

The Properties of Rice



IT is also this way with rice. While the rice itself is the same, rice that nourishes a slanderer of the Law supports the life of one who destroys the seeds of Buddhahood, enabling him to become a more powerful enemy than ever. And yet, does it not sustain his life so that he will in the end be won over to the Lotus Sutra? On the other hand, rice that nourishes the votary of the Lotus Sutra must be rice of the utmost compassion, because it benefits all living beings. This is what is meant by the Buddha's relics turning into rice. I cannot express my joy at your having

sent a messenger all the way here at such a time. Can it be that Shakyamuni Buddha or the Bodhisattvas of the Earth have entered into your body?

I entrust you with the propagation of Buddhism in your province. It is stated that "the seeds of Buddhahood sprout as a result of conditions, and for this reason they preach the single vehicle."¹ If Jibu-bo, Shimotsuke-bo,² or the others should arrive, I will send them without delay. And if you have an opportunity to see Matsuno,³ please carefully explain what I have said.



Background

Only a fragment of this letter remains, and its recipient and the date of its writing are not known. It was once thought to represent the concluding portion of *The True Aspect of All Phenomena*, written on Sado Island in the fifth month of 1273, but in view of its style and content it is now considered to be a fragment of a letter written after Nichiren Daishonin moved to Mount Minobu. Likewise, it is thought that it may have been sent to the lay priest Takahashi Rokuro Hyoe, who

lived at Kajima in Fuji District of Suruga Province. Takahashi's wife was Nikko Shonin's aunt, and Takahashi and his family appear to have actively supported the propagation movement in the Fuji area.

It is worthy of note that, in closing, the Daishonin entrusts the letter's recipient with the responsibility for propagation in his province, suggesting that the recipient had strong faith and was a leading figure among the believers in that area.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

2. Jibu-bo was a follower of Nichiren Daishonin. He was originally a Tendai priest at Shijuku-in temple in Suruga Province. Shimotsuke-bo is another name for Nishu, who was a priest at Ryusen-ji, a temple of the Tendai school in Atsuhara in Fuji District of Suruga Province, but was converted by Nikko Shonin. Because he in

turn had helped convert many farmers, he incurred the wrath of the temple's deputy chief priest, Gyochi, whose opposition to the Daishonin's teachings eventually led to the Atsuhara Persecution.

3. Matsuno Rokuro Saemon, a follower of Nichiren Daishonin and the maternal grandfather of Nanjo Tokimitsu.