

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA THE TATSUNOKUCHI PERSECUTION: THE BUDDHISM OF THE SUN ARRIVES

In the first of two essays on the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, SGI President Ikeda writes that ‘this was the moment in which the Buddhism of the sun broke through the profound darkness of fundamental delusion to illuminate the earth with its brilliance.’

At last I’m here at the place that I have studied about in Nichiren Daishonin’s writings — the place where the Daishonin cast off his transient status and revealed his true identity. I can just picture the Daishonin’s great struggle.”

This was the comment of one of our SGI members from Africa when visiting the SGI Study Center at Tatsunokuchi in Kamakura, Japan, for the first time.

Members from all over the world have voiced similar expressions of deep emotion on visiting this site. “The Daishonin dedicated his life to the struggle to lead all people to happiness,” another member said. “I am proud that it is only in the SGI that the lifeblood of faith dedicated to kosen-rufu remains alive.”

Members of the Soka Gakkai’s Shonan Sub-prefecture, including the local Kamakura Zone, work hard to keep the study center in splendid condition and giving our overseas members a warm welcome.



More than 10 years before the center opened, I visited the area. The building stands on a high plateau, and the garden on its southern side offers a commanding view of the blue waters of Sagami Bay stretching out into the vast Pacific. The sandy beach traces a graceful curve toward the island of Enoshima, in the right foreground. Following the coastline to the left, one sees the Shichiri and Yui beaches, and then, to the far left, somewhat inland, the city of Kamakura. On May 12, 1986, the day of my visit, the rose garden was in fragrant bloom.



The building that is now the SGI Study Center was formerly the vacation home of the Japanese physician Dr. Shokichi Nagayo, a great medical pioneer who opened the first clinic for stomach and intestinal illness in Japan. The famous Japanese writer Soseki Natsume was among those who received treatment at Dr. Nagayo’s clinic. Dr. Nagayo was also a friend of the Nobel Prize-winning German bacteriologist Dr. Robert Koch. When Dr. Koch came to Japan, he visited Dr. Nagayo’s vacation home.

Shijo Kingo, incidentally, who accompanied the Daishonin during the Tatsunokuchi Persecution with the resolve to die at his side, also had a profound mastery of medicine.

Dr. Nagayo’s younger brother, Yoshiro Nagayo, was a writer and a member of the White Birch literary school. As a youth, I enjoyed reading his masterpiece, *A Teacher by the Name of Mr. Takezawa*. Through their association with Yoshiro Nagayo, many great writers and artists of the period visited the vacation house, including Saneatsu Mushanokoji, a noted White Birch writer, and the painter Ryusei Kishida, famous for his *Portrait of Reiko*. It was a center for lively discussions on art, literature and philosophy.

In addition, Dr. Nagayo’s son-in-law, the politician Takeru Inukai, was the son of Prime

Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai, who in turn was a friend of Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. Prime Minister Inukai was one of the first to join the Soka Kyoikugaku Shienkai (Value-creating Education Support Group), which was established to promote the principles of value-creating education formulated by Makiguchi.

The SGI Study Center thus shines with many rich connections, a noble tradition and an aura of refinement and culture.

Looking back, it was in 1979, during the incredible betrayal by the priesthood then, that our Kanagawa Culture Center, a shining beacon of hope, was completed. And during the more recent attacks by Nichiren Shoshu, this profoundly significant SGI Study Center was opened, in 1999. I cannot help but look on both of these facilities as jeweled citadels of the correct teachings, which have been bestowed upon the SGI by the Daishonin.

I hope that all who visit the study center will forge lives as brilliant and indestructible as diamonds, triumphing over all obstacles and never being defeated for all eternity. This is my prayer and conviction.



On the 12th day of the 9th month of the 8th year of the Bun'ei era (1271), a noisy mob surrounded the Daishonin's dwelling at Matsubagayatsu in Kamakura. Hei no Saemon, the most powerful figure in the military government, stormed the building with several hundred soldiers.

The Daishonin declared in a ringing voice: "How amusing! Look at Hei no Saemon gone mad! You gentlemen have just toppled the pillar of Japan" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 766).

The arrogant priest Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple in Kamakura was behind this act of violence. The Daishonin had refuted Ryokan's erroneous teachings, exposed his hypocrisy and triumphed over him in a contest to pray for rain.

Ryokan was no match for the Daishonin—not in the teachings he preached, his personal character or the actual proof of his practice. Therefore, his only alternative was to paint the Daishonin a villain.

And so he devised a scheme: He maligned the Daishonin to powerful figures and their wives, spreading incredibly vicious, base lies about him. The military government was already in an uproar over the impending invasion of Japan by the Mongols—the general punishment that the Daishonin had predicted would befall the country, if the government failed to heed his warnings in "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land."

True leaders, if they cared for their nation's fate, would humbly and earnestly listen to the truthful arguments of a great sage. But the rulers of the military government of the Daishonin's day cared little for the happiness of the people. They merely exploited the crisis that the nation faced to strengthen their own hold on power. And they plotted to destroy the person who was the nation's true treasure, because he stood in their way.

Priests mad with jealousy working hand in glove with authorities blinded by arrogance—this is the pattern that persecutions against the Soka Gakkai, an organization carrying out the Buddha's intent and decree, have followed in recent years.

After the Daishonin was apprehended by Hei no Saemon's men, he was paraded through the streets of Kamakura like a traitor and taken to the residence of Hojo Nobutoki, who was the constable of Sado Island, the place to which the Daishonin was to be exiled. But Hei no Saemon's men came and removed him from the premises in the middle of the night.

They planned to execute him at Tatsunokuchi.

This was not a legal sentence of death—it was an unsanctioned private execution plotted by Hei no Saemon and his cohorts. It all unfolded under the cover of darkness. They were jealous and afraid of the sun of truth. The darkness of the insidious nature of power seethed, sharpening its cruel sword.



On Wakamiya Avenue, on the way to the execution ground at Tatsunokuchi, the Daishonin dismounted from his horse and, facing Hachiman Shrine, sternly reproved Great Bodhisattva Hachiman: “Now I, Nichiren, am the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra in all of Japan, and am entirely without guilt...You had better do something about it [my predicament] right away!” (WND, 766–67). This was a lion’s roar of rebuke at the heavenly deities—the protective functions of the universe—who had promised to safeguard the practitioner of the correct teaching at the assembly where the Lotus Sutra was preached.

When they reached Yui Beach, the Daishonin sent a boy named Kumao to inform Shijo Kingo of his impending execution. Rushing from the house, without even stopping to put on his shoes, Shijo Kingo hastened to the Daishonin’s side with his three brothers. The Daishonin had called on his most trustworthy lay disciple to witness this momentous event.

Though Tatsunokuchi is called an execution ground, it seems that there were no special facilities or buildings. A mat was simply spread over the sand for the beheading.

The soldier had his sword raised and was ready to perform the execution. Shijo Kingo said, “These are your last moments” (WND, 767) and started weeping, but the Daishonin chided him, saying that he should laugh at such a joyful occasion.

Then it happened.

Suddenly, from the direction of Enoshima, an orb as bright as the moon streaked across the sky. The pitch black was illuminated like a moonlit night. The soldier holding the sword was blinded by the object’s dazzling brightness and fell to the ground, and the others, struck with fear, ran off into the distance.



What was this shining object? Research has shown that it may have been a fragment from a meteor stream in the region of the Aries and Taurus constellations. This was the theory of Dr. Hideo Hirose, an eminent Japanese astronomer, who was a former director of the Tokyo Astronomical Observatory and professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo. He hypothesized that the appearance of the bright object on the night of the 12th day of the 9th month of the 8th year of the Bun’ei era (1271) took place around the time the moon set, which he calculated to be 3:44 a.m. [on the 13th day].

The Daishonin writes that the brilliant orb burst through the darkness, shooting across the sky from southeast to northwest. After analyzing all the data, Dr. Hirose concluded that the object that appeared at about 4:00 a.m. was a huge meteor, moving at an altitude of 34 degrees and an azimuth of 79 degrees from south to west. Based on the time of the event, the astronomer determined that the bright object was probably a meteor from the Taurid-Arietid meteor stream that originated from Encke’s Comet.



A great light blazed in the darkness at the very moment that the Daishonin was about to be beheaded. He called out to the soldiers who had fled, telling them that if they were

going to cut off his head they should do it quickly, before the dawn, but they were afraid and would not approach.

Eventually, from far beyond the waves, a dot of crimson began to glow faintly, spreading out to the left and right, and swelling upward until the horizon could be seen. Dawn had arrived. The sun's rays gained rapidly in strength and radiance, making the sea sparkle and lighting the sky. The clouds were dyed in rainbow colors.

The shining, golden sun rose majestically.

This was the moment in which the Buddhism of the sun broke through the profound darkness of fundamental delusion to illuminate the earth with its brilliance.

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