

The Receipt of New Fiefs



I HAVE received your one thousand coins. So your lord has granted you new fiefs! I cannot think it to be true; it is so marvelous that I wonder if it is a dream. I hardly know what to say in reply.

The reason is that people in Japan and throughout Kamakura, and even those in your lord's service, including the scions of his clan, disapproved of you because of your belief in Nichiren's teaching. So I marvel at your receiving the new fiefs. And I marvel at the fact that you are still in your lord's clan at all. Moreover, whenever your lord offered to grant you an estate, you invariably declined to accept it.¹ How strange your fellow samurai must have thought your refusals, how outrageous they must have seemed to your lord!

So I was anxious about how you would fare this time, and in addition, I learned that dozens of your fellow clansmen had slandered you to your lord. I therefore thought you could not possibly obtain a fief. I was concerned because your situation was so overwhelming. Moreover, even your own brothers had abandoned you. And yet, in spite of all this, you have been shown such favor. No honor could be greater than this.

You say that your new domains occupy an area three times the size of Tono'oka.² There is a man from the

province of Sado staying here now who knows that area well. He tells me that, of the three villages, the one called Ikada³ is best. Although its fields and paddies are few, its profits are immeasurable. Two sites each yield an annual harvest worth one million coins in land tax; another site, three hundred thousand coins. Such, he says, are their merits.

In any event, you had been forsaken by your fellow samurai and by the people close to you, and they mocked you for their own amusement. Under the circumstances, an official letter granting you any sort of fief, even one inferior to Tono'oka, would have been welcome. Yet, as it turned out, your new domains are three times as large. No matter how poor these estates might be, avoid complaining of it, either to others or to your lord. If you say, "They are excellent, excellent lands," your lord may add to your fiefs again. But if you say things like, "The lands are poor," or "There are no profits," you could very well be forsaken by both heaven and other people. You should bear this in mind.

King Ajatashatru was a worthy man, but because he killed his own father, immediately heaven should have abandoned him and the earth split open to swallow him up. However, because of the merit his father, the murdered king, had gained by making five hundred

cartloads of offerings to the Buddha every day for the space of several years, and because of the merit he himself would later gain by becoming a supporter of the Lotus Sutra, it was difficult for heaven to abandon him, and the earth remained whole. In the end, he avoided falling into hell and became a Buddha.

Your case is similar to his. You were forsaken by your brothers, resented by your fellow samurai, persecuted by the scions of the clan, and hated by people throughout Japan. Yet, on the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), between the hours of the rat and the ox (11:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M.),⁴ when I had incurred the wrath of the government authorities, you accompanied me from Kamakura to Echi in Sagami Province, holding fast to my horse's reins. Since you thus proved yourself to be the foremost ally of the Lotus Sutra in all of Jambudvīpa, no doubt the heavenly gods Brahma and Shakra have found it difficult to forsake you.

The same is true of your attaining Buddhahood. No matter what grave offenses you might have committed, because you did not turn against the Lotus Sutra, but showed your devotion by accompanying me, you will surely become a Buddha. Yours is like the case of King Possessor of Virtue, who gave his life to save the monk Realization of Virtue and became Shakyamuni Buddha. Faith in the Lotus Sutra

acts as a prayer [to attain Buddhahood]. Strengthen your resolve to seek the way all the more and achieve Buddhahood in this lifetime.

No more gratifying thing has ever happened to any member of your lord's clan, whether priest or layman. When I say this, it may seem as if it is a desire of the present existence, but for ordinary people, that too is only natural, and moreover, a way exists to become a Buddha even without eradicating desires. Explaining the heart of the Lotus Sutra, the Universal Worthy Sutra says, "Without either cutting off earthly desires or separating themselves from the five desires. . ."⁵ And the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai's *Great Concentration and Insight* reads, "Earthly desires are enlightenment; the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana." Explaining how the Lotus Sutra surpasses all the rest of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says, "[The Lotus Sutra is] like a great physician who can change poison into medicine." This passage means that while a lesser physician cures illness with medicine, a great physician cures grave illness with virulent poison.

Nichiren

The tenth month of the first year of Koan (1278), cyclical sign *tsuchinoetora*

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to Shijo Kingo. Lord Ema, whom Shijo Kingo served, had for some time opposed his retainer's belief in the Lotus Sutra and even harassed him by, for example, threatening to transfer him to a

remote province unless he abandoned his faith. Kingo's fellow samurai also treated him with hostility, and for a time it appeared that he might be ousted from the clan and lose his livelihood altogether. Kingo endured several years of

adversity until finally, in 1277, his circumstances changed for the better. This improvement came about partially because in his capacity as a physician he was able to cure Lord Ema of a serious illness. Around the first month of 1278 he was permitted to accompany his lord on official errands. And in the tenth month, when this letter was written, Kingo was granted no less than three new fiefs.

Notes

1. The Daishonin is referring to the fact that, whenever Shijo Kingo was ordered to move to a new estate, he refused to comply because the proposed transfer was actually an unreasonable demotion.
2. An area located in Igara Village of Shimoina District in Shinano Province (present-day Nagano Prefecture) and held in fief by Shijo Kingo.
3. Details unknown. From the text, Ikada appears to be located on Sado Island.

From the content of this letter, however, it appears that he was not altogether pleased with what he had received. The new estates are thought to have been located on Sado Island or in some other remote area, which may have caused his dissatisfaction. In this letter, the Daishonin admonishes him against such feelings and urges him instead to appreciate the fact that circumstances are now improving.

4. This refers to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. After the failed attempt to behead him at Tatsunokuchi, the Daishonin was held in custody at Homma Rokuro Saemon's estate at Echi for one month. On the tenth day of the tenth month he was taken to Sado Island.
5. These words are followed by the phrase "they can purify all their senses and wipe away all their offenses."