

MANGA AS *SHAKUBUKU*: *GYŌ*, *GAKU*, AND *SHIN* IN NICHIREN BUDDHIST

NARRATIVES

by

KAT Y. BERTRAM

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Committee Members:

Stephanie Su, Ph.D.

crystal am nelson, Ph.D.

Albert Alhadeff, Ph.D.

Abstract

Bertram, Kat Yoshie (M.A., University of Colorado Boulder, Department of Art and Art History)

Manga as Shakubuku: Gyō, Gaku, and Shin in Nichiren Buddhist Narratives

Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Dr. Stephanie Su

This thesis explores the unique intersection of Nichiren Buddhism and manga as a medium for religious communication and education, focusing on the practice of *Shakubuku*—enlightening others about the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin (1222-1282) and the mantra *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*. Nichiren Buddhism emphasizes the potential for all individuals to achieve enlightenment within their lifetime, guided by the core tenets of *Gyō* (practice), *Gaku* (study), and *Shin* (faith). This study explores how manga serves as both a narrative art form and a tool for reinforcing the sect's teachings and promoting *Shakubuku*. Despite being often overlooked in art historical studies due to its commercial nature and perceived lack of artistic value; manga holds significant cultural and educational importance. By examining manga that depict the life and teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, this study highlights how the medium incorporates the principles of *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin*, fostering a deeper understanding and devotion among followers and spreading Nichiren Buddhism to a wider audience. Through a comprehensive analysis of selected manga works, this paper contributes to the broader discourse of Japanese religious art, challenging prevailing notions about the value of popular media to emphasize the transformative potential of manga in promoting the core principles of Nichiren Buddhism and cultivating a deeper spiritual connection for both practitioners and non-members.

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Introduction

Shakubuku 折伏, a method of religious proselytization in Nichiren Buddhism involves enlightening others about the benefits and truths believed to be found in the sect's founder's, Nichiren Daishonin (1222-1282), teachings. This practice, often translated as "break and subdue," holds significance for followers of the faith as it signifies a commitment to sharing the principles of *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo* 南無妙法蓮華經—a Buddhist mantra which fosters a desire for global harmony and personal enlightenment. Throughout history art has played a role in this process serving as both an expression and a means of persuasion. Since the introduction of Buddhism to Japan, artists have utilized arts effectively to communicate their message and connect with an audience on a more meaningful level.¹ This visual persuasion has evolved over time, developing alongside the changing trends and needs of society mirroring the adaptability and resonance of Nichiren Buddhism. Over time, Nichiren Buddhism has grown from a small sect during Japan's Kamakura Period 鎌倉時代 (1185-1333), to become a religion embraced by millions worldwide across different regions and cultures.² This thesis explores how manga that portray Nichiren Daishonin's life embody and propagate the core tenets of *Gyō* 行 (practice),

¹ According to the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (720)—the second oldest book of classical Japanese history—Buddhism was introduced to Japan in 552 when the king of Paekche (or Baekje, southern part of present-day Korea) presented the Japanese emperor with several bronze statues of the Buddha, painted banners, and canonical scriptures showing this Buddhist tradition of visual persuasion. 荊木美行著 Ibaraki Yoshiyuki, *日本書紀の成立と史料性 The Establishment and Historical Material of Nihon Shoki* (Osaka: Nenshōsha, 2022), 65-67.

² There are approximately 10 million Nichiren Buddhist practitioners in Japan and more than 11 million internationally. 文化庁 The Agency for Cultural Affairs, *宗教年鑑 令和5年版 Religious Yearbook Reiwa 5th Edition* (Kyoto, Japan: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2020).

Gaku 学 (study), and *Shin* 信 (faith) and thereby strengthen the devotion of followers and encourage *Shakubuku* to non-members.

Personal Positioning and Research Objectives

As a researcher in the field of art history, I have been deeply influenced by my unique background growing up in a Japanese-American household rooted in the cultural and spiritual traditions of Nichiren Buddhism. This personal connection has driven my curiosity and motivated me to delve into the significance of visual representation within religious practice and cultural heritage. Through my background as a Nichiren Buddhist, my research naturally leaned towards Japanese Buddhist art histories, where I found a significant gap in the scholarship. It is evident that the focus of Japanese Buddhist scholarship, across various disciplines, mainly revolves around the Nembutsu (Pure Land) and Zen branches of the faith, while neglecting the Nichiren sect. I believe that this discrepancy can be attributed to the extensive historical support from the government and social elites that both Nembutsu and Zen received, leading to a surplus of artworks produced within these sects. Consequently, there is an abundance of scholarship available on Nembutsu and Zen art, leaving Nichiren Buddhist art largely unexplored in Japanese Buddhist art historical studies.

Nichiren Buddhist art may also be overlooked as much of the artwork produced from this sect falls under the category of popular media. Popular media is not traditionally considered a fine art and is often neglected in art historical studies due to the commercial mass-production of the media and often being seen as ephemeral and transient, catering to popular tastes and trends rather than fine artistic exploration. While popular media, such as manga, do not fall under the traditional canon of art history, in recent years there has been a growing recognition of the

artistic significance and impact of popular media.³ I agree with this assertion that there is artistic and cultural value of popular media worth of studying and analyzing for its artistic merits. This shift is reflected in the inclusion of popular media in contemporary art exhibitions, academic conferences, and publications. It is important to recognize that popular media has its own aesthetic and artistic qualities and studying it can provide valuable insights into the broader cultural and artistic landscape of a society.

Due to popular media being a more recent development in art history practices, it has also been overlooked as a vehicle of theological insight. Specifically, popular media is in a way, artwork curated for the masses, aligning with the philosophy that Nichiren Buddhism should be accessible to all people regardless of background. Using manga as my lens, I strive to reveal the potential of popular visual storytelling in teaching about the dogma of religious works while also facilitating devotion and proselytization. This narrative medium's unique strategies to evoke a multi-sensory experience serve as a compelling means of communication that transcends the confines of traditional textual or oral methods. It highlights the relevance of understanding the dynamic relationship between art, education, and faith within the context of Nichiren Buddhism.

In conducting this study, my aim is to unveil overlooked perspectives that will initiate a dialogue on the artistic production of the Nichiren sect and to contribute to a deeper comprehension of how visual narratives function in the broader framework of religious communication. By examining the utilization of popular media such as manga as a means to convey Buddhist narratives and shedding light on the artistic depiction of Nichiren Daishonin and Nichiren Buddhism, I seek to bridge gaps in the Japanese Buddhist art history discourse.

³ Please see **Manga: A Vehicle for Culture and History** on page 8 that discusses current scholarship on Manga.

Ultimately, this endeavor will contribute to an expanded comprehension of Japanese religious art within the wider scope of Japanese culture and history.

Nichiren Buddhism: *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin*

Due to the common lack of familiarity of Nichiren Buddhism, it is necessary to provide a brief background and explanation of the sect. Named for its founder, Nichiren Daishonin, this school of Buddhism emerged during the 13th century. Nichiren, who was a Buddhist monk, had a profound belief that the essence of Shakyamuni Buddha's⁴ teachings could be found in the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren believed that he lived in a time where the other sects in Japan had strayed from the true essence of Buddhism and as a result, strongly criticized these schools as well as the government and upper class that supported them. Nichiren attributed his contemporary society's unrest on these incorrect religious beliefs and asserted that the salvation of the nation relied on unwavering devotion to the truth found in the Lotus Sutra. This emphasis on the Lotus Sutra as the ultimate teachings of the Buddha and the belief that all individuals, regardless of background or circumstance, have the innate potential to achieve enlightenment within their lifetime.

Central to Nichiren Buddhism are the key tenets of *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin* which form the foundation of the Lotus Sutra's teachings and guide practitioners on the path to enlightenment.

Nichiren states:

⁴ Shakyamuni Buddha, also known as Siddhartha Gautama, was a spiritual teacher from ancient India and the founder of Buddhism. The term "the Buddha" specifically refers to Shakyamuni, denoting him as the enlightened one who first achieved full Buddhahood.

Believe in the *Gohonzon*,⁵ the supreme object of devotion in all of Jambudvīpa.⁶ Be sure to strengthen your faith, and receive the protection of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if it is only a single sentence or phrase.⁷

In layman's terms, Nichiren here means that one should trust in the Gohonzon, representative of the Lotus Sutra. He emphasizes the importance in strengthening one's faith to accumulate fortune and how out of faith comes study and practice and that without these three pillars, one cannot truly follow Nichiren Buddhism.

Gyō 行, although literally translating to "to carry out," is more aptly contextualized as "practice" within this context.⁸ *Gyō* primarily revolves around the chanting of *Gongyo* 勤行 and *Daimoku* 題目. The term *Gongyo* in Japanese translates to "assiduous practice," broadly referring to the dedicated recitation of Buddhist sutras before an object of veneration, such as the *Gohonzon*. *Daimoku* refers to the invocation of *Nam Myōhō Renge Kyō* as well as signifies the

⁵ The Gohonzon holds profound significance as a sacred object of veneration and spiritual focus. It is believed to be a representation of the Buddha's enlightened state and embodies the essence of the Lotus Sutra. The Gohonzon serves as a visual aid during chanting practice. By meditating upon the Gohonzon and chanting Nam Myōhō Renge Kyō in front of it, practitioners seek to deepen their connection to the teachings and cultivate inner wisdom, compassion, and resilience on the path to enlightenment.

⁶ Jambudvīpa 閻浮提, according to the ancient Indian world view, Jambudvīpa is one of the four continents positioned around Mount Sumeru in different directions. It is specifically referred to as the southern continent. The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2002), 314.

⁷ 日蓮大聖人 Nichiren Daishonin, "The True Aspect of All Phenomena" in *日蓮大聖人御書全集 The Complete Works of Nichiren Daishonin*, translated by The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2002), 383.

⁸ Note that the use of the kanji 行 uses the on'yomi, or Chinese reading, of the character. The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 175.

title of the Lotus Sutra, embodying the essence of this profound scripture. *Gyō* also encompasses *Shakubuku*. This act of propagation is considered an integral part of Nichiren Buddhist practice, as it aims to spread the principles of compassion, wisdom, and enlightenment to benefit all of society. Through *Shakubuku*, practitioners actively contribute to the growth of the Buddhist community and the promotion of peace and understanding in the world. Nichiren Buddhist narratives often depict characters engaging in diligent *Gyō*, such as chanting and *Shakubuku*, while the narrative acts as a form of *Shakubuku* itself.

Gaku 学 translates to “learning,” or more fitting in this context, “study.”⁹ *Gaku* is an essential aspect of Nichiren Buddhism, as it helps practitioners deepen their understanding of Buddhist teachings and gain insights into the principles of cause and effect (karma), the nature of suffering, and the path to enlightenment. Central to *Gaku* in Nichiren Buddhism is the Lotus Sutra, which is considered the highest and most profound teaching of the Buddha. In addition to the Lotus Sutra, practitioners may also study writings by Nichiren Daishonin, commentaries by later scholars, and other Buddhist texts to deepen their understanding of the teachings and how to apply them in daily life. Nichiren Buddhist manga serves as a dynamic form of *Gaku*, offering a vehicle for learning about the histories and dogma of Nichiren Buddhism and Nichiren Daishonin. The existence of extensive visual narratives highlights the importance of *Gaku* in this religion, depicting characters deeply engaged in rigorous exploration of the Lotus Sutra.

Shin 信, the third of the three fundamentals of Nichiren’s teachings, roughly translates to “faith.”¹⁰ However, *Shin* differs from the Western-Christian conceptualization of faith, which

⁹ The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 175.

¹⁰ The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 175.

typically revolves around belief in a transcendent deity and adherence to prescribed doctrines, often emphasizing a more passive acceptance of divine will rather than an active engagement with spiritual principles. *Shin* in Nichiren Buddhism is foundational, rooted in a profound trust in the Lotus Sutra's teachings and the inherent Buddha nature within all beings. Through practices like chanting *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, practitioners believe they can awaken their potential for enlightenment and genuine happiness. This faith is not blind; it's an understanding that dedicated practice fosters personal growth and positive change. It is a recognition of the interconnectedness of all life and the inherent potential for growth and transformation within each individual. Ultimately, *Shin* in Nichiren Buddhism serves as a guiding light on the path to enlightenment, inspiring practitioners to lead lives of compassion, wisdom, and integrity, and to realize their fullest potential as awakened beings. In this context, *Shin* carries connotations of trust, confidence, and deep personal conviction rather than just an adherence to dogma or belief in a higher power.¹¹ Nichiren Buddhist narratives often depict the Daishonin navigating life's challenges with unwavering faith in the Lotus Sutra's teachings, illustrating how *Shin* serves as a source of strength, resilience, and guidance in the spiritual journey towards enlightenment.

The Lotus Sutra and *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*

Buddhism teaches that individuals can overcome all challenges in life guided by the fundamental law that governs all life and the universe. The original Buddha, Shakyamuni, discovered the Mystic Law¹² that reveals the potential to transcend suffering. Nichiren, two

¹¹ In Buddhism, practitioners often cultivate a mentor-disciple relationship with the Buddha, viewing him as an exemplar and guide whose teachings illuminate the path to enlightenment, whereas in Christianity, believers typically perceive God as a deity to whom they offer devotion and worship.

¹² Considered to be the ultimate principle or truth of life and the universe. Also known as the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. The term has also been translated into English as Wonderful Dharma, Fine Dharma, and other variations. The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 421.

thousand years after Shakyamuni's passing, named this truth *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo* and developed a practice based on the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra is a central text in Mahayana Buddhism, explaining *Hoben* 方便, or Skillful Means, used by the Buddha to guide all beings toward enlightenment. *Hoben* recognizes the need for tailored teaching methods to suit each individual on their path to awakening. This principle drives home the universal potential for enlightenment.

The mantra *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo* 南無妙法蓮華經 breaks down as follows: *Nam* 南無 represents devotion to the ultimate truth, *Myoho* 妙法 symbolizes the essence of the universe or the Mystic Law, *Renge* 蓮華 translates to lotus flower and signifies the potential of enlightenment, and *Kyo* 經 refers to Sutra. Together, *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo* expresses devotion to the Mystic Law through Buddhist practice. It represents a profound affirmation of devotion and recognition of the transformative power of the Mystic Law. Through chanting *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*, it is believed that individuals connect with this eternal truth and embark on a journey of self-discovery, growth, and liberation from suffering.

Manga: A Vehicle for Culture and History

The analysis of these manga works within the larger realm of historical manga is enriched by the scholarly perspectives of Frederick L. Schodt, Ismay Barwell, Lorne L. Dawson, Tetsuo Najita, and Endo Asai. Schodt's exploration of narrative techniques and cultural dimensions in manga, as discussed in *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*,¹³ offers valuable

¹³ Frederik L Schodt, *Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983).

insights into how manga incorporates Japanese traditions and mythology into its storytelling. This understanding helps contextualize how historical manga, such as those exploring Nichiren Buddhism, integrate cultural and religious themes within their narratives. Schodt's work aids in recognizing the fusion of Japanese narrative theory with religious themes, highlighting how manga serves as a medium for cultural expression and storytelling. Barwell's scholarship on narrative theory, particularly her article *Understanding Narratives and Narrative Understanding*,¹⁴ provides a framework for comprehending Japanese narrativity. Her insights encourage a deeper examination of the structures and elements that contribute to the complexity of narratives in manga. By applying Barwell's framework, one can analyze how manga effectively conveys religious messages and imagery to a modern audience, thereby understanding the narrative strategies employed in these works to convey themes of Nichiren Buddhism.

Furthermore, Dawson's article *The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements*¹⁵ sheds light on the socio-religious context surrounding Nichiren Buddhism. By investigating the cultural significance of new religious movements, Dawson elucidates how these movements, including Nichiren Buddhism, have influenced social and political change in Japan. Examining the socio-religious dynamics using Dawson's perspective enriches the examination of how historical manga depicts the influence of Nichiren Buddhism on Japanese society. Najita's scholarship on Japanese politics and religion, as seen in *Japan: The Intellectual Foundations of Modern Japanese Politics*, provides insights into the interplay between religion and politics in Japan's history. Throughout Japan's history, the relationship between religion and politics has

¹⁴ Ismay Barwell, "Understanding Narratives and Narrative Understanding," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67, no. 1 (2009): 49-59.

¹⁵ Lorne L. Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements: The Case of Soka Gakkai." *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 337-364.

been complex and intertwined, shaping the country's cultural and political landscape in significant ways. Najita's work helps contextualize the broader societal influences on religious movements like Nichiren Buddhism and their implications for political thought and social change. Lastly, Endo Asai's essays on Nichiren Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra¹⁶ offer profound insights into the foundational principles of this Buddhist tradition. Asai's analysis enriches our understanding of Nichiren Buddhism's philosophical underpinnings, such as accessibility and the innate Buddha-nature of all living beings, and its broader significance within Japanese religious history. By weaving together historical context, religious doctrine, and scholarly analysis, Asai provides a perspective on Nichiren Buddhism's development and its enduring impact on Japanese society. Together, these scholars provide a multidimensional framework for analyzing historical manga works exploring Nichiren Buddhism, encompassing cultural, religious, political, and philosophical dimensions. By integrating their insights, one can gain a deeper appreciation of how manga serves as a medium for conveying complex historical and religious themes within the broader context of Japanese society.

The origins of manga can be traced back to the Nara Period 奈良時代 (710-794) where *emakimono* 絵巻物 (picture scrolls) depicted narrative scenes through sequential illustrations combining text, image and narrative. These scrolls laid the foundation for the visual storytelling techniques that define manga today. During the formative Tokugawa Period 徳川時代 (1603-1868), woodblock printed *ukiyo-e* 浮世絵 booklets, also known as manga (although using the

¹⁶ Endo Asai, "Nichiren Shonin's View of Humanity: The Final Dharma Age and the Three Thousand Realms in One Thought-Moment." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26, no. 3 (1999): 239-259. And Endo Asai, "The Lotus Sutra as the Core of Japanese Buddhism: Shifts in Representations of Its Fundamental Principle." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 41, no. 1 (2014): 45-64.

word in a different context than today), further contributed to the development of this media form. These booklets continued the emakimono tradition, of combining text and images, to cover various subjects such as historical events, folk tales, and everyday life in Edo (modern-day Tokyo). Renowned ukiyo-e artists such as Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾 北斎 (1760-1849) and Utagawa Hiroshige 歌川 広重 (1797-1858) played a significant role in popularizing manga as a form of mass entertainment, reaching audiences across different social classes.

Figure 1 is an example of this, which is a page of the *Hokusai Manga* 北斎漫画,

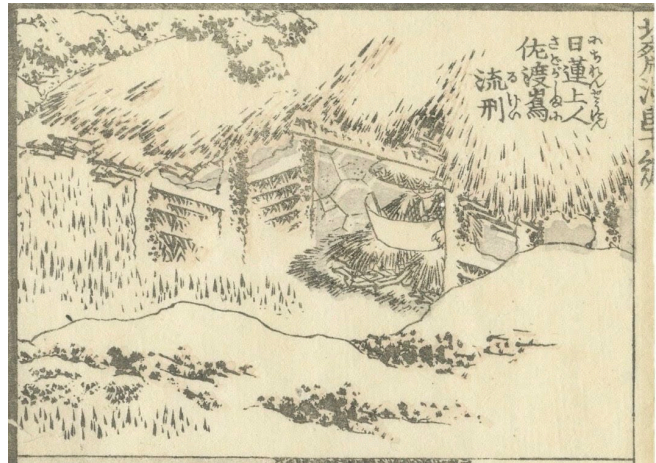


Figure 1: *The Hokusai Manga*, Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), published in 1814-1819, 1834, and 1878.

by Hokusai depicting a portrait of Nichiren Daishonin. Hokusai, a Nichiren Practitioner in his own right, created this composition in a way that combines text and image to convey a specific narrative: Nichiren's exile to Sado. From a unique perspective looking down, as if peeking at the figure of Nichiren Daishonin, Hokusai intentionally obscures the full image of the revered figure, drawing attention to his desolate exile on Sado Island. By skillfully intertwining text with image, Hokusai not only informs viewers about this historic event but also provides visual cues that offer insights into the harsh conditions of Nichiren's punishment, such as his tattered clothing and large quantities of snow, and his unwavering dedication to his faith, symbolized by his firm grasp on the scroll. Through his block of text, Hokusai further solidifies this scene by directly identifying it as Nichiren's exile following the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.¹⁷ In doing so, Hokusai

¹⁷ See page 18 for the section on the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.

not only informs viewers about this historic exile but also provides visual cues that offer insights into the harsh conditions of Nichiren's punishment. Thus, this page serves not only as an example of the precursor to manga but as a forerunner to Nichiren Buddhist manga as well.

In contemporary contexts, the term "manga" has evolved to encompass a diverse range of visual narratives and has become an integral part of Japanese popular culture. It has gained widespread popularity internationally through translations and adaptations, captivating audiences worldwide. Generally, manga refers to Japanese comics or graphic novels that were traditionally published in Japanese, read from right to left, and presented in black and white. However, it is worth mentioning that within Japan, the term manga can be used to describe all comics, irrespective of their country of origin, not exclusively limited to Japanese comics.

Methodology

The methodological process for this thesis commenced with the delineation of manga, drawing upon the theoretical framework outlined by Stephen Salel, Curator of

CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN COMIC ART	
INTENTION	PRODUCTION
1. To elicit emotional reaction (particularly humor)	4. mass-produced and commercially distributed
2. to discuss political or social issues (graphic journalism)	5. bound format (book, magazine, newspaper)
3. to tell a story	6. serial publication
STYLE	
7. incorporates multiple, distinct images arranged in a sequence	11. expressive linework and/or text to indicate movement or emotion
8. intentionally distorted and/or unrealistic image	12. drawn quickly and/or with schematic linework
9. devices (e.g. bubbles or balloons) to frame thoughts or speech	13. multimodality (mixture of text, imagery, and other modes of discourse)
10. use of multiple panels to frame images	14. features identifiable character(s)

Figure 2: *Characteristics of Modern Comic Art* by Stephen Salel.

Japanese art at the Honolulu Museum of Art.¹⁸ Salel's criteria (Figure 2) delineate manga as

¹⁸ Salel presented at the Association for Asian Studies 2024 conference in the *Manhua, Manhwa & Manga: Historical Developments of Comic Art in China, Korea, and Japan* panel. His paper will be published as an article in

works designed to evoke emotional responses, address socio-political themes, and narrate stories. Additionally, manga are characterized by their mass production and commercial distribution, typically in bound format with serial publications. Stylistically, manga features multiple images arranged sequentially, often employing intentional distortions or unrealistic imagery, visual cues to denote thoughts or speech, and the use of multiple panels to structure narratives. Expressive linework and text convey movement and emotion, while the artwork is frequently rendered swiftly with schematic linework. Furthermore, manga exhibit multimodality and prominently feature identifiable characters, collectively embodying the distinctive traits that define the medium.

Upon identifying these qualifiers, the focus was narrowed to Nichiren Buddhist manga, specifically those depicting the life of Nichiren Daishonin. Selection criteria included availability of physical copies or clear photographic evidence, ensuring tangible existence of the chosen manga. With guidance from Dr. Ryan Holmberg,¹⁹ an esteemed scholar of postwar manga,

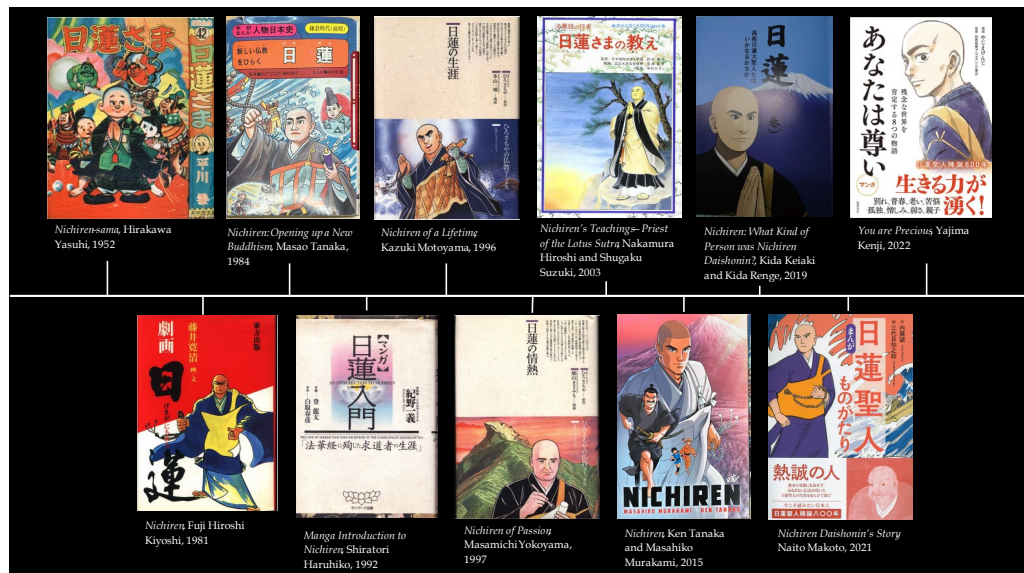


Figure 3: Timeline of manga about Nichiren Daishonin, full selection collected with the assistance of Dr. Ryan Holmberg.

the Autumn 2024 *Impressions Journal*. Stephen Salel, “From Expressions of Religious Devotion to Comic Art: The Evolution of Sugoroku Imagery” (presentation, Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Seattle, WA, March 14-17, 2024).

¹⁹ I would like to extend a special thank you to Dr. Ryan Holmberg for his invaluable assistance and guidance in compiling the list of manga for my research.

a comprehensive list of manga meeting the established criteria was compiled (Figure 3).

Notably, the chosen comics share a common objective of narrating the biographical journey of Nichiren Daishonin as an educational tool for understanding Nichiren Buddhism. This selection process emphasized accessibility, as the manga are readily purchasable online at affordable prices, facilitating widespread dissemination of knowledge of the religion. While acknowledging the limitations of the compiled list, the subsequent chronological delineation of these manga works traces the evolution of Nichiren Buddhist narrative manga over decades, illustrating its emergence as a distinct and vibrant genre within both manga and Buddhist storytelling.

This research is grounded by an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from various scholarly frameworks such as Japanese Buddhist art history, manga history, narrative theory, socio-political research, and religious studies. Despite the scarcity of direct sources on Nichiren Buddhist art or Buddhist manga, these disciplines provide invaluable lenses through which to analyze and interpret the visual narratives of Nichiren Buddhist manga. Central to this analysis is the primacy of religious writings, particularly the *Gosho* 御書.²⁰ By analyzing each examined sequence in conjunction with *Gosho*, this thesis ensures a robust grounding of visual analyses in primary sources. Through this meticulous examination, the study seeks to reveal how Nichiren Buddhist manga effectively integrate key tenets of the faith—such as *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin*—into their narrative fabric, thereby serving as a potent vehicle for proselytization.

²⁰ The *Gosho* refers to the sacred writings or letters penned by Nichiren Daishonin, the founder of the Nichiren school of Buddhism. It is considered a scripture of boundless hope that elucidates the means for all people to attain enlightenment. 〚 or “Go” is an honorific prefix and しょ or “Sho” means writings; literally translating to honorable writing. Nichiren Daishonin composed the *Gosho* during the 13th century, addressing a wide range of topics such as Buddhist philosophy, teachings, and responses to specific questions or situations. These writings are considered the distilled wisdom of Nichiren, reflecting his deep insights into the Lotus Sutra and his perspectives on various aspects of life, faith, and the propagation of Buddhism. The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 261.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter begins the exploration into Nichiren Buddhist manga through an analysis of the representations of its founding figure Nichiren Daishonin as an embodiment of *Gyō*. Beginning with an exploration of Nichiren's life, teachings, and artistic representations, the chapter traces the intricate threads of his narrative through time, art, and scholarly echoes. After establishing the historical backdrop, the depiction of the Daishonin in manga is analyzed using the English published *Nichiren* by Tanaka Ken 田中 健 and Murakami Masahiko 村上雅彦 (2015)²¹ as a case study. The narrative analyzed in all chapters, the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, is examined to demonstrate how manga embodies *Gyō* through its narratives and how it acts as a form of *Shakubuku* itself.

Embarking on the second chapter of this exploration, the spotlight shifts to the pivotal role of *Gaku* within Nichiren Buddhist manga. Here, history intertwines with biography, crafting visually captivating narratives for study. This chapter delves into *Manga Introduction to Nichiren* マンガ 日蓮入門 written by Kazuyoshi Kino 紀野一義 and Shiratori Haruhiko 白取 春彦 and illustrated by Nobori Ryuta 登龍太 (1992),²² which serves as an enlightening tool accentuating the political and religious turmoil Nichiren faced. Through this work, I posit that Nichiren Buddhist manga functions as a dynamic mnemonic tool for study, providing readers with insights into the histories of Nichiren Buddhism and Nichiren Daishonin highlighting the significance of

²¹ 村上雅彦 Masahiko Murakami and 田中 健 Tanaka Ken. *Nichiren* (Chicago, Illinois: Middleway Press, 2015).

²² 紀野一義 Kino Kazuyoshi, 白取 春彦 Shiratori Haruhiko, and 登龍太 Nobori Ryuta, マンガ 日蓮入門—*Manga Introduction to Nichiren* (Tokyo: Sunmark Publishing, 1992).

Gaku within the religion and showcasing the educational potential inherent in these visual narratives.

In the third chapter, building on the concepts of *Gyō* and *Gaku*, the exploration delves into the profound significance of *Shin* within Nichiren Buddhism, illuminating how visual representation intertwines narrative with an individual emotional devotion. In order to emphasize the role of art in rendering abstract concepts tangible and accessible, this section scrutinizes the intricate ways spiritual principles are visually manifested. Through the examination of *You are Precious* あなたは尊い by Yajima Kenji やじまけんじ and Yohei Sadoshima 佐渡島庸平 (2022)²³ this chapter uncovers a nuanced network of visual elements and narrative techniques that brings *Shin* off the page, actively embodying the rich doctrinal tapestry of Nichiren Buddhism. By examining how these works foster spiritual resonance, I demonstrate how manga embodies the *Shin* of Nichiren Buddhism and serves as a potent tool for spiritual engagement and dissemination.

Bringing together the dimensions of *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin* explored in the preceding chapters, this final chapter offers a synthesized understanding of how Nichiren Buddhist manga serve the dual purpose of reinforcing devotion among practitioners and encouraging *Shakubuku* for non-members. By examining the visual representation of practice, the study potential of manga narratives, and the spiritual resonance of faith through the Tatsunokuchi Persecution narrative, I demonstrate how this story in each of the manga embodies the core philosophy and dogma of Nichiren Buddhism. Through the interplay of *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin*, manga invites

²³ やじまけんじ Yajima Kenji and 佐渡島庸平 Yohei Sadoshima, *あなたは尊い You are Precious* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten Publishing, 2022).

readers to awaken their Buddha-nature through the act of reading and engaging with these powerful narratives.

Chapter 1

Nichiren's Legacy in Manga: History, Artistry, and *Gyō* Intersected

In the legacy of Nichiren Daishonin, spanning centuries from 13th-century Japan to contemporary global contexts, a tapestry of historical narrative and visual symbolism intertwines, setting the stage for the emergence of Nichiren Buddhist manga. This chapter embarks with an exploration of Nichiren's persona, teachings, and visual renditions, meticulously weaving through various artistic mediums and scholarly interpretations to illuminate the intricate threads of his life journey. Against this backdrop, manga emerges as a vibrant medium through which Nichiren's narrative is vividly realized, harmonizing tradition with modernity. Within this context, the case study of *Nichiren* by Tanaka Ken 田中 健 and Murakami Masahiko 村上雅彦 (2015) is scrutinized, using the scene of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution to examine manga's transcendent ability to convey the essence of *Gyō*. Acting as a powerful vehicle for reinforcing dedication among practitioners and facilitating *Shakubuku* for non-members, *Nichiren* shows the way that manga advances core tenets of Nichiren Buddhism such as *Gyō*.

Kamakura Japan: A Religious Tapestry

The Kamakura period 鎌倉時代 (1185-1333) of Japan was a time characterized by significant sociopolitical, cultural and religious changes in which Buddhism played a central role. This era witnessed the rise of feudalism under the Kamakura shogunate, resulting in the decentralization of political power leading way for distinct social classes which faced varying degrees of stability and hardship. In this turbulent time, Buddhism not only provided spiritual guidance but served as a unifying force.

Throughout history, Buddhism experienced diversification with the emergence of different sects such as Tendai, Shingon, Pure Land, Zen, and Nichiren Buddhism out of Japan.

While the Tendai and Shingon schools maintained close affiliations with the imperial court, Zen's emphasis on rigorous discipline and meditation practices resonated deeply with the samurai class, aligning with their values of mental fortitude and clarity. While the Pure Land tradition, with its focus on devotion to the Amida Buddha and the promise of rebirth in a blissful afterlife, provided solace and reassurance to a range of classes amidst the tumultuous social landscape. This period marked a discernible shift in religious patronage, witnessing a growing inclination towards Zen and Pure Land schools, indicative of the evolving societal changes and preferences.²⁴ Against a backdrop of societal upheaval and unrest, Nichiren Daishonin emerged as a prominent figure advocating for social reform and championing an interpretation of Buddhism rooted in the Lotus Sutra. His teachings and activism not only reflected the prevailing tensions of the era but also sought to address them by striving for a transformative renewal of both individual consciousness and societal structures.²⁵

Nichiren Daishonin and the Tatsunokuchi Persecution: History and Myth

Nichiren Daishonin 日蓮大聖人, originally named Zennichimaro 善日曆, is a figure whose life is intertwined with both historical fact and mythologized narrative. Born in 1222 in the humble fishing village of Kominato 小湊町, Nichiren's fervent dedication to what he believed were the true teachings of Buddhism often placed him at odds with established religious

²⁴ Koichi Shinohara, "Religion and Political Order in Nichiren's Buddhism." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 8, no. 4 (1981): 225-235.

²⁵ J. A. Christensen, *Nichiren: Leader of Buddhist Reformation in Japan* (Fremont, California: Jain Pub Co, 2001), 53.

and political authorities. His journey from his tranquil childhood to engaging in philosophical debates and spiritual enlightenment mirrors both historical events and mythologized accounts.²⁶

As a young man, Nichiren displayed intellectual prowess and pursued knowledge, studying at the prestigious Tendai Buddhist 天台宗 school on Mount Hiei 比叡山. His dissatisfaction with the state of Buddhism in Japan led him to embark on travels across the country, engaging in debates with followers of various Buddhist sects and other faiths to broaden his understanding of religious philosophies.²⁷ It was during these travels that Nichiren experienced a profound revelation, convinced of the transformative power of the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren's commitment to spreading the message of the Lotus Sutra led to conflicts with ruling authorities and religious establishments, resulting in persecution and exile. Despite adversity, he continued to propagate his teachings, eventually establishing his own school of Buddhism which eventually became known as Nichiren Buddhism.

The specific narrative in Nichiren's life examined in all three chapters depicts the Tatsunokuchi Persecution 竜の口の法難. This event refers to the unsuccessful attempt to execute Nichiren at Tatsunokuchi on the western outskirts of Kamakura in September of 1271. According to Nichiren Buddhist publications,²⁸ the events took place due to Nichiren's conflict with the Shingon priest Ryōkan 良観 (1217–1303).^{25F}²⁹ In early 1271, Japan experienced a

²⁶ Masaharu Anesaki, *Nichiren: the Buddhist Prophet* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), pg. 2.

²⁷ Philip B Yampolsky. "Introduction." In *Selected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, (New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 1990), pg. 3.

²⁸ The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 659.

²⁹ Ryōkan, also known as Ninshō, was a priest affiliated with the True Word Precepts (Shingon-Ritsu) school in Japan. He relocated to Kamakura in 1261 and his activities in the Kanto region led to a connection with the ruling Hōjō clan. Hōjō Tokiyori, the former regent who still held power, constructed Kōsen-ji temple and appointed Ryōkan as its first chief priest. In 1267, Ryōkan assumed the role of chief priest at Gokuraku-ji temple, which had been established by Hōjō Shigetoki, a prominent official of the Kamakura shogunate. The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 553.

drought, leading the shogunate to request prayers for rain from Ryōkan, a request followed by Nichiren's challenge stating that if his prayers could bring rain within seven days, he would become Ryōkan's disciple. However, despite offering prayers for fourteen days with several hundred priests, Ryōkan failed to produce rain and instead encountered fierce gales. In response to his humiliation, Ryōkan broke his promise and began making accusations against Nichiren among the wives and widows of top shogunate officials.

As a result, Nichiren was summoned for interrogation by Hei no Saemon 平左衛門 (unknown-1293),³⁰ the deputy chief of the Office of Military and Police Affairs, on September 10th, 1271. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Nichiren remonstrated with Hei no Saemon and warned of internal strife and foreign invasion if he was unjustly punished. Two days later, on September 12th, Hei no Saemon and a group of warriors stormed Nichiren's dwelling in Matsubagayatsu 松葉ヶ谷 and arrested him. In the middle of the night, Nichiren was taken by Hei no Saemon's men to the execution grounds at Tatsunokuchi Beach.

Nichiren also sent a messenger to Shijō Kingō 四条金吾 (1230-1300),³¹ a loyal samurai believer and supporter who rushed to join him and willingly faced death together. Just before dawn on the thirteenth day, as Nichiren was about to be beheaded at the execution site, a luminous object suddenly shot across the sky and illuminated the surroundings. Terrified, the

³⁰ Also known as Taira no Yoritsuna or by his complete name and title, Hei no Saemon-no-jō Yoritsuna. He held a prominent position within the Hōjō regency, which effectively governed Japan during the Kamakura period. Yoritsuna served under two consecutive regents, Hōjō Tokimune and Hōjō Sadatoki, and held considerable power as the deputy chief of the Office of Military and Police Affairs, second only to the regent himself. The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 280.

³¹ His full name and title were Shijō Nakatsukasa Saburō Saemon-no-jō Yorimoto. Kingō was a samurai retainer who served the Ema family, a branch of the ruling Hōjō clan. He possessed extensive knowledge in medicine and martial arts and was known for his straightforwardness, loyalty, and passion. Around 1256, Kingō is said to have embraced Nichiren's teachings, following in the footsteps of Kudō Yoshitaka and the Ikegami brothers, Munenaka and Munenaga. The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 588.

soldiers called off the execution. Nichiren was then placed under custody at Homma Shigetsura's residence in Echi, approximately twenty kilometers from Tatsunokuchi, for about a month. On October 10th, 1271, he was exiled to Sado. Nichiren himself describes the event in his writing *The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra*:

Finally we came to a place that I knew must be the site of my execution. Indeed, the soldiers stopped and began to mill around in excitement. Saemon-no-jō, in tears, said, “These are your last moments!” I replied, “You don’t understand! What greater joy could there be? Don’t you remember what you have promised?” I had no sooner said this when a brilliant orb as bright as the moon burst forth from the direction of Enoshima, shooting across the sky from southeast to northwest. It was shortly before dawn and still too dark to see anyone’s face, but the radiant object clearly illuminated everyone like bright moonlight. The executioner fell on his face, his eyes blinded. The soldiers were filled with panic. Some ran off into the distance, some jumped down from their horses and huddled on the ground, while others crouched in their saddles. I called out, “Here, why do you shrink from this vile prisoner? Come closer! Come closer!” But no one would approach me. “What if the dawn should come? You must hurry up and execute me—once the day breaks, it will be too ugly a job.” I urged them on, but they made no response.³²

Nichikan 日寛 (1665-1726),³³ the twenty-sixth chief priest of Taiseki-ji temple, interpreted this as meaning that Nichiren as an ordinary person ceased to exist after the Tatsunokuchi

³² Nichiren Daishonin, “The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra.” in *The Complete Works of Nichiren*, 767.

³³ Nichikan, the twenty-sixth chief priest of Taiseki-ji, which is the main temple of the Nikkō school, also known as the Fuji school or Nichiren Shōshū in Japan, holds great reverence as a revitalizer of Nichiren's teachings. His efforts were focused on elucidating the genuine significance of these teachings. In 1708, he assumed leadership of the seminary and adopted the name Nichikan. Subsequently, in 1711, he was designated as the principal instructor at Taiseki-ji by Nichiei. The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 435.

Persecution, while the Buddha nature within Nichiren continued on Sado. Consequently, Nichiren asserts that his teachings before his exile should be regarded as provisional rather than absolute truths. This process is referred to as Nichiren's casting off the transient and revealing the true, signifying his discarding of his transient status and revelation of his true self.

This mythologized account, while containing historical facts woven throughout, blends elements of fiction with concrete moments that can be traced. For example, there is documentation to support that there was in fact a drought around the time this event occurred.³⁴ Notably figures such as Ryōkan, Hei no Saemon, and Shijō Kingō were all real individuals.³⁵ Furthermore, Nichiren's persecution and subsequent exile was heavily documented through letters received and written by the Daishonin. However, there is no historical or scientific backing to support the narrative around the prayers of rain and the bright comet that shot across the sky disrupting the execution. Furthermore, the persecution and subsequent exile of Nichiren are extensively documented through letters written and received by the Daishonin. The inclusion of these elements seems to be a mythicized embellishment within the larger historical context.

Nichiren Daishonin in Scholarly Contexts

Scholarship around Nichiren Daishonin is deeply rooted in historical accounts and primary sources, particularly the Lotus Sutra and his extensive collection of writing known as the *Gosho*. These texts form the cornerstone of Nichiren Buddhism, serving as the bedrock upon which his philosophical framework is built. The Lotus Sutra, revered as the pinnacle of

³⁴ Lee Jung-ho, "Climate Change in East Asia and Agricultural Production Activities in Koryo and Japan during the 12th-13th centuries." *International History of Korean History* 12, (August 2008): 140.

³⁵ Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1981): 369.

Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings, plays a central role in Nichiren's philosophy, emphasizing the inherent potential for enlightenment within all sentient beings and the universal applicability of Buddhist principles. Nichiren's interpretations of the Lotus Sutra, as expounded in his voluminous writings, offer a radical reimagining of Buddhist doctrine and practice by challenging traditional beliefs and emphasizing the concept of attaining enlightenment in the present lifetime. By delving into the profound depths of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren uncovered a revolutionary perspective that challenged established norms and called for a return to the authentic teachings of the Buddha.

Through his extensive commentary and analysis of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren articulated a vision of Buddhism that transcended sectarian boundaries and embraced the fundamental truths inherent in the Buddha's enlightenment. The *Gosho* serves as a repository of wisdom and guidance for practitioners, offering profound insights into the nature of reality, the path to enlightenment, and the interconnectedness of all life through teachings on topics such as karma, compassion, the law of cause and effect, and the concept of the Ten Worlds.³⁶ Nichiren's revolutionary interpretation of the Lotus Sutra not only challenged prevailing religious orthodoxy but also inspired a fervent devotion among his followers, who saw in his teachings a path to liberation and spiritual awakening. His teachings were well-received by the common people, emphasizing empowerment in response to social and political challenges, centering the lower class rather than prioritizing the elite and monastic tradition. Through his teachings based on the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren aimed to raise awareness of humanity's natural capacity for

³⁶ In Buddhist scriptures, there are ten distinct realms or categories of beings. These realms, ranging from the lowest to the highest, include hell, hungry spirits, animals, asuras, human beings, heavenly beings, voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. Originally perceived as separate physical realms with their own inhabitants, the Lotus Sutra introduces a different perspective. According to the Lotus Sutra, each of the Ten Worlds encompasses all ten realms within itself. This suggests that they can be understood as potential life states inherent in every individual. The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 686.

enlightenment and promote a compassionate, wise, and just society. Nichiren's scholarship not only explains his Buddhist philosophy but also encourages personal and societal involvement in the faith, motivating followers to recognize what he believes as the limitless potential of the human spirit for generations to come.

Academic scholarship surrounding Nichiren Daishonin and Nichiren Buddhism offers a multifaceted exploration of his life, teachings, and the socio-political contexts in which they emerged. One notable aspect of this scholarship is the examination of Nichiren Shonin's views on humanity and the fundamental principles of the Lotus Sutra. Asai Endo's articles, "Nichiren Shonin's View of Humanity: The Final Dharma Age and the Three Thousand Realms in One Thought-Moment" (1999) and "The Lotus Sutra as the Core of Japanese Buddhism: Shifts in Representations of Its Fundamental Principle" (2014), delve into Nichiren's interpretations of Buddhist doctrine and the transformative potential of Buddhist practice in the modern world.³⁷ These articles provide valuable insights into Nichiren's visionary perspective and its relevance to contemporary society. Moreover, scholarly works such as Christensen's *Nichiren: Leader of Buddhist Reformation in Japan* (2001)³⁸ and Dawson's "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements: The Case of Soka Gakkai" (2001)³⁹ offer nuanced analyses of Nichiren's role as a reformer and the cultural impact of Nichiren Buddhist movements like Soka Gakkai. These studies shed light on the socio-political dimensions of Nichiren Buddhism, exploring its influence on Japanese society and its engagement with issues of power, authority, and social change.

³⁷ Asai, "Nichiren Shonin's View of Humanity: The Final Dharma Age and the Three Thousand Realms in One Thought-Moment," 239-259. And Asai, "The Lotus Sutra as the Core of Japanese Buddhism: Shifts in Representations of Its Fundamental Principle," 45-64.

³⁸ Christensen, *Nichiren: Leader of Buddhist Reformation in Japan*.

³⁹ Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements: The Case of Soka Gakkai," 337-364.

However, despite the richness of Nichiren Buddhist tradition and its significance in Japanese religious history, there remains a relative scarcity of academic scholarship compared to other Buddhist sects. This gap is highlighted by scholars such as Jacqueline Stone, who in “Placing Nichiren in the ‘Big Picture’: Some Ongoing Issues in Scholarship” (1999), addresses the challenges and limitations in studying Nichiren Buddhism within broader religious studies discourse.⁴⁰ Stone's work underscores the need for greater attention to Nichiren Buddhism in academic research, particularly in light of its global impact and relevance in contemporary contexts. Overall, academic scholarship on Nichiren Daishonin and Nichiren Buddhism offers a diverse array of perspectives and insights, ranging from historical analysis to socio-political critique. While there is still much to be explored and understood, these scholarly endeavors contribute to a deeper appreciation of Nichiren's legacy and the enduring significance of his teachings in the modern world.

The dearth of Art Historical research on Nichiren Daishonin and Nichiren Buddhism is conspicuous within scholarly discourse. Unlike other religious or philosophical traditions that have received significant attention within the realm of art history, Nichiren Buddhism remains largely neglected, with a scant presence in Japanese art literature. To illustrate this neglect, one can consider prominent works within the field, such as, Christine M. E. Guth's exploration of Hokusai's art in “Hokusai's Great Waves in Nineteenth-Century Japanese Visual Culture” in which she briefly touches upon a print featuring Nichiren.⁴¹ However, the analysis predominantly revolves around the aesthetic attributes of the artwork rather than delving into its

⁴⁰ Jacqueline Stone, “Placing Nichiren in the ‘Big Picture’: Some Ongoing Issues in Scholarship.” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 383-421.

⁴¹ Christine M. Guth, “Hokusai's Great Waves in Nineteenth-Century Japanese Visual Culture.” *The Art Bulletin* 93, no. 4 (December 2011): 468-485.

narrative and symbolic implications. The narrative significance of the depiction, such as Nichiren's invocation of the Lotus Sutra amidst a perilous situation, receives only passing mention. The deeper religious and cultural dimensions inherent in Nichiren Buddhist art have yet to be explored. Similarly, Patricia J. Graham's *Faith and Power in Japanese Buddhist Art, 1600-2005* references Nichiren Buddhist temples and the sect itself, due to the scope of her project, discussion remains cursory, leaving substantive exploration of the artistic expressions within this tradition yet to be explored.⁴² This gap in scholarship is symptomatic of a broader trend wherein Nichiren Buddhism is acknowledged within the context of broader surveys of Japanese Buddhist art, but its unique characteristics and contributions are not thoroughly examined leaving ample room for exploration. Further research into Nichiren Buddhist art has the potential to shed light on unique aesthetic expressions, religious symbolism, and the intersection of faith and visual culture in Japan.

The Hagiography of Nichiren

In delving into the exploration of Buddhist religious imagery, it becomes evident that the concept of hagiography, originating from the Christian tradition of written lives of saints, offers a valuable framework for understanding the revered figure of Nichiren. The evolution of the concept of "Buddhist hagiography" from its roots in Christianity's notion of important religious texts to its current connotation of written life accounts of saints reflects a parallel trajectory with

⁴² Graham, Patricia Jane Graham, *Faith and Power in Japanese Buddhist Art: 1600-2005* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

the life and teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.⁴³ Just as saints in Christian hagiography are depicted as embodying spiritual virtues and ideals, Nichiren is similarly portrayed as a holy figure within the Nichiren Buddhist tradition, exemplifying unwavering faith, profound wisdom, and a compassionate mission to spread enlightenment through the Lotus Sutra.

Hagiography isn't an autonomous literary genre but rather manifests through the presence of "hagiographic discourse" in a text. Hagiography can take on diverse literary forms, and the term itself doesn't denote a specific genre outright. However, certain formal characteristics distinguish hagiographic texts, notably their standardized portrayal of protagonists and their religious-moralizing nature. Defining terms like "holy person" or "saint" presents another challenge, as it must transcend medieval Catholic canonical law definitions without rendering them meaningless. Sainthood is conferred based on perceived spiritual perfection, making saints both models for emulation and objects of veneration. It is crucial to recognize that sainthood isn't an objective quality but a subjective designation. It was often bestowed posthumously, although many, including Nichiren Daishonin, were recognized during their lifetime. Hagiography, to some extent, shapes saints rather than merely describing them, emphasizing their role as models and symbols of spiritual ideals. Consequently, biographies of holy persons often lack individuality, focusing instead on idealized concepts of sanctity.⁴⁴

Hagiography serves religious edification, propagating ideals and encouraging adherence to moral standards, distinguishing it sharply from biographical writing in the modern sense. In examining Buddhist hagiography, we uncover its origins in Indian literature like jataka tales and

⁴³ Buddhist Hagiography's terminology is considered more in depth in Jonathan Augustine's book *Buddhist Hagiography in Early Japan*. Jonathan Morris Augustine, *Buddhist Hagiography in Early Japan: Images of Compassion in the Gyoki Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2012): 5.

⁴⁴ Augustine, *Buddhist Hagiography in Early Japan*, 4.

avadana stories, which were adapted and expanded in East Asia to propagate Buddhist teachings on rebirth and karmic retribution. Chinese Buddhist hagiographies blend traditional history with Indian narrative styles, often focusing on eminent monks or popular cults.⁴⁵ Despite challenges in discerning between hagiographic and secular narratives, these texts offer valuable insights into religious beliefs and societal norms of their time. Moreover, Buddhist hagiographic literature reflects the vibrant cults and doctrinal schools that emerged during periods like the Tang dynasty, serving both as expressions of religious fervor and tools for promoting religious ideologies.

Comparable to other forms of Buddhist hagiography, Nichiren Buddhist hagiographic imagery not only exalt Nichiren as a saintly figure but also serve as conduits for transmitting his teachings and inspiring future generations of practitioners, thus perpetuating his legacy across temporal and cultural boundaries. Thus, by examining Nichiren Buddhist imagery through the lens of Western hagiographic concepts, we gain a deeper appreciation of Nichiren's significance and influence within Buddhist tradition.

Visualizing Nichiren Daishonin

Nichiren, like most hagiographic figures, has a standard set of visual symbols that make up his iconography. His visual representations, while adapting overtime, typically feature plump earlobes, symbolic of enlightenment and good fortune, alongside subtle wrinkles on his serene visage, conveying wisdom and spiritual profundity. Consistent across representations of the Daishonin is his calm countenance, reflecting his unwavering faith and inner tranquility. The

⁴⁵ Christoph Kleine, "Portraits of Pious Women in East Asian Buddhist Hagiography: A Study of Accounts of Women Who Attained Birth in Amida's Pure Land." *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 85, no. 1 (1998): 325–361.

shaved head signifies his monkhood and renunciation of worldly attachments, while the multilayered kimono he wears signifies his elevated spirituality and status as a monk. Holding juzu prayer beads or scrolls further underscores his devotion to the Lotus Sutra and his role in disseminating Buddhist teachings. He is at times he reaches out with his hand, symbolizing his dedication to spreading enlightenment and compassion. This iconography can be found across various artistic mediums and spans through different eras, manifesting in paintings, prints, and sculptural renditions displayed prominently in temple settings and beyond.

While there is consistency in the iconography of Nichiren, the way he is portrayed has developed throughout time. The earliest known, and perhaps the most famous representation of Nichiren, is the portrait housed at Kuon-ji Temple 久遠寺, located in Minobu (Figure 1.1).

Created in the 15th century, this portrait is revered as one of the most iconic depictions of

Nichiren, offering a glimpse into his spiritual presence. This painting shows a cropped portrait of Nichiren offering a glimpse into Nichiren's spiritual presence, showcasing his layered robes, fat earlobes, and serene expression. In comparing this painting to a portrait of a different Buddhist sect's founder, Kūkai 空海 (774- 835) the founder of Shingon Buddhism, many similarities can be found (Figure 1.2). The works possess the same composition,



Figure 1.1: Nichiren portrait from Kuon-ji Temple, 15th century.



Figure 1.2: Painting of Kūkai from the Shingon Hasso-zō, a set of scrolls depicting the first eight patriarchs of the Shingon school. Japan, 13th-14th century.

featuring a figure positioned slightly to the right and facing the left within the composition. Although the portrait of Nichiren is more tightly framed, it shares the same posture and implied bodily positioning. The most noticeable similarities lie in their facial features. Both figures have eyes that are slightly closed, symbolizing enlightenment. Additionally, they both exhibit gently arched eyebrows, wrinkled skin (albeit to varying degrees), serene expressions, and earlobes with equal upper

and lower lip sizes that boast a rosy tint, reminiscent of Shakyamuni. This shows that early depictions of Nichiren in visual form bear a remarkable similarity to contemporary portrayals of monks, adhering to the customary Buddhist practices.

This presentation shifts as time progresses and Nichiren begins to be depicted in popular media such as ukiyo-e 浮世絵, a genre of Japanese art from the Tokugawa period, there are numerous renditions of Nichiren Daishonin. Utagawa Kuniyoshi 歌川国芳 (1798-1861) created a ten-piece series entitled *A Concise Bibliography of the Monk Nichiren* during the 1830s highlighting different key moments of his life. Kuniyoshi's series stands out, characterized by its dynamic compositions and rich narrative depth. An exemplary piece from this collection is *Calming the Stormy Sea at Tsunoda in Exile to Sado Island* (Figure 1.3). In this print, Nichiren is depicted aboard a boat, hands clasping juzu prayer beads, as he reaches out towards an



Figure 1.3: Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Calming the Stormy Sea at Tsunoda in Exile to Sado Island* from the series *Concise Illustrated Biography of Monk Nichiren*, 1836.

approaching wave. The mantra *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo* is intricately written out in the turbulent waters. Despite the tumultuous surroundings, Nichiren maintains a serene expression, embodying a sense of inner peace and spiritual resolve amidst the chaos. This woodblock print is part of various collections worldwide, including the British Museum in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum. The artwork in question represents a significant departure from the 14th century portrait, as it is much more dynamic and possesses stronger narrative qualities. This shift in focus moves away from highlighting Nichiren as an individual and instead emphasizes his story. The consistent opposition and resistance faced by the sect resulted in the production of artwork that increasingly showcased dramatic representations, placing a greater emphasis on action. This dynamism is heavily represented in Nichiren Buddhist manga.

The depictions of Nichiren continue to evolve, catering to societal tastes, with current images portraying him as an idealized and heroic figure. In the depiction of Nichiren shown in Figure 1.4, he is depicted wearing pristine robes, with a smooth and clear complexion, and holding prayer beads to symbolize his conviction. Despite being 49 years old in this scene,

Nichiren's appearance leans towards a youthful aesthetic, with subtle indications of aging on his face. Additionally, his wide and large eyes draw inspiration from traditional manga artwork. As a result, Nichiren's portrayal incorporates contemporary elements that align with the trends in manga, making it more relatable and engaging.

The Adaptability of Nichiren Buddhism

The global spread of Buddhism from its origins in ancient India to the contemporary era is a



Figure 1.4: *Nichiren*, page 267.

testament to its remarkable resilience and adaptability. Beginning with the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha, around the 6th century BCE, Buddhism gradually spread across the Indian subcontinent through the efforts of the Buddha's disciples and the patronage of Emperor Ashoka. From there, Buddhist missionaries and traders carried the faith along the Silk Road to Central Asia, China, Korea, and eventually Japan, where it took root and flourished. Over the centuries, Buddhism continued to spread across Asia, reaching Southeast Asia, Tibet, Mongolia, and beyond. In the modern era, Buddhism has further expanded its reach

through migration, globalization, and the efforts of Buddhist organizations to propagate its teachings worldwide. Today, Buddhism is practiced on every continent, with diverse traditions and interpretations reflecting the cultural and social contexts in which it has taken hold. This global diffusion of Buddhism underscores its adaptability to different cultures and its enduring relevance in addressing the spiritual needs of people around the world.

Nichiren Buddhism has demonstrated remarkable adaptability and resilience in addressing the evolving demands of modernity and societal exigencies over time. This adaptability is discernible through the proactive involvement of the faith in contemporary issues and its strategic outreach endeavors on a global scale. Organizations like the Soka Gakkai⁴⁶ have played a pivotal role in advancing Nichiren Buddhism's relevance in the modern world, employing innovative approaches to disseminate its teachings and principles to diverse demographics worldwide. Through initiatives spanning community outreach, educational programs, and interfaith dialogues, Nichiren Buddhism has established itself as a dynamic and inclusive spiritual tradition that directly addresses the challenges and aspirations of present-day society. Moreover, within Japanese culture, there exists a blurred line between philosophy and religion and with the advent of modernity, this fusion of tradition and contemporary values has resonated globally. Engaging with Buddhism and Buddhist narratives doesn't feel like preaching

⁴⁶ Originating in Japan, the Soka Gakkai has evolved into a globally influential Nichiren Buddhist organization. Renowned for its commitment to promoting peace, culture, and education grounded in the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism, Soka Gakkai actively participates in diverse cultural and educational initiatives on an international scale. Founded by Makiguchi Tsunesaburo (1871–1944), a reformist Japanese educator inspired by the philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism, Soka Gakkai emerged as a response to a passionate desire to facilitate fulfilling and happy lives for all individuals. Makiguchi, along with his protégé Toda Josei (1900–1958), faced imprisonment during World War II for opposing the Japanese militarist government's policies. While Makiguchi succumbed to malnutrition and old age in prison, Toda emerged to rebuild Soka Gakkai as a Buddhist movement dedicated to empowering people affected by the aftermath of the war. Ikeda Daisaku (1928-2023), inheriting Toda's vision, played a crucial role in expanding the organization into a multifaceted movement for peace, culture, and education, garnering members worldwide. As of the last available estimates, there are more than 11 million members affiliated with Soka Gakkai across 192 countries and territories, exemplifying its significant global impact. Soka Gakkai International. "About the Soka Gakkai," Soka Gakkai, December 2, 2023, <https://www.sokaglobal.org/about-the-soka-gakkai.html>.

but as guidance for navigating the complexities of modern life due to their emphasis on personal reflection and self-discovery. Rather than imposing rigid beliefs or doctrines, they encourage individuals to explore and interpret the teachings in a way that resonates with their own experiences and understanding. This approach allows for a more open and inclusive interpretation of the teachings, making them feel like general guidance rather than strict rules to be followed.

One tangible manifestation of Nichiren Buddhism's adaptability to modernity is found in manga, a cultural phenomenon that has become synonymous with Japan's contemporary identity. Manga narratives depicting the life and teachings of Nichiren Daishonin epitomize the faith's commitment to embracing contemporary modes of expression and communication while upholding its foundational tenets. By leveraging the visual storytelling prowess of manga, Nichiren Buddhism adeptly reconciles tradition with modernity, presenting its teachings in a visually compelling and accessible format that resonates with a broad audience. The dynamic synergy between Nichiren Buddhist philosophy and the visual lexicon of manga not only sustains the relevance of the faith but also underscores its capacity to evolve and thrive amidst a dynamic societal landscape. This fusion serves as a testament to Nichiren Buddhism's adaptability and enduring dedication to catering to the spiritual needs of individuals in contemporary society. Through its embrace of popular culture and innovative communicative channels, Nichiren Buddhism remains a vibrant and pertinent influence, capable of inspiring and engaging individuals across diverse backgrounds. Drawing on Paramore's framework in “Confucianism as Liberalism,”⁴⁷ Nichiren Buddhism's adaptation to contemporary Japanese

⁴⁷ Kiri Paramore, “Confucianism as Liberalism.” In *Japanese Confucianism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 118–140.

society reflects a similar dynamic interaction between tradition and modernity. Just as Confucianism evolved to accommodate Western liberal ideals in Japan, Nichiren Buddhism has embraced innovative approaches to address present-day challenges while preserving its core teachings. Paramore's analysis sheds light on how traditional belief systems like Confucianism can adapt to changing social and political contexts, offering valuable insights into the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in Japanese thought. As societal dynamics continue to evolve, Nichiren Buddhism's ability to adapt and evolve ensures the perpetuation of its message of peace, compassion, and enlightenment, resonating with humanity for generations to come.

Nichiren: Manga as a Pillar of Gyō

Nichiren written by Tanaka Ken and illustrated Murakami Masahiko published in 2015, presents a dynamic exploration of Nichiren Daishonin's life and teachings in English. Despite being originally a Japanese narrative created by Japanese authors and published through a Japanese religious organization, by publishing in English they made the narrative more accessible to a global audience, enabling individuals from a more diverse background to experience the narrative. This decision reflects a commitment to spreading the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin beyond linguistic and cultural barriers, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of his legacy worldwide. This strong affinity towards *Shakubuku* is why this work was chosen as the case study for *Gyō*.

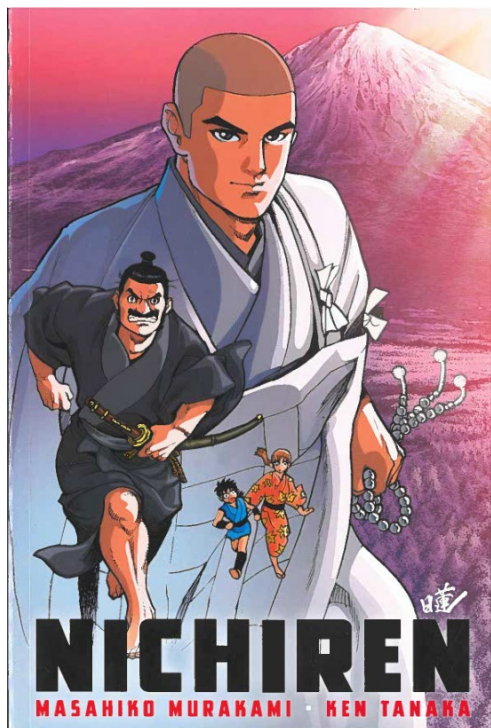


Figure 1.5: *Nichiren* front cover.

The manga's art style and cover also draw in a wide audience. Murakami's work follows the quintessential black and white designs commonly seen in manga. With clean, clear linework, it showcases meticulous attention to detail, allowing the artwork to be visually striking and easily comprehensible. The exaggerated features and movement add a dynamic and energetic touch to the characters, enhancing their expressiveness and bringing their emotions to life. This style embraces traditional manga aesthetics, capturing the essence of the medium. The comics' appeal starts with the cover (Figure 1.5), which features Nichiren as the central figure. He is depicted as a young man, embodying the aesthetic of typical manga heroes, wearing his priestly robes and holding his juzu prayer beads. The backdrop of Mount Hiei, referencing the location of Nichiren's original monastic studies, while evoking Mount Fuji further emphasizes the Japanese narrative to an international audience. Positioned in front of Nichiren are three characters from the comic: Shijō Kingō, Kuma-o, and Taki. In this story, they are disciples of Nichiren however both Kuma-o and Taki are fictionalized characters. Their depiction running forward adds an element of action and tension to an otherwise serene cover. The back cover continues this emphasis on

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Figure 1.6: *Nichiren* back cover.

Nichiren's martyrdom (Figure 1.6), as Nichiren stands defiantly, still with his juzu prayer beads in hand, facing a soldier riding towards him on a horse, sword drawn. The smoky ground and silhouetted figures in the background along with the other soldier on the horse seemingly attacking another priest all add to the action of the scene, highlighting that this narrative is more than just a religious text, but an engaging story.

The scene from this comic I am analyzing is the sequence portraying the Tatsunokuchi persecution on page 254 (Figure 1.7). It begins with a title setting the scene, depicting burning braziers on the beach and the silhouettes of soldiers in the background. The artist creates a tense atmosphere in the dark through moody lighting. Below, three soldiers are seen hesitating, questioning their orders instilling doubt that this may not be the right course of action. Nichiren is then brought to the execution spot on the beach on page 255 (Figure 1.8). Here Nichiren is met

by Shijō, who kneels before Nichiren in distress— emphasized by his furrowed brows and clenched teeth— as he declares that he will die alongside Nichiren. The

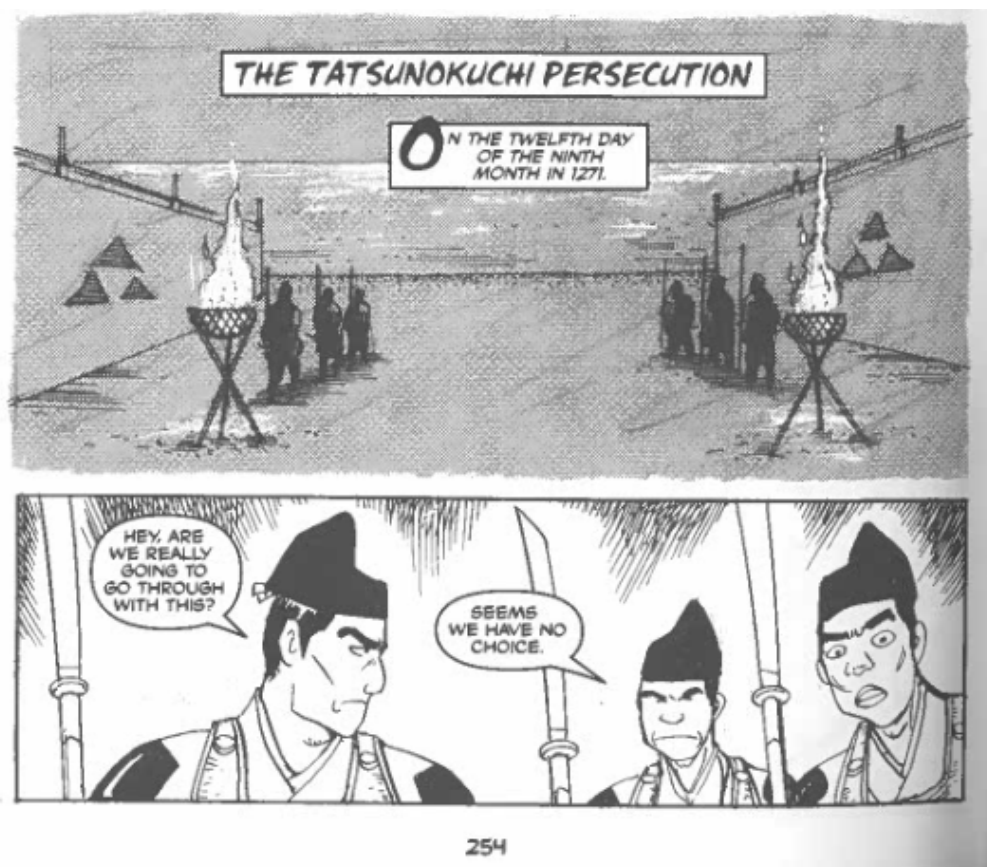


Figure 1.7: *Nichiren*, page 254.

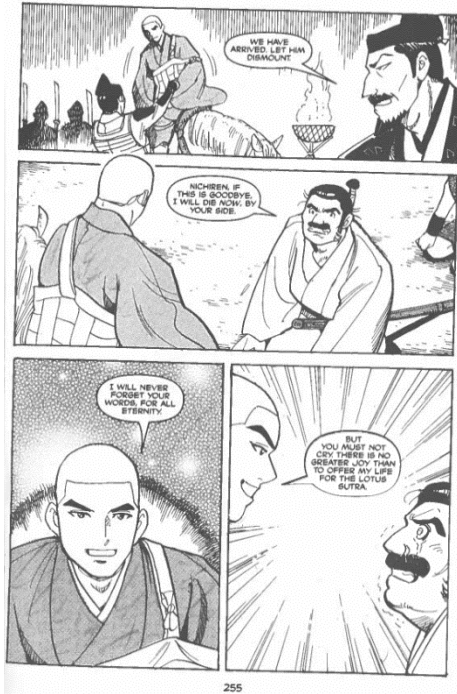


Figure 1.8: *Nichiren*, page 255.

last two panels on this page effectively depict the intense emotions present, using expressive lines that evoke compassion for Nichiren.

Pages 256-257 (Figure 1.9) depict the executioner preparing his sword and approaching Nichiren, who calmly begins chanting for daimoku. The artist skillfully employs gray washes to create dramatic lighting, deliberately obscuring certain areas and leaving them in darkness. This not only evokes the feeling of night but also enhances the sense of tension surrounding the impending execution. On

the bottom of page 256 Nichiren chants with lines bursting out from him giving the appearance that he is a beacon of light against the dark. Despite the executioner raising his sword and Nichiren's disciples looking on with disbelief, Nichiren remains steadfast in his chanting.

Pages 258-259 (Figure 1.10) mark a dramatic shift as the executioner is blinded by a



Figure 1.9: *Nichiren*, pages 256-257.



Figure 1.10: *Nichiren*, pages 258-259.

sudden light. Here the manga bends temporality as this brief moment is slowed down, emphasizing the significance of the comet. Nichiren's disciples react with a mix of smiles and grimaces, while a comet dramatically enters the scene, causing the

executioner to drop his sword. Through onomatopoeic language across the spreads, the visual chaos becomes multi-sensory. Pages 260-261 (Figure 1.11) present a full spread of Nichiren continuing his chanting as the comet passes by, highlighting the contrast between brightness and shadows.

The executioner steps back in panic as other soldiers kneel in prayer. On page 262 (Figure 1.12), Shijō declares the blinding light as the "protection of the heavenly gods." Nichiren then challenges the soldiers to execute him, but on page 263 (Figure 1.13) Hei no Saemon halts the execution looking distressed. Saemon's evident panic, displayed through his furrowed brows,



Figure 1.11: *Nichiren*, pages 260-261.



Figure 1.15: *Nichiren*, page 265.

the last page, 268 (Figure 1.17) which depicts only the ocean, with a wave reaching its peak near the sun in the distance. Unlike other artists, Tanaka incorporates photographic imagery into his compositions adding a layer of realism and dynamism to the water.

Accompanying this image is a text box that delves into Nichiren's arduous journey to establish a harmonious world, highlighting the adversities he encounters along the way.

The Tatsunokuchi persecution vividly exemplifies

the Nichiren Buddhist philosophy of *Gyō* through the unwavering dedication of Nichiren himself to his beliefs and his steadfast commitment to chanting daimoku.

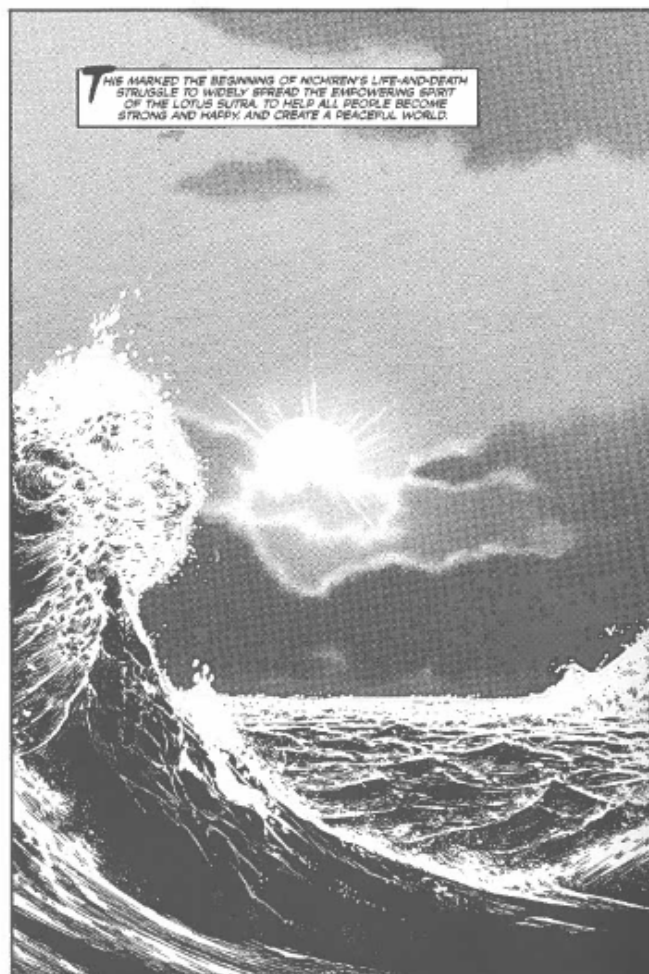
Despite facing intense opposition and persecution, Nichiren remained resolute in his conviction, never wavering from his mission to spread the teachings of *Nam Myōho Renge Kyo*.



Figure 1.16: *Nichiren*, pages 266-267.

Through his continuous recitation of daimoku, he demonstrated the power and transformative

potential of *Gyō* as a means to attain enlightenment and overcome obstacles emphasized through the artist's emphasis created through slowed time and alternating view-points. His unwavering practice in the face of adversity serves as an inspiring example of the essence of Gyo in Nichiren Buddhism. Promoting Nichiren Buddhism to a wider audience is effectively achieved by publishing the manga in English, utilizing this manga as a powerful tool for *Shakubuku* deepening its connection to *Gyō*. This visual narrative persuades the audience to admire Nichiren's resilience and dedication to the Lotus Sutra, inspiring them to consider the transformative potential of Nichiren Buddhism. The skillful use of manga aesthetics, along with the compelling narrative choices, persuades the audience to develop a deeper appreciation for Nichiren Daishonin and consider the path of Nichiren Buddhism.



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Figure 1.17: *Nichiren*, page 268.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Nichiren Buddhist manga, specifically the case study of Nichiren by Tanaka Ken and Murakami Masahiko, effectively embodies the tenet of *Gyō* through its visual details and narrative choices. The manga's art style, with its black and white designs, clean linework, and exaggerated features, captures the essence of traditional manga aesthetics while depicting the Tatsunokuchi persecution to showcase the unwavering dedication of Nichiren to his beliefs and his steadfast chanting of daimoku, emphasizing the transformative power of *Gyō*. By publishing the manga in English, the creators have made the narrative accessible to a global audience, promoting the spread of Nichiren Buddhism beyond linguistic and cultural barriers and a visual narrative that persuades the audience to appreciate Nichiren's resilience and dedication, individuals are encouraged to explore the path of Nichiren Buddhism. The changing representation of Nichiren Daishonin in contemporary contexts reflects a dynamic evolution of popular aesthetic trends mirroring the adaptability of the faith. This updated representation resonates with both domestic and overseas disciples, highlighting the universal relevance and appeal of Nichiren Buddhism's core principles in a rapidly changing world. Through its fusion of tradition and modernity, manga serves as a powerful tool for reinforcing dedication among practitioners and facilitating *Shakubuku* for non-members, deepening their connection to the tenets of *Gyō*.

Chapter 2

Study and Storytelling: Bridging History and *Gaku* Through Manga

The second chapter of this exploration delves deeper into the realm of Nichiren Buddhist manga, where history seamlessly merges with biography to create visually captivating narratives. In this section, our attention is directed towards *Manga Introduction to Nichiren* マンガ 日蓮入門 written by Kazuyoshi Kino 紀野一義 and Shiratori Haruhiko 白取 春彦 and illustrated by Nobori Ryuta 登龍太 (1992), which not only offers unique perspectives on the life and teachings of Nichiren Daishonin but also emphasizes the enduring importance of *Gaku*, or study, within Nichiren Buddhism. Against the backdrop of contemporary tensions within Nichiren Buddhism, particularly during the late 80s and early 90s when the Soka Gakkai separated from the Nichiren Shōshū 日蓮正宗 priesthood, Shiratori's work vividly portrays the historical persecution endured by Nichiren Daishonin. By focusing on crucial moments of conflict and persecution in his life, this manga not only imparts knowledge about historical events but also functions as a mnemonic device for comprehending Nichiren's teachings. Using Kazuyoshi's, Shiratori's, and Nobori's interpretation of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, I explore how this manga works to not only serve as introductory resources for those new to Nichiren Buddhism but also provide reinforcement for dedicated practitioners, embodying the fundamental principle of *Gaku* as a vital pillar of faith.

The Enduring Interest in *Gaku*

Gaku holds profound religious significance in Nichiren Buddhist practice, being one of the three pillars alongside *Gyō* and *Shin*. Lorne L. Dawson's research in "The Cultural

Significance of New Religious Movements: The Case of Soka Gakkai” underlines the dedication to education and literacy among contemporary Nichiren Buddhists through her case study on Soka Gakkai members indicating that SGI-USA members are considerably more likely than the American public to have completed at least some college, hold a baccalaureate degree, and are about twice as likely to have an advanced degree.⁴⁸

Studying Nichiren Buddhism entails immersing oneself in Nichiren's writings and history to gain a thorough understanding of Buddhist teachings and apply them effectively in daily life. By deepening their knowledge of Nichiren Buddhism, individuals enhance their confidence and conviction while acquiring insights into proper practice. Consistently engaging with the *Gosho* (Nichiren's writings) and the history of Nichiren acts as a safeguard against developing superficial perspectives influenced by personal biases or misinterpretations. Succumbing to such pitfalls obstructs the full realization of one's inherent Buddha nature and the true benefits of spiritual practice. The former president of Soka Gakkai, Ikeda Daisaku 池田 大作 (1928-2023), emphasizes this concept by asserting that, “Buddhist study provides us with a great philosophy that serves as a compass to traverse the stormy and perilous seas of life. The more solid our foundation in Buddhist study, the stronger our faith will grow.”⁴⁹ Delving into the intricacies of Nichiren Buddhism allows for doubts to dissipate and to progress toward an unwavering state of contentment. Through the transformative influence of study, profound truths become more deeply understood, guiding individuals along the path to enlightenment. This enduring interest in *Gaku* highlights the profound role that study plays in deepening one's understanding and

⁴⁸ Dawson, “The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements: The Case of Soka Gakkai.” (2001): 348-349.

⁴⁹ Daisaku Ikeda was a Japanese Buddhist philosopher, educator, author, and nuclear disarmament advocate. He served as the third president and then honorary president of the Soka Gakkai, the largest of Japan's new religious movements. “Faith, Practice and Study,” *World Tribune*, December 9, 2005.

conviction in Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. As individuals immerse themselves in Nichiren's writings and history, they not only gain clarity on Buddhist principles but also strengthen their faith and commitment to proper practice. The manga discussed in this chapter exemplify the ongoing dedication to *Gaku* as a pillar of faith as study tool adapted to the evolving needs of the masses, ensuring that Nichiren's life and teachings continue to be widely known and understood for generations to come.

Popular Culture as a Gateway to Nichiren's History

Manga serves as a dynamic and engaging vehicle for learning about and understanding the history of Nichiren Daishonin in a way that surpasses the experience of reading purely historical sources. Through its visual storytelling, manga brings the narrative to life, allowing readers to vividly immerse themselves in the world of Nichiren and gain a deeper understanding of his biographical narrative. Manga and Nichiren Buddhism both prioritize accessibility, making them relatable to a wide range of individuals. Manga appeals to diverse age groups similar to how Nichiren Buddhism is designed to be understood by people from all walks of life, regardless of their background or education. This inclusivity highlights the relevance and approachability of both manga and Nichiren Buddhism for everyday people. Additionally, manga has historically been used as a means of expressing socio-political ideas and themes, including religious narratives. Drawing inspiration from real-world events, social issues, and cultural movements, manga creators incorporate these elements into their stories to provide commentary and critique on the world around them. By using fiction as a medium to address pressing socio-political matters, manga offers readers an opportunity for reflection, dialogue, and exploration of complex topics such as intricate historical accounts.

Nichiren Buddhists have effectively utilized popular media to disseminate their history and engage a broader audience, particularly the general public. This strategic use of artistic expression not only emphasizes the adaptability and contemporary relevance of Nichiren Buddhism but also aligns with the belief that Buddhist teachings should be accessible to everyone. Through manga, Nichiren Buddhists have discovered a platform through which they can reach individuals who may not have otherwise come across their history. As a result, this expands the scope of their influence and impact on society at large.

Studying the *Gosho*

The *Gosho* is the second most important text in Nichiren Buddhist after the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren left behind a vast corpus of individual and collective writings and after his death, Nikkō, Nichiren's successor, bestowed the title "Gosho" upon Nichiren's works, recognizing their significance, and took measures to gather, transcribe, and safeguard them as sacred texts. Consequently, a remarkable number of Nichiren's writings have endured through the ages, many of which remain in his own handwriting.⁵⁰

The content of the *Gosho* encompasses a diverse range of materials, which can be broadly categorized into four groups: Firstly, there are treatises expounding doctrinal principles; secondly, there are writings that admonish or advise government authorities; thirdly, there are letters offering guidance, solace, or encouragement to followers, often interspersed with expressions of gratitude for their support; fourthly, there are records of Nichiren's verbal teachings, including his lectures on the Lotus Sutra. This classification reflects the multifaceted nature of Nichiren's legacy, encompassing both theological discourse and practical guidance for

⁵⁰ The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 450.

his followers, ensuring his teachings endure as a source of inspiration and enlightenment for generations to come. Ikeda Daisaku describes the *Gosho* as the following:

They are writings of hope, proclaiming to humanity that “Winter always turns to spring.” They are writings imbued with respect for the dignity of life, affirming that “Life is the foremost of all treasures.” They are writings of peace, opening the way for actualizing the ideal of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.” And they are writings of victory, demonstrating the triumph of reason over authority and of right over wrong. Nichiren Daishonin’s writings are a brilliant source of hope; studying them fills us with courage and wisdom. This is because doing so brings his indomitable spirit to life within us, igniting the bright flame of faith for overcoming obstacles.⁵¹

For practitioners, the *Gosho* represents a direct link to Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, providing invaluable insights into his interpretation of Buddhist doctrine and his guidance for navigating life's challenges. These writings are revered as sacred texts, offering profound wisdom and spiritual nourishment to those who study them earnestly. Through the *Gosho*, practitioners deepen their understanding of Nichiren's core teachings, including the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and the practice of faith, study, and compassionate action. Non-members, too, can benefit from engaging with the *Gosho*, as it offers a window into the foundational principles and beliefs of Nichiren Buddhism. By exploring Nichiren's writings, individuals gain insight into the historical context in which he lived, the societal issues he addressed, and the enduring relevance of his teachings in contemporary times. The *Gosho*

⁵¹ Daisaku Ikeda, “Basing Our Lives on the Writings of Nichiren Daishonin” Divisional Representative Soka Gakkai Conference, Tokyo, December 26, 2008.

provides a comprehensive framework for understanding Nichiren's philosophy and his vision for a world transformed by the power of the Lotus Sutra.

Crucially, the *Gosho* serves as a guide for both members and non-members alike in navigating life's challenges and finding meaning and purpose in the face of adversity emphasized by Toda Josei's quote, "As you read each line, you should try to absorb it deeply, so that you can say 'How true! It's just as the *Gosho* states!'"⁵² Nichiren's writings offer practical advice, moral guidance, and spiritual encouragement, empowering individuals to cultivate inner resilience and overcome obstacles on the path to enlightenment. Whether one is a dedicated practitioner or a curious seeker, the *Gosho* remains an invaluable resource for discovering the timeless truths of Nichiren Buddhism and fostering personal growth and transformation.

Contemporary Conflict: The Soka Gakkai's Separation from the Priesthood

Kazuyoshi, Shiratori and Nobori's *Manga Introduction to Nichiren* was written amongst a backdrop of sociopolitical tensions between the Soka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood during the late 80s and early 90s. To fully comprehend this tension, it is crucial to provide background information on both groups. The Soka Gakkai, established in 1930 by Makiguchi Tsunesaburō 牧口常三郎 (1871-1944) and Toda Jōsei 戸田城聖 (1900-1958), is a lay organization of Nichiren Buddhists. It experienced rapid growth in the post-war era and gained significant influence in Japanese society, particularly in politics and education. The organization places great emphasis on the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, with a specific focus on chanting the mantra *Nam Myōhō Renge Kyō* as a means of achieving personal empowerment and affecting

⁵² Daisaku Ikeda, "Basing Our Lives on the Writings of Nichiren Daishonin" Divisional Representative Soka Gakkai Conference, Tokyo, December 26, 2008.

societal change. Conversely, the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood represents the traditional clerical institution within Nichiren Buddhism. This priesthood holds authority over religious rituals and doctrines associated with Nichiren Buddhism, including temple administration and interpretation of Nichiren's teachings. Throughout its history, the priesthood has maintained a hierarchical structure and adopted a conservative approach to religious practice.⁵³

During the late 80s and 90s, the tensions between the Soka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood increased due to several factors. One significant point of contention was the difference in interpreting Nichiren's teachings and the role of the priesthood in governing the faith. While the Soka Gakkai advocated for a more democratic and inclusive approach to Nichiren Buddhism, the priesthood aimed to maintain its traditional authority and control over the religious community.⁵⁴ This conflict reached its climax in 1991 when the Soka Gakkai officially separated from the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood, causing a significant divide within the Nichiren Buddhist community. The separation resulted in legal battles and public disputes between members of both factions.⁵⁵ As a result, this division deeply fractured the Nichiren Buddhist community and had far-reaching consequences for Japan's religious landscape. Given these sociopolitical tensions that were relevant for Shiratori, it is unsurprising her version of the narrative heavily focuses on the various persecutions and debates Nichiren faced during his lifetime. This manga serves as a reflection of the enduring challenges faced by practitioners of the faith and underscores the relevance of Nichiren's teachings in navigating complex sociopolitical landscapes.

⁵³ Asai, "The Lotus Sutra as the Core of Japanese Buddhism: Shifts in Representations of Its Fundamental Principle," 46-47.

⁵⁴ Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements: The Case of Soka Gakkai," 344.

⁵⁵ Dawson, "The Cultural Significance of New Religious Movements: The Case of Soka Gakkai," 345-346.

Manga Introduction to Nichiren: Teaching the Daishonin's History

Manga Introduction to Nichiren written by Kazuyoshi Kino and Shiratori

Haruhiko and illustrated by Nobori Ryuta, published in 1992, provides an accessible introduction to the life and teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. The manga presents readers with a visual narrative that highlights the political and religious turmoil faced by Nichiren during his lifetime in feudal Japan. With this manga, they make the complex legacy of Nichiren Buddhism more accessible to a wider audience. Kazuyoshi and Shiratori are known for their works that blend historical themes with engaging storytelling.⁵⁶ The manga was published by Sunmark Publishing サンマーク出版, a prominent publishing company based in Japan, known for its diverse range of publications spanning various genres. Established in 1953, Sunmark has built a strong reputation for producing high-quality educational materials, including textbooks, reference books, and study aids. By contextualizing Nichiren's life within the broader historical and religious landscape of Japan, the manga serves as an educational tool for readers interested in learning about Buddhism and Japanese history.

Nobori's artistic style in *Manga Introduction to Nichiren* exhibits a mature distinctive black and white aesthetic characterized by bold line work and occasional ink bleeds, lending a

⁵⁶ Kino Kazuyoshi was born in 1922 in Hagi, Yamaguchi Prefecture. He obtained his degree from the University of Tokyo, majoring in Indian Philosophy. Currently, he serves as the president of Hosen Junior College. Kino is also actively involved in organizing the Shinnyo-kai group and spreading the teachings of Buddhism among young individuals. In recognition of his efforts, he was honored with the first Buddhist Missionary Culture Award in 1967. Kino has authored several books including "The Scenery of the Lotus Sutra" (comprising five volumes), "Zen" and "The World of Wanderings" published by Suishobo, "The World of Life" published by NHK Books, "Biographies of Famous Monks" published by Chikuma Shobo, and "Reading the Lotus Sutra" released by Bungeishunju and Kodansha Gendai Shinsho, among others. Shiratori Haruhiko is an author who was born in 1954. He completed his studies at Dokkyo University and pursued further education at the Free University of Berlin in former West Germany from 1979 to 1985. During his career, he contributed to the development of the religion series by working on its original story. Additionally, he has authored numerous books. Kino Kazuyoshi, Shiratori Haruhiko, and Nobori Ryuta, *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, 254.

dynamic visual texture to the narrative.⁵⁷ The different figures, while abstracted, eschew cuteness in favor of simplification, maintaining a mature and serious tone throughout the manga. Nobori does not shy away from depicting scenes of violence, bloodshed, and threats, thus imbuing the work with a sense of realism and gravity. Kazuyoshi and Shiratori's meticulous account of events, including dates, names, titles, and locations, demonstrates their commitment to accurately depict the historical biography of Nichiren. This mature approach is further emphasized by the complex language and absence of furigana⁵⁸ requires a certain level of linguistic proficiency, suggesting that the manga is intended for an adult audience. Moreover, the length of the publication highlights its depth and complexity; at 253 pages it is the longest among all the Nichiren manga I have researched, indicating a thorough exploration of Nichiren's history.

The cover design (Figure 2.1) also reflects a purpose beyond mere entertainment. The focus is on the title displayed against a subtle color gradient behind a simple lotus flower. The edges are embellished with a black and gold floral pattern reminiscent of *maki-e* 蒔



Figure 2.1: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, front cover.

⁵⁷ Nobori Ryuta, a manga artist, was born in Hiroshima Prefecture in 1951. Following his high school graduation, he received mentorship from Kawasaki Noboru. Notably, Nobori has authored several books such as "Persons of Japanese History" and "Kojiki" Kino Kazuyoshi, Shiratori Haruhiko, and Nobori Ryuta, *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, 254.

⁵⁸ Katakana, hiragana, kanji, and furigana are components of the Japanese writing system. Katakana is used mainly for foreign words and onomatopoeia, hiragana for native Japanese words and grammatical elements, and kanji, borrowed from Chinese characters, conveys complex meanings and sounds. Furigana refers to small hiragana or katakana characters printed next to a kanji character to indicate its pronunciation; aiding readers unfamiliar with the kanji.

絵, adding a traditional touch to its aesthetic.⁵⁹ Considering just the cover, one might mistake it for a religious or historical text if not for the indication that it is a manga located beside Nichiren's name. All these elements come together to imply the fact that this resource is reputable and reliable and as such a strong vehicle in expressing *Gaku*.

The Tatsunokuchi Persecution is depicted in this manga starting on page 206 (Figure 2.2). In the top right panel, a building roof is shown with labeled to indicate it as the residence of the regent Hōjō Tokimune 北条時宗.⁶⁰ It is here that he learns of the secret

plan to assassinate Nichiren instead of sending him to Sado as originally decided. In response, he orders a messenger to ride there and prevent the event, citing that beheading a monk would bring bad karma. The final panel on this page portrays the messenger swiftly riding on horseback, with horizontal linework



Figure 2.2: Manga Introduction to Nichiren, page 206.

⁵⁹ *Maki-e* (literally: sprinkled picture) is Japanese lacquer sprinkled with gold or silver powder as a decoration. The technique was developed mainly in the Heian Period (794–1185) and blossomed in the Edo Period (1603–1868). *Maki-e* objects were initially designed as household items for court nobles; they soon gained more popularity and were adopted by royal families and military leaders as a symbol of power.

⁶⁰ Hōjō Tokimune served as a regent to the shogun, who successfully defended Japan against two Mongol invasions. The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, 286.



Figure 2.3: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 207.

Page 207 (Figure 2.3) transitions from the audience hall to the beach, which serves as the setting for Nichiren's execution. The top three panels portray two soldiers, one preparing a sword while the other holds it. Both soldiers have furrowed brows and frowns etched on their faces. The central three panels capture the moments when one of the soldiers approaches Nichiren, with katakana sounds emphasizing his slow footsteps on the sand elongating this moment in time. Despite this impending executioner's approach, Nichiren's face remains unmoving, seemingly unaffected by what is about to

happen. The final panel on this page shows Nichiren in profile, sitting with juzu in hand while Shijō Kingō weeps across from him.

Page 208 (Figure 2.4) presents a powerful composition, with two panels capturing the tension of Nichiren's impending execution. The executioner looms behind Nichiren, poised to strike with a raised sword, while Nichiren sits resolutely, clutching his juzu prayer beads—a poignant symbol of his unwavering faith. The artist utilizes ink wash to create a shibori-like pattern in the background,

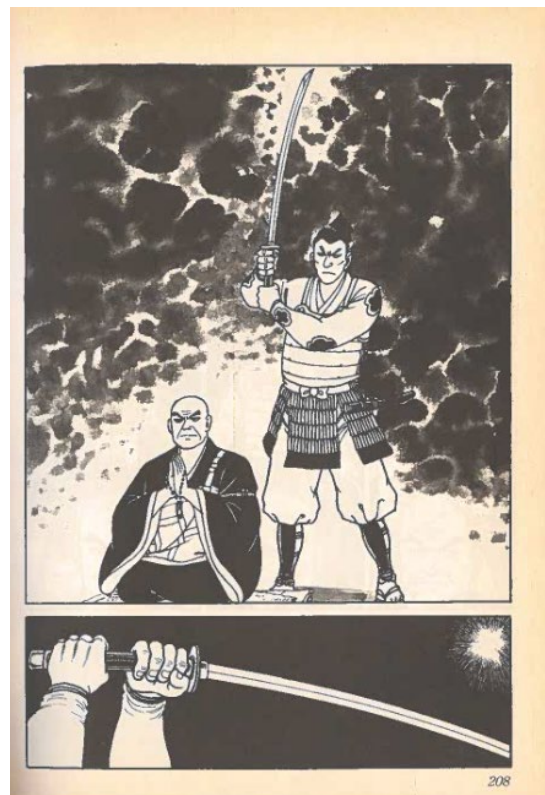


Figure 2.4: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 208.



Figure 2.5: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 209.

adding depth and texture to the scene while also giving the impression of the night sky. As the sword descends, a shining radial light off to the right of the composition symbolizes the divine intervention that will soon unfold.

Page 209 (Figure 2.5) depicts the emotional turmoil Shijō Kingō faces as he grapples with the imminent loss of their revered leader. Nichiren, however, remains composed, expressing gratitude for his transformative journey and urging his followers to rejoice in his teachings rather than mourn his death. As those on the beach in support of Nichiren chant with

their hands together, the radial bright light grows in size. Throughout this sequence, Nobori plays with temporality slowing down moments through cinematic framing taking care to describe all the small details of this event. The spread on pages 210-211 (Figure 2.6) show the soldier's reactions including bulging eyes, open mouths, and sweating brow which underscore their shock and the magnitude of the divine intervention



Figure 2.6: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, pages 210-211.

unfolding before them. Pages 212-213 (Figure 2.7) and 214-215 (Figure 2.8) offer V-shaped compositions that capture the chaos and disbelief among the soldiers as they are engulfed by the

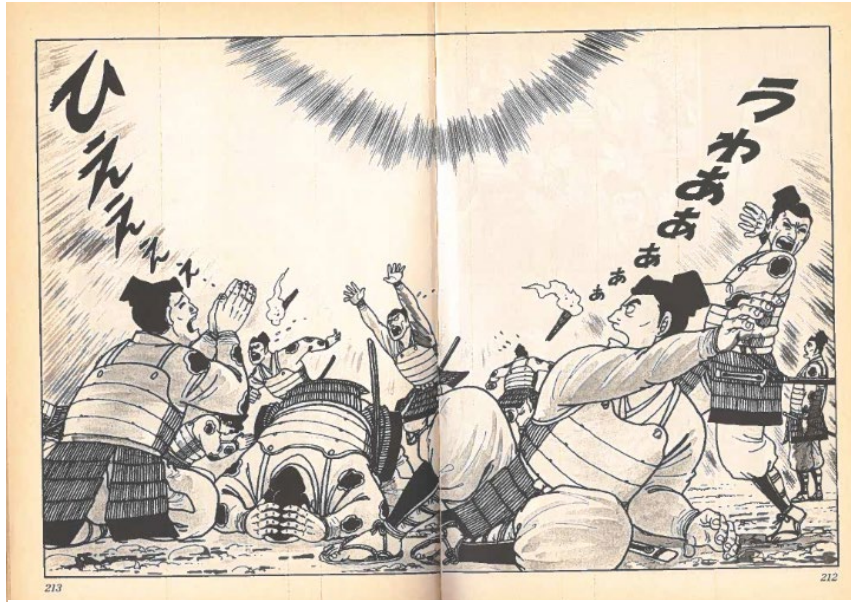


Figure 2.7: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, pages 212-213.



Figure 2.8: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, pages 214-215.

radiant light switching to full spreads. Some soldiers fall to the ground in awe, while others flee in fear or seek solace in prayer. The first full-page spread use hiragana notations to indicate exclamations of the soldiers with the second

losing a lot of the finer details to emphasize the blinding white light.

Through these techniques Nobori creates a multi-sensory experience for the reader. The artist effectively portrays the significant impact of this extraordinary event on observers through

skillful arrangement and expressive lines, highlighting the stark contrast between the bright comet and the dark night sky while evoking intense cast shadows. Pages 216-217 (Figure 2.9) continues by showing witnesses' reactions as the light fades, with the soldiers still falling over in fear while Nichiren's disciples all look on in awe. The next page shows Nichiren, now cast in

shadow as the comet is now behind him, as he remains steadfast, calmly chanting Daimoku—an act that further solidifies his divine protection.

Pages 218-219

(Figure 2.10) show the executioners, recognizing

the signs of Nichiren's spiritual authority, relent in their plans for execution, opting instead for his exile to Sado Island. The last panel shows Tokimune's messenger arriving at the scene demanding a stop to the execution. The sequence then concludes on the spread on pages 220-221 (Figure 2.11) showing Nichiren on Sado Island. Here, the manga's historical edge clarifies as the

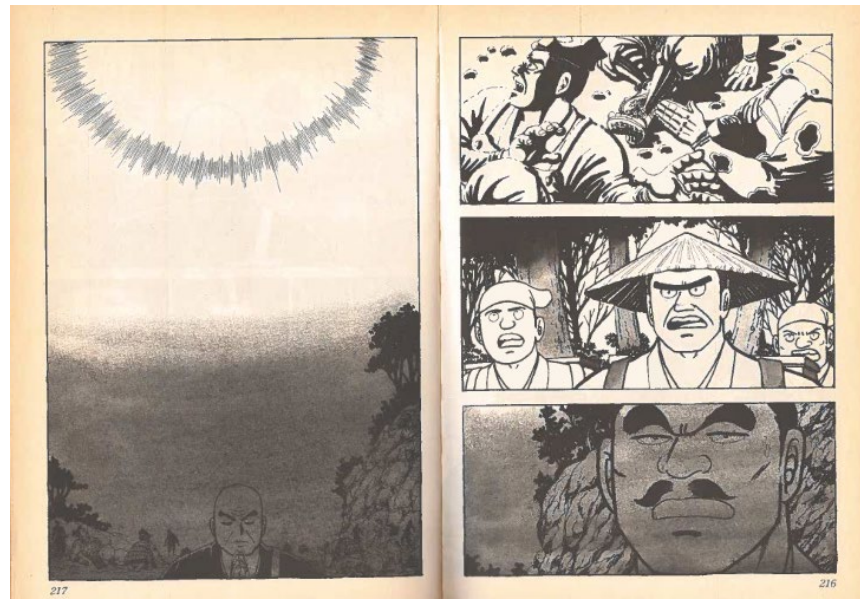


Figure 2.9: Manga Introduction to Nichiren, pages 216-217.

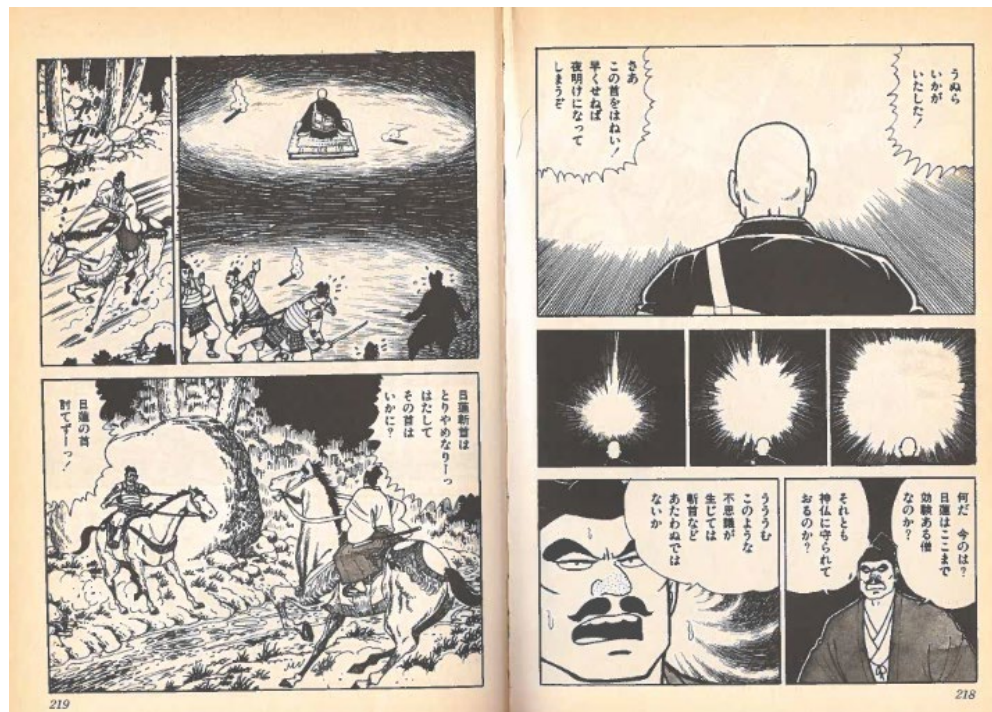


Figure 2.10: Manga Introduction to Nichiren, pages 218-219.

comic shows five panels across the spreads all giving plot progressing information and specific places and dates. The first panel shows a bird's eye view of a group

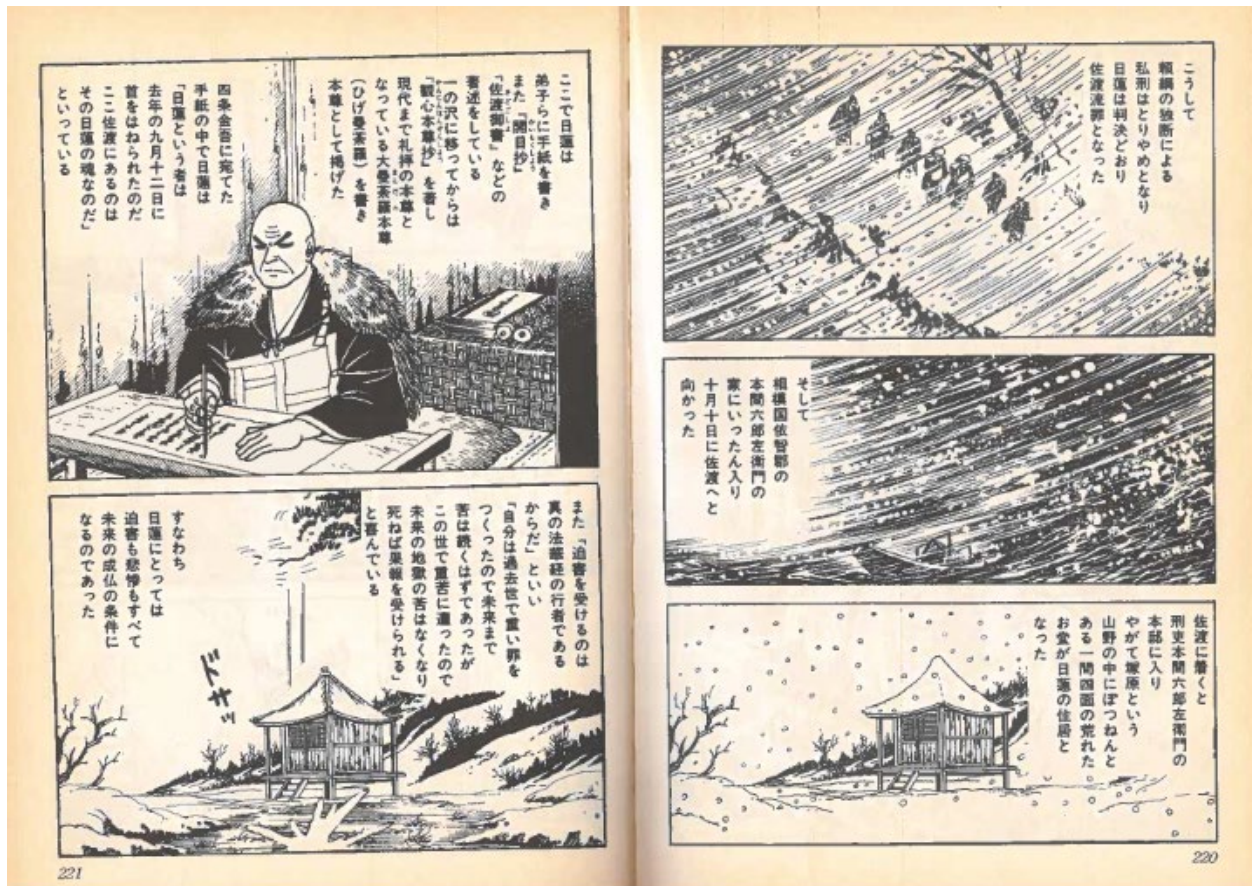


Figure 2.11: Manga Introduction to Nichiren, pages 220-221.

traversing through a snowstorm, their small, silhouetted bodies being battered by the diagonally falling snow. This panel describes that in the aftermath of Nichiren's failed execution he was sent to Sado, with this image being the first part of his journey to the barren land. The next panel shows the group traversing the rough seas as they are continuously battered by snow. The final panel of 220 shows Nichiren's residence on Sado Island explaining how the hut was poorly made, exposing Nichiren to the elements. Page 221 is separated into two panels with the top showing Nichiren writing a letter. He sits with a rough cloak and behind lay multiple *Gohonzons* that he has inscribed. The text here actually quotes the *Goshō* where Nichiren stated, "On the twelfth day of the ninth month of last year, between the hours of the rat and the ox (11:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m.), this person named Nichiren was beheaded. It is his soul that has come to this island of

Sado and, in the second month of the following year, snowbound, is writing this to send to his close disciples.”⁶¹ This refers to a spiritual death, referencing that Nichiren as an ordinary person ceased to exist after the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, while the Buddha nature within Nichiren continued on Sado Island. The panel below similarly quotes the *Gosho* quoting Nichiren who says, “Ever since I, Nichiren, strongly condemned those who slander the True Dharma in Japan, I have been persecuted. It use be that grave sins in my past lives are revealed through my merits in defending the dharma in this life.” This quote is against Nichiren’s hut, now with less snow, showing the long passage of time that has taken place. It also has a note contextualizing these quotes saying that for Nichiren, persecution and misery are all conditions for his attainment of Buddhahood. The significance of *Gaku* is highlighted by incorporating excerpts from the *Gosho*, which serves as a valuable instrument in comprehending the intricate texts. With these pages the authors distance themselves from the narrative through zooming out and changing the perspective. The relationship between text and image change here as well, as the text is no longer dialogue or onomatopoeic, with the text becoming blocks of third-person objective narration, lending to its historical edge.

By contextualizing Nichiren's struggles within the broader sociopolitical landscape of feudal Japan, the manga serves as a potent educational tool, accessible to both practitioners and non-members alike for learning the history of Nichiren. Kazuyoshi, Haruhiko, and Nobori’s deliberate blending of historical themes and quotes from the *Gosho* with captivating storytelling underscores the profound impact of Nichiren's teachings in navigating complex societal challenges, resonating with contemporary tensions within Nichiren Buddhism. Through vivid visual representations, *Manga Introduction to Nichiren* not only informs but also inspires readers

⁶¹ Nichiren Daishonin, “Opening the Eyes” in *The Complete Works of Nichiren Daishonin*, 269.

to delve deeper into the histories of Nichiren Buddhism and the *Gosho*, embodying the essence of *Gaku* as an essential pillar of the faith.

Conclusion

In this chapter's exploration of Nichiren Buddhist manga, the profound capacity of manga to encapsulate historical intricacies and cultural subtleties is uncovered while emphasizing the paramount importance of *Gaku* within Nichiren Buddhism. Through a focused examination of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in *Manga Introduction to Nichiren* by Kazuyoshi, Shiratori, and Nobori, readers are transported into the tumultuous backdrop against which Nichiren Daishonin shaped his life and teachings. This manga's offerings not only distill multifaceted histories into visually captivating narratives but also serve as potent educational tools, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation for Nichiren Buddhism's enduring principles. By contextualizing Nichiren's writings with rich visual imagery and foregrounding pivotal quotes, the artists facilitate accessible and engaging study for both practitioners and non-members alike. Thus, *Manga Introduction to Nichiren* transcends mere artistic expression, emerging as indispensable resources for scholarly inquiry and introspective contemplation within the rich tapestry of the Nichiren Buddhist tradition, embodying the core tenet of *Gaku* as an essential pillar of the faith.

Chapter 3

Sacred Visions: Manifestations of *Shin* in Nichiren Buddhist Manga

In the third chapter of this thesis, we delve deeper into the multifaceted world of Nichiren Buddhist manga, focusing specifically on the profound significance of *Shin* within this spiritual tradition. As a fundamental pillar of Nichiren Buddhism, *Shin* serves as the bedrock of devotion and spiritual practice, guiding practitioners on their journey towards enlightenment. Shedding light on the connected relationship between art and faith, this exploration delves into how visual representations intertwine with emotional devotion. In order to emphasize the role of art in rendering abstract concepts tangible and accessible, this section scrutinizes the intricate ways spiritual principles are visually manifested. Through *You are Precious* *あなたは尊い* by Yajima Kenji やじまけんじ and Yohei Sadoshima 佐渡島庸平 (2022) I analyze visual elements and symbols that transcend language barriers, effectively encapsulating the essence of Nichiren Buddhism showing the way manga provides an opportunity for newcomers to delve into the profound teachings of Nichiren Buddhism; illustrating how manga can effectively advance the fundamental principle of *Shin* and cultivate a stronger spiritual connection.

The Concept of *Shin* as Faith

Shin plays a fundamental role in the spiritual practice of Nichiren Buddhism, going beyond the conventional understanding of "faith" in the Western sense. Unlike the passive acceptance often associated with faith in Western traditions, *Shin* in Nichiren Buddhism embodies a profound trust that is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and the belief that all beings possess Buddha nature. The core of *Shin* lies in acknowledging the interconnectedness of all life and the inherent capacity for personal growth and transformation

within each individual. It is not simply about blindly believing or following dogma, but rather a dynamic process of developing oneself and fostering positive change. Through practices such as chanting *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*, practitioners actively engage with these teachings, having faith in their ability to awaken enlightenment and genuine happiness within themselves. Notably, *Shin* conveys connotations of trust, confidence, and strong personal conviction, emphasizing an active commitment to spiritual principles rather than passively accepting divine will. It is about recognizing one's inherent potential and taking responsibility for one's own spiritual journey.

Shin, in Japanese culture, resonates with concepts such as *makoto* 誠, which signifies sincerity or genuine commitment, and *kokoro* 心, representing the heart or essence of one's being. This situates *Shin* within a broader cultural framework that emphasizes the deeply personal and sincere nature of faith in Nichiren Buddhism. The narratives of Nichiren Buddhism often depict the Daishonin navigating life's challenges with unwavering *Shin* in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Through his example, it becomes evident that *Shin* serves as a source of strength, resilience, and guidance in the pursuit of enlightenment. Similar to the strong mentor-disciple relationship fostered in Buddhism, where the Buddha acts as an exemplar and guide, *Shin* underscores an intimate and personal connection with the teachings themselves. This connection empowers individuals to realize their fullest potential as awakened beings.

In contrast to the Western viewpoint on faith as devotion to a higher power, *Shin* in Nichiren Buddhism encourages practitioners to introspectively focus on cultivating deep trust in themselves and the transformative power of the teachings. It is not about passively surrendering one's fate to a deity but rather actively engaging with the teachings to bring about positive change in the world. Ultimately, *Shin* serves as a guiding beacon on the path to enlightenment. It inspires practitioners to lead lives characterized by compassion, wisdom, and integrity—lives

firmly grounded in profound trust in their own limitless potential as embodiments of Buddha nature.

Interplay of Visual Representation and Piety

Within the discourse of art and religion, conventional wisdom often polarizes viewpoints into two opposing camps: one sees art as subservient to religious doctrine, while the other views the artist as an autonomous creator, detached from religious influence. However, this binary oversimplifies a relationship that is inherently more nuanced and complex. Visual piety, a term defined by David Morgan, emerges as a paradigm that transcends this dichotomy, offering a fresh perspective on the dynamic interplay between art and religion. Visual Piety is a set of practices, attitudes, and ideas centered around images that shape the sacred experience, visual piety dismantles the dualistic divisions between mind and matter, thought and behavior, prevalent in traditional discourse on art and religion.⁶² Colleen McDannell's scholarship underscores the imperative of transcending such dualisms. She argues that the act of looking itself becomes a foundational religious practice, contributing significantly to the formation of beliefs and spiritual experiences.⁶³ This notion challenges the notion that religious engagement occurs solely through doctrinal study or ritualistic observance, emphasizing the profound impact of visual stimuli on the cultivation of faith.

The history of visually representing religious themes and principles across different cultures and time periods is a fascinating exploration. From the ancient civilizations with their intricate religious iconography to the modern mediums of digital art and manga, the visual

⁶² David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (California: University of California Press, 1999): 3.

⁶³ Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998): 9.

representation of religious ideals has evolved and diversified. This evolution reflects the cultural context and spiritual aspirations of diverse communities worldwide. In Nichiren Buddhist manga, the relationship between visual representation and emotional devotion is particularly significant. Manga artists skillfully use visual elements to evoke a range of emotions, from reverence and awe to introspection and empathy. Through vivid imagery, expressive characterizations, and nuanced storytelling, manga serves as a powerful medium for deepening the reader's connection to the principles of Nichiren Buddhism.

Visual religious persuasion has a long history in Japan predating the development of manga. An illustrative example of the fusion of religion and persuasion can be found in the Japanese Buddhist tradition, *etoki* 絵解き, literally meaning "picture decipherment." *Etoki* encompassed a system of pictorial proselytization dating to feudal Japan.⁶⁴ During this era, *etoki* was a method employed by Buddhist practitioners to propagate profound religious principles using visual aids such as *emaki* 絵巻 (hand scrolls) or picture halls adorned with paintings.⁶⁵ While contemporary Japanese society may not readily associate *etoki* with Buddhism, the term has evolved to encompass various printed materials like illustrated guidebooks, instructional manuals, and maps. Much akin to the simplistic yet impactful illustrations found in manga, *etoki* often featured straightforward drawings aimed at conveying complex ideas with minimal verbal text.

⁶⁴ Feudal Japan refers to the *Kamakura* 鎌倉時代 (1185-1333), *Muromachi* 室町時代 (1333-1568), and *Azuchi-Momoyama* 安土桃山時代 (1568-1600) periods.

⁶⁵ Buddhism, from its inception, has embraced the veneration of icons. This tradition is evident in the official introduction of Buddhism to Japan (documented in the *Nihon Shoki* 本書紀 ca. 720—the second oldest book of classical Japanese history) where visual representations played a central role. In 552, the king of Paekche (or Baekje, southern part of present-day Korea) presented the Japanese emperor with several bronze statues of the Buddha, painted banners, and canonical scriptures, alongside other non-Buddhist items. The transmission of faith is thus embodied physically through the act of delivering and accepting religious icons. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1986): 56.

During the Kamakura period (1185-1333), *etoki* emerged as a means for Buddhist preachers to convey their faith through elaborate paintings. These paintings depicted captivating stories of Buddhist paradise and heroic tales, combining education with entertainment in a manner similar to contemporary manga and visual media. *Etoki*, which translates to "pictorial sermon," encompasses the idea of preaching through visual aids. The term itself represents both illustrated books and pictorial sermons, drawing from the literal interpretation of its components: *e* 絵 (pictures, images) and *toki* 解き (deciphering, elucidating). Therefore, *etoki* encompasses not only the painted images but also the act of delivering pictorial sermons to a live audience, embodying the multifaceted nature of visual storytelling within the Buddhist tradition.

Manga not only captivate audiences with their vibrant narratives but also share striking similarities with the visual literacy cultivated through premodern practices like *etoki*. The profound influence of *etoki*, which emphasizes pictorial storytelling and elucidation of religious principles, resonates in the modern phenomenon of manga consumption. Both *etoki* and manga possess fundamental characteristics that contribute to their enduring appeal and effectiveness as mediums of communication, allowing manga to serve as a valuable tool for religious propagation. In both forms, visual storytelling takes precedence, with illustrations serving as primary vehicles for conveying narratives and ideas enabling swift comprehension of complex themes and messages.

This resemblance between manga and *etoki* emerges when examining *E-inga-kyō* 絵因果

経 (Figure 3.1),⁶⁶ a painted handscroll *etoki* and contemporary manga, particularly in their



Figure 3.1: *E-inga-kyō* (*The Illustrated Sutra of Cause and Effect*). Handscroll; ink and colors on paper. 45.6x10.3 inches. 8th century.

utilization of sequential visual imagery paired with text. Dating to the *Nara* period 奈良時代 (710-794), this scroll—and others like it—played a role in transmitting the illustrated life story of Buddha from China to Japan. Its format, with illustrations positioned directly above accompanying text, bears a remarkable similarity to the relationship of text and image in manga panels. This arrangement not only facilitates the comprehension of the narrative but also creates a visually immersive experience for viewers. The vivid scenes depicted in the handscroll offer a captivating glimpse into a foreign belief system, presenting complex themes and moral lessons through both imagery and textual explanations.

⁶⁶ *E-inga-kyō* 絵因果経 is a set of eight painting scrolls created by adding illustrations to *The Sutra of Cause and Effect* 過去現在因果経—translated by the Indian translator, Gunabhadra (394-468). The scroll set originated from the fusion of the original four scrolls with newly added illustrations, marking its first documented appearance in Japanese literature in the *Shoso-in documents* 正倉院文書. Another record, *the Zushoryō* 図書寮 further highlights its presence, indicating the incorporation of pictorial elements within the sutra wrappers. This trend gained traction during a period of deepened collaboration between scriptoriums and painters, signifying a significant shift in the interpretation of Buddhist teachings through visual means in conjunction with textual expressions. Kaminishi, *Explaining Pictures: Buddhist Propaganda and Etoki Storytelling in Japan*, pg. 23.



Figure 3.2: Detail of *E-inga-kyō* (*The Illustrated Sutra of Cause and Effect*). Handscroll; ink and colors on paper. 8th century.

In this pivotal scene from the scroll (Figure 3.2), Shakyamuni's meditation under the jambu tree is detailed. Positioned centrally within the scene, Shakyamuni is unmistakably portrayed seated on a platform, symbolizing his elevated status. The jambu tree, rendered with delicate brushstrokes, arches over him, enveloping him in its tranquil shade as he engages in deep reflection. Surrounding Shakyamuni are his attendants and an armed guard, serving as a visual reminder of his princely heritage and societal standing.

However, despite his privileged position, the scene captures the essence of Shakyamuni's compassion and empathy, highlighting his inner journey towards enlightenment amidst the worldly distractions and responsibilities of his royal upbringing. This event in Shakyamuni's life holds immense significance as it marks a pivotal moment of introspection and realization. The observation of the royal ploughing ceremony and the scenes of diligent labor and natural predation deeply impacted him, leading to a period of intense meditation under the jambu tree. Through these experiences, Shakyamuni gained insight into the inherent suffering and impermanence of life, as well as the interconnectedness of all beings.

This event underscores some of the core teachings of Buddhism, emphasizing the importance of compassion, empathy, and the recognition of suffering as the first noble truth. Shakyamuni's early awakening to these truths laid the foundation for his later teachings on the

path to enlightenment and the alleviation of suffering for all sentient beings. As viewers journey through the *E-inga-kyō* scroll, they are met with themes of perseverance, determination, enlightenment, and a dedication to educating others, embodying the didactic biographical narratives often seen in *etoki* practices, akin to the moralization of Nichiren Daishonin's biography depicted in the manga under examination in this thesis.

The parallels between *etoki* and Nichiren Buddhist manga underscore the enduring legacy of visual propaganda and proselytization within Japanese culture, especially in the context of disseminating Buddhist teachings. While there are many similarities between the two media, manga enhances the traditional practice of interpreting images by integrating contemporary narrative techniques that cater to a broader audience compared to the limited viewership of *etoki*. This fusion results in a more intimate reading experience through a portable format, adding a tactile element that enables manga to establish a deeper emotional connection with its readers. Art plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between abstract spiritual concepts and everyday life. By making these concepts tangible and relatable, art helps us understand them on a deeper level. Visual narratives in manga elucidate complex philosophical ideas in a way that resonates with readers on an emotional level fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of faith.

Evoking Spiritual Resonance

Nichiren Buddhist manga are effective in evoking spiritual resonance among readers, regardless of whether they are practitioners or non-members. The visual narratives and storytelling found in manga captivate individuals, leading them on a transformative journey that aligns with their spiritual sensibilities. The act of physically holding a manga, flipping through its pages, and immersing oneself in its imagery fosters a profound connection with the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. Through this tactile engagement, readers enter into a dialogue with the

text and imagery, participating in a cinematic experience allowing for a more immersive and contemplative experience that resonates with modern audiences. This intimate interaction awakens the reader's Buddha-nature, igniting spiritual awareness and fostering a connection to the core principles of Nichiren Buddhism.

Manga plays a crucial role in facilitating *Shakubuku*, or proselytizing, among non-members. By employing accessible storytelling and visually compelling artwork, manga provide newcomers with an inviting entry point into the world of Nichiren Buddhism. The relatable characters, engaging narratives, and thought-provoking themes presented in manga resonate with readers on a personal level, encouraging them to explore the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and embark on their own spiritual journey. As readers delve deeper into the narrative of manga, they are inspired to reflect on their lives and consider how Nichiren Buddhism can address their existential concerns and spiritual aspirations.

By presenting intricate philosophical concepts in an accessible visual format, manga offer valuable insights and perspectives that enrich spiritual practice. Engaging with manga prompts practitioners to question, explore, and internalize the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, promoting profound spiritual growth and self-awareness. In this way, manga act as catalysts for personal transformation by empowering individuals to embody the principles of Nichiren Buddhism in their daily lives, contributing to the realization of a more harmonious and compassionate world.

You are Precious: Cultivating Individualized Shin in Manga

The manga *You are Precious* is written by Yajima Kenji and illustrated by Yohei Sadoshima (2022). This story presents a poignant narrative exploring themes of love, loss, and the pursuit of happiness through the lens of Nichiren Daishonin's narrative. Yajima crafts a

compelling storyline that delves into the complexities of human emotions and relationships while Yohei 's expressive artwork brings the characters to life, capturing their struggles and triumphs with nuance and depth. This manga is published by Tokuma Shoten 徳間書店 known for its diverse range of publications spanning various genres.

In *You are Precious*, Yohei's art style is a pivotal component in the narrative's visual storytelling. His distinctive artistic approach is characterized by an interplay of elements, ranging from loose, quick brush strokes to meticulous stippled shadows and contouring. The predominant use of a traditional black and white palette contributes to the manga's atmospheric depth, emphasizing contrasts and highlighting key moments within the narrative. Yohei's employment of thick, bold hatching adds texture and dimensionality to his illustrations, imbuing them with a sense of dynamism and energy. Moreover, his adeptness in seamlessly transitioning between very realistic scenes and abstracted chibi-style⁶⁷ figures add layers of visual complexity to the storytelling, allowing for a fluid exploration of the characters' inner landscapes and emotional states. This versatility in style reflects Yohei's mastery of visual language and his ability to evoke a wide range of emotions, from introspective contemplation to lighthearted playfulness, thereby deepening the reader's immersion in the narrative world of *You are Precious*.

⁶⁷ Chibi style in manga refers to a specific art style where characters are drawn in a super deformed and exaggerated manner. In this style, characters are depicted with oversized heads, big eyes, and small bodies. Chibi characters often have cute and childlike features, which adds a sense of charm and humor to the overall artwork. This style is commonly used to depict comedic or lighthearted scenes in manga and anime.

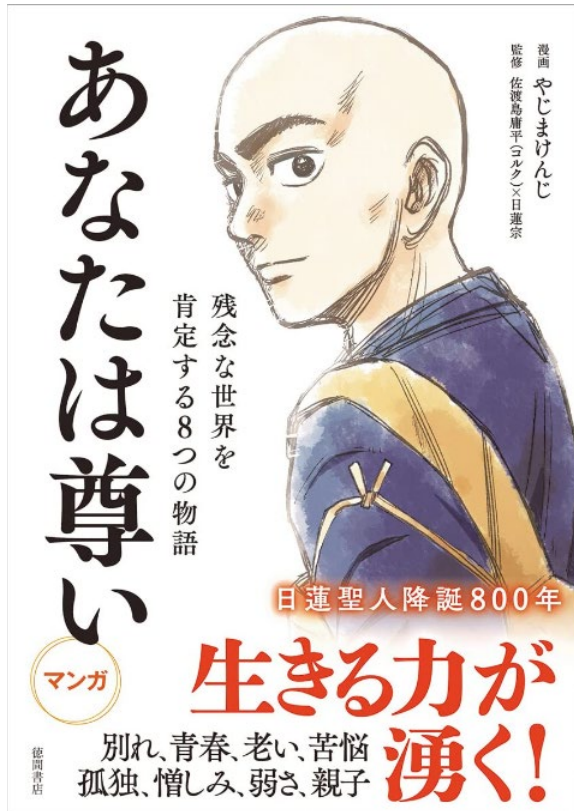


Figure 3.3: *You are Precious*, cover.

The manga's focus on the reader is evident from its cover (Figure 3.3). The dominant figure of Nichiren stands against a plain white background, with his upper body turned away while he gazes over his left shoulder, making direct eye contact with the audience. Nichiren's demeanor in this image conveys a sense of encouragement for readers to follow him, not only in exploring the manga and its storyline but also in embarking on the path towards enlightenment. The significance of the reader in this manga is further highlighted by the title, which does not mention Nichiren's

name at all but instead emphasizes that "you are precious." This serves as a reminder that this manga is specifically created for the inherent Buddha-nature within each reader. This theme of personalized teaching, mirroring the concept of Skillful Means, flows throughout the story and is found in the last sequence detailing the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.

The sequence commences on page 226 (Figure 3.4) with a prominent panel presenting a beach, where Nichiren is depicted kneeling on a mat surrounded by two soldiers and a handful of spectators. Despite the



Figure 3.4: *You are Precious*, page 226.



Figure 3.5: *You are Precious*, page 227.

bright white sand, the scene conveys a nocturnal atmosphere through a gradient of gray in the sky and the presence of a crescent moon. In the panel below, Nichiren is portrayed in profile against a backdrop of the dark sea. Although displaying some wrinkles, Nichiren maintains an idealized and composed demeanor amidst the surrounding chaos, which is evident from the cries urging people to let the speaker through. Moving on to page 227 (Figure 3.5), Shijō Kingō dramatically bursts into the scene, his entrance emphasized by his body breaking out of the panel's frame as he screams that he would willingly die if Nichiren is killed. This moment of action is accentuated by his tear-filled eyes and swift lines suggesting movement, while figures behind him attempt to restrain him. The subsequent panel offers an alternate perspective of this moment, featuring four men struggling to hold Shijō back. Their near-toppling state underscores Shijō's unwavering dedication to his mentor. The bottom two panels depict Shijō now on his knees, weeping, with a monk standing behind him over his shoulder. The following close-up panel focuses on this monk who visibly grapples with maintaining serenity in this tense situation, as evidenced by shadows and tense lines etched onto his face.

On page 228 (Figure 3.6), the scene depicts Nichiren in profile, with a long vertical panel displaying the executioner preparing his sword. Adjacent to it are three horizontal stacked panels. In the top panel, the executioner, while oiling his blade, urges Nichiren to chant the Nembutsu mantra as a means of possible salvation. The middle panel portrays Shijō's dismissive thoughts on this sentiment. In the third panel, Nichiren's side view is highlighted as the executioner's sword ominously looms near his head. The bottom panel of the page shifts the focus to the text itself by dropping the background, as Nichiren rejects compromising his morals for survival and remains resolute in dedicating his life to teaching the Lotus Sutra. Page 229 (Figure 3.7) continues



Figure 3.6: *You are Precious*, page 228.

with three panels capturing Nichiren's words. The top image shows Nichiren's disciples kneeling, some overwhelmed by tears and another chanting through his sorrowful emotions. Nichiren continues to say that if the roots of a tree are rotten it will fall, creating a metaphor to Japanese society and the need to follow the Lotus Sutra. The subsequent panel reinforces this metaphor by depicting a large, healthy tree, symbolizing that standing by one's principles will foster *Shin* in the Lotus Sutra ensuring its legacy for future

panels. In the top panel, the executioner, while oiling his blade, urges Nichiren to chant the Nembutsu mantra as a means of possible salvation. The middle panel portrays Shijō's dismissive thoughts on this sentiment. In the third panel, Nichiren's side view is highlighted as the executioner's sword ominously looms near his head. The bottom panel of the page shifts the focus to the text itself by dropping the background, as Nichiren rejects compromising his morals for survival and remains resolute in dedicating his life to teaching the Lotus Sutra. Page 229 (Figure 3.7) continues



Figure 3.7: *You are Precious*, page 229.

generations. The bottom panel on this page zooms in on Nichiren's eye, intensifying the moment and emphasizing his forthcoming words as significant. At this point, he directly addresses both his disciples and future generations, speaking with conviction and authority.



Figure 3.8: *You are Precious*, pages 230-231.

This is exemplified on pages 230-231 (Figure 3.8) through a modern cityscape and



Figure 3.9: *You are Precious*, page 232.

Nichiren's direct dialogue, which places significant focus on the contemporary moment, modern Nichiren Buddhist practice, and the individual reader's interaction with the manga. Nichiren mentions that this practice will persist even a thousand years from then (the year 2271), emphasizing its enduring nature. In the concluding page of the manga, page 232 (Figure 3.9), the executioner is depicted holding a sword that is about to be swung, as indicated by movement lines. The final panel portrays Nichiren with hands clasped in prayer, fervently reciting Nam Myōhō Renge Kyō, thus reinforcing his spiritual commitment and *Shin*.

Conclusion

The examination of Nichiren Buddhist manga as representations of Shin has revealed the profound interplay between visual portrayal, spiritual dedication, and cultural adaptation within the framework of Nichiren Buddhism. By conducting a thorough analysis of *You are Precious* by Yajima and Yohei, we uncover the transformative potential of manga in promoting the fundamental principle of shin and cultivating a stronger connection to its spiritual essence. Employing an individualized approach, with Nichiren Daishonin directly engaging with the reader, a personal bond is formed with the narrative, consequently igniting the reader's inherent Buddha-nature. This personalized method assists in persuading the reader to develop an emotional investment in this story and its practice. As depicted in manga narratives, Nichiren Buddhism embodies a dynamic amalgamation of tradition and modernity, offering an enduring message of resilience, compassion, and enlightenment that surpasses linguistic and cultural barriers. Ultimately, Nichiren Buddhist manga act as influential conduits for evoking spiritual resonance, facilitating personal growth, and nurturing a more profound comprehension and appreciation of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

Conclusion: *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin* in Manga

In this concluding chapter, intricate concepts of *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin* are tied together examining *Nichiren*, *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, and *You are Precious*, discussed in the preceding chapters, serve as dynamic conduits for advancing the core principles of Nichiren Buddhism and fostering a deeper spiritual connection. The aim of this research was to initiate a discourse on the artistic production of the Nichiren sect and explore the dynamic relationship between art, education, and faith. By challenging the notion that popular media lacks artistic value and analyzing how manga portrays Nichiren Buddhism, this study explores previously overlooked avenues of research in religious communication. Ultimately, this research strives to broaden the existing canon of Japanese religious art and ignite further discussions on Nichiren Buddhist artistic expression.

All of these manga embody the fundamental principles of Nichiren Buddhism through the Tatsunokuchi Persecution narrative. While each manga contains elements of *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin*, these works were specifically selected for their focus on one of the aspects. The Manga *Nichiren* was chosen as an example of *Gyō* for its close association with *Shakubuku* and its visual emphasis on the practice of *Daimoku*. For *Gaku*, *Manga Introduction to Nichiren* stands out because of its meticulous attention to historical details and inclusion of direct quotes from the *Gosho* making it a valuable study resource. Lastly, *You are Precious* represents *Shin* by focusing on the reader, guiding them towards establishing a personal connection with the narrative, thereby igniting spiritual resonance and recognizing their innate Buddha-nature.

Tracing each of the manga's telling of the Tatsunokuchi persecution, the emphasis on a particular tenet is evident. Looking at Figures 1.9 and 1.10, pages 258-261 in *Nichiren*, the authors show particular attention to Nichiren chanting *Daimoku*. Through the use of temporal

manipulation, the authors stretch out a brief moment across four pages to underscore the importance of the practice of *Daimoku*, and by result highlight the importance of *Gyō* as well. On the other hand, *Manga Introduction to Nichiren* focuses on historical details rather than prayer during the execution attempt. Although time is also slowed down in this manga, Figures 1.9 and 1.10, pages 258-261, show the author's prioritization in depicting the figures present in the scene rather than showing Nichiren chanting *Nam Myōhō Renge Kyō* explicitly, as in *Nichiren*. Instead, his hands positioned in prayer imply this practice while textual information provides crucial historical accuracy. Lastly, *You are Precious* serves as a case study for *Shin* due to its personal engagement with the reader and its aim to cultivate spiritual resonance. The manga diverges from the other two by halting the scene right before the comet disrupts the execution during the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. Instead, it redirects the focus towards the reader, seen in Figures 3.7 and 3.8, pages 229-231, where Nichiren addresses them directly as future generations, cultivating *Shin*. The manga then transitions to a modern cityscape, effectively bridging the significance of this medieval story to present times. This direct engagement between Nichiren and the reader encourages them to either continue or initiate their practice of Nichiren Buddhism.

The concepts of *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin* work together harmoniously to accumulate fortune and bring about positive changes in daily life. These tenets are not limited to Buddhists alone but can be embraced by anyone seeking happiness and fulfillment. By passive engagement with these principles through reading, individuals can begin to learn about the transformative power of Buddhism in daily life. Regardless of their status as a Buddhist or not, they can embrace these tenets and accumulate fortune, happiness, and benefit which encourages both dedication and conversion. Through determination, perseverance, and the balanced approach of *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin*, individuals can manifest their inherent Buddhahood, revolutionize their lives, and

experience boundless benefits and happiness. The manga discussed in this thesis caters to different readers: those seeking strength in contemporary life, those interested in understanding Nichiren Buddhism doctrines, and even those who do not speak Japanese but who can still learn about Nichiren Buddhism through visuals. This shows how Nichiren Buddhism continuously evolves with time and expands its influence globally.

In summary, Nichiren Buddhist manga epitomizes the dynamic synergy between *Gyō*, *Gaku*, and *Shin* by providing readers with a distinctive opportunity to engage with the rich traditions and timeless wisdom of Nichiren Buddhism in an accessible visual narrative. Concluding this exploration reveals that Nichiren Buddhist manga is far more than just a medium for disseminating religious teachings; it emerges as a profound catalyst for personal growth, spiritual enlightenment, and global harmony for members and non-members alike. Through its adaptability, relevance, and transformative power, Nichiren Buddhist manga continues to inspire individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultural contexts. Consequently, it secures the enduring legacy of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings by playing a pivotal role in advancing the dogma of Nichiren Buddhism and nurturing a deeper connection to its spiritual essence for generations to come.

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Appendix: Figures

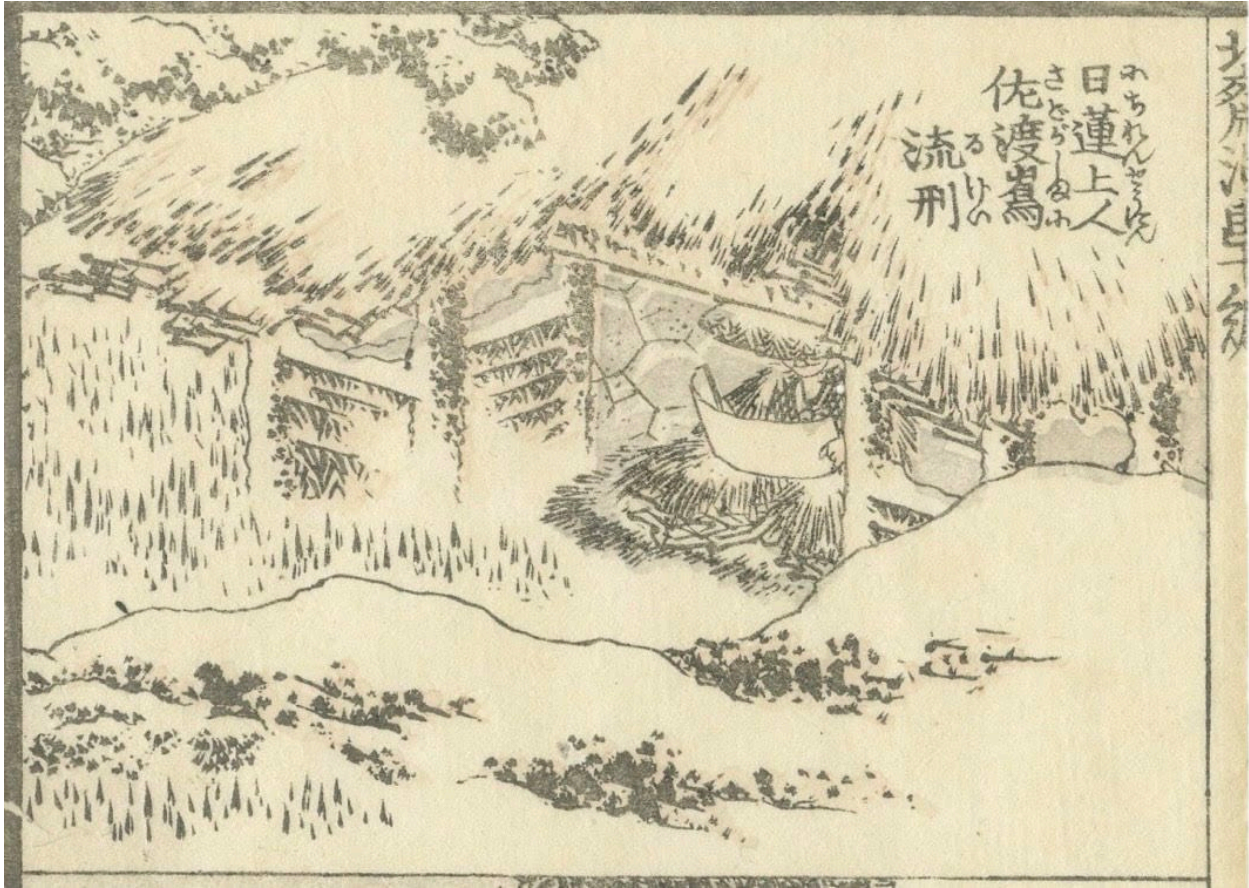


Figure 1: *The Hokusai Manga*, Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), published in 1814-1819, 1834, and 1878.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN COMIC ART	
INTENTION	PRODUCTION
1. To elicit emotional reaction (particularly humor)	4. mass-produced and commercially distributed
2. to discuss political or social issues (graphic journalism)	5. bound format (book, magazine, newspaper)
3. to tell a story	6. serial publication
STYLE	
7. incorporates multiple, distinct images arranged in a sequence	11. expressive linework and/or text to indicate movement or emotion
8. intentionally distorted and/or unrealistic image	12. drawn quickly and/or with schematic linework
9. devices (e.g. bubbles or balloons) to frame thoughts or speech	13. multimodality (mixture of text, imagery, and other modes of discourse)
10. use of multiple panels to frame images	14. features identifiable character(s)

Figure 2: *Characteristics of Modern Comic Art* by Stephen Salel



Figure 3: Timeline of comics about Nichiren Daishonin, full selection collected with the assistance of Dr. Ryan Holmberg.



Figure 1.1: Nichiren portrait from Kuon-ji Temple, 15th century.



Figure 1.2: Painting of Kūkai from the Shingon Hassozō, a set of scrolls depicting the first eight patriarchs of the Shingon school. Japan, 13th-14th century.



Figure 1.3: Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Calming the Stormy Sea at Tsunoda in Exile to Sado Island* from the series *Concise Illustrated Biography of Monk Nichiren*, 1836.



Figure 1.4: Nichiren, page 267.

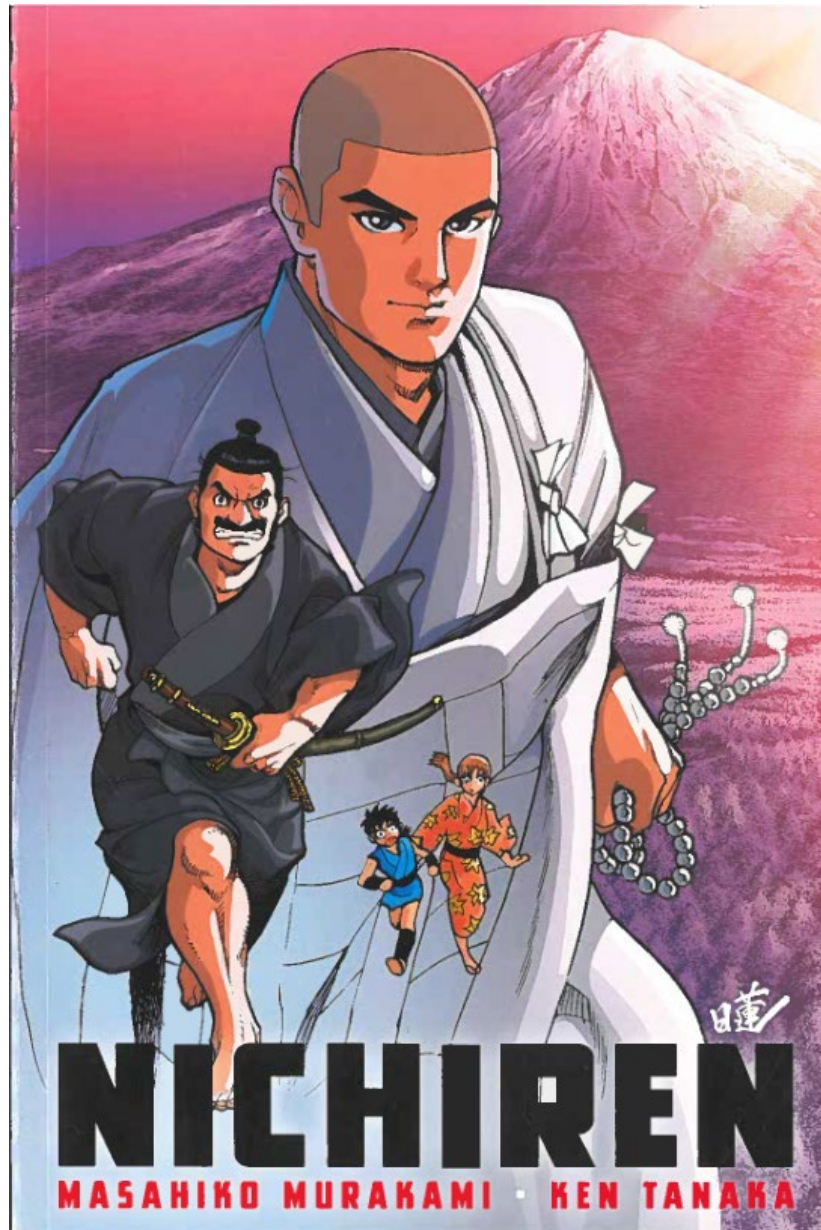


Figure 1.5: *Nichiren* front cover.

A long time ago, when samurai ruled Japan...

It is a period of great disaster. Society is in turmoil. Yet those in power turn their backs on the misery all around them.

Buddhist priests enjoy great influence among the rulers, who use religion as a way to control the people. Both care more about money and power than helping the suffering masses.

But when a young priest challenges the authorities, showing the way to bring peace and happiness to society, they will stop at nothing to silence him....



蓮

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ISBN: 978-0-9779245-7-8

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Figure 1.6: *Nichiren*, back cover.

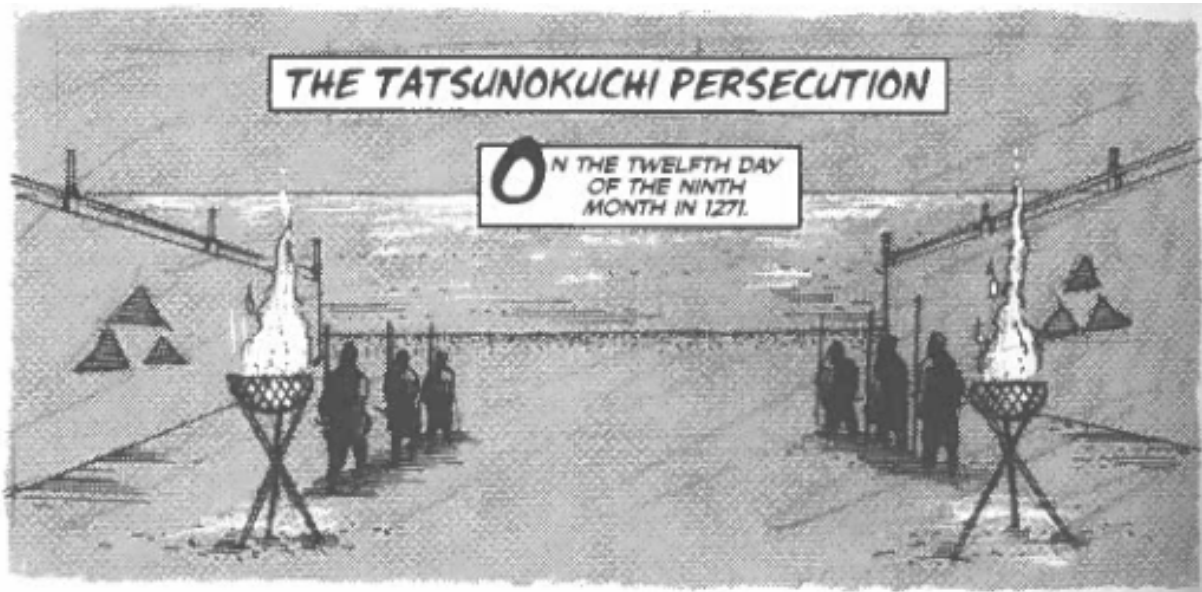


Figure 1.7: *Nichiren*, page 254.

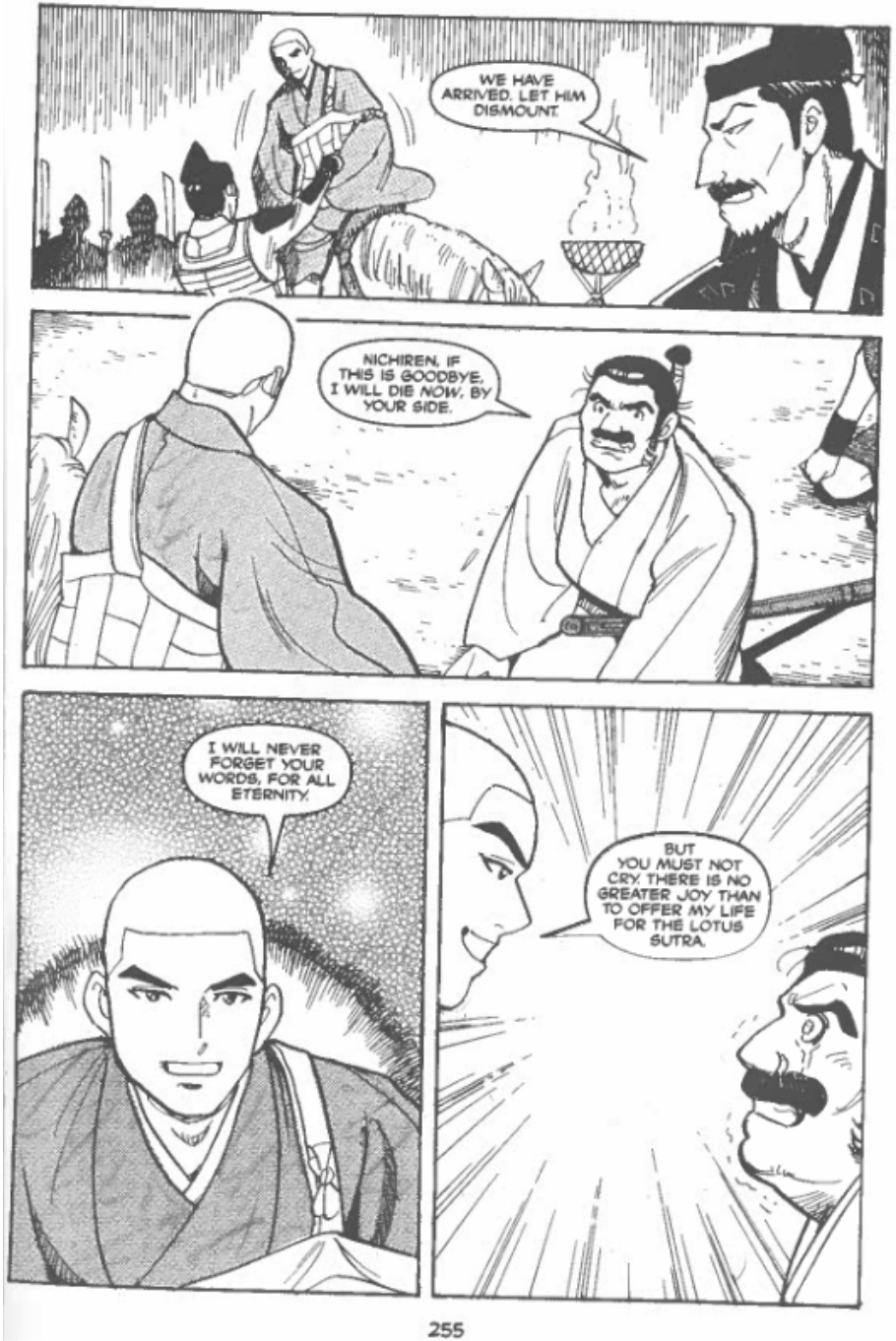


Figure 1.8: *Nichiren*, page 255.



Figure 1.9: *Nichiren*, pages 256-257.



Figure 1.10: *Nichiren*, pages 258-259.



Figure 1.11: *Nichiren*, pages 260-261.



Figure 1.12: *Nichiren*, page 262.



Figure 1.13: *Nichiren*, page 263.



Figure 1.14: *Nichiren*, page 264.

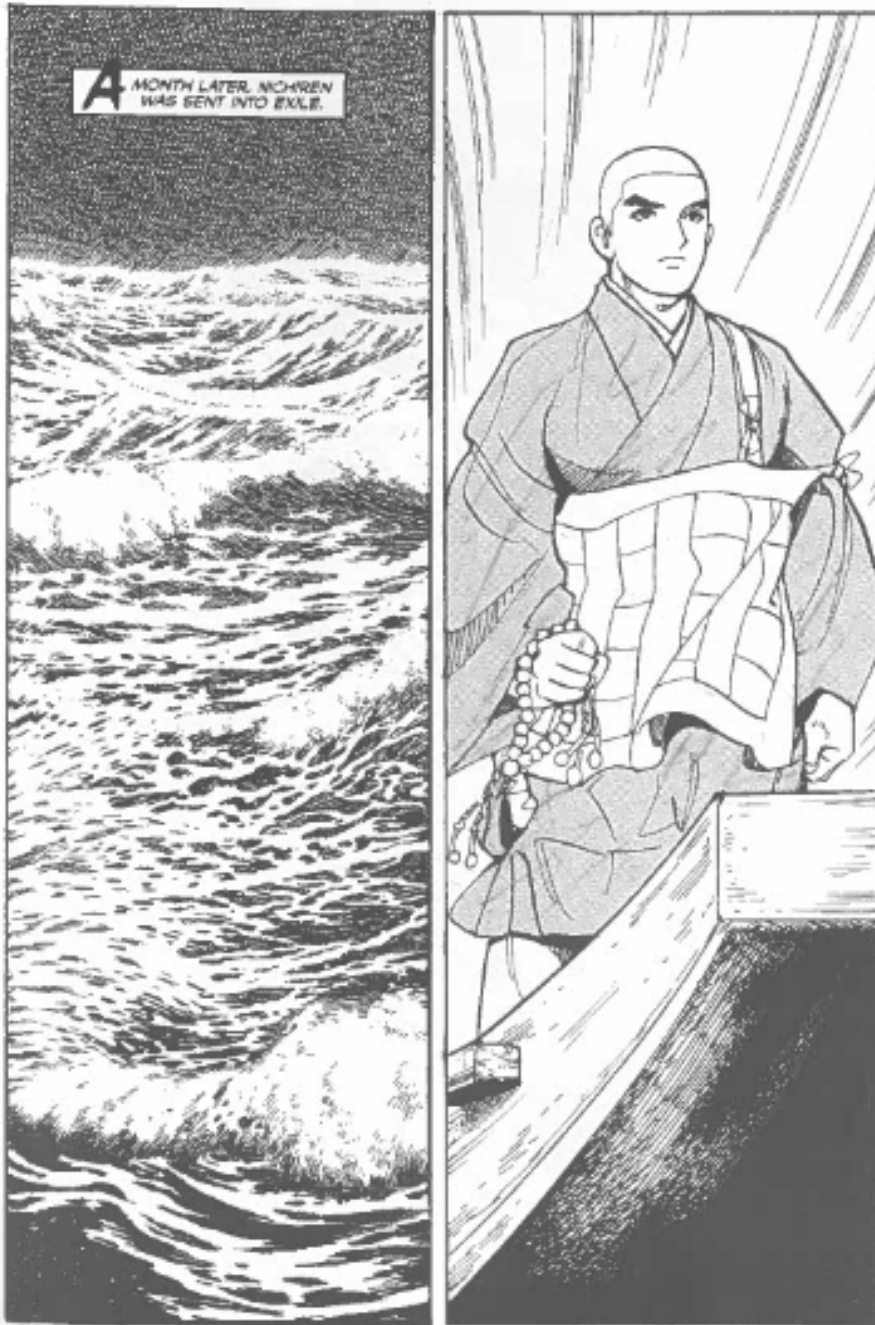


Figure 1.15: *Nichiren*, page 265.



Figure 1.16: *Nichiren*, page 266-267.

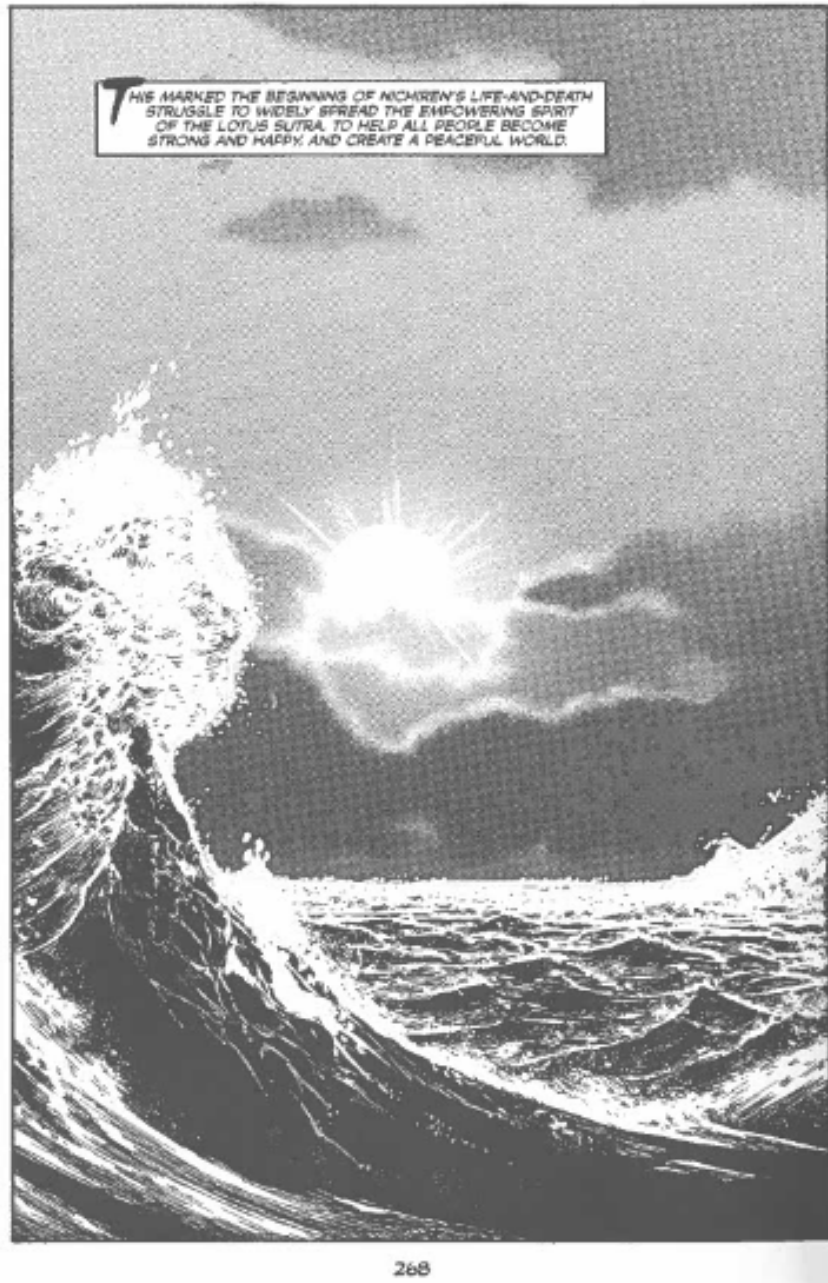


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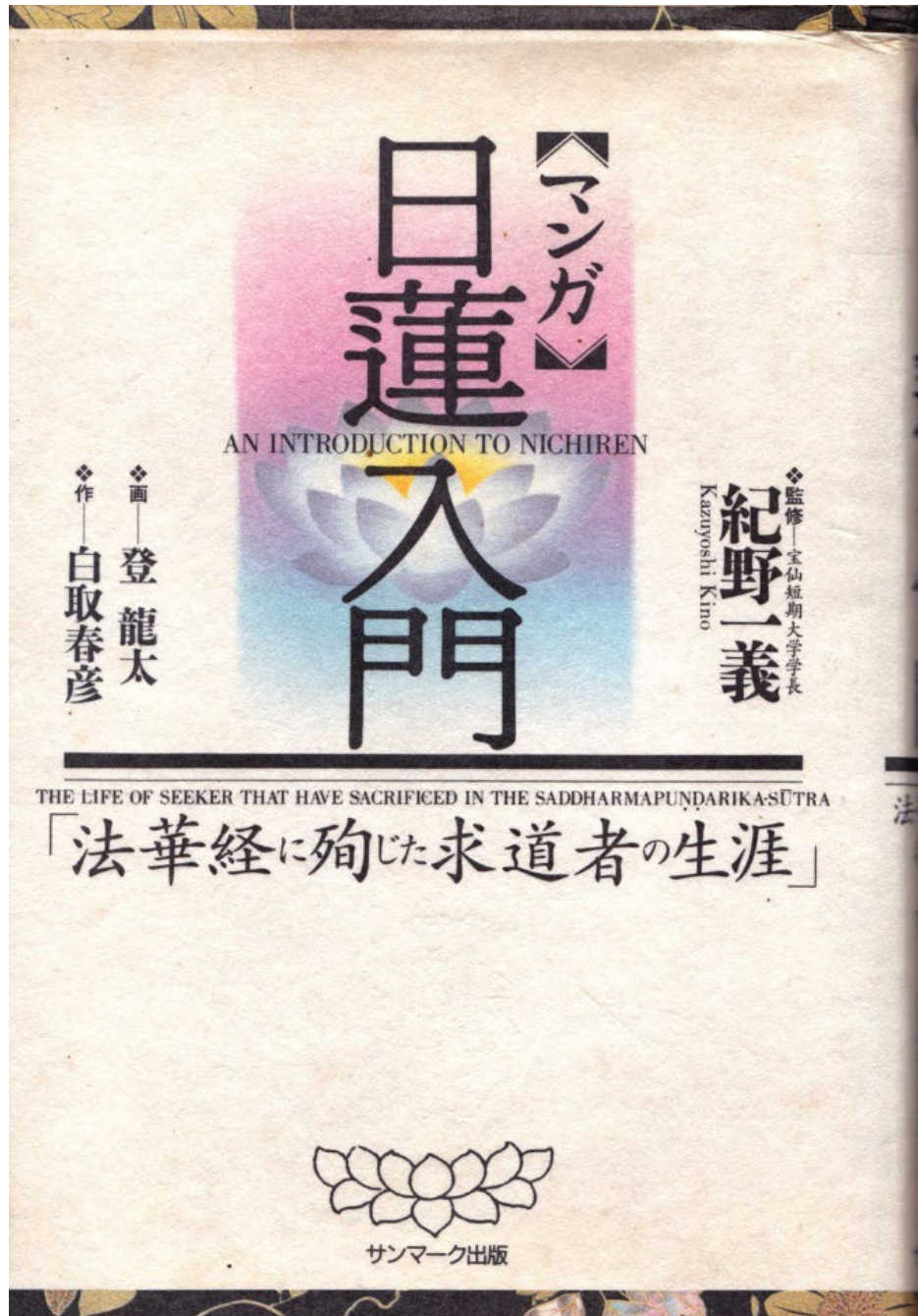


Figure 2.1: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, front cover.



Figure 2.2: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 206.

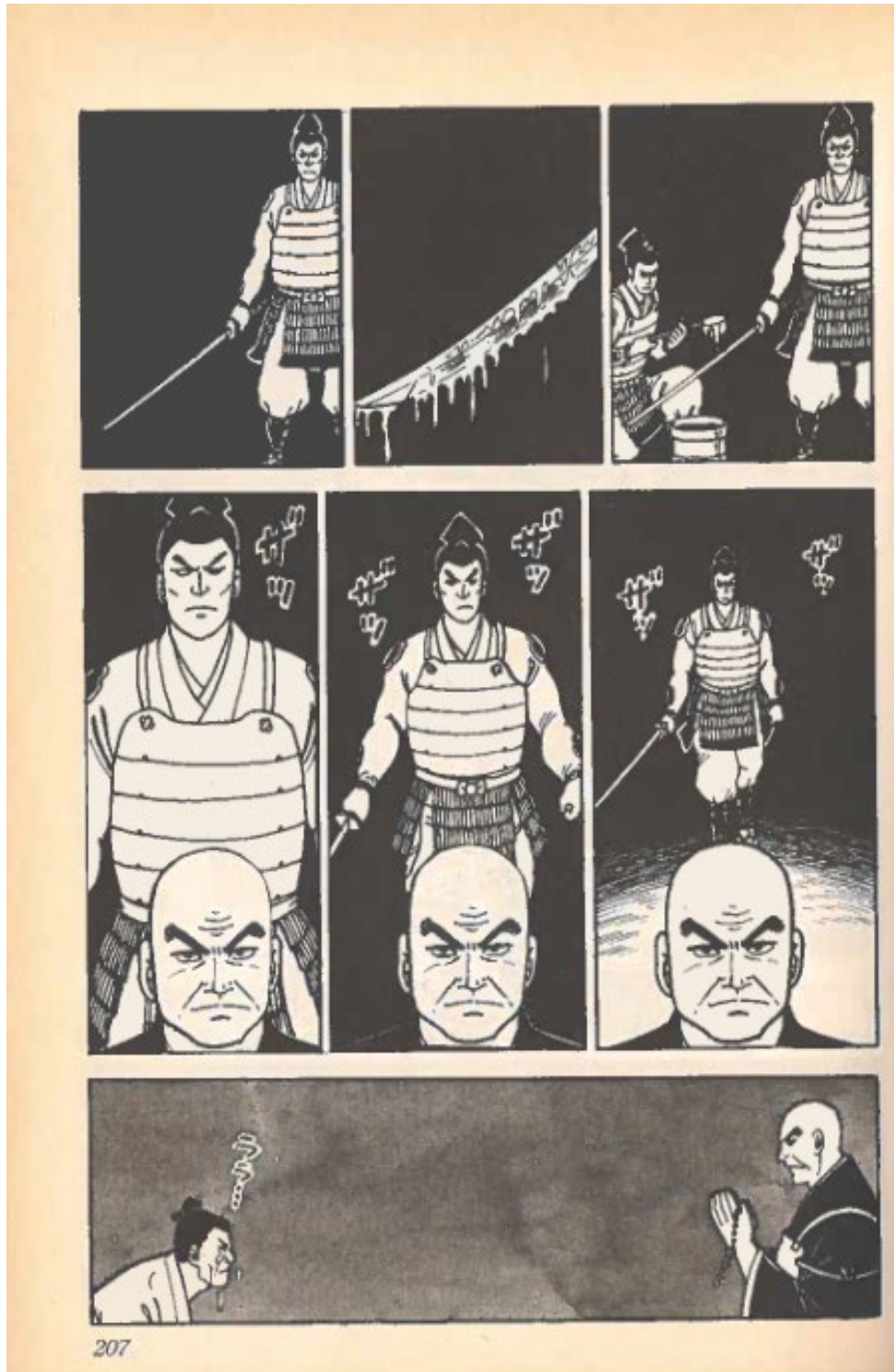


Figure 2.3: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 207.

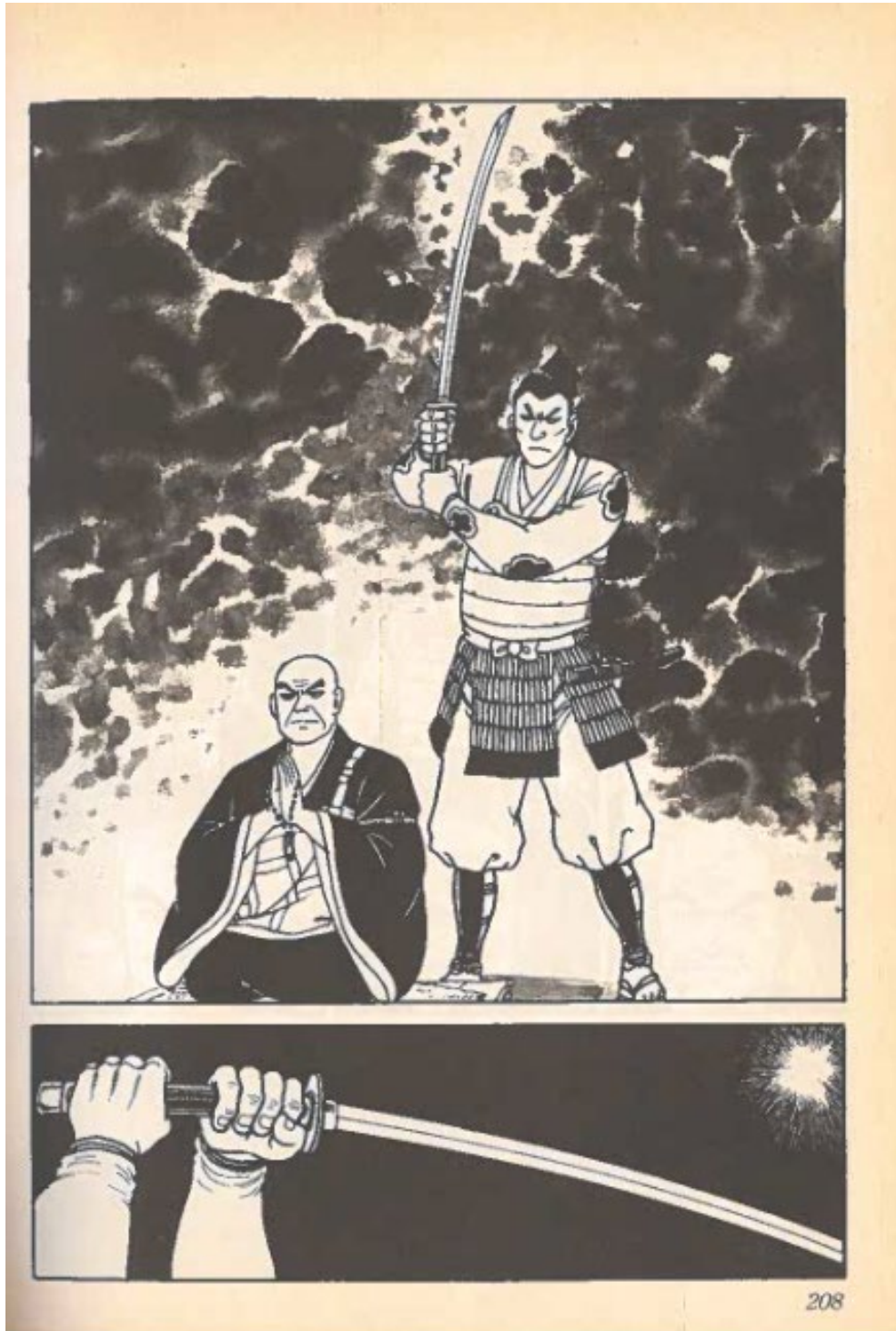


Figure 2.4: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 208.



Figure 2.5: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 209.



Figure 2.6: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 210-211.



Figure 2.7: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 212-213.



Figure 2.8: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 214-215.



Figure 2.9: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, page 216-217.

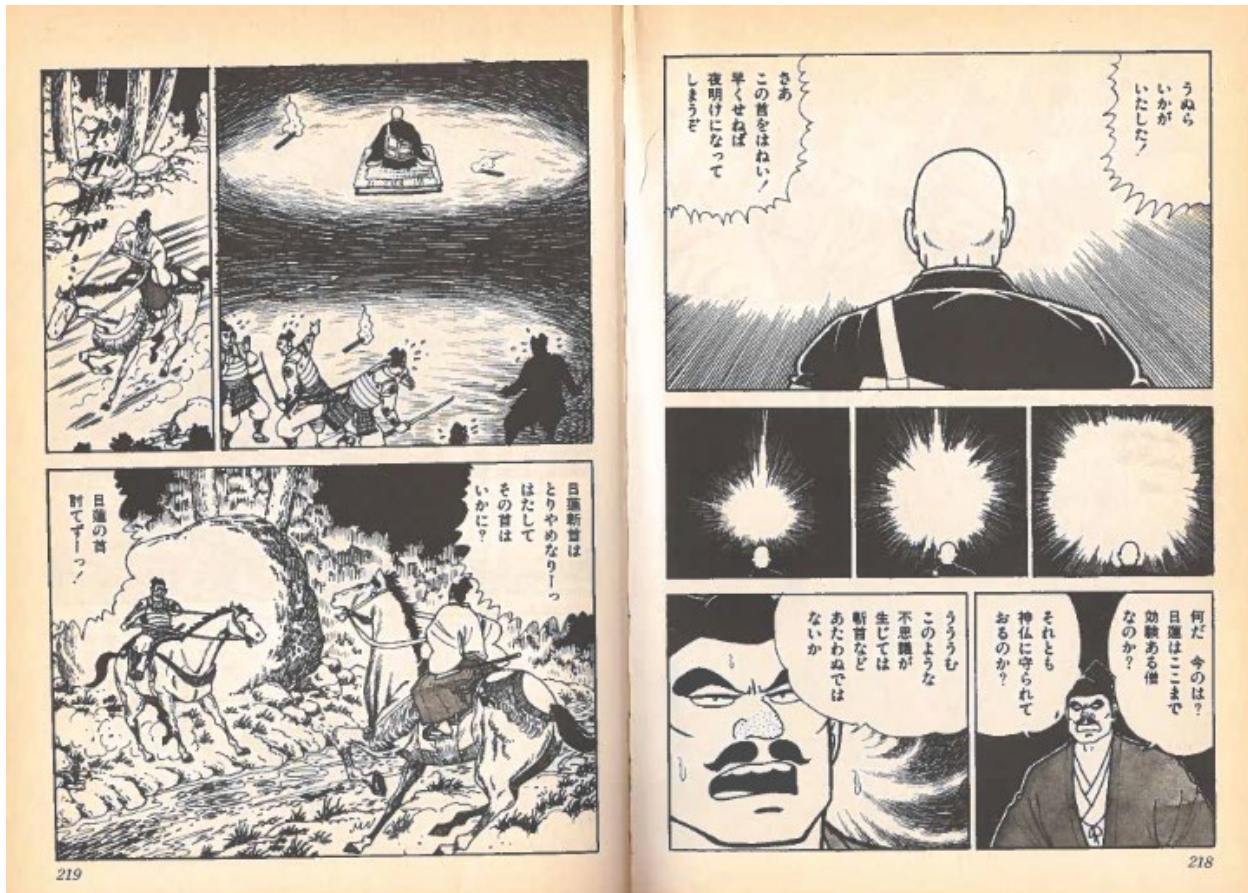


Figure 2.10: *Manga Introduction to Nichiren*, pages 218-219.

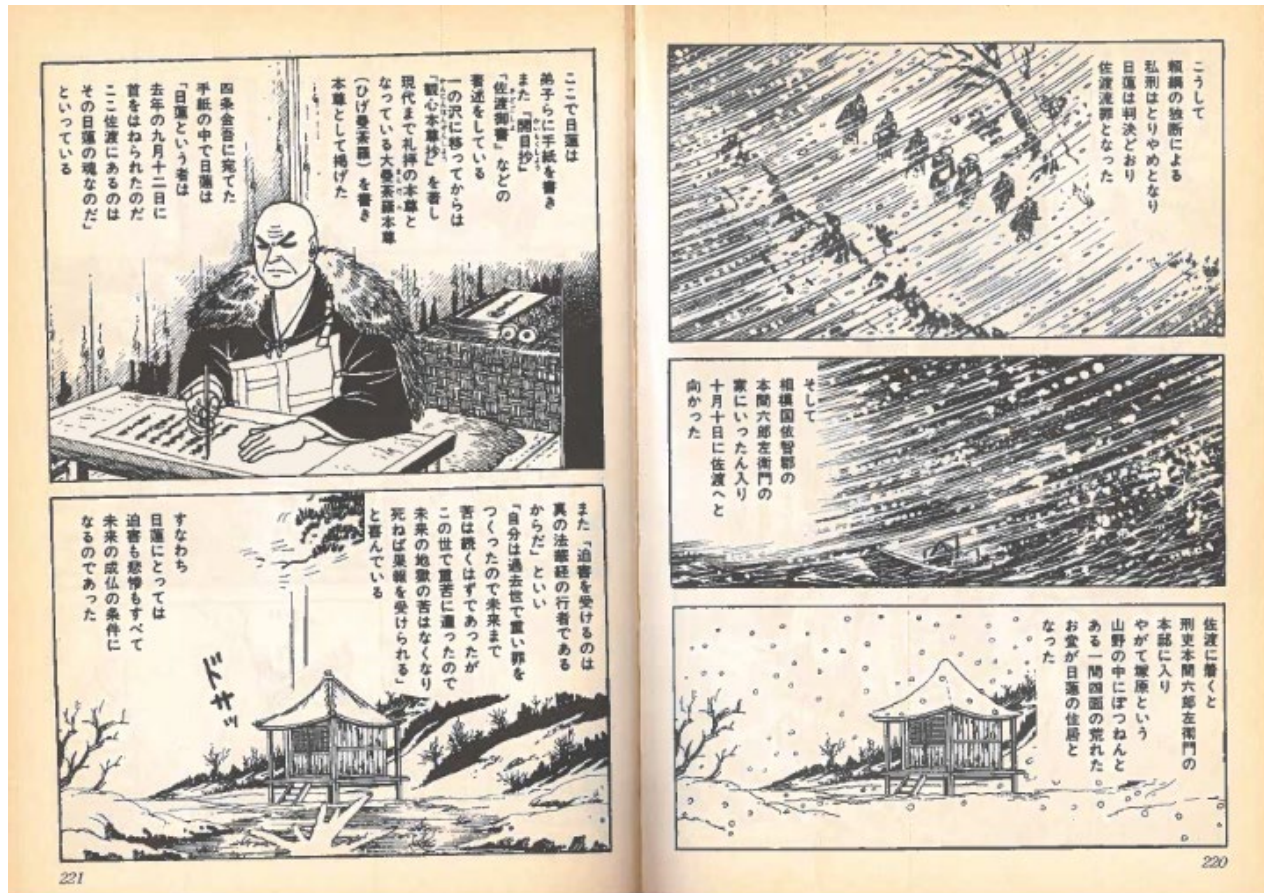


Figure 2.11: Manga Introduction to Nichiren, page 220-221.



Figure 3.1: *E-inga-kyō* (*The Illustrated Sutra of Cause and Effect*). Handscroll; ink and colors on paper. 45.6x10.3 inches. 8th century.



Figure 3.2: Detail of *E-inga-kyō* (*The Illustrated Sutra of Cause and Effect*). Handscroll; ink and colors on paper. 8th century.

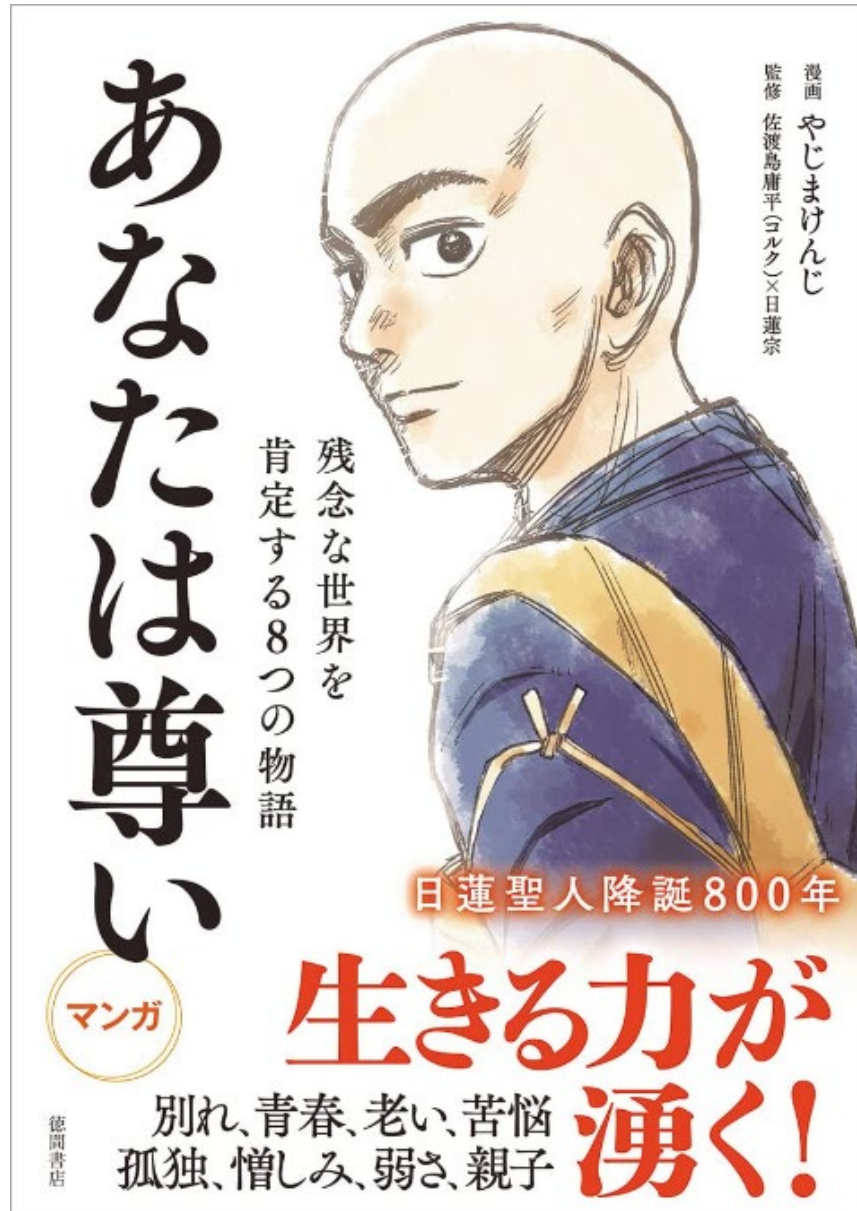
Figure 3.3: *You are Precious*, cover.



Figure 3.4: *You are Precious*, page 226.



Figure 3.5: *You are Precious*, page 227.



Figure 3.6: *You are Precious*, page 228.



Figure 3.7: *You are Precious*, page 229.



Figure 3.8: *You are Precious*, page 230-231.



Figure 3.9: *You are Precious*, page 232.