Plain Words on the Pure Land Way

Sayings of the Wandering Monks of Medieval Japan

Translated by Dennis Hirota

"Those who seek the world beyond abide in the thought that they are out on a journey.

Though you travel to the limits of cloud or sea, as long as you have physical existence, you cannot do without the bare essentials of food, clothing, and shelter. Nevertheless, whether you are attached to them or not makes all the difference. When you are constantly aware that you have but one night's lodging, not a permanent dwelling, nothing can obstruct your saying of the nembutsu."

Plain Words on the Pure Land Way is a collection of sayings that guided the lives of wandering monks in medieval Japan. Long appreciated for their incisiveness and immediacy, these sayings provide a vivid glimpse into the thought and experience of people who dedicated themselves to the *nembutsu*—the utterance of the Name of Amida Buddha—during the tumultuous period when it first emerged as a way to enlightenment available to all.

This collection is highly regarded not only as a document revealing the spirit of the nascent Pure Land path before the rigid division into doctrinal schools, but also as an important example of the literature of the recluse's thatched hut (*sōan bungaku*) and of Buddhist writings in the vernacular (*kana hōgo*). Japanese text included.

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Cover Illustration

A *nembutsu hijiri* or wandering monk spreading the teaching of Amida Buddha. Such men abandoned worldly pursuits, shaved their heads, and donned monk's robes, but often were not affiliated with any particular temple and not recognized by the state as authorized, ordained monks. They carried on their study and practice in small, isolated groups and spread the Dharma among the common people.

In the illustration, plain robes and bare feet indicate a commitment to a life of poverty; the staff, a mendicant existence without settled dwelling. The staff is tipped with deer antlers, perhaps a survival from earlier traditions when *hijiri* were "holy men" who gained magical powers through austerities in the mountains. Deer were regarded as sacred messengers of the gods and their antlers and skins were thought to possess supernatural properties (Shibusawa Keizō, ed., *Nihon jōmin seikatsu ebiki*, Tokyo, 1968, vol. 5, pp. 39, 87).

At his chest is a gong-like bell, which was rhymically struck to accompany the chanting of Amida's Name. Following in the tradition of Kūya, the "hijiri of the marketplace," he may also have led dancing recitation (*odori nembutsu*) with this bell in villages and city streets. At his shoulder is an oversize rosary, perhaps jointly used in group nembutsu chant.

The articles at his waist are uncertain. One may be a bamboo tube for stick incense. The other may be a booklet in which to keep a register of people who promised to recite the nembutsu a certain number of times daily; this was a feature of *yūzū-nembutsu* practice. Or, it may simply be a handkerchief, which Ippen in his *Record*, for example, lists among the twelve "tools" or possessions allowed a follower.

This figure, from a biographical handscroll of Hōnen (*Hōnen Shōnin eden*, XVII, 4), may depict the lad Kyōrenja (section 51) at the age of twelve, on his way to a memorial service in Kyoto on the anniversary of Hōnen's death. In a sermon on that occasion, Hōnen's disciple Seikaku announced that any who doubted his explanation of the teaching should verify it with Shōkō, another prominent disciple dwelling in distant Kyushu. Kyōrenja, without even returning to his hut, immediately set off to see Shōkō, demonstrating the total dedication to the Way that was the ideal of the *hijiri*.

Plain Words on the Pure Land Way

Chill autumn
air:
    Not even
a crock for
salted bran.

aki no iro
nuka-miso tsubo mo
nakarikeri.

BASHŌ

Plain Words on the Pure Land Way

SAYINGS OF THE WANDERING MONKS OF MEDIEVAL JAPAN

A Translation of Ichigon Hōdan

by Dennis Hirota

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Kyoto

Plain Words on the Pure Land Way appeared in *The Eastern Buddhist*, IX, 2 (October, 1976) and X, 1 (May, 1977), in an earlier version, under the title "Ichigon Hōdan." It is published in book form under the auspices of the Ryukoku University Translation Center and the Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley, and is included in the Institute of Buddhist Studies Publication Series.

Distributed by:

The Buddhist Bookstore
1710 Octavia Street
San Francisco, California 94109

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Shichijo Omiya
Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto 600
Japan

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Cover design: Yoko Yoshikawa

Printed in Japan
by Komiyama Printing Co., Tokyo

EPIGRAPH

Haiku inscribed by Bashō on a portrait of Kenkō, author of *Essays in Idleness*, to be hung in the dwelling of a disciple. It includes an allusion to *Plain Words*, section 67, which Kenkō quotes in his *Essays*.

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Introduction

I

COLLECTED HERE are the words of recluses and wanderers—men in search of paths to Buddhahood amid ashes of war and great turbulence in their society. Abandoning worldly ambitions, they joined a tradition of fugitives and outsiders. Often unsanctioned by established temples and unrecognized by the state, they depended for guidance not on scriptural texts and the old scholasticism, but on predecessors who, like themselves, were impelled above all by the fervor of their quest. Legends of forerunners and words of companions lit their way; to such plain counsel as gathered here—on aspiration and practice, provisions and shelter, sickness and death—they turned for advice in their day-to-day hardships, for the tuning of nerve, and for all they needed to know of the compassionate power of the Dharma.

The path these men tread opened forth from the Pure Land teaching, which is often regarded as "popular Buddhism," devotional activity accommodated to the common people. For four centuries after its introduction into Japan, however, it remained the province of monks performing rites in official temples and the court nobility seeking peace for the dead. When it finally developed its potential as an effective form of Māhāyana Buddhism in the Kamakura period (1185–1333), it did so in intimate relation with these wandering monks, who rejected any use of Buddhism for temporal ends and insisted on genuine aspiration for enlightenment.

Pure Land thought gave direction to a long though amorphous and eclectic tradition of "holy men" (*hijiri*) in Japan,[1] and conversely, the hermits and wanderers who emerged in numbers from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries—with their strength of purpose and a poverty shared with the common people—provided the vehicle by which Pure Land Buddhism developed and spread as an indigenous path to awakening.

Plain Words on the Pure Land Way

Plain Words on the Pure Land Way (*Ichigon hōdan*, literally "one word talks fragrant [with Dharma]") includes over 150 brief statements in the form of personal instruction, anecdote, and dialogue. Many of the sections are anonymous, but the names of more than forty monks are also recorded. It was compiled at the close of the remarkable period in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when various new forms of Buddhism emerged, including the traditions formalized as Pure Land (Jōdo, Shin, and Ji), Nichiren, and Zen (Rinzai, Sōtō). Most of the sayings stem precisely from this era of unparalleled vigor and creativity. Hōnen was the first of the new founders, and at the heart of the path in *Plain Words* is his teaching that those who "just say the Name" of Amida Buddha—Namu-amida-butsu—will attain birth in the realm of Amida's enlightenment, the Pure Land.

The depiction of Buddhist practice in *Plain Words* is striking for several reasons. First, the work exhibits a broad sense of tradition, rooting the Pure Land movement in the legacy of the wandering monks by embracing within its past such figures as Gyōgi of the eighth century and Saichō and Kūkai, the founders of the Heian-period Buddhism. In fact, it places native sources rather than the texts and schools from the Asian continent at its foundations, invoking in its opening section a revelation delivered at the Great Shrine at Ise, since early times the most sacred place of worship in the country. Further, out of this historical awareness, it goes on to lament the degeneration of

reclusive practice and foreshadows the course the tradition was later to take.

Above all, however, *Plain Words* conveys with immediacy the vital spirit of the wandering monks during the Kamakura period, their resolution and tough-minded practicality. It is said that two streams of Pure Land practice are brought together in *Plain Words*, that of Hōnen's sole practice of saying of Name of Amida (*senju nembutsu*) and that of a Shingon-influenced nembutsu practice spread by the *Kōya hijiri*—reclusive or itinerant monks based on Mount Kōya. From the perspective of the work itself, however, it may be more accurate to say that these two streams are grasped together as a single tradition of wholehearted aspiration for enlightenment, and that this breadth of vision reflects the diversity and raw energy of the times, before the fine doctrinal distinctions of the various Pure Land schools solidified.

The compiler of *Plain Words* has not been identified. No preface or editorial note is attached, and nothing in the work can be attributed to the compiler's hand with certainty. He was no doubt a practicer of the Pure Land path, and probably a monk like almost all of the figures he quotes. Further, he clearly possessed considerable literary talent.[2] Today, most readers first encounter the work in the classic *Essays in Idleness* (c. 1333) by the monk Kenkō, who responded to the trenchant thought and expression of *Plain Words* by quoting several sections from memory.[3] The concreteness of its language evokes the ambiance of practice, with talk of backpacks, paper robes, and meals of gruel or of bean paste heated on leaves. Images drawn from archery suggest the warrior background of many of the monks, and homely details of earthenware, broken walls, and the resilience of bamboo indicate a closeness to daily life.

Further, numerous scenes vividly convey the extremity of spirit that the aspirants of the times experienced. We find Shunjō in nocturnal vigil before the chapel where Kūkai is enshrined,

when a voicing of the nembutsu suddenly emerges from it and pierces him to the quick (section 2). Or a young court lady disguised as a priestess beats a drum before a deserted shrine, crying out in the night for salvation (section 78).

Plain Words is an example of *kana hōgo*—writings on the Dharma in the venacular rather than Chinese, the language of learning and of Buddhism. Such writings were an innovation closely associated with the penetration of the teaching into the lives of the common people. The collection not only typifies the genre, but gives direct expression to its moving spirit in the repeated admonitions again scholarship for its own sake. This attitude does not represent a mere evasion of the dangers of attachment; at work is a demand for directness and integrity in facing the problem of transcending birth-and-death, and at its core is the insight that true resolve is not a matter of ordinary learning.

At the heart of the nembutsu teaching in *Plain Words* lies a paradox in which our ordinary judgments and perspectives are brusquely uprooted and overturned. People of the nembutsu are "neither monk nor yet worldly" (section 98); they know that "to speak deeply about the meaning of the nembutsu is, on the contrary, a sign of shallowness" (99) and that they are "impeded by their own virtue" (25). In Hōnen's phrase, which echoes in the works of his disciples, "The way to say the nembutsu lies in having no 'way'" (100). The masters in *Plain Words* sought a language as they sought the life of the nembutsu, and their terse phrases represent, more than simplicity of doctrine, a refusal to be satisfied with an easy and insular knowledge. Thus, they confront us still with a probing test of religious life.

II The Traditions in *Plain Words*

As noted before, various strands of Buddhist practice and tradition are drawn together in *Plain Words*. It may be helpful, therefore, to sketch some of the chief elements that find their

way into the work. Here we will consider the development of official and unofficial Buddhism in the Nara period (seventh and eighth centuries); the institutionalization of mountain Buddhism in the ninth century; the spread of nembutsu chant as a standard practice on Mount Hiei and among lay people in the tenth century, when the court culture was reaching its zenith but already giving rise to disaffection among the lower aristocracy; and the emergence of large numbers of wandering monks engaging in Pure Land practices in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when the country passed through a violent transition toward a feudal society. These developments set the stage for the appearance of Hōnen and other figures in *Plain Words* from the end of the twelfth century.

Official and Unofficial Buddhism

The date for the introduction of Buddhism into Japan is often set at 538, when King Seong Myong of Paikche on the Korean peninsula sent an envoy with a gilt statue of Śākyamuni and copies of sutras. It is clear, however, that Buddhist beliefs and practices were already known through immigrants from the Asian mainland, and that these beliefs had fused with Taoist and native shamanistic practices. From the very beginning, then, Buddhism tended to flow in two distinct streams—that of an official religion functioning to enhance and protect the state, and that of an underground tradition associated with "holy men" who undertook disciplines and austerities in the mountains.

State Buddhism

The envoy from the Korean peninsula was followed by others during the sixth century, and after political struggle among the leading clans over whether to admit the foreign religion, Buddhism was formally accepted by the court, though not adopted exclusively. Prince Shōtoku (574–621), in his "Seventeen Article

Constitution" of 604, declares that the people should "revere the Three Treasures." A program of temple construction and training of clergy was instituted, and by 624 a census showed that there were forty-six temples populated by over eight hundred monks and five hundred nuns. Many of these temples were built by powerful clans and had as their chief activity the worship of ancestors and offering of prayers for the dead. The sponsorship of the court was also directed toward temporal benefits, and monks were charged with making prayers for rain and warding off sickness. Thus, in their study and performance of rites and ceremonies, the clergy functioned as government officers, and their duty to the safekeeping and prosperity of the country superceded any personal aspirations for enlightenment.

With the strengthening of the central government through the adoption of the Chinese administrative system (Taika Reform of 645), a bureau was organized to manage religious affairs, and state control of temples became fixed. Clan temples were encompassed within this system, and court-appointed clerical offices were established to administer temple lands and possessions and oversee the activities of monks and nuns. Ordination required government authorization, and clergy were supported not by donations from devotees, but directly by the court or the aristocratic clans.

The conduct of monks and nuns was carefully regulated both by minute precepts governing daily life and by strict public statutes. In 702, extensive new codes of law (*Taihōryō*) prohibited not only such non-Buddhist practices as fortunetelling and healing through sorcery, divination, or Taoist spells, but even the establishment of gathering places outside of temples and propagation in society. Despite exhortation in the sutras to spread the Dharma, priestly activities were confined to temples and monasteries, and contact with the common people was regarded as unnecessary and potentially threatening to the bureacratic system. Court appointment of clerics and restriction

of propagational activity remained hallmarks of official policy even in the Kamakura period, when the Pure Land and Nichiren schools underwent repeated state persecution.

In 710, the capital was moved to Nara. Powerful temples quickly relocated within the city precincts, and during the seven decades that the capital remained there, temple activity flourished, backed by the government and economically supported by large land holdings throughout the country. A program to construct temples in every province was instituted, and Nara's Tōdaiji became their headquarters. Eminent monks capable of study abroad appeared and, together with monks from China and even India, established the six officially recognized schools—essentially scholastic traditions—of the Nara period.

The Counter-Tradition

The 702 codes also forbid monks and nuns from undertaking unauthorized practice in secluded mountains and forests, but a repetition of such regulations in 718 indicates that violation was common. The government feared the use of isolated areas to build private followings and develop staging areas for insurrection. Practice in the mountains, however, had been widely accepted since ancient times as an initial activity for religious aspirants. Mountains were considered sacred, the abode of gods, and both Buddhists and Taoists retired to them to attain spiritual perfection and cultivate supernatural powers. The authorities, while wary of such activity, hoped to utilize the powers gained, so while prohibiting monks from Taoist practices, allowed them to employ Buddhist incantation for healing and exorcism. Mountain training centers were therefore established, and novices with special permission could undertake practices under a watchful government eye.

Thus, while most of the regular, fully ordained monks lived in the great urban temples, there were in addition two other categories of Buddhist aspirant. People belonging to these

categories were sometimes officially recognized, but many others were private, unauthorized practicers. One category was the *ubasoku* (Sk. *upāsaka*, "lay practicer") who, though not shaving his head or wearing robes like a monk, performed practices of varying levels in the mountains. Some were affiliated with temples, received material aid from the state, and would be ordained in the future, but others were not recognized, and carried on activities among the common people, from whom they obtained support.

There were also *shami* (Sk. *śrāmaṇera*, "novice"), who underwent initial ordination, shaved their heads, and wore robes and surplices. They were exempted from conscripted labor like regular monks. After some years of practice in the mountains they might, upon passing further government review, receive the complete 250 precepts and be ordained as full-fledged monks (*biku*, Sk. *bhikṣu*). They would then take a position in one of the main temples of the Nara area or a state temple in the countryside. Toward the close of the Nara period, there also appeared increasing numbers of self-proclaimed *shami* who shaved their heads without government authorization.

There are several outstanding examples of religious practicers outside of the bureaucratic system during this period. One is the *ubasoku* En no Ozunu (634?–701), who is regarded in the traditions of Shugendō—the way of attaining supernatural powers through austerities in the mountains—as their founder. Originally of a family of Shintō priests, he performed practices for over thirty years on the sacred mountain Katsuragi. His disciplines stemmed chiefly from Buddhist and Taoist traditions, fused with native beliefs and Shintō elements; later, Shugendō developed from such practices with strong influence from esoteric Buddhism. It is said that he gained power over natural forces and could control gods through Buddhist incantations. In 699, he was banished by the authorities for seeking to manipulate people through his magical powers.

Another influential figure was Gyōgi (670–749; section 102), a novice (*shami*) of the Nara temple Yakushiji. He also carried on practices in the mountains, then instead of assuming a post in a temple, began to travel throughout the country, spreading the teaching and undertaking many public works projects to relieve the suffering of the ordinary people. He is said to have built irrigation canals and bridges, and also public shelters for people journeying to fulfill their labor obligations. He attracted many followers and established a number of *dōjō* or seminaries, but as an outsider he was watched by the authorities, who attempted to suppress his activities. Finally, however, when the government had difficulties completing the huge temple Tōdaiji, he was commissioned to collect contributions for it and elevated to high clerical rank.

En no Ozunu and Gyōgi together well represent the two major faces of the tradition of the outsider taking shape in the Nara period—mountain practice to gain spiritual powers and works among the people to manifest the Buddhist ideal of compassion.

Mountain Buddhism in the Heian Period

As the Nara temples prospered, monks emerged who sought to influence temporal affairs. The most conspicuous was Dōkyō, who gained the attentions of the empress and had himself appointed to a succession of lofty posts, finally conspiring to become emperor. His ambitions were thwarted, and after the death of the empress he was quickly banished. Nevertheless, his example underscored the potential threat of powerful temples to the imperial family, and the next emperor resolved to relocate the capital. In 784 it was moved to Nagaoka, and then in 793 to the basin area of present Kyoto, where a new capital named Heian-kyō was built.

Early in the Heian period (794–1185), two additional schools of Buddhism, freshly introduced by monks who had studied in China, were officially recognized. These schools, Tendai and

Shingon, quickly became the dominant forms of Buddhism in the new capital, patronized by the imperial court and the aristocratic clans. Like the Nara schools, they remained distant from the common people; nevertheless, their founders had emerged from the earlier tradition of outsiders, and in Heian Buddhism, the aspect of mountain practice in this tradition became institutionalized as official Buddhism: the central temples, which previously had occupied the urban plains, themselves moved to the mountains. The Tendai school was established on Mount Hiei overlooking Kyoto from the northeast, and Shingon on Mount Kōya, several days' journey south in Wakayama.

Two basic motives underlay this change in locale. First, Heian Buddhism was pervaded by esoteric thought, which, as we have seen, was strongly associated with practice on sacred mountains. This was true not only of Shingon, a form of orally-transmitted Tantric Buddhism, but also of Tendai, which included programs both of Tendai meditation and of esoteric practices belonging to the same tradition as Shingon. These practices were characterized by the use of manual postures or gestures (*mudrā*), repetitive incantation of sacred syllables or verbal formulas (*mantra*), and meditative exercises focusing on Buddhas and bodhisattvas depicted in intricate patterns (*maṇḍala*), all aimed to bring the practicer into unity with Buddha or true reality. The sense of mystery and magical power imparted by these practices and the aesthetic qualities of the rituals and the graphic representations of the numerous Buddhas quickly enchanted the aristocracy, and esoteric Buddhism came to be favored at court. The second reason for the move to the mountains was to escape the worldly entanglements into which the temple institutions in the urban areas had fallen; in this, both the court and the new founders were in accord.

Kūkai

With regard to esoteric practice, we see a strong continuity with the earlier traditions of mountain training in Kūkai (774–835), who established the Shingon school. While still a student in the national college, he began entering the mountains to perform Taoist and Buddhist meditative practices, including the chanting of mantras. He probably associated with practicers in mountain temples, and around the age of twenty-four he became an *ubasoku*. Thereafter, until the age of thirty-one, he was an unauthorized wandering ascetic traveling widely and training on various mountains. Wishing to pursue his studies of esoteric Buddhism, he applied to the government and was sent to China in 804, where he received the transmission of the eminent master Hui-kuo (746–805). He returned to Japan in 806 and, in recognition of the importance of the teachings he had received, was summoned to the capital in 809. He quickly won imperial sponsorship, and the following year, was appointed the administrative head (*bettō*) of Tōdaiji. In 816, he was granted Mount Kōya, where he began a monastery that in succeeding centuries grew into an immense complex of temple halls and buildings.

Saichō

The element of withdrawal in the Heian-period mountain Buddhism is seen in Saichō (766–822, section 96), who established the Tendai school. He was fully ordained at Tōdaiji, but soon left to build a rough hermitage on Mount Hiei, shortly before the capital was moved to Kyoto. After several years, he made his hermitage into a temple, which came to be regarded as the protector of the new capital, for it stood in the direction from which evil influences were thought to arise. The young monk came to the notice of the emperor Kammu, who sent him to China to study. In 804, Saichō went to Mount T'ien-t'ai and

brought back texts and traditions of this school as well as of esoteric Buddhism and Zen.

Saichō stressed the necessity of true aspiration for enlightenment (*dōshin*) and firmly rejected impulses to use priestly activities or temple offices to procure material comforts and recognition. *Rules for the Meditation Hut*, a handbook on mountain practice attributed to him, states:

> It is not our lot to possess vast tracts of valuable land or large supplies of food, neither are grand temples managed by monastic officials to be our dwelling.[4]

The practicer with genuine aspiration will live in simplicity in a thatched hut, far from the centers of wealth and power, devoting himself wholly to the Dharma. Saichō's emphasis on an austere life informed by resolution to attain enlightenment became a major element of the *hijiri* ideal in the following centuries.

This aspiration holds, in its negative face, stringent self-reflection and sensitivity to any lingering worldly attachment at the roots of one's thoughts and perceptions. In vows that he wrote shortly after embarking on his reclusive life of practice on Mount Hiei, Saichō speaks of himself as "the most foolish among the foolish, the most deluded among the deluded, a being defiled and shaven [like a hypocritical monk], the lowest Saichō." This same element of self-reflection coupled with the courage of religious resolve is expressed in his conception of the "last age of the Dharma" (*mappō*), in which humankind is seen to exist at an unbridgeable distance from the influence and example of Śākyamuni, and yet precisely because of this to be ripe for the teaching that can lead all swiftly to Buddhahood. A pessimistic view of the conditions of the world may seem to provide an excuse for laxity in religious practice. On the contrary, however, to the latter-day practicers, the formal monastic rules were no longer valid, but one was to follow the spirit of precepts

based on wisdom, in full realization that one's own condition did not allow for the fulfillment of the code of conduct of the Buddha's day. This awareness differs utterly from a sense that precepts themselves had grown slack because the age had declined. The insistence on self-awareness grew even stronger as the Pure Land teaching developed.

The Pure Land Buddhism of Mount Hiei

Both Saichō and Kūkai recognized the importance of imperial support and, as the state bureauracy weakened, the patronage of the aristocracy, and they both acknowledged Buddhism's role as the protector of the nation. As the temples they founded grew in size and wealth in the succeeding centuries, so did a close involvement with secular society, and ecclesiastical institutions became a haven for aristocratic offspring who lacked sufficient backing for advancement at court. Thus, beyond the temple precincts, Buddhism functioned chiefly as landlord or in ritual and ceremonial roles, offering prayers for supernatural aid in alleviating sickness, bringing rain, or counteracting natural calamities.

Mount Hiei, with its close proximity to the capital, came to possess political influence not only though its clerical officers and court activities, but also because of its military potential. The temples required administrative priests to manage their manors in the various provinces, and there grew up a class of monks whose function was identical to the military branches of the nobility. Moreover, numbers of men were attracted to the monasteries as a sanctuary from taxes and conscription labor. Mount Hiei became the home of numerous "soldier monks" under the rule of temple administrators, and shows of force in the capital as well as armed clashes with other temples began to occur from the end of the tenth century.

It is in this setting that the original impulse behind Saichō's mountain hermitage began to reassert itself, this time in close

connection with Pure Land Buddhism. Monks had renounced mundane life, but they found that the mountain monasteries in which they sought refuge had themselves been permeated by the hierarchical structures of the aristocratic society. Repulsed by the ambitions and temporal entanglements that pervaded the temples, they withdrew, renouncing the world anew. Their paths led to secluded valleys apart from the main temples, where they could dedicate themselves to study and practice undisturbed. At the same time, this became a movement back toward the world of society.

Pure Land Practice

Pure Land Buddhism was an integral part of the Chinese T'ien-t'ai meditation teachings that Saichō introduced from China. In basic T'ien-t'ai writings, four types of meditative practices were defined: constant sitting samādhi, constant walking samādhi, half-sitting, half-walking samādhi, and samādhi in which physical posture is not determined ("neither walking nor sitting" only). All of these were extremely demanding forms of practice. Of them, the second and third were particularly important in Japan.

Constant walking samādhi (*jōgyō zammai*) involves the concentration of physical, mental, and verbal activity on Amida Buddha by circumambulating a statue of him for ninety days, day and night without interruption, contemplating his features and his land and reciting his Name. The aim of this practice is not birth into Amida's land in the future, but entrance into the samādhi in which the Buddhas of the universe appear before one, signifying attainment of the realm of enlightenment. Half-walking, half-sitting samādhi (*hangyō hanza zammai*) consists of circumambulation of a statue of a Buddha for seven days constantly repeating incantations (*dhāranī*), followed by three weeks devoted to seated meditation, chanting of the *Lotus Sutra*, and repentance for delusional thoughts and acts.

A hall for meditative practice centering on the *Lotus Sutra* (*Hokezammai dō*) was built during Saichō's lifetime, and after his death, his disciple Ennin (794-864) built a hall for constant walking samādhi with a large golden image of Amida in the center and depictions of the Pure Land on the four walls. Ennin also studied in China, and on Mount Wu-t'ai, he learned a method of melodic chanting of the nembutsu and of the *Smaller Sutra* (*goe nembutsu* or *inzei nembutsu*). He established the performance of this chant as a form of constant or "uninterrupted" (*fudan*) nembutsu, commonly carried on for periods of seven days and nights, in the halls for constant walking samādhi on Mount Hiei. The *Smaller Sutra* itself states:

> Śāriputra, if good men and good women, hearing of Amida Buddha, hold steadfast to the Name for one day, or two days, or three days, or four days, or five days, or six days, or seven days, with wholeness of mind undistracted, then at the time of death, Amida Buddha will appear before them together with a host of sages. Thus, when their lives end, their minds will be free of all invertedness, and they will immediately attain birth in Amida Buddha's land of bliss.

In the tenth century, constant nembutsu employing melodic chant gradually became a standard form of practice in the meditation halls of Mount Hiei and was adopted at other temples, such as Shitennōji in present Osaka. About this time also, utterance of the nembutsu began to spread beyond temple precincts. The nobility, attracted by the aesthetic qualities of Amida worship, built chapels on their estates, and at the opening of the eleventh century, the lady Sei Shonagon included in a list of "enviable people" those "who can afford to build their own Chapel of Meditation and pray there in the evening and at dawn."[5]

Behind these developments lay the activities of such figures of

the outsider tradition as Kūya (or Kōya, 903-972), who taught the chanting of the nembutsu among the populace, and Yoshishige Yasutane (931-1002), a Chinese scholar in the court bureaucracy who eventually took orders on Mount Hiei. Although their names are not mentioned in *Plain Words*, they pioneered modes of nembutsu practice—rhythmic chanting in city streets, and concentrated recitation in small fellowships—that left their marks on the later tradition.

Early Diffusion: Kūya

Kūya, in the first part of his life, displayed the typical traits of the older type of shamanistic practicer who, after performing an amalgam of practices, including austerities in the mountains, emerged among the people as a wandering holy man working to alleviate their suffering by teaching the Dharma, curing sickness, and undertaking public works projects such as clearing roads and digging wells. Further, though he later received full ordination on Mount Hiei, he preferred to maintain his title of *shami*. In part, this reflects a critical stance toward the official constraints on temple activity, but it also expresses a genuine humility characteristic of the later *hijiri*. Although Gyōgi was regarded as a bodhisattva and indeed given this title by the emperor, the men of *Plain Words* refer to themselves as "outcast (*hi-nin*, 'nonhuman') monks," recognizing themselves as the least capable of religious aspirants.

A brief biography by Yoshishige concisely states Kūya's importance: he made the nembutsu popular among the common people. In 938, he appeared on the streets of the capital teaching the chanting of Amida's Name. An early statue depicts him with a small gong at his chest, which he beat to the rhythm of the nembutsu chant, and it is also said that he performed a dancing nembutsu (*odori nembutsu*). Before him, the nembutsu was considered an incantation to pacify the dead and bring them merit; according to Yoshishige, it was rarely performed by lay Buddhist devotees, and ordinary people shunned (*imu*) it because of its associations with death. Kūya, with his ecstatic chanting in the marketplace, his joy in the nembutsu emerging even into dance, spread the Pure Land teaching as a way to salvation among ordinary people for the first time, and he found adherents from the nobility as well as the lowest strata of society. His practice was not an exclusive devotion to the nembutsu; Yoshishige describes meditative practices and such austerities as burning incense on his arm. He is also credited with stopping an epidemic. Nevertheless, as the "*hijiri* of the marketplace" (*ichi no hijiri*), he brought nembutsu chant out from the temple confines.

Nembutsu Fellowships

The second major development in the diffusion of the nembutsu during the tenth century—one which shows beginnings of acceptance among the intellectuals of the lower aristocracy—was the emergence of fellowships of Pure Land practicers. Their formation was probably directly influenced by Kūya, who gathered both monks and laity at a temple he founded in Kyoto. The central figures in the early fellowships were Yoshishige and the Tendai monk Genshin (942-1017, section 1). At his residence in Kyoto, Yoshishige built a small chapel on the western bank of a garden pond—the side nearer the Pure Land—and enshrined a statue of Amida. There he performed devotions morning and evening, calming his mind by thinking on Amida and reading the *Lotus Sutra*. In 964, he formed an association of twenty scholars and twenty Tendai monks that met twice a year, first at the foot of Mount Hiei and later at various temples. The participants heard a sermon on the *Lotus Sutra* in the morning, then composed poetry based on passages from it. From evening, they devoted themselves to recollection of Amida Buddha and recitation of the nembutsu, in which they passed the night.

The use of the *Lotus Sutra* together with the nembutsu

resulted from belief in the power of the sutra to eradicate the effects of wrongdoing in the past. As we have seen, self-reflection and repentance were crucial features of Tendai contemplative practice based on the *Lotus Sutra*. Through coming to perceive clearly, on the basis of true reality, the blind passions and false thoughts motivating one's actions, one could neutralize the harmful effects of one's past karma and avoid evil acts in the future. Even chanting the sutra was taught to hold this power to save one from plunging into hell. By further reciting the nembutsu after extirpating one's past evil, it was thought that one could attain birth in Amida's Pure Land.[6]

Yoshishige's fellowship for mutual support in religious practice gradually came to take on a greater social function, with increasing weight given to poetry composition and banqueting, and after twenty years it disbanded. Two years later, Yoshishige became a monk and joined another, newly-formed fellowship at Yokawa, a secluded area on Mount Hiei. This was the "nembutsu-samādhi fellowship of twenty five" (*nijūgo-zammai e*), started in 986. Genshin drafted the rules for the fellowship, which was clearly intended as a more tightly-knit and religiously-oriented group. Meetings took place at the full moon of every month, and though the same pattern of *Lotus Sutra* study and nembutsu devotion was kept, the poetry composition was done away with. Moreover, the members vowed to care for one another in times of illness, and to give support at death, when it was necessary for the practicer to focus his thoughts on Amida Buddha in order to attain birth in the Pure Land. Members were buried together and their deaths recorded in a register for memorial services. Further, an element of Tantric practice is seen in the sprinkling of sand invested with the power of the light-mantra over the remains of dead members. This mantra was said to hold the power of eradicating the effects of the deceased's wrongdoing.[7]

Membership grew to more than one hundred, and Genshin

founded other similar groups also, in which men and women, monk and lay came together to engage in Pure Land practices. On the one hand, lay people went to temples once a month to join together in devotions with monks; this may be seen as an emblematic retreat to the mountains. Yoshishige, for example, even while serving at court, states that on returning home in the evening to his own chapel, he felt as though he were dwelling in the mountains. That is, he imagined himself a recluse in the secluded hut of a *hijiri*. On the other hand, for monks too the fellowship meetings represented a kind of retreat, a withdrawal from entanglements and duties in the main temple to pursue study and training in solitude. The fellowships, then, represented a world of religious aspiration and practice in which the distinction between lay and monk, secular society and temple, began to lose its fixity.

Early Nembutsu Writings

Two major literary works emerged from the nembutsu fellowships, both expressive of the practical bent of the nembutsu movement in the tenth century. The first is Yoshishige's *Japanese Records of Attaining Birth in the Land of Bliss* (*Nihon ōjō gokuraku ki*), a collection of accounts of people who had attained birth in Amida's Pure Land, including both monks and laity, men and women. Yoshishige notes in his preface that though people might hear of the Pure Land path, unless they knew of instances in which practicers actually attained birth, they would find it impossible to believe in the teaching. Thus, taking Chinese works as his model, he created the first example of an important genre in the literature of the period. It includes, for example, the biography of Kūya mentioned before, describing Kūya's composure at death, which was attended by miraculous fragrances and music from the skies, indicating that Amida had come to receive him.

The second work to arise from the impetus of the fellowships

is Genshin's *Essentials for Birth* (*Ōjōyōshū*). It was completed early in 985, between the disbanding of the first fellowship and the formation of the "nembutsu-samādhi fellowship," and appears to be a handbook for the members of the latter. It gives detailed instruction for practice based on Tendai meditation, including the constant walking samādhi and uninterrupted nembutsu chant. At its core it teaches contemplative training leading to perception of Buddhas and the features of the Pure Land, but Genshin also notes that those incapable of achieving such states should nevertheless chant the Name focusing their thoughts on Amida. He sets forth as the aim of such recitation not entrance into deep samādhi, but birth into the Pure Land after death in this world. With *Essentials for Birth*, Genshin articulated the doctrinal underpinnings for the later focus on vocal, rather than contemplative, nembutsu practice. As the references in *Plain Words* indicate, it remained the handbook of the nembutsu *hijiri* movement in the Kamakura period.

Emergence of the Nembutsu Hijiri

During the eleventh century, Buddhist teachings and practices began to spread widely among all levels of society and to all parts of the country, borne by monks who departed from the major temples in numbers. Many of them were originally of prominent aristocratic families. Some withdrew to isolated huts in the mountains and forests where they pursued their practices of meditation, sutra chanting, and austerities. Others, however, followed the models of Kūya and Genshin, either going down into the cities and wandering in the countryside, or withdrawing to secluded valleys near temples and, while devoting themselves to study and practice, associating with lay people and unordained practicers by giving sermons and leading worship and chant.

Those who followed a mendicant life among the people lived by begging food and alms, stopping before houses to recite

passages from sutras or incantations for warding off misfortune. Some collected contributions for temples they formed affiliations with, to be used for building construction or for an image or bell; at times they performed rites for the dead or to cure illness.

The life of wandering might be broken by periods in places where *hijiri* gathered apart from the main temples. These were known as *bessho* ("special places") in contrast to the monks' "original temple" (*honji*). Such sites began to appear in the first half of the eleventh century and quickly grew to number more than sixty, chiefly in western Japan, but also in the rural eastern regions where *hijiri* traveled. Some of the *bessho* had small temple halls as their center. As *hijiri* gathered, perhaps attracted by stories of some venerable practicer in residence, they would build their grass huts nearby. Monks sharing the same teachings and practices joined together to hold sessions for sermons, repentance, uninterrupted nembutsu, and enactment of Amida's coming with bodhisattvas to welcome one at death (*mukae-kō*), a rite originated by Genshin. Smaller *bessho* had only a few residing *hijiri*, but larger ones are said to have had populations of a hundred or even a thousand.

Most *bessho* were relatively secluded, but places of popular worship also became gathering places for wandering monks and took on the coloration of their practices. Shitennōji, for example, was closely associated with Pure Land practice in the popular mind, and the sunset viewed from its western gate was said to provide a glimpse of the Pure Land in the west. *Hijiri* gathered there to perform constant nembutsu chant and contemplative exercises focused on the Pure Land, and to undertake retreats, hoping for a revelation from Prince Shōtoku, the temple founder, assuring them of future attainment of birth. One common practice that developed here was a pilgrimage to perform one million utterances of the nembutsu (*hyakumanben no nembutsu*), which might require seven to ten days. Such prac-

tice was executed to gain merit for dead relatives or for one's own birth in the Pure Land, or to avoid sickness and adversity.

About this time there also appeared a number of *shami* of a distinctive type. While from the tenth century we find mention of many men of the lower classes shaving their heads and wearing robes to avoid taxes and conscription labor, in the eleventh century there emerged *shami* who had been officially ordained and who kept a monk's exterior, yet maintained families and homes. Such men lived in violation of their precepts, but they also served as living examples of the possibility of salvation, through the power of the Dharma, even for those who were given to wrongdoing. In the tale literature of this period there are many examples of monks and laity who commit transgressions throughout their lives, yet because of some meritorious deed such as hearing a single sermon on the *Lotus Sutra* or reciting the nembutsu at death, do not suffer the consequences that their misdeeds might have brought on them. Such tales manifest an acute sense that the shadow of the "last age of the Dharma" had fallen, but they also suggest the saving power of self-awareness and the need for self-reflection and exertion.

Interpenetrating Nembutsu

The most important development in Pure Land practice during this period was the evolution of *yūzū-nembutsu*—"interpenetrating nembutsu" in which the merit of one's own recitation was made to fuse with the merit of other practicers, so that the collective body of good would pervade each person, becoming the cause of their birth in the Pure Land. Thus, the attainment of one person signified the attainment of all. This form of nembutsu had its intellectual roots in the *Lotus* and *Garland Sutras*, but was articulated by the Tendai monk Ryōnin (1073–1132) on the basis of a revelation that he received from Amida Buddha: "One person is all people; all people are one person. One practice is all practices; all practices are one practice."

Ryōnin originally trained in constant walking samādhi and esoterism, then went to Ōhara, a *bessho* associated with Mount Hiei. There he performed typical *hijiri* practices, reciting the nembutsu sixty thousand times a day and chanting the *Lotus Sutra*. From later descriptions of practice at Ōhara, he seems also to have gathered practicers for three-day periods of circumambulation, performed to the accompaniment of nembutsu in beautiful chant melodies that he developed, with a marked musical talent, from traditional Tendai chant. His methods of chant eventually gained great popularity and were spread by wandering *hijiri*. While Genshin had emphasized personal effort and cautioned practicers in the fellowships he founded against depending on others, Ryōnin evolved a form of communal chant that evoked a harmonious atmosphere of mutual benefit and joint attainment.

Moreover, in 1117 Ryōnin received his revelation and began traveling widely to propagate his teaching. Developing his thought further, he employed a register in which he recorded the names of people who promised to say the nembutsu—perhaps ten times each morning facing the west, or a hundred or a thousand times daily. In this way he created a community of practicers in the society at large, making the practice of the *hijiri* at their *bessho* available to ordinary people in their homes. Thus, his *yūzū-nembutsu* represents a further descent of the nembutsu from the mountain into the lives of the common people.

The element of joint-creation and sharing of merit in nembutsu practice developed into a widespread custom of group sessions of constant chanting—commonly for a day, three days, or seven days—open to both monks and laity. Examples may be seen in the nembutsu groups created by Myōhen and Shunjō, the seven-day nembutsu meeting organized by Seikaku on the third anniversary of Hōnen's death, and the sessions held by Ippen during his travels.

Nembutsu of Nara and Mount Kōya

Pure Land practices were also undertaken by reclusive and itinerant monks of the Nara schools and Mount Kōya. An example of the former is Yōkan (or Eikan, 1033–1111), who propagated Pure Land teachings among the general populace late in life and wrote several works that influenced Hōnen and his movement. He was ordained at Tōdaiji and became a noted scholar of the Sanron (Mādhyamika) school. When in his thirties, he withdrew to Mount Kōmyō temple, a Tōdaiji *bessho*, and took up nembutsu practice. About the age of forty he fell ill and thereafter dedicated himself to attainment of birth in Amida's Pure Land.

Yōkan emphasized wholeheartedness in practice of the nembutsu and is said to have recited the Name tens of thousands of times daily. This "wholeheartedness" (*isshin*) was a kind of total concentration on Amida, and he speaks of sitting in solitude in his hermitage, facing the west with his eyes closed and his hands in a gesture of homage, attaining singleness of mind through utterance of the Name. His practice was not restricted to the nembutsu, however, but included Tantric elements, reflecting the growing influence of esoteric thought in the Nara schools. Yōkan himself was an important figure in the development of *ronmitsu*, a blending of Sanron and esoteric traditions. In addition to the nembutsu, he chanted dhāranī and performed contemplative exercises focused on the Sanskrit letter A, which he identified both with the Dharma-body or reality that a practicer attains oneness with through Amida, and with the logic of negation taught in the Sanron school.

Pure Land thought also came to adopted by Shingon practicers from the tenth century on, and Kakuban (1094-1143), in attempting to bring about the revival of Mount Kōya three centuries after Kūkai, absorbed Pure Land practice on the basis of Shingon doctrine. He accomplished this by identifying Amida

as an aspect of Vairocana, the Sun Buddha who is Dharma-body itself in Shingon teachings.[8] The Pure Land also is another name for the reality that pervades all things. Thus, by reciting the mantra of Amida,[9] forming the hand posture representing him, and contemplating him, one can achieve a oneness with Amida that signifies attainment of the Shingon goal of Buddhahood with this very body.

III The World of *Plain Words*

The two broad streams of Pure Land practice seen in *Plain Words*—that of Hōnen and that of the Kōya *hijiri*—both trace their roots to the traditions delineated above. Hōnen studied under a student of Ryōnin on Mount Hiei and was also familiar with the Pure Land teachings of the Nara schools, and the leaders of the Kōya *hijiri*—Myōhen (section 4) and Shunjō (section 2)—emerge from the streams of Nara school and Shingon esoterism.

A sharp wind, however, blows through the world of *Plain Words*, sweeping away all that is unessential from practice. In part, it is a reassertion of the critical impulse of the outsider tradition, an insistence on purity of motive. The elaborate, formalized practices of the established schools, including the ritual esoterism indulged in by the court, came to be abandoned. Even the chants and incantations commonly performed by wandering monks became suspect, for they often functioned more as means of support than practices for emancipation. In the twelfth century, a bleak pessimism pervaded the air as the court aristocracy declined and warrior clans struggled openly for power. At the same time, the collapse of the old order released fresh energies. Thus, the emphasis on genuine aspiration was also an affirmation of a path compatible with the thoroughgoing honesty and severity of the wandering monks.

Hōnen

The doctrinal basis of the teachings in *Plain Words* is the "sole practice of saying the nembutsu" developed by Hōnen. In his career, we see another development in the *hijiri* tradition. Like Genshin, Hōnen renounced secular life to enter the monastery, then left the main temple seeking seclusion for study and practice. But after twenty-five years of Tendai Pure Land training in a *bessho* at Kurodani, a valley of Mount Hiei, he further decided to abandon his previous practice and decended from the mountain, settling in the foothills of Kyoto. There he taught that Amida Buddha, in order that every person might attain enlightenment, selected as the act resulting in birth in the Pure Land one that could easily be performed by all people—the simple saying of the Name. Other practices—contemplative exercises, sutra chanting, monastic precepts—were to be put aside. Only saying the nembutsu entrusting oneself to Amida's compassion was necessary.

With this teaching, Hōnen stripped away all self-attachment from religious endeavor. Previously, practice had been understood as accumulation of merit, discipline of the heart and mind, and the eradication of delusional thought, but bringing the self-scrutiny of the *hijiri*—the discernment of latent grasping for esteem and profit even in religious activity—deeply to bear on his own life, Hōnen declared himself incapable of fulfilling such practice. The only Buddhist act he was capable of was saying the Name and attaining birth through the working of Amida's Vow.

Hōnen won followers from among the nobility as well as the lowest levels of society and attracted many *hijiri*. While he wore monk's robes, maintained his basic precepts, and even bestowed lay precepts on others, he firmly denied the necessity of renouncing secular life. Thus, in pursuing his search for a path to enlightenment, he came nearly full circle, back to ordinary society, and precisely by doing so, advanced the tradition of the outsider. Late in life, as his teaching gained popularity, he was deprived by the authorities of his monkhood and the Jōdo (Pure Land) school he founded was outlawed.

Myōhen

A version of the sole practice of nembutsu that remains rooted in the earlier *hijiri* tradition is seen in Myōhen. He was ordained at Tōdaiji, where he studied the Sanron school. Though gaining renown as a scholar-monk, he rejected worldly prestige and retired to the Tōdaiji *bessho* at Mount Kōmyō, where he took up Pure Land practices. In this, he followed in the footsteps of Yōkan, who also repeatedly refused lectureships and temple posts in order to pursue his Pure Land practices.

About the age of thirty, Myōhen went to Mount Kōya, settling in a secluded valley, Rengedani, which he rarely left during the remainder of his life. Like Yōkan, he received transmissions of esoteric practices. After encountering Hōnen (section 4), however, he is said to have abandoned his Sanron study and esoteric training and devoted himself to saying the Name together with his followers:

> Whenever asked, he used to discourse on the doctrines of the exoteric and esoteric sects, but as for himself he did nothing but the one thing of repeating the sacred name.[10]

From *Plain Words*, we see that Myōhen initiated followers in such esoteric traditions as the "eighteen elements" of basic practice, which would qualify one to receive the *abhiṣeka* ("sprinkling water" on the forehead) ritual and further transmissions (section 85).

His daily routine included other widespread practices of the times. Every morning he declared vows to observe the precepts and worshiped relics of Śākyamuni Buddha. These activities reflect a determination to return to Śākyamuni's authentic

teaching and way of life. This resolve arose in reaction against the corruption of the temple establishment and was shared by reclusive figures associated with the Nara schools such as Gedatsu (section 12) and Myōe, both fierce critics of Hōnen's teaching.

In addition, Myōhen and his group performed practices common among the earlier nembutsu fellowships. Every evening they enacted Amida's coming at death (*mukae-kō*), and at the six hours of the day (at four-hour intervals), they chanted the nembutsu and hymns. Thus, "sole practice of the nembutsu" meant for such monks the eradication of all residue of attachment from study and practice, leading one eventually to abandon complex esoteric rites and training and to concentrate on strict observance of precepts and recitation of the nembutsu.

Shunjō

The career of Shunjō also reflects the older *hijiri* traditions. After receiving initial training in esoteric Buddhism, he undertook austerities at a number of sacred mountain sites. He then became a wandering monk, performing both recitation of the *Lotus Sutra* and week-long sessions of uninterrupted nembutsu. Later, he made Mount Kōya his base and built a following of close disciples.

He is best known as a leader of *kanjin hijiri*, monks traveling the countryside collecting contributions for temple construction and public works projects. He offered his services to the shogunate for the restoration of Tōdaiji, consciously following Gyōgi's example, and employed a knowledge of temple architecture that he gained in China in directing the huge project involving many craftsmen, itinerant monks and workers. He also built seven other temple halls, known as new *bessho*, which served as places for nembutsu practice and also as centers for public welfare activities.

Shunjō's practice on Mount Kōya is reflected in a bell that he

contributed to a temple that probably stood in Rengedani. It is inscribed with Sanskrit "seed-letters" (Sk. *bīja*) or characters representing Amida and his attendant bodhisattvas, together with a spell for Amida Buddha and with the words of the light-mantra. We see, then, that although in later Jōdo school accounts Shunjō is portrayed as a follower of Hōnen's teaching, his nembutsu practice was rooted in his earlier Shingon training. Nevertheless, he seems to have focused his practice chiefly on Amida rather than other Buddhas in the Shingon pantheon, and he established groups of nembutsu practicers in various areas of the country. On Mount Kōya, for example, he founded a *bessho* slightly deeper in seclusion than Myōhen's Rengedani, and there a small number of his most ardent followers practiced constant nembutsu.

IV After Hōnen

> Seeking the world beyond is no different from carrying out your life on the paths of this world. (Section 69)

In Hōnen's thought, the concept of "selection and rejection" (*senjaku*)—Amida's determination of simple utterance of the Name as *the* act for birth and his setting aside of all traditional forms of religious cultivation—had the same effect as the *hijiri*'s stern passion for poverty and candor: it sheared away all that was extraneous—all appetite for the inconsequential—from authentic practice of the way. Hōnen's nembutsu, however, harbored an inherent tension, which we glimpse in the practice of the Kōya *hijiri*. It was natural, given the total dedication advocated by the *hijiri*, that adoption of his thought would lead to wholehearted endeavor in recitation of the Name and an effort to eliminate mundane obstructions that might express itself even as a wish for death. Hōnen himself uttered the nembutsu

incessantly, tens of thousands of times daily, much like Ryōnin, Yōkan, and other earlier practicers. The nembutsu he taught, however, was effective not because of any effort by the aspirant, but rather because it was decided on by Amida and made to hold the Buddha's virtues. Hence, sole practice for Hōnen assumed the entrusting of oneself to the Buddha's wisdom and the power of his Vow to save all beings. Solely saying the Name became a very different kind of act from other practices, including nembutsu recitation to accumulate merit, and *sole* practice was integral to its nature. Other kinds of practice—for merit or self-purification—were unnecessary; faith in the sufficiency of simple utterance, however, was. Thus, there appeared among Hōnen's following some who emphasized constant effort to recite the Name, and others who felt that faith in Amida's compassion was the key to attainment. The master sought to reconcile the two elements of practice and faith (sections 26, 114), but was not altogether successful.

Plain Words includes chiefly the sayings of followers who stressed lifelong endeavor in reciting the Name; it is here that their accord with the Kōya *hijiri* monks lies. Viewing the collection in historical context, one notices that a number of Hōnen's other prominent disciples are missing; Kōsai (1163–1247), Shinran (1173–1263, founder of the Shin school), and Shōkū (1177–1247, founder of the Jōdo school Seizan branch), all of whom developed the concept of faith or trust, receive no mention. If the compiler of *Plain Words* was a man of the Jōdo school, he probably belonged to the Chinzei branch, which became the mainstream of the school, represented in the work by the founder Shōkō, his chief disciple, Ryōchū (Nen'a), and a number of others.

It is in the delineation of the dimension of faith, however, that we see the completion of the trends we have been describing. In Hōnen, practice became possible while carrying on mundane life because its genuineness ceased to depend on the training or

mental state of the aspirant. Nembutsu practice was no longer spiritual discipline or the eradication of the effects of inner turmoil, past and present. Rather, the concept of practice itself underwent a change. Hōnen was able to disclose the true practice of the Pure Land way—the act selected precisely because it could be easily incorporated into everyday life—by eliminating all impulses to appropriate it as one's own, all pride in human effort. By doing so, he brought practice down from Mount Hiei and out of the *bessho* and made it fully available to ordinary people.

Through the entrusting of oneself to the Vow, then, the nembutsu enters one's life; trust is the link between the practice infused with the Buddha's virtues and the practicer. Faith in Amida's Vow means precisely abandoning the vanity in learning and the self-consciousness in good acts. Thus, Hōnen speaks of entrusting oneself to the nembutsu by becoming a foolish person and "simply saying the nembutsu with wholeness of heart, free of any pretensions to wisdom" (page 71). In this way, nembutsu becomes the central activity of life:

> Even when engaged in other activities, do them while saying the nembutsu. Don't say the nembutsu while doing something else. (Section 32)

Here, ordinary life in the world is superimposed on the *hijiri*'s life of undefiled practice; they coincide without impedement. Because practice is solely saying the Name, a life in dedication to it can be carried on in a mundane context uncompromised.

Those among Hōnen's disciples who explored the dimension of faith, however, sought to articulate further the incorporation of the Buddha's practice by revealing how the nembutsu is not merely added to one's everyday life, but utterly pervades and transforms it. Kōsai, Shinran, and Shōkū all taught that attainment of the awakening termed faith—which is freedom from the constrictions of the imagined self—represented a union of a

person with Amida's wisdom-compassion.[11] Having relinquished all clinging to egocentric perceptions by entrusting oneself to the Buddha, one is transfused with authentic awareness of the nature of human life, and having discarded attachments to one's accomplishment of good, every act is made to hold the virtue of transcending the self. One joins, then, not merely a fellowship of aspirants along the path who pool their merit, but a community of those who have come through—one that embraces all who rejoice in the Name, including Buddhas and enlightened beings. This is mundane life as itself the austere life of one free of the domination of self-will. Such life is wholly mundane, filled with acts arising from ignorance and passions, and at the same time it is an ongoing transformation of it, the effortless resolution of our gravest concern (section 74). As *Plain Words* states: "When you have genuinely let go of your attachments, you show no sign of having done so" (section 60).[12]

The Hijiri as Ideal

Coming at the close of an era of great creativity, *Plain Words* displays, amid the stark immediacy of the life of practice, a developed sense of a "*hijiri* ideal," and with it, strands of nostalgia. Thus, true to its probing, self-reflective spirit, it also portends the deterioration of the tradition. Three general sources of secularization demand comment in the work, being intertwined with the *hijiri*'s life: self-indulgent interpretation of the *hijiri* ideal; professionalism; and the appropriation of the *hijiri*'s life for ends other than religious.

Concealing Virtue

One of the central themes of *Plain Words* is the idea that *hijiri* should hide any trace of goodness, lest they succumb to pride in their practice and, under the scrutiny of their fellows, a concern for reputation. The *hijiri* of the Kamakura period struck out into the wilderness not for knowledge and power, like the holy

men of old, but to leave behind the self. The reverse side of their reluctance to reveal their accomplishments was a genuine humility, a biting awareness that, whatever the appearances, their life hardly merited the respect of others. In *Plain Words*, these feelings are vividly expressed by Myōhen:

> I have become known as a "man of the Way" and live in splendid circumstances: this is altogether at odds with my original intention. And unaware of my inmost feelings, people see my secluded life here and think it worthy of admiration. (Section 47)

"Splendid circumstances" refers to his hermitage, a small temple hidden away in Rengedani scarcely lavish by ordinary standards; elsewhere he speaks of its poor construction (section 76). Nevertheless, his high aristocratic birth as well as his accomplishments in learning and practice no doubt brought him deferential treatment, especially among the low-ranking *hijiri*. Wandering monks gained a canny sense both of underlying complacence and of authentic practice and traded tales of exemplary monks; Myōhen's diligence in seeking to avoid fame merely enhanced his stature in the eyes of his followers.

It was in such situations, however, that the strategy of hiding one's virtue could be employed to effect. It was derived from the basic T'ien-t'ai text, *Great Tranquility and Insight* (Ja. *Makashikan*), which states that one should "contract one's virtues and expose one's flaws; make a show of delusions and conceal one's reality."[13] Concealing one's rectitude, then, is not merely a matter of seclusion; when necessary, it means to make use even of a camouflage of despicable conduct in order to preserve one's integrity. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, there begin to appear numerous tales of monks who put an end to the lingering gratification of esteem by, for example, pretending to such lapses as living with women.[14]

The notion of hiding one's practice or good acts is open to

abuse, however, as a positive interpretation of wrongdoing. *Plain Words* cautions:

> Although the Buddhist teaching states that virtues are best hidden, purposely making a show of foolishness is also a fault, one that will turn into indolence. (Section 136)

Nevertheless, concealing one's activity as a monk, with its superficial blurring of the religious and the mundane that renders external judgments meaningless, may be seen to hint at the deeper revision of the idea of virtue seen before, in which authentic practice has crossed beyond the limits of self-purification and self-will. Here, the key to the *hijiri*'s abandonment of reputation lies finally in hiding one's virtues above all from oneself, or rather, seeing right through them, to the error in imposing ordinary standards, moral or religious, on the life of the nembutsu. As Hōnen states, "Wakening aspiration for enlightenment is best accomplished by stealth" (section 84).

Professional Hijiri

The venerable masters of old, with total commitment, discarded the trappings of their renunciation, including sutra texts and images for worship. They repudiated their esoteric knowledge of the significance of Sanskrit letters and abandoned the secret rituals that had been transmitted to them. But now, it is said in *Plain Words*, monks utilize their skills in chant and in preaching—which might include storytelling, musical intonation and instrumental accompaniment, and even dance and mime—to attract a following and collect donations and alms.

Plain Words makes repeated reference to chant in worship, which was closely related to the *hijiri* tradition. Under the influence of Kūya, Senkan (918–983) of Miidera wrote hymns in Japanese to be sung to Tendai chant melodies, and Genshin followed him, composing hymns for use in worship among the nembutsu fellowships. Ryōnin further developed the aesthetic

elements of chant, which spread with his *yūzū-nembutsu*. By the time of *Plain Words*, liturgical chant had become extremely popular, and had even been adopted to secular songs.

Plain Words even speaks of the deterioration of chant into "monkey-music" (*sarugaku*, section 107), pointing perhaps, beneath the irony, to actual shifts in occupation. *Sarugaku* refers to entertainments such as farce and mime performed during festivals at temples and shrines. The performers were itinerants loosely affiliated with the temples and shared a background not unlike that of many wandering monks. Gradually the entertainments absorbed elements of religious music and Buddhist themes; nō drama and kyōgen comedy, which are still performed as offerings at temples and shrines, have their roots here.

Another example of the mundane development of the *hijiri*'s training is "their tales of war" (section 93), originally the stuff of sermons interwoven with the theme of impermanence. Narratives of battle—the best known is the *Tales of the Heike*—came to be intoned to melodies derived from Tendai chant and developed into a popular entertainment. Specialists, often blind, wore monk's garb and sang the tales to the accompaniment of the *biwa*, a continental lute that gained popularity in Japan in the Heian period. These itinerant "biwa monks" numbered in the hundreds in Kyoto alone during the Kamakura period.

The biwa monks and temple entertainers were the forerunners of specialists in the arts who stemmed from the *hijiri* tradition, including linked verse poets, nō performers, and the *tonseisha* ("recluses") of the Muromachi period who advised the Ashikaga shoguns and feudal lords in such matters of taste and connoisseurship as flower arrangement, gardens, and incense appreciation.

Life of the Thatched Hut

The movement of wandering monks into the realm of the arts

was paralleled by the adoption of the recluse's life by men of letters. A tendency to idealize the hijirji's life and to perceive in it a freedom denied in the rigid, hierarchic court society dominated by a single clan may be traced back to the latter part of the tenth century, the time of Yoshishige and his garden chapel. The outstanding example, however, is Saigyō (1118–1190), who abandoned his post as a court guard to pursue the life of wandering monk and poet.[15] As monk, his career shares elements in common with Kyōbutsu—a disciple of Myōhen and the best-represented *hijiri* in *Plain Words*. Both trained at Ōhara and Mount Kōya, and both were familiar (despite Kyōbutsu's disclaimer, section 40) with Tendai chant and *yūzū-nembutsu* practices.

Further, the purity of aspiration emphasized by the wandering monks came to be seen as capable of transforming artistic discipline into a way of spiritual cultivation. This perception is clearly expressed in Kamo no Chōmei's *Tales of Aspiration for Enlightenment* (*Hosshinshū*, 1216), written about the time of Hōnen's death. In one tale, Chōmei states:

> Vice-governor of Dazaifu Sukemichi, a skilled biwa player, . . . did not perform any of the usual practices for attaining the world beyond. Going into his private chapel each day, he simply played pieces on the biwa while having someone keep count and directed the merit accruing from this toward his birth in the Land of Bliss. (VI, 9)

Here, dedication to the single art of the biwa is substituted for recitation of the nembutsu. Chōmei carefully explains why such training works to bring about religious fulfillment:

> Religious practices are [essentially] acts accomplished through effort and aspiration; hence, one should not necessarily think of such [performance on the biwa] as ineffective. We find here the spirit of artistic dedication (*suki*),

> in which a person ceases to delight in joining socially with others, or to sorrow at declining fortune. He is moved to deep compassion by the opening and scattering of blossoms, and his mind is made lucid wherever he thinks of the moon's rising and setting, so that he seeks above all to remain unstained by worldly defilements. Thus, the reality of arising-and-perishing naturally manifests itself to him, and attachments to fame and profit completely die away. This is indeed the gateway to freedom and emancipation.

The cultivation of an undistorted sensitivity to the things of the world through artistic discipline, seclusion, and closeness to nature is seen here to resemble the *hijiri*'s practice in his hermitage and to lead to the same end. This spiritualization of secular arts and daily activities through commitment, training, and aesthetic preferences modeled on the *hijiri*'s life characterizes such arts as the tea ceremony, which developed under the influence of monks and artistic performers who sought to create the atmosphere of a mountain retreat in their practice.[16]

Plain Words criticizes the transmutation of the hermit's life of practice into literary pursuit as an error:

> Many who dwell in solitude cling to their way of life, believing that their minds are pure because they pass their time wholly in intoning verses in their still and tasteful retreats: they are deceiving themselves (section 44).

Nevertheless, we sense here a recognition of the shifting center of cultural creativity from religion to arts. It is in the realm of the arts and the aesthetic ideals termed "chill," "lean," "withered," *sabi* (solitariness) and *wabi* (poverty) that the spirit of the *hijiri* tradition was next to find new expression.

Plain Words captures a moment in the history of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. Since its time, developments at the *dōjō* and

bessho founded by wandering monks have grown into major temple institutions, and most clergy of all schools have become *shami*, wearing monk's robes while maintaining homelife and families in their temples. The temples themselves, interwoven into secular life, are bequeathed to offspring, and may be litigated like an inheritance. The teachings have been codified, in accord with government policy in the Edo period, and are refined and debated by professional scholar-clerics. *Hijiri* of old now bear honorific names posthumously bestowed by emperors. *Plain Words* gives a glimpse of the great revolution that preceded.

The moment it evokes also occurs in the life of the Pure Land practicer; herein lies the work's abiding value. It points in two directions at once, and through its individual entries we see that traveling the road of the death of the self becomes an engagement in life in secular society, and return to ordinary life is founded on the departure it depicts. It teaches that unless one makes an effort to free oneself from the attachments and desires that bind one to samsaric life, it is impossible to awaken to the working of Amida's compassion, which comes to pervade one's existence just as one is.

A Note on the Text

There is little to be said about the compilation of *Plain Words* that cannot be deduced from the text itself. Similar anthologies exist, but they seem to be derivative.[17] While Hōnen's sayings may have been drawn from earlier biographies or collected sayings, other material, most notably the sayings of Kyōbutsu, cannot be found elsewhere.

As noted before, the doctrinal content and the image conveyed of Myōhen and other monks of the older *hijiri* type suggest the perspective of the Chinzei branch of Hōnen's Jōdo school. Myōhen, however, appears nearly as often as Hōnen in

the collection, and Kyōbutsu has the greatest representation with twice as many entries. In addition, the editorial comments occasionally appended to the text occur chiefly in material associated with Kyōbutsu. Either a record of Kyōbutsu's sayings was incorporated into *Plain Words*, inclusive of these comments, or perhaps more likely, *Plain Words* may itself have been compiled by a disciple of Kyōbutsu.

One other theory of authorship should be mentioned: the poet-monk Ton'a (1289–1373). As a man of the Ji school founded by the wandering monk Ippen, Ton'a was in a position to respond to stories of both the Jōdo and Kōya hijiri streams of nembutsu. Moreover, there are examples among his poems showing that he turned his literary gifts to religious themes. It is the kindred spirit expressed in *Essays in Idleness*, however, that most strongly suggests Ton'a as compiler of *Plain Words*, for he and Kenkō were closely associated both as monks and as poets sharing the reputation of being among "the four heavenly kings" of poetry. The evidence is circumstantial, but it takes into consideration the literary qualities of *Plain Words*.[18]

The work is assumed to have been compiled after the death of the masters named (either 1287, when Nen'a died, or 1297, when Jishin died), and before 1333, the generally accepted date for the composition of *Essays in Idleness*. The latest possible date is 1350, when Kenkō died.

The translation follows the earliest extant text, published in 1648 with a note stating that it is based on a manuscript dated 1463. It is also included in Miyasaka Yūshō, ed., *Kana hōgo shū*, Nihon bungaku taikei, volume 83, Iwanami Shoten, 1964. The text may have passed through several stages of editing by the time it assumed this form. Section breaks are not clearly shown in the original; these have been added in this volume wherever separate quotations are specifically indicated, and section numbers have been added. The text, however, is not consistent in format; some sections include more than one entry, and in

several instances, adjoining sections may originally have been considered one.

A more widely read edition in premodern Japan is that of the Jōdo school priest Tanchō 湛澄, published in Genroku 2 (1689) under the title *Hyōchū zōho ichigon hōdan shō* 標註増補一言芳談鈔. Tanchō's notes still provide the foundation for modern annotated editions. However, explanatory comments also seem to have been incorporated into the text at some points. In addition, Tanchō lent the work a Jōdo school outlook by reorganizing it under ten headings of his own devising. Since the original displays little organization apart from the opening entries, I include here a list of the sections in their order in Tanchō's edition, according to the present section numbers:

Food, Clothing and Shelter: 6, 42 (part 6), 18, 76, 53, 44 (part 3), 82, 96, 19, 88, 43, 52, 80, 45.
Purity and Simplicity: 42 (part 3), 81, 41, 67, 103, 106.
Teachers and Companions: 102, 11, 140.
Impermanence: 29, 42 (part 1), 70, 66, 78, 42 (part 5), 34.
Mindfulness of Death: 44 (part 1), 39 (part 2), 97, 61, 72, 94, 59.
Facing the Moment of Death: 9, 62, 107.
Nembutsu: 1, 3, 2, 10, 28, 99, 133, 134, 74, 135, 73, 77, 54, 91, 123, 124, 125, 5, 100, 114, 98, 35.
Attainment of Faith: 26, 112, 126, 30, 27, 113, 31, 128, 122, 33, 121, 116, 117, 119, 120, 129, 32, 109, 110, 111, 4, 13, 14, 108, 57, 56, 130, 127, 20, 60 (part 2), 36, 7, 37, 38, 55, 75, 132, 58.
Learning: 64, 85, 115, 101, 68, 118, 12, 51, 46, 47, 42 (part 8), 42 (part 9), 63, 104, 65, 60 (part 1), 23, 17, 139, 42 (part 7), 105, 39 (part 1), 79, 42 (part 2).
Admonitions: 42 (part 4), 92, 93, 87, 138, 50, 83, 84, 137, 21, 49, 15, 25, 24, 89, 90, 136, 86, 16, 95, 71, 69, 48, 40, 8, 44 (part 2), 131.

Another modern edition is Taya Raishun, *Kōchū ichigon hōdan*, 1938, which collates four published editions and appends Tanchō's notes as well as those of another Edo period edition, *Ichigon hōdan kukai* 一言芳談鈔句解 (1688) by Sokan 祖観. A text annotated and translated into modern Japanese by Konishi Jin'ichi is included in Usui Yoshimi, ed., *Hōjōki, Tsurezuregusa, Ichigon hōdan shū*, Chikuma Shobō, 1970. Selections translated and annotated by Gorai Shigeru are included in his *Bukkyō bungaku*, Kadokawa Shoten, 1975.

The monks of *Plain Words* express little interest in the scholastic side of their tradition—the works of Genshin and Hōnen, or Hōnen's inspiration Shan-tao, that formed the foundation of the nembutsu teaching; their effort is rather to forge the living, native expression of those teachings. Thus Kyōbutsu speaks repeatedly of incisive statements of Dharma that do not exceed a single sheet of paper. I have appended several examples of this genre. With *Yokawa hōgo* attributed to Genshin, I have followed a text transmitted in the Shin school *Shinshū hōgo shūi*, which is more concise than the common version. Hōnen's *Ichimai kishōmon* is based on the autograph manuscript. The circumstances of its composition, two days before Hōnen's death at the age of seventy-nine, are recorded in a biography:

> As the master [Hōnen] lay with the end approaching, [his disciple] Seikan-bō requested him to set down the essentials of the nembutsu-faith briefly in his own hand, even though he had listened to Hōnen's teaching for some years; he said that he would treasure it thereafter as a keepsake.

Myōhen's statement is taken from *Myōhen sōzu isshi hōgo genchū*, published in Genbun 5 (1740) and available in the Ryukoku University library.

NOTES

1. The term *hijiri* 聖 originally meant "sage" and appears to have its roots as an honorific title for a "holy man" or shaman of the indigenous religious traditions. Its literal meaning is understood as one who knows religious traditions. Its literal meaning is understood as one who knows (*shiri*) the movements of the sun (*hi*) and other heavenly bodies [Hori Ichirō, "On the Concept of Hijiri (Holy-Man)," part 1, p. 129] or one who controls or kindles (*shiru*) the sacred fire (*hi*) [Gorai Shigeru, *Kōya hijiri*, p. 29]. By the time of *Plain Words*, however, it was used chiefly to indicate a wide variety of reclusive or itinerant monks, who were often without official clerical status. It sometimes retained its honorific sense, but it was also employed simply as a common noun for low-ranking wandering monks only loosely affiliated with temples. The synonymous term *shōnin* (聖人 or 上人) likewise had both these meanings, honorific and common.

2. A comparison of the dialogue between Myōhen and Hōnen (section 4) with versions in other records reveals a sense of the dramatic qualities of spare expression in *Plain Words* lacking in the more explanatory renderings. *Hōnen shōnin eden*, for example, comments on Myōhen's omissions of ordinary civilities in his eagerness to hear Hōnen's comment (Coates and Ishizuka, *Hōnen the Buddhist Saint*, p. 318).

3. Kenkō (1283–1350) devotes section 98 of *Essays in Idleness* (*Tsurezuregusa*) to *Plain Words:*

> In reading a book titled *Ichigon hōdan*, which records the words of venerable *hijiri*, I was impressed with the aptness of the following passages:
>
> (1) Acts you must ponder whether to do or not are, as a rule, better left undone.
>
> (2) Those mindful of the world beyond should own nothing, not so much as a crock for salted bran. Even with copies of scripture for daily use and sacred images for the altar, it is senseless to own fine things.
>
> (3) A recluse passes his life managing to feel no want of what he lacks; this is the best way to live.

> (4) The senior monk should become a novice, the sage a fool, the prosperous man poor, and the person of accomplishments unschooled.
>
> (5) Aspiring to the Buddha Way is not an involved task. Allow yourself time and set your mind to no worldly business: this is the primary step.
>
> There were a number of other statements that I do not recall.

Kenkō's quotations are paraphrases: (1) corresponds to section 22 of *Plain Words;* (2) is derived from sections 67 and 95; (3) corresponds to section 41, (4) to section 60, and (5) to section 50. In addition, he may have drawn on *Plain Words* sections 53 and 127 for his comment on Shinkai (*Tsurezuregusa*, 49) and his quotation of Hōnen (39).

4. *Zen'an shiki* 禅菴式, quoted in Hazama Jikō, "The Characteristics of Japanese Tendai," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14(2–3): 109, 1987. Hazama states that *Zen'an shiki* is the record referred to in *Plain Words*, section 96.

5. Ivan Morris, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, New York: Columbia, 1967, p. 163, section 156.

6. The chanting of the *Lotus Sutra*, like the nembutsu, came to be disseminated among the common people by wandering monks. Such monks, termed "bearers of the sutra" (*jikyōja*), often led a mendicant life, chanting portions of the sutra before houses and receiving alms. They tended, however, to be reclusive, dedicating themselves to repeated recitations of the *Lotus Sutra* and the writing of copies in isolation. The Nichiren school may be seen as developing out of this tradition.

Stories of monks devoted to the *Lotus Sutra* may be found in *Hokkegenki*, compiled about 1040; translated in Yoshiko K. Dykstra, *Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sutra from Ancient Japan*, Hirakata: Kansai University of Foreign Studies, 1983.

7. The mantra of light (*kōmyō shingon*): oṃ amogha vairocana mahā-mudrā maṇi padma jvala pravarttaya hūṃ. Mantras are sacred embodiments of reality as sound and often have no apparent literal meaning as phrases; they are said to hold the power, when repeated numbers of times, to protect the practicer and ward off evil and danger.

8. This identification of Amida with Vairocana may be expressed obliquely in Genshin's revelation at Ise (section 1), for the tendency to

associate the "Great Sun Buddha" (*Dainichi nyorai*) with the sun goddess Amaterasu, enshrined at Ise, goes back to the Nara period. It is said that Gyōgi was sent to Ise by the emperor to gain approval for the construction of the statue of Vairocana at Tōdaiji.

9. The Amida spell (*Amida shōju*) or shorter *mantra:* oṃ amṛta teje hara hūṃ.

10. Coates and Ishizuka, *Hōnen the Buddhist Saint*, p. 321. Myōhen's daily practice is also recorded in Hōnen's biography, translated in this book.

11. See my article, "Religious Transformation in Shinran and Shōkū," *Pure Land* 4:57–69, 1987.

12. Perhaps the true inheritors of the spirit of the nembutsu *hijiri* are the "wondrous, excellent people" (*myōkōnin*) of the Shin path, whose stories begin to be collected and published in the Edo period. While the *hijiri* abandoned their learning and the pursuit of security, the *myōkōnin* were often from the outset illiterate people of the countryside living in harsh uncertainty. Nevertheless, after long struggle with the teaching carried on in their daily lives, they came to manifest in word and deed a joy and self-knowledge arising from the wisdom of the nembutsu.

13. Quoted and discussed in Itō Hiroyuki, *Inton no bungaku*, Kasama Shoin, 1975, pp. 215–220.

14. Murakami Manabu, "*Setsuwa* Tales and *Hijiri* Ascetics," *Acta Asiatica* 37:85–103, 1979.

15. Tokue Mezaki, *Saigyō no shisōshi-teki kenkyū*, Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1978, pp. 100–105.

16. For a consideration of Pure Land Buddhist thought and perception in the aesthetics of the tea ceremony, see my article, "The One-page Testament Attributed to Rikyu: *Rikyu Ichimai Kishomon*," *Chanoyu Quarterly* 33:41–52, 1983.

17. Tajima Kazuo, "Ichigon hōdan kō," in *Bukkyō bungaku kenkyū* 11, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1973, pp. 183–212.

18. The wide-ranging case for Ton'a as compiler may be found in Sanda Zenshin, "Ichigon hōdan no hensha wa Ton'a ka," included in his book, *Jōdoshū shi no shokenkyū*, 1959.

Plain Words on the Pure Land Way

I

It is told:

Bishop Eshin made a pilgrimage to the Great Shrine at Ise to spend seven days in secluded prayer. During the final night, in dream, the portals of the holy shrine suddenly opened and a gentlewoman stepped forth in an aura of sanctity. She declared:

> The Goddess of the Great Shrine has returned to the capital, the primal enlightenment. I am caretaker in the absence. Instructions were left, saying: *If sentient beings of the last age should seek the essential path of liberation, advise them to say the Name of Amida Buddha.*

Great Shrine at Ise. The most important Shintō shrine, dedicated to the Sun Goddess Amaterasu. In medieval times, Shintō deities had come to be widely regarded as manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

the capital. The center, the truth or reality that is the source of Buddhas' activity in this world.

primal enlightenment (*hongaku*). The original Mind or Buddhahood inherent in all beings, though they may not yet have gained awareness of it. Wisdom or true reality transcends the dichotomies between this world and the world beyond, or ignorance and enlightenment; thus, enlightenment pervades the world of beings and forms its foundation. This concept played an important role in medieval Tendai thought and lent support to the emanational view of the various deities.

last age. The final period in the history of the Buddhist path in the world, when the teachings of Dharma survive but, because of the condition of the world and of beings, practices can no longer be fulfilled and realizing enlightenment through one's own efforts is impossible. In one theory, it began in 1052 and will run ten thousand years.

2

The venerable Shunjō was in the closing night of a vowed week-long seclusion at the inner sanctuary of Mount Kōya. When it had drawn into the deep of night and all had grown still, from within the chapel of the Founder's Samādhi there emerged a single, distinct voicing of the nembutsu. Hearing it, he was overcome with both sorrow and joy, and his sleeves were wet with tears.

inner sanctuary (*oku no in*). A chapel built in the most sanctified part of temple precincts, behind and above the main halls, and dedicated to the temple founder or other special figure.

Founder's Samādhi. It is said that Kūkai (774–835), the founder of the Shingon complex on Mount Kōya, did not die, but entered the deep samādhi in which he dwells to this day, working for the enlightenment of sentient beings.

3

Ren-amidabutsu had a dream in which the Deity of the Hachiman Shrine declared:

Birth into the Pure Land does not depend on saying the nembutsu once; it does not depend on saying it many times. It depends on the heart.

Hachiman. Originally the fifteenth emperor Ōjin (r. 270–310), who was deified, with his main shrine at Usa in nothern Kyushu; eventually regarded as the god of archery, and thus of war. Given the title "Great Bodhisattva" and considered a manifestation of Amida Buddha.

4

On his way back from a pilgrimage to Zenkōji temple, Bishop Myōhen of Mount Kōya had an interview with Hōnen.

Myōhen asked, "How can I break the bonds of samsaric existence with this life?"

Hōnen replied, "Just say the nembutsu."

"That's surely the answer. But what should I do about the delusional thoughts and feelings that fill my mind?"

"Even though deluded thoughts arise, you will attain birth though the power of the Primal Vow."

Satisfied with this answer, Myōhen left.

Afterwards Hōnen murmured to himself, "Trying to attain the Pure Land by suppressing delusional thoughts is like casting away the eyes and nose you're born with in order to say the Name."

Zenkōji. Temple enshrining a famous image of Amida with his two attendant bodhisattvas, said to have been transmitted from India and to be the living embodiment of the Buddha himself. This temple was a popular pilgrimage site and center for hijiri.

5

Simply dedicate yourself to saying the nembutsu. This may seem but a pouring of water to stone, but utter it, and there will be benefit.

DHARMA-SEAL MYŌZEN

6

There's certainly no reason that anything in this defiled world should gladden the heart. Simply endure the minor hardships with equanimity. It's like being in a boat in rough weather and wanting to shift back to the stern, then up to the bow.

BISHOP MYŌHEN

7

Aspire for birth with the deep-rooted mind of one fixed on a target.

ANONYMOUS

8

Most likely you never awaken any genuine compassion; but you must harbor hatred of no one.

ANONYMOUS

9

When I lie dying, don't exclaim, "Oh, it seems the time has come!" It is my life, which I've habitually clung to

since the beginningless past, so I may feel dejected. Just encourage me to say the nembutsu.

ANONYMOUS

10

After his demise, Archbishop Jien appeared in someone's dream and declared:

Studying exoteric and esoteric teachings has served no purpose. Only contemplation of emptiness and saying the nembutsu—practices I took up from time to time—have stood me in good stead for the world beyond.

11

The *Commentary on the Awakening of Faith* states, "Two people should not share a single room; they will disturb each other and obstruct the Way."

Commentary on the Awakening of Faith. Doubtfully attributed to Nāgārjuna. Extensively quoted by Kūkai and highly regarded in the Shingon school; modern commentators therefore suggest that this saying originated with a follower of Kakuban (1095–1143), who incorporated nembutsu into Shingon practice and opened the way for the associations between Mount Kōya and nembutsu hijiri monks. The work does not, however, contain the present statement (T32, no. 1668).

12

Zen-amidabutsu of Kurodani told this story:

A hijiri went to Gedatsu and asked permission to live and study with him.

Gedatsu replied, "Good monk, I perceive that aspiration for enlightenment is awake within you. Engaging in study is altogether useless; swiftly return whence you came. Those here lack desire for the world beyond, and I put them to study only because it's better than aimlessly doing nothing at all."

Thus he drove him away.

Zen-amidabutsu. Unidentified; the monk in the story may well be the narrator. The name is found in *Collection of Sand and Pebbles* (I, 3), which depicts a close relation with Myōhen, suggesting that he was a Kōya hijiri.

Kurodani. An area of Mount Hiei that provided refuge to monks devoted to reclusive practice, becoming a center for nembutsu hijiri. Separated from the major halls, it nevertheless maintained a long tradition of Tendai Pure Land study and contemplation, and was the home of Hōnen for twenty-five years, until he left Mount Hiei to found and spread the independent Pure Land school.

13

Put plainly, if in your heart you genuinely aspire for the Pure Land and reject this defiled world, you will unfailingly attain birth by just saying the Name without any special concentration. If your aspiration is not authentic, you may clear away a hundred thousand obscurities and grasp the deepest of doctrinal truths, yet attainment of birth will elude you.

In practicing the Buddha Way, continuous effort is crucial. It's preposterous for people who have once discerned their own capacities and resolved upon the single practice of the nembutsu to change because someone has spoken against it.

MYŌHEN

14

When I reflect on having met with the effective cause of birth, Other Power, I realize that it is with this life that I must gain liberation from birth-and-death. Though we encounter Other Power, we will certainly fall to lower realms again if we idly pass by to no purpose. Whether or not we part from samsaric existence, then, depends on the present.

MYŌZEN

15

If your concern is birth in the Pure Land, take care not to stand conspicuous in the eyes of men. Human beings are injured by human beings. For a hijiri monk, gaining a measure of prosperity in this life means, on the whole, so much jetsam with regard to the world beyond.

MYŌZEN

16

There's no profit in idly sleeping, but neither is anything lost.

MYŌZEN

17

A hijiri knows it's good being good for nothing.

MYŌZEN

18

It is best that one's dwelling be disagreeable. If it pleased the heart, then unenlightened as we are, we would certainly become attached to it.

MYŌZEN

19

Asked where an outcast monk should live, Myōzen replied, "So long as you can say the nembutsu, anywhere at all is fine. Avoid places where your utterance is hampered. But wherever you dwell, be detached from your surroundings."

outcast. Literally, "non-human," used of those who live beyond the pale of ordinary society.

20

Further, Myōzen said: "The 'baby's nembutsu' is best."

Hearing of monks engaged in a display of learning, he commented, "Ignorant men, blind to their own nature."

Cf. Shinran (1173–1263): "I recall hearing the late Master Hōnen say, 'Those of the Pure Land tradition attain birth by becoming their foolish selves.' Moreover, I remember him smile and say, as he watched humble people of no intellectual pretensions coming to visit him, 'Without doubt their birth is settled.' And I heard him say after a visit by a man brilliant in letters and debating, 'I really wonder about his birth'" (*Letters of Shinran*, 6).

21

Whatever occurs, we in our foolishness can keep our composure only so long as we avoid facing it squarely. Our aspiration may appear imposing, but if something happens, it is easily shaken.

MYŌZEN

22

Acts you must ponder whether to do or not are, as a rule, better left undone.

MYŌZEN

23

For the person who actually wants to attain the world beyond, nothing is more pointless than withdrawal from ordinary life.

MYŌZEN

24

You may not go to great lengths to aid others, but if you truly aspire to part from samsaric existence, there is certain to be appropriate benefit for every other being.

MYŌZEN

25

Hijiri monks are impeded by their own virtue. Rather than trying to perform good acts, just stop doing evil.

MYŌZEN

26

If, because it is taught that birth is attained with but one or ten utterances, you say the nembutsu heedlessly, then faith is hindering practice.

If, because it is taught that you should say the Name "without abandoning it from moment to moment," you believe one or ten utterances to be indecisive, then practice is hindering faith.

As your faith, accept that birth is attained with a single utterance; as your practice, endeavor in the nembutsu throughout life.

HŌNEN

one or ten utterances. Amida's Eighteenth Vow in the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life* states that those who say the Name perhaps ten times with sincere trust will attain birth. Śākyamuni's words at the close of the sutra state that the person who rejoices in the nembutsu even once will be born.

moment to moment. From the Chinese master Shan-tao (613–681): "Single-heartedly practicing the saying of Amida's Name alone—whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining—without concern for the length of time, and without abandoning it from moment to moment: this is called the act of true settlement [of birth], for it is in accord with the Buddha's Vow" (*Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra,* T37, 272b). This passage is said to have awakened Hōnen to the nembutsu teaching.

27

It's taught that if you believe saying the nembutsu once to be indecisive, every utterance becomes nembutsu of no faith. Amida Buddha's Vow was established so that birth would be attained with each utterance; therefore, every single saying of the nembutsu is a karmic act that results in birth.

HŌNEN

28

When I read Shan-tao's *Commentary*, to my eye it appears that the three essential attitudes and the four rules of practice are all Namu-amida-butsu.

HŌNEN

three essential attitudes. Literally, "three minds." The Eighteenth Vows speaks of beings "(1) sincerely (2) entrusting themselves and (3) aspiring for birth" in the Pure Land. These attitudes were identified with those enumerated in the *Contemplation Sutra*, which states that beings should awaken three minds: genuine mind, deep mind, and aspiration. Shan-tao analyzes these at length in his commentary, explaining the first as complete sincerity, the second as self-reflection and trust, and the third as desire to be born in the Pure Land through directing merit towards one's own and others' attainment.

four rules of practice. Prescriptions for proper nembutsu practice: worship of Amida and the beings of the Pure Land; exclusive practice of saying the Name and thinking on Amida; wholehearted, uninterrupted practice; and practice sustained throughout life (Shan-tao, in *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land*).

29

Hōnen instructed someone:

Human life is such that occasionally a person bolting down mouthfuls of good food will choke on it and die. So chew with Namu-amida-butsu, do Namu-amida-butsu as you swallow.

30

Without fretting about whether your passions are superficial or deep-seated, without weighing the magnitude of your karmic evil, just say Namu-amida-butsu with your lips and through your voicing bring about the settlement of birth.

HŌNEN

31

Hōnen often said in guiding others:

People who have seriously embraced the aspiration for birth always have about them a slightly cynical distrust of the world.

32

The venerable late Master Hōnen taught, "Even when engaged in other activities, do them while saying the nembutsu. Don't say the nembutsu while doing something else."

ZENSHŌ

33

In straightening an arrow shaft, you shut one eye to train

it closely. When, in like manner, in the single, wholehearted practice you cast no sideward glance, swiftly it finds its mark.

SHŌKŌ

34

If people who have been steadily and deeply mindful of birth into the Pure Land find that their practice is regressing, they should consider well: the time of death is approaching.

SHŌKŌ

35

Hōren of Jōdodani not only let his provisions dwindle; his morning meal was scarcely more than a formality, and even it was completely forgotten in his worship for birth into the Land of Bliss. It was far beyond the ordinary. If the nembutsu entered his heart as he prepared his meal, the result resembled neither steamed rice nor gruel. After some years, his face began growing more haggard day by day and his bodily strength waned. To close friends who inquired after him, he replied:

nishi e yuku	If only the single way
suji hitotsu dani	leading to the West
tagawazuba	is certain,
hone to kawa to ni	then let my body
mi wa naraba nare	be skin and bone.

Jōdodani. The place of Hōren's residence, also known as the "new" Kurodani. His grandfather, Hamuro Akitoki, of a prominent branch of the Fujiwara clan, donated an estate in the northeastern hills of Kyoto (Shirakawa) for a hermitage for Eikū. This hermitage was passed on to Hōnen and then to Hōren, who lived there until his death.

36

Kyōbutsu-bō said:

I told Myōhen that a poem had enabled me to grasp the Dharma-gate of the nembutsu. "I can appreciate that," he replied.

The poem:

tada tanome	You must simply trust.
tatoeba hito no	If deceptions
itsuwari o	should accumulate,
kasanete koso wa	then be reproachful.
mata mo uramime	

poem. By Jien, included in the imperial collection *Shinkokinshū*, XIII, 1223, with the headnote, "the spirit in pledging love." It is commonly interpreted as a man's words to dispel a woman's misgivings, but may also be taken, perhaps more fittingly here, as words to oneself.

37

It is not to be learned that the three essential attitudes are had for the learning.

KYŌBUTSU

38

You may become conversant with all eighty-thousand Buddhist teachings, but as one in the condition of human foolishness you will still be given to error. All that is critically important is the thought, "Buddha, save me!"

KYŌBUTSU

39

It is inconceivable that either Myōhen or Myōzen simply happened on the awakening of aspiration. They had to struggle constantly to subdue their delusional thoughts with the truth of the way things are. Never losing sight of truth, then, may itself be called the mind aspiring to the Way. Practice for birth is possible only when this mind is stalwart. Since all matters serve as but hindrances, how could anyone with an irresolute mind endure? People unable to maintain the truth as it demands all surrender to their hearts and in the end come to give scarcely a thought to the world beyond. Taking the truth in vain—failing to carry it through to the end—is the greatest obstruction to birth.

Whether you live a mundane life or for transcendence of this world, in the end the one great matter is death alone. Just resolve, "When the time comes, so be it," and every pressing concern will vanish. It is from cherishing your existence and clinging to life that all obstacles arise. If you simply come to realize that death by some mishap is actually a cause for joy, you will be able to face all difficulties with tranquility. Thus, if you sincerely aspire for the world beyond, by all means firmly establish the truth for yourself and do not capitulate to the heart; do not give your mind to things of this samsaric world.

KYŌBUTSU

40

Kyōbutsu-bō said:

Recluses these days, once they have cut off the topknots they wore in mundane life, become superb scholars and preachers. Going up Mount Kōya, they turn into illustrious Shingon masters and eminent explicators of the commentaries. Or, although originally they may have been unable to form even the syllable *shi* し properly curved, they acquire a serviceable hand at the standard Sanskrit and Chinese characters. But it's extremely rare to see one whose abhorrence of samsaric existence runs deep, or who is wholly immersed in practice for attaining the world beyond. When they first cut their topknots, they seemed resolved never to be thus possessed of ambition, but they have aroused thoughts driven by fierce self-attachment and concern for reputation.

Up to the time that I abandoned the world, all of us were taught that since renunciation meant giving up all we possessed, seeking more was inexcusable. We therefore embraced a determination never to engage in any activity, secular or religious, that—though it might mean mastering the arts and skills of this life—would turn into a lingering

attachment to samsara and in the end become a hindrance to birth. This included any attainment, whether it lay easily in reach or at a distance, regardless of its form. Hence, though I was long at Ōhara and Mount Kōya, I learned not even one chant melody nor a single Sanskrit letter.

Thus he spoke. With all things, it is best for our attainment of the world beyond simply to pass steadily through this life.

commentaries. May refer specifically to the *Commentary on the Awakening of Faith* (see section 11).

Sanskrit. In the Shingon school, Sanskrit characters play an important role in contemplative practices; see section 85.

Ōhara. Area northeast of Kyoto, known as a hijiri center with close ties to Mount Hiei. As Pure Land teachings spread in society, religious chant (*shōmyō*) came to be widely used as a vehicle of propagation and popular worship. Tendai chant, imported from China during the ninth century, was adapted for verses in Japanese by Senkan (918–983) and later by Genshin, who composed many such hymns. In 1109, Ryōnin (1073–1132), the founder of Yūzū-nembutsu, established Raigō-in ("Temple of Amida's Welcoming") in Ōhara as a training center for Tendai chant. The melodic chanting of hymns and nembutsu came into vogue, and also influenced popular music and drama (sections 93, 107).

41

As a recluse, accustom yourself to making do whatever the circumstances, feeling no want of anything you may lack.

KYŌBUTSU

42

Kyōbutsu-bō said:

To feel attached to your implement box or wicker pack is to lose sight of why you use it in the first place. Earnestly resolve in your heart: this life is one night's lodging, this world but dream and illusion, so let it be as it may.

As a means to taking your existence lightly and aspiring for the world beyond, you should become keenly aware that being alive is a matter of this day only, of the present moment alone. Realize this, and what is now scarcely endurable will be easily borne; your endeavor for the world beyond will be dauntless. If you imagine even casually that your life will be long, things of this world will swell in importance and all those concerns unrelated to the aspiration for enlightenment will arise.

For more than thirty years I have taken this truth of impermanence as my support, and to this day I make no error. I have looked as far to the future as the possibility of death by the year's end, but never contemplated life extending into the next year. I am now in old age. In all matters I think only of today. Ultimately, the key to liberation lies in setting your mind on impermanence.

implement box. A container of woven bamboo covered with leather. Kamo no Chōmei, in his *Ten-foot Square Hut* (*Hōjōki*), uses a similar term, stating that he keeps three "black leather containers" for the writings he possesses: poetry, musical works, and Genshin's *Essentials for Birth*. They were apparently lidded and small enough to be kept on a suspended shelf, and were used to protect fragile items from the weather in travel and in temporary shelter.

wicker pack. A kind of backpack. Packs were one of the few items

deemed necessary to the hijiri's life, and are a conspicuous feature in pictorial representations. Judging from references in *Plain Words*, they were liable to become objects of envy and attachment. Various kinds were in use, and a hijiri's affiliations could be discerned from his pack. For example, followers of Ippen (1239–1289), the "hijiri who discarded," used ornamented black wooden boxes with symbolic coloration (see *No Abode: The Record of Ippen*, p. 27).

Even for the person untroubled about daily necessities, it is extremely difficult to strive for the world beyond with peace of mind. Effective practice, then, turns not on the supply or lack of provisions, but simply on aspiration. Hence my own desire for such provisions died away long ago. Attaining the world beyond alone is crucial.

It is possible to get along by living life naturally as it comes. "Apart from liberation from samsaric existence, let all things be as they may!" Such is the detachment in which the person aspiring for birth abides. Awakening the aspiration for emancipation, however feebly, is the genuine and sincere homage to the Buddha made in true accord with the Buddha's mind. For this human body beset with wants, there can be no freedom from the necessities of life, so with garments of paper and such things as come to hand I manage my life. But to treat these things as if they were significant and to rank them alongside my practice for the world beyond would be the ultimate folly.

garments of paper. The cheapest form of clothing, made of heavy paper treated with persimmon tannin, weathered, and softened by hand. First adopted by monks observing strict precepts, for paper robes could be produced without depending on women at any stage.

People of ancient times, on casting off worldly life, lived with purity and simplicity of heart. Nowadays reclusion is but poorly understood, and through it people are instead corrupted in spirit.

Although the person aspiring for the world beyond chops wood and draws water, it should be the chopping wood and drawing water of one who is thinking of birth.

Wherever I look, I find only the world's uncertainty and the evanescence of my existence within it. Hence, although it may be but an everyday incident, I always sense my life in great peril. But you, monks, even when confronted with real danger, show not the slightest sign that you are aware. How little concerned you appear, then, when I see you at your daily tasks. The vital issue concerning the reality of impermanence is not just how it should be expressed. That can be done only after you have taken it even slightly to heart.

Those who seek the world beyond abide in the thought that they are out on a journey. Though you travel to the limits of cloud or sea, as long as you have physical existence, you cannot do without the bare essentials of food, clothing, and shelter. Nevertheless, whether you are attached to them or not makes all the difference. When you are constantly aware that you have but one night's lodging, not a permanent dwelling, nothing can obstruct your saying of the nembutsu.

"This existence would have ended pointlessly as a body cast aside in a field, but to have let go of it for the sake of

emancipation, enduring the cold and heat and the sickness: this will be the reminiscence of a greatly blessed lifetime!"

How rare are people who rejoice thus.

That learning is worthless to the outcast monk is a matter of degree. The person with the capacity should occasionally skim Genshin's *Essentials for Birth* in an elementary way, taking a look at the concrete descriptions of the transience of samsaric existence, the bliss in the Pure Land attained through the nembutsu, and so on. Hence the venerable Myōhen commented, "It is ridiculous for the person of nembutsu not to know what the ten joys of the Pure Land are."

But you should never labor after a thorough mastery or lucid understanding of every word and phrase just because study is recommended. In reading the text, it is enough to be able to grasp the gist without too much effort and to survey generally the most important passages. Once you have mastered this proven method, you will never deviate from the teaching, the fundamental intent of which lies in encouraging us to attain the world beyond. This is its living core.

Although you study only to this degree, if you sense your self-attachment or concern for reputation growing, you should resolutely desist. To turn medicine into poison is complete folly. On the other hand, if through your grasp of even a single sentence or phrase you find yourself more earnest in saying the nembutsu or your aspiration for birth strengthened, or you experience a fresh sense of urgency welling up within, you should indeed read the sacred words from time to time.

The person whose natural abilities are meager, however, should wholeheartedly say the Name without even this level of learning. If you endeavor in practice with genuineness of heart and mind, you will never stray from the basic intent of the teaching. The mind of faith—the mind aspiring for enlightenment—will arise of itself if you practice.

ten joys. The bliss resulting from ten benefits experienced with birth in the Pure Land. Discussed in *Essentials for Birth:* 1) being welcomed by Amida and a host of bodhisattvas; 2) the opening of the lotus on which one is born in the Pure Land; 3) taking on excellent bodily characteristics and transcendent powers; 4) experiencing the splendor of the Pure Land; 5) joy without end; 6) being able to save those one has known in this world; 7) joining the company of bodhisattvas; 8) seeing Amida and hearing the teaching from him; 9) paying homage to all the Buddhas; 10) advancing to Buddhahood (T84, 41–45).

Study the teaching that leads to the world beyond under a person who aspires to it. Learning devoid of aspiration is apt to be detrimental to others. There is a saying, "Only a serpent knows a serpent's mind." Likewise, the world beyond is apprehended only by the person with aspiration. Even though it may not actually harm your spirit, carefully avoid possessing anything that will foster greed in others.

43

Those who adopt the life of a recluse, however indifferent in manner, seeking to say the nembutsu in the peace of

their hearts, must relinquish even the implements of the supramundane Dharma. With provisions for subsistence in this world, then, their wariness must be all the greater, and they must learn to live in a poverty of things. Even in simply hiding their nakedness and eking out their day-to-day living, they should manage in a way that, befitting a hermit, leaves unstained their aspiration to be free.

KYŌBUTSU

44

Kyōbutsu-bō once said:

I have long embraced the truth that death is not to be feared. Strengthened by this, I find that when my condition in this present sickness takes a slight turn for the better, I'm taken aback by the thought that I'm not yet to die. So monks, put an end even to hopes of having a better pack. Now it may seem but a trifle, but in the end it will grow into a lingering attachment to samsaric life. Abide with vigilance in an aversion of this self and embrace the aspiration for death.

The attainment of the world beyond lies simply in contemplating quietly.

The old warriors of the eastern provinces used to say that if they stayed long in the capital, they'd lose their nerve. This reveals, likewise, the wisdom of those who aspire to the world beyond. Bodily repose and lucidity of mind come only after you have eradicated even the slightest con-

cern for fame and profit. Many of those who dwell in solitude cling to their way of life, believing that their minds are pure because they pass their time wholly in intoning verses in their still and tasteful retreats: they are deceiving themselves.

warriors. Samurai from the eastern provinces (Bandō) were known for their ferocity. It is said that the Taira warriors, after gaining ascendancy in Kyoto, took up the ways of courtiers and lost their fighting spirit. Thus, the Minamoto clan established their "bivouac government" in the east at Kamakura, far from the old capital, after seizing power.

still and tasteful (*yūgen*). Literally, "dark," "subtle," or "difficult to grasp or express." This term, which originally characterized the apprehension of profound truth in Taoist and Buddhist writings, was used to describe an aesthetic ideal, a sense of mystery and refinement harboring great depth of feeling. In medieval times, it came to include a cultivated appreciation of the spiritual loneliness and poverty of the hermit's thatched hut, which was regarded as a source of artistic and religious sensibility.

45

Hopeless is the hijiri who, clad in a robe of paper, takes pains to straighten the creases.

MYŌHEN

46

Someone asked Myōhen, "Is study beneficial when its sole aim is attainment of the world beyond?"

He answered, "At first, your thoughts may be on the world beyond, but later it will come to be entirely for esteem and possessions."

47

Myōhen often said:

Personally, I regret the day I began to dwell in this mountain monastery. I imagined that, after withdrawing from worldly life, I would be heating bean-paste over a fire of twigs and brushwood for my meals, but quite the opposite, I have become known as a "man of the Way" and live in splendid circumstances: this is altogether at odds with my original intention. And unaware of my inmost feelings, people see my secluded life here and think it worthy of admiration.

This he would say with a wry expression.

48

Although I should repent my bodily and mental acts of evil with the karma of speech—the nembutsu—I waste my time with vanities.

GYŌSEN

49

Heaven and earth answer no practical purpose, yet embrace all things. Thus is the person of the Way. In becoming one of no consequence whatsoever lies the supreme consequence.

GYŌSEN

50

Wholly aspiring to the Buddha Way is not an involved task. Allow yourself time, putting the Way before all else and setting your mind to no other business: this is the primary step.

GYŌSEN

51

People who take up scholarly study—though they may have long yearned for the world beyond—usually lose their aspiration.

KYŌRENJA

52

Gedatsu, vexed by the susceptibility of his palate, deliberately watered any carefully prepared food.

53

Shinkai crouched but never sat. Asked about this, he replied: "Where in the three realms and the six paths can I settle back with an easy mind?"

three realms. The spheres of samsaric existence where ignorant beings transmigrate, including the world of desires (living things dominated by lust and greed), the world of form (ethereal matter, where beings are free of desire), and the world on non-form (realm of lofty meditative states).

six paths. The various modes of existence in the world of desires: hell, famished ghosts, beasts, asuras (warring demigods), human beings, and gods.

54

When you come to a landing just as the ferry is pulling away, there is only one thing to be done: just grab hold and get aboard.

If the crossing you seek traverses the river of passions surging through this life, then once you have encountered Amida's Name there is nothing else to be done: just say the nembutsu, reverently entrusting yourself to it. None of us really realize how much we suffer because of our own calculating wisdom.

KENSHŌ-BŌ OF SHŌIN

55

None of us genuinely perceive that it's saying Namu-

amida-butsu that is crucial, without deliberating whether we are wholehearted in it or not.

KENSHŌ

56

There are none who have awakened an authentic entrusting of themselves to the Buddha. Who regrets the time taken up with other tasks because it keeps them from practice for the world beyond?

KENSHŌ

57

No one really realizes that the mind of highest good is that possessing the thought, "Buddha, save me!"

KENSHŌ

58

Extraordinarily rare are those who, casting aside the desires and ambitions that torment the spirit, seek to devote themselves wholly to saying the Name with their hearts and minds unadorned, just as they are. No one has truly wakened the aspiration just to say the nembutsu

single-heartedly, becoming one who does not even distinguish between black and white.

Do we realize what power is embodied in the mystery of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow? We are all busy fashioning our places in the world, neither reflecting on the evil of our existence nor turning a thought to the power of the Buddha and the Dharma. Thus our evil karma runs on unchecked. This is a miserable attitude.

KENSHŌ

59

The desire to hasten toward death is the greatest aid to attaining the world beyond.

KENSHŌ

60

It used to be that, in their aspiration for the world beyond, the senior monk became a novice, the sage a fool, the prosperous man poor, and the person of accomplishments unschooled. But now, people are completely different.

I was long on Mount Kōya, spending my youth and adulthood there, but I learned not a single Sanskrit letter. An inured renunciation of all desire for wealth and esteem requires that you turn your back even on the skills you

have. Going about acquiring others, then, is preposterous. For more than thirty years I have made a habit of abstaining from such knowledge.

When you have genuinely let go of your attachments, you show no sign of having done so. Thus, casting off concern for reputation and possessions does not mean you must feel constrained about keeping the company of other practicers or obtaining a single robe of paper to wear. This level of involvment and material comfort is an aid to the world beyond.

An infant turns to its mother without any idea why. There is simply an utter reliance. Entrusting yourself to the Name is like this.

KENSHŌ

61

The eighty thousand teachings of the Dharma all expound one word: death. Keep death in mind, and you will naturally acquire a grasp of all eighty thousand.

SHŌKŌ

62

When the late Jakugan-bō was confined to his sickbed, Kyōsen-bō gave this advice:

People who practice horseback archery learn a full-dress etiquette and ceremony that accompanies shooting. When it comes down to the actual day of contest, however, they are so filled with eagerness to shoot that once they have sprung forth on their horses, they forget everything but the desire to get their arrows to the target.

Likewise, you have been engrossed with one thing and another concerning the world beyond and have studied ceaselessly, but already you lie sick. Now you must embrace the aspiration to attain birth, saying the nembutsu with no other thought.

63

Once you have taken refuge in the Primal Vow and entrusted yourself to the Name, it is merely the work of the fawning demon within you to spend time sitting before a text, thinking you should read it because its teaching conforms with the nembutsu.

CHŪREN

fawning demon. Ippen states: "There are two kinds of demons, compliant and unruly. There are those that become demonic while heeding the practicer's thoughts and desires, and those that become so while thwarting and confounding him. Of these two, the compliant demons present the more serious problem" (*No Abode: The Record of Ippen*, pp. 145–46).

64

Words of the Dharma for the person aspiring to the world beyond will not exceed a single page.

KYŌBUTSU

65

Words of the Dharma for the person aspiring to the world beyond are simple in content, profound in aspiration.

KYŌBUTSU

66

I once told Shimbutsu-bō:

When people in secular life like blacksmiths and carpenters train apprentices in the ways of their trade, they do not necessarily teach in complete detail. Nevertheless, if the novice becomes competent at the essentials, they say that the way has been transmitted.

Similarly, even if you have nothing to show for these two or three years you've spent with me except that, as one who has broken away from the world, you do not lose sight of impermanence, then my original purpose will have been fulfilled.

KYŌBUTSU

67

Those mindful of the world beyond recognize that they should own nothing, not so much as a crock for salted bran.

SHUNJŌ

salted bran (jinta). Fermented pastes made with beans, rice and salt have long been a common part of the Japanese diet (see section 47). A paste made with rice bran is the coarsest such food, and although at times apparently eaten, is now used chiefly for pickling vegetables.

The setting for this comment is given in *Collection of Sand and Pebbles* (IV, 9): The Tendai prelate Kenshin held a forty-eight day meeting to discuss Genshin's *Essentials for Birth* with many eminent monks (this appears to be a variant report of the celebrated "Ōhara discussion" [*Ōhara dangi*]; see note on Kenshin). After it was over and the others had left, Hōnen asked Shunjō to state the crux of the discussion. Shunjō replied: "Know that anything on which your attachments abide—though it be but a crock for salted bran—should be cast away." Kenshin, calling it the finest comment to come out of the entire session, was moved to tears of joy.

68

As might be expected, one mark of aging is a growing awareness that the Pure Land is drawing near and that attainment of birth is definitely settled. Put simply, when you genuinely aspire for birth, it makes no difference whether you are walking, standing, sitting, or reclining while you utter the nembutsu. In just wholeheartedly saying "Namu-amida-butsu, Namu-amida-butsu" whether waking or sleeping, standing or sitting, rising or retiring,

you have all your travel provisions for the unfailing attainment of birth.

Learning may also seem important, but it is not really necessary. In fact, although you may clarify one doubtful issue through study, in the process you will stumble on other questions and so spend a lifetime resolving doubts, without a chance to utter the nembutsu in the peace of your heart. Learning, rather than being an aid to nembutsu, is a formidable obstruction.

JŌGAN

69

Seeking the world beyond is no different from carrying out your life on the paths of this world. This day is already at dusk. How easy it is to be slack in your labor. The year too drifts to a close; a lifetime is elapsing without any sense of urgency. At night, lie down and lament this meaningless procession of hours, and at dawn awaken and resolve to endeavor in your practice to the day's end.

When slovenly and negligent, set your mind on the transience of samsaric existence. When wayward thoughts take hold in your heart, raise your voice and utter the nembutsu. When confronted by demons and imps, arouse your compassion and try to help them; do not feel you must overcome them.

Poverty is the seed of awakening that day by day advances us along the Buddha-path. Possessions are the chains of birth-and-death, and night after night they move us to further evil.

ANONYMOUS

70

Of three-hundred sixty days a year, not one gives respite from the law of impermanence. Think of each hour, day and night, as none other than the time of death.

GEDATSU

71

My wish is to be wisdomless.

MYŌHEN

72

All through life, live in reproach of your life.

KYŌSEN

73

The meaning of the nembutsu path lies in clinging to no meaning.

SHŌSHIN

meaning . . . lies in no meaning (*gi naki o gi to su*). The crucial point in the nembutsu path is to say the Name with complete trust, free of all intentions to perform good and all calculation based on nembutsu utterance as one's own meritorious act. This phrase is attributed to Hōnen in other records; also see a similar expression in section 100.

74

Attaining birth in the Pure Land is our gravest concern, effortlessly resolved.

MYŌZEN

75

Someone asked Kyōjitsu-bō, "I say the Name knowing utterance to be the key to attaining birth, but my thoughts wander off to the moors and mountains of this world and I say it merely from my lips. What should I do?"

He answered, "When you set out with the idea of coming here, surely you did not think 'I'm going there,' 'I'm going there' with every step. You made your way here with your mind full of unrelated thoughts. Nevertheless, you did not cease walking and you have arrived.

"In this way, once you have wakened the aspiration for birth into the Land of Bliss, if you continue saying the Name of Amida to the end of your life, then even though your mind strays while doing so you will unfailingly attain birth."

76

Since his hermitage was inconvenient in floor plan and construction, Kū-amidabutsu of Mount Kōya remodeled it in his mind, commenting that it would be good if

slightly re-done. When someone offered to have the alterations made, however, he replied, "No, don't touch it. This way it is an aid to renunciation. If I found it pleasant and became attached to it, it would serve no purpose whatever."

77

Nothing is of greater moment than realizing that birth in the Land of Bliss is simple. Here, in essence, lies the central point of the Pure Land way. When you become aware of the ease of attaining birth, then it is indeed so. Nevertheless, modern scholars have produced a hodge-podge of conflicting doctrines, and because of the profundity of the sacred teaching, it is now all but impossible to distinguish true from erroneous. Hōnen's words, however, were free of this difficulty.

ZENSHŌ

78

At a shrine of Mount Hiei, a young court lady disguised herself as a priestess. In the middle of the night, after everyone had retired, she beat out clear raps on a drum before the shrine of Jūzenji, singing with perfect lucidity of heart: "Let it be as it may. Please, please. . . ."

After persistent questioning, she explained, "When the transience of samsaric existence fills my mind, I say: Let the things of this world be as they may. Please bring me to the world beyond!"

shrine of Jūzenji. One of seven shrines at the foot of Mount Hiei whose deities came to be regarded as the guardians of the temple complex. Jūzenji was considered the manifestation of Jizō Bodhisattva.

79

To chant the *Liturgy of Praise* or other hymns and gather people for sermons, even at a temple secluded in the woods, is likely to be detrimental.

SHINCHŌ

Liturgy of Praise (J. *Rokuji raisan*). Also known as *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land* (J. *Ōjōraisan*). Hymns by Shan-tao arranged to be chanted at six times during the day: dawn, midday, sunset, evening, midnight and early morning.

80

Anxiously facing winter without adequate clothing, I decided to descend Mount Kōya. But near the Great Gate I came on a deer, its fur new-grown into a winter coat, and turned back to dwell on the mountain.

HARIMA

Deer were regarded as possessing magical powers (see note on the cover illustration) and hijiri often used their pelts for clothing.

81

I have seen a hijiri heartened to learn that provisions had run out. For that leanness when the smoke of the cooking hearth dies away holds what it truly means to be a hermit.

ANONYMOUS

82

There is a three-point oral tradition regarding reclusion. First, do not continue to live in the same place. Second, do not dwell where other aspirants have built their huts. Third, do not ostentatiously reform your accustomed way of life with the idea that you have now abandoned the world.

KYŌJITSU

83

Do not stand conspicuous in people's eyes, like crimson leaves dotting the far hillside or a single tree in a field: the best hijiri are bamboo in a brake.

JI-AMIDABUTSU OF SHIMOTSUMURA

84

Wakening aspiration for enlightenment is best accomplished by stealth.

HŌNEN

85

Long ago I met Myōhen and, upon being initiated in the eighteen elements of practice, requested instruction in the samādhi of the Sanskrit characters in a lunar ring. Whereupon the master admonished me: "Do not cherish the thought of becoming learned or wise. Even Śākyamuni, when performing practices for Buddhahood, was neither scholar nor sage. He was an aspirant for enlightenment who sacrificed himself to learn the second half of a gatha and cast away his life to feed his body to a tigress. Of what use, then, are abstruse teachings? It is the aspiration for enlightenment that is paramount."

Although permission to receive instruction in the ring-samadhi was then granted, I felt drawn to abstain from learning it.

GANSHŌ

eighteen elements (*jūhachi dō*). Elementary forms of Shingon practice—including self-purification, preparation of the hall, adornment of the altar, offerings, etc.—performed using eighteen kinds of *mudrā* (manual signs).

samādhi of Sanskrit characters (*ji-rin kan*). Meditative practice in which one forms, on the mental image of a lunar ring, various patterns

of Sanskrit characters representing the five elements (earth, water, fire, wind, air) or the Buddhas and bodhisattvas one is worshiping.

gatha. Refers to a hymn taught in the *Nirvana Sutra:* "All things are impermanent;/They arise and then perish./When arising and perishing comes to an end,/That tranquility is bliss." When Śākyamuni, in a previous life, was performing bodhisattva practices in the Himalayas, the god Indra took on the form of a man-eating demon, appeared near him, and uttered the first half of the verse. In order to be taught the second half, Śākyamuni agreed to offer his body to the demon after hearing it.

tigress. In a previous life, Śākyamuni offered his body to a tigress to keep it from eating its cubs.

86

To live as a hermit is to be untrammeled by things of the world; it is like drawing a length of bamboo out from a dense thicket.

KYŌBUTSU

87

When they were with Kyōbutsu-bō in Kyoto, Kakumei-bō said to Shōren-bō, "The conduct of practicers in former times differs from what we see today. Before, what hijiri monks discussed among themselves was whether or not they personally aspired for the world beyond. Now they speak of capacity for scholarship as the crux of what it means to be an aspirant."

"Yes," said Kyōbutsu-bō, "the lives of practicers have changed utterly."

88

As you pursue your vagrant life of alms-begging and practice, carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of various places as sites for your final moments. Decide on one beforehand where you will be able to exert your efforts for the world beyond with a tranquil heart, leaving behind all self-attachment and concern for reputation. People lacking aspiration are devoid of such foresight.

ANONYMOUS

final moments. Many nembutsu practicers believed that one's condition in one's final moments determined one's future, and in particular, whether one could attain birth in the Pure Land. It was taught that Amida would come for those who were mindful of him and said the nembutsu at the very end. Such practicers therefore performed the nembutsu to prepare themselves for the time of death and to eradicate the effects of any wrongdoing, and they sought to arrange their surroundings so that they would remain undistracted at the time of death.

89

In subduing sexual craving, contemplation of bodily corruption or impermanence is secondary. Poverty is supreme. Hence the late Master Hōnen said, "I am not excessively troubled, for I put poverty and lowliness foremost. It is because practicers these days are well off that they find restraint difficult."

The master never spoke of relations between men and women, even in passing.

KYŌBUTSU

Hōnen, though teaching that only saying the nembutsu was necessary to attain birth and that whether or not one observed precepts was irrelevant, himself maintained basic precepts, including celibacy, throughout his life.

90

Kyōbutsu-bō said, to teach a fellow practicer the ideal stance of one seeking the world beyond:

May my daily existence be mean, my heart exalted.

91

A glimpse of the venerable Myōzen the other day overturned my previous assumptions. For I had been pondering sententiously the plainest of matters. Indeed, nothing surpasses giving yourself up joyfully to saying the nembutsu.

KYŌBUTSU

92

When scholar-monks of various schools are summoned to the imperial court for a service, they spend the time before it starts conferring with each other about matters of mutual concern. Up to the time of Emperor Ichijō the way of attaining the world beyond was all their discussion, for

it seems their study of esoteric and exoteric writings was solely for liberation from samsaric existence. From the reign of Emperor Shirakawa they began speaking of scriptural texts. By the time of Emperor Toba worldly affairs had become their sole interest. That was when I served at court. Up to that time the discussions were at least recorded. Now not even that is done.

ANONYMOUS

Emperor Ichijō. 980–1011; reigned 986–1011.
Emperor Shirakawa. 1053–1129; reigned 1072–1086.
Emperor Toba. 1103–1156; reigned 1107–1123.
The last two emperors were powerful figures after abdication, during the period of the "cloister government" (*insei*) when political struggle intensified and the power of the aristocratic court declined.

93

For the venerable monks of old, the great issue throughout their lives was whether or not they had the aspiration for enlightenment. Those of later times fell to discussing texts. Now they speak of nothing but their tales of war.

HONGAN OF HŌDŌ-IN

tales of war. Hijiri monks employed a variety of stories in their sermons, and the struggle between the Taira and Minamoto warrior clans provided graphic material for teaching the impermanence of life and the vanity of worldly fortune. As itinerant storytellers, they played an important role in teaching the recent history of their turbulent era to people of the countryside, and the present passage is often cited in discussions of the origins and religious coloration of war narratives such as the *Tales of the Heike.* These tales were often chanted to the accompaniment of the lute by bard-like "lute monks" (*biwa hōshi*), to melodies reminiscent of Tendai chant (*shōmyō*, see sections 40 and 107).

Hongan of Hōdō-in. Hōdō-in was a temple at Rengedani on Mount Kōya. Hongan ("Primal Vow") was used as a generic name for nembutsu hijiri on Mount Kōya; the person referred to here is unidentified.

94

Having renounced worldly life or become a recluse means that you have resolved, at bottom, to meet death at the road's edge or in a field. Bear this in mind, and you will never for a moment envy others, however disheartening your experience. But even in this, you must rely on the Buddha's power.

MYŌHEN

95

There are three hindrances to emancipation. First, cherished possessions—including sacred images for the altar and copies of scripture for daily use. Second, holding your life dear. Third, ignoring the instructions of a true teacher.

GEDATSU

96

The dwelling of the person seeking the world beyond

should not exceed three *ken* in area: one for the altar room, one for living space, and one for mundane tasks.

A RECORD OF SAICHŌ

ken. The area of a square about six feet on a side. A hut of three *ken* would correspond with that of Kamo no Chōmei, which had outside porches for household tasks.

97

From the time I first abandoned the world, I have made desire for an early death my study. Having continued now for more than thirty years, I never forget it even for a moment.

Since I hope for death soon, when I sense that my life will last even slightly longer, I am desolate and seized by misgivings. In this way, I put to an end all impulses to have even a better pack. Is not the important thing to reject samsaric existence?

KENSHŌ

98

Kyōshin, who settled in Kako, built no fence to the west: toward the Land of Bliss the gate lay open. Nor, befittingly, did he enshrine an image of worship; he kept no sacred books. In appearance not a monk nor yet worldly, he faced the west always, saying the nembutsu, and was like one to whom all else was forgotten.

99

To speak deeply about the meaning of the nembutsu is, on the contrary, a sign of shallowness. Even though your reasoning not go deep, if only your aspiration is deep, you are certain to attain birth.

HŌNEN

100

The way to say the nembutsu lies in having no "way." If you just say it earnestly, without taking account of your conduct or the good and evil of your heart, you will attain birth.

HŌNEN

101

Shōkō refused to engage in scholarship, saying:

Even those long devoted to learning abandoned it in favor of the nembutsu. In a person's all so fugitive moments, it is meaningless to neglect the nembutsu and study instead. Such activity is best left to the spare time that may remain after saying the Name.

102

Gyōgi taught: "Always be a companion to others and not yourself at center." In acting as a support to others lies true equanimity of heart.

JI-AMIDABUTSU OF SHIMOTSUMURA

103

A hijiri cautioned his fellow practicer:

Do not hunger after possessions. Accumulating is easy, but the important thing is letting go.

104

Nin-amidabutsu forgot how to write Chinese characters and Japanese script; he used only the simplest syllabary.

105

However valiantly you have wakened the aspiration for enlightenment, take your active practice down a peg or two. Give heart the higher place, practice the lower.

KYŌRENJA

106

I had to rebuke some fellow practicers:

You're like those who add baggage to the hijiri's pack in order to strengthen their footing.

KYŌBUTSU

107

Kyōbutsu-bō, in his last illness, three days before death, said:

The venerable Myōhen told me, "Just hold to the thought, 'Buddha, save me!' All else is useless."

I never took this seriously, but the truth of it comes to me now. Even contemplating bodily corruption is meaningful only in normal circumstances, not when facing death.

Anoku-bō of Tōjōji said, "To learn the scriptural passages as used in ceremonial chant is to turn them into monkey-music." I see now what he meant.

monkey-music. Literal translation of *sarugaku,* a term for popular entertainments, including the precursor of nō drama, often performed at temples and shrines.

108

While performing practice in Shikoku, Shinkai wrote on the wall of a farmhouse:

Say the nembutsu without becoming a "person of the nembutsu" and you will attain birth.

109

Someone asked which was better: to be anxious about birth, reflecting on one's lack of genuine aspiration, or to feel convinced that one's birth is certain, without examining one's way of life.

I answered: "Long ago I met the lay-priest Ogura. He explained that birth is settled at the very first moment faith is awakened; it is simply that, since one's span has not run out, one's physical existence has yet to perish. His own attainment of birth was resplendent. I have heard that lay-priest Kumagai said much the same thing."

GYŌSEN

110

Zenshō-bō also said, "Birth into the Pure Land is settled in the same sense that death is the inevitable end of all living things." He attained a birth that was marvelous in all respects.

These two or three men—Ogura, Kumagai, Zenshō-bō—directly received Master Hōnen's guidance and followed his teaching. It is imperative, then, that we abide in the realization that our birth is firmly settled.

(This was Gyōsen's response to a question from Jishin.)

111

Hongaku-bō of Chinzei asked Myōhen, "It is said that uttering the Name when you are distracted does not constitute good; you must first still the mind and then recite it. How should I go about this?"

Myōhen answered, "That statement applies to the most adept. Inferior practicers like myself are wholly incapable of ridding the heart and mind of distractions. Hence, without concern about whether we are agitated or not, we simply take a rosary with a sturdy strand and turn the beads, saying the Name. To wait expectantly for the moment the mind is concentrated would mean never being able to say the nembutsu."

112

Hōnen often said, "Oh, may I splendidly attain birth this time!"

Overhearing this, Jōgan-bō said, "If even you speak with such uncertainty, how anxious must others feel about birth."

Then Hōnen smiled and said, "Until the very moment we mount the lotus-seat, how can we put an end to such thoughts?"

113

Awanosuke's nembutsu and my own are exactly the same. We have nothing in mind aside from "Save me, Amida Buddha!"

HŌNEN

Awanosuke was considered among the dullest members of Hōnen's following. Thus Hōnen tested Shōkō, asking how Awanosuke's way of saying the Name compared with Hōnen's own. When Shōkō answered that the master's nembutsu was certainly superior, Hōnen responded with the comment above. The exchange is similar to that sparked by Shinran, who said that the mind with which he said the nembutsu was the same as Hōnen's. Other disciples criticized this comment as an audacious claim to the same depth of learning and insight, and presented the matter to Hōnen, who said, "My trust has been imparted by Amida; so has Shinran's. Therefore they are one and the same" (*Tannishō*, Postscript).

114

Shan-tao's teaching that we will attain birth through saying the Name "ten times or even once" gives us the essentials of trust in the nembutsu; his statement that we should "not abandon it from moment to moment" gives us the essentials of practice.

HŌNEN

Shan-tao's teaching. Concerning "ten times or even once": "By saying the Name to the end of one's life or down to but ten times or even once, a person easily attains birth through the power of the Buddha's Vow" (*Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land*, T47, 429a). Concerning "moment to moment," see Passage 26.

115

Someone said to Myōhen, "For the brief period I engage in study I want to decrease my recitations of the Name."

Myōhen replied, "The end of study lies nowhere but in the practice of nembutsu. If you intend to decrease your utterances, I cannot teach you."

116

In my heart is the thought, "Amida Buddha, save me!" and on my lips is its utterance.

SHŌKŌ

117

The late Master Hōnen said, "When you say the nembutsu for the sake of attaining birth, the great significance of this act fills your heart and, thus encouraged, you wish to utter it always. With this, know that you are already possessed of the three essential attitudes."

SHŌKŌ

118

Hōren said, "Please tell me frankly whether wisdom is essential for attaining birth, for if it is, I will devote myself

to religious study. Or, if simply saying the Name is enough, I wish to know the reason for this."

Hōnen answered, "The commentaries unequivocally affirm that saying the Name is the act that results in birth. They clearly state also that no distinction is made between the wise and the ignorant. Hence, the utterance of the Name is sufficient to attain birth. Rather than give yourself to study, wholeheartedly say the nembutsu. When you encounter Amida, Avalokiteśvara, and Mahāsthāmaprāta, what scriptural passage will not be plumbed? People who have yet to grasp the teaching of birth through the nembutsu should study it. But once they know it, they should lose no time for saying the Name by chasing after insignificant bits of wisdom."

Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāptā (J. Kanzeon, literally, "One who perceives the sounds of the world," and Daiseishi, "One who has attained great power"). The bodhisattvas who accompany Amida Buddha, identified with compassion and wisdom, respectively. It is taught that they come at the point of death to take nembutsu practicers to the Pure Land.

119

Even those who lack the three essential attitudes will come to attain them if they follow the ancient method of thinking perforce that their birth is firmly settled.

NEN'A

120

All things considered, the fundamental teaching of Pure Land Buddhism amounts to no more than the thought, "Amida Buddha, save me!"

NEN'A

121

In the course of life in this world, the unenlightened person will inevitably feel desire for esteem and wealth. The understanding and practice for birth into the Pure Land, however, must be wholly genuine and real.

SHŌKŌ

122

After his attainment of birth, Hōnen appeared to Jūshinbō of Miidera in a dream and answered his question:

Though you ask, Amida Buddha is completely without appearances. One can only say the Name.

123

You need not set aside special periods for the nembutsu, but when your mind is concentrated—as when you intone

the Name during the chanting of the *Liturgy of Praise*—carefully maintain the aspiration to see the Buddha before you.

NEN'A

special periods. For example, one-day or seven-day periods of constant nembutsu recitation.

see the Buddha before you. Taught as the goal of nembutsu practice in some strains of the Pure Land teaching. On Mount Hiei, for example, practice of constant circumambulation of a statue of Amida while chanting the nembutsu was taught to culminate in seeing the Buddhas of the cosmos before one. This idea is related to the concept of attaining birth by seeing Amida at the moment of death and being taken to the Pure Land.

Smaller Sutra. One of the three major Pure Land sutras; also known as the *Amida Sutra*, the title of the more widely used of two Chinese translations.

124

When the time for midday worship came, Shōkō would break off whatever he was doing and immediately begin the chant of the *Smaller Sutra* and the recitation of hymns and nembutsu—even in the midst of a sermon, and though there might be but a few words remaining. It is said that the practicers gathered to hear him could not help but join in the hymns also.

NEN'A

Smaller Sutra. One of the three major Pure Land sutras; also known as the *Amida Sutra*, the title of the more widely used of two Chinese translations.

125

Someone asked, "The *Contemplation Sutra* teaches how one may see Amida Buddha's body and land. Should I do such meditations even if I practice utterance of the Name?"

Hōnen answered, "In the beginning I too performed such useless practices, but not any longer. I entrust myself solely to the utterance of the Name."

JŌGAN

126

A person jumping over a ten-foot ditch will try to leap fifteen. Those aspiring for birth should attain the settled faith, and still continue their effort.

HŌNEN

127

If you abide in an attitude of self-power, even saying the Name but a single time will be an expression of self-attachment. If you entrust yourself to Other Power, utterance after utterance, nembutsu after nembutsu, will be the manifestation of Other Power.

HŌNEN

128

If you feel your attainment of birth is firmly settled, then it is settled. If you feel it is not, then it is not.

HŌNEN

129

How lamentable it is that those who believe in causality are weak in their faith in Other Power, and those who believe in the Primal Vow do not acknowledge the law of causality. If you entrust yourself wholly to Amida's Vow and further believe in causation, you will be in accord with the Buddha's intent and will attain birth.

NEN'A

causality. Buddhist tradition teaches that one reaps the fruits of one's own acts; good acts result in favorable life conditions in the future, and evil acts result in pain. Through the power of Amida's Vow, however, even those who have spent a lifetime in evil can attain birth in the Pure Land. These two assertions are not in contradiction because the Pure Land path, like all forms of Buddhism, is based on practice through which one's existence is transformed by the truth or reality expressed in the teachings. Pure Land Buddhism is distinctive in that the transformative practice has been accomplished by Amida Buddha, and it becomes the beings' own practice as the utterance of the Name.

130

With a heart free of deceit, I entrust myself to Amida's

Primal Vow, certain that I will attain birth. This is termed the three essential attitudes.

NEN'A

131

Be diligent in making yourself a hijiri. Of obstacles to birth, none exceed covetousness. Among the various forms of evil, the foremost is hunger for things.

GYŌSEN

132

If you truly desire to attain birth, just say the nembutsu, without becoming solicitous about others or involving yourself in sundry matters. You can hope to aid other sentient beings when you return to this defiled world from the Pure Land.

ANONYMOUS

Shinran states: "In our present lives, it is hard to carry out the desire to aid others, however much love and tenderness we may feel; hence, such compassion always falls short of fulfillment. Only the saying of the Name manifests the heart of great compassion that is replete and thoroughgoing" (*Tannishō*, 4).

133

Learn well the taste of the nembutsu!

KYŌJITSU

134

It is a great pulley that Amida has furnished!

CHIEF ABBOT KENSHIN

135

Those who revere Shan-tao should endeavor in no practice other than the Name. Nevertheless, they should accept as a matter of course those opportunities to do good that spontaneously present themselves and that do not become obstacles to the nembutsu. They should not find such activities distasteful, thinking they are to be rejected. But neither should they take them up in the time devoted to nembutsu, thinking it important to perform them.

JŌGAN

Shan-tao enumerates five forms of practice focusing on Amida Buddha as the "five right practices" for attaining birth: 1) sutra chanting, 2) contemplating Amida and the Pure Land, 3) worshiping Amida, 4) saying the Name, and 5) offering praise and homage to Amida. Of these, he singles out saying the Name as the "act of true settlement" of birth. This is the central act, and other good practices are taught as auxiliary or supportive of one's nembutsu practice.

136

Although the Buddhist teaching states that virtues are best hidden, purposely making a show of foolishness is also a fault, one that will turn into indolence. It is like going to one's quarters instead of the practice hall and, because it is a place for sleep, soon dozing off in the midst of uttering the nembutsu. The auxiliary practices, then, are important for the encouragement they give the unenlightened, who are forever inclined to shiftlessness.

JŌGAN

137

Those who aspire for the world beyond cease to do the things they want; for all that they desire in their hearts to do is wrong.

ANONYMOUS

138

Once, when Kyōbutsu-bō was practicing in Ōshū, he was given lodging in a layman's house. He found that the walls and surrounding fences had all been allowed to fall into disrepair and asked about it. The owner explained, "I'm planning to move to the Renown County area."

Tears came to Kyōbutsu's eyes, and turning to his fellow practicers he said, "When aspiration fills the heart,

a person naturally casts off attachments to this defiled world. This is a telling reply."

Renown County. Kyōbutsu takes the place name, in its literal meaning, as a reference to the Pure Land.

139

Followers of Kyōbutsu were speaking of what they wished for in the Pure Land way. One of them (Tsuchio Shirōtarō) said, "Plain words about attaining the world beyond unencumbered by doctrine."

Kyōbutsu, struck by this, exclaimed, "A superb thought! There is nothing to match that for getting to the quick."

140

Reclusion has nothing to do with harboring a deep aversion for humankind. And to fear people without cause also reflects a warped outlook. Rather, at the heart of abandoning the world lies a profound rejection of the craving for esteem and wealth.

Since all practicers in their foolishness find it difficult to manage alone, you would probably do well to associate with one or two others who do not arouse strong yearnings for fame and possessions. If the number increases, however, there are bound to be problems.

ANONYMOUS

Appendices

Words on the Dharma at Yokawa

Yokawa hōgo Attributed to Genshin

To part from the three evil courses and be born human is cause for great joy. Our position in the world may be wretched, but can it be worse than that of beasts? The household we are born in may be destitute, but our lot still surpasses that of famished ghosts. Our hopes and wishes may be frustrated, but this can hardly be compared with the pain in hell. Moreover, dwelling in this world consciously experiencing its sorrow is an opportunity to weary [of samsaric existence]. Be glad, therefore, at having been born a human being.

However shallow our trust, the Primal Vow itself is fathomless; if we simply entrust ourselves to it, then, we will unfailingly attain birth.

However spiritless our utterance of the nembutsu, if we but say it, we gain with certainty Amida's welcome at death. Vast are the virtues of the Primal Vow, so rejoice at having encountered it.

It is taught that delusional thinking is, by nature, the fundamental ground of foolish beings' existence. Apart from our delusional aversions and attachments, we have no mind. Up to the very point of death we will be foolish beings wholly possessed of delusional thoughts and feelings, but if we say the nembutsu in full awareness of this, we will be blessed with Amida's coming, and at the

moment we mount the lotus dais, our delusions will be overturned, becoming the mind of enlightenment.

The nembutsu emerging to utterance from our delusional thoughts is like a lotus blossom unstained by the mud. Do not doubt, therefore, that your attainment of birth is settled.

The One-Page Testament

Hōnen's *Ichimai kishōmon*

The nembutsu I have taught is not the contemplative practice that has been discussed and proclaimed by the accomplished sages of China and Japan. Neither is it to recite the nembutsu after having grasped its meaning through scholarly study. It is simply to utter "Namu-amida-butsu," realizing that if you just say it, you are certain to attain birth in the Land of Bliss. Nothing else is involved.

The teachings speak of three essential attitudes, four rules of practice, and so on, but these are all inherent and fulfilled in the thought that you will decidedly be born through Namu-amida-butsu. If you imagine that there is some abstruse matter apart from this, you will isolate yourself from the compassion of the two Honored ones, Śākyamuni and Amida, and slip through the net of the Primal Vow.

You may have carefully studied all the teachings that Śākyamuni taught during his lifetime, but if you entrust yourself to the nembutsu, then you should—by turning yourself into a foolish person ignorant of even a single written character, and becoming the same as the unlettered women and men who take religious orders while remaining at home—simply say the nembutsu with wholeness of heart, free of any pretensions to wisdom.

As testimony, I seal this with the imprint of my hands.

The faith and practice taught in the Pure Land path are exhaustively stated on this single sheet of paper. I know no special doctrine whatsoever apart from what is written here. To keep erroneous doctrines from arising after my death, I have thus recorded my thoughts.

Sealed: Genkū (Hōnen)

Words on the Dharma in One Page

Myōhen's *Isshi hōgo*

The virtuous masters of old were superbly accomplished in wisdom and the various forms of practice, and their deaths were splendid as they freely fulfilled their hearts' desire.

Most teachers of the different schools at present, though they study texts, possess little resolution to achieve enlightenment. They use the Buddha's words as a bridge for making their way in the world, and turn the sacred teachings into means for supporting their material existence. Thus, their training in ordinary times is wholly for the sake of esteem and profit, and while they idly debate between the accommodated teachings and the real, days and months pass swiftly by. Suddenly they find that the time of death is upon them, and know not what to do. Vacillating between saying the nembutsu and reciting mantras, they are overcome with anxiety. It is like rushing to dig a well when caught in a drought.

From ordinary times, then, set your thoughts wholly on the means by which to resolve the one great matter: breaking free from samsaric existence.

Biographical Notes

Anoku-bō. Unidentified. Tōjōji is said to have been in Hitachi province, in the Kantō region.

The term "-bō," originally indicating a monk's cell, came to signify monks themselves and was frequently added as an element in Buddhist names.

Awanosuke. Had been a fortune-teller living in Fushimi, south of Kyoto, and notorious for his love of wine and women. Once, while on his way to Harima province, he lost his way, and realizing that in the course of his life in this world also he needed a guide, took refuge in Hōnen, becoming a devoted follower. He began the custom of holding two rosaries of one hundred eight beads, using one as he recited the nembutsu and the other in keeping count; this is the origin of the double-stranded *nenju*. It is said that late in life he went to the Konjikidō in Hiraizumi and there, while sitting with hands together in nembutsu, attained birth.

Chūren. Unidentified.

Bishop Eshin. Title for Genshin (942–1017), the first major Pure Land thinker in Japan. His father died when he was seven, and at the age of nine he embarked on monastic life at Mount Hiei. Quickly showed aptitude in Tendai studies, but rejecting worldly recognition and rewards, retired to a secluded temple on the mountain, Eshin-in at Yokawa, to dedicate himself to study and practice. Mastered a wide range of Tendai teachings and founded the Eshin branch of Tendai scholarship. The most influential of his numerous works, however, was *Essentials for Birth*, which encourages all people to reject mundane attachments and aspire for the Pure Land, and teaches various forms of practice for attaining birth, including utterance of the nembutsu.

Ganshō. Kamakura warrior Katsurayama Gōrō; Kōya hijiri.

Gedatsu (1155–1213). Also known as Jōkei. Born into an influential branch of the Fujiwara clan; nephew of Myōhen. At the age of eight, began his Buddhist studies in Kōfukuji, the ancient and powerful Nara temple of the Hossō (consciousness-only) school. Took the tonsure at the age of eleven, and eventually gained renown for his scholarship, preaching, and saintly adherence to precepts. In 1192, disillusioned by the worldliness of the ecclesiastical establishment, he left Kōfukuji to take up a life of reclusion on nearby Mount Kasagi. There he devoted himself to study and discipline, and worshiped Maitreya Bodhisattva, the future Buddha, aspiring for birth into Maitreya's pure land, Tuṣita heaven. In 1205, he wrote the "Kōfukuji Petition," a request to the imperial court by established temples that Hōnen's teaching be banned. This petition contributed to Hōnen's exile in 1207.

Gyōgi (670–749). Renowned for his propagation of Buddhism during the Nara period; considered a forerunner of the wandering hijiri. Entered the Nara temple Yakushiji at the age of fifteen and studied the Hossō school. Practiced austerities in the mountains, then worked to transmit the teaching to common people. He traveled widely, establishing *dōjō* or seminaries and undertaking such projects as building roads and bridges, digging canals for irrigation, and founding clinics. His activities were recognized by Emperor Shōmu, who appointed him great archbishop (*daisōjō*), the highest clerical rank, and commissioned him to collect contributions from throughout the country for constructing the statue of Vairocana Buddha at Tōdaiji. Regarded as a bodhisattva during his lifetime.

Gyōsen (d. 1278). First studied Shingon teachings under Jōhen (1166–1224), a Shingon scholar-monk with a strong appreciation of Hōnen's teaching. Became accomplished in meditative practices; later turned to the nembutsu. Said to have been a disciple of both Shōkō and Zenshō. Lived in Kōzuke province (Gumma) and taught those who came to him. Compiled *Biographies of Birth through the Nembutsu* (*Nembutsu ōjō den*), which consists of sketches of nembutsu practicers, including a number from the warrior class in his area, focusing on experiences at the time of death.

Harima. Unidentified. May simply indicate a hijiri from Harima province (modern Hyōgo).

Hōnen (1133–1212). Also known as Genkū. Established the Jōdo school based on the sole practice of saying the nembutsu. When he was nine, his father, a provicial samurai official, was struck down in a property struggle; his dying wish was that his son not seek revenge. Hōnen was forced to flee to a local temple for safety. In 1145, he went to Mount Hiei, and two years later, at the age of fifteen, was ordained. He devoted himself to basic Tendai studies for several years. It was a time, however, when Enryakuji and its soldier-monks were embroiled in political conflicts; therefore, in 1150, Hōnen retired to Kurodani, an isolated area of the mountain which served as a retreat for Pure Land practice. There he studied under Eikū. In 1156, went for a time to Nara to study the Pure Land teachings of the older schools. In 1175, on reading a commentary on the *Contemplation Sutra* by the T'ang dynasty master Shan-tao, awakened to the attainment of birth through simply saying the nembutsu entrusting oneself to Amida's Vow. Finding the Tendai Pure Land practices unnecessary, he left his life of nearly three decades on Mount Hiei and descended to Kyoto, settling at the foot of the eastern hills. Taught the path of nembutsu to people of all levels of society, attracting numerous disciples. Criticism from the established temples gradually mounted, until he was exiled from the capital and his teaching banned by imperial order in 1207. Pardoned in 1211; returned to Kyoto, where he died in 1212.

Hongaku-bō. Unidentified. The name is found in the lineage of Ryūkan's Chōrakuji branch of the Jōdo school, which states that Hongaku lived in Kyushu where he spread the teaching.

Hōren (1146–1228). Also known as Shinkū. From a family of high court officials. At the age of twelve, began Buddhist studies at Kurodani under Eikū, a master of Tendai Pure Land teachings and the "quickly perfecting precepts" (*endon-kai*). Hōnen was a fellow student, and after Eikū's death, Shinkū became his earliest disciple, establishing the lineage of Eikū–Genkū (Hōnen)–Shinkū. In 1204, Shinkū wrote the "Seven Article Pledge" with which Hōnen's following responded to criticism of their conduct from Mount Hiei, and after Hōnen's exile in 1207, he became the leader of the remaining movement, laying the foundation for the later Jōdo school. He attended Hōnen after his return to

Kyoto, becoming custodian of his remains and belongings, and worked to maintain the movement amid periodic attacks from Mount Hiei. Among his students was Myōzen.

Jakugan-bō. Disciple of Myōhen; lived on Mount Kōya.

Ji-amidabutsu. Unidentified. Shimotsumura is in modern Wakayama prefecture.

The use of names ending "-amidabutsu" (Amida Buddha) among nembutsu hijiri is commonly traced to Shunjō, who called himself "Namu-amidabutsu" to encourage disciples to say the Name. However, there is evidence of earlier usage among monks practicing *yūzū-nembutsu.*

Jien (1155–1225). Ranking Tendai prelate and one of the foremost men of letters of his age. Son of regent Fujiwara Tadamichi. Entered monastic life at the age of eleven; eventually served as chief abbot of Enryakuji on Mount Hiei. Known as a historian (author of *Gukanshō*, in which he is critical of Hōnen's following) and prolific poet (see section 36). Brother of regent Kujō Kanezane, one of Hōnen's main supporters.

Jishin (d. 1297?). Disciple of Nen'a.

Jōgan (1168–1251). Also known as Shūgen. Born into the Fujiwara clan, the son of a high minister. Resided at Ninnaji, where he studied the Shingon school, gaining knowledge of traditional learning concerning Sanskrit characters. Converted to Tendai before finally becoming a disciple of Hōnen and retiring to an isolated temple in the Daigoji compound. Later moved to a hermitage at Takedani, near Kiyomizu. An incident in which he recommends Shingon dharani over the nembutsu to benefit the dead is told in *Essays in Idleness*, section 222.

Jūshin-bō. Two biographies for monks of this name survive. (1) Also known as Kakuyu or Shutsu'a (1158–1233). Son of a scholar of Chinese classics; studied Tendai esoteric teachings at Miidera. Later, heard the nembutsu teaching from Hōnen. About the age of forty, retired to a hermitage in the northern part of Kyoto city and taught the attainment of birth in the Pure Land through various practices. Hōnen's disciple Kakumei-bō Chōsai studied under Jūshin after Hōnen's death and

spread his teaching. (2) Also known as Kakken; eminent Tendai monk, brother of Hōren-bō Shinkū. It is not known which figure is referred to here, or whether they are indeed different monks.

Kakumei-bō (1184–1266). Also known as Chōsai. Son of the lord of Iyo (modern Ehime) Fujiwara Kuniaki. Went to Kyoto at the age of nine and studied Chinese classics. At the age of nineteen, became a monk and studied under Hōnen. As a close attendant of the aging master, he accompanied him into exile in 1207, and returned with him to the capital in 1211. After Hōnen's death, studied widely, including precepts and Tendai meditation practices; also long practiced *zazen* under Zen master Dōgen. Founded a temple in his native Shikoku. Devoted his later years to writing and lecturing, living at Kubonji in northern Kyoto. There he attracted a number of disciples; Gyōnen, prominent Kegon scholar and chronicler of the Pure Land streams of the period, heard his lectures on Shan-tao's *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra.* However, his branch of the Pure Land school, though conciliatory toward other schools in that it recognized attainment of birth through various practices and not nembutsu alone, soon declined.

Kenshin (1130–1192). Monk of the Eshin branch of Tendai. Son of the lord of Mimasaka (modern Okayama) Fujiwara Akiyoshi. Went to Mount Hiei while still a child and gained high rank and reputation as a scholar of exoteric and esoteric teachings. At the age of forty-three, however, he retired to a secluded life of practice at Ōhara, north of Kyoto. In 1186, he is said to have invited Hōnen to a gathering with scholar-monks of various schools in order to discuss the teaching of the sole practice of nembutsu. Participants included, among the monks mentioned in *Plain Words*, Myōhen, Gedatsu-bō Jōkei, and Shunjō-bō Chōgen. Deeply impressed by Hōnen's message, Kenshin abandoned other practices and devoted himself to the nembutsu, participating in sessions of constant recitation with twelve fellow aspirants. In 1190, he was appointed to the office of chief abbot (*zasu*) of Enryakuji.

Kenshō-bō. Nembutsu hijiri who practiced on Mount Kōya, then retired to Matsukage-yama (Shōin) in the hills of Yamashina, southeast of Kyoto, where many monks of Myōhen's lineage lived (Gorai, *Kōya hijiri*, p. 226).

Kū-amidabutsu. Name taken by Myōhen after meeting Hōnen (section 4) and converting to his teaching.

Kumagai (1138–1207). Also known as Rensei. Gained fame as a fierce warrior during the struggle between the Taira and the Minamoto. Born a samurai of the Taira clan named Jirō Naozane; son of the head of the Kumagai district in Musashi province (modern Saitama). With his father, served Minamoto Yoritomo. In 1192, after losing a boundary dispute, renounced worldly life and studied under Hōnen, becoming a devoted follower. With a warrior's directness, he constantly recited the nembutsu and avoided turning his back toward the west in his daily activities. Said to have predicted the day of his death and achieved birth in the Pure Land before many witnesses. The legend of his slaying of the Taira youth Atsumori and subsequent revulsion from violence is one of the best known chapters of the *Tales of the Heike.*

Kyōbutsu. From Makabe in Hitachi province in eastern Japan. Nothing is known of his Buddhist training, but from information in *Plain Words*, he seems to have become a Kōya hijiri and to have met Myōhen when about the age of forty, becoming an important disciple. He also had associations with Hōnen. Perhaps roughly contemporaneous with Shinran (Gorai, *Bukkyō bungaku*, p. 208).

Kyōjitsu. Also known as Enkai. Practiced Tendai on Mount Hiei and later turned to Pure Land teachings under Hōnen's disciple Ryūkan.

Kyōrenja (1199–1281). Also known as Nyū'a. Originally studied the doctrine of *ichinen* (literally, "one thought-moment" or "one utterance"), which emphasizes the mind with which the nembutsu is said. In 1214, however, he attended the memorial service on the third anniversary of Hōnen's death, and on hearing a sermon by Seikaku (1176–1235), an advocate of diligent recitation throughout life, converted. Went to Kyushu to study under Shōkō, becoming one of his leading disciples. At the age of thirty-eight, after Shōkō's death, went to Kamakura and actively spread the teaching. Author of several commentaries. Also see the note on the cover illustration.

Names ending in *-renja* ("lotus society") were adopted by Pure Land Buddhists identifying themselves with the White Lotus Society, a group of monk and lay aspirants formed in China by Hui-yuan (J. Eon) in the

fifth century. Nembutsu recitation as a member of a fellowship was a widespread form of practice in the Heian and Kamakura periods.

Kyōsen-bō. Of Hitachi province (modern Ibaraki). Disciple of Hōnen; later studied under Myōhen on Mount Kōya.

Kyōshin (d. 866). Early Heian-period figure who originally trained at Kōfukuji in Nara, becoming an respected scholar-monk. Aspiring for birth in the Pure Land, however, he decided to abandon his priestly accomplishments. Made a wandering pilgrimage throughout Japan, eventually settling near the village of Kako, in present Hyōgo prefecture. There he abandoned the monk's life, building a thatched hut and taking a wife. He lived in poverty, working fields and carrying baggage for travelers, and passed thirty years in utterance of the nembutsu. He was a forerunner of the Kamakura-period nembutsu practicers, and his story is found in *Konjaku monogatari* and other sources. Shinran, in a record of his sayings, is quoted, "I follow the example of the shami Kyōshin" (*Gaijashō*, compiled in 1337), and Ippen, when seriously ill, sought to travel to Kyōshin's grave to die.

Myōhen (1142–1224). Also known as Kū-amidabutsu. Entered Tōdaiji after his father, the influential counselor of state Fujiwara Michinori, was killed in the Heiji Rising in 1159. Studied the Sanron school and esoteric Buddhism. Gaining renown for his learning, was invited to lecture at the annual Vimalakīrti session at Kōfukuji and received the title "Master of Precepts," but rejecting worldly pride and esteem, retired to Mount Kōmyō, a temple between Nara and Kyoto used for reclusive Pure Land practice by Tōdaiji monks. Soon seeking further distance from the secular world and deeper study of esoteric Buddhism, went to Mount Kōya around 1173. Lived at Renge-zammaiin in a secluded valley known as Rengedani; this small temple became known as "the hermitage" (*go-anjitsu*, see section 76). Many reclusive monks gathered around him to perform nembutsu practices under his guidance, and he is recognized as the founder of the Rengedani hijiri and a leading figure in the formation of the Kōya hijiri who roamed the countryside during this period. Though he adamantly refused the clerical rank of bishop (*sōzu*), he was known by this title. The encounter in section 4 was his first with Hōnen. It is said to have taken place at Shitennōji in Osaka and to have decisively altered Myōhen's nembutsu practice.

Myōzen (1167–1242). Tendai scholar-monk; born into the Fujiwara clan, son of a high court official. Studied exoteric and esoteric teachings on Mount Hiei under Kenshin (section 134) and others. Built the Bishamon-dō in northern Kyoto where he lived in reclusion; attained the high clerical rank of *hōin* (Seal of Dharma). At first opposed Hōnen's teaching, but after Hōnen's death was converted through an encounter with Hōren (section 35) and through reading Hōnen's *Passages on the Nembutsu Selected in the Primal Vow* (*Senjakushū*).

Nen'a (or Nenna; 1199–1287). Also known as Ryōchū. Recognized as the third head of the Jōdo school (Chinzei branch). Through numerous writings, systematized its doctrinal base, and also prepared for its eventual growth in Kyoto by training many disciples and establishing temples, chiefly in the Kantō region. Born of the Fujiwara; his father served as a samurai in Iwami province (modern Shimane). Began Buddhist training in his home province at the age of twelve and received precepts at Mount Hiei in 1214. As a youth, studied widely under masters of Tendai, Hossō, Zen, and precepts, but from 1232, returned to his home province and devoted himself to constant nembutsu recitation. In 1236 went to Kyushu and studied the Pure Land masters intensively under Shōkō. Receiving Shōkō's approval of his understanding, returned to his home area in 1238 and propagated the teaching. In 1248, lectured in Kyoto on Hōnen's *Senjakushū*, then made a pilgrimage to Zenkōji. From there, went to Kantō, where he was very active in lecturing and writing, building a large following. In 1259, went to Kamakura, the capital of the Shogunate. Though the activities of nembutsu monks were strictly watched, he received the support of influential figures and gained a respected position in the world of Buddhism of the day. In 1276, at the request of disciples who sought to unify the Pure Land teachings in the capital, went to Kyoto, where he spent eleven years teaching and writing. In 1286, returned to Kamakura, where he died the following year.

Nin-amidabutsu. May refer to Ninkū, thirteenth century monk, disciple of Shōkō.

Lay-priest Ogura (d. 1248). Also known by the Buddhist name Chimyō. According to Hōnen's biography, Chimyō was born a samurai in Kōzuke province (modern Gumma). When serving in the capital in 1200, he heard Hōnen's teaching and resolved to become a

monk. After six years with Hōnen, returned to his native province and lived in a thatched hut in the village of Ogura, attracting followers and gaining renown as the "holy man of Ogura." His death at the age of seventy was said to have been accompanied by such miraculous signs as purple clouds, music and fragrances.

"Lay-priest" (*nyūdō*) is a title for men who, retiring from secular involvments, adopt monk's robes and shave their heads while remaining at home.

Ren-amidabutsu. Of Buzen province, nothern Kyushu; disciple of Shōkō. It is recorded that in 1228 he participated in a special forty-eight day session of continuous nembutsu with Shōkō and Kyōrenja.

Saichō (767–822). Ordained at Tōdaiji, but dissatisfied with the worldliness of the official Nara temples, pursued practice and study in the seclusion of Mount Hiei before the capital was moved to Kyoto. Founded Enryakuji, the Tendai monastery on Mount Hiei, and transmitted Tendai teachings from China.

Shimbutsu-bō. Unidentified.

Shinchō. Unidentified.

Shinkai. Buddhist name of Taira Munechika, lord of Awa province on Shikoku. He was an adopted son of Munemori, who inherited the leadership of the Taira clan from Kiyomori and was eventually destroyed by the Minamoto at Dannoura. Munechika renounced worldly ties during the fall of the Taira, when in the prime of life. Joined Shunjō's group of nembutsu practicers and accompanied Shunjō to China. Based on Mount Kōya, he also wandered the country as a mendicant

Shōkō (1162–1238). Also known as Benchō and Ben'a. Born in northern Kyushu; entered monastic life when seven years of age. From the age of twenty-two, he studied Tendai teachings for seven years on Mount Hiei, then returned to Kyushu. Stunned by the death of a brother three years later, he turned to Pure Land teachings. At the age of thirty-six, when in Kyoto to obtain an altar image, he met Hōnen for the first time, and returned two years later to study under him. After five years, he returned to Kyushu where he built a number of temples

and trained disciples. One distinctive feature of his thought is the teaching that forms of practice other than nembutsu may also lead to birth in the Pure Land. His nonexclusive stance helped his stream of the teaching, the Chinzei branch, spread and become the mainstream of the Jōdo school.

Shōren-bō. Said to have studied under Myōhen and Jōgan-bō. Resided at Ninnaji and was known for his mastery of the *Contemplation Sutra.*

Shōshin (1176–1253). Also known as Tankū. Grandson of Minister of the Left Tokudaiji Saneyoshi and son of the ranking Tendai prelate Enjitsu. Pursued esoteric and exoteric teachings on Mount Hiei, but later studied under Hōnen, becoming one of his closest attendant disciples and even accompanying him into exile. Received precepts under Hōnen and Shinkū; also known for his ability to attain samādhi. After Hōnen's death, lived at Nison-in in Saga, in the western part of Kyoto, where he built a large following. During persecutions in the late 1220's, brought Hōnen's ashes to rest at Nison-in, making it the center for veneration of Hōnen. Served as Myōzen's spiritual advisor when the latter was near death; bestowed precepts on two retired emperors, Tsuchimikado and Go-saga. Composed an illustrated biography of Hōnen on the thirty-third anniversary of his death.

Shunjō (1121-1206). Also known as Chōgen. Born in Kyoto, a member of the ancient literati Ki family. Entered the Shingon temple Daigoji at the age of thirteen. Later performed austerities in Shikoku, a site for practice closely associated with Kūkai, and on various mountains as a *yamabushi* (mountain ascetic). Became a wandering hijiri, performing such activities as recitation of the *Lotus Sutra* and week-long periods of constant nembutsu utterance. Assembled groups of *kanjin hijiri,* mendicant monks traveling the countryside collecting contributions for temple construction and public works projects, and following the model of Gyōgi (section 102), built many bridges and roads as well as baths at hijiri centers and for public use. Went to Sung dynasty China for study three times; on the first occasion, in 1167, met his countryman Eisai, who later transmitted Rinzai Zen to Japan, and with him journeyed to Mount T'ien-t'ai and other Buddhist centers. Later dwelled on Mount Kōya, where he founded a hijiri retreat for constant nembutsu practice. Was entrusted by the government with collecting funds for and oversee-

ing the reconstruction of the major Nara temple Tōdaiji, which had sided with the Minamoto and been attacked by the Taira in 1180, and with restoring its immense statue of the Buddha Vairocana, the central Shingon Buddha often identified with Amida.

Zenshō-bō (1174–1258). Tendai monk of Rengeji in Tōtōmi province (modern Shizuoka). At the age of twenty-nine, met Rensei (see section 109) and learned of Hōnen's nembutsu teaching. Through Rensei, he went to live with Hōnen's following at Yoshimizu, in the eastern hills of Kyoto. He became an important disciple, and several of Hōnen's extant writings are addressed to him. After gaining assurance in his religious understanding, he returned to his original temple and actively spread the teaching. When Hōnen's disciple and Tendai monk Ryūkan (1148–1227) was banished from Kyoto in the persecution of 1227, on his way to his place of exile he is said to have had a reunion with Zenshō, then a nembutsu hijiri who labored as a carpenter.

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Japanese Texts

一枚起請文

源空述

もろこし・わが朝に、もろもろの智者達の沙汰しまうさるる観念の念にもあらず。また、学文をして念の心を悟りて申す念仏にもあらず。ただ往生極楽のためには南無阿弥陀仏と申して、疑なく往生するぞと思ひとりて申すほかには別の子細候はず。ただし三心・四修と申すことの候ふは、みな決定して南無阿弥陀仏にて往生するぞと思ふうちに籠り候ふなり。このほかにおくふかきことを存ぜば、二尊のあはれみにはづれ、本願にもれ候ふべし。念仏を信ぜん人は、たとひ一代の法をよくよく学すとも、一文不知の愚鈍の身になして、尼入道の無智のともがらにおなじくして、智者のふるまひをせずして、ただ一向に念仏すべし。

為証以両手印

浄土宗の安心・起行、この一紙に至極せり。源空が所存、このほかにまったく別義を存ぜず。滅後の邪義をふせがんがために、所存を記しをはりぬ。

建暦二年正月二十三日

源空（花押）

一紙法語

いにしへの先徳は智行とくたけて臨終こゝろにまかせて目出度かりき。近頃の諸宗の人師おをくは教文を学すれとも菩提を期する心ざしすくなし。仏教を以て世を渡る橋とし、聖教を以て身を養ふなかだちとす。しかる間平生の稽古しかしながら名利のためなれば、権実をあらそふほどに光陰はやくつきて臨終たちまちに近づく時何事をかすべきとて、或は念仏或は真言時に臨むで思ひ煩ふ。誠にかはきにのぞんで井をほるがごとし。只一大事の生死を出べきはかりことを平生よく〳〵おもひたゝずむべし。あなかしこ。

横川法語

まづ三悪道をはなれて人間に生るること、おほきなるよろこびなり。身はいやしくとも畜生におとらんや。家はまづしくとも餓鬼にまさるべし。心におもふことかなはずとも地獄の苦にくらぶべからず。世の住み憂きはいとふたよりなり。このゆゑに人間に生れたることをよろこぶべし。信心あさけれども本願ふかきゆゑに、たのめばかならず往生す。念仏ものうけれども、となふればさだめて来迎にあづかる。功徳莫大なるゆゑに、本願にあふことをよろこぶべし。またいはく、妄念はもとより凡夫の地体なり。妄念のほかに別に心はなきなり。臨終のときまでは一向妄念の凡夫にてあるべきぞとこころえて念仏すれば、来迎にあづかりて蓮台に乗ずるときこそ、妄念をひるがへしてさとりの心とはなれ。妄念のうちより申しいだしたる念仏は、濁りに染まぬ蓮のごとくにて決定往生疑あるべからず。

とにかくに、すゝまじとするを、すゝめんために、助業は大切なり。」

137 或人の云く、「後世者は、したき事をとゞむるなり。心にしたき事はみな悪事なるが故なり。」

138 敬仏房、奥州の方に修行のとき、寄宿しける在家の、四壁、大堺、みなやぶれて、すみあらせる体なり。その故をとふに、亭主こたへて云く、「名取郡にうつりすむべき故なり」云々。敬仏房これをきゝて落涙し、同行に示して云く、「欣求の心あらば、自然に穢土を執すべからず。才覚にいはれけるなり。」

139 同上人のもとにて、人々後世門の事につきて、あらまほしき事ども、願ひあひたりけるに、或云く、椎尾四郎太郎「法門なき、後世物語」云々。上人感じて云く、「いみじく願へり。その髄を得たる事、これにしくべからず。」

140 有いはく、「遁世といふは、ふかく人をいとふべからず。但、故なく人をおそるる、又僻因なり。いま、いとふ故は、ふかく名利をいとふ故なり。抑、又凡夫の行人は独身にして、難治なる故に、いたく名利をもよほさぬ。同行一両人あひかまへて、したしむべきか。それもおほくならば、かたゞ〳〵難あるべきなり。」

の中に、「とはれても、阿弥陀仏はまたく風情もなし。たゞ申すなり」と、上人こたへ給ひけり。

123 然阿上人云く、「別時まではなくとも、六時礼讃の次の念仏、心すまさむ時なんどは、別に用心して見仏の思ひに住すべし」云々。

124 同上人云く、「聖光上人は、談義の最中にも、日中の時きたれる時は、一文一句をも誦しさして、やがて阿弥陀経をはじめ、礼讃念仏を行じましましき。同聞の聴衆も、心ならず、各別に礼讃をしき」云々。

125 乗願上人云く、「或人問うて云く、『色相観は観経の説なり。たとひ称名の行人といふとも、これを観ずべく候ふか、いかに。』上人答へていはく、『源空も、はじめは、さるいたづら事したりき。今はしらず。但信二称名一なり。』」

126 法然上人云く、「一丈の堀をこえむと思はん人は、一丈五尺をこえんと、はげむべきなり。往生を期せん人は、決定の信をとりて、しかもあひはげむべきなり。」

127 又云く、「もし自力の心に住せば、一声なほ自力也。もし他力をたのまむは、声々念々みな他力なり。」

128 又云く、「往生は、決定と思へば、定めて生る。不定とおもへば不定なり。」

129 然阿上人云く、「かなしき哉。因果を信ずるものは、他力の信よわく、仏願を信じて、かねて因果を信ぜば、即仏意にかなひて、往生すべきものなり。」

＊『標注一言芳談抄』には「本願を信ずる者は因果の理ゆるし。庶幾は、もはら仏願を信じ……」とある。

130 又云く、「いつはらざる心をもて、仏の本願を信じて、まさに往生せむと思ふ、これを三心といふなり。」

131 行仙房の云く、「あひかまへて、聖るべき也。往生のさはりの中に、貪愛にすぎたるはなし。衆悪のさはり、色貪をさきとす」云々。

132 ある人云く、「真実に往生せんと思はば、人をもかへりみず、物にもいろはずして、たゞ念仏すべし。利生は還来穢国を期すべし。」

133 敬日房の云く、「かまへて、念仏に気味おぼえよ。」

134 顕真座主の云く、「轆轤かまへたることぞ。」

135 乗願上人云く、「善導を仰がん人は、名号よりほかの事は、行ずべきにあらず。さればとて、寄り来ん所の善根の、念仏の障碍とならざらんほどの事をば、値遇結縁すべきなり。きらへばとて、いま〳〵しき事の様にはおもふべからず。行ずべければとて、念仏のいとまを入るべからず。」

136 又云く、「仏法には、徳をかくす事をば、よき事にいひたれども、ほかに愚を現ずれば、又懈怠になる失あり。たとへば、道場へは入らずして、寝所にゐて、念仏せんとするほどに、しばらくこそあれ、ねぶりならへる所なるがゆゑに、のちにはやがて、ねいるがごとし。されば凡夫は、

の往生をとげられたり。此両三人は、同上人面授の人々にて、彼御教訓也。然れば、決定往生の思ひを可レ成也。此、慈心上人問、行仙上人答也。

111 鎮西の本覚房、明遍に奉レ問りて云く、「心若散漫せば、其時の称名善にあらず。心をしづかにしてのち、可レ唱也と申候ふは、いかゞ可二用意一候ふらん。」答へて云く、「其は上機にてぞ候はん。空阿弥陀仏がごときの下機は、心をしづむる事は、いかにもかなひがたければ、念珠の緒をつよくして、乱不乱を不レ論、くりるてこそ候へ。心のしづまらん時と思はんには、堅固念仏申さぬものにてこそ候はんずれ。」

112 法然上人つねの御詞に云く、「哀、今度しおほせばやな」と。其時乗願房申さく、「上人だにもか様に不定げなる仰の候はんには、まして其余の人はいかゞ候ふべき」と。其時上人うちわらひて、の給はく、「蓮台にのらんまでは、いかでか此思ひはたえ候ふべき」云々。

113 又云く、「あの阿波介が念仏も、源空が念仏も、またくもて同念仏なり。『助給へ阿弥陀仏』と思ふ外は、別の念を発さざる也。」

114 又云く、「十声・一声等の釈は、念仏を信ずる要、念々不レ捨者等は、念仏を行ずる要なり。」

115 或人、明遍に問うて云く、「学問のほど、暫、念仏の数反を減じ候はん」と。答へて云く、「学問は念仏を修せむがためなり。もし数反を減ぜらるべくは、教へたてまつるべからず。」

116 聖光上人云く、「辨阿は、『助給へ、阿弥陀仏』と心にも思ひ、口にもいふなり。」

117 又云く、「故上人の給ひしは、『往生のために念仏を申す時、念仏の行、心に大要におぼえて、行ずるに付けて、勇ありて、つねに念仏の申したからんをば、我身にすでに三心を具せりとおもふべきなり。』」

118 信空上人問うて云く、「智慧もし往生の要たるべくは、正直に仰をかうむりて、修学をいとなむべし。又たゞ称名不足なくは、そのむねを存ずべく候」云々。答へて云く、「往生の業は、是称名といふ事、釈の文分明也。有智無智を不レ簡といふこと、又以顕然なり。然れば、為二往生一称名為レ足。学問を好むとせむよりは、一向に念仏すべし。弥陀・観音・勢至に奉レ逢の時、何の法文か達せざらん。念仏往生の旨をしらざらんほどは可レ学是。もしこれを知りをはりなば、いくばくならざる知慧をもとめて、称名の暇をさまたぐべからず。」

119 然阿上人云く、「三心を具せざる者も、おして決定往生と思へば、この故実によりて、はじめて三心をば具する也。」

120 又云く、「凡浄土宗の元意、『たすけ給へ、阿弥陀仏』と思ふにすぎず。」

121 聖光上人云く、「凡夫は歴縁対境の名利をば可レ発也。但、往生の解行につきては一向真実なるべし。」

122 法然上人御往生の後、三井寺の住心房に夢

97　顕性房の云く、「我は遁世の始よりして、疾く死なばやと云ふ事を習ひしなり。さればこそ、三十余年が間ならひし故に、今は片時も忘れず。とく死にたければ、すこしも延びたる様なれば、むねがつぶれて、わびしき也。さればこそ、符籠一も、よくてもたむとする事をば制すれ。生死を厭ふ事を大事とおもはざらんや」云々。

98　賀古の教信は、西には垣もせず、極楽と中をあけ、あはせて本尊をも安ぜず、聖教をも持せず、僧にもあらず、俗にもあらぬ形にて、つねに西に向ひて念仏して、其余は忘れたるがごとし、云々。

99　法然上人の云く、「念仏の義を深く云ふ事は、覚而浅き事也。義はふかくらずとも、欣求だにも深くは、一定往生はしてん。」

100　又云く、「称名念仏は、様なきを様とす。身の振舞、心の善悪をも沙汰せず、念比に申せば、往生するなり。」

101　聖光上人、学問を不レ受して云く、「日来学し給へる人々だにも、捨ててこそ念仏をば申されけれ。さばかり惜しきいとまに、念仏をば申さずして学問をする事、無益也。念仏を申していとまのひまには、さもありなん。」

102　下津村、慈阿弥陀仏云く、「行基の云く、『常作二他伴一、自莫レ為レ主』云々。人のわきに入りたるが、心のやすき事にてあるなり。」

103　或上人同法を誡めて云く、「物なほしがり給ひそ。儲はやすくて、捨つるが大事なるに」と云

云。

104　忍阿弥陀仏、和漢の文字、みなもて忘却す。依二片仮名一用レ之、云々。

105　敬蓮社云く、「いかに発すとも、行業などをば、二重三重ひきさげて可レ行也。心をば上手になして、行業を下手になすべき也。」

106　敬仏房云く、「同朋を呵して云く、『おのれは荷籠負の足ためんずるものなり。』」

107　同上人最後の所労の時云く、死期三日以前「僧都御房の、『仏助け給へと思ふ外は、要にあらず』と被レ仰れし事、もさしもやと思ひしが、今こそおもひしらるれ。不浄観も平生の時のこと也。東城寺の阿耨房が、『式の法文を習ふは、猿楽をするにてこそあれ』と云ひけるも、今ぞ思ひ知らるる」云々。

108　心戒上人、四国修行のあひだ、或百姓の家の壁に書付けて云く、「念仏者ならで、念仏申して、往生をとぐべし」云々。

109　行仙房の云く、「或人問うて云く、『我身の無道心をかへり見て、往生をうら思ふと、涯分を不レ顧、決定往生と思ふと、何がよく候ふべき。』答へて云く、『我むかし小蔵入道に謁ひたりき。往生は最初の一念に決定せり、報命尽きざれば依身の未レ消ばかり也と申されしが、殊縁の往生をとげられき。熊谷入道も、此定に被レ申けるとなん承りき。』」

110　禅勝房又、「生あるもの必死するがごとく、往生におきては、決定也」と被申けるが、殊縁

生智者にてはましまさず。為二半偈一投レ身、為レ虎捨レ命道心者にてこそ、まし〳〵しか。然れば、深法は無用の事也。道心こそ大切なれ』云々。是を承つて後、輪観雖レ被レ許レ之、不レ可レ奉レ習 志 相催したりき」云々。

86 敬仏房の云く、「遁世といふは、稠林に竹を引くがごとく、物にかゝへられぬなり。」

87 同人上洛の時、覚明房、昇蓮房に語申して云く、「むかしの後世者の振舞と、今の後世者の風情とはかはりて候ふ也。昔の聖どもの沙汰しあひて候ひしは、其人は後世を思ふ心のあるかなきかの体にてこそ候ひしが、今は学問し候ふべき器量などのあるを、後世者の実と申しあひて候ふ也」云々。敬仏房の云く、「後世者のふりは、大

ん。」

91 同上人云く、「今度法印御房を見たてまつるに、日来の所存をかへたる也。させる事もなかりける事を、様がましく思ひけるなり。誠にほれぼれと念仏するには不レ如」と云々。

92 或人物語に云く、「諸宗の学生、公請に随而、御仏事いまだ始まらざる程、自他要事を相談す。一条院の御時などまでは、一向後世門の事なり。頭密の法文、しかしながら、出離のために学レ之故か。白河院の御時よりは、法文の沙汰也。鳥羽院の御時にいたるまでは、ひとへに世間の沙汰なり。則我等出仕の時也。然而其時までは論議日記ばかりをばせし也。当世は其程の事もなきか」。

にあらたまりにけるにこそ。」

88 有 云く、「乞食修行の次に、我執名聞を遁れて、心しづかに後世のつとめをもし、終をも取りつべき依レ所、便宜の得失などをかねてよく〳〵思慮し、見さだめておくべき也。後世のこゝろなきものは、この案がなき也。」

89 敬仏房の云く、「姪事対治、不浄無常は猶次也。只以レ貧為レ最。依レ之、故上人は、『あながちにうれへず。貧賤をさきとする故也。今の後世者は其身富有なるがゆゑに、此事難レ禁』と云々。同上人、あからさまにても、男女の間の事物語にし給はず」。

90 同上人、或同朋に後世者の究竟の事をしへんとて云く、「身はいやしくて、心はたかくありな

93 宝幢院の本願云く、「むかしの上人は、一期、道心の有無を沙汰しき。次世の上人は法文を相談す。当世の上人は合戦物語」云々。

94 明遍云く、「出家遁世の本意は、『道のほとり、野べの間にて死せむことを期したりしぞかし』と、如レ此おもひつれば、いかに心ぼそき事にあふとも、一念も人をうらむべからず。其につけても、仏力をあふぐべきなり。」

95 解脱上人云く、「出離に三障あり。一には所持の愛物、本尊持経等まで。二には身命を惜しむ。三には善知識の教にしたがはざる。」

96 伝教記文に云く、「後世者の住所は三間に不レ可レ過。謂く、一間は持仏堂、一間は住所、一間は世事所也。」

75 或人敬日房に問うて云く、「称名は往生の要としりて、となへ候へども、心には野山のことのみ思はれて、口ばかりに唱ふれば、いかゞ候ふべき。」答へて云く、「御房はこれへおはしまさんといふ心にて、立出であゆませ給ふあひだは、あゆむ足ごとに、これへ〳〵とばかりおもひ給ふ事、よもあらじ。あらぬことをも思ひてこそ、あゆみ給ひつらめ。されども、あゆむことやまずして、これまでおはしたり。此定に、極楽に往生せむといふ願をおこして後、弥陀の名号をとなへ給ふ間には、あらぬことをおぼしめすとも、称名やまずして命終るまで行なひ給はば、往生決定なるべし。」

76 有云く、「高野の空阿弥陀仏の、御庵室のしつらひの、便宜あしげにて、『すこし、か様にしたらばよかりなむ』と御たくみありける間、『さやうしつらひなさん』と人申しければ、『いや〳〵あるべからず、是又厭離のたよりなり。よしと思ひて心とめては、無益なり』とおほせられける。」

77 禅勝房云く、「所詮、浄土門の大意は、往生極楽はやすき事と心得るまでが大事なり也。やすしと心得つれば、かならずやすかるべき也。然るを、近代の学生の異義まち〳〵なるは、聖教甚深なれば邪正わきまへがたし。但、上人の仰には、さしもの事はなかりき。」

78 有云く、「比叡の御社に、いつはりて、かんなぎのまねしたる、なま女房の、十禅師の御前にて夜うち深けて、人しづまりて後、ていとう〳〵と、鼓をうちて、心すましたる声にて、『とてもかくても候。なう〳〵』とうたひけり。其心を人にしひ問はれて云く、『生死無常の有様を思ふに、此世の事はとてもかくても候。なう後世をたすけたまへと申すなり』云々。」

79 信澄房云く、「寂林寺にも、六時礼讃など誦みて、聴聞に人あつめなどせば、即所損たるにて有るべき也。」

80 播磨上人、「衣裳を思煩ひて、高野を退出す。大門の辺にて、鹿の冬毛に生ひかはりたるを見て、立ちかへりて住山」云々。

81 或人、「時料断絶のよしをきゝて、入興の色ある事。意に云く、世をのがるゝありさまはけぶりたえて、かすかなるこそ本意にてあれ」云々。

82 敬日上人云く、「遁世に三の口伝あり。一には同宿、二には同体なる後世者どもの庵をならべたる所に不レ可レ住。三には遁世すればとて、日来の有様をこと〳〵しく不レ可レ改」云々。

83 下津村、慈阿弥陀仏云く、「竹原聖がよき也。遠山の紅葉、野辺の一樹などの様に、人目にたつはあしきなり。」

84 法然上人の云く、「道心をば、ぬすみて発したるがよきなり。」

85 願生房の云く、「其昔明遍上人にあひたてまつりて、十八道伝受の次に、字輪観可レ奉レ受よし所望の処に、上人示して云く、『学生智者なこのみ給ひそ。釈迦仏の因位にも、学

く其日にあたりて、すぐに射んとて、はたと馬を出しつるうへは、相構へて、射あてんと思ふ外は、他事なき也。其定に、日ごろは、後世の事、とかく好み習ひつれども、いますでに病床にのぞみたり。他念なく念仏して往生せむと思ひ取り給ふべし』と候ひし也。」

63 中蓮房の云く、「本願に帰し、名号を信じて む上は、念仏相応の教文なればとて、文にむかひていとまを入れ候ふ事は、みなこれ順魔にてあるなり。」

64 敬仏房の云く、「後世者の法文は、紙一枚にすぎぬなり。」

65 又云く、「後世者の法文は、義はあさくて、心ざしがふかゝるべき也。」

66 又云く、「或時心仏房に示して云く、『世間の鍛冶番匠等が其道を伝へる事は、かならずしもことごとく教へねども、其中に宗とあることをしつれば、其道を伝へたりといふぞかし。其定に此二三年そひたるしるしには、世をのがれたる身にて、無常を忘れずしてだにあらば、本意なるべし。』」

67 俊乗房の云く、「後世をおもはんものは、糟汰瓶一も、もつまじき物とこそ心えて候へ。」

68 乗願房の云く、「さすがに歳のよるしるしには、浄土もちかく、決定往生しつべき事は、思ひしられて候ふ也。所詮、真実に往生を心ざし候はんには、念仏は行住坐臥を論ぜぬとなれば、ただ一心に、ねても覚めても、たちゐ・おきふしにも、無南阿弥陀仏〳〵と申して候ふは、決定往生のつととおぼえて候ふなり。学問も大切なる様に候へども、さのみ往生の要なることも候はず。又学して一の不審を披くといへども、するにしたがひて、あらぬ不審のみいできたるあひだ、一期は不審さばくりにて、心しづかに念仏する事もなし。然而念仏のたよりにはならで、中々大なるさはりにて候ふ也。」

69 有云く、「後世をねがはば、世路をいとなむがごとし。けふすでに暮れぬ。渡世はげまざるにやすし。今年もやみ〳〵闌けぬ、一期いそがざるに過ぎぬ。よひにはふしてなげくべし、いたづらにくれぬることを。暁にはさめて思ふべし、ひめもすに行ぜむ事を。懈怠の時には、生死無常を思へ。悪念思惟の時には、声をあげて念仏すべし。鬼神魔縁等におきては、慈悲をおこして利益をあたへ、降伏の思ひをなす事なかれ。貧は菩提のたね、日々に仏道にすゝむ。富は輪廻のきづな、夜夜に憧業をます。」

70 解脱上人云く、「一年三百六十日は、みな無常にしたがふべき也。しかれば、日夜十二刻は、しかしながら、終焉のきざみと思ふべし。」

71 明遍僧都の云く、「無智にぞありたき。」

72 敬仏房云く、「一生はたゞ生をいとへ。」

73 正信上人云く、「念仏宗は、義なきを義とする也。」

74 明禅法印の云く、「往生は、大事なることのやすき也。」

学問などしつれば、大旨は無道心になる事にてあるなり。」

52 有云く、「解脱上人、食事の気味覚ゆるをいたみて、調へたる物に水をいれたまひき。」

53 有云く、「心戒上人、つねに蹲居し給ふ。或人其故を問ひければ、『三界六道には、心やすくしりさしするゑて居るべき所なきゆゑ也』云々。」

54 松蔭の顕性房の云く、「渡に出でたる舟に行きあひたるには、先つかみつきて乗るほかに、別の手なし。今生の愛河をわたらんとおもふに、弥陀の名号の聞得つる上には、仰信して称名するほかには別の様なき也。なまざかしき智慧に損ぜらるる事を、真実におもひしる、人ごとになきなり。」

55 又云く、「心の専不専を不レ論して、南無阿弥陀仏ととなふる声こそ詮要と、真実に思ふ人のなき也。」

56 又云く、「真実に此身を仏にまかせたてまつる心をば、人ごとにおこさざる也。後世のつとめに、暇ををしむものは一人もなきなり。」

57 又云く、「『仏たすけ給へ』と思ふ心を、第一のよき心にてあることを、真実に思ひしる事、人ごとになきなり。」

58 又云く、「心ぐるしき悋嗇どもを、なげすてて、たゞありのまゝなる心にて、平に名号をとなへんと思へるごときは、はてすくなし。黒白を辨へざるほどの者になりて、平に念仏せむと思へる意楽を、真実におこせる人もなき也。阿弥

陀仏の本願他力の不思議の身をば、いか程のちからと知りたるやらん。人ごとに分際を作りて、罪悪の身をかへりみで、仏力法力におもひつかざるなり。然る間、罪業も、いよ〳〵とゞまらざる也。これは返返もあしき心なり。」

59 又、「死をいそぐ心ばへは、後世の第一のたすけにてあるなり。」

60 又云く、「むかしは後世をおもふ者は、上臈は下臈になり、智者は愚者になり、徳人は貧人に成り、能あるものは無能にこそ成りしか。今の人はこれにみなたがへり。我は高野にはじめも中比もひさしくありしかども、梵字一もならはず。名利を捨つるならひには、ある能をだにもこそ捨つれ、ならふ事はうたてしき事也。我は三十余年、さ様の事知らじとならひし也。よく捨つれば、すてぬものの様にてあるなり。名利を捨つるといへばとて、同行をはぢず、紙衣ひとつもとめて着るほどの事をいふにはあらず。これ程の名利は、後世をたすくるなり。

小児の母をたのむは、またく其故を知らず、たゞたのもしき心ある也。名号を信敬せんこと、かくのごとし。」

61 聖光上人云く、「八万法門は死の一字を説く。然れば則、死を忘れざれば、八万法門を自然に心得たるものにてある也。」

62 有云く、「故寂願房、所労の時、敬仙房談じ申して云く、『在家の者の流鏑馬ならす時は、さま〴〵に儀式作法をならべて習へども、まさし

ば蛇がしるやうに、後世の事をば後世者がしるなり。たとひわが心をば損ずるまではなくとも、人の欲をましつべからむ物をば、あひかまへて〳〵不レ可レ持レ之。」

43 又云く、「如レ形も、非人をたて、心やすく念仏せんと思はんものは、出世の法財なほ可レ閣レ之。況んや世間の資縁はあひかまへて〳〵、事すくなき様にふるまひなすべき也。はだへをかくし、命をつぐ事も、非人の身に相応して、出離の心ざしもけがさぬやうに、たくむべき也。」

44 或時仰せらるゝ、「年来死をおそれざる理をこのみ、ならひつる力にて、此所労もすこしよき様になれば、死なでやあらんずらむと、きものつぶるゝ也。さればこそ、御房達の籠負一もよくしてもたんとしあひ給ひたるをば、制したてまつれ。たゞ今はなに事なき様なれども、つひには生死の余執と成るべき也。しかれば、あひかまへて、つねに此身をいとひにくみて、死をもねがふ意楽をこのむべき也。

後世の事は、たゞしづかに案ずるにあるなり。むかしの坂東の人、京に長居しつれば、臆病になる也。これ後世者の才覚也。身しづかに心すむなどいふ事は、いさゝかなれども名利をはなれてのうへの事也。然るを幽玄なる楼にうそぶきたるばかりをもて、心のすむと執するが故に、独住の人おほくは、僻事にしなす也。」

45 明遍僧都云く、「紙ぎぬに衣紋つくろふ程の者は、不覚人にて有るなり。」

46 又云く、或人たづね申して云く、「一向に後世のためと思ひてし候はん学問、いかゞ候ふべき。」仰せて云く、「始は後世のためと思へども、後には皆名利になるなり。」

47 折々被レ仰れて云く、「某が身には、此御山に居初めたりけるが、悪事にて候ひける。遁世しなん後は、ほだの上に、味噌焼きなどうちおきて、はさみくふ風情にて有りなんずるとこそ思ひしに、かへりてやの物になりて、ゆゝしげなるありさまにて候ふ事、本意相違の事也。これは内心をばしらず、か様にて閉籠りたる体に候ふ事を、人の心にくゝおもへる故なり」とて、にがみたまひしなり。

48 行仙房云く、「身意に作る罪をば口業にてこそ懺悔すべきに、いたづらごとにひまをいるゝことよ。」

49 又云く、「天地はものの要にたゝずといへども、諸の事をふくめり。道人もかくのごとし。たゞ何事も要にたゝぬ身に成りたらん、大要の事なり。」

50 又云く、「たゞ仏道をねがふといふは、別にやうやうしき事なし。ひまある身となりて、道をさきとして余事に心をかけぬを第一の道とす。」

一言芳談抄巻之下

51 敬蓮社の云く、「日来後世の心あるものも、

て、誠の供養なる事、たゞいさゝかも、出離の心をおこすにある也。有待身、縁をからずといふことなければ、紙衣、自二世一事をりにしたがひていとなめども、大事がほにもてなして、後世のつとめにならべたる様に思ふ事、返々無下の事也。

むかしの人は世をすつるにつけて、きよくすなほなるふるまひをこそ、したれ。近来は遁世をあしく心得て、かへりて、気ぎたなきものに成りあひたる也。

後世者といふものは、木をこり水をくめども、後世をおもふ者の、木こり水をくむにてあるべきなり。

某は事にふれて、世間の不定に此身のあだなる事をのみ思ふあひだ、折節につけて、起居のふるまひまでに、あやふき事おほくおぼゆるに、御房たちは、よにあぶなかりぬべきをりふしにも、いさゝかも思ひよせたる気色もなき也。まして、うちふるまひたるありさまなど、よに思ふ事もなげにみゆるなり。さればたゞ、無常の理も、いかにいはむにはよるべからず。いさゝかなりとも心にのせてのうへの事也。

後世者はいつも旅にいでたる思ひに住するなり。雲のはて、海のはてに行くとも、此身のあらんかぎりは、かたのごとくの衣食住所なくてはかなふべからざれども、執すると執せざるとの事のほかにかはりたるなり。つねに一夜のやどりにして、始終のすみかにあらずと存ずるには、さはりなく念仏の申さるゝ也。

いたづらに、野外にすつる身を、出離のために すてゝ、寒熱にも病患にもをかさるゝは、有りがたき一期のおもひ出かなと、よろこぶ様なる人のありがたきなり。

非人法師の身に学問無用といふことも分際あるべき事也。器量あらむものは、如レ形往生要集の文字よみ風情の事をもて、生死無常の詳しきありさま、念仏往生の頼もしき様など、時々はくり見るべき也。されば、僧都御房も『念仏者の十楽おぼえざらんは、無下の事也』など仰せられたる也。又学問すべしといへばとて、一部始終を心得わたし、文々句々分明に存知せむなどいふ心ざしは、ゆめ〳〵あるべからず。たゞ文字よみなどしたるに、やすらかに心得らるゝ体なり。大要貴き所くりみるほどの事なり。此故実を得つれば、相違なし。教の本意、後世にすゝむ大なる要となる也。又これ程の事なりとも、我執名聞もまさる様におぼえば、一向に可二停止一レ之。薬を毒となす事、返々おろかなる事也。一文一句なれども、心得によりて念仏もまめにおぼえ、後世の心もすゝみ、いそぐ様なる心ばへいでくる体におぼえば、たふとき文どもをも、時々はみるべき也。但、天性器量おろかならんものは、これほどの学問もなくとも、一向称念すべき也。行を真心にはげまば、教の本意にたがふべからず。信心道心も、行ずればおのづからおこる事也。

後世の学問は後世者にあひてすべき也。非後世者の学問は人を損ずるがおそろしき也。蛇の心を

死ねとだに存ずれば、一切に大事はなきなり。この身を愛し、命を惜しむより、一切のさはりは起ることなり。あやまりて死なむはよろこびなりとだに存ずれば、何事もやすくおぼゆる也。しからば、我も人も、真実に後世をたすからむとおもはんには、かへすがへすも、道理をつよくたてて、心にまけず、生死界の事を、ものがましくおもふべからざるなり。」

40 又云く、「近来の遁世の人といふは、もとゞり切りはつれば、いみじき学生・説経師となり、高野にのぼりつれば、めでたき真言師、ゆゝしき釈論の学生になり、或はもとは仮名の『し』文字だにもはかゞ〳〵しくかきまげぬものなれども、梵漢さるていに書きならひなどしあひたるなり。

41 又云く、「遁世者は、なに事もなきに、事闕けぬ様をおもひつけ、ふるまひつけたるがよきなり。」

42 又云く、「裘荷・簏負など執しあひたるは、彼を用うる本意をしらざる也。あひかまへて、今生は一夜のやどり、夢幻の世、とてもかくてもありなむと、真実に思ふべきなり。生涯をかろくし、後世をおもふ故、実には生きてあらんこと、今日ばかり、たゞいまばかりと真実に思ふべきなり。かくおもへば、忍びがたきこともやすく忍ばれて、後世のつとめもいさましき也。かりそめにも、一期を久しからむずる様にだに存じつれば、

然而生死界を厭ふ心もふかく、後世のつとめをいそがはしくする様なる事は、きはめてありがたき也。はやもとゞりなどきりけん時は、さりとも、此心をばよもおこしたてじとおぼゆる様なるを、我執・名聞甚しき心をさへ、おこしあひたる也。某が遁世したりし比までは、猶『世をのがるる様には、あるをだにもこそすつれ、なきを求むる事はうたてしき事なり』と習ひあひたりしあひだ、世間出世につけて、今生の芸能ともなり、生死の余執とも成りて、つひに後世のあだとなりぬべきは、ちかくもとほくも、とてもかくても、あひかまへてせじとこそ、このみならひしか。されば、大原・高野にも、其久ありしかども、声明一も梵字一もならはで、やみにしなり」

今生の事おもくおぼえて、一切の無道心のごと出来る也。某は三十余年、此理をもて相助けて、今日まで僻事をしいださざるなり。今年ばかりかとまでは思ひしかども、明年までとは存ぜざりき。今は老後也。よろづはたゞ今日ばかりと覚ゆる也。出離の詮要、無常を心にかくるにある也。資縁無煩人も、のどかに後世のつとめするは、きはめてありがたき也。これをもておもふに、資縁の有無によらず、たゞ心ざしの有無による也。然れば、某は資縁の悕望は、ながく絶えたる也。たゞ後世ばかりぞ大切なる。又自然にあれば、あらるゝ也。後世を思ふ人は、出離生死のほかはなに事もいかにもあらばあれと、うちすつる意楽に、つねに住するなり。仏の御心に真実にかなひ

は一念に一度の往生をあておき給へる願なれば、念ごとに往生の業となるなり。」

28 又云く、「善導の御釈を拝見するに、源空が目には、三心四修皆共に、南無阿弥陀仏と見ゆるなり。」

29 又或人にをしへて云く、「人の命は、うまき物を大口にくひて、むせて死ぬる事もある也。しかれば、南無阿弥陀仏とかんで、南無阿弥陀仏とて、ぐとのみ入べし。」

30 又云く、「煩悩のうすくあつきをもかへり見ず、罪障のかろきおもきをも沙汰せず、たゞ口に南無阿弥陀仏ととなへて、声につきて、決定往生をなすべし。」

31 又つねのおすゝめに云く、「往生極楽をまめやかにおもひ入たる人のけしきは、世間を一くねりうらみたる色にて、つねにはあるなり」云々。

32 禅勝房云く、「故上人の教あり。『たとひ余事をいとなむとも、念仏ししこれをするおもひあるべき也。余事をしし念仏せんと思ふべからず。』」

33 聖光上人云く、「筥をたむるに、片目をふたぎて、よくためらるゝ様に、一向専修も、横目をせざれば、とく成る也。」

34 又云く、「日来、随分に後世をおもふ様なるものの、行業など、退転する事あらば、死期のちかづきたるとおもふべきなり。」

35 浄土谷の法蓮上人は、資縁省略のうへ、形のごとくの朝喰し、往生極楽のつとめに、わすられて、世のつねならず。これがために、これをいとなむ、念仏、心に入るときは、飯にもあらず、粥にもあらぬ体なり。年にしたがひ、日をおひて、容顔おとろへ、身力つきぬ。良友たづねきたりて、訪ひて、返事云く、

西へゆくすぢ一だにたがはずば骨とかはとに身はならばなれ

36 敬仏房云く、「念仏の法門は、歌一首にて心得たるよし、僧都御房に申すなり。仰せて云く、『さぞ。』

たゞたのめたとへば人の偽をかさねてこそは又もうらみめ」

37 又云く、「三心をば、ならひて具するものとな習ひそ。」

38 又云く、「たとひ八万の法門を通達せりとも、凡夫の位には程あやまちあるべし。仏助け給へとおもふ事のみぞ、大切なる。」

39 又云く、「彼両上人も、明遍・明禅任運の御発心などは見えず。たゞ、つねに理をもて、制伏し給ひし也。しからば、道理を忘れざるを、又道心といふべき也。後世のつとめは、心つよくてのうへの事也。よろづさはる事のみあるをば、おぼろげの心にては、いかでか、たへこらふべき。然而人ごとに、道理のごとく道理をたて得ざるあひだ、皆心にまけて、はては後世も思はぬものに成りあひたるなり。道理のかひなく、道理を始終とほさぬが、第一の後世のさはりにてあるなり。世間出世、至極、たゞ死の一事也。死なば

用なり、とくかへりたまへ。これに候ふものどもは、後世の心も候はぬが、いたづらにあらむよりはとてこそ、学問をばし候へ』とて、追返されし」云云。

13 明遍云く、「所詮真実に浄土をねがひ、穢土を厭ふ心候はば、散心称名をもて往生候ふ事うたがひなく候。其心真実ならずば、百千の不審をひらきて、甚深の義理を悟候ふとも、往生かなひがたく候ふか。仏道修行には、功が大切なるなり。一度機をかゞみて、一行におもひさだめて後、人の、とかくいへばとて、変改の条、無下の事なり。」

14 明禅法印云く、「他力の強縁にあへる事を思ふに、生死を出離せむことは、今生にあひあたれり。此縁にあひながら、むなしくすぐしては、一定また受けさげられぬとおぼゆるなり。しかれば、生死をわかれざらんこと今生にあるなり。」

15 又云く、「後世をたすからんとおもはんものは、かまへて人目にたつべからざるものなり。人をば人が損ずるなり。聖法師の、今生に徳をひらく事は、大略、後世のためには捨て物なり。」

16 又云く、「いたづらにねぶりゐたるは、させる徳はなけれども、失がなきなり。」

17 又云く、「ひじりは、わろきがよきなり。」

18 又云く、「居所の心にかなはぬはよき事なり。心にかなひたらんには、われらがごとくの不覚人は、一定執着しつとおぼえ候ふなり。」

19 或人たづね申して云く、「非人法師は、いかなる所にか住ますべく候ふらん。」仰せて云く、「念仏だに申されば、いかなる所にてもありなん。念仏のさはりとならん所ぞ、あしかるべき。但、境界をば離るべきなり。」

20 又云く、「あか子念仏がよきなり。」

さかしだちたる事どもきこしめして、被レ仰れて云く、「身の程しらずの、物おぼえず。」

21 又云く、「凡夫は、なに事も、まさしくそのことに臨まぬほどなり。意楽は、いみじき様なれども、事にふれてうごきやすきなり。」

22 又云く、「しやせまし、せでやあらましとおぼゆるほどの事は、大抵せぬがよきなり。」

23 又云く、「真実には後世をたすからむと思はんには、遁世が、はや第一のよしなき事にてありけるぞ。」

24 又云く、「利益衆生とて、こと〴〵しくせねども、真実に生死をはなれんとおもへば、分々に利益はかならずあるなり。」

25 又云く、「聖法師は功徳に損ずるなり。功徳をつくらむよりは、悪をとゞむべきなり。」

26 法然上人云く、「一念十念にて往生すといへばとて、念仏を疎相に申さば、信が行をさまたぐるなり。『念々不捨者』といへばとて、一念十念を不定におもふは、行が信を妨ぐる也。信をば一念に生と取りて、行をば一形はげむべし。」

27 又云く、「一念を不定に思ふは、念々の念仏ごとに、不信の念仏になる也。其故は、阿弥陀仏

一言芳談

一言芳談抄巻之上

1 有云く、「恵心僧都、伊勢太神宮へまゐりて、七ケ日参籠はつる夜の夢に、宝殿の御戸たちまちにひらけて、ゆゝしげなる貴女一人いでたまへり。示して云く、『太神宮は本覚の都へかへりおはします。これは御留守に侍るものなり。末代の衆生出離の要道をたづぬる事あらば、弥陀仏を念ぜよとすゝむべきよしおほせおかれ侍る。』」

2 有云く、「俊乗上人、高野の奥院に七ケ日参籠結願の夜、深更におよびて、よろづ寂寞たりける時、入定の御殿のうちに、たゞ一こゑ念仏の御声さだかにしたまひけり。人これを聞きて、悲喜身にあまり、感涙たもとをしほりけるとぞ。」

3 有云く、「蓮阿弥陀仏が夢に、八幡宮つげてのたまはく、『往生は一念にもよらず。多念にもよらず。心によるなり。』」

4 高野の明遍僧都、善光寺参詣のかへりあしに、法然上人に対面。僧都問うて云く、「いかゞして今度生死をはなるるべく候。」上人云く、「念仏申してこそは。」問給はく、「誠にしかり。但、妄念おこるをば、いかゞ仕候ふべき。」上人答へて云く、「妄念おこれども本願力にて往生するなり。」僧都「さうけたまはりぬ」とて、出給ひぬ。上人つぶやきて云く、「妄念おこさずして往生せんとおもはん人は、むまれつきの目鼻を取りすてて、念仏申さんと思ふがごとし。」

5 明禅法印云く、「たゞよく念仏すべし。石に水をかくるやうなれども、申さば益あるなり。」

6 明遍僧都云く、「穢土の事はいづくも心にかなふ道理あるべからず。たゞ少難をば心に忍ぶべきなり。たとへば、悪風にあへる舟の中にて、艫へ行き、舳へゆかんとせんがごとし。」

7 有云く、「往生をおもはん事、たとへばねらひづきせんとする心根をもつべし。」

8 有云く、「慈悲をこそおこさざらめ。人をなにくみそ。」

9 有云く、「我臨終の時は、『すは、たゞいまとみゆるは』などいふべからず。無始よりをしみならひたる命なれば、もし、心ぼそくおぼゆる事もあらむか。たゞ念仏をすゝむべき也。」

10 慈円僧正入滅ののち、或人の夢に示して云く、「顕密の稽古は、ものの用にもたゝず。時々せし空観と念仏とぞ、後世の資粮となる。」

11 有云く、「釈摩訶衍論の中に、『一室に二人とも住むべからず。たがひになやまし。道を損ずるがゆゑなり』といへり。」

12 黒谷善阿弥陀仏、物語に云く、「解脱上人の御もとへ聖まゐりて、同宿したてまつりて、学問すべきよしを申す。かの御返事に云く、『御房は発心の人と、見たてまつる。学問してまたく無

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