

The Domain of Shakyamuni



[I]N the Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni Buddha says], “But now this threefold world is all my domain, and the living beings in it are all my children.”¹ If we go by this passage in the sutra, then the threefold world is all the realm of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni.

And in the “Life Span” chapter he says, “Ever since then I have been constantly in this saḥā world.” This means that from a time in the remote past described as numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago down to the present, this saḥā world has been the land in which Bodhisattva Shakyamuni reigns.

Moreover, one hundred years after the Buddha entered nirvana, there was

a ruler named Ashoka the Great, and three times he entrusted this southern continent of Jambudvīpa to the care of the Buddhist monks.

And in the great land of Japan, which is in the southern continent of Jambudvīpa, the Chinese priest known as the Great Teacher Nan-yüeh was reborn as Prince Jōgū [Shōtoku], the crown prince of this country of Japan, and in time became its ruler.²

Therefore we know that all the rulers of Japan from the time of Prince Shōtoku on have been heirs of the Great Teacher Nan-yüeh. And all the rulers from Emperor Kammu on down, as well as Mountain King³ . . .



Background

This is a fragment of a letter whose date and recipient are unknown. Nichiren Daishonin quotes the “Simile and Parable” (3rd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra to make clear that the threefold world is all the domain of Shakyamuni Buddha. Next, he quotes the “Life Span” (16th) chapter, where the Buddha states that since the time he originally attained enlightenment countless kalpas in the past, he has been in this

saḥā world, preaching the Law and converting living beings. After the Buddha’s death, he says, King Ashoka entrusted the continent of Jambudvīpa to Buddhist monks. Finally, he refers to Prince Shōtoku as the reincarnation of the Great Teacher Nan-yüeh of China, and associates Japanese emperors with Nan-yüeh’s heirs. Mountain King is the patron deity of Mount Hiei, the center of the Tendai school.

In essence, the Daishonin points to the saḥā world as the domain of Shakyamuni Buddha and to the traditional and spiritual connection between the land of Japan and the Lotus Sutra. This

suggests a refutation of the Pure Land school, which looked to Amida Buddha, who dwelled in another land, for salvation.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
2. Though Prince Shōtoku never ascended the imperial throne, he was appointed to the office of regent by Empress Suiko (r. 593–628), who delegated to him all powers of governance.
3. Emperor Kammu (r. 781–806) is the

fiftieth sovereign, and during his reign Dengyō revealed and upheld the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. Mountain King is the name of the main god of the shrine who is revered as the guardian deity of Mount Hiei and the Tendai school.