk exiled to Sado for some unknown offense around the same time as Nichiren. He became a follower of Nichiren and was given some writings by him. There remain twelve writings addressed to Sairen-bō, two of which are thought conclusively to be forgeries and are accordingly included in the *zokuhen* volume of the *Shōwa teihon* collection. The other ten writings are included in the *seihen*, but their authenticity has been questioned by Asai and others. Some scholars have even doubted the real existence of Sairen-bō, because his biography is quite unclear. Although his historicity is now regarded as certain, the authenticity of Nichiren's writings addressed to him is still in doubt.⁶

Here I would like to consider two writings sent to Sairen-bō. One is the *Shohō jissō shō* 諸法実相鈔 (1273) and the other is the *Risshōkan jō* 立正観抄 (1274). The former contains the idea that the ordinary person is the original Buddha (*bonpu honbutsu*), while the latter refers to the classification of the Buddhist teachings in terms of the fourfold rise and fall (*shijū kōhai* 四重興廢); both ideas are found in Tendai *hongaku* doctrine.

THE *SHOHŌ JISSŌ SHŌ* AND THE IDEA THAT
THE ORDINARY PERSON IS THE ORIGINAL BUDDHA

Matsudo Yūkiō, who develops a theory of engaged Buddhism on the basis of the Nichiren tradition, proposes the idea that the ordinary person is the original Buddha (*bonpu honbutsu*), which will provide a

⁵ For a discussion of the problems surrounding Sairen-bō and Nichiren's writings addressed to him, see STONE 1990, pp. 215-30.

⁶ The most recent research on those writings is by NAKAJŌ (1996, pp. 141-65), who expresses doubt about their authenticity.

new standpoint for a modern person to reinterpret Nichiren's thought (MATSUDO 1994). The idea is found in the *Shohō jissō shō* (Treatise on the truth that phenomenal things as such are the ultimate reality). Commenting on a reference in the *Lotus Sūtra* to "the Tathāgata's secret and his supernatural powers," it says:

Even the two Buddhas, Śākyamuni and Many Treasures, are Buddhas in terms of function (*yū* 用). It is Myōhō-rence-kyō which is the original Buddha.... The "Tathāgata's secret" is the three bodies in terms of essence (*tai* 体) and the original Buddha (*honbutsu* 本仏), while his "supernatural powers" are the three bodies in terms of function and the trace Buddha (*shakubutsu* 迹仏). The ordinary person is the three bodies in terms of essence and the original Buddha, while the Buddha is the three bodies in terms of function and the trace Buddha. It is thought that Śākyamuni Buddha possessed the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent for the sake of us, ordinary persons; however, this is not so. On the contrary, it is the ordinary person who endows the Buddha with the three virtues.

(STN 1: 724)

In this way, we can set up the following formula:

The original Buddha = Myōhō-rence-kyō = the "Tathāgata's secret"
= the three bodies in terms of essence = the ordinary person

The trace Buddha = Śākyamuni and Many Treasures = the
Tathāgata's "supernatural powers" = the three bodies in terms
of function = the Buddha

From this perspective, the ordinary person is regarded as even more fundamental than the Buddha. Similar ideas can be found in other writings sent to Sairen-bō, such as the *Tōtaigi shō* 当体義鈔 (STN 1: 757) and *Shōji ichidaiji kechimiyaku shō* 生死一大事血脈鈔 (STN 1: 522), although a clear statement that the ordinary person is the original Buddha can only be found in the *Shohō jissō shō*.

In the *Shohō jissō shō*, we can also find another expression of the idea that the phenomenal world as such is the ultimate reality:

The ultimate reality is another name for Myōhō-rence-kyō. All phenomenal things are nothing but Myōhō-rence-kyō. A being in hell manifesting the appearance of a being in hell is the ultimate reality. If it changed into a hungry ghost, that would not be the true aspect of hell. The Buddha manifests the appearance of the Buddha, and the ordinary person manifests the appearance of an ordinary person. In this way, the appearance of all

things just as they are is nothing but Myōhō-enge-kyō; this is the meaning of the truth that phenomenal things as such are the ultimate reality. (STN 1: 725)

The idea of this passage seems very similar to that of the following passage of the *Sanjū-shi ka no kotogaki* cited earlier, a representative piece of literature of Tendai *hongaku* doctrine:

The ultimate reality as revealed in *honmon* is phenomena. Our opinion is that a being in hell is a being in hell, a hungry ghost is a hungry ghost, and the world of the Buddha is the world of the Buddha; they are the ultimate reality just as they are themselves without transformation.... Therefore, the meaning of the *honmon* teaching is that deluded sentient beings are themselves the ultimate reality and their appearances are also the ultimate reality. (TADA 1973, p. 174)

This type of logic—that “A is A and nothing other than A”—is a typical idea of *hongaku* doctrine, one that I call the “principle of self-consistency” (SUEKI 1995). Both the *Shohō jissō shō* and the *Sanjū-shi ka no kotogaki* exhibit this same type of thinking. If we follow Tamura Yoshirō and think that the influence of *hongaku* doctrine is limited to the early stage of Nichiren’s thought, then the *Shohō jissō shō* must be regarded as a forgery because of its similarity to *hongaku* doctrine. However, as SATŌ Hiroo points out, the early and later stages of Nichiren’s intellectual development are not divided as clearly as Tamura says (1981, p. 253).

The later stage of Nichiren’s thinking includes ambivalent ideas. While the Buddha is on the one hand thought to be an absolute savior transcending us, on the other hand, he is also thought to reside in our minds. This ambivalence is most typically expressed in a passage of the *Kanjin honzon shō* 観心本尊鈔, Nichiren’s most important work written while he was at Sado, where he says: “Śākyamuni Buddha of one’s own mind has manifested the three bodies since countless dust-particle kalpas ago; he is the old Buddha without beginning” (STN 1: 712). Here, Śākyamuni Buddha is represented as a Buddha who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago, and he is also inherent in one’s mind at the same time.

The idea that the Buddha resides in one’s mind has its basis in the Tendai theory of three thousand realms in one thought (*ichinen sanzen*). According to this theory, one’s mind in a single moment of thought encompasses all elements in the world, including the Buddha. Nichiren attached great importance to the theory of *ichinen sanzen* and often discussed it in the *Kanjin honzon shō* and other writings.

Although this theory itself is an orthodox Tendai doctrine, it leads in the direction of *hongaku* doctrine when taken to its extreme, because it teaches that one's own mind includes all elements in the world and has ultimate value. It also teaches that even a being in hell possesses the Buddha realm and in this sense does not differ from the Buddha.

Thus, because of its continuity with the *ichinen sanzen* principle, we cannot say that the idea that the ordinary person is the original Buddha in the *Shohō jissō shō* contradicts the ideas developed in the *Kanjin honzon shō* and Nichiren's other authentic works. However, neither can we say without hesitation that this text is authentic, because it lacks Nichiren's other idea, that the Buddha is the absolute, transcendent savior. For this reason, it remains in the category of Nichiren B, that is, those works whose authenticity cannot be determined one way or another.

THE *RISSHŌKAN JŌ* AND THE CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHINGS OF THE FOURFOLD RISE AND FALL

The *Risshōkan jō* (Treatise on right contemplation) is included in the *rokunai* corpus and is considered to be one of the most important writings among those sent to Sairen-bō. It exists in a transcription made by Nisshin 日進 (1271–1334), the third chief priest of Minobu, and its authenticity is thought to be highly probable. The main topic of the text is a comparison between the *Lotus Sūtra* and meditation or contemplation (*shikan* 止観), and it disputes the idea that the latter is superior to the former.

The idea that contemplative insight is superior to the *Lotus Sūtra* is typically expressed in the classification of the teachings of the fourfold rise and fall (*shijū kōhai*).⁷ This is a classification of the teachings of the Buddha that developed in the texts of *hongaku* doctrine in medieval Tendai. It is formulated as follows:

1. When *shakumon* (the first fourteen chapters of the *Lotus Sūtra*) arises, *nizen* 爾前 (the sutras preached before the *Lotus Sūtra*) is superseded.
2. When *honmon* (the latter fourteen chapters of the *Lotus Sūtra*) arises, *shakumon* is superseded.
3. When *kanjin* 観心 (contemplation of the mind) arises, *honmon* is superseded.

Thus one progresses through the four levels of *nizen*, *shakumon*, *honmon*, and *kanjin*. The fourfold rise and fall is the most typical classification of teaching in the writings of Tendai *hongaku* doctrine. Among

⁷ The *shijū kōhai* and theories concerning it are discussed in STONE 1999, pp. 168–75.

Nichiren's writings, only the *Jippōkai ji* 十法界事 and the *Risshōkan jō* mention the fourfold rise and fall.

The problem is determining when this classification was formed. If it was formed after Nichiren, both the *Jippōkai ji* and the *Risshōkan jō* must be later forgeries. Although ISHIDA Mizumaro once asserted that the basis of the classification of the fourfold rise and fall is found in a writing by Kōsai 幸西 (d. 1247), a disciple of Hōnen (1967, p. 246), this is a misunderstanding, because Kōsai's system is not fourfold but rather has six stages, which do not "rise and fall" in a graded sequence (see SUEKI 1993, p. 295).

The *Jigyō nenbutsu mondō* 自行念仏問答 (Questions and answers on the *nenbutsu* as one's own practice), written in the latter half of the twelfth century by an unknown author, may be the first text to mention all these four categories. However, they are employed there as four types of viewpoint of Amida Buddha and not as a system for classifying teachings; therefore, they cannot be identified with the classification of fourfold rise and fall (SUEKI 1998, p. 290).

The first extant text containing a clear expression of the fourfold classification is the *Kankō ruijū* 漢光類聚, which is attributed to Chūjin 忠尋 (1065–1138) but was actually compiled by somebody related to Jōmyō or a disciple of Jōmyō 靜明 (GRONER 1995, p. 53). Since Jōmyō was a contemporary of Nichiren, whether or not Nichiren knew of this new classification in the *Kankō ruijū* is open to question. This is one of the main reasons why writings in the Nichiren corpus that contain mention of this classification are thought by some to be forgeries. However, the date of compilation of the texts related to *hongaku* doctrine is not clear, and there is a possibility that their main ideas had been formed through oral transmission before the texts that we now know were written down. For this reason, the fact that the classification of fourfold rise and fall is not found in the texts before Nichiren cannot be a decisive reason for dismissing as forgeries those writings attributed to him that contain it.

In any event, the thrust of the *Risshōkan jō*, which rejects the superiority of contemplation over the *Lotus Sūtra*, is not contradictory to Nichiren's other writings. For Nichiren, meditation or contemplation is not superior to practicing the *Lotus Sūtra* but is contained in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Nevertheless, there remains a problem. A writing called the *Risshōkan jō sōjō* 立正觀抄送状, which is said to have also been sent to Sairen-bō as a sort of summary of the *Risshōkan jō*, says that contemplation is not taught in the *honmon*, but in the *shakumon*, portion of the *Lotus Sūtra*. This idea is quite peculiar and cannot be found in Nichiren's other writings. In this way, the *Risshōkan jō* still remains in the category of Nichiren B.

Conclusion

We have examined some of the works included in Nichiren B. These works cannot be conclusively demonstrated to be either Nichiren's authentic works or apocryphal ones, but there exists the possibility that they are Nichiren's work. Usually the ideas developed in them are not identical to those of Nichiren A, but they are often more fully elaborated expressions of ideas found in Nichiren A. For this reason, we cannot disregard them when we consider Nichiren's ideas, but neither can we treat them as being on the same level as those of the Nichiren A category. This is the reason why we must acknowledge the category of Nichiren B (along with its ambiguity), and not just Nichiren A and Nichiren C. We cannot always deal with medieval literature in clear-cut scientific terms but must sometimes acknowledge some ambiguity.

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