

## Many in Body, One in Mind



I RECEIVED the white quilted robe and the thick-quilted cotton one, as well as one thousand coins, through the good offices of Hoki-bo.<sup>1</sup> Hoki-bo and Sado-bo, and the believers in Atsuhara, have proved the strength of their resolve.

If the spirit of many in body but one in mind prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas if one in body but different in mind, they can achieve nothing remarkable. The more than three thousand volumes of Confucian and Taoist literature are filled with examples. King Chou of Yin led seven hundred thousand soldiers into battle against King Wu of Chou and his eight hundred men.<sup>2</sup> Yet King Chou's army lost because of disunity while King Wu's men defeated him because of perfect unity. Even an individual at cross purposes with himself is certain to end in failure. Yet a hundred or even a thousand people can definitely attain their goal, if they are of one mind. Though numerous, the Japanese will find it difficult to accomplish anything, because they are divided in spirit. In contrast, although Nichiren and his followers are few, because they are different in body, but united in mind, they will definitely accomplish their great mission of widely propagating the Lotus Sutra. Though evils may be numerous, they

cannot prevail over a single great truth, just as many raging fires are quenched by a single shower of rain. This principle also holds true with Nichiren and his followers.

You have served the Lotus Sutra with devotion for many years, and in addition, you demonstrated remarkable resolve during the recent incidents [at Atsuhara]. Many people have mentioned this, and Hoki-bo and Sado-bo have also said so. I have listened carefully and reported everything to the god of the sun and to the Sun Goddess.

I should have replied to you earlier, but there was no one who could bring this letter to you. Acharya Ben<sup>3</sup> left here so quickly that I had no time to finish writing before his departure.

All of you have been wondering whether the Mongols will really attack again, but I believe that invasion is now imminent. Though the fall of our country would be deplorable, if the invasion does not take place, the Japanese people will slander the Lotus Sutra more than ever, and all of them will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. The nation may be devastated by the superior strength of the Mongols, but the slander of the correct teaching will cease almost entirely. Defeat would be like moxa cautery, which cures disease, or like acupuncture, which re-

lieves pain. Both are painful at the moment, but bring happiness later.

Nichiren is the emissary of the Lotus Sutra; the Japanese are like King Mihirakula, who eliminated Buddhism throughout Jambudvīpa. The Mongol empire may be like King Himatala, a messenger from heaven sent to punish those hostile to the votary of the Lotus Sutra. If the Japanese repent in their present existence, they will be like King Ajatashatru, who became a fol-

lower of the Buddha, cured his white leprosy, and prolonged his life by forty years; though lacking the roots of faith, he reached the first stage of security, and in his present life gained the realization that phenomena neither are born nor perish.

With my deep respect,  
Nichiren

The sixth day of the eighth month



## Background

This letter is generally thought to have been presented to the lay priest Takahashi, whose wife was an aunt of Nikko Shonin. Hoki-bo, better known as Nikko Shonin, led the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings in Fuji District of Suruga. Takahashi was a leading figure among the lay believers there, and his residence was used as a headquarters when the persecutions of lay believers occurred in Atsuhara Village in the Fuji area.

This letter is dated the sixth day of the eighth month, but no year is given.

## Notes

1. Hoki-bo was the Buddhist name given to Nikko Shonin when he became the Daishonin's disciple in 1258. Sado-bo, the other name mentioned in the next sentence, refers to Niko (1253–1314), another of the Daishonin's six senior priest-disciples.

It is believed, however, to have been written between 1275, when persecutions began in Atsuhara due to the increasing number of new believers there, and 1280, the year before the second Mongol invasion, when the Atsuhara persecutions were resolved.

This letter stresses the importance of unity in the face of the numerous evils arrayed against the Daishonin's followers, and speaks of the imminence of a second Mongol invasion that may ultimately serve to excise slander against the correct teaching of Buddhism.

2. This story appears in *Records of the Historian*.

3. Ben is another name for Nissho (1221–1323), one of the Daishonin's six senior priest-disciples.