

Finding a Copy of “The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra”



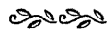
YESTERDAY I was summoned through a messenger from the former governor of Musashi¹ to a meeting with Nembutsu priests. I wonder if the messenger could also have been from Jūrō.² I need to consult a copy of *The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra* in private. Whatever it may

take to do so, please find me a copy.

Nichiren

The fourteenth day of the tenth month

To the priest Musashi-kō



Background

This letter to Musashi-kō, about whom no details are known, is dated the fourteenth day of the tenth month and is thought to have been written in 1259. Nichiren Daishonin asks Musashi-kō for a copy of *The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra*. T’an-luan, a Chinese patriarch of the Pure Land school, used this work by Nāgārjuna in defining the Nembutsu as the “easy-to-practice way.” Hōnen, founder of the same school in Japan, went further by relegating the Lotus Sutra to the “difficult-to-practice way” and rejecting it. The Daishonin must have regarded the commentary as essential in making clear the error of Hōnen’s assertions. The following is thought to be Musashi-kō’s reply to the Daishonin’s request.

I have sent you fourteen volumes of *The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra*. I looked for the other volume but was unable to find it. When you have finished, please return them to me as soon as possible. I intend by all means to go listen to your preaching myself. The talk you gave yesterday was as truly admirable as the blessings to be gained by the fiftieth person who hears the Lotus Sutra and responds with joy. And I would be pleased to receive the pair of trousers. My salutations,

With my deep respect.

The eleventh day of the tenth month

To Āchārya Nichiren

The Daishonin’s letter is dated the fourteenth day of the tenth month, and

this reply, the eleventh day of the tenth month. In 1259 there were two tenth months in the lunar calendar, the second an intercalary month, one added periodically to the calendar to adjust for the length of the year. It is therefore thought that the reply was writ-

ten in the intercalary tenth month. It is also surmised that the Daishonin had offered to send a gift of trousers as thanks for the loan of a valuable text, and that is why Musashi-kō refers to the trousers here.

Notes

1. The former governor of Musashi, or Musashi Province, is thought to refer to Hōjō Tomonao. Musashi Province was adjacent to Sagami Province, where Kama-

kura, the seat of government, was located. The post of governor of Musashi was generally held by a high-ranking official.

2. Little is known about Jūrō.