

## Translators' Note

**W**E would like to draw your attention to a number of words used in these translations whose meaning in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is somewhat different from, or has an additional dimension to, the generally understood sense. Many of the terms and concepts used by various religions, philosophies, and cultures, though superficially similar, have quite different implications. A correct understanding of those terms and concepts as they are used in the Daishonin's Buddhism leads to a richer reading experience and more profound grasp of his message. Thus we present the following brief explanations of terms and a few paragraphs in which we discuss points that bear on the translations themselves. All but the most common Buddhist terms appearing in the translations and notes are also explained in the glossary, and each work in this volume is accompanied by a brief background essay.

**deity, god:** These terms indicate the positive forces, or influences, in life, society, and the natural environment, which create happiness and protect life. They represent the functions that support and protect people in response to the good causes they make.

**demon, devil:** These terms indicate the forces in people's lives, in society, and in the natural environment that cause misery and unhappiness, and even destroy life itself. For instance, the "devil king of the sixth heaven" is the personification of the fundamental ignorance, or darkness, inherent in life. In terms of Buddhist practice, demons and devils function to prevent people from attaining enlightenment. It is said that Shakyamuni first conquered the devil within, and then attained enlightenment.

In Buddhism there are two kinds of demons: good and evil. The Chinese character for "demon" means the spirit of a deceased person, and indicates either a spirit that has come to be revered as a deity, or a spirit that brings harm to people. The term "hungry spirits," for example, refers to the spirits of the deceased that suffer starvation as a result of evil deeds performed when they were alive.

**evil:** When the word is applied to Buddhists, it refers to their acting against the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and thus making the cause to fall into hell, or a state of intense suffering. When it is applied to people who are unaware of Buddhism, it refers to their being ignorant of their own Buddha nature, and making no effort to develop it.

**heaven:** The term “heaven” indicates either the dwelling place of the heavenly gods or the gods themselves.

**mind:** The Japanese word “kokoro,” or “shin,” which is customarily translated as “mind” or “heart,” has no exact English equivalent, for it is a term that encompasses the whole of one’s mind, spirit, emotions, volition, and psyche. It can also indicate “life” as a psychosomatic entity. Thus, when one encounters the word mind or heart, one should understand it in its widest possible sense.

**punishment:** Buddhism expounds the principle of cause and effect. One receives either positive or negative results, depending on whether one’s actions have been good or bad. In Buddhism there is no transcendental being, such as a god or gods, who bestows rewards or inflicts punishment. The terms “punishment” and “punish” either indicate the retribution, or negative result, one incurs for one’s offenses, or communicate moral lessons.

**salvation, save:** “To save people” means to free them from sufferings, and enable them to become truly happy by leading them to enlightenment, or Buddhahood.

**school:** Various denominations of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism are mentioned by Nichiren Daishonin in his works. In the translation of Buddhist literature, the term “school” is generally used to refer to the denominations of both Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. We have followed this practice.

**sin:** The word “sin” is used in the same sense as the words “offense” and “crime.” To avoid misunderstanding that may arise from preconceived notions of the meaning of sin, we have used the term only when it is clear what offense it refers to, as, for example, “the sin of slander.”

**way:** The “way” means either the way to attain enlightenment or enlightenment itself. Thus, the Buddha way means either the practice to attain Buddhahood or Buddhahood itself. The bodhisattva way means the bodhisattva practice to attain enlightenment oneself and to lead others to that goal.

#### *Additional points*

The cyclical signs and divisions of the day, such as *kanoe-saru* and “the hour of the tiger,” warrant a brief explanation. They are based on an ancient system, originally Chinese, for counting days, months, and years, and for indicating directions and the time of day. The system consists of two ordered sets of Chinese characters, one of ten units called the ten stems, or trunks, and the other of twelve units called the twelve branches. The sets were used together in two-symbol combinations, with one from each set, to create a cycle of sixty signs, usually known as the sexagenary cycle, or Chinese zodiacal symbols. In counting years, the cycle was simply repeated endlessly. The twelve branches, written out clockwise around a circle and bearing the names of different animals, were also used to mark time in two-hour intervals. The hour of the rat, for instance, stood for the time between 11:00 P.M. and 1:00 A.M. See Appendix O for the names of the ten stems and twelve branches, the total cycle of sixty combinations, and the time intervals indicated by the twelve branches.

In reckoning a person’s age, the Japanese, from ancient times until as recently

as 1950, considered an infant to be one year old at birth, and added a year with the passing of each New Year's Day. All ages given in this book follow that system.

A reference should also be made here regarding quotations from Chinese Buddhist texts. Quotations from those texts often appear in the *Nichiren Daishonin gosho zenshu* (The Complete Works of Nichiren Daishonin) in abbreviated form, without any direct reference, for example, to the grammatical subject or tense of the passage. However, such passages have been rendered in English so that they may be understood clearly. To enhance readability the translators have sometimes chosen not to put their additions to the original in brackets.

The titles of all documents referred to by the Daishonin have been translated into English, with the exception of those that consist of the name of the place where the author lived, such as *Tung-ch'un* (the name of the place where the author, Chih-tu, lived). The Japanese titles of those documents are found in Appendix H. All titles are italicized, except for those of the sutras, which are in roman type. The titles of sutras that retain their Sanskrit names, such as the Susiddhikara Sutra, appear in romanized Sanskrit. *The Platform Sutra* and *The Teaching on Meditation Sutra*, however, are italicized because they are not actually sutras, but these written by Chinese Buddhists. A shortened form of many longer book titles is also used in the text. These are listed in Appendix G.

Additionally, most of the names of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, deities, and mythical personages mentioned by the Daishonin have been translated, many for the first time. The names of actual historical figures, such as Shakyamuni, Shariputra, and Nagarjuna, naturally remain unchanged. The names of Buddhist schools are also rendered in English. (Examples of the above: Many Treasures Buddha, Bodhisattva Superior Practices, the wisdom king Craving-Filled, and the True Word school.)

In attempting to translate proper names, however, there were some cases where the meaning of the Chinese original was unclear, or where the Sanskrit original was unknown, thus making an accurate translation impossible. In these cases the name is simply presented in romanized Japanese. (Examples: the kings Sen'yo and Dammira.)

All personal names are given according to the prevailing custom of their land of origin. Thus, with Japanese personal names, the family name comes first, and the given name, second. Minamoto no Yoritomo, for instance, is Yoritomo of the Minamoto family. Sometimes the second element in a name is an official title. In the name Shijo Kingo, for instance, Shijo is the family name, and Kingo, the title of the government office held by him. His given name is Yorimoto.

Almost all the Buddhist terms, such as *ichinen sanzen*, *sanzen jintengo*, and *gohyaku jintengo*, that have heretofore appeared only in Japanese have also been translated. Certain Japanese expressions that believers in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism have taken to quite naturally, however, were not translated because of their familiarity and suitability. Those include *daimoku*, *Gohonzon*, *shoju*, and *shakubuku*.

Also, some English Buddhist terms have been revised. The translations in this volume have been done over a nearly thirty year period, and in the interim there have inevitably been changes in the use and perception of the English language as well as improvements in our understanding of how to convey Buddhist concepts. Thus, for instance, "the object of worship" has been changed to "the

object of devotion,” and “the true entity of all phenomena” to “the true aspect of all phenomena.”

For the sake of easier reading, no Japanese, Chinese, or Sanskrit words have been italicized, with the exception of terms for measurements, such as the Japanese *cho*, *ri*, and *ryo*; cyclical signs, such as *kanoe-saru*; and component words of Myoho-renge-kyo, such as *myo*.

Additionally, no macrons or diacritical marks appear with Japanese or Sanskrit words. We felt that for many readers such marks would probably have little meaning, and might even make the words less accessible. Sanskrit words are listed with the elaborate diacritical marks demanded by strict Indology, and with their Japanese equivalents, in Appendix C. Chinese personal names have been romanized according to the traditional Wade-Giles system, and their pinyin equivalents can be seen in Appendix D.

Also for the reader's convenience, endnotes are sometimes repeated nearly verbatim so that there is no need to leaf through the book in search of information.

In accordance with recent developments in American English usage, instead of B.C. and A.D., B.C.E. and C.E. are employed in this volume.

A final word should be added concerning dates in the translation. In pre-modern times, Japan, like China, recorded dates based on the lunar calendar. Thus, the date of the Daishonin's birth is the sixteenth day of the second lunar month of 1222, which corresponds to April 6, 1222, on the Gregorian, or solar, calendar. New Year's Day on the lunar calendar, which was regarded as the beginning of the first month and of spring, varied from year to year, but always fell somewhere between what would have been January 21 and February 19 on the Gregorian calendar.

Because the months of the lunar year were shorter than those of the solar one, it was necessary to add an extra month at certain intervals so that the lunar year accurately reflected the seasons. Such a month is known as an intercalary month and occurred regularly about once every thirty-three months. In the translations, such months are indicated by the word “intercalary,” as in “the intercalary first month.”

In conclusion, we would like to mention that in the past scholars believed that Buddhism was officially introduced to Japan in either 538 or 552. In the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, perhaps in accordance with *The Chronicles of Japan*, the latter figure is used. Studies now identify the year conclusively as 538.