

# TRANSLATION

## *Ichigon Hōdan*

### Part II

Translated by DENNIS HIROTA

51. Kyōrenja<sup>24</sup> said: "The fact is that though you may have long sought the Buddha Land, if you turn to something like scholarship you will almost certainly lose that aspiration for enlightenment."

52. It was said: "Gedatsu Shōnin, vexed by the susceptibility of his palate, deliberately watered any carefully prepared food."

53. It was said: "Shinkai Shōnin<sup>25</sup> crouched down but never sat. When asked about this he replied, 'Where in the three realms and the six paths can I settle back with an easy mind?' "

54. Kenshō-bō<sup>26</sup> of Shōin said: "When you chance to come to a landing just as the ferry is pulling away, there is only one thing to be done; you drop all else and get aboard. If it is the deep current of passions that is your life which you seek to traverse, then once you have encountered

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\* This is the final part (second fascicle) of a translation of *Ichigon Hōdan*; part I appeared in vol. ix, 2.

<sup>24</sup> 敬養社 Said to have met Hōnen's disciple Seikaku in 1214 and later to have become a close disciple of Shōkō. It is recorded that in 1228 he presided over a special 48 day session of nembutsu practice held by Shōkō.

<sup>25</sup> 心戒上人 The Buddhist name of Taira no Munechika, adopted son of Munemori and Lord of Awa Province. Renounced worldly ties during the fall of the Heike, when in the prime of his life, and dwelled on Mt. Kōya.

<sup>26</sup> 順性房 Appointed Prime Minister in 1199; entered religious life in 1216 and died in 1225 at the age of 71. Said to have studied the Seizan branch of Shōkō.

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Amida's Name there is no other consideration: you simply entrust yourself in saying the nembutsu. Not a single person truly perceives how much he suffers because of his own calculating wisdom."

55. Further he said: "There is no one who truly feels that what is essential is the voicing of namu-amida-butsu, making no issue of whether he is wholehearted in it or not."

56. Further he said: "There is no one who has awakened a true and sincere entrusting of himself to the Buddha. Who regrets the time taken up with other things because it keeps him from his worship?"

57. Further he said: "No one truly realizes that the best of heart and mind is the thought, 'Buddha, save me!'"

58. Further he said: "How extraordinarily rare it is for a man to cast aside the desires and ambitions that torment the spirit and resolve just to say the Name in the ordinariness of his heart, simply as he is. Hardly a man has truly wakened the aspiration just to say the nembutsu, which means becoming one who does not even know the difference between black and white. Do we realize what power is embodied in the mystery of Amida's Primal Vow? We are all busy fashioning our places in the world, neither reflecting on the evil of our very selves nor giving a thought to the power of the Buddha and the Dharma. This is a wretched attitude, and because of it our defiled karma runs on endlessly."

59. Further he said: "Being prepared to die immediately is the greatest help for birth into the Buddha Land."

60. Further he said: "It used to be that in the aspiration for future Buddhahood a senior monk became a novice, a wise man became a fool, a prosperous man became poor and a man of accomplishments became unschooled. Nowadays, however, people are completely different. I was long on Mt. Kōya, spending my youth and manhood there, but I learned not a single Sanskrit letter. An inured renunciation of all desire for wealth and renown requires that you turn your back even on the capabil-

ities 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 truly renounce the world you have the appearance of one who has renounced nothing. Thus, to abandon name and possessions does not mean avoiding the company of other practitioners or searching out and wearing a garment of paper. A certain amount of respectability and material comfort is an aid to birth.<sup>27</sup>

“A child turns to its mother without any idea of why; there is simply an utter reliance. Entrusting yourself to the Name is like this.”

61. Shōkō Shōnin said: “The 80,000 gates of the Dharma all illuminate one word: death. If you do not let death slip from your mind, you will naturally acquire a grasp of all 80,000 gates.”

62. It was said: “When the late Jakugan-bō<sup>28</sup> was confined to his sickbed, Kyōsen-bō<sup>29</sup> advised him, ‘People who practice horseback archery learn a full-dress etiquette and ceremony along with shooting. When it comes down to the actual day of contest, however, they are filled with an eagerness to shoot, and once they have sprung forth on their horses they forget everything but the desire to get their arrows to the target. In a similar way, you have been engrossed with one thing and another concerning the future Buddhahood and have studied ceaselessly, but already you lie in sickbed. Now you must embrace your aspiration to attain birth, saying the nembutsu with no other thought.’”

63. Chūren-bō<sup>30</sup> said: “Once you have taken refuge in the Primal Vow and entrusted yourself to the Name, it is merely the working of your own

<sup>27</sup> One of a number of passages which defy definitive interpretation. *Tancho* refers to *Tanzuregusa* 58: “People today cannot compare in resourcefulness with men of the past. They go into the mountain forests to live as hermits, only to find the life unendurable without some means of allaying their hunger and shielding themselves from the storms. As a result, how can they help but display at times something akin to a craving for worldly goods?” (trans. Donald Keene).

<sup>28</sup> 寂願房 A disciple of Myōhen; lived on Mt. Kōya.

<sup>29</sup> 敬仙房 Disciple of Hōnen. Later studied under Myōhen and lived on Mt. Kōya.

<sup>30</sup> 中蓮房 Unidentified.

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demon of attachment to spend time sitting before a text, thinking you should read it because it happens to conform with the nembutsu teaching."

64. Kyōbutsu-bō said: "A treatise on the Dharma for the man of nembutsu will not exceed a single page."

65. Further he said: "A treatise on the Dharma for the man of nembutsu is simple in tenor, fathomless in aspiration."

66. Further he said: "Once I told Shinbutsu-bō,<sup>31</sup> '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 the result of these past two or three years you have spent with me be only that you, as one who has abandoned the world, do not lose sight of impermanence, my original purpose will have been accomplished.'"

67. Shunjō-bō said: "The man who aspires for future Buddhahood recognizes in even a single crock for bean-paste something not to be owned."

68. Jōgan-bō<sup>32</sup> said: "It is one sign of aging that, in spite of everything, you grow increasingly aware that the Buddha Land is nearing and that it is time to settle, once and for all, the question of birth. Whether you happen to be walking, standing, sitting or lying while you say the nembutsu is ultimately of no consequence if you truly aspire for birth; thus, in simply saying *namu-amida-butsu*, *namu-amida-butsu* wholeheartedly, waking and sleeping, standing and sitting, rising and retiring, you have all your provisions for the journey—the settlement of your birth. Learning may also seem to be important, but it is not really necessary for attaining the

<sup>31</sup> 心仏師 Disciple of Kyōbutsu.

<sup>32</sup> 東願師 Born to the Fujiwara clan. Resided at Ninna-ji where he studied esoteric Buddhism, becoming knowledgeable in Sanskrit. Converted to Tendai before finally becoming a disciple of Hōnen. Late in life moved to Taketani in the eastern part of Kyoto, south of Kiyomizu-dera. Died in 1251 at the age of 84.

Buddha Land. In fact, although you may clarify one doubtful issue through study, in the process you will stumble upon other questions and so spend a lifetime in resolving doubts without a chance to utter the nembutsu in the peace of your heart. Learning, therefore, is not an aid to nembutsu; rather, it is a formidable obstruction."

69. It was said: "Seeking the Buddha Land is not different from managing 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 you should lie down and lament this meaningless procession, 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 birth-and-death. 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 that you must overcome them. Poverty is the seed of enlightenment 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 greater evil."

70. Gedatsu Shōnin said: "There are 360 days a year and not one of them gives respite from the law of impermanence. Thus you should think of each hour of the day and night as the very occasion that you face your death."

71. Myōhen Sōzu said: "How I wish to become unwise!"

72. Kyōsen-bō said: "In this life, simply cast off all attachment to living."

73. Shōshin Shōnin<sup>33</sup> said: "In Nembutsu Buddhism, the way to enlightenment lies in having no way."

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<sup>33</sup> 正信上人 Grandson of Minister of the Left Tokudaiji Saneyoshi and son of the ranking Tendai prelate Enjitsu. Studied on Mt. Hiei and later became a disciple of Hōnen, whom he followed into exile in Shikoku. Upon Hōnen's death in 1212 moved to Nison-in in the western part of Kyoto where he spread the Jōdo teaching. Died in 1259 at the age of 78.

74. Myōzen Hōin said: "Birth into the Buddha Land is the effortless resolution of the matter of gravest concern."

75. Someone asked Kyōjitsu-bō,<sup>34</sup> "I pronounce the nembutsu knowing that act to be the key to birth, but my mind wanders off to moors and to mountains and my utterance is of the lips alone: what should I do about this?" 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, if, once you have wakened the aspiration for birth, you continue saying the nembutsu to the end of your life, then even though you think of other things while you say Amida's Name you will attain birth without fail."

76. It was said: "Since his hermitage was somewhat inconvenient in construction, Kū-amidabutsu<sup>35</sup> of Mt. Kōya remodeled it in his mind, commenting on how good it would be to improve things a bit. When someone offered to make the necessary alterations, however, he replied, 'No, it mustn't be touched. This way it is an aid to renunciation. If I found it pleasant and became attached to it, it would be altogether useless.'"

77. Zenshō-bō said: "Coming to the realization that attainment of birth is a simple matter is itself momentous: in the end, it is here that the central point of Jōdo Buddhism lies. When one becomes aware of its simplicity, then it is indeed so. Nevertheless, modern scholars have produced a multitude of contradictory doctrines; this has meant that, because of the great profundity of the sacred teaching, it has become extremely difficult to distinguish the true from the erroneous. Hōnen's words, however, were free of such problems."

78. It was said: "At a shrine of the guardian deity of Mt. Hiei a young court lady disguised herself as a shrine priestess. In the middle of the

<sup>34</sup> 教日房 Began with Tendai studies and later turned to the Jōdo teaching under Hōnen's disciple Ryūkan.

<sup>35</sup> 空阿彌陀仏 One of Myōhen's names.

night, after everyone had retired, she beat a drum before the inner shrine at Jūzenji,<sup>36</sup> singing out with perfect lucidity of heart: 'Be it as it may. Please, please. . . .' After persistent questioning, she explained: 'When the impermanence of samsara fills my mind, I utter the words, Let the things of this world be as they may; please bring me to the Buddha Land!'

79. Shinchō-bō<sup>37</sup> said: "To celebrate the six hours of the day with chant<sup>38</sup> or hold gatherings for sermons, even at a temple secluded in a woods, is to invite confusion."

80. Harima Shōnin<sup>39</sup> said: "Facing a winter without adequate clothing, I decided to leave Mt. Kōya. But just beyond the Great Gate I came upon a deer, its new fur grown into a winter coat, and turned back to dwell on the mountain."

81. It was said: "How fine it is to hear that provisions for food have run out; for that leanness when the smoke of the kitchen hearth trails away holds what it truly means to be a hermit."

82. Kyōjitsu Shōnin said: "There is a three-point oral tradition regarding the renunciation of worldly life. The first forbids dwelling in the same place; the second, living where other practitioners have built their retreats; and the third, ostentatiously reforming your accustomed way of life with the idea that you have now renounced the world."

83. Ji-amidabutsu of Shimotsumura said: "Do not stand conspicuous in the eyes of men, like crimson leaves dotting the far hillside or a single tree in a field: the best *hijiri* are bamboo in a brake."

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<sup>36</sup> One of seven ancient guardian shrines on Mt. Hiei.

<sup>37</sup> 信澄房 Unidentified.

<sup>38</sup> It is an ancient Buddhist practice going back to India to perform worship at six times during the day: dawn, midday, sunset, evening, midnight and early morning. Hymns by the T'ang Dynasty priest Shan-tao written specifically for this purpose are probably referred to here.

<sup>39</sup> 播磨上人 Unidentified; may simply refer to a practitioner from Harima Province.

84. Hōnen Shōnin said: "If you seek to waken the aspiration for Buddhahood, do it by stealth."

85. Ganshō-bō<sup>40</sup> said: "Long ago I met Myōhen Shōnin and, upon being initiated in the eighteen elementary rules of Shingon practice, requested instruction in the samadhi of the Sanskrit characters in a lunar ring;<sup>41</sup> whereupon the Shōnin admonished me: 'Do not cherish the thought of becoming accomplished in learning or in wisdom. Even Sakyamuni, when performing practices for his attainment, was neither scholar nor sage. He was an aspirant for Buddhahood who sacrificed himself for the sake of learning the second half of a gatha and cast away his life to feed his body to tigers. Of what use, then, is the esoteric Dharma? It is the aspiration to become a Buddha that is important.' Although permission to receive instruction in the ring-samadhi was then granted, I felt drawn to abstain from learning it."

86. Kyōbutsu-bō said: "To live as a hermit is to be untrammelled by things of the world; it is like pulling a length of bamboo out of a dense thicket."

87. When they were with Kyōbutsu-bō in Kyoto, Kakumei-bō<sup>42</sup> said to Shōren-bō,<sup>43</sup> "The conduct of nembutsu practitioners in former times differs from what we see today. Before, when *hijiri* spoke together, their discussion was always whether they personally had the aspiration to be

<sup>40</sup> 願生房 Unidentified.

<sup>41</sup> A meditative practice in which one forms, upon a mental image of a lunar ring, various patterns of Sanskrit characters standing for the five elements (earth, water, fire, wind, air) or for different Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

<sup>42</sup> 覺明房 Also known as Chōsai 長西. Son of the Lord of Iyo Province Fujiwara no Kuniaki. Entered Buddhist life under Hōnen at 19. After Hōnen's death travelled to different temples, studying precepts and Zen as well as Jōdo Buddhism. Returned to his native Sanuki and founded a temple. Later returned to Kyoto where he lived at Kubon-ji and propagated the teaching, becoming the founder of the Kubon-ji branch of the Jōdo school. The last record of his life is dated 1261, when at 78 he delivered lectures on Shan-tao's commentary on the *Meditation Sutra* at Kubon-ji.

<sup>43</sup> 証聖房 Said to have studied under Myōhen and Jōgan-bō. Resided at Ninna-ji and was known for his mastery of the *Meditation Sutra*.



born into the Buddha Land or not. Nowadays they speak of the capacity for scholarship as the basis of a practitioner's life." Kyōbutsu-bō said, "Yes, what it means to be a practitioner of nembutsu has undergone a complete transformation."

88. It was said: "As you carry on the life of practice, wandering about and begging your food, you should leave behind all self-attachment and concern for reputation and perform your worship with tranquility of heart. Moreover, you should carefully consider beforehand the advantages and disadvantages of various sites and select one suited to attaining Amida's coming at the moment of death. People lacking aspiration for the Buddha Land are devoid of such foresight."

89. Kyōbutsu-bō said: "In subduing sexual desire, the method of turning one's gaze upon the body's impurity and the impermanence of human existence is secondary. It is the life of poverty that is supreme. Hence the late Master Hōnen said, 'I am not particularly troubled by sexual passion; for I put poverty and lowliness before all else. It is because practitioners nowadays are rich in possessions that restraint is so difficult.' The Master never, even in passing, spoke of the entanglements of others."

90. He also said, in order to teach a fellow-practitioner the guiding principle of the man seeking birth: "I wish my life to be one of utter abasement and my heart to be noble."

91. He also said: "I lately had a glimpse of the venerable Myōzen Hōin and it completely transformed my accustomed outlook; for I had been making a great to-do about the plainest of matters. Truly there is nothing that matches giving oneself unselfconsciously to saying the nembutsu."

92. It was said: "When scholars of the various schools are summoned to the court for a service, they spend the time before it starts conferring with each other about matters of mutual concern. Up until the time of Emperor Ichijō<sup>44</sup> the way of nembutsu was all their discussion; for was not their

<sup>44</sup> 980-1011; reigned 986-1011.

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study of esoteric and exoteric writings solely for the sake of liberation from birth-and-death? From the reign of Emperor Shirakawa<sup>45</sup> they began speaking of texts. By the time of Emperor Toba<sup>46</sup> worldly affairs had become their only concern. That was when I served at court. Up to that time the discussions were at least recorded. Now is even that much done?"

93. A nembutsu practitioner said: "For the *shōnins* of old, the great issue throughout their lives was whether they had the aspiration for enlightenment or not. Those of later times fell to discussing texts. Now they speak of nothing but their tales of war."<sup>47</sup>

94. Myōhen said: "At the heart of your renunciation of home and worldly life is the resolution to meet death at the road's edge or upon a moor; if you keep it in mind, then however discouraging an experience you may encounter, you will not for a moment feel envious of others. Even in this, however, you must rely on the Buddha's power."

95. Gedatsu Shōnin said: "There are three hindrances to liberation. One is cherished possessions. This includes sacred images and copies of scriptures. The second is holding your life dear. The third is ignoring the instruction of those who guide you."

96. A record of Dengyō's teaching<sup>48</sup> states: "The dwelling of the man seeking birth should not exceed three *ken*<sup>49</sup> in area: one for the altar, one for living space, and one for secular tasks."

97. Kenshō-bō said: "From the time I first abandoned the world, I have

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<sup>45</sup> 1053-1129; reigned 1072-1086.

<sup>46</sup> 1103-1156; reigned 1107-1123.

<sup>47</sup> *Hijiri* were often something of itinerant storytellers, employing a variety of materials in their sermons. This passage is often cited in discussions of the origins and religious coloring of war tales such as *Heike monogatari*.

<sup>48</sup> Dengyō 伝教, also known as Saichō 最澄 (767-822), was the founder of the Tendai monastery on Mt. Hiei. The record referred to here is unknown.

<sup>49</sup> One *ken* is the area of a square about six feet on a side.

made the desire for a quick death my study. And because I have continued thus for more than thirty years, that thought does not slip from my mind now even for a moment. Since I hope to die swiftly, when it seems that my life will be prolonged even a little, I am desolated and filled with misgivings. Thus, I put to an end all impulses to have even a single pack of any worth. Is not the important thing to abandon this world of birth-and-death?"

98. "Kyōshin,<sup>50</sup> who settled in Kako, built no fence to the west: toward the Land of Perfect 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. Hōnen Shōnin said: "To speak deeply of the doctrinal rationale of the nembutsu is, contrariwise, a sign of shallowness. Even though your reasoning not go deep, if only your aspiration for the Buddha Land is deep, you are certain to attain birth."

100. Further he said: "The way in saying the nembutsu lies in having no 'way'. You will be born because, without deliberating about your conduct or the good and evil in your heart, you earnestly say the Name."

101. Shōkō Shōnin did not engage in scholarship, saying, "Even those who had long devoted themselves to learning abandoned it and pronounced the Name. In a man's all so fugitive moments, it is meaningless

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<sup>50</sup> 敬信 Early Heian period monk who originally trained at Kōfuku-ji in Nara, becoming an accomplished scholar-priest. However, he conceived a desire for birth into Amida's Buddha Land and set out on a wandering pilgrimage throughout Japan, eventually settling in Kako, in the present Hyogo Prefecture. There he abandoned priestly life, building a thatched hut and taking a wife. He lived in poverty, working fields and carrying baggage for travelers, and died in 866. He was a forerunner of Kamakura nembutsu practitioners, and his story is found in *Kan'eiwa monogatari* as well as other records. Shinran, in a record of his sayings (*Gaijashō*, 1337), is quoted: "I follow the way of the practitioner Kyōshin."

to neglect the nembutsu and to study instead. Such activity is best left to the spare time that may remain after saying the nembutsu."

102. Ji-amidabutsu of Shimotsumura said: "Gyōki<sup>51</sup> taught, 'Be ever a companion to others and not yourself at center.' In accompanying others lies true equanimity of heart."

103. A *shōnin* cautioned his fellow-practicer: "Do not hunger after possessions. Accumulating is easy, but the important thing is to abandon."

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

105. Kyōrenja said: "However intently you have wakened the aspiration for enlightenment you should take your active practice down a peg or two. Give heart the higher place, practice the lower."

106. Kyōbutsu-bō said: "I rebuked some practicers, 'You've taken up the *hijiri*'s pack, but all the while you're trying to strengthen your footing.'"

107. In his last illness, three days before death, he said: "Myōhen used to tell me that everything was meaningless except the thought, 'Buddha, save me.' I never took it seriously, but the truth of it has come to me now. Even the contemplation on the body's defilements is a practice to be performed under normal circumstances, not when facing death. Anoku-bō of Tōjōji said that if you study ceremonial sutra chanting your performance will be no more than monkey-music;<sup>52</sup> I can see that now."

108. While making a pilgrimage of places associated with Kūkai in

<sup>51</sup> 行基 A famous master of the Hossō school who is said to have made pilgrimages throughout the country spreading Buddhism among the people and establishing a large number of temples. He counted among the four founders of Nara's Tōdai-ji. Died in 749 at the age of 82.

<sup>52</sup> Literal translation of *sarugaku*, a term for popular entertainments, including the precursor of *nō*, sometimes performed at temples and shrines.

Shikoku, Shinkai Shōnin wrote the following on the wall of a farmhouse: "Say the nembutsu without becoming a 'man of nembutsu' and you will attain birth."

109. Gyōsen-bō said: "Someone asked me whether it was better to be anxious about birth, reflecting on one's own lack of aspiration for Buddhahood, or not to reflect thus on one's way of life in the conviction that one's birth is already settled. I answered, 'I asked Ogura-nyūdō'<sup>53</sup> about this long ago and he explained that birth is settled at the very first moment faith is awakened; it is simply that one's span has not run out, so one's fleshly existence has yet to perish. His own attainment of birth was splendid. I have heard that Kumagai-nyūdō'<sup>54</sup> said much the same thing.' "

110. "Zenshō-bō, whose attainment was perfect in all respects, had said, 'Birth into the Buddha Land is settled in the same sense that death is the inevitable end of all living things.' These two or three men—Ogura-nyūdō, Kumagai-nyūdō, Zenshō-bō—directly received the Master's guidance and followed his teaching. It is imperative, then, that we realize that our birth is firmly settled." (This was Gyōsen Shōnin's response to a question from Jishin Shōnin.)

111. Hongaku-bō'<sup>55</sup> of Chinzei asked Myōhen: "It is said that uttering the Name when you are distracted does not constitute good; you must first still the heart and then pronounce it. How should I go about this?" Myōhen answered, "That statement applies to the most able practitioners. But for incapable practitioners like myself, ridding the heart of distractions is beyond our powers. Hence, without pondering whether we are agitated

<sup>53</sup> 小園入道 Buddhist name: Chimyō-bō 智明房. Died in 1167 on Mt. Kōya.

<sup>54</sup> 熊谷入道 Buddhist name: Rensei-bō 蓮生房. Served Minamoto no Yoritomo before entering Buddhist life. Became a disciple of Hōnen and later dwelled on Mt. Kōya. Died in 1208 at the age of 70. The story of his slaying of Atsumori is one of the best known chapters of *Heiki monogatari*.

<sup>55</sup> 本覚房 Unidentified. The name is found in the lineage of Ryūkan's Chōraku-ji branch of the Jōdo school, which states that Hongaku lived in Kyushu where he spread the teaching.

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or tranquil, we simply take a rosary with a sturdy strand and turn the beads, saying the nembutsu. To wait expectantly for the moment the mind is concentrated would mean never being able to say the nembutsu.”

112. Hōnen Shōnin often said: “Ah, that after this life I be born in the Buddha Land!” Overhearing this, Jōgan-bō said, “If even the Shōnin speaks with such uncertainty, how unsure must other people feel.” Then Hōnen smiled and said, “Until the very moment we mount the lotus-seat, how can we put an end to such thoughts?”

113. Further he said: “Awanosuke’s<sup>56</sup> utterance and my own are exactly the same nembutsu. We have nothing in mind aside from ‘Save me, Amida Buddha!’ ”

114. Further he said: “Shan-tao’s explanation that a man will attain birth through the nembutsu by saying it once or ten times<sup>57</sup> gives us the essentials of nembutsu faith, while his statement, ‘to continue in nembutsu moment after moment is to be in accordance with the Vow,’<sup>58</sup> gives us the essentials of practice.”

115. Someone said to Myōhen: “For the brief period I engage in study I want to decrease the number of times I say the nembutsu.” Myōhen replied: “The end of study lies nowhere but in the practice of nembutsu. If you are thinking of decreasing your utterances, I cannot teach you.”

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<sup>56</sup> 阿波介 Said to have indulged in divination and sadistic behavior—beating his wives and concubines—before becoming a follower of Hōnen.

<sup>57</sup> *Ōjo raisen*: “If a man continues pronouncing the Name of Amida to the end of his present life, or if he does so only ten times, or even once, he could easily be born in Amida’s Land, owing to the virtue of Amida’s Prayer” (trans. D. T. Suzuki).

<sup>58</sup> *Sanzangi*: “There are two things to be distinguished [in the correct practice of the nembutsu]. The one is to pronounce single-mindedly the Name of Amida alone, whether walking or standing, sitting or lying, whether for a long time or for a short time; to keep on holding the Name from moment to moment. This is called the right practice which rightly assures [one to be born in the Pure Land], as it is in accordance with Amida’s Original Prayer” (trans. D. T. Suzuki).

116. Shōkō Shōnin said: "In my heart is the thought, 'Amida Buddha, save me,' and on my lips is its utterance."

117. Further he said: "Hōnen stated, 'When you say the nembutsu in aspiration for birth, the greatness of the act fills your heart, and thus encouraged, you wish to say the nembutsu always: know that this is what it is to have already attained the threefold mind.'"

118. Shinkō Shōnin<sup>59</sup> said: "Please tell me frankly whether wisdom is essential for the attainment of birth, for if it is I will devote myself to religious study. Or, if simply saying the Name is sufficient, I wish to be perfectly certain in my mind about this." Hōnen answered: "The commentaries are unequivocal in affirming that saying the Name is the act that brings about birth. They make abundantly clear also that in nembutsu there is no distinction between the wise and the ignorant. Hence, the utterance of the Name is sufficient to attain birth. Rather than giving yourself to study, you should wholeheartedly say the nembutsu. What scripture is not plumbed at the moment you encounter Amida, Kannon and Seishi? Insofar as a person is ignorant of the significance of birth in the Buddha Land through nembutsu, he should study. But once he has learned this, he should not lose time for saying the Name by chasing after insignificant bits of wisdom."

119. Nen'a Shōnin<sup>60</sup> said: "Even one who has lacked the threefold mind will finally attain it if he follows the ancient method of thinking perforce that his birth is firmly settled."

<sup>59</sup> 信空上人 Son of First Secretary Yukitaka.

<sup>60</sup> 然阿上人 Also known as Ryōchō 良忠. Born to the Fujiwara clan, son of the Tendai priest Enjitsu. Entered Buddhist training while still a child and learned esoteric teachings, but also studied widely under great masters of the Hossō, Sanron, Kegon and Zen schools. Met Shōkō in Kyushu in 1236 and became his disciple. Went to Kamakura, where he converted Hōjō Tsunetoki, and founded Renge-ji. Later made journeys throughout the country, propagating the teaching. Attributed with various scholarly works. Died in 1287 at the age of 89.

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120. Further he said: "All things considered, the fundamental teaching of Jōdo Buddhism amounts to no more than the thought, 'Amida Buddha, save me!'"

121. Shōkō Shōnin said: "In the course of his life in this world, the foolish man is inevitably given to some attachment to reputation and wealth. The realization and practice for his birth into the Buddha Land, however, must be wholly true and real."

122. After his attainment of birth, Hōnen Shōnin appeared to Jūshin-bō<sup>61</sup> of Miidera in a dream and in answer to a question stated: "Though you ask, Amida Buddha is not characterized in any way. I can only say the Name."

123. Nen'a Shōnin said: "You do not have to go so far as to set aside special periods for nembutsu, but when your mind is concentrated—as when you pronounce the Name during the six periods of daily worship—you should take special care to abide in the thought of seeing the Buddha before you."

124. He also said: "When the time for the midday worship came, Shōkō Shōnin would break off whatever he was doing and immediately begin the chant of the *Smaller Sutra* and the hymnal nembutsu, even in the midst of a sermon, and though there might be but a few words remaining. It is said that the practitioners gathered to hear him could not help but perform the hymn also."

125. Jōgan Shōnin said: "Someone asked, 'The *Meditation Sutra* teaches the visualization of the shapes and colors of the Buddha Land. Should I do such meditations even if I practice the utterance of the Name?' Hōnen answered, 'In the beginning I, too, performed such useless practices, but not any longer. I only entrust myself to the utterance of the Name.'"

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<sup>61</sup> 住心房 Tendai priest and older brother of Shinkū.



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126. Hōnen Shōnin said: "A man who wants to jump over a ten-foot ditch will try to leap fifteen. The man who aspires for birth should attain the settled faith, and yet endeavor."

127. Further he said: "If I abide in an attitude of self-power, though I utter the Name but a single time it will be an expression of self-power. If I entrust myself to Other Power, then utterance after utterance, nembutsu after nembutsu, will be Other Power."

128. Further he said: "If a man thinks that his attainment of birth is firmly settled, then it is settled; if he thinks it is not, then it is not."

129. Nen'a Shōnin said: "How lamentable it is that those convinced of the bond between cause and effect are weak in their faith in Other Power and those who believe in the Primal Vow do not acknowledge the law of causation. You should entrust yourself wholeheartedly to the Buddha's Vow and also believe in causation, for then you will be in accord with the Buddha's meaning and will attain birth."

130. Further he said: "With a heart free of deceptions (1), I entrust myself to the Buddha's Primal Vow (2), certain in my aspiration for birth (3). This is known as the threefold mind."

131. Gyōsen-bō said: "Be diligent in making yourself a *hijiri*. Amidst all the obstacles to birth there is none greater than covetousness. Among all evils, the principal one is greed in the world of forms."

132. It was said: "If you desire to attain birth in all truth and sincerity, you should solely utter the nembutsu and neither worry about others nor make Buddhist or worldly matters your concern. You can hope to benefit other sentient beings when you return to this defiled world from the Buddha Land."

133. Kyōjitsu-bō said: "Devote yourself to learning the taste of the nembutsu!"

134. Kenshin Zasu<sup>62</sup> said: "It is a great pulley that Amida has built!"

135. Jōgan Shōnin said: "The man who aspires to follow Shan-tao should endeavor in no practice beside the Name. Nevertheless, he should accept as a matter of course those opportunities to do good which spontaneously present themselves and which do not become obstacles to the nembutsu. He should not find them distasteful, thinking they are to be rejected. But neither should he take them up in the time devoted to nembutsu, thinking that it is good for him to perform them."

136. Further he said: "Although it is said in Buddhism that virtues are best hidden, the dissipation in purposely making a show of one's foolishness is also a fault. It is like going to one's quarters instead of to the altar room 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 to ignorant man, who is forever inclined to shiftness."

137. It was said: "The man who aspires for the Buddha Land ceases to do the things he wants; for all that he desires in his heart to do is evil."

138. "Once, when Kyōbutsu-bō was practicing in Ōshū, he was given shelter in a house whose walls and surrounding fence had all been allowed to fall into disrepair. He asked about this and the owner explained, 'I'm planning on moving to the Renown County area.' Upon hearing this Kyōbutsu-bō turned to his fellow-practicers with tears in his eyes and said, 'When a man aspires for the Buddha Land, he naturally casts off his attachment to this defiled world.' A very telling remark."

139. "Followers of Kyōbutsu were speaking of things they wished for in Nembutsu Buddhism. One of them (Tsuchio Shirōtarō) said, 'Plain talk about birth and enlightenment unencumbered by doctrine.' The Shōnin,

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<sup>62</sup> 願真座主 Ranking priest of the Tendai school; later went to Ōhara, a *kyōji* center north of Kyoto, where he devoted himself to the nembutsu.

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struck by this, exclaimed, 'A splendid thought! There is nothing to match that for grasp of the living marrow of the nembutsu way.' "

140. It was said: "Renunciation of the world has nothing to do with harboring a deep aversion for mankind. And to fear people without cause also reflects a distortion in outlook. At the heart of renunciation is the profound rejection of concern for reputation and gain. Then, since any man in his foolishness would find difficulty in managing alone, surely it is well to join with one or two others who do not arouse strong yearnings for fame and wealth. If the number increases, however, there will inevitably be problems."

*(Concluded)*