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*Re-Visioning
"Kamakura" Buddhism*

EDITED BY

Richard K. Payne

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To my teachers
Chisei Aratano and Taisen Miyata

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Chanting the August Title of the Lotus Sutra: Daimoku Practices in Classical and Medieval Japan

Jacqueline I. Stone

THE NEW BUDDHIST movements of the Kamakura period (1185–1333) are known for their emphasis on simple, widely accessible practices, based upon faith rather than doctrinal understanding or meditative insight and held to be particularly suited to the capacity of persons living in the degenerate, Final Dharma age (*mappō*). Often this emphasis on simple practices has been cited to support oversimplified descriptions of Kamakura Buddhism as a popular movement reacting against the excessively complex practices and elitism of the older Buddhist establishments. Although not wholly inaccurate, such descriptions need to be more carefully qualified.¹ The simple practices emerged too long before the Kamakura period to be considered exclusively characteristic of that age, and even during the Kamakura period itself, easy accessibility of the Buddhist path to uneducated common people represented only one of several reasons why simple practices came to be widely advocated. Tracing the evolution of such practices thus provides an important key to uncovering the complexities in the emergence of Kamakura Buddhism and reveals numerous points of continuity, as well as change, between older and newer religious forms.

Of the simple practices, chanting the *nembutsu* or name of the Buddha Amida (Skt. Amitābha) in the formula “Namu-Amida-butsu” has received the widest attention in the West. We have a general idea, for example, how this invocational or chanted *nembutsu* emerged alongside and gradually surpassed the visualization meditations and other contemplative forms of *nembutsu* being practiced within the Tendai sect during the Heian period (794–1185); how it was chanted by persons of every social rank, from court nobles hoping for birth

in Amida’s Pure Land to common people who were taught to chant it by wandering *hijiri*; how it was used for memorial prayers and as a protection against vengeful ghosts and other evils; and how it was eventually elevated to the status of an exclusive practice by Hōnen (1133–1212), who deemed it the sole gate of salvation in the Final Dharma age.² Less well understood, however, is the evolution of another, structurally similar simple practice—that of chanting the *daimoku* or title of the *Lotus Sutra*. This essay will explore how the practice emerged and developed and what the emergence and development of the practice may contribute to our knowledge of Kamakura Buddhism.

Unlike the invocational *nembutsu*, the chanting of the *daimoku* seems to have had few if any Chinese precedents.³ In Japan, as is well known, chanting the title of the *Lotus Sutra* in the formula “Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō” was advocated by Nichiren (1222–1282), one of the leading figures in the new Kamakura Buddhist movements. *Myōhō-rengē-kyō* is the Japanese pronunciation of *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* (Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Wondrous Dharma, T. 262.9:1–62), Kumārajīva’s superb translation of the *Lotus Sutra* done in 406 and revered as authoritative throughout East Asia. *Namu* is a transliteration of the Sanskrit *namo-* (from *namas*) and expresses devotion, veneration, praise, or the taking of refuge—in this case, with respect to the *Lotus Sutra*. Today, the *daimoku* is chanted almost exclusively by adherents of the various denominations of Nichiren Buddhism or by members of those new religions that claim some link with Nichiren’s teaching.⁴ So closely is this practice associated with Nichiren’s name that he is often assumed to have initiated it. This assumption may have been strengthened by traditional Nichiren hagiography, which relates how, on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth lunar month in the fifth year of Kenchō (1253), on the morning of his first public sermon, Nichiren rose before dawn, climbed Mt. Kasagamori in Awa province and, facing eastward over the Pacific Ocean toward the rising sun, chanted “Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō!” for the first time.⁵ Many people, both Nichiren Buddhists and others as well, have evidently understood this as meaning not only the “first time” Nichiren himself chanted the *daimoku* but the “first time” it was ever voiced by anyone. However, as we shall see, Nichiren himself did not claim to have originated the practice of chanting the *Lotus Sutra*’s title, and in fact insisted that Buddhist masters of the past had chanted it before him. Although Nichiren’s specific claims about his predecessors may be open to qualification, Japanese scholarship in recent decades has established that Nichiren’s practice of chanting the *daimoku* did indeed have antecedents. Moreover, within the early Nichiren community, this practice was understood variously, and not always in ways

that accorded with what is considered orthodox doctrine by the major Nichiren denominations today. This essay will explore some aspects of the origins and development of the practice of chanting the *daimoku* in medieval Japan. The first part will deal with this practice as it existed before Nichiren, assessing the current state of Japanese scholarship on this subject. The second part will examine the question of how the chanting of the *daimoku* was understood within the early Nichiren community.

The *Daimoku* outside the Nichiren Context

In this section, we will consider two types of evidence that shed light on *daimoku* practice outside the context of Nichiren and his community. First we will examine a discussion of the practice of chanting the *daimoku* that occurs in the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, an apocryphal work in four fascicles attributed to the Japanese Tendai founder Saichō (767–822). This text, the focus of much modern scholarly controversy, was in premodern times widely thought to have been known to Nichiren and to have influenced his formulation of the *daimoku* practice. Then we will turn to a consideration of several widely scattered references to the chanting or other uses of the *daimoku* before Nichiren's time.

The *Shuzenji-ketsu* Controversy

The *Shuzenji-ketsu* ([Doctrinal] Decisions of Hsiu-ch'an-ssu)⁶ was the first text to draw modern scholarly attention to the possibility of pre-Nichiren origins for the practice of chanting the *Lotus Sutra's* title. The *Shuzenji-ketsu* purports to be a record of various transmissions received by Saichō during his journey to China, chiefly from Tao-sui at the temple Hsiu-cha'n-ssu on Mt. T'ien-t'ai. It belongs to the genre known as *kuden hōmon* or orally transmitted doctrines, texts systematizing medieval Tendai doctrines informed by notions of original enlightenment (*hongaku*). It is thought to represent an early stage in the development of the "great matters of the threefold seven categories" (*sarjū shichika no daiji*)—the four broad categories of transmission and three abbreviated transmissions—that systematize the orally transmitted doctrines of the Eshin school of medieval Tendai Buddhism.⁷ It also presents the most detailed discussion of the practice of chanting the *daimoku* to appear in any known medieval text outside the corpus of works belonging to the Nichiren tradition. Other medieval Tendai texts appear possibly to refer to the practice of chanting the *Lotus Sutra's* title, but these notices are for the most part brief and unclear.⁸ The *Shuzenji-ketsu*, in contrast, dis-

cusses the *daimoku* at some length and offers a doctrinal explanation for this practice. Like most of the Tendai *kuden* literature, it is virtually impossible to date with accuracy; estimates range from the mid-eleventh to the beginning of the fourteenth century. Because this text for a long time represented the sole unambiguous reference to the practice of chanting the *daimoku* outside of Nichiren Buddhism, its dating became a focus of considerable controversy between scholars of the Tendai and Nichiren sects. At stake were the issues of who had initiated this practice and how far Nichiren had been influenced by the Tendai establishment of his day, with which he had supposedly broken. Here let us first look at what the *Shuzenji-ketsu* has to say about chanting the *daimoku* and then summarize the controversy surrounding it, considering the implications of proposed datings.

Several passages in the *Shuzenji-ketsu* discuss the chanting of the *daimoku*. The first occurs in the context of an extended discussion of the threefold contemplation in a single mind (*isshin sangan*), a central meditation of Tendai Buddhism whereby one contemplates in terms of a single thought-moment the unity of the three truths of emptiness, provisional existence, and the middle. According to the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, the method of this meditation should be varied in accordance with three distinct temporal contexts: special times, ordinary times, and the hour of death.⁹ Concerning the last of these, it states,

The practice of this [deathbed] rite does not resemble the form of meditation for ordinary times. When one faces his end and the pain of dissolution comes upon him suddenly and wracks his body, his spiritual faculties are blunted, so that he is unable to discern things clearly. What will your learning in ordinary times avail you, if in your dying moments you fail to carry out the essential practice necessary for liberation? Therefore at this stage, one should practice the threefold contemplation in a single mind as encompassed in the Dharma container (*hōgu*). The "threefold contemplation in a single mind as encompassed in the Dharma container" is precisely Myōhō-enge-kyō. . . . At the time of death, one should chant Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō. Through the workings of the three powers of the Wondrous Dharma [subsequently explained in considerable detail as the powers of the Dharma, the Buddha, and faith], one shall at once attain enlightened wisdom and will not receive a body bound by birth and death.¹⁰

Here we see that the *daimoku* is (1) presented as a practice uniquely appropriate to one's final moments; (2) defined as a "meditation container," whose recitation is equal to the threefold contemplation in a single mind; and (3) associated with faith. The latter two aspects

suggest similarities with the teaching of Nichiren, who regarded the chanting of the *daimoku* as equivalent to meditative discipline and grounded it in faith. There is no evidence, however, that Nichiren recommended the *daimoku* as a practice specifically for the time of death, in the manner of the *Shuzenji-ketsu*.¹¹

A second relevant passage of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* similarly presents the chanting of the *daimoku* as a simple form of another traditional Tendai meditation, in this case, the contemplation of “the single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms” (*ichinen sanzen*)—standard Tendai terminology for the interpenetration and identification of the mind (“single thought-moment”) and all dharmas (“three thousand realms”). This meditation, like the threefold contemplation in a single mind, is interpreted by the *Shuzenji-ketsu* in terms of the three temporal contexts of special times, ordinary times, and the time of death. Here, again, the contemplation of the single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms to be practiced at the hour of death is identified as “Myōhō-enge-kyō.” “At the time of death,” the text reads, “one should chant Myōhō-enge-kyō with a concentrated mind.”¹² It also describes a practice in preparation for death in which one recites certain brief passages from the *Lotus Sutra* one thousand times, invokes the name of the bodhisattva Kannon (Skt. Avalokiteśvara) one thousand times while profoundly contemplating the bodhisattva, and also chants the title of the *Lotus Sutra* one thousand times.¹³

A third passage mentions the *daimoku* in the course of describing practice “possessing concrete form” (*usō*). Like the first passage cited above, it presents the chanting of the *daimoku* as a simplified form of the threefold contemplation in a single mind. It also associates the *daimoku* with specific objects of worship (*honzon*):

The transmission concerning the Master [Tao-sui]’s profound and secret method of practice states, “You should make pictures of images representing the ten realms [of beings] and enshrine them in ten places. Facing each image, you should, one hundred times, bow [with your body], chant Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō with your mouth, and contemplate with your mind. When you face the image of hell, contemplate that its fierce flames are themselves precisely emptiness, precisely provisional existence, and precisely the middle, and so on for all the images. When you face the image of the Buddha, contemplate its essence being precisely the threefold truth. You should carry out this practice for one time period in the morning and one time period in the evening.”¹⁴ The Great Teacher [Chih-i] secretly conferred this Dharma essential for the

[beings of] dull faculties in the the last age. If one wishes to escape from birth and death and attain *bodhi*, then first he should employ this practice.¹⁵

This passage, too, offers some intriguing parallels to Nichiren’s thought. Its reference to the ten images suggests the calligraphic mandala devised by Nichiren, on which the names of representatives of all ten realms of beings are inscribed as manifestations of the true aspect of reality, represented by “Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō” written down the mandala’s center. It also associates the chanting of the *daimoku* with the last age, as Nichiren did.

Today most scholars agree that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* is not Saichō’s work. Like many Tendai texts of the medieval period, it was retrospectively ascribed to a great teacher of the past. But if not Saichō, then who did write it, and when? At what period in time were Japanese Buddhists chanting the title of the *Lotus Sutra* at the hour of their death, as this text prescribes? Does the *Shuzenji-ketsu* predate Nichiren, and if so, did Nichiren read it? Did it influence him in formulating his teachings concerning the *daimoku* and the mandala? Or is it a later work, representing a borrowing of Nichiren’s ideas back into the Tendai tradition from which he had emerged? Or—yet a third possibility—did the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and Nichiren’s thought emerge independently, perhaps drawing on a common source or sources? These questions have provoked heated argument and have yet to evoke scholarly consensus.

In premodern times, when the *Shuzenji-ketsu* was still held to be Saichō’s work, many scholars within the Nichiren sect evidently assumed that Nichiren had drawn on it in developing his thought. They were no doubt confirmed in this opinion by the fact that two works in the corpus of writings attributed to Nichiren refer to the *Shuzenji-ketsu* by name.¹⁶ The three abbreviated transmissions of the Eshin school mentioned in the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and other medieval Tendai texts—concerning, respectively, the triple-bodied *tathāgata* of the perfect teaching, the causality the *Lotus*, and the Land of Ever-Quiescent Light—were sometimes identified in premodern Nichiren denominational scholarship with the Three Great Secret Dharmas that Nichiren had set forth as the core of his teaching: the object of worship, the *daimoku*, and the *kaidan* or ordination platform.¹⁷

The first to challenge Saichō’s authorship appears to have been Shinchō (1596–1659), originally a priest of the Nichiren sect who converted to Tendai Buddhism and seems to have entertained rather acrimonious feelings toward his former affiliation. In his *Kindan Nichiren gi* (Repudiating the Nichiren Doctrine), Shinchō denounced

the *Shuzenji-ketsu* as a forgery and criticized doctrinal interpretations put forth by the Nichiren sect that were based upon it.¹⁸

In contrast to Shinchō's view, other, later Tendai scholars stoutly maintained Saichō's authorship of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and argued on this basis that Nichiren Buddhism owed its central practice—chanting the *daimoku*—to the founder of their own, Tendai sect. "In no respect is this a counterfeit writing," wrote Keikō (1740–1795) of the Jimon branch of Tendai. Noting that the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, like Nichiren's writings, advocates the chanting of the *daimoku* as a practice embodying the essence of all sutras, he added, "There is no doubt about it, Nichiren's school represents a branching off of the above-mentioned transmission [i.e., the *Shuzenji-ketsu*]."¹⁹ Buddhist scholar Maeda Eun (1857–1930), while not personally affiliated with the Tendai sect, also upheld Saichō's authorship of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and cited Keikō's earlier observation to underscore what he saw as the essentially derivative nature of Nichiren doctrine. "Even the chanting of the *daimoku*, the essential point underlying the founding of that [Nichiren] sect, had already been demonstrated by Master Saichō,"²⁰ he wrote.

The first scholar to consider the *Shuzenji-ketsu* in the light of modern textual methodology was Shimaji Daitō (1875–1927). Recognizing it to be apocryphal, Shimaji offered one of the earliest attempts at dating this text. In an essay published in 1922,²¹ he suggested connections between the Pure Land thought of the Heian period and the *daimoku* practice recommended in the *Shuzenji-ketsu*. The *Shuzenji-ketsu*, Shimaji pointed out, especially recommended the *daimoku* as a deathbed practice and stressed the importance of faith. In this, he said, it resembled the Pure Land thought expressed in the famous *Ōjōyōshū* (Essentials of Birth [in the Pure Land]) by the Tendai prelate Genshin (942–1017), a work that had played a significant role in the popularization of Amidist belief and practice. The *Ōjōyōshū* mentions the possibility of salvation simply by chanting the *nembutsu* with faith in Amida, and also emphasizes the soteriological significance of chanting the *nembutsu* during one's dying moments. Moreover, as the *Shuzenji-ketsu* does with the meditation on the mind, it distinguishes three temporal contexts for *nembutsu* practice—ordinary times, special times, and the time of death.²²

After comparing the *Shuzenji-ketsu* with other medieval Tendai oral transmission literature, Shimaji placed its composition between about 1060 and 1128—that is, between the end of the main Fujiwara period (897–1086) and the beginning of the Insei or Cloister government period (1086–1185).²³ This would definitely place the *Shuzenji-ketsu* before Nichiren, and Shimaji does not appear to have questioned that Nichiren would have been aware of this text. Never-

theless, he pointed out what he saw as significant differences in how the *daimoku* was conceptualized in the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and in Nichiren's teaching. For example, where the *Shuzenji-ketsu* presents the *daimoku* within a framework similar to notions of achieving birth in the Pure Land, Nichiren interpreted it in terms of attaining Buddhahood in this very body (*sokushin jōbutsu*). The *Shuzenji-ketsu* advocates chanting the *daimoku* as a practice specifically intended for the hour of death, while Nichiren regarded it as the fundamental practice to be conducted at all times. Also, where the *Shuzenji-ketsu* appears to regard the *daimoku* as a lesser, accommodated practice, Nichiren saw it as the highest form of practice, embodying the Buddha's ultimate teaching. Shimaji also noted two further distinctions that, in his view, should be drawn between Nichiren's teaching and medieval Tendai thought in general, including the *Shuzenji-ketsu*: (1) medieval Tendai represents a mixture of exoteric and esoteric doctrines and meditative practices, while Nichiren stressed exclusive devotion to the *Lotus*, and (2) where Tendai thought tends to place greater emphasis on doctrinal understanding and meditative insight, Nichiren established his practice of the *daimoku* on the basis of faith alone.²⁴

In Shimaji's opinion, an immediate and significant influence on Nichiren's particular interpretation of the *daimoku* was the exclusive invocational *nembutsu* taught by Hōnen (1133–1212), founder of the Japanese Jōdo or Pure Land sect. Though Nichiren criticized Hōnen's doctrine harshly, the practices of these two teachers showed striking similarities, in that both recommended the repeated chanting, based upon faith, of a single phrase, held to contain the essence of the Buddha's teaching and to open salvation to all men and women equally in the Final Dharma age. Several scholars have commented upon the possible influence of Hōnen on Nichiren's thought in this regard.²⁵ Shimaji argued that Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū*, which recommended both meditative and invocational forms of the *nembutsu*, might be likened to the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, which links the *daimoku* with meditative practices, while Hōnen's advocacy of the single-practice *nembutsu* based upon faith alone no doubt stimulated Nichiren in developing his own interpretation of the *daimoku*.

Although Shimaji departed from scholars such as Keikō and Maeda in recognizing that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* was not Saichō's work, he, too, judged that it predated Nichiren. Unlike Keikō and Maeda, Shimaji did not suggest that Nichiren owed his ideas about the *daimoku* solely to the *Shuzenji-ketsu*. Nevertheless, despite the differences he pointed out between the *Shuzenji-ketsu*'s interpretation of the *daimoku* and Nichiren's, or between medieval Tendai thought and Nichiren's thought in general, Shimaji on the whole regarded Nichiren's doctrine as essentially a continuation of the Eshin school of medieval

Tendai.²⁶ Thus he concurred at least to some extent with Keikō and Maeda in assuming a strong influence from medieval Tendai on Nichiren's thought.

In the last several decades, certain scholars within the Nichiren sect have vehemently opposed such views, at least in part, it appears, because the presumption that Nichiren drew upon the *Shuzenji-ketsu* in developing his ideas about the *daimoku* has seemed to them to compromise Nichiren's originality and underscore his indebtedness to the parent, Tendai tradition. Among the first to deny a connection between the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and Nichiren was Asai Yōrin (1883–1942), professor at the Nichirenshū-affiliated Risshō University and a pioneer in applying the techniques of modern textual studies to the Nichiren canon. Asai insisted that Keikō, Maeda, Shimaji, and all others who maintained that Nichiren had been influenced by the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, or by the medieval Tendai oral transmission literature in general, were in error. Such scholars had wrongly assumed that the essence of Nichiren's doctrine was expressed by those works in the Nichiren corpus reflecting the influence of medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought. However, Asai argued, these works—including the two that mention the *Shuzenji-ketsu* by name—were not written by Nichiren at all; rather, they represent the forgeries of later disciples who, influenced by their study on Mt. Hiei or at Tendai centers in eastern Japan, had incorporated Tendai original enlightenment thought into their understanding of Nichiren's teaching.²⁷ Asai claimed that Nichiren had drawn solely on the pure, orthodox T'ien-t'ai/Tendai Buddhism of the Chinese T'ien-t'ai founder Chih-i (538–597), the sixth T'ien-t'ai patriarch and restorer Chan-jan (711–782), and the founder of Japanese Tendai, Saichō, repudiating the medieval Tendai of his own day with its admixture of esoteric and Amidist elements. The *Shuzenji-ketsu*, Asai said,

represents a jumbled doctrine that mixes esoteric thought, ideas of birth in the Pure Land, meditation, and the *daimoku*. . . . It would be strange if [Nichiren] Shōnin, who based himself on a pure doctrine of the *Lotus Sutra*, would have acknowledged the *Shuzenji-ketsu*—with its mixture of *Lotus*, esoteric, and Amidist elements—as a work embodying the “inner meaning of the Tendai sect.”²⁸

Asai's contributions to the critical textual study of the Nichiren canon are enormous, but his project of isolating a “pure” Nichiren doctrine, untouched by medieval Tendai influences, suggests a sectarian interestedness in establishing Nichiren's intellectual independence from the medieval Tendai tradition.

Asai contented himself with arguing against a connection between Nichiren's thought and that of medieval Tendai underlying the *Shu-*

zenji-ketsu; he did not speculate about when the *Shuzenji-ketsu* had been written. That remained for his disciple Shigyō Kaishū (1907–1968), who estimated that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* had been compiled about the middle or late Kamakura period—that is, somewhere between the mid thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. This would place it at approximately the time that Nichiren was active, or perhaps slightly earlier or later. A date of composition roughly contemporary with Nichiren would of course make it less likely that he had read and been influenced by the *Shuzenji-ketsu* than if this text had existed since the later Heian period. Shigyō in fact went so far as to assert that the new Kamakura Buddhist movements, Nichiren's included, had not developed out of the Tendai original enlightenment thought seen in the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and other oral transmission texts, as Shimaji and other scholars of medieval Japanese Buddhism had claimed; rather, mature Tendai original enlightenment thought had developed in response to and in competition with the new Kamakura Buddhist movements.²⁹ This suggestion of Shigyō's remained in the realm of speculation, however, as he offered no concrete evidence to support it.³⁰

A more convincing argument for assigning the *Shuzenji-ketsu* a date contemporary with or after Nichiren has been offered by the late Tamura Yoshirō (1921–1989), a specialist in Kamakura Buddhist thought and the history of interpretation of the *Lotus Sutra*. Like Asai and Shigyō, Tamura attempted to draw clear lines of demarcation between Tendai original enlightenment discourse and the interpretation of that doctrine in the thought of Nichiren and other new Kamakura Buddhist teachers, but he pursued this task in a more historically grounded and less polemical fashion than these earlier scholars. Tamura accepted Shigyō Kaishū's proposed date of mid-to-late Kamakura for the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, but, unlike Shigyō, supported it with a strong argument. Basing his decision on a detailed comparative study of a number of medieval Tendai texts, Tamura proposed a tentative periodicization of six stages in the development and systematization of Tendai original enlightenment thought over the years from 1100 to 1400, assigning specific texts to different stages. Because the *Shuzenji-ketsu* is one of the earliest known texts to enumerate all of the threefold seven categories of transmission into which the original enlightenment doctrine was eventually systematized by the Eshin school, Tamura assigned it to the fourth stage in his periodicization, or 1250 to 1300, the period during which he believed that the system of the threefold seven categories was fully elaborated. However, he also noted that, whereas the four broad categories of transmission are discussed in detail in the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, the three abbreviated transmissions are merely mentioned by name. He there-

fore surmised that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* belongs to an early part of this stage.³¹ The *Shuzenji-ketsu*, in Tamura's opinion, could conceivably represent an incorporation of Nichiren's *daimoku* into a Tendai text, though he did not strongly argue the case.³² Among those claiming a date for the *Shuzenji-ketsu* contemporary with or after Nichiren, Tamura's argument remains the best substantiated.

Other scholars, however, still maintain—with minor qualifications of Shimaji Daitō's dating—that this text should be assigned to the later Heian. The most intriguing suggestion in this regard has been advanced by Buddhist historian Takagi Yutaka (1928–),³³ who adopts for the sake of discussion the premise that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* dates from around the Cloister government period. Takagi points out that the use of the *daimoku* as a deathbed practice, recommended in the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, resonates with the tremendous concern for dying in a ritually correct manner that strongly engaged Japanese Buddhists of the later Heian. From about the tenth century on, Buddhist belief that one's dying thoughts exercise a determinative effect on one's fate after death gave rise to specific deathbed practices, aimed at enabling one to face death with a calm and properly focused mind, thus escaping the round of transmigration and achieving birth in the Pure Land. Such practices are described in the many *Ōjō den* or "accounts of those born in the Pure Land" that were compiled during this period. After examining the accounts in eight collections of such tales compiled between 951 and 1153, Takagi determined that the chief of these deathbed practices was the invocational *nembutsu*, which evidently gained considerable impetus from its use in the deathbed setting. A less widespread form of deathbed practice attested to in the *Ōjō den* was reciting the *Lotus Sutra* or individual chapters, verses, or phrases from the sutra. Those performing these *Lotus*-related deathbed practices appear to have usually been *jikyōsha*—literally, "one who holds the sutra"—devotees of the *Lotus*, often monks and *hijiri* but also including lay persons, who relied on the *Lotus Sutra* and recited it as their personal practice. Takagi's research did not unearth any accounts of individuals who chanted the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sutra* in their dying moments as the *Shuzenji-ketsu* recommends. Nevertheless, several *Ōjō den* describe the chanting of short verse sections or even briefer passages from the sutra, a practice that Takagi sees as a possible precursor to use of the *daimoku* in this setting.

As a deathbed practice, Takagi notes, the *nembutsu* would have had major advantages over *Lotus Sutra* recitation. First, it would have been widely accessible, especially to those unable to read the sutra or to acquire a copy of it. This accessibility has always been a point that recommended the invocational *nembutsu* among the common people,

for practice at ordinary times as well as at the hour of death. Second, whether the dying individual chanted many *nembutsu* or few, it could still be said of that person that he or she died chanting the Buddha's name, an exemplary manner of death. Sutra recitation, however, would have carried the risk that one might die in mid-sentence or mid-chapter, a death that one imagines might well have been considered unaesthetic or even inauspicious. Such a possibility would have rendered this practice less suitable than the *nembutsu* for deathbed use. The *daimoku*, however, would not have had this drawback. Takagi suggests that the chanting of the *daimoku* as a deathbed practice may have emerged as a response on the part of *Lotus* devotees to the use of the chanted *nembutsu* in the deathbed setting. The *Shuzenji-ketsu* would then represent a doctrinally systematized explanation of a practice that certain individuals were in fact already carrying out. Takagi upholds Shimaji's conclusion that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* was stimulated by the strand of Pure Land thought represented in the *Ōjō-yōshū*, which also divides practice into three temporal contexts and stresses the importance of specific deathbed observances. Both of these texts and the ideas they represent, he suggests, emerged from the same intellectual environment.

One important question that Takagi briefly touches upon but does not discuss in detail is why people would have felt a need for deathbed practices specifically related to the *Lotus Sutra*, such as the *Shuzenji-ketsu* describes, rather than simply chanting the *nembutsu*. As many scholars have pointed out, the Buddhism of the Heian period united faith in the *Lotus Sutra* with aspirations for Amida's Pure Land, *Lotus* and Amidist elements being seen as perfectly harmonious and complementary. Monks at the great Tendai center on Mt. Hiei and other practitioners as well often conducted *Lotus* repentance rituals or other *Lotus*-related practices in the morning and Amidist observances at night—a custom that in later times came to be called "daimoku in the morning, *nembutsu* in the evening," although at the time of which we speak, the *Lotus* practices in question do not appear to have entailed chanting the *daimoku* itself.³⁴ Even the *Lotus*-based deathbed rites that Takagi describes were conducted with the aim of achieving birth in Amida's Pure Land, so it would seem as though the *nembutsu* should have sufficed for deathbed purposes. It has been widely observed that Buddhist practice of the Heian period, which generally combined devotion to Amida with *Lotus Sutra*-related observances ("one Buddha, one sutra," as historian Kawazoe Shōji terms it), was first broken by Hōnen's teaching of exclusive reliance on the *nembutsu*.³⁵ However, we should also note that even earlier, there were at least some individuals who, though they may not have made exclusive claims, nevertheless relied solely

on the *Lotus Sutra*, even in the hour of death. Ienaga Saburō has in fact suggested that the posture of those among the *jikyōsha* who recited the *Lotus* as their only religious discipline may have contributed to Nichiren's advocacy of the *daimoku* as an exclusive practice.³⁶

Takagi's hypothesis about the *Shuzenji-ketsu's* connection to Heian-period deathbed practices has yet to be confirmed, as he has found no independent evidence of anyone at that time chanting the *daimoku* in their last hours.³⁷ Nevertheless, especially when considered together with the similarities that Shimaji Daitō pointed out between the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and the *Ōjōyōshū*, it remains a plausible argument for dating the *Shuzenji-ketsu* before the Kamakura period.

Another recent contribution to the debate over the *Shuzenji-ketsu* has come from Hanano Michiaki, who, endorsing Takagi's views, holds that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* dates from around the latter part of the Cloister government period and influenced Nichiren's thought.³⁸ It is most unlikely, in Hanano's view, that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* represents either a reverse influence from the Nichiren sect on the Tendai tradition from which it had emerged or an apocryphon produced by Nichiren's later disciples. He argues that the monks of Mt. Hiei—rooted as they were in the aristocracy and valuing the direct transmission of teachings from master to disciple—would scarcely have been open to influences from the Nichiren sect, which had its social and economic base among a considerably lower class of people. Hanano also points out that Nichiren's later followers on the whole maintained his stance of exclusive devotion to the *Lotus Sutra*. It is unlikely, he argues—and his point here is well taken—that they would have forged something as eclectic as the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, which combines devotion to the *Lotus* with Amidist and esoteric elements.³⁹ In Hanano's estimation, the *Shuzenji-ketsu* is almost certainly the work of Tendai monks.

Another contributor to the debate is Takahashi Ken'yū, who points out discrepancies between the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and authenticated works of Saichō with regard to the chronology of Saichō's studies in China.⁴⁰ Takahashi argues that Nichiren—who, judging from his extant writings, revered Saichō and was familiar with the facts of his biography—would therefore have immediately recognized the *Shuzenji-ketsu* as a forgery and rejected it out of hand. However, misdating of the events of Saichō's journey to China is very common in medieval Tendai *kuden* texts and may have been done deliberately by the compilers to convey some tacit meaning—perhaps to distinguish these later documents from authentic writings of Saichō.⁴¹ Nichiren did indeed have a keen eye for textual problems and would probably have noticed the discrepancy in dates, but we cannot be certain what it would have signified to him or assume that he would have rejected the *Shuzenji-ketsu* solely on this account.

The above discussion by no means exhausts the opinions that have been put forward concerning the date of the *Shuzenji-ketsu*,⁴² but it will have served to establish the outlines of the debate. In sum, the major arguments are (1) that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* predates Nichiren and to a greater or lesser extent contributed to the formation of his teaching about the *daimoku*; or (2) that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* was composed during or after Nichiren's time, either by Tendai monks who appropriated the Nichiren Buddhist *daimoku* practice or by later disciples of Nichiren. It is also possible that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and Nichiren's *daimoku* practice emerged independently, connected only through some earlier, common source(s). In this case, one could imagine that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* either predates Nichiren or is roughly contemporary with him but that he was unaware of it, or that it was composed about the same time as Nichiren or later but did not draw on his teaching. In any event, two major issues emerge here: the chronology of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* (as well as the problem of its authorship), and its influence, if any, on Nichiren's *daimoku*.

As we have seen, the *Shuzenji-ketsu* cannot as yet be dated with certainty. Sound arguments have been advanced for placing it in either the late Heian or the mid-Kamakura period. It may be that further studies of medieval Tendai documents will shed light on this issue. For it does seem, on balance, that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* is far more likely to be a Tendai text than a Nichirenist apocryphon. Apart from its references to the *daimoku*, its content is much closer to medieval Tendai thought than to Nichiren doctrine, and, as Hanano Michiaki has argued, if Nichiren's later disciples had wished to produce a document legitimizing their *daimoku* practice by linking it with Saichō, they would probably have written something more reflective of Nichiren's emphasis on exclusive devotion to the *Lotus Sutra* than the *Shuzenji-ketsu*.⁴³ It is conceivable, perhaps, that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* may represent an incorporation of Nichiren's *daimoku* into the medieval Tendai tradition. Both in Nichiren's lifetime and after his death, many of his disciples, some of whom had originally been Tendai monks, studied at or retained ties with Tendai institutions. However, although we have evidence that such connections resulted in the introduction of medieval Tendai doctrines into Nichiren thought, scholarship has thus far uncovered little indication of reverse appropriation, from Nichiren doctrine into Tendai. And, as we shall see from the next section, the author(s) of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* could have derived the *daimoku* from sources other than Nichiren's followers. Thus, although the "reverse influence" theory of the *Shuzenji-ketsu's* references to the *daimoku* is not impossible, it awaits the support of concrete evidence.

In short, the date and authorship of this important text remain a mystery. So does the question of its influence, if any, upon Nichiren.

One should note, however, that even if the *Shuzenji-ketsu* should predate him, that does not necessarily mean that he read it. If the two writings in the corpus of Nichiren's work that refer to the *Shuzenji-ketsu* by name should be apocryphal, then we have no concrete evidence connecting Nichiren with this text. Even if these writings are in fact genuine, it is worth noting that they are dated 1280, two years before Nichiren's death and long after he had established his *daimoku* practice. Significantly, perhaps, the *Shuzenji-ketsu* is not mentioned in any of his extant early works of the 1250s and 1260s, when he first began advocating the chanting of the *daimoku*. For example, in a personal letter dated 1264, he urges a lay follower to "simply chant Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō, as Bodhisattva Tenjin [Vasubandhu] and the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai [Chih-i] did."⁴⁴ This was at a period in his life when Nichiren still very much considered himself a follower of Saichō. Had he been familiar with the *Shuzenji-ketsu* at this time, it seems likely that he would have mentioned Saichō here as well.

There is room, then, to question the traditional view that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* itself directly influenced Nichiren in his thinking about the *daimoku*. Nevertheless, Nichiren began his religious career as a Tendai monk, and it is possible that, in his early studies as a young man on Mt. Hiei or through his later association with other Tendai clerics, he might have heard of the ideas and practices described in the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and incorporated them into his thinking. As we shall see below, recent scholarship has uncovered abundant evidence for the use of the *daimoku*—though not its exclusive use—before Nichiren's time. Thus the question of his familiarity with preexisting *daimoku* practices no longer hinges solely on the date of the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, a fact that has somewhat blunted the polemical edge of the long controversy over this text.

The Daimoku before Nichiren

The formidable difficulties in dating the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and other medieval Tendai texts—including those that seem to hint at *daimoku* practices—mean that these documents cannot tell us with certainty when the practice of chanting the *Lotus Sutra*'s title emerged. They can only suggest that it may have been conducted independently of the Nichiren tradition. In recent decades, however, scholarship based on other kinds of documents has shed some light on this issue, demonstrating that the *daimoku* was indeed being chanted before the Kamakura period, though at that time it was neither uniform nor widespread.

One of the first to note early references to chanting the *daimoku*

was Ienaga Saburō (1913–), who in 1947 published evidence of this practice that he had found in *Ōjō den* and sermon collections dating from the mid-Heian period.⁴⁵ Ienaga discovered the following three examples. First, the *Shūi ōjō den* (compiled early twelfth century) devotes a section to one Tachibana no Morisuke (d. 1096), who "every evening faced the West and, placing his palms together in reverence, chanted the name of [A]mida and recited the title of the *Lotus Sutra*."⁴⁶ Two other examples come from the early Cloister government period, in the form of tales or *setsuwa* related in the *Hokke hyakuza kikigakishō*, a partial record of three hundred-day series of lectures on the *Lotus Sutra* held in 1110 in accordance with the vow of a daughter of the retired emperor Go-Sanjō. The record of the lecture given on the fourth day of the third month relates the story of a slow-witted novice monk in Sui-dynasty China who, being unable to read the *Lotus Sutra*, was taught to recite only the title. "From the moment the bell struck at dawn until nightfall, he chanted only 'Namu-ichijō-myōhō-rence-kyō [Namu to the one vehicle, the Sutra of the Lotus Blossom of the Wondrous Dharma].'" In his shame at being unable to read the sutra, he threw himself from a high crag. Thereupon he fell into hell, where horse- and ox-headed demons thrust him into a kettle. Hearing their iron staves strike the kettle, he mistook the sound for the temple bell. "I am being negligent," he thought, and, raising his voice, chanted 'Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō.'" At once the kettle broke, the boiling water in the kettle was transformed into a clear, cool lake, and he and everyone were seated on lotus blossoms. After having questioned the monk and heard his story, Yama, the king of hell, "rejoiced greatly and prostrated himself in reverence, saying, 'Go back and chant the title of the *Lotus Sutra* all the more,'" and the monk was restored to life.⁴⁷

The record of the lecture given on the twenty-sixth day of the Sixth Month also relates how chanting the *daimoku* effected a miraculous escape from hell. This story concerns one Sun-chū, a native of Wen-chou, of whom we are told that "there was no evil he didn't commit." Sun-chū made fun of a mendicant monk who was devoted to the *Lotus* by screwing up his mouth and chanting "Myōhō-rence-kyō" in mocking imitation of the monk. But when Sun-chū died and fell into hell, King Yama declared that, although Sun-chū had appeared to be an extremely evil man, he had in fact performed an immense good deed. "Never yet has a person who chanted 'Myōhō-rence-kyō' a single time, whether in mockery or in earnestness, ever fallen into hell," King Yama said. 'Go back to the *sahā* [world] and embrace the *Lotus Sutra* with greater devotion.'⁴⁸

In these examples, the chanting of the *daimoku* has not yet emerged as an independent practice in its own right and is seen as

inferior to reciting the sutra itself. Nevertheless, these tales reflect a belief that the potency of the *Lotus Sutra* was such that even invoking its name was sufficient to redeem human ignorance and evil.

Ienaga gives further examples suggesting that by the latter Heian period, people had come to regard the sutra as an object of devotion whose beneficent power could be invoked in much the same way as that of a buddha or bodhisattva. The *Eiga Monogatari* records that when his son Yorimichi lay critically ill, troubled by possessing spirits, the powerful courtier Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1027) cried, “May the *Lotus Sutra* that I have served these many years help me!”⁴⁹ The *Konjaku Monogatari* tells of a *jikyōsha* who, when assaulted by robbers on the way back from a pilgrimage to Mt. Mitake, called out three times, “*Lotus Sutra*, save me!”⁵⁰ The same collection also contains the tale of a former wet nurse who out of compassion took charge of an infant whose mother could not feed it. Placing her withered breast into the baby’s mouth, she prayed earnestly throughout the night, “May the *Lotus Sutra* that I have read these many years help me!” whereupon her breasts at once filled with milk.⁵¹ One can easily imagine how those looking to the *Lotus Sutra* as a source of help and protection would have found in the *daimoku* a convenient form by which to invoke its aid.

The most detailed research to date on the origins of the *daimoku* has been done by Takagi Yutaka, mentioned above in connection with his suggestions regarding the *Shuzenji-ketsu*. Takagi’s work on the origins of the *daimoku* in the Heian period is so vital to understanding the history of this practice that we shall devote the remainder of this section to summarizing it.⁵² Building upon Ienaga’s findings, Takagi has demonstrated that the words “*Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō*” or similar expressions of devotion to the *Lotus Sutra* first appeared in formulaic expressions of devotion to the three treasures of Buddhism, specifically, of devotion to the dharma. An extremely early example found by Takagi appears in connection with memorial services sponsored in 881 by Sugawara no Michizane for his deceased parents, which included the dedication of a new Kannon image, offerings to monks, and lectures on the *Lotus Sutra*. Michizane’s written prayer (*ganmon*) composed on the occasion of these events concludes with a conventional expression of desire for his parents’ enlightenment and for the transfer of merit to all living beings. This wish is introduced with the words “*Namu-Kanzeon-bosatsu, Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō*.”⁵³ This is the oldest authenticatable occurrence of the phrase “*Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō*” to be discovered in Japanese sources thus far.⁵⁴

Shimaji Daitō had already pointed out that use of the title of the *Lotus Sutra* in expressions of devotion to the three treasures occurs

in certain works attributed to Genshin, author of the above-mentioned *Ōjōyōshū*, and his disciples Kakuun (953–1007) and Kakuchō (952/960–1034).⁵⁵ Shimaji mentioned specifically the *Kūkan* (Contemplation of Emptiness), a brief text attributed to Genshin, which concludes with the statement that one who “abhors the impure *sahā* world and aspires to the Pure Land of Utmost Bliss should chant “*Namu-Amida-butsu, Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō, Namu-Kanzeon-bosatsu*.”⁵⁶ This is clearly an expression of devotion to the three treasures, in which “*Amida*” represents the treasure of the buddha; “*Myōhō-rence-kyō*,” the treasure of the dharma; and “*Kanzeon*,” the treasure of the sangha. In this case, we also find it explicitly stated that the *daimoku* is to be chanted aloud. Takagi points out similar occurrences of the *daimoku* being used to express devotion to the three treasures in works attributed to Kakuun.⁵⁷

As we have seen in the case of the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, the medieval Tendai corpus includes many apocryphal works retrospectively attributed to eminent scholar-monks, and it is difficult to be certain whether the above-mentioned texts are indeed the work of Genshin and Kakuun. However, Takagi notes that a reference to the *daimoku* also occurs in a recently discovered document that is verifiably the work of Genshin’s disciple Kakuchō, the *Shuzen kōshiki* (colophon dated 989). This is a liturgical writing for a ceremony Kakuchō conducted in 989 and 991 for a “believers’ association for cultivating good” (*shuzenkō*), which he had founded in his district as an opportunity for those participating to perform good and create merit for themselves, their deceased relatives, and all living beings. This text specifies what phrases were chanted in expression of devotion to the three treasures: as an expression of devotion to the dharma, the words “*Namu-ichijō-myōhō-rence-kyō*” (*Namu* to the one vehicle, the Sutra of the Lotus Blossom of the Wondrous Dharma) were chanted.⁵⁸ Takagi suggests that if the above-mentioned *Kūkan* and the works attributed to Kakuun are genuine, then, together with this indisputably authentic work of Kakuchō, they would constitute evidence that, in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, Genshin and his disciples were intoning the *daimoku* on Mt. Hiei as an expression of devotion to the treasure of the dharma.

By turning from written documents to another sort of “text,” Takagi has been able to document a further possible connection between Genshin’s lineage and the *daimoku*. He points out that in the year 1007, Fujiwara no Michinaga caused to be placed in a mound on Mt. Kimpū in Yoshino a copy of the *Lotus Sutra* and other sutras that he had inscribed. This is the earliest fully verifiable instance in Japan of sutra burial, a practice associated with belief in the Final Dharma age and aimed at preserving the teachings throughout the degenerate

era until the advent of Maitreya, the future Buddha. Takagi notes that the outer surface of the side of the lid of the cylindrical bronze case containing the scrolls of Michinaga's *Lotus Sutra* was inscribed with twelve Sanskrit letters giving the Sanskrit equivalent of *Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō*⁵⁹ and that the monk who officiated as lecturer (*kōji*) at the ceremony where the sutras were offered for burial was none other than Kakuun.⁶⁰ He suggests that if the *daimoku* were indeed known among Genshin's disciples on Mt. Hiei, it might have reached Michinaga via Kakuun.

In looking beyond written texts, Takagi has found additional evidence for the early use of the *daimoku*. He notes, for example, a thousand-armed Kannon image, erected in 1012 at the Kōryūji in Kyōto for the benefit of the donor's deceased parents, that bears in two places, along with the inscription "Namu-amida-butsu," the inscription "Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō."⁶¹ Based on the names inscribed on the statue, Takagi judges that the donor was not necessarily a person of high rank.

Takagi finds that up through the twelfth century, single-phrase expressions of devotion to the *Lotus Sutra* had not yet crystallized as "Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō," instead, several different phrases were employed. His examples include the following. A prayer inscribed by Sugawara no Sadayoshi in 1060 contains the phrase "Namu-Hoke-kyō-ō" (*Namu* to the *Lotus*, king of sutras).⁶² A stone monument about 123 centimeters high, inscribed in 1064 and marking the remains of Jōsūji Temple in Toyono in Shimo-mashiki district, Kumamoto Prefecture, is inscribed "Namu-nyōhō-myōhō-rengē-kyō" (*Namu* to the Sutra of the Lotus Blossom of the Wondrous Dharma, [inscribed] in accordance with procedure).⁶³ Fujiwara no Munetada records in his diary *Chūyūki*, in his entry for the twenty-second day of the ninth intercalary month of 1118, a ceremony at which the Empress Dowager Fujiwara no Hiroko made offerings at the Amida Hall at Uji. According to his description, at four distinct points in the ceremony, the monks made obeisances and intoned expressions of devotion to the *Lotus Sutra*. These expressions were "Namu-gokuraku-nan-chigū-myōhō-rengē-kyō" (*Namu* to the Sutra of the Lotus Blossom of the Wondrous Dharma, the utmost bliss, which is difficult to encounter), "Namu-kugyō-kuyō-ichijō-myōden" (*Namu* with reverence and offerings to the wondrous scripture of the one vehicle), "Namu-byōdō-daie-myōhō-rengē-kyō" (*Namu* to the impartial great wisdom, the Sutra of the Lotus Blossom of the Wondrous Dharma), and "Namu-shōjō-sese-chigū-myōhō" (*Namu* to the Wondrous Dharma, to be encountered throughout lifetime after lifetime and age after age).⁶⁴

Takagi also notes the existence of the "title chanters" (*daimyōsō*), the monks who intoned the title of the sutra at public lectures on the

Lotus Sutra or at other Buddhist ceremonies. The exact form in which the title was intoned is not known; perhaps, Takagi suggests, it was in the manner of the above-mentioned ceremony described in the *Chūyūki*. In any event, he points out that people would have heard the title chanted on such occasions, a fact that might well have helped facilitate the spread of the *daimoku* as an expression of devotion to the *Lotus*. An additional piece of evidence, not noted by Takagi, is that one of Nichiren's letters also contains a reference to the lecturer on the *Lotus Sutra* chanting its title at the time of the lecture.⁶⁵

By the late twelfth century Takagi finds evidence of the *daimoku* being chanted repeatedly, in units of many thousands, in the same manner that the *nembutsu* was recited. In 1183, in accordance with a long-standing vow, the artist Unkei (d. 1223) had two copies of the *Lotus Sutra* transcribed with the support of a female sponsor known as Akomaro and two monk-calligraphers. Appended to Unkei's colophon is a list of *raihāi kechiensha*, those who performed ritual obeisance (*raihāi*) during the copying to gain merit and form a bond (*kechien*) with the dharma. This list includes several monks from Unkei's school as well as other men and women. According to the colophon, Unkei calculated the number of lines copied daily and, for each line copied, had the male and female *kechiensha* bow three times and "chant together the august title and also the *nembutsu*."⁶⁶ The "august title" here evidently refers to the *daimoku*, for the list of *kechiensha* is followed by the statement "During the copying, the above persons bowed fifty thousand times and [chanted] the *nembutsu* one hundred thousand times, and the august title of the *Lotus Sutra*, one hundred thousand times." The colophon also mentions the number of individual recitations performed by local people who supported the project: among these individuals, two lay persons chanted the august title and the *nembutsu* each three thousand one hundred times, and one monk, Sōkei, chanted the august title of the *Lotus* one hundred thousand times. Takagi suggests that an emphasis beginning about the time of the Cloister government period on the quantity of *nembutsu* chanted is here reflected in the chanting of the *daimoku*.

Other references to chanting the *daimoku* that Takagi cites from about the same period occur in *setsuwa*. One such example appears in a tale from the *Hōbutsu shū* (A Collection of Treasures, compiled about 1177–1180). King Evil Poison, so called because of his hostility toward Buddhism, was inordinately fond of cattle. Wishing to save him from his evil, the Buddha summoned his disciples Kāśyapa, Śāriputra, and Maudgalyāyana and transformed them, respectively, into a cow, its owner, and a cowherd. He named the cow Myōhō, the owner Renge, and the cowherd Kyō. The three presented themselves to the king, who was delighted. When he called for them, he would

say, "Myōhō, Renge, Kyō." After the king died and fell into hell, he was able to escape punishment because he had, although inadvertently, pronounced the title of the *Lotus Sutra*.⁶⁷ Another example appears in the *Hosshin shū* (A Collection of Religious Awakenings, compiled about 1214–1215), a collection of *setsuwa* attributed to Kamo no Chōmei (1155–1216). This story concerns a wise man who had a number of children. As soon as his children became capable of speech, he taught them to chant the title of the *Lotus Sutra*. As they grew older, he taught them more of the sutra, phrase by phrase, until they could repeat an entire chapter or roll. When asked why he did so, he explained that, should the children die young, they would nevertheless have formed a bond with the *Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha's ultimate teaching; thus the opportunity provided by their having been born into a human existence would not have been wasted.⁶⁸

In sum, there is abundant evidence for the chanting of the *daimoku* well before Nichiren's time; indeed, the phrase "Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō" is attested to as early as the late ninth century. As an expression of devotion to the three treasures, the *daimoku* served to express veneration of the dharma, and in this form was included in written prayers, intoned at ceremonies, and inscribed on statues and monuments and the bronze cases of sutras intended for burial. It served as a simple phrase by which to invoke the power and protection of the *Lotus Sutra*, and, although by no means as widespread as the *nembutsu*, seems to have been chanted in similar fashion by at least the end of the twelfth century. Moreover—if the *Shuzenji-ketsu* is a Heian-period text—it would seem that the *daimoku* was also used as a simplified form of meditation and as a deathbed practice.

It is noteworthy, however, that the chanted *daimoku* of this period does not yet seem to have gained much momentum as a popular practice. The *setsuwa*, cited above, of the dull-witted novice who escaped from hell by chanting the *daimoku* and of the wise man who taught the *daimoku* to his young children show an awareness that this practice was suitable to people of limited learning. However, the point of these stories seems to be not the suitability of the chanting of the *daimoku* as a practice for uneducated persons, but the immensity of the *Lotus Sutra's* salvific power, so great that even uttering its title would enable one to form a bond with the dharma and escape the pains of hell. Such tales would also have resonated with widespread belief that all people living in the Final Dharma age were of limited capacity. Commoners may have had the opportunity to hear the *daimoku* chanted at lectures and ceremonies, such as that conducted by Kakuchō; the inscriptions on the thousand-armed Kannon noted by Takagi also suggest that it may have been known among people outside the aristocracy. Nevertheless, the presently available

evidence from the Heian period in several cases connects the *daimoku* with monks, members of the nobility, and other ranking persons. The *daimoku* may well have emerged in monastic and aristocratic circles, rather than as a direct response to the needs of the common people, as has often been suggested.

As in the case of the *Shuzenji-ketsujji*, the question arises whether or not Nichiren knew of and drew upon this earlier, Heian-period *daimoku* tradition. Ienaga Saburō thought not, though he acknowledged Nichiren's conviction that the expression "Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō" had been used by teachers of the past. Nichiren, he noted, had himself written, "In our country, for seven hundred years and more [i.e., since the introduction of Buddhism], . . . there has been no one who chanted or encouraged others to chant Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō in the same manner that the name of Amida is chanted. . . . [I] Nichiren alone first chanted it in the country of Japan."⁶⁹ On this basis, Ienaga surmised that Nichiren's *daimoku* had not developed out of antecedent *daimoku* practices but was "re-invented" on the pattern of the chanted *nembutsu*.⁷⁰

Takagi Yutaka, however, in continuing the research Ienaga had initiated and making additional findings, has reached a very different conclusion. He suggests that three major elements contributed to the development of Nichiren's *daimoku* practice: (1) earlier *daimoku* practices of the Heian period, (2) *daimoku* in medieval Tendai doctrine, as represented by the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, which Nichiren would have encountered during his studies on Mt. Hiei, and (3), as Ienaga had suggested, Hōnen's *nembutsu*. It was out of these three, Takagi argues, that Nichiren forged his unique conception of the *daimoku*, divorced from the Amidist elements often associated with it during the Heian period, and established it as an exclusive practice and the core of a new interpretation of Buddhism.⁷¹

The evidence from Nichiren's own writings on this issue is not clear-cut. It is true that Nichiren's references to specific persons chanting the *daimoku* before him are generally not to contemporaries or even to Japanese predecessors, but to Buddhist masters of India and China.⁷² The statement Ienaga quotes, that "Nichiren alone first chanted" the *daimoku*, would indeed seem to suggest that Nichiren knew of no one else in his own time chanting "Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō." Nevertheless, one can juxtapose this with another passage, already referred to, in which Nichiren writes that, since the time of the Buddha, whether in India, China, or Japan "the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sutra* has never yet been advocated in the same manner as the name of Amida. Individuals have merely chanted it themselves, or when lecturing on the sutra, the lecturer alone chanted it."⁷³ This would seem to reflect some awareness of previous *daimoku* practices. It also

suggests that Nichiren saw the originality of his *daimoku*, not in the fact that he was literally the first to chant it, but in that he was the first to propagate it “in the same manner as the name of Amida”—that is, as an exclusive practice with claims to universal validity. In addition, Nichiren certainly knew of at least one of the attempts being made to express devotion to the *Lotus Sutra* in a single phrase. In 1264 he wrote a letter, quoted in the previous section, in response to a female disciple who had reported to him that she was chanting “*Namu-ichijō-myōden*” (*Namu* to the wondrous scripture of the one vehicle) ten thousand times a day. In it, he advised her that “though it amounts to the same thing, you should simply chant *Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō*, as *Bodhisattva Tenjin* and the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai did.”⁷⁴

Thus, although the relevant passages are not sufficiently explicit to enable a firm conclusion, Nichiren’s extant writings do convey some consciousness of earlier or existing *daimoku* practices. In addition, Takagi’s research has shown that by Nichiren’s time, the *daimoku* was being used in a variety of ritual contexts, although the usage was not widespread. When we consider that Nichiren as a young man spent at least twelve years studying at Mt. Hiei, Onjōji, Mt. Kōya, Shitennōji, and other religious centers in and near the imperial capital, it seems likely that he would have encountered such practices. Though much of it is circumstantial, the evidence in sum suggests that Nichiren’s *daimoku* was not merely something he originated as a counter to the chanted *nembutsu* but had roots in these antecedent forms of *Lotus* devotion.

The *Daimoku* of Nichiren and His Community

With Nichiren, chanting the *daimoku* becomes the basis of an entire Buddhist system. Nichiren drew on traditional works of T’ien-t’ai exegesis, such as Chih-i’s *Fa-hua hsüan-i* (Profound Meaning of the *Lotus Sutra*), which interprets the sutra’s title as containing the essence of the sutra itself. *Namu-myōhō-rence-kyō* was for Nichiren the heart not only of the *Lotus*, but of all other teachings, and the seed of buddhahood itself. In his thought, it is both the core of the Buddha’s teaching and the uniquely valid form of Buddhist practice. One utterance of the *daimoku*, Nichiren wrote, was equivalent to reciting the entire sutra.⁷⁵ Those who chant the *daimoku* will never be dragged down by evil karma and worldly offenses into the lower realms of transmigration but are sure to attain buddhahood in this very body or achieve birth in the Pure Land.⁷⁶ In Nichiren’s later writings, chanting the *daimoku* is presented not as a beginning step or accommodation to those incapable of the greater practice of reciting the sutra,

but as the highest form of practice, the ultimate of the Buddha’s teaching, which he had embodied in the title of the *Lotus Sutra* specifically for the Final Dharma age when people would need it most. The *daimoku* contains all good precepts and the merit gained by observing them.⁷⁷ All the practices undertaken by the Buddha over countless kalpas and the enlightenment he consequently attained are contained within the sutra’s title and “spontaneously transferred” to those who embrace it.⁷⁸ “To practice only the seven characters *na-mu-myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō* may seem limited,” Nichiren wrote, “but because [the *daimoku*] is the teacher of all buddhas of the three time periods, the leader of the bodhisattvas of the ten directions, and the guide that enables all sentient beings to attain the Buddha Way, it is in fact profound.”⁷⁹

The second portion of this essay will focus not on the doctrinal foundations of Nichiren’s *daimoku*—which would require a separate study—but on how the practice of chanting *daimoku* was understood early in the history of the Nichiren Buddhist tradition and how it differed from, or developed beyond, what we now know of *daimoku* practice in the Heian period. For this information we will turn not only to Nichiren’s better-known writings, those that are considered normative for Nichiren doctrinal studies, but also to his early writings and writings that may be termed problematic, that is, texts attributed to Nichiren but whose authenticity has been questioned by modern scholars and that may be redactions or even apocryphal works produced by his disciples, possibly after his death but well before the end of the medieval period.⁸⁰ By thus examining *daimoku* practice within the early Nichiren community, we can better understand the points of both continuity and difference between this newly emerging tradition and earlier Buddhist forms of the Heian period.

The *Daimoku* as Meditative Practice

Nichiren’s Buddhism, like that of Hōnen, is often characterized as a teaching of faith, as a way of distinguishing it from the parent, Tendai tradition, characterized as a teaching of meditation. It is true that the chanting of the *daimoku* was for Nichiren, above all, an expression of faith—faith, in this case, not in an external savior figure such as the Buddha Amida but in the Wondrous Dharma of the *Lotus Sutra*. Especially in his later writings, Nichiren stressed salvation through faith rather than through meditative insight, and this position also represents orthodoxy for the major Nichiren denominations today. Nevertheless, we need to qualify more carefully the distinction between faith (represented by Nichiren) and meditation (represented

by Tendai) as a way of dividing the “old Buddhism” of the Heian period from the “new Buddhism” of the Kamakura period. Devotional and contemplative aspects of Buddhist practice are not always easily or even meaningfully distinguishable, and in addition, there are sound historical reasons for questioning whether either Tendai or Nichiren Buddhism can be neatly categorized in this way. One such reason, which we will focus on here, is evidence that the *daimoku* was at least occasionally taught as a meditative discipline, or as an accompaniment to traditional Tendai meditation, in the early Nichiren community.

Nichiren himself appears to have taken this view during the first part of his career. Two of his authenticated early writings recommend Tendai meditative practice in conjunction with the *daimoku* for those capable of performing it. One, an essay dated 1260, reads,

One’s constant practice should be chanting the *daimoku*, Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō. . . . Because ours is an age in which the ignorant are many, precedence is not given to the contemplation of the single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms. But those with a will to do so should by all means study and contemplate it.⁸¹

And in a letter to a scholar-monk disciple in 1271, shortly before his exile to Sado Island, Nichiren wrote,

What should always be upon one’s lips is Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō. What should always reside within one’s heart is the contemplation of the single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms. This is the practice and understanding of wise persons. As for the lay persons of Japan, one should just have them chant Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō exclusively, [for] the name [of the sutra] is invariably accompanied by the virtue of its essence.⁸²

However, from the period of the Sado exile (1271–1274), a critical turning point in Nichiren’s life and thought, references to the contemplation of the three thousand realms in a single thought-moment as an adjunct mode of practice virtually disappear from Nichiren’s writings. By 1277, he would write that he “did not encourage the way of contemplation of the single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms but urged only the chanting of the *daimoku*”⁸³ as the sole authentic practice for the Final Dharma age.

Nichiren’s later works in fact present the “three thousand realms in a single thought-moment” (i.e., the realm of the Buddha’s enlightenment, the perfect interpenetration of the mind and all phenomena) not as a principle to be discerned or perceived, as in introspective meditation, but rather as a reality inherent and manifested in the moment of faith and chanting.⁸⁴ He describes the difference,

using the Buddhist language of his day, as one of “abstract principle” (*ri*) versus “concrete manifestation” (*ji*).⁸⁵ That is, where traditional T’ien-t’ai/Tendai meditation aims at perceiving through introspective contemplation the “single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms” as a formless principle inherent in one’s mind, in Nichiren’s teaching this principle is manifested in concrete form as the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sutra*. One need not, then, meditate to perceive this principle within one’s mind; such meditation is in fact claimed to be unsuited to the Final Dharma age. Rather, one takes faith in its concrete manifestation—the *daimoku*—and accesses it in the act of chanting. It is not clear, however, whether in making this distinction Nichiren saw his “*daimoku* of faith alone” as a radical departure from earlier meditative discipline or as a continuation of it in an altered, more accessible form. His writings leave room for both views, and later interpretations have varied considerably.

References to the *daimoku* as a form of meditation also occur in other works traditionally attributed to Nichiren but whose authenticity has recently come under question. Such problematic or possibly apocryphal texts would be less useful than fully authenticated ones were our concern simply to establish what Nichiren himself taught. However, traditions are formed by others besides the founder. It is worth our while here to examine such problematic writings because some of these texts discuss the *daimoku* in great detail and because our aim is not to present an “official” interpretation of the *daimoku* but to investigate any available sources suggesting how this practice was understood by early Nichiren Buddhists.

First let us look at an essay in the Nichiren collection entitled *Isshō jōbutsu shō* (On Becoming a Buddha in One Lifetime), which describes the *daimoku* as a method of carrying out the Tendai meditative practice of “contemplating the mind” (*kanjin*):

Now if you wish to put an end to beginningless birth and death and, this time round, attain unexcelled *bodhi* without fail, you must contemplate the subtle principle originally inherent in living beings. The “subtle principle originally inherent in living beings” is Myōhō-enge-kyō. Therefore, when one chants Myōhō-enge-kyō, that is contemplating the subtle principle originally inherent in living beings.⁸⁶

It also describes chanting the *daimoku* as a method of purifying the mind of delusion, as in meditation, and revealing the inherent Buddha nature:

Even right now, the deluded mind in a single thought-moment of ignorance is an unpolished mirror. But if one polishes it, it will

surely become the bright mirror that is the true suchness of the Dharma nature. Profoundly arouse the mind of faith and day and night, morning and evening, polish [the mirror of the mind] without neglect. How should one polish it? Simply chanting *Namu-myōhō-reenge-kyō* is what is called “polishing.”⁸⁷

Here we note that faith is also emphasized. In this text, as with others in the Nichiren collection—and for that matter, in the *Shuzen-ji-ketsu*—“faith” and “meditation” clearly do not represent exclusive conceptions of the *daimoku*.

This essay has traditionally been assigned the very early date of 1255, two years after Nichiren’s first public sermon, an event later regarded as marking the founding of his sect. Should the *Isshō jōbutsu shō* in fact be Nichiren’s writing, and the date of 1255 correct, it would represent the earliest of his surviving works to mention the practice of chanting the *daimoku*. However, Nichiren’s authorship has recently been questioned.⁸⁸

Another problematic essay discussing the *daimoku* in the vocabulary of traditional Tendai meditation is the *Ichinen sanzen hōmon* (The Doctrine of the Three Thousand Realms in a Single Thought-Moment). This work has traditionally been dated 1258, but again, Nichiren’s authorship is in question.⁸⁹

The meditation on the three thousand realms in a single thought-moment and the meditation method of the threefold contemplation in a single mind are both contained within the five characters *myō-hō-reen-ge-kyō*, and the five characters *myō-hō-reen-ge-kyō* are contained within our mind. . . . Thus, when we chant *Myōhō-reenge-kyō*, the Buddha of original enlightenment within our mind appears.⁹⁰

Here, as in the *Shuzen-ji-ketsu*, the *daimoku* is described literally as a “meditation container.” The *Ichinen sanzen hōmon* also discusses in considerable detail another simplified form of meditation recommended in several medieval Tendai texts—that of reciting three times a passage from the *Lotus Sutra* dealing with the “ten suchnesses”⁹¹ as a means of practicing the threefold contemplation in a single mind.

The *Ichinen sanzen hōmon* further identifies chanting the *daimoku* with meditative practice as follows:

Ignorant people may think it hard to understand that chanting the sutra’s title and contemplation are the same. Nevertheless, [*chūan*] two of T’ien-t’ai [Chih-i]’s [*Mo-ho chih-kuan*] refer to “vocalizing or remaining silent.”⁹² “Vocalizing” indicates the sutra. “Remaining silent” indicates contemplation. Moreover, [*chūan*] one of the *Ssu-chiao i* [The Meaning of the Four Teachings] states, “Not only

is it not a waste of effort, it is the essential by which one can accord with the principle.”⁹³

In the text of Chih-i’s famous meditation manual, the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* (Great Calming and Contemplation), the phrase “vocalizing or remaining silent” refers—among practices performed with the body, mouth, and mind—to practice with the mouth as it pertains to the constantly sitting *samādhi*, first of the four kinds of *samādhi* that Chih-i’s manual outlines. The *Mo-ho chih-kuan* explains that, when in the course of seated, silent meditation, the practitioner becomes tired, ill, or drowsy or is assailed by inner or outer hindrances, he may call upon the name of a buddha and so gain aid in clearing away the obstructions to his meditation.⁹⁴ Thus in the practice of Chih-i’s constantly sitting *samādhi*, “vocalizing,” or calling on the name of a buddha, serves as no more than an aid to the primary task of “remaining silent” or practicing contemplation. Here, however, in the *Ichinen sanzen hōmon*, “vocalizing” and “keeping silent” are placed on an equal level, and the chanting of the *daimoku* thus equated with meditation.

Part of the discussion of the *daimoku* in the *Ichinen sanzen hōmon* occurs in the context of a polemic against “wordless” Zen and its denial of the scriptural tradition, particularly against its implicit rejection of the *Lotus Sutra*. In answer to the question “whether, even without reading the sutra, one can attain buddhahood simply by contemplation of the mind-ground,” this writing insists that vocal practice of the sutra—specifically, the chanting of its title—forms a necessary complement to silent contemplation. “Persons of wisdom should practice contemplation together with reading and recitation [of the sutra]. Ignorant persons, though they chant the *daimoku* alone, will be encompassed within this principle.”⁹⁵ Here we see that for “ignorant persons,” chanting the *daimoku* replaces meditation, a point to be discussed in detail below.

As we have seen, scholars have questioned the authenticity of the *Isshō jōbutsu shō* and the *Ichinen sanzen hōmon*, and these two texts may thus represent the ideas of certain of Nichiren’s followers, rather than of Nichiren himself. Nor can we be certain whether they were written in Nichiren’s lifetime or at some time after his death. Nevertheless, we do know that, after Nichiren’s death, not all his followers understood the *daimoku* as a matter of pure devotionism; some continued to interpret it in terms of meditative practice. One such was Tenmoku (1245–1337), who had become a disciple during Nichiren’s lifetime. Tenmoku interpreted the *daimoku* in light of the two kinds of *Lotus samādhi* of T’ien-t’ai Buddhism, established by Chih-i’s

teacher Hui-ssu (515–577) on the basis of the “Peaceful Practices” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*—peaceful practices possessing characteristics and peaceful practices devoid of characteristics.⁹⁶

Practice has two aspects. One is to chant the title [of the *Lotus Sutra*] in any of the four postures—walking, standing, sitting, or lying down—even with a distracted mind. This is “practice possessing characteristics” (*usōgyō*). The “peaceful practices possessing characteristics” correspond to this. The other aspect is that, with understanding of its meaning, one chants Myōhō-rence-kyō with one’s mouth and directly contemplates the subtle principle of the single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms. This is “practice devoid of characteristics” (*musōgyō*). The “peaceful practices devoid of characteristics” correspond to this. In other words, it does not matter whether one has wisdom or not, whether one is noble or base, or of high or low station, whether one breaks the precepts or is without precepts. If one carries out the practice of contemplating and reciting the five characters of the *daimoku*, even with a distracted mind, he shall directly behold the body of [Bodhisattva] Fugen [Skt. Samantabhadra]. If one who has wisdom and understanding devotes himself to the practice of the subtle contemplation of the three thousand realms in conjunction with the five characters *myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō*, he shall at once behold the body of Fugen. Even though practice is thus divided into two, both lead to the fruit of buddhahood.⁹⁷

Tenmoku’s description of the practice “possessing characteristics” and the practice “devoid of characteristics” appears to be closely modeled on Hui-ssu’s. Moreover, his interpretation of the *daimoku* as a vehicle for the visualization of the bodhisattva Fugen seems far closer to T’ien-t’ai meditative practices than to the *daimoku* of faith alone taught by Nichiren in his later years.

Another medieval Nichiren monk who should be mentioned in this context is Mōbara Nikkai (1341–1396), who interpreted Nichiren Buddhist *daimoku* practice in terms of the categories of Tendai meditation such as the “ten modes of contemplation” (*jūjū kampo*).⁹⁸ Though they have generally remained a minor voice, contemplative interpretations of the *daimoku* have coexisted in the Nichiren tradition along with more strongly devotional understandings down to the modern period.⁹⁹

If we take into account the evidence of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* as well as writings by or attributed to Nichiren and his followers, it appears that in the late Heian and Kamakura periods, the practice of chanting the *daimoku* was emerging as an adjunct or alternative to *Lotus*-centered Tendai meditative disciplines, much in the same way that

nembutsu recitation based upon faith alone had emerged alongside, and eventually superceded, the various contemplative and visualization meditations associated with the Buddha Amida. As such, it must be seen as part of a larger historical process. During the Heian period, the four kinds of *samādhi* constituting the T’ien-t’ai meditation system introduced from China by Saichō were gradually supplemented and then surpassed in popularity by such tangible acts of devotion as reading, reciting, and transcribing the *Lotus Sutra*, as well as other devotional practices including the chanted *nembutsu*.¹⁰⁰ Some of these practices had roots in the Tendai meditational framework itself: the chanted *nembutsu* derived in part from the constantly walking *samādhi*, the second of the four kinds of *samādhi*, in which one both contemplates the Buddha Amida and chants his name, while *Lotus* devotion formed a component of the part-walking, part-sitting *samādhi*, third of the four kinds of *samādhi*, in which one pays reverence to and recites the *Lotus Sutra* along with practicing meditation. Another important influence here was esoteric Buddhism, which emphasizes practices having vocal and visual ritual form—practice with body, mouth, and mind. This shift in emphasis from *ri* toward *ji*, as Buddhists of the time spoke of it—that is, from introspective contemplation to practices emphasizing vocalization and tangible devotional form—continued both within medieval Tendai and in the new Buddhist movements, culminating in the latter with the *daimoku* and the *nembutsu* presented as exclusive teachings based upon faith alone. Looking back over the history of Tendai and Nichiren Buddhism, one can say that in general the former has placed greater emphasis on meditative discipline and the latter on faith, but the distinction is far from absolute. Contemplative and devotional strands have coexisted and overlapped in both traditions, and the shift in emphasis from introspective meditation to practices emphasizing faith and outward expression transcended sectarian lines. In fact, it characterized much of Japanese Buddhism in the late classical and medieval periods.

The Daimoku as the Practice of “Ignorant Persons”

As we have seen, some of the Heian-period *setsuwa* that mention chanting the *daimoku* reflect an awareness that this practice was suited to people of limited capacity. In the collection of works attributed to Nichiren, discussion of the merits of chanting the *daimoku* as a practice especially suited to “ignorant persons” achieves the status of a conscious discourse. But who exactly were these “ignorant persons”? Different texts in the Nichiren corpus suggest at least four different ways in which this category may have been understood.

First, "ignorance" is explicitly equated with illiteracy. The *Sōzai ichinen shō*, a problematic text attributed to Nichiren and traditionally dated 1258, reads,

Question: If an ignorant person who cannot read even a single word chants "Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō," what benefit is there in that?

Answer: Even in the case of an illiterate person who cannot recognize a single character, if he has faith and chants [the *daimoku*], then among the three karmas of the body, mouth and mind, he first forms the merit of actions of the mouth. And if he forms this merit, the Buddha's seed will be planted in his breast, and he will surely become a person who is liberated.¹⁰¹

Here, chanting the *daimoku* is presented as especially advantageous to those who cannot read.

Second, ignorance is equated with lack of capacity for meditative discipline. We have already seen this meaning of "ignorance" in passages quoted earlier, for example, from the *Ichinen sanzen hōmon*: "Persons of wisdom should practice contemplation together with reading and recitation [of the sutra]. Ignorant persons, though they chant the *daimoku* alone, will be encompassed within this principle." This suggests the advantages of chanting the *daimoku* to those who can neither read the sutra nor practice meditation. A similar understanding of the category "ignorant persons" is seen in the passage, also quoted above, from Nichiren's authenticated essay *Shō Hokke daimoku shō*:

One's constant practice should be chanting the *daimoku*, Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō. . . . Because ours is an age in which the ignorant are many, precedence is not given to the contemplation of the single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms. But those with a will to do so should by all means study and contemplate it.¹⁰²

Although the primary distinction here seems to be between those who can and those who cannot study and meditate, Nichiren's association of ignorance with the age (*mappō*) should also be noted, as it becomes increasingly important in his later thought.

Third, "ignorant persons" are equated with the laity. This view appears in Nichiren's pre-Sado letter to his monk-disciple Sanmi-bō, also quoted above:

What should always be upon one's lips is Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō. What should always reside within one's heart is the contemplation of the single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms. This is the practice and understanding of wise persons. As for the

lay persons of Japan, one should just have them chant Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō exclusively.¹⁰³

Fourth—and this is the understanding that dominates the Nichiren corpus—"ignorant persons" are taken to mean all those born into the present, Final Dharma age, for whom chanting the *daimoku* is the sole authentic path of liberation. We find this especially in Nichiren's writings from the period of the Sado exile (1271–1274) on, for example, in a famous passage from his major work *Kanjin honzon shō* (1273):

For the sake of those ignorant of the single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms, the Buddha, arousing great compassion, wrapped up this gem within the five characters [of the *daimoku*] and hung it around the necks of the immature beings of the last age.¹⁰⁴

In Nichiren's later thought, all lesser distinctions of literate and uneducated, clergy and laity, are dissolved in this category of universal "ignorance." For him, the Final Dharma age meant a time when no distinctions in the form of practice should exist: "everyone, whether wise or foolish, should alike abandon other practices and chant Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō."¹⁰⁵

These four conceptions of "ignorance" can be readily summed up in two: literal "ignorance," as some tangible limitation on certain individuals' ability to carry out traditional Buddhist disciplines, whether stemming from illiteracy, an inability to meditate, or lay status; and metaphorical "ignorance," or the benighted condition of living in the Final Dharma age, an existential problem in which all were implicated.

Working from Nichiren's extant letters, Takagi Yutaka has compiled information about the social composition of the early Nichiren community, both monks and laity, and found that Nichiren's lay followers of whom we have knowledge were chiefly samurai, both direct vassals of the *bakufu* (*gokenin*) and their retainers, and included several *bakufu*-appointed estate stewards (*jitō*). Others were local landholders engaged in farming (*myōshu*) and women of a class to have servants.¹⁰⁶ These people appear to have represented a range of reading ability; Nichiren wrote of one devout woman that she "could not read a single sentence,"¹⁰⁷ while a few others at the opposite end of the spectrum were versed in literary Chinese. Most seem to have been literate at least to some degree, and Nichiren encouraged those who were capable of so doing to recite portions of the *Lotus Sutra* as an auxiliary to the *daimoku*—a practice he himself conducted.¹⁰⁸ However, Nichiren's letters do not give us a complete pic-

ture of his immediate community of disciples. His lay followers would have included not only the people to whom the letters were addressed but many of their retainers, relatives, servants, and others who composed their households. In addition, not all of Nichiren's letters have survived, and there were lay followers of whom we know almost nothing.¹⁰⁹ Among all these people, it is likely that some could not read, and even those whose could read the Japanese syllabary or prose written in the mixed Japanese and Chinese style (*kana majiri bun*) might have been unable to read the text of the *Lotus Sutra*. The simple practice of chanting the *daimoku* would have amply answered the religious needs of such devotees.

Nevertheless, as Takagi's findings demonstrate, Nichiren's lay followers of whom we have knowledge were not drawn from the lowest stratum of medieval society, and many were in fact literate. Thus the "ignorant person who cannot distinguish even a single character" may have represented not only any actual unlettered devotees who had to be instructed, but also a symbolic extreme case whose salvation would guarantee the salvation of all.

As a simple practice suited to "ignorant persons," in both literal and metaphoric senses, the *daimoku* exhibits continuities not only with those Heian-period *setsuwa* that mention the *daimoku* in connection with persons of limited understanding, but also with the practice of invoking Amida's name. In particular, in the claim that merely chanting the title of the *Lotus Sutra* with faith enables all persons equally to attain buddhahood in the Final Dharma age, we find a parallel to Hōnen's exclusive *nembutsu*. Both the chanted *nembutsu* and Nichiren's *daimoku* were no doubt advocated at least in part for the sake of uneducated common people, and, as simple alternatives to less accessible forms such as meditation or sutra recitation, served to make Buddhist practice available to a wider range of people. In addition, over time, the doctrine that liberation depended only on a simple act available to anyone would prove subversive of the clerical-lay hierarchy and of monasticism itself, helping to open the way for a strongly lay-oriented Buddhism in Japan. Nevertheless, in both Pure Land and Nichiren traditions of the Kamakura period, emphasis on a simple, exclusive religious act was not solely a matter of making Buddhist practice available to those of limited education. It was also linked to awareness of the degenerate age and its unique soteriological demands. The claim that the *daimoku* constituted the sole, absolute form of practice, universally valid and not accommodated to individual capacity for understanding, must have conveyed to those who embraced it a certainty about their personal liberation at a time when liberation was thought to be especially difficult to achieve. If everyone, even the most ignorant person, could be saved, one's own salvation could not be in doubt.

Nichiren Buddhist Innovations in Daimoku Practice

Lastly we will mention three innovations in uses of the *daimoku* practice within the Nichiren tradition that appeared during or after Nichiren's lifetime. These are a concept of the *daimoku* as an esoteric mantra for realizing union with the originally enlightened cosmic Buddha, the use of the *daimoku* as a memorial prayer, and iconographic representations of the *daimoku*.

THE DAIMOKU AS ESOTERIC MANTRA

Shingon esoteric Buddhism reveres the cosmic Buddha Dainichi (Skt. Mahāvairocana), whose body is said to be composed of the five universal elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space. The same five elements also compose the bodies of all beings. Through the performance of the three mysteries—the forming of *mudras* or symbolic gestures with the hands or body, the chanting of mantras or sacred syllables with the mouth, and the meditation on sacred mandalas with the mind—the practitioner is said to realize the identity of her or his own person with the cosmic Buddha.

Esoteric Tendai Buddhism, which developed under the influence of Shingon practice, also had its primordial or originally enlightened cosmic Buddha, identified in this case with the eternal Śākya-muni Buddha described in the "Fathoming the Lifespan of the Tathāgata" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. Medieval Tendai texts typically refer to this Buddha as "the unproduced triple-bodied *tathāgata*" (*musa sanjin no nyorai*), meaning that he possesses inherently the three bodies of a buddha: the manifested body (Jpn. *ōjin*; Skt. *nirmāṇakāya*), the physical body with which the Buddha appears in this world to save the beings; the recompense body (Jpn. *hōjin*; Skt. *sambhoga-kāya*), or the wisdom that the Buddha has attained, conceived of as a "body"; and the Dharma body (Jpn. *hosshin*; Skt. *dharmakāya*), the Buddha as personification of ultimate truth. Like Shingon's Dainichi, the unproduced triple-bodied Buddha was regarded as transtemporal, without beginning or end, immanent in all things and identified with the cosmos itself.

One document in the Nichiren corpus suggests the *daimoku* to be a mantra or *bija* (seed word) associated with this primordial Buddha. This is a record of secretly transmitted oral teachings on the *Lotus Sutra* attributed to Nichiren—almost certainly the work of later disciples—that describe this Buddha using the esoteric Sanskrit terms *samayās* (the *mudrās* or hand gestures associated with the various deities or the implements, e.g., *vajras*, swords, etc. with which they are iconographically depicted) and *bijas*, (the Sanskrit letters symbolizing particular buddhas or bodhisattvas):

The august form [of this Buddha] is the originally inherent forms and aspects of the ten realms [of living beings]. His *samayas* are what [these beings of] the ten realms hold. His *bīja* is the single word "faith," that is, *Namu-myōhō-renge-kyō* just as it is. [Again,] his *samaya* is the palms placed together [as in chanting the *daimoku*]. Keep this secret!¹¹⁰

Also under Shingon esoteric influence, Japanese Tendai began to associate the five characters of the *Lotus Sutra*'s title with the five universal elements comprising the body of the primordially enlightened Buddha, thus stressing that buddhahood is originally inherent in all things. Because of the difficulty of dating medieval Tendai texts, it is difficult at present to judge even approximately when this association began. It appears, for example, in the *Hokke kan'yō ryaku chū shūku*,¹¹¹ an apocryphal work of indeterminate date attributed to Saichō. It also appears in certain of the problematic writings in the Nichiren corpus—for example,

the five elements are earth, water, fire, wind, and space. . . . In the present [*Lotus*] sutra, they are opened and explained as the five aspects of the buddha nature and the seeds of the five wisdom buddhas inherent in the minds of all living beings. They are in fact the five characters *myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō*. These five characters form the substance of the human body. Inherent and constantly abiding, they are the *tathāgata* of original enlightenment.¹¹²

Carrying this discourse one step further, we find that at least one text in the corpus of works attributed to Nichiren recommends chanting the *daimoku* as a practice for realizing one's identity with the cosmic Buddha. This text is a (some scholars say apocryphal¹¹³) letter from Nichiren to a follower named Abutsu-bō living on Sado Island where Nichiren had been exiled. Abutsu-bō had evidently asked for an explanation of the magnificent jeweled stupa of the *Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna* (Many Jewels) that emerges from beneath the earth in the eleventh chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. The reply, given in part below, identifies the stupa with the *daimoku*, *Myōhō-renge-kyō*, and describes chanting the *daimoku* as a practice for realizing that one is enlightened originally, that is, identical to the primordial Buddha:

Now the single body of Abutsu Shōnin consists of the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space. These five elements are the five characters of the *daimoku*. This being the case, Abutsu-bō is himself the jeweled stupa and the jeweled stupa is itself Abutsu-bō. Any other understanding would be profitless. . . . You may think you made offerings to the jeweled stupa of the *Tathā-*

gata Many Jewels but that is not so; you offered them to yourself. One's own person is the *tathāgata* of original enlightenment, possessing three bodies in one. Believing in this way, chant *Namu-myōhō-renge-kyō*. Then that place [where you do so] is the very place where the jeweled stupa dwells.¹¹⁴

Nichiren Buddhist practice resembles in some respects the three mysteries of Shingon in greatly condensed form: one mandala—to be discussed below; one mantra—the *daimoku*; and one *mudrā*—that is, the *gasshō* gesture of the palms placed together in reverence, used while chanting the *daimoku*. Nichiren himself, as well as many of his contemporary and later disciples, had originally been trained in the esoteric Tendai tradition. Thus, despite Nichiren's own hostility toward Shingon and its influence upon Tendai, it is not surprising that some esoteric elements should appear in Nichiren Buddhist thought concerning the *daimoku*.

THE *DAIMOKU* AS MEMORIAL PRAYER

Another development in the chanting of the *daimoku* to take place within the Nichiren community was the use of this practice for the enlightenment of the deceased. Several of Nichiren's letters indicated that both he and his followers chanted the *daimoku* many tens of thousands of times along with recitation of the *Lotus Sutra* for the purpose of memorial prayers.¹¹⁵ In one letter dated 1279, Nichiren also praises a follower who, on the thirteenth anniversary of his infant daughter's death, had erected a stupa about sixteen feet high inscribed with the seven characters *na-mu-myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō*. He urges, "Be sure to inscribe the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sutra* on any other stupas [you may erect] from now on."¹¹⁶ Today, in the various Nichiren denominations, the *daimoku* is still inscribed on wooden votive tablets (*tōba*) used in memorializing the deceased.

In this context we should also take note of the practice of inscribing the *daimoku* on *itabi*, vertical stone tablets that were erected widely during the medieval period for votive purposes, most commonly for the enlightenment of the deceased. *Itabi* were often inscribed with the *nembutsu*, with Sanskrit letters representing various esoteric deities, or with the names of other buddhas or bodhisattvas. Among Nichiren Buddhists, they were inscribed with the *daimoku*. Some of these *daimoku itabi* bore only the inscription "Namu-myōhō-renge-kyō," while on others, this central inscription of the *daimoku* was flanked by the names of the two buddhas, Śākyamuni and *Prabhūtaratna*, who sit side by side in the jeweled stupa in the *Lotus Sutra*. To these were sometimes added the names of *Viśiṣṭacāritra*

(Superior Conduct) and the others of the four leaders of the bodhisattvas who, in the fifteenth chapter of the sutra, emerge from beneath the earth and vow to spread the sutra in the evil latter age after Śākyamuni's nirvana. Other *daimoku itabi* reproduce the entirety of Nichiren's calligraphic mandala, discussed below. The oldest known *daimoku itabi* is preserved at the *daibō* of the Nichirenshū temple Honmonji in Ikegami, Tokyo. It is dated 1290, just eight years after Nichiren's death. From the inscription, it seems to have been erected as a votive offering for the enlightenment of the donors' deceased father.¹¹⁷

We have already seen from the *Shuzenji-ketsu* that the *daimoku* was employed specifically as a deathbed practice. Within the Nichiren tradition, from Nichiren's time on, we find it being offered for the well-being of the deceased. There is a commonality here in the association with death, but a shift from chanting it merely for one's own enlightenment after death to also offering it for the enlightenment of others.

THE *DAIMOKU* AS MANDALA

Nichiren was to our knowledge the first person to give the *daimoku* iconographic expression. Some of his early writings suggest that an inscription of the *daimoku* served his followers as a personal *honzon* or object of worship, such as this 1260 essay:

Question: What should be the object of worship, comportment, and constant practice of those who believe in the *Lotus Sutra*?

Answer: First of all, as to the object of worship, you may use the eight rolls of the *Lotus Sutra*, or a single roll, or one chapter, or you may inscribe the title and make it the object of worship. . . . As for comportment, always sit up straight before the object of worship. When outside the place of practice, you need not give preference to [any of the four postures—] walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. One's constant practice should be chanting the *daimoku*, *Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō*.¹¹⁸

A personal letter to a lay follower dated 1264 similarly reads, "In your letter you say that three times each day you bow in reverence to the seven characters [of the *daimoku*],"¹¹⁹ suggesting that an inscription of "Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō" was enshrined as an object of worship.

Such inscriptions no doubt represent the embryonic form of Nichiren's calligraphic mandalas, which he began to inscribe from the time of the Sado exile on. This object of worship, called the Great Mandala (*daimandara*) or *gohonzon*, represents the Buddha

wisdom manifested in all phenomena. Down its center are inscribed the seven characters *na-mu-myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō*. Surrounding this central inscription are the names of the two buddhas who figure in the *Lotus Sutra*, Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna, together with those of great bodhisattvas from both this world and other worlds, as well as the names of disciples, gods, humans, dragon kings, demons, and hell-dwellers, representing the ten realms that constitute the categories of sentient beings. "Illuminated by the light of the five characters of the Wondrous Dharma, they display their originally inherent enlightened attributes," Nichiren wrote.¹²⁰ Nichiren called this mandala, as he did the *daimoku* that it embodies, the "single thought-moment comprising three thousand realms as manifested in actuality" (*ji no ichinen sanzen*). By having faith in the *daimoku* and chanting it before this object of worship, he taught, one could in effect enter the mandala and participate in the enlightened reality that it depicts. Nichiren inscribed these mandalas for individual believers as a focus of personal faith and practice. More than 120 of them inscribed in his own hand survive to this day. They may also have been enshrined in local Hokkedō or chapels for *Lotus* devotion where Nichiren's followers met.¹²¹ Nichiren also inscribed smaller versions of the mandala to be worn on the person as *omamori* or protective amulets.¹²²

The three aspects of *daimoku* practice discussed above—the *daimoku* considered as esoteric mantra, offered as a prayer for the deceased, and embodied in Nichiren's mandala—appear to be innovative uses of the *daimoku* found primarily, if not exclusively, within the Nichiren tradition. From another view, however, they represent the assimilation to the *daimoku* of other preexisting forms, functions, and interpretations of Buddhist devotion, such as the use of mandalas, prayers for the deceased, and the idea of esoteric union with a cosmic Buddha. In this sense, they are very much connected to earlier practices.

Conclusions: The Emergence of the *Daimoku* in Medieval Japan

In elevating the chanting of the *daimoku* to the status of an exclusive practice, Nichiren assimilated to it all the beneficial functions that Buddhists of the medieval period expected their religion to perform: realization of the Buddha nature, worldly protection, salvation of the deceased, eradication of sins, and birth in a pure land. His genius lay in his welding of sophisticated Tendai doctrines to this simple form of practice, thus making the *Lotus* tradition accessible to

a broader spectrum of people. The simplicity and claim to all-inclusiveness of Nichiren's *daimoku* gave rise to multiple interpretations even in his early community, and this tendency has continued down to the present. Today, the chanting of the *daimoku* is variously regarded as an expression of faith, a meditative discipline, and an offering for the salvation of the dead. *Lotus*-based new religions stress its power for healing and producing worldly benefits and as a prayer for global peace, and at least one traditional Nichiren lineage—the Nakayama school based in Chiba—employs it as a tool for ritual exorcism.

The *daimoku* practice of the Kamakura period—that is, the *daimoku* of Nichiren and his early community—differed from that of the preceding era in its extensively elaborated doctrinal basis and in its claim to universal and exclusive validity. Nevertheless, it cannot be fully understood independently of its Heian antecedents. During the Heian period, as noted above, we find a widespread shift from complex to simpler forms of Buddhist practice and from *ri* to *ji*—that is, from introspective contemplation to practices involving recitation and tangible, ritual form. Among *Lotus*-related practices, alongside the traditional meditation methods of the Tendai sect, such practices as reading, reciting, and transcribing the sutra gained popularity. Short portions of the sutra additionally came to be chanted as abbreviated forms of meditation, including the verse section of the “Fathoming the Lifespan of the Tathāgata” chapter, the passage dealing with the ten suchnesses, and (as in the *Shuzenji-ketsu*) the *daimoku* itself. These shifts occurred for several reasons, including the influence of esoteric Buddhism, whose practice is grounded in visual and vocalized forms; belief in the Final Dharma age and the perceived need for simple practices suited to the limited beings of that age; the rise of deathbed practices, which by the nature of their circumstances tended to be simple; and the spread of faith in the *Lotus Sutra* beyond monks and aristocrats to a widening range of people, including those unable to acquire copies of or even read the sutra text or to devote themselves to meditative disciplines. The emergence of the practice of chanting the *daimoku* must be understood in the context of this larger historical process. Nichiren's contribution was to provide the *daimoku* with a highly developed doctrinal foundation and to advocate it as a single, exclusive practice. Though this universal, all-inclusive interpretation of the *daimoku* is unique to his teaching, the practice of the *daimoku* itself did not appear suddenly without antecedents, nor can it be understood solely as a popular practice offered to the common people. Like many aspects of Kamakura Buddhist practice, it is rooted in, and displays continuity with, an earlier tradition.

Notes

1. Descriptions of this kind overlook the extent to which Buddhism before the Kamakura period was already reaching out beyond the aristocracy, especially through the activities of *ubasoku* and *hijiri*—general terms for monks and ascetics outside the officially sanctioned monastic organization—and also *shugenja*, or shamanistic practitioners associated with esoteric Buddhism. The elite-popular dichotomy also tends to reify the structure of medieval Japanese society into the extremes of “nobles” and “common people.” Many followers of the new Kamakura Buddhist movements—for example, those of Hōnen and Nichiren—were samurai, local landholders, estate stewards, and the like—that is, people who ranked at various points between these two poles.

2. For the various roles and interpretations of the *nembutsu*, see, for example, Hori Ichirō, *Folk Religion in Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 83–139; and James C. Dobbins, *Jōdo Shinshū: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 18–19. For the reception of Hōnen's *nembutsu* by different social classes, see Tamura Enchō, *Nihon Bukkyō shisōshi kenkyū, Jōdokyō hen* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1959), pp. 35–50.

3. The phrase “*Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō*,” as the title of the *Lotus* is most frequently chanted, and similar expressions occur in some Chinese T'ien-t'ai texts by or attributed to the T'ien-t'ai patriarchs Chih-i (538–597) and Chan-jan (711–782). On this, see Shimaji Daitō, “Shōdai shisō ni tsuite,” *Tōyō tetsugaku* 29, 5 (May 1922) (reprinted in his *Kyōri to shiron* [Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1931]), pp. 495–496; and Asai Endō, “Hokke shōdai no genryū to tenkai,” *Ōsaki gakuhō* 142 (December 1986): 6–7. “*Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō*” also appears once in a striking tale from the T'ang-dynasty text *Fa-hua ch'uan-chi, chüan* 9, episode 11. This story tells of a woman who fell into hell for the sin of selling fish. On hearing that she had once performed the good act of listening to a lecture on the *Lotus Sutra*, Yama, the king of hell, agreed to let her return to the human world, but first offered her a view of the tortures that await evildoers in hell. On beholding their sufferings, she cried out “*Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō!*” (or, in Chinese, “*Na-mo miao-fa lien-hua ching!*”), whereupon all the evildoers who heard her had their sins instantly eradicated and were at once reborn in the heavens (T. 2068.51:90b–c). *Chüan* 5, episode 19 of the same text also tells of a novice monk who escapes from hell by “reciting the title of the *Lotus*” (70a–b). However, these tales refer to single utterances of the *daimoku*, not to its repeated chanting as an established practice.

4. One notable exception is that of Kitamura Sayo (1900–1967), founder of the new religion Tenshō Kōtai Jingū Kyō, who taught her followers to chant “*Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō*” but claimed no particular association with Nichiren, Buddhism, or the *Lotus Sutra*. See *The Prophet of Tabuse* (Tabuse, Yamaguchi Prefecture: Tenshō Kōtai Jingū Kyō, 1954), pp. 63, 67, 107.

5. This first chanting of the *daimoku* facing the morning sun is not mentioned in Nichiren's extant writings or in the *Goden dodai* of Nichidō (1282–

1341), one of his earliest biographies. However, it does appear in the *Hokke honmonshū yōshō*, an apocryphal work attributed to Nichiren that is thought to have been written about forty to fifty years after his death. See Rishshō Daigaku Nichiren Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo, ed., *Shōwa teihon Nichiren Shōnin ibun* (Minobu-chō, Yamanashi-ken: Minobusan Kuonji, 1952–1959; rev. 1988; hereafter *STN*), 3:2159.

6. Hieizan Senshūin, ed., *Dengyō Daishi zenshū* (Tokyo: Sekai Seiten Kankō Kyōkai, 1989; hereafter, *DDZ*), 5:69–138; or Tada Kōryū et al., eds., *Tendai hongaku ron, Nihon shisō taikai* 9 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), pp. 41–96. *Shuzenji-ketsu* is actually an inclusive title for two smaller, closely related works: the “Shuzenji sōden shichū” (Personal Annotations on the Transmissions of Hsiu-ch’an-ssu, *DDZ* 5:69–90 or *Tendai hongaku ron*, pp. 42–53, in which it is called the *Shuzenji-ketsu sōden shiki*) and the “Shuzenji sōden nikki” (Diary of the Transmissions of Hsiu-ch’an-ssu, *DDZ* 5:91–138; *Tendai hongaku ron*, pp. 54–96).

7. The four broad categories (*kōden shika no daiji* or *shika no dembō yōge*) are the threefold contemplation in a single mind (*issnin sangan*), the mind and its objects (*shinkyōgi*), the essence of calming and contemplation (*shikan daishi*), and the profound meaning of the Lotus Sutra (*Hokke shingū*). The three abbreviated transmissions (*ryakuden sankā no daiji*) are elaborations on the fourth of the broad categories, “the profound meaning of the Lotus Sutra,” and consist of the triple-bodied *tathāgata* of the perfect teaching (*engyō sanjin*), the significance of the Land of Ever-Quiescent Light (*jō jikkōdo gi*), and the causality of the Lotus (*Renge inga*). These seven categories are said to be “threefold” because they are presented in terms of the three aspects of teaching (*kyō*), practice (*gyō*), and realization (*shō*). A detailed explanation of the seven categories appears in Uesugi Bunshū, *Nihon Tendai shi* (Nagoya: Hajinkaku Shobō, 1935), pp. 599–712; a briefer account may be found in Shimaji Daitō, *Tendai kyōgaku shi* (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1929; reprint, Tokyo: Ryūbunkan, 1986), pp. 464–467. In English, see Tamura Kwansai, “Some Aspects of Oral Transmission in Japanese Tendai Buddhism,” *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 10, 2 (March 1962): 743–737.

8. For example, the colophon to the *Myōhō-enge-kyō shutsuri shōji kechi-myaku* gives the five characters *myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō* of the Lotus Sutra’s title—along with the passage from the “Skillful Means” chapter of the sutra dealing with the ten suchnesses and the verse section of the “Fathoming the Lifespan of the Tathāgatha” chapter, both of which were often ritually recited—as essentials to be believed in wholeheartedly for freeing oneself from birth and death and attaining *bodhi* (*DDZ* 5:194), and the *Shinmyō kan* contains the expression “*Namu-byōdō-daie-ichijō-myōhō-enge-kyō*” (*Namu* to the one vehicle of [the Buddha’s] impartial great wisdom, the Sutra of the Lotus Blossom of the Wondrous Dharma) (*Tendai hongaku ron, Nihon shisō taikai* 9, p. 139). Such examples may possibly reflect the practice of chanting of the sutra’s title in one form or another but are not altogether clear. In addition, the *Genshi kanjō shiki*, a Tendai text of the Danna school describing the proceedings for a particular ritual initiation, the *genshi kanjō*, explicitly says that in the course of the ceremony, the disciple receiving the transmission should be admonished to “single-mindedly chant *Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō*,” but no

further explanation of this practice is given (cited in Hazama Jikō, *Nihon Bukkyō no tenkai to sono kichō*, vol. 2: *Chūko Nihon Tendai no kenkyū* [1948; reprint, Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1974], p. 77).

9. Practice at special times means formal practice in a secluded place, conducted for a fixed length of time and according to prescribed ritual. This section of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* suggests a period of seven, twenty-one, or a hundred days and gives detailed instructions for arranging the place of practice, enshrining objects of worship, and conducting the threefold contemplation. Practice at ordinary times can be performed while walking, standing, sitting, or lying down and involves contemplation of the mind in the midst of daily activities, observing in accordance with the three truths that one’s momentary thoughts are simultaneously devoid of substance (emptiness) yet arise in dependence upon conditions (provisional existence), exhibiting both aspects yet definable as neither (the middle). Practice for the time of death was intended for one’s last hours, traditionally held to be a moment of great soteriological importance, as right mindfulness at the moment of death was believed essential to achieve the Pure Land and not fall back into the realms of transmigration.

10. *DDZ* 5:74; *Tendai hongaku ron*, p. 46. The entire section of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* dealing with the threefold contemplation for one’s final hours, only part of which is quoted above, was at some point incorporated into the corpus of works attributed to Nichiren under the independent title *Rinjū issnin sangan* and appears in the *Shōwa teihon Nichiren Shōnin ibun* (*STN*) 3: 2205–2206.

11. Nevertheless, Nichiren’s letters do highly praise the manner of death of those among his followers who died chanting the *daimoku*. See “Uenodono gohenji,” *STN* 2:1490–1492, and “Myōhō-ama gozen gohenji,” *STN* 2: 1537. On Nichiren’s understanding of the moment of death, see Matsu-mura Jugon, “Nichiren Shōnin ni okeru rinjū sōsō gi,” *Osaki Gakuhō* 144 (March 1988): 1–12.

12. *DDZ* 5:87. This passage occurs in the second fascicle of the text, which is devoted to the transmission concerning “the mind and its objects” (*shinkyōgi*). This fascicle is virtually identical to another medieval Tendai writing, the *Ichinen sanzen fukuchū* attributed to Ennin (794–864) (*Dainihon Bukkyō zensho* [Tokyo: Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan, 1970–1973; hereafter *DNBZ*], 41: 33–34). Although the origin and relation of the two texts are not clear, it has been thought that they circulated independently (see Ono Genmyō, ed., *Bussō kaisetsu daijiten* [Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, 1933–1936; rev. ed., 1964–1967], 1:153–154). Recently it has been suggested that the *Fukuchū* was originally an independent text that at some point was incorporated into the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, possibly to expand the *Shuzenji-ketsu*’s rather brief discussion of the “mind and its objects” category (see Asai Endō, *Shuzenji-ketsu*, in *Tendai hongaku ron*, pp. 556, 561). It is included in the *Dengyō Daishi zenshū* version of the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, which is based on a Keichō-period (1596–1614) transcription that must also have contained it. It has, however, been omitted by editorial decision from the *Nihon shisō taikai* version, which is based on two fifteenth-century transcriptions of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* in which this section is lacking. If the *Fukuchū* was originally an independent text, that would

mean that not one but two medieval Tendai documents are known to have recommended chanting the *daimoku* as a practice for the hour of death.

13. *DDZ* 5:87–88.

14. That is, for two hours twice a day.

15. *DDZ* 5:109; *Tendai hongaku ron*, pp. 71–72.

16. These are the *Tōtai renga shō* (*STN* 3:2137) and the *Jūhachi enman shō*, which speaks of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* as representing the “inner meaning of the Tendai sect” (3:2137, 2144). A third writing in the Nichiren collection, the “Nichinyo gozen gohenji,” mentions a transmission that Saichō received from Tao-sui in China, which has been thought to refer to the *Shuzenji-ketsu* (2:1377). As we shall see, however, some question exists about Nichiren’s authorship of these texts. The *Shuzenji-ketsu* is also quoted in the *Onkō kiki-gaki*, a collection of oral teachings on the *Lotus Sutra* traditionally attributed to Nichiren but now generally regarded as the work of later disciples (3:2544). Here it is referred to as “the transmission of the profound purport” (*genshiden*).

17. See, for example, the *Nichiman shō* of Sado Ajari Nichiman (1272–1360), *Nichirensū shūgaku zensho* (*NSZ*) 2:404; the *Hokke honmon gukyō shō* of Nichiryū (1385–1464), *Nichiryū Shōnin zenshū* 11:5–6; and the *Shinryū shōden shō* of Nisshū (1532–1594), *NSZ* 10:232–233. Of these, the *Shinryū shōden shō* explicitly mentions the *Shuzenji-ketsu* as its source for the three abbreviated transmissions.

18. *Kindan Nichiren gi*, Rishō University library ms. no. A05.31, *maki* 2, section 11. The modern Tendai scholar Uesugi Bunshū (1867–1936) also suggested that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* may be a forgery by Nichiren’s later disciples, though he stated this opinion only parenthetically and gave no reasons in support of it. See his *Nihon Tendai shi*, 1:505.

19. *Sange gakusoku*, in *Kinsei Bukkyō shūsetsu* (Tokyo: Kōya Kokusho Kan-kōkai, 1925), p. 27.

20. *Tendaiishū kōyō*, *Maeda Eun zenshū* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1931), 2:22.

21. “Shōdai shisō ni tsuite,” pp. 494–510.

22. *Ōjō yōshū* 2, chap. 6. See also Allan A. Andrews, *The Teachings Essential for Rebirth: A Study of Genshin’s “Ōjō Yōshū”* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973), pp. 75–86.

23. “Nihon Tendai kyōseki no mondai,” *Kyōri to shiron*, p. 332. Shimaji’s argument is based in part on the fact that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* is clearly drawn upon in the *Kankō ruijū*, a text attributed to Chūjin (1065–1138). Subsequent scholarship, however, has called Chūjin’s authorship of the *Kankō ruijū* into question; thus Shimaji’s dating of the *Shuzenji-ketsu* may be incorrect. See Hazama Jikō, *Nihon Bukkyō no kaiten to sono kichō*, vol. 2: *Chūko Nihon Tendai no kenkyū*, p. 116.

24. Shimaji Daitō, “Shōdai shisō ni tsuite,” pp. 500–502.

25. In addition to Shimaji, see especially Ienaga Saburō, “Nichiren no shūkyō no seiritsu ni kansuru shisōshiteki kōsatsu,” in his *Chūsei Bukkyō shisōshi kenkyū* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1947; revised 1960), pp. 66–108; and Kawazoe Shōji, “Nichiren no shūkyō keisei ni okeru nembutsu haigeki no igi,” *Bukkyōshigaku* 4, 3–4 (August 1955): 59–71 and 5, 1 (January 1956): 45–57.

26. Shimaji Daitō, *Tendai kyōgaku shi*, p. 469.

27. Many works in the Nichiren corpus exhibiting the influence of Tendai original enlightenment thought (*hongaku shisō*) do not survive in Nichiren’s holograph, fail to appear in the earliest catalogues of his writings, or exhibit other textual problems, thus lending weight to Asai’s arguments that a number of these texts may be apocryphal. However, Asai’s attempt to use any reference to the Tendai original enlightenment doctrine in itself as grounds for questioning the authenticity of works attributed to Nichiren is not without problems. See Jacqueline Stone, “Some Disputed Writings in the Nichiren Corpus: Textual, Hermeneutical and Historical Problems” (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1990), esp. chap. 1.

28. *Nichiren Shōnin kyōgaku no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1945), p. 190. Asai discusses the differences between the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and Nichiren’s thought concerning the *daimoku* on pp. 185–197. The specific response to Keikō, Maeda, and Shimaji appears on pp. 194–195. The entire sixth chapter of this book, pp. 182–373, develops the thesis that Nichiren’s thought differs essentially from that of medieval Tendai original enlightenment discourse.

29. Shigyō Kaishū, “Nichiren Shōnin kyōgaku no shisōshiteki kenkyū no ichi kōsatsu: Toku ni chūko Tendai kyōgaku o haikai toshite,” *Ōsaki gakuho* 101 (July 1954): 46–49.

30. A similar opinion had already been advanced more than a decade earlier by Tamamuro Taijō, in his *Nihon Bukkyōshi gaisetsu* (Tokyo: Risōsha, 1940), pp. 239–244. According to Tamamuro, by the Kamakura period the Tendai sect found itself isolated by its elitist tendencies from the newly emerging warrior society, and its sphere of influence was threatened by the spread of Hōnen’s Pure Land teaching. As a survival strategy, Tamamuro suggested, Tendai monks deliberately incorporated more popularly accessible elements into their sect’s teaching, forming a “new Tendai.” Tamamuro cites the use of the *daimoku* and of images representing the ten realms of beings described in the *Shuzenji-ketsu* as evidence of this trend. (Unlike Shigyō, however, Tamamuro placed the *Shuzenji-ketsu* in the early Kamakura period and felt that Nichiren had drawn on it in formulating his thought.) More recent scholarship suggests that the Tendai sect was by no means as quickly overshadowed by the new Kamakura movements as Tamamuro’s (and Shigyō’s) arguments suggest. Moreover, the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, being written in Buddhist literary Chinese, was clearly intended for a monastic readership, and it is doubtful to what extent the practices it recommends can be seen as popular accommodations.

31. In addition, the *Shuzenji-ketsu* does not apply the three aspects of teaching, practice, and realization to the entirety of the four broad categories. This point has been noted by other scholars, who also, like Tamura, see the *Shuzenji-ketsu* as representing an early stage in the formulation of the threefold seven categories of the Eshin school. See, for example, Hazama Jikō, *Chūko Nihon Tendai no kenkyū*, pp. 115–117, and Asai Endō, *Shuzenji-ketsu in Tendai hongaku ron*, p. 556.

32. Tamura Yoshirō, *Kamakura shin Bukkyō shisō no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1965), pp. 414–417; and idem, “Tendai hongaku shisō gaisetsu” in *Tendai hongaku ron*, pp. 532–534.

33. The following summary is based on Takagi Yutaka, *Heian jidai Hokke Bukkyōshi kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1973), pp. 447–465.

34. See Shioda Gisen, "Asa daimoku to yū nembutsu," *Ōsaki gakuho* 103 (June 1955): 64–68.

35. Kawazoe Shōji, "Nichiren no shūkyō keisei ni okeru nembutsu haigeki no igi," pt. 1, p. 63.

36. Ienaga Saburō, "Nichiren no shūkyō no seiritsu ni kansuru shisōshiteki kōsatsu," *Chūsei Bukkyō shisōshi kenkyū*, pp. 93–94.

37. While doing the final proofreading of this essay, I happened to find such a reference, although not in the *Ōjō den* that Takagi studied. According to the court diary *Chūyūki*, Emperor Horikawa on his deathbed "first chanted the titles of the larger *Hannya* (Skt. *Prajñā*) and *Lotus* sutras, as well as the august name of the venerable Fudō (Acala); then chanted the august names of Śākya[muni] and [A]mida and faced the West" (entry for the seventh month, nineteenth day of Kajō 2, or 1107; *Zōho shiryō taisei* 11:230b [Kyoto: Nozomigawa Shoten, 1965]). Here the *daimoku*, along with other invocations, was clearly chanted in a deathbed setting, thus lending weight to Takagi's argument.

38. Hanano Michiaki, "Nichiren kyōgaku to *Shuzenji-ketsu*," *Tōyō gakujiutsu kenkyū* 15, 5 (1976): 127–155. This article contains a near-exhaustive summary of scholarship on the *Shuzenji-ketsu*. Hanano's own estimate of the date of this text appears on p. 144.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 152–153.

40. Takahashi Ken'yū, "Nichiren Shōnin to *Shuzenji-ketsu*," *Nichiren kyōgaku kenkyūjo kiyō* 5 (March 1978): 81–99. For example, Saichō sailed for China in the twentieth year of the Chen-yüan era by the Chinese calendar (the twenty-third year of Enryaku in Japan, or 804) and returned to Japan the following year. According to the *Shuzenji-ketsu*, however, he was in China in the twenty-fourth year of Chen-yüan. (In fact, there was no such year, as the era name was changed to Yung-chen in 805.) In addition, the *Shuzenji-ketsu* says that Saichō received a transmission concerning the teaching, practice, and realization of "calming and contemplation" (*shikan*) on the third day of the sixth month, but he had in fact left China in the fifth month. This discrepancy in the dates of Saichō's stay in China had already been noted by Shimaji Daitō and other scholars. Takahashi gives a more detailed analysis of differences between authenticated writings of Saichō and the *Shuzenji-ketsu* and other medieval Tendai works, regarding the dates and contents of specific transmissions that Saichō is said to have received.

41. Hanano Michiaki, "Nichiren no shōdai shisō to Danna-ryū no kanjō genshi kuden," in *Nichiren Chūgoku Bukkyō shisō to sono tenkai*, ed. Misaki Ryōshū (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1992), p. 133.

42. To mention a few others advanced by leading scholars: Hazama Jikō (1895–1946), in a 1933 article reproduced in his *Chūko Nihon Tendai no kenkyū*, p. 37, originally placed it in the late Heian period. In a later article (dated 1940), however, he revised this estimate, suggesting that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* had been compiled somewhere from the end of the early to the mid-Kamakura period (*Chūko Nihon Tendai no kenkyū*, p. 116). Hanano suggests that Hazama changed his mind under the influence of Asai Yōrin (see Hanano Michiaki, "Nichiren kyōgaku to *Shuzenji-ketsu*," p. 139). Shioda Gisen

(1889–1964) placed the *Shuzenji-ketsu* in the late Fujiwara period, about the time of Chūjin (1065–1138); see his "Shōdai shisō no kontei to sono kiketsu," *Seishin* 29 (1955): 5. Ōkubo Ryōjun (1915–), in his "*Shuzenji-ketsu* o chūshin to suru nisan no mondai," *Tendai gakuho* 9 (October 1967): 7, suggests that the *Shuzenji-ketsu* was compiled after Nichiren had put forward his teaching of the *daimoku*.

43. Takahashi Ken'yū, "Nichiren kyōgaku to *Shuzenji-ketsu*," p. 153.

44. "Gassui gosho," *STN* 1:293. For an assessment of the claim that Vasubandhu and Chih-i chanted the *daimoku*, see Asai Endō, "Hokke shōdai no genryū to tenkai," pp. 4–7.

45. Ienaga, "Nichiren no shūkyō no seiritsu ni kansuru shisōshiteki kōsatsu," pp. 95–96.

46. *DNBZ*, 68:519b.

47. Kobayashi Yasunori, ed., *Hokke hyakuza kikigakishō sōsakuin* (Tokyo: Musashino Shoin, 1975), pp. 59–61. Takagi Yutaka (*Heian jidai Hokke Bukkyōshi kenkyū*, p. 432) has determined that this story is based on a similar Chinese tale in the T'ang-dynasty collection *Fa-hua ch'uan chi*, *chūan* 5, tale 19. In the original story, the novice monk is not instructed to chant the *daimoku* before flinging himself from the cliff, but, in hell, he "recites the title of the *Lotus*" and is able to return to the human world (T. 51.2068:70a–b). This is one of the few references to chanting the *daimoku* in Chinese sources (see n. 3).

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 118–120. This lecture, appropriately, is commenting on a passage from the "Dhāraṇī" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, in which the Buddha praises ten female *rākṣasas* who have vowed to protect the sutra's devotees, saying, "Well done, well done! For merely being able to protect one who receives and keeps the name of the *Lotus [Sutra]*, your happiness shall be immeasurable" (*Miao-fa lien-hua ching* 7, T. 262.9:59b, 20–21).

49. *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (NKBT), 75:369.

50. *NKBT*, 24:200.

51. *NKBT*, 25:138.

52. The following summary is based on Takagi Yutaka, *Heian jidai Hokke Bukkyōshi kenkyū*, pp. 430–447.

53. "Kichijō-in Hokke-e ganmon," *Kanke bunsō*, no. 650, in *NKBT*, 72:599.

54. Takagi has found two examples that may possibly be earlier but occur in texts that cannot be reliably dated. The *Aji hishaku*, which is attributed to Enchin and carries the date 858, concludes with the phrase "Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō" (*Chishō Daishi zenshū*, 3:1195a). However, this work is very likely apocryphal, and thus its dating is uncertain. The *Kachio engi* says that the monk Shōnyo, fourth abbot of the Kachiodera, in later life "had [people] chant 'Namu-myōhō-enge-kyō' . . . and contemplate 'Namu-Amida-nyorai'" (*DNBZ*, 83:17b). The text itself says that Shōnyo was born in 781, and the events that it describes may belong to the Jōgan era (859–876). If so, this would represent the earliest known instance in Japan of the *daimoku* being actually chanted as a practice. However, the date of the *Kachio engi*, too, is unknown (Takagi, *Heian jidai Hokke Bukkyōshi kenkyū*, pp. 445–447).

55. Shimaji Daitō, "Shōdai shisō ni tsuite," p. 497; and *Tendai kyōgaku shi*, p. 394.

56. *DNBZ*, 41:125a.

57. The *Nembutsu hōgō* has, among its expressions of devotion to the treasure of the Dharma, the words "Namu-kaisan-kennichi-kaigon-kennon-issai-shujō-kai-jōbutsudō-byōdō-daiei-ichijō-myōhō-rengē-kyō" (*Namu* to the Sutra of the Lotus Blossom of the Wondrous Dharma, the impartial great wisdom that opens the three vehicles to reveal the one vehicle, that opens the [Buddha's attainment in this] immediate [lifetime] to reveal [his attainment in the remotest] past, and that opens the path of buddhahood to all sentient beings) and "Namu-ijjishi-gonkai-kenjitsu-hosshaku-kempon-ichijō-myōden" (*Namu* to the wondrous scripture of the one vehicle that opens the provisional and reveals the true, casting off [the Buddha's] manifest traces to reveal his original [ground]) (*DNBZ*, 41:139b, 140a); and the *Ichijitsu bodaige* has "Namu-dōjō-shōtoku-honchi-jinjin-ichijō-myōden" (*Namu* to the wondrous scripture of the profound single vehicle, the original ground realized at the place of enlightenment) (143c). Both these works are attributed to Kakuun.

58. *Shuzen hōshiki*, reproduced in Akamatsu Toshihide, *Zoku Kamakura Bukkyō no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1966), p. 318.

59. Takagi cites Takeuchi Rizō, ed., *Heian ibun, Kinsekibun hen* (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1965), p. 90, as his source for this inscription. The inscription itself is reproduced in Seki Hideo, ed., *Kyozuka ibun* (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1985), inscription no. 10, p. 7.

60. Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon Jōdokyō seiritsu shi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1956; rev. ed., 1975), p. 170, n. 20.

61. Takeuchi Rizō, ed., *Heian ibun, Kinsekibun hen*, pp. 92–93.

62. "Fujiwara Yorimichi no tame Shirakawa-in ni oite Daisōjō o gasu myōson kyūjūsan ganmon," in *Honchō bunshū* 46, *Shintei zōho kokushi taikai*, ed. Kuroita Katsumi (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1966), 33:191.

63. Takeuchi Rizō, ed., *Heian ibun, Kinsekibun hen*, pp. 111–112. I have followed Takeuchi here in giving this inscription as "Namu-nyohō-myōhō-rengē-kyō." Takagi gives it as "Namu-nyohō-rengē-kyō"; one of these is probably a misprint. The expression *nyohō*, "according to [prescribed] method," was often prefixed to the names of sutras that had been copied according to ritual procedure. In the case of sutras intended for burial, it was also inscribed before the name of the sutra on the sutra case and on the stone stupa erected above the burial mound. See Willa J. Tanabe, *Paintings of the Lotus Sutra* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1988), p. 44. Though Takagi does not call this to our attention, if the monument at the Jōsuiji—which is in Kyushu—was originally erected there, that would suggest that at a very early date the *daimoku* had already spread well beyond the radius of the capital.

64. *Chūyūki*, in Zōho Shiryō Taisei Kankōkai, ed., *Zōho shiryō taisei* 13 (Kyoto: Nozomigawa Shoten, 1965), p. 80.

65. "Myōmitsu Shōnin goshōsoku," *STN* 2:1164. This has also been noted by Asai Endō, "Hokke shōdai no genryū to tenkai," p. 7.

66. "Unkei gankyō okugaki," Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, ed., *Komonjo jidai kagami*, 3, 47: 76–78.

67. *Hōbutsu shū*, *DNBZ*, 91:63 b–c.

68. *DNBZ*, 91:220c.

69. "Matsuno-dono goke-ama gozen gohenji," *STN*, 2:1630–1631.

70. Ienaga, "Nichiren no shūkyō no keisei ni kansuru shisōshiteki kōsatsu," p. 96.

71. Takagi Yutaka, *Heian Jidai Hokke Bukkyōshi kenkyū*, pp. 464–465.

72. The "Gassui gosho" names Vasubandhu and Chih-i as predecessors who chanted the *daimoku* (*STN*, 1:293). The *Tōtaigi shō* and the "Utsubusa nyobō gohenji" both name Chih-i and his teacher Hui-ssu (1:767; 2:1785); the *Tōtaigi shō* also names Saichō. The *Sandai hihō bonjō ji* names Vasubandhu, Nāgārjuna, Hui-ssu, and Chih-i (2:1864). The authenticity of both the *Tōtaigi shō* and the *Sandai hihō bonjō ji* is in question.

73. "Myōmitsu Shōnin goshōsoku," *STN*, 2:1164.

74. "Gassui gosho," *STN*, 1:293.

75. "Myōhō-ama gozen gohenji," *STN*, 2:1527.

76. In his later years, Nichiren taught his followers to aspire not to the Pure Land of Amida, but to the "Pure Land of Eagle Peak" (Jpn. *ryōzen jōdo*), an apotheosis of Mt. Gṛdhrakūta where Śākyamuni Buddha is said to have preached the *Lotus Sutra*. This term also occurs in certain medieval Tendai texts.

77. *Kyōgyōshō gosho*, *STN*, 2:1488.

78. *Kanjin honzon shō*, *STN*, 1:711.

79. "Shijō Kingo-dono gohenji," *STN*, 1:635.

80. According to Nichiren textual specialist Suzuki Ichijō, apocryphal writings attributed to Nichiren began to appear roughly a century after Nichiren's death and were produced for only another hundred years or so thereafter. See his *Nichiren Shōnin ibun no bunkengaku-teki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1965), p. 8.

81. *Shō Hokke daimoku shō*, *STN*, 1:202.

82. *Jisshō shō*, *STN*, 1:490.

83. *Shishin gohon shō*, *STN*, 2:1298.

84. This shift in thought reflects the increasing importance that the *daimoku* assumed for Nichiren from the time of the Sado exile. His authenticated works written before then describe the merits of chanting the *daimoku* merely in terms of enabling one to escape the lower realms of transmigration and eventually attain birth in a pure land. While on Sado, however, he began to describe the *daimoku* as enabling the direct attainment of buddhahood. On this see, for example, Asai Endō, "Nichiren no ibun to hongaku shisō" in *Hongaku shisō no genryū to tenkai, Hokekyō kenkyū*, ed. Asai Endō (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1991), 11:290–292; and Marumo Ryūsei, "Nichiren Shōnin no *daimoku* ron: Sado zengō ni okeru sōi ni tsuite," *Nichiren kyōgaku kenkyūjo kiyō* 16 (March 1989): 37–44.

85. For example, in the *Kanjin honzon shō* (*STN*, 1:719) and "Toki Nyūdō-dono gohenji" (2:1522). For more detailed discussion of the concept of *ji* in Nichiren's teaching, see Mochizuki Kankō, *Nichiren kyōgaku no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1958), pp. 89–110, 118–122; and Asai Endō, "Ji no hōmon," *Nichiren kyōgaku kenkyūjo kiyō* 13 (February 1986): 1–11.

86. *Isshō jōbutsu shō*, *STN*, 1:42.

87. *STN*, 1:44.

88. Tamura Yoshirō includes it in a list of works from the Nichiren collection in which, even though they date from Nichiren's early period when his

writing still reflected considerable medieval Tendai influence, "original enlightenment thought is excessively emphasized or overly developed." They are therefore, in Tamura's opinion, suspect (*Kamakura shin Bukkyō shisō no henkyū*, pp. 591–592). This is not in itself a very convincing argument, as Tamura does not explain what would constitute "excessive emphasis" on original enlightenment thought in a work from Nichiren's early years, a time when he drew substantially on the original enlightenment discourse. Nevertheless, the text does exhibit some puzzling features. Its strong Tendai perspective would suggest that it belongs to the early part of Nichiren's career, but its claim that chanting the *daimoku* is the direct practice for attaining buddhahood does not appear in any of Nichiren's authenticated works until the time of the Sado exile. It also contains a noncritical reference to the practice of "chanting the Buddha's name." If this refers to the invocational *nembutsu*, it would be a rare occurrence in Nichiren's writings of any period.

89. For a discussion of this text and the argument surrounding its authenticity see Stone, "Some Problematic Writings in the Nichiren Corpus," pp. 135–151, 157–172.

90. *STN*, 3:2036–2037.

91. "Only a Buddha and a Buddha together can fathom the true aspect of the dharmas, that is to say, the suchness of their characteristics, the suchness of their nature, the suchness of their essence, the suchness of their power, the suchness of their activity, the suchness of their causes, the suchness of their conditions, the suchness of their effects, and the suchness of their ultimate equality from beginning to end" (T. 262.9:5c). The interpretation of this passage in terms of the three truths derives from Chih-i, who, by transposing the punctuation of the Chinese text, construed the passage three different ways to yield, respectively, the meanings of emptiness, provisional existence, and the middle (*Fa-hua hsüan-i*, T. 1716.33:693b, 9–26). See also the translation of this passage from the *Fa-hua hsüan-i* in Paul L. Swanson, *Foundation of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy: The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism* (Berkeley, Calif.: Asian Humanities Press, 1989), pp. 180–181.

92. See T. 1911.46:11b, 9–21.

93. *STN*, 3:2037. The quote from the *Ssu-chiao i* appears at T. 1929.46:725b, 6–7.

94. T. 1911.46:11b. See also Neal Donner and Daniel B. Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation: A Study and Annotated Translation of Chih-i's Mo-ho chih-kuan*, Kuroda Institute Classics in East Asian Buddhism (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), pp. 224–225; and Daniel B. Stevenson, "The Four Kinds of Samādhi in Early T'ien-t'ai Buddhism," in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter N. Gregory, Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism, no. 4 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), pp. 56–57.

95. *STN*, 3:2038.

96. *Fa-hua ching an-lo-hsing i*, T. 1926.46:700a. These two forms of *Lotus samādhi* were incorporated by Chih-i into the part-walking, part-sitting *samādhi*, the third of the four kinds of *samādhi* outlined in his *Mo-ho chih-kuan*. See also Stevenson, "The Four Kinds of Samādhi in Early T'ien-t'ai Buddhism," pp. 67–72.

97. *Engoku jitsugi shō*, *Nichirenshū shūgaku zensho*, 1:81.

98. See the discussion of Nikkai's thought in Watanabe Hōyō, *Nichirenshū shingyōron no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1976), pp. 158–174.

99. On this subject see Watanabe Hōyō, "Nichiren kyōgaku ni okeru sanmai no mondai," *Nihon Bukkyō gakkai nemfyō* 41 (March 1976): 339–351.

100. See, for example, Shioda Gisen, "Asa daimoku to yū nembutsu," pp. 66–67; and Asai Endō, "Nichiren no kyōgaku to hongaku shisō," pp. 293–294.

101. *STN*, 1:84–85.

102. *STN*, 1:202.

103. *Jisshō shō*, *STN*, 1:490.

104. *STN*, 1:720.

105. *Hōon shō*, *STN*, 2:1248.

106. Takagi Yutaka, *Nichiren to sono montei* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1965), pp. 67–81.

107. "Ben-dono ama gozen gosho," *STN*, 1:752.

108. See, for example, Ōtani Gyōkō, "Nichiren Shōnin ni okeru senshō daimoku to yogyō no jissen: Toku ni dokujū o chūshin toshite," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* (March 1975): 432–434. Ōtani focuses on Nichiren's writings from the period of his retirement on Mt. Minobu (1274–1282); an earlier instance of Nichiren recommending sutra recitation along with chanting the *daimoku* occurs in the "Gassui gosho," *STN*, 1:290, dated 1264.

109. One intriguing group of disciples is those for whom Nichiren inscribed mandalas as objects of worship (*honzon*), but of whom nothing else is recorded. Of forty-nine lay followers known to have received mandalas from Nichiren, only about 10 percent additionally received letters from him that have survived and that give us further information about them. See Takagi Yutaka, *Nichiren to sono montei*, pp. 68, 78, n. 5.

110. *Ongi kuden*, *STN*, 3:2672.

111. *DDZ*, 5:293.

112. *Sanze shobutsu sōkanmon kyōsō hairyū*, *STN*, 2:1697.

113. For a summary of the questions surrounding its authenticity, see Stone, "Some Disputed Writings in the Nichiren Corpus," p. 243.

114. "Abutsu-bō gosho," *STN*, 2:1145. One passage from the *Shuzenji-ketsu* similarly suggests that "chanting the single name *myō* [of *Myōhō-enge-kyō*]" can serve as an esoteric practice for achieving union with Dainichi (*Tendai hongaku ron*, p. 77; *DDZ*, 5:115).

115. See, for example, "Utsubusa nyobō gohenji," *STN*, 2:1784; and "Ueno-dono haha ama gozen gohenji," *STN*, 2:1810.

116. "Nakaoki Nyūdō goshōsoku," *STN*, 2:1718–1719.

117. On *daimoku itabi*, see Ishimura Kiei, "Daimoku, myōgo, jusanbutsu itabi," in *Itabi no sōgō kenkyū*, ed. Sakazume Shūichi (Tokyo: Haku Shōbō, 1983), pp. 120–129; and Chijiwa Itaru, *Itabi to sono jidai: tejika na bunkazai, mijika na chūsei* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1988), pp. 158–169. The description of the oldest known *daimoku itabi* appears in Chijiwa, pp. 162–165. The stone monument inscribed with a variant of the *daimoku* at the Jōsuiji, noted by Takagi and mentioned above, suggests itself as an antecedent to these medieval *itabi*.

118. *Shō Hokke daimoku shō*, *STN* 1:202.

119. "Gassui gosho," *STN*, 1:291.

120. "Nichinyo gozen gohenji," *STN*, 2:1375. For a detailed description of the great mandala (*daimandara*), see Nichirenshū Jiten Kankō inkai, ed., *Nichirenshū jiten* (Tokyo: Nichirenshū Shūmuin, 1981), pp. 262-264.

121. Takagi Yutaka, *Nichiren to sono montei*, p. 74; Watanabe Hōyō, "Daimandara to Hokkedō," *Nichiren to sono kyōdan* 1 (1976): 90-95.

122. Miyazaki Eishū, *Nichirenshū no kitōhō* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1980), p. 48.