

RISING FROM THE LOTUS:  
TWO BODHISATTVAS FROM THE LOTUS SUTRA AS A  
PSYCHODYNAMIC PARADIGM FOR NICHIREN

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*Introduction*

A fundamental principle of the psychology of images is the notion that images are normative for a person's life. With this as a working hypothesis, we can discover in Nichiren's use of two figures from the *Lotus Sutra* elements of his personality structure which are both central throughout his career and a key in understanding the evolution of his vision. Although these two figures have been considered important elements of his thought and are often taken up in studies on Nichiren, their implications for the meaning of his life and thought as a whole have not been examined. Such an examination would reveal the manner in which his self-image establishes a pattern and indeed a context for other important elements in this thought, particularly his attitude toward the Japanese nation, his soteriology, and his eschatology.

There is a clear need to establish such a framework within which to place the complex streams of events, both social and psychic, which comprise Nichiren's life. The numerous excellent studies of Nichiren notwithstanding, an adequate broadly applicable framework has yet to be formulated. Even the more sophisticated interpretations have not done justice to the dynamic and complex development of his inner life. More commonly, both in scholastic circles and in certain political and religious groups, his thought has been oversimplified and misappropriated. This is demonstrated, for example, in Nakamura Hajime's assertion (based on a quotation taken out of context) that "Nichiren's first and last concern was Japan" (Nakamura 1964, p. 443).

In raising the issue of image and identification in Nichiren's life, I have in mind his sense of identification with Jōfukyō and Jogyō, the two bodhisattvas from the *Lotus Sutra*. The term "identification" can be used in two ways: an awareness of some common feeling or characteristic, that is, an identity with another person; or the establishment of one's identity as a certain person. In this study the term is meant to indicate a continuum between these two meanings. In Nichiren's case the movement is generally from the former toward, and at some points touching, the latter. However, later in his life, after the identification has become strong, the movement also goes backward at times toward looser analogies and similes. The shifts in the strength of identification also seem to reflect an ambivalence in Nichiren's self-image.

Identification with a certain image or figure becomes a determining factor in the interpretation of one's subsequent experience and the shaping of one's activities, but it also reflects one's previous experience and interpretation of that experience. For this reason we can understand Nichiren's identification with the bodhisattvas as representating critical themes that run throughout his career, even though these figures do not themselves appear in his early writings. This pattern can be clearly seen when we examine Nichiren's life.

The common structure running through his career is a radically dichotomous self-understanding, the central elements of which are given expression in his identification with the two Bodhisattvas. We can briefly characterize the chief elements represented by the two bodhisattvas as poles of Nichiren's personality.

Jōfukyō Bodhisattva represents Nichiren's sense of persecution and his heroic perseverance in face of harsh antagonism. Because of Nichiren's extreme exclusivism and militant posture, his sense that he was persecuted was often accurate. However, it must at times be seen as including elements of persecution and martyr complexes. These in turn contributed to the actual antagonism in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Jogyō Bodhisattva is the embodiment of Nichiren's evolving sense of mission, and the locus for the expression of his compassion. Identification with this figure develops its clearest

expressions during Nichiren's exiles when he is less involved in external conflict. At its extreme it includes his image of himself as the central figure in an eschatological history based on the *Lotus Sutra*, as well as other delusions of grandeur.

These radically dichotomous poles of Nichiren's self-image, and the tension between them, are reflected in other central elements of his thought, most strikingly in his image of the nation. On the one hand, Japan is the ideal place, the finest of all lands. It is the source of the regeneration of the earth as a Buddha-land, and can be seen as a *tathāgata-garbha* giving rise to Nichiren in particular and more generally an enlightened world. On the other hand, however, Nichiren has an extremely negative assessment of the actual state of affairs in the nation. It is the most wicked and corrupt place and is bound for suffering and destruction.

#### JŌFUKYŌ BODHISATTVA

Jōfukyō (Sadāparibhūta: Never-Disparaging; also called Fukyō) Bodhisattva appears in Chapter Twenty.<sup>1</sup> The Chapter begins with Śākyamuni Buddha's declaration that if a person holds to this Sutra, and another person abuses him, the latter "will receive retribution for a great sin," and the former will gain merit, causing him to attain purity of the six senses. He then relates the story of Jōfukyō Bodhisattva, who appeared in the Age of the Reflected Dharma, when true realization was lacking, and monks filled with pride had great power.<sup>2</sup>

For what reason was he named Never-Disparaging? Whomever this *bikṣu* saw, be it *bikṣus* [monk], *bikṣuṇī* [nun], *upāsaka* [layman], or *upāsikā* [laywoman], he would do obeisance to them all and utter praise, saying, "I profoundly revere you all! I dare not hold you in contempt. What is the reason? You are all treading the bodhisattva-path, and shall succeed in becoming buddhas" (Hurvitz 1976, p. 280).

Some of the proud followers of the Hīnayāna, being ignorant of the truth of what he said, considered him presumptuous and were greatly angered. Although they would abuse him verbally and "would beat him with sticks and staves, with tiles and stones," Jōfukyō Bodhisattva continued in his ways, evincing boundless patience and loyalty to the truth.

When he faced the end of his life, he heard verses from the *Lotus Sutra* in the midst of open space, and as a result he attained purity of his faculties, extended his life-span by an astronomical number of years, and attained supernatural powers and wisdom. Seeing this miraculous event and hearing him expound the Sutra, those who had previously abused him were converted.

Śākyamuni Buddha goes on to reveal that Jōfukyō Bodhisattva was none other than himself in a previous life, and that he attained supreme enlightenment by keeping, reading, and reciting this Sutra, and by expounding it to others.

Nichiren's use of this Chapter is closely related to his use of the Thirteenth Chapter, "Fortitude," where myriads of bodhisattvas take an oath before the Buddha that they will perpetuate the Sutra in spite of the latter evil age, *mappō*.

In a frightful and evil age we will broadly preach,  
 Those ignorant men, whoever they may be,  
 That revile us with foul mouths  
 Or attack us with knives and staves,  
 We will all endure. . . . Foul language and wry faces,  
 Repeated banishment,  
 Separation from stupas and monasteries--  
 Such shall the many evils be;  
 But, mindful of the Buddha's commands,  
 We will all endure these things (Hurvitz 1976, p. 205).

Such passages suggest that the *Lotus Sutra* was written, at least in part, during a period when Mahāyāna cults were emerging and where still in the process of developing their own institutions. The Thirteenth and Twentieth Chapters of this Sutra evince a good deal of antagonism and polarization between the established

stream of the tradition and the newly emerging groups. Nichiren relies heavily on these Chapters in coming to terms with the frustration of his hopes and his personal suffering and in justifying militant means of propagating his teachings. One can easily see how Jōfukyō Bodhisattva's heroic allegiance to the task of propagating the *Lotus Sutra* could be taken as a source of inspiration in Nichiren's attempts to spread his teaching in the face of formidable obstacles. Indeed, we could predict that his identification with this particular bodhisattva would increase in periods of his life when he felt most victimized and unrecognized.

Although a discussion of Nichiren's early life is not within the scope of this paper, one point bears mention here. Takagi Yutaka (1970, pp. 31-33) suggests that because of the situation at Mt. Hiei, where sons of noble families were favored, Nichiren did not have access to private instruction, but only public lectures. As a result, he came up with his own novel interpretations of the scriptures. It also seems that the hierarchical structure of society in general, and at Mt. Hiei in particular, precipitated in Nichiren a reaction which informed the character of his religion. He, among all major Buddhist leaders in Japan in this period, is unique both in coming from a family of commoners and in the militantly exclusive character of his religious teachings. Nichiren's exclusivist tendencies gradually took clearer and stronger form, and eventually gave shape to extreme attitudes both toward various forms of Buddhism and towards the nation as a whole. In giving expression to such attitudes, he often identified himself with Jōfukyō Bodhisattva, especially in the harsh conditions he faced during his exile to Sado.

### JOGYŌ BODHISATTVA

The other bodhisattva of primary importance to Nichiren was Jogyō (Viśiṣṭacārita: Superior Conduct) Bodhisattva, one of the leaders of the welling-up-out-of-the-earth bodhisattvas who appear in the Fifteenth Chapter of the *Lotus*. In this Chapter, the emergence of incalculable myriads of bodhisattvas from the earth

becomes the pretext for Śākyamuni Buddha to reveal that he was actually enlightened inconceivably long ago, and that the birth, renunciation, enlightenment and *parinirvāṇa* of the historical Buddha were merely a show of expedient means. These myriads of bodhisattvas were converted by Śākyamuni after his enlightenment in the inconceivable past. In the Twenty-second Chapter Śākyamuni entrusts them with the task of propagating the Sutra.

Nichiren's identification with Jogyō Bodhisattva developed toward the latter part of his career. In general his identification with this figure takes place within a much less antagonistic atmosphere than his identification with Jōfukyō Bodhisattva. In Nichiren's use of Jogyō Bodhisattva, we see the merging of two important themes which had been developing in this thought. One is his growing tendency to interpret the *Lotus Sutra* literally, as a blueprint for history. Eventually he came to read the events of his life and times according to his understanding of the Sutra, so that the world in which he lives was his vision of the *Lotus*. In turn, he read the Sutra as a revelation of the destiny of the world. Within this view of history, he saw his own times, which he had come to consider as the *mappō*, as the climax of the drama unfolded in the Sutra.

The second theme we find in Nichiren's identification with Jogyō is a sense of himself having a uniquely important role in the regeneration of the Buddha-Dharma in Japan and the world. The two themes coalesce in his identification with Jogyō Bodhisattva, the one entrusted with the task of propagating the *Lotus Sutra* in *mappō*.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF A VISION

In developing a periodization of Nichiren's career, I have relied a great deal on the work of Tamura Yoshirō. Tamura holds that the traditional periodization of Nichiren's life, dividing it into two periods, before and after the exile to Sado (1271-1274), is insufficient. He suggests that the events leading up to and including the earlier exile to Izu (1261-1263) mark a significant enough change

in Nichiren's life and teachings that they warrant the division of his career into three periods (Tamura 1970, pp. 10-14). I feel that a similar judgment can be made about the period of his retirement to Mt. Minobu, which as we shall see is a time of important changes in Nichiren's character and thought. In short, then, we arrive at a four-period scheme: 1) the early period, from the original proclamation of his teaching in 1253 up until his emergence from the Jissōji seclusion in 1259; 2) the period from after the Jissōji seclusion until just before the exile in Sado in 1271, including the Izu exile; 3) the period from just before his exile to Sado until his brief return to Kamakura in 1274; and 4) the period of his retirement to Mt. Minobu where he spent the rest of his life.

*The Early Period: Until Nichiren's Emergence from the Jissōji Seclusion*

Much of the information we have about Nichiren's life comes to us through his own accounts, often written many years after the events he was describing, and with purposes other than satisfying the demands of historical accuracy. It seems quite clear, though, that he began his career of teaching and proselytizing in the year 1253. It is also widely accepted that from the spring of 1258 Nichiren secluded himself for nearly two years in Jissōji, a small temple near Kamakura. These two events will act as the parameters of our consideration of the early period of Nichiren's career.

Nichiren's works from this period reveal that he had resolved his long search for truth, and was already confirmed in the central theme of his life's teaching, faith in the *Lotus Sutra* and the intonation of homage to its title, the *daimoku*, *Namu-myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō*.<sup>3</sup> Compared with his later works, his writings from this period are of a rather philosophical tenor, using Tendai logic to establish the supremacy of the *Lotus Sutra*, as well as to dispel any doubts in its efficacy. He often wrote of the eternal Śākyamuni and encouraged people to become enlightened to the truth within their own lives. During this early period, Nichiren was calling for a reform of Tendai to what he understood

to be the true teaching. He was also performing Tendai services with other Tendai priests (Rodd 1980, p. 7).

Conspicuously absent from the writings of this period are some important features which generally characterize Nichiren's teachings. There is no mention of either *mappō* or Japan as a part of his own teachings. The two bodhisattvas, Jōfukyō and Jogyō, do not appear until the Jissōji seclusion. Furthermore, in contrast to a common misconception that Nichiren attacked all other sects when he first proclaimed his doctrine in 1253 (a view which stems from Nichiren's own later writings), his main attack was on the Jōdo sect, the inclusion of other sects taking place gradually, in accord with the circumstances of the propagation of his faith (Tamura 1969, p. 3). The introduction and development of such themes in his later writings is strong evidence in support of the view that Nichiren had undergone important changes from this earlier period. Right from the start, however, his attacks seem to have had a militant, uncompromising and exclusivistic character which created severe enmity. Nevertheless, at this point he can still be accurately seen as being within the fold of Tendai Buddhism and he exhibited great confidence and zeal in his efforts to convince Tendai priests of his interpretation of the teaching.

#### *The Second Period: Hokekyō no Gyōja*

The seclusion at Jissōji can be seen as a transitional phase to the second period, which assumes its mature character during Nichiren's Izu exile (1261-1263) and extends up until just before his exile to Sado in 1271.

Throughout the early period of Nichiren's career, Kamakura, where he lived, was beset by a remarkable series of fires, epidemics, and natural catastrophes. The death, suffering, and despair caused by these calamities typified the times. Tamura suggests that the startling series of catastrophes had thrown Nichiren into a new period of doubt and crisis. Thus he secluded himself in Jissōji for a protracted period of scriptural study and contemplation. As a result of his searching, Nichiren dispelled his doubts and arrived at firm convictions which he expressed in his writings in 1259 and 1260, including the *Shugo kokkaron* (On Protecting the



Nation) and the *Risshō ankokuron* (On Establishing the Truth and Bringing Peace to the Nation). The reason for the calamities, he believed, was the failure of the government and the people to practice the Buddha-Dharma properly. In order to have the strength to rectify the government and save society, it was necessary to unite the spiritual energies of the whole nation behind a single teaching. Thus Nichiren's true teaching should be recognized and all other sects should be suppressed (Tamura 1969, pp. 10-14).

In the *Risshō ankokuron* Nichiren cites several "nation-protecting scriptures" (*chingo kokkakyō*), mentioning calamities which would take place in the country if the ruler and the people did not have the true faith. Floods, conflagrations, plagues, famine, drought, typhoons, earthquakes, political intrigues, and rebellions had all beset Japan. Noting that invasion by a foreign power was also predicted, Nichiren threatened that this too would happen if his teachings were not accepted.<sup>4</sup> The same treatise also called for the vigorous suppression of other sects of Buddhism. In 1260 Nichiren presented the *Risshō ankokuron* to the Bakufu, escalating the already rapidly growing antagonism between him and the adherents of other sects. This work reflects a new level of confidence and resolve in Nichiren, as well as a commensurate leap in his militancy. He was soon forced to flee Kamakura and was eventually arrested and exiled to Izu in 1261.

It was at Izu that Nichiren first referred to Jōfukyō Bodhisattva with some sense of personal identification.

Those people who beat up Jōfukyō Bodhisattva, even had they aroused a repentant heart in their very same lives, would still have fallen into the Hell of Incessant Suffering because their sin was so difficult to eradicate (*Shōwa teihon Nichiren-shōnin ibun*, p. 240).

In this passage we see what appears to be an attempt to come to terms with his exile, as well as the realization that he would not easily convert the nation to his beliefs.

So far, we have observed a radical escalation in his sense of persecution and antagonism. It is also fair to say that, in order to challenge the entire Buddhist establishment of his day, he must have developed an extremely strong sense of his own importance. He has begun to identify with Jōfukyō Bodhisattva as a role model in order to justify his suffering, which, from the time of the Izu exile, he began to take as an important mark of the *Hokkekyō no gyōja*, the one who puts the *Lotus Sutra* into practice. He also seems to be developing a strong sense of the unfolding of the *Lotus* as history. These two elements are clearly reflected in the following passage from the *Kyōkijōkusho*:

It is said in the Chapter in the *Lotus Sutra* "On Fortitude" that in the fifth five-hundred period of the Dharma, there would appear enemies of the truth of three kinds.<sup>5</sup> The present time is just in this period of the fifth five-hundred years, and I see clearly the existence of the three kinds of enemies. . . . We are not entitled to be *Hokkekyō no gyōja* unless we call forth the hatred of the three kinds of enemies. One who does so is destined to lose his life on that account (my adaptation of Anesaki 1949, pp. 41-41; *Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 245).

As this second period proceeded, Nichiren developed an increased sense of the importance and uniqueness of his own position. He wrote in a letter in 1264:

None of those in Japan who hold to the Sutra have yet manifested what is stated in the Sutra [since everyone who really holds to it must encounter peril on that account]; one person, Nichiren alone has read [and put into practice the words], "We shall not care for bodily life, but only cherish the supreme Way." Then Nichiren is Japan's foremost *Hokekyō no gyōja* (my adaptation of Anesaki 1949, p. 50; *Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 327).

In this period of his life the increasing antagonism which Nichiren felt took on cosmic dimensions. He was increasingly identifying with those portions of the Sutra which promise protection for its propagators. The kami, who under the *honji-suijaku* theory were seen as bodhisattvas, would protect Nichiren and punish those who persecuted him.

We have already seen that Nichiren believed that the calamities occurring in the country were due to the people not believing in the true Dharma. To go a little further into the workings of this cosmic punishment, let us look at the *Risshō ankokuron*.

Because everyone turned his back on the truth and all people reverted to evil, the good kami abandoned the country and left; the sages departed and did not return. On account of this, evil spirits and demons came and calamities and difficulties occurred (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, pp. 209-210).

These themes also arise very clearly at the time of the next major catalytic event in Nichiren's life, the arrival early in 1268 of a Mongol envoy demanding tribute from (and thus claiming hegemony over) Japan. Inspired by what seemed to be a fulfillment of his prophecy in the *Risshō ankokuron*, he again remonstrated before the government and became all the more vehement. A letter from 1268 reflects the development of many of the themes we have been examining.

The Buddhas and kami are filled with anger. There is no doubt that they will destroy the nation. Again, it is Nichiren who knows the way to prevent this. Outside of Mt. Hiei, I am the only one in Japan. . . . If this fact goes unheeded, [Japan] will suffer the divine punishment of the ten *rākṣasas* who protect the *Lotus Sutra* which Nichiren maintains (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, pp. 423-424).

In this statement we see that it is no longer just a matter of Japan being abandoned by its protectors, but that it is precisely

they who will punish the unbelieving nation. We can note in the buddhas and kami a radical dichotomy of attitudes parallel to Nichiren's own. They are benevolent and protecting, but they also mete out punishment in anger. We also see the development of Nichiren's sense of self-grandeur as "the only one in Japan." The qualification "outside Mt. Hiei" can be accounted for partly by the fact that this letter is addressed to a priest, presumably of the Tendai sect. It also reflects a continued reverence for Saichō, who established the great center of Tendai Buddhism at Mt. Hiei, and lingering sympathies and hopes for the sect. Apparent here is not only Nichiren's concern for the nation, but also the fact that this concern is cast within a rather negative appraisal of the actual state of affairs. The word "suffer" here translated the term *kōmuru* 蒙, written with the first of the characters in the compound for "Mongol" 蒙古, suggesting that the "divine punishment" would take place at the hands of the Mongols. As we shall see, this foreshadows an important development in Nichiren's thought.

Nichiren's increasing emphasis on protection for propagators of the *Lotus Sutra* has a counterpart, however, in the other pole of his personality. During that same period he seems to have had a shift in attitude, so that his earlier naive hope that his arguments would sway the nation was replaced by the expectation of martyrdom. Due to Nichiren's analysis of the situation and his militant proselytizing and sharp tongue, he antagonized several people in high positions. He aggravated the situation by reintroducing his *Risshō ankokuron* and was eventually sentenced to exile on Sado. According to his own account, this sentence was carried out only after a miraculous stay of execution at Tatsunokuchi.

#### *The Third Period: Exile on Sado*

The exile to Sado, the island where Nichiren spent two and a half years, was the major turning point of his life. In terms of his own religious teaching, it marks the beginning of a decade in which his energy was increasingly directed toward establishing a movement which would continue beyond his own passing. The exile also marked the end of any significant religious-political activities

in Kamakura or other important population centers, and the beginning of a much more reclusive life. However, the sting of rejection was still very sharp and attack and justification, confrontation and conversion, remain the central focus of his writings, particularly during the early part of his exile.

As in the Izu exile, the theme of Jōfukyō Bodhisattva arises. One month after the Tatsunokuchi incident, Nichiren used the persecuted Bodhisattva in a rather sophisticated interpretation of his own suffering.

Fukyō Bodhisattva was not abused and vilified, stoned and beaten with staves without reason. He had probably slandered the true Dharma in the past. The phrase "after expiating his sins" indicates that because Fukyō Bodhisattva met with persecution, he could eradicate his sins of past [lifetimes]. . . . In the past Fukyō Bodhisattva himself read [these passages from the *Lotus Sutra* concerning suffering]. Now in the *mappō*, in Japan Nichiren alone seems to do so (my adaptation of Seikyo Times 1979, pp. 17-19; *Showā teihon Nichiren*, pp. 507-08).

He ends this same letter saying that he wishes he might enable the whole nation to attain enlightenment, "but in an age when no one will heed me, it is beyond my power." This statement reflects a reassessment by Nichiren of his possibility of converting the nation and hints at the transformation in Nichiren's teachings that was to take place while in Sado.

After having been deposited on Sado in the middle of winter, and in the next spring having reached the age of fifty, Nichiren wrote:

I am like Fukyō Bodhisattva and the people of this country are like the fourfold multitude who reviled him. The actors are different, but the cause of suffering is the same. . . . Why should I not become Śākyamuni Buddha like Fukyō? (Rodd 1980, p. 110; *Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 617)

In a slightly earlier letter he wrote: "The Chapter 'On Fortitude' of today must be the 'Fukyō' of the future. At that time I must become Fukyō Bodhisattva" (Rodd 1980, p. 101; *Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 515). Nichiren was growing old and had no assurance that he would ever be able to leave Sado. Given the images he had established, it is easy to see how a concern about dying in exile could call forth the image of the miraculous life extension and grand destiny of Jōfukyō Bodhisattva.

These examples of very strong identification with Jōfukyō Bodhisattva reflect an equally strong movement in Nichiren's thought toward the interpretation of his own life in terms of the Sutra. At this time, his awareness of the difficulty of seeing his vision realized and of the intransigence of his opposition was also increasing. As his identification with Jōfukyō Bodhisattva and the sense of persecution associated with it grew, his criticism of the nation took on an even harsher tone and a grander scale. Tokoro Shigemoto points out that after the exile to Sado, there are no more statements like, "This is solely to repay my indebtedness to the nation" (1965, p. 422). Rather, he believed, the Japanese have a perverted view about the Dharma. Thus, when they try to ward off the Mongols with prayer it will have the contrary effect of causing them to be invaded (Tokoro 1965, p. 422).

The sense of persecution and polarization evinced in his references to Jōfukyō Bodhisattva is predominant during the Sado exile. There also arises a contrasting theme. This new image which gave expression to Nichiren's sense of mission and his compassion toward the people is his identification with Jogyō Bodhisattva. While living in the harsh conditions of his exile to Sado, Nichiren's references to Jogyō are few in contrast to the large number made to Jōfukyō. In these few instances the main themes are that Jogyō Bodhisattva received the transmission from Śākyamuni Buddha and Prabhūtaratna Buddha, and that he propagates the *daimoku*. While some references do not express a clear sense of personal identification, in others it is very strong. In a letter to one of his staunchest disciples in 1272, he wrote:

I say that when the two Buddhas, sitting side by side in the many-jeweled stupa, commissioned Jogyō Bodhisattva, it was as if Nichiren were [himself commissioned] to propagate the five characters of the *daimoku*. Isn't Nichiren the emissary of Jogyō Bodhisattva? You also, following Nichiren, as a *Hokekyō no gyōja*, relate it to the people (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 637)

Again in the following year he said:

At this time (the onset of *mappō*), the welling-up-out-of-the-earth bodhisattvas first must appear in the world and, simply using the five characters *myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō*, clothe the children (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 719).

After his arrival at Sado Nichiren was subject to harsh opposition. Eventually, however, he was able to build a following there. This may have given him some hope that he, like Jōfukyō Bodhisattva, would be able to convert his former adversaries. However, upon his return to Kamakura he set forth his previous demands in a rather formalistic manner and then retired to Mt. Minobu. This seems to reflect the fact that by that time he had acquired a greater realism regarding the actual Japan. At that time, as at a few times earlier in his career, if he had been willing to compromise, he could have received recognition. Instead, he stubbornly refused to accept anything but a total suppression of the other sects. The polar structure of Nichiren's vision created contradictory needs. In his identification with the image of Jōfukyō the persecuted Bodhisattva, he needed rejection to confirm his identity. However, the millennial figure of Jogyō Bodhisattva called for a bond of benevolence and compassion with all people, and thus for affirmative relations with others. A compromise would not have allowed him confirmation of either image. The only way he could have let go of the image of the persecuted Jōfukyō Bodhisattva would have been through voluntary conversion of the whole nation, thus fulfilling that image and affirming the image of Jōfukyō Bodhisattva. Nichiren had realistically given up hope for

such a resolution several years earlier. The tension between the actual and the ideal Japan now called for an even more radical solution, if it were to be resolved at all.

*The Fourth Period: Mt. Minobu*

In 1274 Nichiren retired to Mt. Minobu to spend the rest of his life there. Away from the harsh confrontations and persecutions which loomed so large in his references to Jōfukyō Bodhisattva in Sado, he was able to abide in repose in his *Lotus Sutra* universe. The physical conditions were still rather severe and his health was weakening, but he had withdrawn voluntarily and had been away from the center of Japanese society for some time. The world of conflicts had receded into the distance and its existence was primarily internal, carried in his memory. This withdrawal narrowed his world in the physical and social sense, but it afforded him open ground emotionally and spiritually. This new sense of space coupled with his own spiritual maturation produced his greatest mystical flights.

Although this is such an extremely secluded place, secretly hidden in the breast of Nichiren's body of flesh and bones is the secret teaching of the one great matter which was transmitted by the Master Śākyamuni at Vulture Peak. Thus, within Nichiren's breast is the place where all Buddhas enter *samādhi*; upon my tongue is where they turn the Dharma wheel; my throat is the place where they are born; in my mouth is the place of their true awakening. Since it is such a wondrous place as this, where the *Hoke-kyō no gyōja* resides, how could it be inferior to the Pure Land of Vulture Peak? (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 1884)

He often consoled the faithful with the assurance that they would be reborn in the paradise of Vulture Peak. Early in his career the shock of his failure to fulfill his dreams of converting the nation was absorbed into his headlong rush toward and expectation of martyrdom. Even after going to Sado, he still clung to this image, saying that he had been decapitated and his ghost had come to the



island (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 590). In Minobu the failure of his further hopes was assuaged by his mystical inner visions and his projections about the future of his teaching.

The softening of his personality and the movement toward interiorization which Nichiren was undergoing are reflected in a definite shift in his use of the images of the two bodhisattvas. Jōfukyō Bodhisattva was rarely mentioned and Jogyō Bodhisattva became a major theme in his writings. Nichiren's identification with Jogyō Bodhisattva not only brought together within his own vision the unfolding of the *Lotus Sutra* as history and his own unique importance, but also linked the destiny of the nation and the world to his own grand mission. In a work in 1277 Nichiren referred to the *daimoku* as the heart of the original teaching of the *Lotus Sutra*, to be revealed by the welling-up-of-the-earth bodhisattvas at the beginning of *mappō*. The passage continues:<sup>6</sup>

Those who were to spread what is called the derivative teaching were Nan-yeuh, T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, Dengyō, and so forth. The present corresponds to the time in which Jogyō Bodhisattva has already appeared in the world (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 1316).

Another passage, from the *Hōonshō*, written in the same year, states:

So far as Nichiren's compassion is vast and comprehensive, *namu myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō* will continue beyond the ages. Such is this merit that it will open the blind eyes of all sentient beings in Japan and close off the way to the Hell of Incessant Suffering. This merit surpasses that of Dengyō (i.e., Saichō) and Tendai (i.e. Chih-i), and is greater than that of Nāgārjuna and Kaśyapa (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, pp. 1248-49).

Nichiren felt Japan's destiny to be a very special one. Not only was there a mysterious connection between the Sun Goddess Amaterasu and the Awa district where Nichiren was born and first

preached the true Dharma (Rodd 1980, pp. 144-145), but Japan was the place from which the Dharma would spread to other nations. He believed that in *mappō* the Buddha-Dharma would spread from Japan, returning to China and beyond, whence it came, just as "the sun comes out of the east" (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 1850). In this connection he also made such statements as "my Japan is more excellent than China and surpasses the eighty thousand other countries" (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 882).

How could Nichiren speak of this "my Japan" alongside the wholesale attacks he made on the nation in connection with his references to *Jōfukyō* Bodhisattva? One answer is that "my Japan" is an ideal, the Japan in which Nichiren's vision of the *Lotus Sutra* would be realized. It is the land with the potential to be the well-spring of the regeneration of the world as a Buddha-land, the ideal world. Thus we see that Nichiren was maintaining a dual image of the nation parallel to his dual image of himself. This explains how he could maintain such seemingly contradictory attitudes. Inherent in such a dual image, however, is a need for resolution. On the one hand, in the context of references to *Jōfukyō*, he seems ever more set in his conviction that Japan is a wicked nation full of totally unrepentant people and is destined to undergo great suffering and destruction. The whole nation opposes him and converting the nation is "beyond his powers." On the other hand, in passages relating to *Jogyō* he seems to be ever more confident in the success of his mission of converting the whole nation to his true teaching, which is destined to bring salvation to the world. In short how can the sense of persecution and opposition which characterizes his identification with *Jōfukyō* Bodhisattva be reconciled with the positive sense of mission and surety of success associated with the figure of *Jogyō* Bodhisattva?

After leaving Sado, references to *Jōfukyō* gradually become fewer and stop altogether a little more than a year and a half after his arrival in Minobu. During the last half of Nichiren's stay in Sado he makes a few references to *Jogyō*, but after retiring to Minobu they become much more numerous. During the period of a little under four years beginning with the spring of 1272, we see both of these images arising together in Nichiren's writings. It is

precisely during this period, when the images of the two bodhi-sattvas seem to hold equal weight in Nichiren's consciousness, that he seems most concerned with resolving the tension represented by this double image.

The resolution to this seeming contradiction came with the development of what was earlier implied in the relationship between the Mongols and divine punishment. After his retirement to Mt. Minobu, Nichiren had little hope that he could convert the nation by his own power. It was here that he developed the idea that the Mongols were the instruments of the Buddha's *shakubuku*, the stern compassion which forcefully breaks opposition to the Dharma.

Although it is wretched that my country will perish, even if this happens, the people of Japan will slander the *Lotus Sutra* even more, and all people will fall into the Hell of Incessant Suffering. . . . The Mongols, as the messengers of heaven, will punish those people who are the enemies of the *Hokekyō no gyōja*. (Tokoro 1965, p. 423; *Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 830).

The Mongols had already vindicated Nichiren once by sending messengers in 1268 and 1269. It was because of his vehemence on that occasion that Nichiren triggered his exile. Again, his recall from Sado to Kamakura in 1274 was probably due in large part to imminent Mongol attack. Yet in spite of his personal strength and apparent prophetic power, he did not receive the allegiance he demanded. Again his response was total refusal to compromise. Nichiren was the *Hokekyō no gyōja*, the one who lives in the *Lotus Sutra*, the embodiment of the Sutra.<sup>7</sup> Those who oppose him were slandering the *Lotus Sutra* and would inevitably cause their own downfall.

The people of this country, without a single exception, are the ones who commit the three perverted offenses. This is what has caused Bonnō, Taishaku, Nitten, Gatten, and the Four Heavenly Kings to enter into the body of the great

ruler of the Mongols. Nichiren may be a fool, but since I have identified myself as the messenger of Śākyamuni and the *Hokekyō no gyōja*, it is incomprehensible that they do not make use of me. For this offense, the country will be destroyed (Tokoro 1965, p. 423; *Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 996).

If the Mongols had landed, it would have been proof of Nichiren's mission:

All the inhabitants of Japan shall suffer from the invaders. Whether this comes to pass or not will prove whether or not Nichiren is the *Hokekyō no gyōja* (Anesaki 1949, p. 115, *Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 1018).

This invasion of the Mongols, however, is not the final act of the drama. Rather, it is the divine chastisement which will finally turn Japan away from its false beliefs and toward the true Dharma.

It will not be long before the great Mongols send their warships, myriads in number, and attack this country. Then, the sovereign and the whole people will surely abandon all the Buddhist and Shinto sanctuaries they used to revere and join in crying *Namu myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō*, *Namu myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō* and with folded hands pray, "Oh Master Nichiren, save us; Oh Master Nichiren" (Anesaki 1949, pp. 115-16; *Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 1052).

Here Nichiren finds meaning in the nation's suffering just as he found meaning in his own. As he, like Jōfukyō Bodhisattva, suffered for slandering the *Lotus Sutra* in the past, so would the nation suffer from the same sin. As his suffering purified him, like Jōfukyō Bodhisattva, it would help him to become Śākyamuni Buddha in the future, just as the suffering of the nation would purify it and bring forth the realization of its potential as a Buddha-land. Thus Nichiren attempts to give coherence to all his

experiences, to all of the crises, personal and national, by casting them in the drama of the *Lotus Sutra*.

Nichiren died late in 1282, a little more than a year after Japan's repulsion of the Mongol invasion. In the last letter he wrote, shortly before his death, he refers to himself as "one who has found Japan too much to handle" (Rodd 1980, p. 167; *Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 1924).

### CONCLUSION

In our examination we have noted both a complex structure and a dynamic development in Nichiren's thought. The extreme poles of his personality found a justification and a grand elevation in his images of the two bodhisattvas Jōfukyō and Jogyō.

The figure of Jōfukyō Bodhisattva supported Nichiren in the admirable traits of heroic perseverance and courage of conviction. Yet this image is not only one of the above virtues, but of extreme antagonism, suffering, and persecution, which are largely representative of his social relationships. At its extreme it gave form to delusions of persecution, thus contributing to actual persecution.

Jogyō Bodhisattva is much more the characteristic image of Nichiren's relationship to his disciples and his life of voluntary retirement. It is the image which evolves most strongly in voluntary withdrawal from social conflict. It helps him to give expression to his compassion and is a potent ingredient of his vivid creative life of imagination. His most beatific and ecstatic mystical flights manifest the power of this image. His delusions of grandeur, however, are also given expression in relation to Jogyō and reflect Nichiren's inability to overcome his fixation on and investment in such images.

Nichiren's identification with these two potent images helped to give focus to his energies. They are certainly central to his own interpretation of the drama of his life, and acted as important recurring themes in it. Yet, it might be said that his cleaving to such images not only empowered him, but also caused him to

manifest inflexible and obsessive behavior. At least in the case of Jōfukyō Bodhisattva, this is certainly in keeping with the character of the image. What was described above as inflexible and obsessive behavior, however, is possibly one of the critical characteristics responsible for the continuing validity of the Nichiren tradition.<sup>8</sup> In any event, the existence of these two figures in this Sutra, and the polarized character of certain portions of it, may form part of the explanation as to why Nichiren became a champion of the *Lotus Sutra*. It is unfortunate that we are lacking more information on his earlier life.

To the extent that one's vision is a projection of one's self-understanding, it is natural that we find a radically dichotomous bipolar structure in other central elements of Nichiren's thought. The two images of the nation correspond with the two self-images, so that we can understand a great deal of Nichiren's thought or activity as having its focus on one polar extreme or the other. For example, his famous reference to himself as the "pillar of Japan" (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 1222) clearly reflects his positive self-image in the ideal Japan.

In modern times Nichiren has been depicted as a patriot by some scholars, politicians, and religionists. The most extreme cases of this were seen earlier in this century in such people as Tanaka Chigaku, Ishiwara Kanji, and Kita Ikki, who misappropriated Nichiren's legacy as a basis for nationalistic adventurism. Such views fail to appreciate the complexity and evolution of Nichiren's vision, and the fact that his assessment of the actual Japan moved from bad to worse, and ended up as negative as his ideal Japan was positive.

Nichiren's eschatology, in which he would play a critical role in Japan as a Buddha-land, and yet where a wicked and unrepentant Japan must be punished, reflects this same polarity. Such a radical split calls for an equally radical resolution, which emerges in the remarkable convergence of the kami and the Mongols as the instruments of the Buddha's divine punishment.

The same parallel exists in the soteriological aspect of his teaching. On the one hand, practitioners of the *Lotus* are promised divine protection, of which Nichiren found evidence in his survival

of several attacks on his life. On the other hand, they are not entitled to be called *Hokekyō no gyōja* unless they suffer and die before realizing its ideal potential. Likewise Nichiren suffered and died in order for his spirit to give meaning to the lives of people even today.

Examining Nichiren's personality structure in terms of his identification with these two bodhisattvas has provided us with a valuable hermeneutical device. It has two major advantages over other devices which have been used to interpret Nichiren's life.

First, the scheme is abstracted from central elements of his own thought and represents a fundamental structure to be found in it. Thus it is broadly applicable when trying to interpret the complex and varied events in Nichiren's life and thought. Its validity is born out by its compatibility with other sophisticated interpretations of Nichiren's life and thought. For example, it seems consistent with Tamura Yoshirō's three-stage division of Nichiren's social interaction as affirming reality, confronting reality, and transcending reality. Further, many aspects of Nichiren's thought, while not manifesting this polar structure, can be seen to focus around one pole or the other.

The second advantage of this scheme is that it not only gives us a tool for interpreting the dynamic and complex events of Nichiren's life, but also reveals the creative tension out of which they arise. Since this structure reveals a central matrix of the creative workings of Nichiren's mind, even when considering aspects of his thought in which this polarity is not apparent, its indirect impact and developmental implications must be taken into account.

#### NOTES

1. All Chapter numbers refer to the arrangement of the text in Kumārajīva's Chinese translation.
2. There is an old Buddhist tradition, first found in the Pāli canon, that after the death of the Buddha, the Dharma would pass through three stages: the True Dharma, the Reflected

Dharma, and the Declined Dharma (*mappō*). According to one formulation, *mappō* began in 1052.

3. The Sanskrit word *namo*, besides being translated into Japanese as *namu*, was also translated as *kimyō* 歸命 and can be understood as offering or devoting one's life.
4. Since Nichiren had been living in Kamakura, the political and military center of Japan at that time, it is likely that he had some idea of the situation on the continent and the strength of the Mongols.
5. The three kinds of enemies are those who verbally and physically attack propagators of the *Lotus*, arrogant monks, and forest hermits who hold themselves above others. See Hurvitz 1976, p. 205.
6. In the following passage Nichiren's identification with Jogyō Bodhisattva is strongly implied. There are several other passages in which the connection is even more explicit. One letter says, "I have realized that I am the rebirth of Jogyō Bodhisattva" (*Showā teihon Nichiren*, p. 1720). However, there are many questions concerning the authenticity of many of the letters attributed to Nichiren. The passage quoted above is from a letter in Nichiren's own hand.
7. Professor Watanabe Hōyō has suggested to me that the image of the *Hokekyō no gyōja* unifies the poles of Nichiren's personality and the images of the two bodhisattvas. This is certainly one of the most important images for Nichiren. It spans virtually his whole career and takes on ever-increasing significance for him. He uses it in a broader, less personal sense early in his career and later on often uses the term to refer to himself alone, as a unique being in history. Nichiren employs the term in a vast range of different postures and situations. In fact the image is given its definition by Nichiren's life and frequently arises in association with either his messianic or his persecuted images of himself. Thus, *Hokekyō no gyōja* is certainly a comprehensive image which includes within it the polar images we have been discussing. I have chosen to transliterate rather than translate it because of its flexible and changing character. It is for precisely the same reason that this image cannot be said either to negate the dichotomous nature of Nichiren's personality or to resolve the contradictions created by it. If it can be said to unify the two images, it is only in the sense that Nichiren's entire life is



encompassed by his faith in himself.

8. Nichiren shares in common with the common image of Jesus such salient characteristics as persecution, the role of a millennial figure, and a positive evaluation of suffering. Nichiren's attraction to the image of martyrdom has also been discussed.

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