

# THE MIDDLE WAY

ADVOCATING THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN THE TRUE BUDDHA

WINTER/SPRING/SUMMER/FALL

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### ◆◆◆ *The Middle Way*

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NEVER SEEK THIS GOHONZON  
OUTSIDE YOURSELF.

THE GOHONZON EXISTS ONLY  
WITHIN THE MORTAL FLESH OF  
US ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO  
EMBRACE THE LOTUS SUTRA  
AND CHANT  
NAN-MYŌHŌ-RENGE-KYŌ<sup>1</sup>.

*THE REAL ASPECT OF THE GOHONZON*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nan-Myoho-Renge-Kyo – the correct way to pronounce Odaimoku when chanting.

<sup>2</sup> *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. 1 p. 213

# THE MYSTERY SURROUNDING THE KAIDAN GOHONZON<sup>3</sup> QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Reverend Raidō Hirota  
2021 International Meetings

**QUESTION:** What is the origin of the Dai-Gohonzon<sup>4</sup>? In Nichiren Shoshu<sup>5</sup> we are told that when Nikko Shonin<sup>6</sup> left Minobu<sup>7</sup>, he took the Dai-Gohonzon, the Daishonin's ashes and other things. What is strange is that there is no writing by the Daishonin<sup>8</sup> or Nikko Shonin that mentions the Dai-Gohonzon. Is there any proof or document that the Dai-Gohonzon was written by Nichiren Daishonin and carved by Nippo<sup>9</sup>? Or is this a lie like the Daishonin's transfer documents to Nikko Shonin?

I read that the first person to mention the Dai-Gohonzon was Nichiu Shonin. Many people say that he commissioned an Ita-Mandara (Dai-Gohonzon) to be carved. It was many years before Nichikan Shonin<sup>10</sup> mentioned it. The Dai-Gohonzon was kept in storage until the Meiji era.

As a member of Nichiren Shoshu it is a very important issue for me because the faith of the members of Nichiren Shoshu is derived from the Dai-Gohonzon. When I asked the priest at the *fukyosho*<sup>11</sup> to which I belong, he said there were no gosho<sup>12</sup> about the Dai-Gohonzon because the gosho are orientations, or points of reference.

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<sup>3</sup> Kaidan Gohonzon – Dai-Gohonzon. These words will be interchangeable through this newsletter, and will be explained further into this newsletter.

<sup>4</sup> Dai-Gohonzon – Kaidan Gohozon – the large plank Gohonzon enshrined at the Nichiren Shoshu head temple Taiskekiji.

<sup>5</sup> Nichiren Shoshu – The religion based on the True Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

<sup>6</sup> Nikko Shonin - - Byakuren Ajari Nikko Shonin (1246-1333) – 2<sup>nd</sup> High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism who received the transfer of the teachings directly from Nichiren Daishonin.

<sup>7</sup> Minobu –located in Yamanashi prefecture, it is where Nichiren Daishonn spent the last eight years of his life; where he built his temple Kuno-ji, and where his ashes are buried. It is where the head temple of the Nichiren Shu (Minobu sect), which believes in Shakyamuni as the true Buddha, is located.

<sup>8</sup> Daishonin – Nichiren Daishonin - (1222-1282) the true Buddha who realized the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō imbedded in the Lotus Sutra and established the Law as the means by which all livings beings can become enlightened.

<sup>9</sup> Nippo – a priest who was a disciple of Nichiren Daishonin. He will be discussed later in this newsletter.

<sup>10</sup> Nichikan Shonin – (1665–1726) the 26<sup>th</sup> high priest of Nichiren Shoshu

<sup>11</sup> Fukyosho – mission or missionary

<sup>12</sup> Gosho - The writings of Nichiren Daishonin.

**Reverend Raidō Hirota (RH):** The Gohonzon is the object worship of our faith. It is usually written on paper, or carved on a piece of wood, both of which are material objects. The question is, “What is inside the Gohonzon?”. This is something I have been talking about at meetings for a long time: the contents of Gohonzon. The Gohonzon contains the essence of the Law of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, which is that all living things are equal, and all living things can become enlightened. That’s what is inside the Law.

Nikko Shonin is the successor to Nichiren Daishonin. The reason Nikko Shonin left Minobu and moved to Shizuoka<sup>13</sup>, and founded Taisekiji<sup>14</sup>, was to protect the Buddhist Law that Nichiren Daishonin had taught. Nikko Shonin was an extremely religious man. When he left Minobu, he didn’t take anything with him that did not belong to him. Not even a single book. Therefore, he did not take the Kaidan Gohonzon with him either. If a Gohonzon was given to him personally by Nichiren Daishonin, then he would have taken that with him to his new location. Since the Kaidan Gohonzon is supposedly for all mankind to worship, it does not belong to one person, and therefore is not a personal item. So, there is no way Nikko would have taken something that belongs to everyone, and not to him personally. If he had taken that which belonged to everyone and not to him personally, that would be considered stealing, which is something Nikko Shonin would never have done.



Nikko Shonin

People also say Nikko Shonin removed Nichiren Daishonin’s ashes from his grave at Minobu and took them with him when he left Minobu. That is impossible. Nikko Shonin never did that. Nikko Shonin’s objective was to protect the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. To steal the Daishonin’s ashes is beyond the realm of the Law that Nichiren Daishonin taught. The ashes are not the Law. They are not the teachings. Nikko’s only objective was to protect and preserve the True Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin for posterity. So, he left Minobu, and established Taisekiji in Shizuoka.

Thus, the story of Nikko Shonin leaving Minobu with Nichiren Daishonin’s ashes and the Dai-Gohonzon is a falsehood contrived by Taisekiji. It is very far from the actual facts. The ashes are not at Taisekiji.

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<sup>13</sup> Shizuoka – a province in Japan known for its views of Mt. Fuji.

<sup>14</sup> Taisekiji – the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. Also, the organization of the head temple.

Taisekiji also asserts that Nichiren Daishonin only transferred the Law to Nikko Shonin. To support this assertion, they insist there are two wills (*Nikkano Shojo Sho*). These Wills, or transfer documents, which are openly handed to a successor, they say, were handed to Nikko. However, a Will is something one receives and opens not long after someone has passed away. It is given to, and opened by the person it is addressed to. If it is not opened soon after the deceased has passed, it is considered invalid. If you mentioned they found the Will two or three years later, it is not considered a Will. And though Taisekiji insists Nikko received such Wills, Nikko Shonin, himself, does not mention anywhere that he has received one Will, nor two. If, two or three years after Nichiren Daishonin's death Nikko mentioned the receipt of a Will, the people around him, such as the five other priests Nichiren Daishonin designated as senior priests to carry on and spread his teachings in their locales, would have objected and would have said that that was wrong. There are no writings by other priests concerning Nikko Shonin's receipt of a Will. Yet, Taisekiji continues to insist that two Wills exist, and that they clearly state that Nichiren Daishonin transfers everything to Nikko Shonin. These documents are false. These documents were forged at a later time – after Nikko Shonin's lifetime.

During Nichiren Daishonin's time, Gohonzons were inscribed on paper. It was in scroll form. People wall or, because people carried it as a rolled scroll. Kamakura era. Four era, an era when society which were once on paper technique was to paste the inscribed on, onto wood, paper into the wood. The was initiated to extend the



Nichiren Daishonin

either unrolled it and hung it on the were transient at that time, people This was during the 13<sup>th</sup> century – the hundred years later, during the Edo was more stable, objects of worship began to be carved in wood. The paper that the object of worship was then carve the characters through the custom of wood-carved Gohonzons life of Gohonzon, as they would last

longer on wood than on paper. It was not only Nichiren Daishonin's sect that employed this technique. All other sects did the same. That was 400 years after Nichiren had lived. The custom of wood-carved Gohonzons did not exist during Nichiren Daishonin's time. To say the Kaidan Gohonzon was carved in wood by Nichiren Daishonin or anyone else during the 13<sup>th</sup> century is not a credible statement.

The 26<sup>th</sup> high priest, Nichikan Shonin was high priest during the Edo era. He was the first priest to declare that the Kaidan Gohonzon was the ultimate Gohonzon. He wrote it in an address and left it as his declaration. That declaration became the authority upon which Taisekiji's assertions, that the Dai-Gohonzon is the ultimate and

true Gohonzon, and all other Gohonzons are shadows, is based. It is an extreme theory that Nichikan initiated and Taiseikiji promulgated. Based on this assertion, it is their belief that Kaidan Gohonzon at Taiseikiji is the premier Gohonzon, Gohonzons in temples rank second, and Gohonzons given to believers rank third. But the truth is, there is no ranking amongst Gohonzons. Among the Gohonzons that Nichiren Shoshu Buddhists worship, there is no such thing as an “ultimate Gohonzon,” or a “shadow Gohonzon.” Each Gohonzon that is legitimately inscribed by a legitimate high priest has exactly the same power of faith. They are all the same. Yet, Taiseikiji insists that each Gohonzon has a different power. Nonetheless, True Buddha Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching is that all lives are equal. So, this indicates that Taiseikiji’s statements concerning the ranking of Gohonzons is far removed from the True Buddha’s teachings. Still, Taiseikiji persists with their falsehoods.

Let’s investigate why Nichikan Shonin made his declaration. Nichikan became high priest during the Edo period (1603-1868). At the time of Nichikan, Japan was under the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate<sup>15</sup>. It was the Tokugawa government’s policy to not allow religions to influence the governing of the country. The various Buddhist religions were prohibited from lobbying the government, and from debating the differences in their Buddhist belief between each other. Due to these strict prohibitions, the Tokugawa government was able to flourish because they controlled all the religious group as they saw fit.

As a result of not having to debate their merits, each sect started to embellish their merits as proof of their piety, purity, efficacy and power. Each sect only had to make claims of absoluteness, greatness, correctness and power without having to prove anything. And they did it more and more, to an extreme.

To prove to believers that Nichiren Shoshu was the correct religion, Nichikan Shonin began to make extreme declarations. As Gohonzon is the object of worship in Nichiren Shoshu, and Taiseikiji is the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu, Nichikan declared that the Gohonzon enshrined in the head temple is the ultimate and supreme Gohonzon. Nichikan made this declaration because he wanted believers nationwide to focus on Taiseikiji.

It was not only Nichiren Shoshu and other Buddhist sects, but similar exaggerated claims have been advanced by many religions throughout history. For example, to elevate its power and increase its membership Christianity asserts that “Christ died for our sins,” and confession and the promise of remission of sins is a large part of the belief that Christian believers have bought into.

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<sup>15</sup> Shogunate – (1192-1867) Japanese form of government in which the hereditary military ruler, or shogun, was an absolute dictator, not restricted by rule or law and who paid nominal allegiance to the emperor.

It is due to the social and political atmosphere of the Edo period that propelled Nichikan Shonin to initiate the idea of the supreme Gohonzon in order to elevate the status of the Nichiren Shoshu religion. But the times are different now. Yet, Taisekiji has continued to convey this fabricated notion in this modern era without consideration for the conditions present during the Edo period that prompted this extreme notion. Instead, Taisekiji insists it is Nichiren Daishonin's teaching. And they continue to perpetuate this lie even though religions today are no longer restrained by the government. And the atmosphere in modern times does not reflect any vestiges of past oppressions. Instead, Taisekiji has been clinging to the reasoning of that past era and using it to validate their claims, and what they teach and how they teach it.

There is nothing written by Nikko Shonin or Nichimoku Shonin<sup>16</sup> about a Kaidan Gohonzon. If Nikko Shonin had brought the Dai-Gohonzon from Minobu, he should have written about it. He could have said, "I didn't steal it. I had a right to bring it." And if a Gohonzon does not have a clear statement – provenance – about where it is from, it looks false. Usually a Gohonzon has some kind of clear record of where it is from. There is no such statement anywhere. That there is no record that exists stating that the Dai-Gohonzon is from Minobu is very strange. Without documentation, it looks like it just appeared like smoke. Someone, after Nikko Shonin's advent, must have written that Nikko Shonin brought that Gohonzon from Minobu.

**Question: Is there any evidence that 9<sup>th</sup> High Priest Nichiu Shonin<sup>17</sup> commissioned the Kaidan Gohonzon to be carved? And, was he the first priest to mention the Kaidan Gohonzon?**

**RH:** There is no mention of it in the writings of 9<sup>th</sup> High Priest Nichiu Shonin.

**Question: What did Nichiren Daishonin write at the time of the Atsuhara Persecution<sup>18</sup>? Did he inscribe a Gohonzon in response to the Atsuhara Persecution?**

**RH:** On October 1, 1279, at the age of 58 Nichiren Daishonin wrote a letter while living at Minobu entitled in English, "Persecution Befalling the Buddha."

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<sup>16</sup> Nichimoku Shonin - Niidakyo Ajari Nichimoku (1260-1333) – 3<sup>rd</sup> High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism who inherited the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin from Nikko Shonin.

<sup>17</sup> Nichiu Shonin – (1409-1482) the 9<sup>th</sup> high priest of Nichiren Shoshu.

<sup>18</sup> Atsuhara Persecution – the subjection of the peasant followers of Nichiren Daishonin living in the village of Atsuhara to continuous threats and acts of violence against them for 3 years, and finally the arrest of 20 peasants and the execution of 3 for not renouncing their faith in Nichiren's teachings.

Atsuhara is located at the foot of Mt. Fuji. October is the time of harvest. The Atsuhara farmers were accused of doing something they did not do, which was harvesting the rice crops belonging to other farmers. Twenty Atsuhara farmers were arrested and forced to walk the entire distance from Mt. Fuji to Kamakura on foot. When they arrived, they were thrown into prison cells dug out of a hillside. The cells were nothing more than three walls of earth and rock, while the front was completely open and exposed to wind, rain, and the cold. All the farmers were tortured and intimidated by the Kamakura government in an effort to get them to renounce their faith. But to a man, they held firm to their faith in Namumyōhōrengekyō<sup>19</sup> despite their suffering. Unfortunately, three farmers – three brothers – were executed by bow and arrow in their cells. The three brothers died while chanting Namumyōhōrengekyō.



When Nichiren Daishonin learned of the plight of these farmers, he was very affected. Through this catastrophic event he realized that all lives have Buddha-mind. All life is equal. All life has the same mind as him. Consequently, Nichiren wrote the letter, “Persecution Befalling the Buddha” to the believers in Atsuhara in response to this atrocity. In this letter, Nichiren states that twenty-seven years had passed since the time he embarked on his practice of the Lotus Sutra on April 28, 1253 at the age of 32.

And now, after twenty-seven years of practice he had realized through the Atsuhara farmers’ persecution that, though these believers were illiterate peasants and so different from himself, who had dedicated his life from childhood to studying and practicing Buddhism, he, and they in a short time, had achieved the same faith. This was what Nichiren Daishonin had aspired to achieve. He realized that what the Atsuhara believers were striving to realize through their faith, their practice and their attitude towards the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō was the same as his own. He and these farmers were the same. They were connected. Their beliefs – their faith – had merged, and was equal to his own. That was the teaching and the result the Daishonin was aiming for. All of this he expressed in the letter “Persecutions Befalling the Buddha.” This letter encapsulates the soul or contents of Gohonzon.

Taiseikiji has stated in writing that Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Kaidan Gohonzon on October 12, 1279, eleven days after he wrote the letter to the Atsuhara believers. However, it is not possible that Nichiren could have begun and finished the

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<sup>19</sup> Namumyōhōrengekyō - the Mystic Law which enlightens all Buddhas; the Supreme Law of life and the universe; the Buddha-nature in all things.

Kaidan Gohonzon in eleven days. I say this because, before inscribing a Gohonzon one needs to compose it in his mind – reflecting on it and developing a concrete idea, a complete thought and a mental picture of what one intends to create, as well as the advance planning. What Nichiren Daishonin realized through the experience of the Atsuhara peasants was something spiritual, something intangible that is the basic essence of faith. “Persecutions Befalling the Buddha” contains the original content of every single Gohonzon – not one special, super Gohonzon.

This, that I have just explained, touches on the ultimate concerns of faith.

**Question:** You are saying, as a result of the traumatic events that the Atsuhara believers had experienced, Nichiren Daishonin realized what the complete expression of the Law was, what faith was? Then when, if ever, did he inscribe a Gohonzon that expresses that?

**RH:** Over the course of his lifetime Nichiren Daishonin inscribed several hundred Gohonzons. The question is whether the Kaidan Gohonzon was written after the Atsuhara Persecution. If Nichiren had actually inscribed a Gohonzon specifically “for all mankind,” and done so eleven days following the Atsuhara Persecution, he would have written a letter or document stating or referencing this. But there is no such letter – no document exists referencing such a Gohonzon. And no writings exist referencing an Atsuhara Gohonzon in any way.

Between the Kamakura era and Edo era Japan descended into chaos and continuous wars. Clans rose up and fought each other in battle after battle. Many fires broke out, and many temples were destroyed. So, it could be possible that there were writings by Nichiren that were destroyed or stolen during this chaotic period. However, the fact is there is no documentation written by Nichiren that exists stating that he inscribed the Kaidan Gohonzon – or the ultimate Gohonzon.

The most important thing is the invisible Law that is the content of Gohonzon. You can’t destroy the content of Gohonzon because you can’t destroy the Law, itself. You can’t annihilate what Nichiren Daishonin learned – what he realized and put into Gohonzon. That is the real meaning of Gohonzon.

**Question:** Is the Shoshinkai writing the true history of Nichiren Shoshu? This is the case with everything: American history is distorted. We were never taught the truth, and now our history needs a rewrite to include the whole truth. How can a civilization endure if it is founded on lies? Nichiren Shoshu needs to rewrite its



**history, especially because of the True Law it represents. Unfortunately, most believers believe what Taisekiji is saying.**

**RH:** That is exactly correct. What we are insisting on here is to change what has been and continues to be taught. What Taisekiji teaches is that the Kaidan Gohonzon contains all truths, and the whole world must worship it. This is different from what Nichiren Daishonin was teaching. It is important to spread the teaching that every single being has the life of Buddha within them. That is the important point to propagate. It will not save anyone to tell them their faith has to be based on believing in the Kaidan Gohonzon, which is the teaching of Taisekiji. Taisekiji's teaching is not the teaching of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

**Question:** In a March meeting, you used the term "Kaidan Gohonzon". I had never heard that term before. That term is not listed in my Buddhist Dictionary. Could you please explain what is "Kaidan Gohonzon"?

**RH:** The term "Kaidan Gohonzon" is a generally used term among Japanese believers. *Kaidan* is the main sanctuary of a Buddhist temple. In this case, it is the main altar at Taisekiji. Therefore, "Kaidan Gohonzon" and "Dai-Gohonzon" are the same Gohonzon, just referred to by two different names.

The world view during Nichiren Daishonin's time was different from what it is today. At that time, their understanding of the world only included India, China, Mongolia and Japan. North America, South America, Europe, Africa were not in their thoughts. In fact, they didn't understand that the world was round. Their understanding of the scope of the world was, therefore, limited.

It was the desire of Nichiren and his followers for the entire nation of Japan, including the emperor to believe in Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. They wanted the emperor to have the teachings established inside Japan first, then spread to countries beyond Japan, to the wider world as they understood it at that time.

The word *Kaidan* can also imply governing body (society, government, etc.) stage or platform. So, whatever was built by a kingdom or government was called a *Kaidan* so and so. Thus, a Gohonzon for a country or the world is called *Kaidan Gohonzon*. And the place where that Gohonzon is enshrined is called *Kaidan-dō*. (*Dō* = temple.) In this case, that would be the main Gohonzon at Taisekiji Temple.

Of course, during the Kamakura period, which was Nichiren Daishonin's time, it was the Shogun who had power – the Kamakura feudal government – and not the emperor. The Kamakura Shogunate was a military government which sent the

emperors into exile. Nevertheless, the emperors still maintained some authority because, despite the military leaders' projected machismo, they still possessed the human foible of feeling veneration and awe for the imperial hierarchy. So, even though the emperor no longer had the absolute power he once had, the emperor still existed, and continues to exist to this day in Japan because humans admire and respect sovereignty. And the Japanese people especially love sovereignty, though it is only symbolic. In Japan, the emperor has power in that symbol.

During Nichiren Daishonin's time the emperor was a believer in Buddhism. Nowadays they don't openly say that because the imperial family is a symbol of Shintoism. But they used to be Buddhists. That is why Nichiren Daishonin thought if the sovereign of the country, and the samurai who had the power, believed in his Buddhism that would inspire all the Japanese people to wake up to True Buddhism. At that time, Nichiren had no idea that the emperor and the feudal Shogunate government would lose their power and Japan would become a more democratic country. Because the world view was so different at the time, Nichiren Daishonin believed if the emperor and samurai became believers, the people would follow.

The contradiction between Nichiren Daishonin's intent and Taiseikiji's is that the Kaidan Gohonzon at Taiseikiji is not the "main sanctuary Gohonzon" it is the "country's Gohonzon." Taiseikiji named this Gohonzon *Kaidan Gohonzon* or *Dai-Gohonzon*, and gave it status; even though they claim Nichiren Daishonin gave it its status. Neither Nichiren Daishonin, Nikko Shonin or Nichimoku Shonin ever mentioned this "Kaidan Gohonzon" or "Dai-Gohonzon." These names do not appear anywhere in their writings. But suddenly these terms appeared many years after the passing of Nichiren, Nikko and Nichimoku.

**Question:** The Three Great Secret Laws are *Hommon no Honzon*, *Hommon no Daimoku* and *Hommon no Kaidan*. Nichiren Daishonin realized these Laws hidden in the depths of the *Juryo* (16<sup>th</sup>) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, and he used these terms. Perhaps this inspired Taiseikiji to designate it's Gohonzon *Kaidan Gohonzon*?"

**RH:** *Sandai Hihō*, the Three Great Secret Laws are *Hommon no Daimoku* (the true invocation of Namumyōhōrengekyō of True Buddhism), *Hommon no Honzon* (the true object of worship of True Buddhism) and *Hommon no Kaidan* (the true sanctuary of True Buddhism). This *kaidan* is referring to the place, the space and the environment where the Gohonzon is located. That is what Nichiren Daishonin meant by *kaidan*. Taiseikiji's meaning is *kukudo kaidan*, which means nationally established *kaidan*. There is a place built by a country. So *Kaidan Gohonzon* in their reasoning means a Gohonzon in a space

built for and by a nation. There is a huge difference in meaning. What Taisekiji is saying is that the main sanctuary of Taisekiji is the “high sanctuary of True Buddhism” and the Gohonzon enshrined there is the “true object of worship of True Buddhism” created for the nation.

But the Three Great Secret Laws that Nichiren Daishonin realized and taught, *Hommon no Daimoku*, *Hommon no Honzon* and *Hommon no Kaidan*, are equal to everyone everywhere. If the True Invocation (*Hommon no Daimoku (NamuMyohoRengeKyo)*) is equal to all lives, then the True Object of Worship (*Honmon no Honzon*), which is the physical representation of that Law of *Myōhō-Renge-Kyō*, is also equal to all lives. And the same is true of places where the True Object of Worship is enshrined (*Hommon no Kaidan*) and the True Invocation is chanted. All three Laws are universally equal and on the same level for everyone.

By contrast, the national *Kaidan-do* of Taisekiji, and the national Gohonzon – Kaidan Gohonzon (Dai-Gohonzon) – are not equal to all. Taisekiji has placed them above all others. Therefore, the meaning of *kaidan* as used by Taisekiji, and the meaning of the *kaidan* in the Three Great Secret Law are completely different. Taisekiji believes that if the Kaidan Gohonzon should disappear (be destroyed), Nichiren Daishonin’s Law would also disappear. As an absolute condition, they believe that all believers must visit Taisekiji and worship the Kaidan Gohonzon in order to become enlightened. And if all believers visit and pray to the Kaidan Gohonzon the whole world will be at peace. Taisekiji insists that the Kaidan Gohonzon contains all laws, and that it is complete and supreme, and is the center of everything while all other Gohonzons are shadows of that Gohonzon and rank lower in status and in power. Their premise, I believe, is neither Nichiren Daishonin’s belief, nor Nichiren’s teaching.

**Question: Where did the Kaidan Gohonzon come from? Who inscribed it? And when?**

**RH:** It is really unknown. No one knows when and how it came to the head temple. It is not known who carved it, or when it was carved. This answer, in itself, is very strange. It was probably decided long after Nichiren Daishonin passed away, when someone thought, “let’s make this great Gohonzon.” That’s probably how it came about.

Of course, Taisekiji continues to insist that Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Kaidan Gohonzon. But if such an important object and milestone in Nichiren Daishonin’s life and religion had taken place, there would be written proof of this great event. But, as I stated earlier, there is no record. There is no clarity on this issue.

**Question: Who is Nippo Shonin? I have read that he actually was the person who carved the Dai-Gohonzon. And that he didn't 'choose a side' between the differing schools but rather set up a non-denominational temple on Mt. Shichimen, near Mt. Fuji. It still exists today but you actually have to hike to it. There is no road.**

**RH:** Nippo Shonin was born in 1258 and passed away in 1341 at the age of 83. No documents exist referencing any significant teachings he taught as a priest. Actually, there is nothing on record of any teachings he taught. However, it is well documented that he was extremely skillful with his hands. It is on record that he was responsible for tonsuring or shaving Nichiren Daishonin's hair. At the time they lived, there were no barbers to do a buzz cut. So, all the heads of the priests had to be shaved with a blade. It's a very delicate procedure, requiring a skilled expert. Nippo was just such a specialist, and thus tasked with shaving Nichiren Daishonin's head. That is what he is known for.

It is also on record that while Nichiren Daishonin was still alive Nippo Shonin carved a seated statue of Nichiren Daishonin measuring 9 centimeters (3 ½"). Nichiren Daishonin was very pleased, and smiled when he saw the statue because it was very well made. A historical document still exists, chronicling the statue of Nichiren Daishonin created by Nippo.

There is a claim that the statue was made of a portion of the wood that was used to make the Kaidan Gohonzon. There is also a claim that Nippo was so skilled with his hands that he was the one who carved the Kaidan Gohonzon. The Kaidan Gohonzon is made of a huge plank of camphor wood. During the Kamakura era people carved statues of Buddha. But as mentioned earlier, the custom of carving script into wood did not yet exist. That custom began during the Edo era, some 400 years after Nichiren Daishonin's advent. Even though there is this story about Nippo carving the Kaidan Gohonzon, the technology and culture of this technique did not exist during his time.

Once the technique of carving script objects of worship into wood began in the Edo period, it spread everywhere. So, the rumor that Nippo carved the Kaidan Gohonzon and then carved the little statue of Nichiren Daishonin out of the leftover wood from the Kaidan Gohonzon is just not credible. It's a rumor. And there is no documentation – nothing on record – chronicling this story.

As I mentioned above, no records or documents of Nippo's teachings exist. It is also clear that Nippo did not leave Minobu with Nikko Shonin, because there is no document existing that states that he did. So, Nippo joined a different group. The records indicate that Nippo lived to be 83 years old, and he did build a temple. But the temple you mention that is supposed to have been built in a remote area that is difficult reach, is a myth. What is true is that Nippo built a temple called Kochoji in a city called

Numazu, in Shizuoka prefecture. There is an area in the city of Numazu which is called Okamiya. That is where Kochoji temple is located. It is a fact that Nippo built this temple, and that the temple still exists today. But the area of Okamiya is not remote. It is not deep in the mountains. It's quite accessible in the middle of a city. So, the temple you mentioned that is inaccessible is just a myth.

**Question: Nichiren Daishonin inscribed many Gohonzons. Did he only inscribe them for individuals? Or did he ever inscribe them for mankind? Taisekiji said he inscribed the Kaidan Gohonzon for all mankind.**

**RH:** In 1271, after the Tatsunokuchi Persecution<sup>20</sup>, and at the start of the Sado exile<sup>21</sup>, Nichiren Daishonin realized Buddhahood and expressed it for the first time in physical form as a Gohonzon for himself. It was the object of worship of Namu-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō. But then he realized that Buddhahood was not only for him. It was for everyone – all life. If he alone was satisfied being Buddha, it would not mean anything. He realized that he had to deliver this message to everyone. He had to teach the meaning of Buddha to everyone. He then began inscribing Gohonzons for other individuals.

Taisekiji says that the Kaidan Gohonzon was inscribed to all mankind, but it was not. It was designated for one person whose name is Yashiro Kunishige. That Gohonzon was therefore, not meant for all people, it was inscribed for one person. So, for starters their claim is already a contradiction.

Nichiren Daishonin believed that if a person does not believe in the teaching, then the Gohonzon would not mean anything. That is why he only gave Gohonzons when believers earnestly believed and exhibited true faith. When Nichiren could confirm that a believer's faith was true and sincere, he inscribed a Gohonzon for them. Or, sometimes when a believer requested a Gohonzon, he would inscribe one for them. Moreover, during the time of the Kamakura era, the lifestyle and living conditions of the people varied, depending on their social class. The samurai class owned big houses and had the space to create an environment to enshrine Gohonzon. On the other hand, the peasants were very poor. They did not live in sizable houses. Theirs were one room houses where they lived, slept and ate. There was no place in their homes to create an environment to enshrine Gohonzon. Besides, many of peasants were illiterate. Consequently, it was mostly the samurai class that were conferred Gohonzons. The samurai believers would have peasants living in their same community come to their

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<sup>20</sup> Tatsunokuchi Persecution – September 12, 1271, an unsuccessful attempt to execute Nichiren Daishonin at Tatsunokuchi just outside Kamakura.

<sup>21</sup> Sado Exile – About a month after the attempt to execute Nichiren, on Oct. 10, 1271 he was exiled to the penal colony on Sado Island, a remote and inhospitable island in the Japan Sea, where he arrived on Nov. 1, 1271 to serve his sentence.

homes to chant together and to read and study letters from Nichiren Daishonin and learn how to be a good believer together. That is what practice was like during Nichiren Daishonin's time. Believers who did not have Gohonzon would go out into nature and chant without Gohonzon. They kept their faith and practice even without Gohonzon. This is called *Naitoku Shinko*<sup>22</sup>.

So, contrary to what Taiseikiji claims, Gohonzons inscribed by Nichiren were only inscribed to a designated person.

**Question: How is it known that the Dai-Gohonzon was inscribed to Yashiro Kunishige? Is his name on that Gohonzon?**

**RH:** This is another mystery. Unlike scrolls that you can hang on the wall, a wooden plank Gohonzon requires a platform or stand to be mounted on. The name Yashiro Kunishige is not written on the Gohonzon itself, it is written in an indentation on the Gohonzon's stand. The Gohonzon itself is written in Nichiren Daishonin's handwriting, but the name Yashiro Kunishige is not in Nichiren's handwriting. As mentioned earlier, during the Kamakura era when Nichiren Daishonin lived, written objects of worship (not including statues) were never carved in wood as it was not a technique that was part of the culture at the time. It wasn't until 400 hundred years later, during the Edo period, that this technique was employed. As this is the case, I do not believe the carving occurred during Nichiren Daishonin's time. But the handwriting of the Gohonzon is definitely Nichiren's.

The mystery surrounding the name Yashiro Kunishige is that his name does not appear in any writings of Nichiren Daishonin. So, it does not appear that he existed during the time of Nichiren Daishonin. If the Gohonzon was given to Yashiro Kunishige, there would have to be some record that this Gohonzon was given to him, or a letter mentioning his name. But the name, Yashiro Kunishige does not exist anywhere other than in the groove of the stand of the Kaidan Gohonzon in someone's handwriting other than Nichiren Daishonin's. Nichiren never gave a Gohonzon to a person he did not know. He not only gave Gohonzon to a person he knew, it was also a person whose faith he knew to be earnest, sincere, and correct.

Shijo Kingo<sup>23</sup>, Nanjo Tokimitsu<sup>24</sup>, etc. are names that appear in Nichiren Daishonin's letters many times. If the name of one of them appeared on that stand, I

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<sup>22</sup> Naitoku shinko – the practice of chanting without Gohonzon.

<sup>23</sup> Shijo Kingo – a devout follower of Nichiren Daishonin, who accompanied him to Tatsunokuji, where Nichiren was to be executed.

<sup>24</sup> Nanjo Tokimitsu – Lord of Ueno, who inherited his position at the age of 7 upon the death of his father and elder brother. The Nanjo family were devout believers in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, and several high priests, including Nichimoku Shonin, were members of this family.

would imagine that that Gohonzon was meant for not only that person, but also for the many believers surrounding that person. Because there were many people who could not have a Gohonzon in their home. Shijo Kingo, Nano Tokimitsu, and well-known believers were the representative for their regional believers. If their name appeared on the platform, it would be easier to understand. But the name Yashiro Kunishige does not appear anywhere in the writings. No one knows who he is. It's mysterious. It's in the realm of disbelief.

**Question: Could Yashiro Kunishige be the carver of the Gohonzon? Perhaps he signed it like artists sign their work.**

**RH:** That is not possible.

It is the custom that a high priest transcribes a Gohonzon and confers it to a believer. Believers do not and are not permitted to write their names on Gohonzon. But, about 50 years ago, the Soka Gakkai created a Gohonzon on its own because they wanted a wooden Gohonzon. They did it without the knowledge of the priesthood. That is sacrilegious. Only the high priest is granted that sacred responsibility.

The person who does the carving of wooden Gohonzons is an artisan. They would never sign their name. This is their profession. If they ever did that, they would not get another job.

**Question: How long have you known about this?**

**RH:** I learned about this from reading a research paper on the Kaidan Gohonzon which documents this name, not written in Nichiren Daishonin's handwriting, that appears in a notch or indentation in the platform that holds the Kaidan Gohonzon.

**Question: In the past, you had said that True Buddha Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Dai-Gohonzon. That was at a meeting in New Jersey in June 2002. In 2005 you said the same thing. In your treatise on the Gohonzon written in 2015 you made no mention of Nichiren inscribing the Dai-Gohonzon. Now you say he did not – or it is not recorded that he did. Has your thinking on this evolved? To clarify the record should it be said that Nichiren Daishonin did not inscribe the Dai-Gohonzon? Or should the record state that there is no written proof that Nichiren inscribed the Dai-Gohonzon?**

**RH:** In 1279, after having chanted *Namumyōhōrengekyō* for 27 years, Nichiren Daishonin wrote the letter “Persecutions Befalling the Buddha.” In this letter he states that his teaching is accomplished. In other words, he had reached the point where his teaching was complete when he learned about the faith of the Atsuhara farmers and thus realized that their faith was exactly the same as his. This letter was written on October 1, 1279. Now, Taiseikiji insists that to celebrate and express the completion of his teaching, Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Kaidan Gohonzon on October 12, 1279, eleven days after writing this letter. But there is no writing written by Nichiren eleven days after or at any time stating that he inscribed a Gohonzon to celebrate and express his realization and completion of his teachings.

I had learned from childhood as an acolyte priest that Nichiren Daishonin had inscribed the Kaidan Gohonzon. We were taught that he inscribed the Kaidan Gohonzon eleven days after he wrote “Persecutions Befalling the Buddha.” We were taught it over and over and over again. And I never doubted what I was told. I just believed that was the way it was. But, as I matured and started to research on my own, something didn’t equate. And what I had been telling my believers, and what I was learning did not match. In 2002 and 2005, and probably a little after that, I still believed what I had been taught. But all the while I continued to study and learn on my own. Over the years my way of thinking changed. The actual facts did not match what I had been taught as a young priest.

Even if the Kaidan Gohonzon was inscribed in 1279, as I mentioned earlier, for three hundred years following the Kamakura era Japan devolved into endless wars. Clans rose up and fought against each other to rule Japan. Warlords vied with each other to bring temples and their believers over to their side. Some temples became involved in the wars. Many temples were robbed and vandalized, and many were burned down. During this time, Taiseikiji was burned. Many Gohonzons were lost, stolen, or burned. Perhaps there was a Kaidan Gohonzon inscribed by Nichiren, and it still exists. Perhaps Nichiren did not inscribe a Kaidan Gohonzon, and one never existed. And perhaps, he inscribed one and it was burned or disappeared. Actually, we really don’t know the truth.

The most important thing is that Nichiren Daishonin completed his Buddhist Law on October 1, 1279 when he realized that the faith of the Atsuhara peasants was equal to his. His enlightenment or awakening to the faith of the Atsuhara believers is included on all Gohonzons inscribed after October 1, 1279. The contents of Gohonzon includes the mind of Nichiren Daishonin, as well as the faith of the farmers. Whether a Kaidan Gohonzon exists or not, the most important thing is the Buddha-mind, the enlightened mind that Nichiren awakened to. Taiseikiji says if the Kaidan Gohonzon



disappears, the Law will disappear too. Quite to the contrary, the Law is not going to disappear. This is because what is written on Gohonzon – the contents of Gohonzon – is actually inside yourself. That is the most important, and significant issue.

What I said previously and what I am saying now is different because over the years I kept studying and learning. I came to realize that the facts do not match up with the claims of Taiseikiji. But, that Taiseikiji's claims don't equate with the facts is not the important focal point. The significant issue here is that on Oct. 1, 1279 Nichiren Daishonin wrote in a letter that he had accomplished what he had set out to do on the day he declared the supreme Law – 27 years earlier -- and that the True Law of Buddhism was now complete. That fact won't disappear.

To my chagrin, I didn't study well enough in the past.

**Question:** Can it be said that after the Atsuhara Persecution True Buddha Nichiren Daishonin's thinking evolved. He was then able to finally express his total enlightenment? In addition to the following two phrases he added to the Gohonzons following Atsuhara. 1) *Nyaku noran sha zu ha shichibun* ("Whoever troubles the preacher of the Law, may his head be split in to seven pieces."). 2) *Butsumetsugo Nisen ni hyaku san-ju yonen* ("almost two thousand two hundred and thirty-some years after the Buddha's passing") which is an expression and symbol of the conditions of *Mappō* (the Latter Day of the Law)<sup>25</sup>, were there any other elements he added? Where these elements expressing *Shitei ikka* (the oneness of master and disciple)? And therefore, were all the subsequent Gohonzons Nichiren inscribed complete?

**RH:** One side of the Gohonzon reads: *Nyaku noran sha zu ha shichibun* (Whoever troubles the preacher of the Law, may his head be split in to seven pieces, or go in many directions.). The other side reads: *U kuyo sha fuku ka jugo* (Those who make offerings to the votary of *Namumyōhōrengekyō*, which is the true Law for all living beings, will have good fortune surpassing that of the ten honorable titles<sup>26</sup>). These two phrases were first added in August 1278 to some Gohonzons. It was not until a year later, at the time of the Atsuhara Persecution in 1279, that Nichiren Daishonin included these two phrases on every Gohonzon. The persecution of the Atsuhara peasant farmers had been

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<sup>25</sup> Mappo - the Latter Day of the Law – the age of decline of the Law; this present time period which began in 1052, about 2000 years after the death of Shakyamuni. It is called the evil age.

<sup>26</sup> Ten honorable titles – ten epithets for the Buddha, expressing his power, wisdom, virtue and compassion. 1) Thus Come One. 2) Worthy of Offerings. 3) Right and Universal Knowledge. 4) Perfect Clarity and conduct. 5) Well Gone. 6) Understanding of the World. 7) Unexcelled Worthy. 8) Teacher of People. 9) Teacher of Gods. 10) Buddha, the World Honored One.

going on for a long time and reached its climax in the fall of 1279. The government's goal was to eliminate those believers.

Another phrase which was also written on the Gohonzons before Atsuhara is *Butsumetsugo nisen ni hyaku ni-ju yonen* ("almost two thousand two hundred and twenty-some years after the Buddha's passing). This phrase appeared in 1271, the year Nichiren began inscribing Gohonzons. Each year thereafter, he would update the year on Gohonzon. Then, in response to the persecution the Atsuhara people were subjected to, Nichiren settled on a permanent date which was related to the Atsuhara Persecution: *Butsumetsugo Nisen ni hyaku san-ju yonen* ("almost two thousand two hundred and thirty-some years after the Buddha's passing"). And thereafter the date has never changed because this statement reflects the Daishonin's state of mind at that moment.

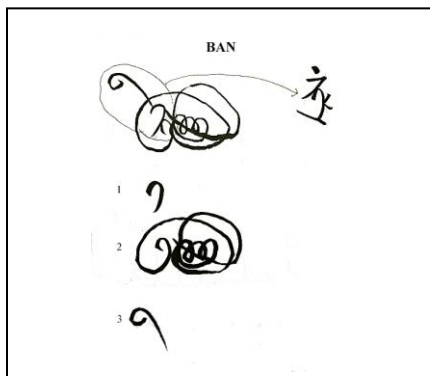
Another thing that changed on Gohonzons after the Atsuhara Persecution, and that is related to the date change, is Nichiren's *kao*. A *kao* is a signature that is considered to be like a stamp. It resembles a flower, and is therefore referred to as a "flower stamp." Nichiren Daishonin's "flower stamp" changed after Atsuhara. Before Atsuhara it was in *Bonji* script, and after the Atsuhara Persecution it was in *Boronji* script. Samurai who were spiritual also did the same: they change their signature to express a change in their mindset. In this particular case, it means that Nichiren Daishonin's mind had changed when he realized that his faith and his mind, and the faith and mind of the Atsuhara farmers were exactly the same at the time of the Atsuhara Persecution. This new signature appears on all Gohonzons after that point.

### NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S KAOs

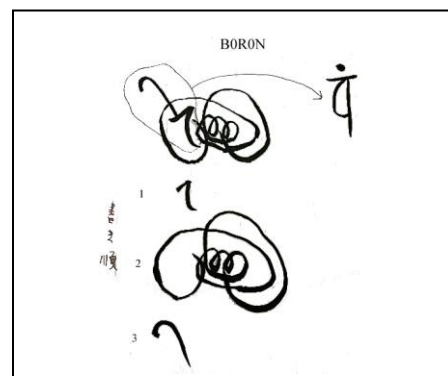
**Before October 1, 1279**

**After October 1, 1279**

*Bonji*  
script



*Boronji*  
script



**Question: Are these changes on the Dai-Gohonzon?**

**RH:** The Kaidan Gohonzon does have all these elements. All Gohonzons written after the Atsuhara Persecution have all these elements. These three elements that I have just discussed express *shitei ikka* (the oneness of master and disciples). To restate they are:

1. a) *Nyaku noran sha zu ha shichibun* (Whoever troubles the preacher of the Law, may his head be split in to seven pieces, or go in many directions.)  
b) *U kuyo sha fuku ka jugo* (Those who make offerings to the votary of *Namumyōhōrengekyō*, which is the true Law for all living beings, will have good fortune surpassing that of the ten honorable titles)
2. *Butsumetsugo Nisen ni hyaku san-ju yonen* (“almost two thousand two hundred and thirty-some years after the Buddha’s passing”)
3. The changed *kao*, or flower stamp.

**Question:** In *A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms and Concepts* published by Nichiren Shoshu International in 1983, under the biography of Nikko Shonin it states that before Nikko Shonin left Taisekiji to establish the Omosu Seminary he appointed 6 senior disciples “to protect the Dai-Gohonzon at Taisekiji.” Is this true? Of course, it also states that when he left Minobu Nikko “took the Dai-Gohonzon and Nichiren’s Ashes and other treasures with him.” You have already discussed the falsehood of that claim.

**RH:** First, let me explain the cause of Nichiren Daishonin’s death. There were deep woods surrounding Mt. Minobu. The location where Nichiren settled was in a valley between mountain peaks. It was very hot and humid during the summer months. In winter, it was quite cold and the snow extremely deep. And during both the summer and winter there was no direct sunlight. Needless to say, conditions in this Minobu valley were detrimental to one’s health. The conditions on Sado Island where Nichiren had been exiled, were harsh. But the conditions at Minobu, where he had chosen to live, were much harsher. Thus, Nichiren suffered from a severe gastrointestinal disorder with prolonged diarrhea. It was the cause of his death at the age of 61.



Nichiren Daishonin passes away

As Nichiren had suffered for such a long time, he realized he was going to die from his condition. And when he became aware his death was imminent, he chose six priests from among his disciples who appeared to be the most qualified, capable and faithful-minded to be his successors. These six priests originally came from various areas of Japan. Nichiren's intention was for these six priests to return to their native locales to spread the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō to many

people all over Japan.

The six priests he chose had lived together with Nichiren Daishonin, and spent a lot of time learning about the teachings directly from him. He felt confident about their attitude towards faith. That is why he chose the six he did to represent him after he was gone and bestow upon each of them new names: Nikko, Niko, Nitcho, Nichiji, Nissho and Nichiro.

Despite Taisekiji saying that Nikko Shonin is the only priest specifically appointed by Nichiren to be his immediate successor, Nichiren treated these six priests equally. Since Nichiren taught that all lives are equal, and all lives can become enlightened, there is no way Nichiren Daishonin would have singled out one special person. He taught all six priests in the way, with the same content. Of course, not all six priests were in the same place at the same time. But he did not pull one priest aside to teach him secretly. When you consider his teaching that all lives are equal, there is no way Nichiren would have behaved in that way. He treated everyone the same.

Nikko Shonin observed Nichiren Daishonin carefully and believed Nichiren led by showing the correct way to behave and to conduct matters. So, it is a fact that Nikko Shonin followed Nichiren Daishonin's example and appointed six priests to carry on after him.

As I have explained several times, Taisekiji asserts that when Nikko Shonin left Minobu he took the Kaidan Gohonzon and Nichiren Daishonin's ashes. As has been stated here, the Kaidan Gohonzon is carved into wood. The Gohonzon is first written on paper, placed on the wood and the characters are then carved into the wood. The face of Gohonzon was painted with black lacquer, and gold color was poured into the carved-out characters. This tradition was not introduced until the Edo era. It was not only the Fuji School, but many Buddhist sects began creating similar script objects of worship during this period.

During Nichiren Daishonin's time food was scarce. So, it is hard to imagine that there was an artisan at Minobu who was skilled with lacquer. Also, the wood itself was

very heavy, because the Gohonzon was made of a large log that was cut in half lengthwise. The face of Gohonzon was carved on the flat cut side of the log. The backside was the natural rounded shape of the tree it came from. It's very hard to imagine that Nikko Shonin carried this heavy log down the mountain. If it were flat it would have been difficult enough to carry it on one's back. But because the shape of the Kaidan Gohonzon is so unusual, it would have been difficult to put it on the back of a horse because it would have been too unstable to transport down a mountain.

Gohonzons inscribed on paper, which was the tradition during the Kamakura era, were so convenient. (And every Gohonzon during the Kamakura era was made on paper.) They could be rolled up into a scroll, then unrolled and hung on a wall wherever one was, and chanted to. Therefore, despite Taisekiji's claim, it is impossible that the Kaidan Gohonzon was made of wood during the Kamakura era. And equally impossible that Nikko Shonin carried it from Minobu to the Fuji area.

So, no, Nikko Shonin did not charge the six senior priests he appointed to be responsible for caring for the Kaidan Gohonzon.

Taisekiji also insists Nikko took the ashes of Nichiren Daishonin. But Nichiren Daishonin wrote a Will requesting that his ashes be buried at Minobu. Honoring this request, Nikko Shonin build a cemetery at Minobu and buried Nichiren Daishonin's ashes. Even though Minobu became heretical, and Nikko Shonin opposed their beliefs, he did exhume Nichiren Daishonin's ashes and take them with him when he left, because the Daishonin's ashes did not belong to him. Nikko only took things that belonged to himself. Though there was one instance when by mistake he took a book from Minobu. When he realized he had the book, he acknowledged his mistake, apologized and returned it to Minobu. He was very strict about that sort of thing. He would not take anything that did not belong to him. Nikko Shonin had a profound belief that protecting Nichiren Daishonin's teachings was the most important way for him to live. Emotionally it was very difficult for Nikko Shonin to leave the Daishonin's ashes at Minobu because he would not be able to go back and visit Nichiren's gravesite. I'm sure it made him very sad, and I'm sure he wept. But he chose to do so.

By publishing a book like *A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms and Concepts* that states that Nichiren Daishonin appointed Nikko Shonin as his successor in two transfer documents, that Nikko took the Kaidan Gohonzon and Nichiren Daishonin's ashes when he left Minobu, that Nikko appointed six senior priests to protect the Kaidan Gohonzon, and all the many falsehoods contained therein, Taisekiji has established a false history. In an authoritative way, they have, by publishing books like this, made falsehoods facts as if it is the accurate history. Unfortunately, they are trying to unify all believers with a faith based on lies.

**Question:** But the official Nichiren Shoshu website in Japan lists in its chronology the *Articles to be Observed After the Passing of Nikko (Nikko ato jojo no koto)*, which they say was written in 1332. This is Nikko Shonin's Last Will and Testament addressed to Nichimoku. Article 2 of this document states: *The Dai-Gohonzon of the second year of Kō'an (1279), which Nikko inherited (from Nichiren), is hereby bequeathed to Nichimoku.*" In addition, the third High Priest Nichimoku Shonin stated: "...The Dai-Gohonzon which was entrusted upon the person of Nikko is the plank Gohonzon. It is now here at this temple (Taisekiji)." Do these documents exist? Is there any truth to them? What is the truth?

**RH:** It has been determined by experts that *Nikko ato jojo no koto* or *Articles to be Observed After the Passing of Nikko*, was not written by Nikko Shonin, but was written by someone in a later era after Nikko Shonin had passed away.

As I have mentioned previously, there are counterfeit gosho and writings, and there are true gosho and writings. In fact, the fake gosho or documents are created to look real by including some true teachings within them so that they won't have the appearance of being inauthentic. So, there is some truth among the false assertions. There are some among the priesthood who have said we should separate the documents and publish true documents separately from the forged documents. But because there are some true teachings among the fake documents we cannot eliminate the fake documents and deny them 100%. What we have to do is extract what are the true teachings within the counterfeit documents and eliminate that which is false.

This is what has to be done with *Articles to be Observed After the Passing of Nikko (Nikko ato jojo no koto)*. Even though it was not written by Nikko Shonin, we should not deny this document in its totality because it does contain some of Nichiren Daishonin's True Teachings. Part of it, however, is twisted. Those parts need to be discarded.

When you consider anything fake, forged, counterfeited in this world, no matter what the thing is, it's a crime. These things are created to dupe and deceive people in the present and the future. The objective is to create an object that resembles the true object so closely that the identity of the forger is completely obscured. Most of the time when it has been discovered that something is fake, people will make the excuse that somehow the original Nikko Shonin document had been lost or destroyed, so we had to make a copy. This is a typical response when something is revealed as being fake. Something that may sound to some to be true or possible, but is not true, becomes convoluted when people begin attributing the forgery: One person may say it was created by so and so at this time, and another say, no, it was someone else at another

time. And a third person will say no, it was at a different time by someone else. For this reason, no one knows for certain who actually created the forgeries. The forger's goal was to conceal their identity.

**Question:** Even though Taisekiji is aware of all of this, they keep stating with absolute authority the validity of these documents. I assume this is to solidify their power, authority and righteousness. But don't these lies hurt the religion?

**RH:** After all, even if it looks fake, if the contents of these documents are beneficial for them they will say it is true. Even if to them the document feels suspicious, if within that document there may be some true statements, they will continue to say it is a true and original document. Their decisions are based on whether something is beneficial or disadvantageous to their organization, and not whether it is true or false. If it were beneficial to them, they would say something is fake. But if it is not beneficial, they will not. They really don't have the courage to tell the truth. This is how and why fake documents and objects keep spreading all over the world.

**Question:** Doesn't Taisekiji realize believers read the gosho? In "Reply to Kyo'o" (Gosho Zenshu page 1124) (written in 1273) Nichiren wrote, "I Nichiren have inscribed my life in sumi, so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart." Here Nichiren is addressing an individual about a Gohonzon he has given to them. It is not referring to the Dai-Gohonzon. And in "The Real Aspect of Gohonzon" (Gosho Zenshu pg. 1243) (written in 1277) Nichiren describes all the elements on the Gohonzon, and he calls it a cluster of blessings. Then he says "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. . . the Gohonzon is found in faith alone." These two statements seem to contradict each other. One says believe in it with your whole heart, the other says it's inside you and found in faith alone. How are the two reconciled? These two statements also contradict Taisekiji's claims.

**RH:** Nichiren Daishonin was a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. Through his way of life, his life experience, combined with the realization in his heart of the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō and the practice of this Law, he became enlightened. Unfortunately, it was difficult to share this invisible Law with everyone. He could not hold out his hand and say, "Here, this is the Law," because it is invisible. It is difficult to explain it without showing it. That is why he expressed the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō as a Gohonzon, which depicts the intangible Law he became

enlightened to inside his heart and mind. He wanted to teach everyone to put their hands together and chant and keep having faith and learning that the life of Buddha is for everyone. He wanted everyone to be enlightened to the invisible Buddha-life. However, when he made the Gohonzon as a visible object, people started to focus on the object itself, believing that the object itself was the Law. But, the fact is, the Law is invisible. Nichiren just expressed the Law in Gohonzon – a physical form – so that the Law could be delivered and taught to the people. More and more, people started believing that the visible object is the Law. Furthermore, some people started addressing the Kaidan Gohonzon as the absolute and ultimate Gohonzon, and the most important among all Gohonzons. That became the way of thinking at Taisekiji. And that is how the whole system of Taisekiji is structured.

As I have explained previously, “Reply to Kyo’o” (Gosho Zenshu, page 1124) is one of the counterfeit Gosho.

**Question** In “Reply to Kyo’o,” Nichiren Daishonin is saying, believe in me, rather than believe in the Law. When he says, “I Nichiren have inscribed my life in sumi, so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart.” To me, it seems to be saying believe in this Gohonzon because it’s me, Nichiren.

**RH:** As you pointed out, it is contradictory. And that is what makes it suspicious and thus a fake gosho. “Reply to Kyo’o” is fake. “The Real Aspect of Gohonzon” (Gosho Zenshu pg. 1243) is a true gosho.

**Question:** Nichiren Daishonin resided at Minobu at the time of the Atsuhara Persecution. If such an ultimate Gohonzon was inscribed in 1279, and was not given to Nikko, would it not be at Minobu, or another temple established by one of the other 6 senior priests? What has Nichiren Shu written about this subject? Do they make any claims about an ultimate Gohonzon?

**RH:** The fake document, *Articles to be Observed After the Passing of Nikko (Nikko ato jojo no koto)*, which was discussed above, states that Nikko Shonin inherited the Dai-Gohonzon from Nichiren Daishonin and passed it on to Nichimoku Shonin. And another fake document from Nichimoku states that he received the Dai-Gohonzon from Nikko, and that it is at Taisekiji. As I mentioned earlier, neither Nikko Shonin, Nichimoku Shonin, both of whom strictly followed Nichiren Daishonin, nor Nichiren



himself have mentioned anything at all about a Kaidan Gohonzon. And the other priests appointed by Nichiren Daishonin as senior priests, and were at Minobu, have never said anything at all about it.

**Question: Why does the Shoshin-kai give believers Nittatsu Shonin<sup>27</sup> Gohonzons which are copies of the Dai-Gohonzon?**

**RH:** Nittatsu Shonin Gohonzons are not copies of the Kaidan Gohonzon. Though it is said that Gohonzons believers have in their homes are copies of the Kaidan Gohonzon, they are not complete letter for letter [character for character] copies. There is a small area on Gohonzon where high priests can compose something. So, apart from the differences in handwriting, what they add is what makes each high priest's Gohonzons dissimilar. One high priest may write one thing, while another something else. Nittatsu Shonin's Gohonzons were written with his faith and mind informing its contents. I cannot tell you what he was thinking at the time he inscribed his Gohonzon. But I can say his faith and mind are embedded in his Gohonzons.

The most important elements of Gohonzon, elements in the teachings, and in the continuance of our faith is that we are learning from Nikko Shonin, the successor of Nichiren Daishonin. When you compare Nichiren Shoshu Gohonzons with the Gohonzons of other Nichiren sects you will notice there is a big difference. When Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon, he wrote *Namu-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō-Nichiren*. This indicates that the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō and the person of Nichiren are one. After Nichiren Daishonin passed away, Nikko Shonin added *Zaigohan*<sup>28</sup> after Nichiren. So, down the middle of Nichiren Shoshu Gohonzons it reads *Namu-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō-Nichiren* then the *Zaigohan*. This appears on all Nichiren Shoshu Gohonzons. *Zaigohan* means: the life of the True Buddha Nichiren Daishonin is eternal and still lives today, and high priests of Nichiren Shoshu who follow are responsible for inscribing Gohonzon on Nichiren's behalf.

Today, a stamp is used instead of a handwritten signature. But long ago, they used a signature that was circular in shape and looked like a flower. This flower signature is called *kaō*, or written seal. It is also referred to as "flower stamp." The *Zaigohan* is Nichiren's *kaō*, or flower stamp, indicating that "Nichiren Daishonin is living today, and this is written by him." Over the years, some high priests had difficulty writing the *Zaigohan*, and that is why it was made into a seal that could be

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<sup>27</sup> Nittatsu Shonin – 66<sup>th</sup> high priest of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism who passed away on July 22, 1979. In his final years, Nittatsu tried to protect the True Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin from the distortions of the Soka Gakkai.

<sup>28</sup> *Zaigohan* – is Nichiren Daishonin's signature as copied first by Nikko Shonin. Now, rather than handwritten *Zaigohan* by high priests, they use a stamp signature called a *kaō* or flower stamp.

stamped. Each successive high priest has the responsibility to transcribe what Nichiren Daishonin wrote, and to include the *Zaigoan* to express that this is written by Nichiren Daishonin who is living today. And, in another area of the Gohonzon, the high priest will sign his own name.

The difference between the Nichiren Shoshu Gohonzon and the Gohonzon of other Nichiren sects is that the priests of the other sects replace Nichiren's name with their own name. So, the Gohonzons of other sects read *Namu-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō-High Priest so and so*.

**Question:** At least for the past 70-75 years, Nichiren Shoshu has heavily promoted making a pilgrimage to the head temple to pay homage to the Dai-Gohonzon. Many of our older members have had the opportunity to do this. I have not. But I have always yearned to make a pilgrimage. What is the origin of the tradition of pilgrimage in Nichiren Shoshu?

**RH:** The head temple of Nichiren Shoshu is Taisekiji, located in the city of Fujinomya in Shizuoka Prefecture. It is situated at the foot of Mt. Fuji. To visit Taisekiji, we Japanese call it "climbing the mountain." Japanese believers try to visit Taisekiji several times a year, depending on how deep their belief is. They "climb the mountain" to worship, and consider just getting there as a part of their encouragement in their daily life.

During Nichiren Daishonin's time, people with true faith traveled on foot for many, many days to reach wherever Nichiren Daishonin was, just to learn from him. Those people had strong faith. Usually they were the "leaders" of all the believers in their locale who helped other believers forge their faith. Of course, these leaders wanted to learn from Nichiren Daishonin too, but they also represented the voices of the believers in their community. They presented to Nichiren Daishonin all the questions believers back home had, and the problems they were facing. These leaders stayed with Nichiren Daishonin for a month or two to study and record in writing all the information they could to help and share with their believers. Back home they conveyed all that Nichiren Daishonin taught, and reported Nichiren's answers to personal questions of believers, while at the same time sharing these answers with all the believers.

It was like what we are doing now in our international meetings. We share the questions and answers with everyone. And even if it is a private question, it is excellent nutrition for the faith of each of you.

Traveling to study with Nichiren Daishonin established the original protocol for how this religion is to be taught physically. This practice continued with Nikko Shonin



Nichimoku Shonin

and Nichimoku Shonin. People gathered around the high priest to learn about this faith. This practice is quite different from just going to Taisekiji. Nowadays, the emphasis is on the act of just going there. It is not on seeking the teachings and having a hunger for the True Teachings. Today, the important thing within Nichiren Shoshu, Taisekiji is just visiting the head temple.

In Nichiren Daishonin's religion there is no belief in a holy location, or a sacred site. This is because the basis of the religion is the search for faith. Right now, that understanding is twisted.

Nichiren Shoshu, Taisekiji, emphasizes that believers have to make a pilgrimage to Taisekiji – this specific place – in order to develop faith. It is wrong to worship a place because it is the head temple. The correct view on this fundamental issue is to search for faith.

After Nichiren Daishonin passed away, Nikko Shonin made every effort to stop the other senior priests from changing Nichiren's teachings to reflect their own way of thinking. Nevertheless, the five other senior priests rejected his efforts. But it was not only them, Hakiri Sanenaga, the land owner in Minobu where Nichiren Daishonin's temple, Kuon-ji, was built, and who had been a believer of Nichiren during Nichiren's life, developed his own personal beliefs with the permission of senior priest Niko. Nikko Shonin tried to convince Sanenaga that his beliefs and actions were very wrong. But Sanenaga persisted with his slanderous behavior which was untenable for Nikko. And by living in Kuon-ji, which was owned by Sanenaga, Nikko Shonin was thereby receiving offerings and being supported by someone who was slandering unrepentantly. Nikko Shonin realized he was wrong to remain in such a slanderous place. Since the entire atmosphere was proving to be heretical, Nikko Shonin decided to leave Minobu. His desire was to find a location where he didn't have to worry about the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin being distorted. He wanted to create a place where he was free to teach the correct, unadulterated teachings and avoid the mistakes that were being made at Minobu. That is how he came to choose the place where Taisekiji is now.

The Fuji area where Taisekiji is located was owned by the Nanjo family. Nikko Shonin believed that Tokimitsu Nanjo, the Lord of Ueno, was a true believer and supporter of Nichiren Daishonin and of himself. That is why Nikko accepted the land offered by Nanjo. When Nikko Shonin left Minobu he documented it in writing. His statement reads, "Wherever I settle will be fine, as long as I can teach Nichiren Daishonin's True Teachings. That is all that matters. The location is not important." So,

it is not that he chose a specific location because it was a very holy or spiritual place. He just wanted to find a place where he was free to teach the correct, right, and true faith. He didn't choose a place that was "meant to be." He just needed a place where he would not be disturbed. And, his intention was to teach the true faith to each believer. The most important thing was for each believer to keep and maintain the true faith as Nichiren taught it. This is how the faith will spread all over the world, as a teaching of Nichiren Daishonin. Therefore, it is not that all believers have to go to Taisekiji. The most important thing is that each believer maintains and keeps their faith as a part of their life.

**Question:** Over the years I had been told to go on *tozon*<sup>29</sup> for many reasons. But I was never told to go for that reason. My local Nichiren Shoshu temple told me that by going to Taisekiji I would: 1) see the legitimacy of this teaching in the form of the temple and the temple grounds and its history. And 2) They said I needed to pay my debt of gratitude to the Dai-Gohonzon; to hear the high priest lecture in the presence of the Dai-Gohonzon; and only in that process would I be able to reach enlightenment and practice correctly. I was never able to go because my wife, who is not a Buddhist, would not let me spend the money it would take to go.

**RH:** In the last few months, I have talked about Taisekiji's improper emphasis on the Kaidan Gohonzon being the most important Gohonzon, the Gohonzon in temples are second in importance, and the believer's Gohonzon ranks third in significance. Moreover, they insist that the Kaidan Gohonzon is the real Gohonzon, and all other Gohonzons are copies and shadows. They also insist that if you don't visit the Kaidan Gohonzon, you won't be able to be happy. This is what is being taught to all their believers. But, as I have said again and again, all Gohonzons are equal and function exactly the same for every believer. It's just as one dollar has the same monetary value as another one dollar. And as the air we breathe is the same air everyone breathes. We receive the same sunlight from the same sun that everyone else receives. Like the sun, the air and a dollar, Namumyōhōrengekō is equal to everyone. You are not going to be deprived of air, water or sunlight. Namumyōhōrengekō is also like that. The belief that you will not have deep faith if you don't visit Taisekiji was created by an organization that wants to place the head temple as the center of the religion, and make their organization a strong organization, However, the truth is, Nichiren Daishonin's True Law can be taught anywhere. That is exactly what Nikko Shonin taught in his writings. He wrote, "I can teach the True Teaching of Nichiren Daishonin anywhere. There is no

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<sup>29</sup> Tozon – pilgrimage to the head temple Taisekiji.

specific location that I need to choose to teach the True Teachings.” A specific location is not a part of the original teaching. The original teaching is only, “to teach the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.”

If you traveled to Japan on pilgrimage, you could visit the sites where Nichiren Daishonin had lived or had been, but you will not receive any of his teachings. Today, there are temples at those sites, but they are not affiliated with Namumyōhōrengekō. Nichiren is now quite famous. Wherever he had been, wherever he had lived are all tourist attractions now. The temples that have been built at these sites are a part of the tourist circuit. So, you can go to the locations where Nichiren Daishonin lived and view the scenery, but you will not learn about his teachings from the temples at those sites. You can also go to Taisekiji because it is a public place. But you will not be able to go inside the main temple where the Kaidan Gohonzon is enshrined. And spiritually, you would not put your hands together and chant to that a Gohonzon with people and an organization who are believing in the wrong teaching. So, if you spend a lot of money to go to Japan to develop your faith, I would have to say the environment to learn about Nichiren Daishonin’s faith and his teachings does not exist in the places where he had lived or had spent time.

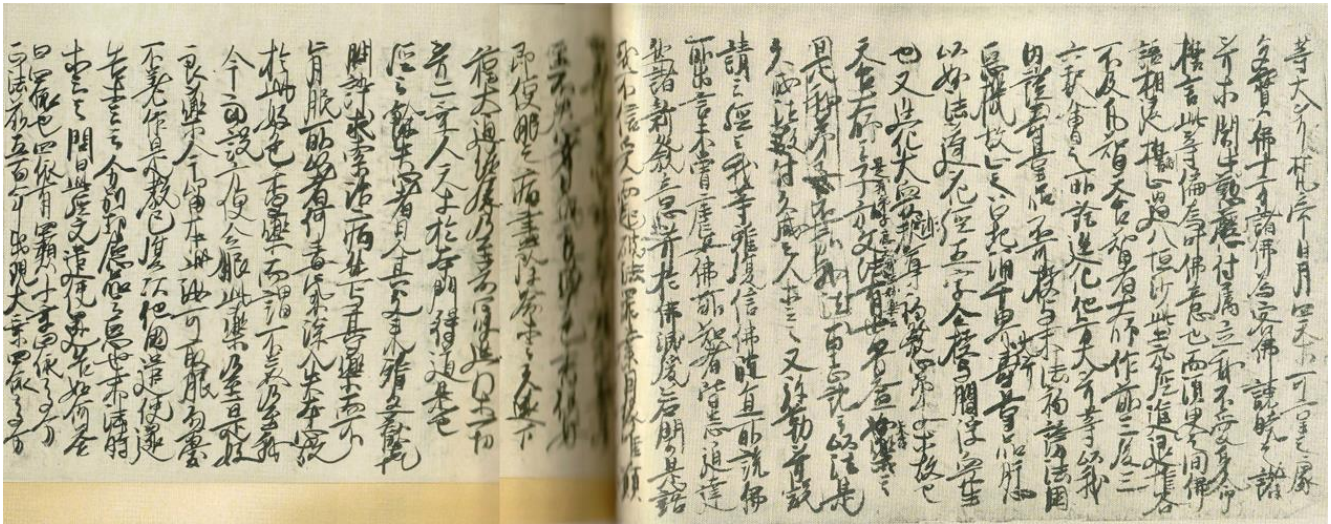
If you are interested in the places that are related to Nichiren Daishonin’s life, you can easily find pictures of the them on the internet. And I’m sure you can find images of these places with captions in English. As you view these images, I want you to think about the time Nichiren Daishonin lived. Think about him being there in those places over 700 years ago. But most importantly, I want you think that Nichiren Daishonin dwells inside you. He lives in the minds of everyone.

**Question: Does the hut that Nichiren Daishonin lived in on Sado Island, where he wrote the *Kaimoku Sho*, still exist? I would like to visit that, or see a picture of that because I would like to understand how he could have written that goshō in that environment.**

**RH:** Nichiren Daishonin lived in a hut in a cemetery on Sado Island. In the middle of that cemetery stands four big columns. That location was never intended as a residence for the living. In Nichiren’s day, the residents of Sado were poor farmers who could not afford a funeral. They bought a coffin for their deceased and left it in a common area of the cemetery. Then they recited some chapters of the Lotus Sutra.

The hut did not have any facilities – no bathroom, no kitchen – and it barely had walls and a roof. It was a terrible environment that Nichiren Daishonin was consigned

to. It was wretched and inhospitable. That was by design, because the government wanted him to die. The hut no longer exists. People have just guessed where the location might have been.



Kaimoku Sho

The original *Kaimoku Sho* is not on public display. It is located at Honmonji temple in Kitayama in Fujinomya, a temple established by Nikko Shonin. Nikko Shonin established a seminary called Omosu Dansho at this site. And it was at Omosu Dansho where he lived for 35 year, and where he taught acolyte priests. In this seminary, Nikko Shonin wanted to raise priests to deliver Nichiren Daishonin’s true teachings of Buddhism for posterity. As I have mentioned earlier, Nikko left Minobu and moved to Fujinomya where, together with Tokimitsu Nanjo he established Taisekiji. For nine years he worked together with Nichimoku to establish the basic foundation of Taisekiji. Then, after transferring Taisekiji to the care of Nichimoku and five other senior priests, Nikko established Kitayama Honmonji and Omosu Dansho. And for 35 years, until his death, he devoted himself to Omosu Seminary. Nikko Shonin’s grave is located at Kitayama Honmonji.

If you believe that Taisekiji is the most spiritually important place, isn’t it strange that Nikko Shonin’s gravesite is at Honmonji and not Taisekiji? Contrary to Taisekiji’s assertions, we who practice the true Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism do not worship a location.

Nikko Shonin cared deeply about Nichiren Daishonin’s gosho. He took great care of the gosho, and kept them with him. This includes the *Kaimoku Sho*. If it were on display to the public it could be ruined if one is not careful. So, it is kept in a storage room, and once a year it is aired out and put on display.

**Question: Kitayama Honmonji believes that the original Buddha is Shakyamuni and not Nichiren Daishonin.**

**RH:** Kitayama Honmonji was originally established by Nikko Shonin, but the thinking of the priests who followed Nikko after his death changed and they veered away from his teachings. In 1941 Honmonji became a Nichiren Shu temple. I can assure you that is why we should not have a faith based on a location. Even if you designate a location as a holy site, people's minds change. Nikko Shonin invested his passion, and earnestly endeavored to develop Kitayama Honmonji as True Buddha Nichiren Daishonin's center of study and worship. But in the end, after his death the center has changed to the wrong thinking – the wrong direction. That was not his wish, nor what he taught. So, we must be very careful and realize that things can change like this, unless we have a very strong faith within ourselves.

**Question: Why does the Omiesama that you carved have a Gohonzon from Nichikan Shonin, knowing that this high priest, during the Edo era, created a doctrine at will to impress the Tokugawa government and other religions and parishioners in Japan at that time? Each sect presented themselves as the most orthodox or the most unique and ultimately correct Buddhist sect. Each group embellished their attributes more and more. Nichikan Shonin, to impress his believers, made extreme statements. Since Taisekiji was the head temple he insisted the Gohonzon at Taisekiji was the most important Gohonzon. Nichikan wanted this view of the Taisekiji Gohonzon to be broadcast nationwide. Please explain this.**

**RH:** The high priests who succeeded Nichiren Daishonin after his death were Nikko Shonin, Nichimoku Shonin, etc. They all transcribed Nichiren Daishonin's Gohonzon. Every Gohonzon is a copy of what Nichiren Daishonin wrote. When you say Nikko Shonin Gohonzon, or Nichikan Gohonzon, it is not a Gohonzon created by Nikko or Nichikan. It is a copy of a Nichiren Daishonin Gohonzon transcribed by Nikko or Nichikan, etc. That is the correct meaning. All Gohonzons were written by Nichiren Daishonin first. And every Gohonzon that follows, written by a high priest, is a copy of what Nichiren Daishonin first wrote. No one can be Nichiren Daishonin. And Nichiren Daishonin can no longer produce Gohonzons since he is no longer alive. The role of the high priests who succeed Nichiren Daishonin is to copy what he wrote. Therefore, it is not Nichikan Shonin's Gohonzon. It is a copy of Nichiren Daishonin's Gohonzon copied by Nichikan Shonin. It is also not correct to say it is my Gohonzon. The priests at

Minobu started to write their own Gohonzons. That was something Nikko Shonin could not accept because they were not copies of Nichiren Daishonin's Gohonzon. And Nikko Shonin insisted that that was wrong.

As has been mentioned, Nichikan Shonin lived during the Edo era, which lasted for 264 years. This era was ushered in by Ieyasu Tokugawa<sup>30</sup> in 1603. As the ruler of the country – the Shogun – Ieyasu Tokugawa had to determine the best way to control the various religions. Each religion had its own beliefs and objects of worship. And each religion had its own followers or believers. Tokugawa thought that if the people listened to the religious leaders of their respective religions and not to the ruler of the country, it would be difficult to govern the country and control the people. So, he devised a plan to control the religions. It was a two-prong policy to control the lifeline of the various religions.:



Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa  
Ushered in the Edo era

1. He banned shakubuku. No religion was permitted to proselytize or convert people to their religion.
2. Before the Edo era, priests were allowed to openly engage in debates about the merits of their teachings. "The Law of Public Discourse" was what it was called. The rule was, if you lose a debate, which determined which teaching was correct, the priest and believers of the defeated sect or religion had to join the winning sect. They were very serious and profound discussions. It was quite normal and quite common to have these public discourses. But the Tokugawa government banned them to assert absolute control over the people's minds.

Since Nichikan Shonin lived during the Edo period, he was obliged to conform to these regulations, and was thus prohibited from doing shakubuku and engaging in discourse with the leaders of another sect. This isolated the various religions. And because they had no interaction with other groups or people of other religions, their beliefs hardened, with each sect increasingly believing that their religion was the most correct, the most pure and pious, and the most powerful teaching. Due to the laws in place at the time, even if they were wrong, they could not be challenged.

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<sup>30</sup> Ieyasu Tokugawa – (1543- 1616) – the first shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate, which ruled Japan from 1603 – 1868. He was one of the great organizers of Japan.



To put it simply, Nichikan did the same. He began to bestow extreme attributes on Taisekiji: declaring that the head temple, Taisekiji, was the most sacred and important place. He also emphasized the correctness of the teachings, and elevated the Kaidan Gohonzon as the center of the religion and the supreme Gohonzon over all Gohonzons. At that time, this message was easy for the believers to understand. And alas, it became the doctrine of the time.

We are in a different era now. We can think freely and talk openly to others. We have to be very careful about what Nichikan Shonin did, and why he did it. We should not be thinking that he was a bad or heretical priest. We should realize that due to the restrictive conditions during the time he lived, he was forced to adhere to the mandates of the government under which he lived, which forced him to go in the direction that he did. Because we, at this time, can think clearly, we must explore the how and why these exaggerations came about. We must face it. We must face the facts.

**Question:** In the Spanish writings, as in the English language, we do not mention that the Gohonzon is the creation of the high priest, but rather the transcription of the Gohonzon of Nichiren. You mentioned that all Gohonzons are transcripts of the Gohonzon created by Nichiren Daishonin. So, if all Gohonzons are transcripts, a Gohonzon transcribed by Nikken Shonin or SGI are correct? Nichikan Shonin's faith was to alter the teachings to have more members in Taisekiji. That's the same as Ikeda to gain power and Nikken to believe himself to be super powerful.

**RH:** SGI told its believers if they chant Nammyohorengekyo they will be happy, they will change their life and have many benefits. That is what SGI is and has been teaching for a very long time. They say this is the teaching of Nichiren Daishonin. This teaching is very simple, appealing and easy to understand. But it is different from what Nichiren Daishonin taught. It is not Nichiren Daishonin's teaching.

In terms of Nichikan Shonin, due to the era in which he lived, and the culture and circumstances of that time, he made exaggerated claims about the religion, including declaring that the Kaidan Gohonzon was absolute and the center of everything. He did this in order to keep believers practicing this faith. That teaching was appealing and easy to understand. But again, it was way off from what Nichiren Daishonin taught.

Regarding the transcriptions of Gohonzons by the various people you mentioned – Nichikan, Nikken and Daisaku Ikeda – if the person has not properly succeeded to the position of high priest, or if a person does not have true faith, or if a person says his handwriting is very good, “so I am perfectly capable of transcribing a Gohonzon,” all

these propositions would devalue Gohonzons. Gohonzon would no longer have any spiritual value, and it would be far removed from the world of faith. Abe Nikken did not legitimately succeed Nittatsu Shonin. Daisaku Ikeda stated that he is more important than Nichiren Daishonin. When people like them transcribe Gohonzons, it is just a copy. They do not have the spiritual authority to transcribe Gohonzons. This means, only the person who has the right or the official spiritual authority can transcribe Gohonzons. Nichikan Shonin had that right and that authority.

**Question:** Do you believe in the Dai-Gohonzon? Does the Shoshinkai believe in the Dai-Gohonzon? I do not mean if it is considered the super Gohonzon, because that has already been clarified many times here. But, do you believe the story of Taiseikiji, that it is the Gohonzon that the Daishonin left to humanity? Or do you consider it a Gohonzon that Taiseikiji determined appropriate to elevate its status?

**RH:** There is a Law that Nichiren Daishonin realized. He realized through faith and from his heart that there is a Law that exists in the universe. To deliver that Law to all of us he created the Gohonzon. The Law is Namumyōhōrengekyō. The Gohonzon represents the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō, which is the Odaimoku. The Law is expressed with the kanji characters of Odaimoku on Gohonzon. The place where you enshrine Gohonzon is called *kaidan*. The order of the Three Great Secret Laws is 1) the Law Namumyōhōrengekyō or Odaimoku (*hommon no daimoku*); 2) the Odaimoku is expressed on Gohonzon in *kanji* characters (*hommon no honzon*); and 3) the Gohonzon is placed in a *kaidan* (*hommon no kaidan*). This is the proper order of the Three Great Secret Laws. Through this flow of *Odaimoku, honzon, kaidan* the teaching of Nichiren Daishonin was formed. Nichiren Daishonin believed that the only way people would believe in the Law was by seeing it. Thus, he created the Gohonzon to express the Law in physical form. For me, and for everyone we believe in the Law through the Gohonzon. Nichiren Daishonin expressed the Law in the Gohonzon because people would have difficulty imagining the Law without seeing it represented in physical form. However, the most important thing is not the physical form of Gohonzon, it is the Law that is expressed in it.

For me, the most important thing is the Law. I believe in the Law through the Gohonzon. It's not that I believe in the Kaidan Gohonzon. I believe in the Law that is expressed in Gohonzon. So, I do not believe the Kaidan Gohonzon is the absolute Gohonzon. I believe in the Law.

To conclude, when you face Gohonzon you see *Namumyōhōrengekyō Nichiren* written down the center. Nichiren Daishonin had a very difficult life. He was

enlightened as a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. To live as a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra is what we need to do, because we all have the Buddha-life inside us. Nichiren's name appearing on the Gohonzon means that he became a Buddha before everyone. It also means, that Gohonzon is a model to remind everyone that they can become Buddha too. With Gohonzon, Nichiren is showing everyone how to become Buddha. All lives possess the invisible Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō. So, by placing your hands together in front of Gohonzon, you can become Buddha because you and everyone have the life of Namumyōhōrengekyō in side you. This is the message Gohonzon delivers.

**THE GOHONZON IS FOUND IN FAITH ALONE.  
AS THE SUTRA STATES,  
"ONLY WITH FAITH CAN ONE ENTER  
BUDDHAHOOD."<sup>31</sup>**



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<sup>31</sup> "The Real Aspect of Gohonzon, *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. 1, p.213.

# GOSHO SELECTION

## ON PERSECUTIONS BEFALLING THE BUDDHA<sup>32</sup>

Now in the second year of Koan (1279), it is twenty-seven years since I first proclaimed the true teaching at Seicho-ji temple. It was noon on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month in the fifth year of Kencho (1253), on the southern side of Jibutsudo Hall in the Shobutsu-bo of the temple, located in Tojo Village. Tojo is now a district, but was then a part of Nagasa District in Awa Province. Here is located what was the second, but is now the country's most important shrine to the Sun Goddess, built by Minamoto no Yoritomo, founder of the Kamakura shogunate. The Buddha fulfilled the purpose of his advent in a little over forty years; T'ien-t'ai<sup>33</sup> took about thirty years, and Dengyo, some twenty years. I have repeatedly spoken of the indescribable persecutions they suffered during those years. For me it took twenty-seven years, and the persecutions I faced during this period are well known to you all.

The Lotus Sutra reads, "Since hatred and jealousy abound even during the lifetime of the Buddha, how much worse will it be in the world after his passing?" Shakyamuni Buddha suffered innumerable persecutions: For ninety days he was forced to eat horse fodder; a huge boulder was dropped on him, and though it missed him, his foot was injured and bled; a group of eight priests led by Sunakshatra<sup>34</sup>, outwardly acting as the Buddha's disciples but in spirit siding with Brahmans, watched every moment of the day and night for a chance to kill him; King Virudhaka killed great numbers of the Shakya clan<sup>35</sup>; King Ajatashatru had many of Shakyamuni's disciples trampled to death by wild elephants and subjected the Buddha to a series of severe tribulations. Such were the persecutions that took place "in the Buddha's lifetime."

In the more than two thousand years "after his passing, "no one, not even Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, T'ien-t'ai or Dengyo, encountered any of the still greater persecutions predicted to occur. No one can say they were not votaries of the Lotus

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<sup>32</sup> *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. 1, p. 239

<sup>33</sup> T'ien-t'ai - (538-597) made a theoretical categorization of Shakyamuni's teachings and founded a Chinese school of Buddhism that recognized the Lotus Sutra as a superior teaching.

<sup>34</sup> Sunakshatra – A priest who devoted himself to Buddhist austerities and attained a limited form of enlightenment. But he was arrogant and thought he had mastered Buddhism. He is said to have fallen into hell alive.

<sup>35</sup> Shakya clan – the family, or clan that Shakyamuni Buddha belonged to.

Sutra, but if they were, why did none shed even a drop of blood, as did the Buddha, nor suffer even greater trials? Could the sutra's predictions be false and the Buddha's teachings nothing but great lies?

However, in these twenty-seven years, Nichiren was exiled to the province of Izu on the twelfth day of the fifth month in the first year of Kocho (1261), was wounded on the forehead and had his left hand broken on the eleventh day of the eleventh month in the first year of Bun'ei (1264)<sup>36</sup>. He was to be executed on the twelfth day of the ninth month of the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), but was instead exiled to the province of Sado. In addition, many of his disciples were murdered or executed, banished or heavily fined. I do not know whether these trials equal or surpass those of the Buddha. Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo came nowhere near me in what they endured. Had it not been for the advent of Nichiren in the Latter Day of the Law, the Buddha would have been a great liar and the testimony given by Taho and all the other Buddhas would have been false. In the twenty-two hundred and thirty years since the Buddha's death, Nichiren is the only person in the whole world to fulfill the Buddha's prophecy.

In the Latter Day of the Law of both Shakyamuni and the Buddhas before him, the rulers and people who despised the votaries of the Lotus Sutra seemed to be free from punishment at first, but eventually they were all doomed to fall. Among those who attacked Nichiren, there were at first no signs of punishment. During these twenty-seven years, the Buddhist gods who vowed to protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra--Bonten, Taishaku, the gods of the sun and moon, and the Four Heavenly Kings--did little to help Nichiren. But by now they have realized in terror that unless they fulfill the oath they swore before the Buddha, they will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Consequently, they are now earnestly carrying out their vow by punishing those who attacked the votary of the Lotus Sutra. The deaths of Ota Chikamasa, Nagasaki Tokitsuna and Daishin-bo<sup>37</sup>, for example, who were all thrown from their horses, can be attributed to their treachery against the Lotus Sutra. There are four kinds of punishment: general and individual, conspicuous and inconspicuous. The massive epidemics, nationwide famines, insurrections and foreign invasion suffered by Japan are general punishment. Epidemics are also inconspicuous punishment. The tragic deaths of Ota and the others both conspicuous and individual.

Each of you should summon up the courage of a lion and never succumb to threats from anyone. The lion fears no other beast, nor do its cubs. Slanderers are like howling

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<sup>36</sup> The eleventh day of the eleventh month in the first year of Bun'ei (1264). This is the date of the Komatsubara persecution when Nichiren Daishonin and his followers were ambushed by assassins. Nichiren suffered injuries, but two of his disciples were killed.

<sup>37</sup> Ota Chikamasa, Nagasaki, Tokitsuna and Daishin-bo – Once followers of Nichiren Daishonin, they renounced their faith, and plotted against other followers during the Atsuhara Persecution.

jackals, but Nichiren's followers are like roaring lions. Hojo Tokiyori and Hojo Tokimune, the past and present regents, pardoned me when they found I was innocent of the accusations against me. The regent will no longer take action on any charge without confirming its validity. You may rest assured that nothing, not even a person possessed by a powerful demon, can harm Nichiren, because Bonten<sup>38</sup>, Taishaku<sup>39</sup>, the gods of the sun and moon, the Four Heavenly Kings<sup>40</sup>, Tensho Daijin<sup>41</sup> and Hachiman<sup>42</sup> are safeguarding him. Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken even a bit, demons will take advantage.

We common mortals are so foolish that we do not fear the warnings in the sutras or treatises so long as they do not concern us directly. But you must be fully prepared for the havoc Hei no Saemon<sup>43</sup> and Adachi Yasumori<sup>44</sup>, in their outrage, will wreak upon us. People are now being sent to Tsukushi<sup>45</sup> to fight the Mongols; consider yourself in the same position as those who are on their way or who are already at the battlefield. So far our believers have not experienced anything so terrible. The warriors in Tsukushi, however, now face a dreadful fate, and if they are killed in battle, they will be doomed to fall into hell. Even if we too should meet such severe trials, we will attain Buddhahood in the future. Our present tribulations are like moxa cauterization, minor pain necessary to remove greater pain.

You need not frighten those peasant believers from Atsuhara, but you should encourage them in every way possible. Tell them to be prepared for the worst. Do not expect good times, but take the bad times for granted. If they complain of hunger, tell them about the hell of starvation. If they grumble that they are cold, tell them of the eight freezing hells. If they say they are frightened, explain to them that a pheasant sighted by a hawk, or a mouse stalked by a cat, is as desperate as they are. I have repeated the foregoing almost daily for the past twenty-seven years. Yet with Nagoe no Ama, Shofu-bo, Noto-bo, Sammi-bo<sup>46</sup> and others, who are so cowardly, close-minded, greedy, and filled with doubt, it is like pouring water on lacquerware or slicing at thin air.

There was something very strange about Sammi-bo. However, I was afraid that any admonition would be taken by the ignorant as mere jealousy of his wisdom, and

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<sup>38</sup> Bonten – along with Taishaku, he is a tutelary deity who protects Buddhism.

<sup>39</sup> Taishaku – along with Bonten, a tutelary deity who protects Buddhism.

<sup>40</sup> Four Heavenly Kings – represent the whole, unlimited universe in all directions.

<sup>41</sup> Tensho Daijin – the sun goddess who protects Buddhism.

<sup>42</sup> Hachiman – considered to be one of the Buddhist gods (*shoten zenjin*) who protect Buddhism.

<sup>43</sup> Hei no Saemon – (d. 1293) a powerful member of the Hojo Regency who was a fierce opponent of Nichiren Daishonin. He and his son were beheaded in 1293.

<sup>44</sup> Adachi Yasumori – (1235 – 1281) the leader of an influential clan who vied with Hei no Saemon for power.

<sup>45</sup> Tsukushi – the ancient name of Kyushu.

<sup>46</sup> Nagoe no Ama, Shofu-bo, Noto-bo and Sammi-bo – former followers of Nichiren Daishonin who renounced their faith.

therefore, I refrained from speaking out. In time his wicked ambition led to treachery, and finally to his doom during the Atsuhara Persecution. If I had scolded him more strictly, he might have been saved. I did not mention this before because no one could understand it. Even now the ignorant will say that I am speaking ill of the deceased. Nevertheless, I mention this for the benefit of other believers. I am sure that those who persecuted the believers at Atsuhara were frightened by the fate of Sammi-bo.

Even if others are clad in armor and instigate, my disciples should never do the same. If there are some who prepare for fighting, please write to me immediately.

With my deep respect,  
Nichiren

The first day of the tenth month  
This letter should be kept by Shijo Kingo.  
Oct 1, 1279  
Shijo Kingo