

Distorting the History of the Kanazawa Persecution

In its efforts to promote pilgrimage, the priesthood also misrepresents an event known in the history of the Fuji school as the Kanazawa Persecution. During the eighteenth century, believers in Kanazawa sincerely practiced and spread Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism despite oppression by the local government. It is said that some believers from Kanazawa visited the head temple secretly at night when their lord's traveling party passed through the Fuji area on their way to and from Edo (present-day Tokyo). The priesthood writes: "Even now, the story of the 'Tozan of Stealth' is recounted at Myoki-ji temple in Kanazawa. We must store the thought deep in our hearts that it is this kind of noble faith, with the Head Temple as the source, which builds the path to our future and eternal attainment of Buddhahood."^{29,30}

What the priesthood does not tell us about the Kanazawa Persecution is the fact that the priesthood extended practically no support to lay believers during the persecution. In 1727, the twenty-eighth high priest, Nissho, sent a

● KEY POINTS:

- (1) **Fact:** Not a single priest at Taiseki-ji suffered during the 18th-century Kanazawa Persecution while many lay believers were severely punished.
- (2) **Myth:** It is a myth fabricated by the priesthood that Taiseki-ji extended its support for the Kanazawa believers throughout the persecution. Nichiko Hori, the 59th high priest and renowned historian of Nichiren Buddhism, said that the head temple withheld its support because it was afraid of persecution.

request to the governor of Kanazawa asking for permission to build a temple in the area, but it was denied. Nissho could have appealed the governor's decision to the shogunate government, but decided against it.

From then on, the lay believers of Kanazawa were left on their own, and apparently the priesthood did not wish to have anything to do with them. As Nichiko

A lake at renowned Kenrokuen Garden in Kanazawa, Japan, where many lay believers of Nichiren Buddhism suffered persecution under the powerful provincial government in the eighteenth century. During the persecution, the believers were left on their own without support from the head temple Taiseki-ji. As a result, this once-energetic lay movement eventually died out.

Hori, the fifty-ninth high priest and renowned historian of Nichiren Buddhism, comments on the probable reason why Taiseki-ji did not appeal the governor's decision: "One of the reasons why Taiseki-ji did not act on the last resort was that it was concerned about bringing danger to itself in dealing with the powerful provincial government."³¹

Deserted by the priests from whom they expected to receive encouragement and support, the Kanazawa believers, nevertheless, continued to seek the Daishonin's teaching. This is the truth behind what the priesthood calls the pilgrimage of "stealth" by Kanazawa believers.

In the end, five believers were imprisoned, and one of them died in confinement; fourteen were placed under house arrest; and many were harshly interrogated. No priest at the head temple was persecuted in connection with these events. Abandoned by the priesthood, the lay movement in the area eventually died out. (For more details, please see *The Untold History of the Fuji School*, pp. 79–83.) ■



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