The Periphery of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*, and the Core of the *Kanjin-honzon-sho*

**Watanabe Hoyō**

Nichiren (日蓮 1222-82) was one of the founders of “Kamakura New Buddhism.” His well known treatise, the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* (立正安国論 On Bringing Peace to the Nation by Establishing the True Dharma), was produced in 1260; July, 2009 will count the 750th year of recognition of this work.

The *Rissho-ankoku-ron* was offered as counsel to the monk Tokiyori of the Saimyoji Temple (最明寺入道北条時頼). Known as Hojo Tokiyori prior to renouncing public life to join the priesthood, he was a former Regent of the Shogunate and was thus still someone who exerted great influence within the Kamakura Government. The scene of the dramatic occasion of Nichiren’s offering the document for transmission to Tokiyori has been captured in powerful and impressive drawings, and because they appear in textbooks, the scene is widely known. In actuality, however, the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* appears as a dramatic scene within Nichiren’s religious activities more than just that one time. Since it seems as though this point, if anything, has been continuously overlooked, I have to say that I am afraid there may be cases in which Nichiren’s life is misconceived as being that of a politically ambitious monk.

However, the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* treatise is a religious admonishment that is founded in faith. Subsequently reproduced several times only by Nichiren himself, its basis and the development of his ideas regarding it are clearly explained in a great number of his writings. With this paper I would like to sketch, so to speak, the complete figure relative to such a *Rissho-ankoku-ron*, and while commentaries have been made from diverse points of view in this regard, my focus here is to reassert its basic foundation once more.

**I  Another look at the presentation of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* and its aftermath.**

A) Works that predated the *Rissho-ankoku-ron.*,
Nichiren submitted the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* as his own personal proposal, developed through his individual study. But, prior to its submission, Nichiren had written letters and treatises that formed the premise of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*.

In the *Shugo-kokka-ron* (守護國家論), written one year before the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* in 1259, Nichiren expressed his feelings of having been born in a Japan that had a frontier-like nature. In the introduction to this work Nichiren writes that, based on those feelings, he feels the need to explain what correct Buddhism is, his purpose being to extensively criticize the Pure Land Teaching (念仏) advocated by Honen (正願 1133-1212). It was a systematic and skillfully written treatise containing sixteen sections within seven chapters.

In the beginning of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*, Nichiren writes of his feelings concerning impending calamities affecting the nation that he had previously predicted and discussed in his *Sainan koki yurai* (災難興起由來), and the *Sainan-taiji-sho* (災難對治抄), both written in February of 1260, some five months prior to the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*. References from sacred texts and other commentaries in these works are taken from *Shugo-kokka-ron*.

**B) Perception of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* as prophetic**

The Kamakura Government did not follow the dictates of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*. Based on writings in sacred texts, Nichiren had predicted civil wars and foreign invasions. His prophecies were eventually realized, and conflicts within the Kamakura Government soon came to light, Letters of State came to Japan from Mongolia (蒙古國書), and Mongolian emissaries visited the country, all of which created anxiety over the possibility of aggression.

In 1268 Nichiren wrote the treatises *Ankoku-ron-soejo* (安国論副状) and *Ankoku-ron-gokan-yurai* (安国論御勘由來), both of which referred back to what he had written in the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*. The *Rissho-ankoku-ron* had been personally delivered to Hojo Tokiyori by Yadoya Saishin (宿屋貞信). In the treatise *Yadoya-Nyudo-sai-gojo* (宿屋入道再御状) of 1268, Nichiren asked Saishin why there had been no response to it by the Kamakura Government. Because a great comet had appeared in 1264, and because Japan had received a Letter of State in 1268 from Mongolia implying a future invasion, Nichiren wrote in the *Ankoku-ron-okugaki* (安国論奥書) in 1269 that the prophecies of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* had become reality.

The *Ko-saimyoji-nyudo-kenzan-gosho* (故最明寺入道見参御書), written in 1269, indicates that Nichiren had met Hojo Tokiyori in 1260, eight years before the submission of the
The Periphery of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*, and the Core of the Kanjin-honzon-sho (H. Watanabe) (145)

*Rissho-ankoku-ron*. In the *Kingo-dono-gohenji* (金吾殿御返事), in 1270, Nichiren referred to the arrival of the Letter of State from Mongolia. Since it seemed that what Nichiren had foretold in the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* was coming to pass, he demanded an open public debate.

In the *Ankoku-ron-sojo* (安国論送状) of 1272, Nichiren requests Toki Jonin (富木常忍) to make a copy of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* and send it to him at Sado Island, where he had been exiled. He wrote the *Ken-rissho-i-sho* (顛立正意抄) while still in exile on Sado Island in 1274; in it he reasserted the purpose of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*, saying, “I am sure that this prediction of mine about their future lives will also come true. It is as certain as shooting an arrow at the great earth that all the people in Japan, high and low, will fall into the Hell of Incessant Suffering (無間地獄).” Rather than emphasizing an ability to predict calamities, Nichiren’s fundamental purpose had been to save the people from having to endure such sufferings.

Writing in the *Muso-gosho* (夢想御書) of 1272, Nichiren reported that according to a dream he had on October 10, 1272, military units of various sizes would be dispatched from Sagami Province (相模国) on January 9, 1273, for the purpose of repelling a Mongolian invasion. The Mongolians did invade Japan, but it was not until October of 1274. In November of 1274, in the *Kassen-zaizen-gosho* (合戦在前御書), Nichiren wrote: “The fifth 500-Year Period (五百年歳), the period of steadfast engagement in disputes, falls today in the age of *Mappo* (末法 The Latter Age of Degeneration). Accordingly, as we look at the world today, Japan and Mongolia are fighting a war right under your nose.” At this critical moment, Nichiren declared that the only way to save Japan was through the *Lotus Sutra*, bequeathed by Buddha to save all the people in the age of *Mappo*.

Nichiren made five copies of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* on his own, and wrote numerous treatises and letters in connection with it. It can be understood from these writings that Nichiren was raising the issue of examining measures to protect the people from calamities, and that his examination was taken from a purely religious standpoint. His conclusion was to regenerate Buddhism through faith in the *Lotus Sutra*.

II Looking at the final part of the *Kanjin-honzon-sho* to examine Buddha’s teaching on realizing a peaceful society

The complete title of this work is *Nyorai-metsugo-gogohyakusaishi-kanjin-honzon-sho*, (如来滅後五百歲始観心本尊抄 On the Origination, in the Fifth Five Hundred Year Period
(146) The Periphery of the Rissho-ankoku-ron, and the Core of the Kanjin-honzon-sho (H. Watanabe)

after the Tathagata’s Passing, of the Primary Focal Point for Observation of the Mind). It begins with a commentary that the fifth volume of T’ien-tai’s 天台智顕 work, Great Concentration and Insight 摩訶止觀, is the source of the doctrine of “three thousand realms in a single moment of thought (一念三千).”

The Kanjin-honzon-sho can be seen as having three areas of discussion: 1) Observation of the Mind 観心, 2) the Primary Focal Point 本尊, and 3) Dissemination 流通. The first section discusses the doctrine of the three thousand realms in a single moment of thought, asserts that Nichiren’s personal experiences have proved the truth of the Lotus Sutra, and says that the sacred title of the Lotus Sutra is the remedy that is the salvation of the people in the age of Mappo. The second section is devoted to the legacy bequeathed to the people in the age of Mappo—all of the various sutras and, ultimately, the Lotus Sutra, which clearly shows the Eternal Buddha’s strategy to save the world. Part three is about Nichiren’s experience of the prophetic writing of the Lotus Sutra and his own writings foretelling future occurrences-writings that would continue even after the Kanjin-honzon-sho.

The following phrases can be found at the end of the Kanjin-honzon-sho: (Showa teihon Nichiren Shonin ibun, p720, 昭和定本日蓮聖人遺文)

A) "When the sky is blue, the land is bright."
B) "...those who knew the Lotus Sutra can see the reasons for occurrences in the world."
C) "For those who are incapable of understanding the truth of ichinen-sanzen 三千年 (three thousand realms in a single moment of thought), Buddha, with his great compassion, wraps this jewel with the five characters of the five mystic words of the Lotus Sutra’s title, myo-horen-ge-kyo 妙法蓮華経, and drapes it around the neck of the ignorant people in the age of Mappo."

D) The Four Great Bodhisattvas 四菩薩 will protect such people, just as T’ai-kung-wang 大公 and the Duke of Chou 周公 assisted the young ruler, King Chen 成王, or as the Four Elders of the Shang-shan 四皓 attended the child-emperor Hui 惠帝 of ancient China.

As for the points related to these final words:

A) says that when the sky is beautiful, gloom disappears from the land;
B) says that we attain social peace (a bright land) when we attain the real intention of the Lotus Sutra (the blue sky);
C) speaks to the importance of understanding the Lotus Sutra: It is difficult for ignorant
The Periphery of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*, and the Core of the Kanjin-honzon-sho (H. Watanabe) (147)

and ordinary people (凡夫) in the age of *Mappo* to understand the doctrine of *ichinen-sanzen*. Because of that, Buddha shows a method of practice that is easy to understand, Buddha drapes that jewel around the neck of ignorant and ordinary people;

D) metaphorically restates (B) “can see the reasons for occurrences in the world” with the historical facts that T’ai-kung-wang and the Duke of Chou were retainers of King Wu (武帝) of the Chou (周) dynasty in ancient China and likewise served the King’s young son, King Chen; and that four elder statesmen of the Shang-shan attended the child-emperor Hui, the second emperor of the former Han (漢) dynasty. This was intended to serve as an explanation of the ideology that the Buddha’s merit of practicing the bodhisattva way leading to buddhahood and the merit of his teaching and saving all living beings since his attainment of buddhahood are fully contained in the *daimoku* (the five mystic words), and thus the merits that he accumulated before and after his attainment of buddhahood are naturally transferred to us when we believe and chant the *daimoku*. It can be understood from the context that the real-time realization of peace in the world through the core of Buddhism is related to such a realization of ongoing tranquility in society.

III The meaning of the phrase “the true and sole teaching of the *Lotus Sutra*” in the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*.

The above quoted final points A-D of the *Kanjin-honzon-sho* are associated with the phrase “the true and sole teaching of the *Lotus Sutra*” (実乗の一善) that appears near the end of the *Rissho-ankoku-ron*. Nichiren wrote the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* when he was 39 years old, and following its writing, his religious consciousness was raised. Thereafter, Nichiren believed himself to be a practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra* because he experienced various persecutions, and he considered himself to be an avatar of the bodhisattvas that emerged from the earth who (地涌の菩薩), in chapter 15 of the *Lotus Sutra*, were said to be those who would lead dissemination of the sutra after the Buddha’s passing. The *Rissho-ankoku-ron* was prepared as a private admonishment and counsel to the government, and not as an exposition of Nichiren’s religious realization, but the following lines from the *Rissho-ankoku-ron* resonate strongly with the *Kanjin-honzon-sho*, which he wrote at age 53:

A) “You should promptly discard your false faith, and take up the true and sole teaching of the *Lotus Sutra* at once.” (Showa teihon Nichiren Shonin ibun, p226)
B) “Then this triple world of the unenlightened will all become Buddha-lands. Will Buddha-lands ever decay?”
C) “All the worlds in the universe will become Buddha’s Pure Lands (宝土). Will Buddha’s Pure Lands ever be destroyed?
D) “When our country does not decay and the world is not destroyed, our bodies will be safe and our hearts tranquil. Believe these words and revere them.”

The first of these, sentence (A), encourages faith in the Lotus Sutra. There are a lot of sacred scriptures in Buddhism, some of them becoming the basis for the practice of a particular Buddhist group. Nichiren classified the Lotus Sutra as the highest peak of the sacred scriptures, and “the true and sole teaching.” He constructed charts of ichidai-goji-zu (一代五時図), the Tendai doctrine that classified Buddha’s teaching lifetime according to five periods. Following this doctrine, Nichiren emphasized the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. I think that “the true and sole teaching” reference from the Rissho-ankoku-ron means “the prophetic writing of the Lotus Sutra (法華経の未来記),” as when Buddha refers to the spread of the Lotus Sutra in the age of Mappo. My whole study of Nichiren Buddhism forms the background of this opinion.

The expression of sentence (B), “this triple world of the unenlightened will all become Buddha-lands,” is provocative; it is the prediction that the Lotus Sutra will save the world in which we live. The lands of the world become Buddha-lands at once. I think that the Lotus Sutra treasures reality. In early Buddhism, ignorant and ordinary people’s approach to the attainment of Buddhahood is gradual; it does not suggest an instantaneous attainment of Buddhahood in one jump. But the Lotus Sutra shows instantaneous attainment through faith, and thus it can affirm that Buddhahood can be attained by believing “the true and sole teaching of the Lotus Sutra.”

The implication of sentence (C) is that the Pure Buddha-lands are not limited to the world we perceive before our eyes. It intends to expand our vision of Buddha-lands to encompass the entire universe.

In sentence (D), “When our country does not decay and the world is not destroyed, our bodies will be safe and our hearts tranquil,” the concept of realization of Buddha-lands is concretely drawn through the three factors of nation (国土の安泰), body (身の安全), and heart (心の安寧). The peace of the country is connected to the safety of our bodies, and again to the tranquility of our hearts.

—1290—
The Periphery of the Rissho-ankoku-ron, and the Core of the Kanjin-honzon-sho (H. Watanabe) (149)

IV Nichiren’s study of Buddhism and his wish for the safety of the country

The Rissho-ankoku-ron and the Kanjin-honzon-sho were written in different times and for different purposes, but common to both is the faith that the essence of Buddhism is the safety of the country through faith in the Lotus Sutra. After Nichiren’s death, his disciples and believers admired him as the practical and passionate advocate of his faith. After the presentation of the Rissho-ankoku-ron they gave their hearts over to his “consciousness as a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra” and his consciousness of being a “reincarnation of the bodhisattvas that emerged from the earth.” Nichiren’s disciples and believers experienced the bitter history of oppression in Japan. I think that, in light of such a history, a model of martyrdom was found in Nichiren’s life.

But the modern global environment is undergoing great changes. Humankind’s coexistence is the challenge of modern society, a society in which such factors as confrontation and cooperation, or dialogues and harmony are mixed and developed. Under such conditions, I want to squarely face the Rissho-ankoku-ron in its sense of Nichiren’s personal admonition and counsel based on his faith. Ours is an environment that can clearly recognize the structure of Nichiren’s doctrine and his behavior. I analyzed Nichiren’s works from such a point of view. Nichiren’s consciousness of Buddhism becomes clear through this research. Even in those days he took seriously the relationship between the development of religion and the realization of peace in society.

Epilogue

Nichiren’s letters and treatises were viewed as sacred writings in the Nichiren sect. Today we are researching Nichiren’s works from the more objective perspective that arose after World War II. I think that this same perspective is taken in research with regard to Shinran (親鸞 1173-1262).

I have explored the famous phrases of the Rissho-ankoku-ron and the Kanjin-honzon-sho, tracing them through Nichiren’s various works. There is much research and discussion regarding this subject, and the results, from all the various perspectives, will be endless. While I don’t think that this presentation will be added to those detailed arguments, we, Nichiren Buddhists, welcome the advent of the 750th anniversary of the presentation of the Rissho-ankoku-ron by our founder. Setting aside a complete historical discussion, I wrote this work with the aim of outlining the figure of faith in Buddhism as the original prayer...
for the peace of the nation that Nichiren portrayed.

Bibliography

Writings of Nichiren Shonin Vols. 1-2; Edited by George Tanabe Jr. and Jay Sakashita; translated by Kyotsu Hori. Distributed by the University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002-2003.

Authors: Vol.1, Komatsu, Hosho; Vol.2, Watanabe, Hoyo; Sekido, Gyokai, et.al.

〈Key words〉 Rissho-ankoku-ron, Kanjin-honzon-sho

(Professor emeritus, Rissho University, Ph.D.)