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On Treasure

I have received the one thousand coins, one sack of salt, one sack of taros, and some ginger that you took the trouble to have a messenger bring.

In the heat, water is considered a treasure; in the cold, fire is. In a famine, rice is considered a treasure; in a war, weapons are. At sea, ships are seen as treasure; in the mountains, horses are. In the regions of Musashi and Shimosa, stone is regarded as a treasure. But here deep in the mountains, taros and salt from the sea are held to be treasures. Even though we have bamboo shoots and mushrooms, without salt they taste like dirt. And with regard to gold, both the ruler and the people consider it a treasure. It is similar to rice, which is the life of all living beings.

The same may also be said of coins. In China there is a mountain called Copper Mountain. Because coins come from that mountain, each coin makes the journey here across three thousand miles of sea. Everyone thinks of them as jewels. And you have presented these to the Lotus Sutra.

A man named Mahānāma changed rocks into gems simply by taking them up in his hands. King Golden Grains turned sand into gold. The Lotus Sutra turns plants and trees into Buddhas, so how much truer must this be of human beings with minds? The Lotus Sutra turns people of the two vehicles, who have scorched their seeds of Buddhism, into Buddhas. How much truer, then, must this be of people whose seeds are alive? The Lotus Sutra turns icchantikas, or people of incorrigible disbelief, into Buddhas. How much truer, then, must this be of those who believe?

It is impossible to say all that I wish. I will definitely write again.

With my deep respect,

Nichiren

The eighth day of the eighth month

Reply to Ueno

Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter on the eighth day of the eighth month in 1279 at Minobu to Nanjō Tokimitsu. The Daishonin praises Tokimitsu for his offerings to the Lotus Sutra, saying that deep in the mountains where he is, the items such as salt and taros that Tokimitsu has sent are regarded as valu-
able treasure. The coins Tokimitsu sent he compares to jewels. Since the Lotus Sutra can turn even plants and trees and persons of incorrigible disbelief into Buddhas, he says, there can be no doubt about the Buddhahood of a believer.

Notes

1. One of the five ascetics who heard Shakyamuni Buddha's first sermon and became his first converts. The Increasing by One Āgama Sutra depicts him as excelling in supernatural powers. Descriptions of turning rocks into gems are found in Ts'ung-i's *Supplement to the Three Major Works on the Lotus Sutra*.

2. Little is known about King Golden Grains. The source of this account of turning sand into gold is also unknown.