

Myōe's Criticism of Hōnen's Doctrine

BANDŌ SHŌJUN

I

SOON after the death of Hōnen Shōnin 法然上人 (1133–1212) which occurred on January 25th, 1212, Myōe Shōnin 明恵上人 (1173–1232) successively published two books severely criticizing Hōnen's great writing on the significance of the Nembutsu practice, the *Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu Sbū* 選擇本願念佛集 (abbreviated hereafter as *Senjakusbū* 選擇集). These were *Ikkō Senjusbū Senchakusbū no naka ni oite Ja o kudaku Rin* 於一向專修宗選擇集中摧邪輪 (abbreviated hereafter as *Saijarin* 摧邪輪) and *Saijarin Sbōgonki* 摧邪輪莊嚴記 (abbreviated hereafter as *Sbōgonki* 莊嚴記), published on November 23rd, 1212 and June 22nd, 1213 respectively. In view of the many repercussions Myōe's works caused in the contemporary philosophical world and thereafter, it would be worthwhile to consider the ideological encounter of these two eminent Buddhist sages against the background of the Kamakura Period, in which they were near contemporaries.

Hōnen succeeded in achieving independence from the established Buddhist sects with his clear-cut teaching of salvation through singleminded invocation of the Name of Amida, thus establishing for the first time in the history of Japanese Buddhism an independent Pure Land sect; and this bold step began the new Kamakura Buddhist reform movement with all its far-reaching consequences. The spiritual influence exercised by Hōnen is clearly reflected in the reactions of contemporary Buddhist leaders of both old and new factions. This is attested to in their writings, sayings, and diaries.

If the founding of the Tendai and Shingon Schools by Saichō and Kūkai at the beginning of the Heian Period (794–1192) is called the first attempt at religious reformation imposed from above, that is, from the Imperial House-

hold of the Emperor Kammu, Hōnen's founding of the Pure Land School toward the end of the Heian Period might well be called a second religious reformation, which this time represented and responded to the aspirations of the lower levels of society. This marked the most significant point in the history of Japanese Buddhism, the emergence of what is now known as the Kamakura new Buddhism. The fact that its influence not only inspired the common people but also extended to the established Buddhist sects may be compared to the Reformation movement inaugurated by Luther and Calvin in 16th century Europe and the subsequent Counter-Reformation which arose within the Catholic world.

Among the violent reactions, both political and doctrinal, of the traditional Buddhist circles on Mt. Hiei and at Nara against Hōnen's reformative attempts the most remarkable in the Nara Buddhist camp were those of Jōkei 貞慶 (Gedatsu Shōnin 解脱上人; 1155-1213) and Kōben 高辨 (Myōe Shōnin). Jōkei, as the leader in Nara, appealed to the emperor to have Hōnen's teaching banned. Myōe, being in a position equal in influence to that of Jōkei, lost no time in publishing two books criticizing the doctrines expounded in Hōnen's *Senjaku-shū*. He took these measures immediately, and not by way of political maneuvering but by philosophical and doctrinal argument.

An outstanding feature of Myōe's criticism of Hōnen was that he did not merely denounce superficial moral transgressions Hōnen's followers may have committed, but penetrated much deeper, focusing his criticism on Hōnen's teaching itself. It presented a challenge hardly to be dismissed lightly by Pure Land circles since it was a positive argument posed by an authentic Buddhist master with years of hard-gained experience encompassing the three aspects of precept, meditation, and wisdom. This accounts for the fact that these two works by Myōe have been the center of frequent scholarly disputes and controversies until the present day.

Historically, Saichō's establishment of the Tendai School on Mt. Hiei at the beginning of the Heian Period can be seen as expressing his rejection of the degenerated Nara Buddhism. He sought thereby to initiate a disciplinary reform for Mahāyāna practitioners based upon the precepts in the *Fan-wang-ching* 梵網經 (the Mahāyāna *Brahmajāla Sūtra*), and thus disavowed the whole existing monastic structure which was based on Hīnayāna-type ordination. Hōnen's founding of the Pure Land School can also be seen as a dialectical unity of Nara

and Heian Buddhism: he regarded the Nembutsu as consummating all other religious practices, while Heian Buddhism had already passed its zenith and had lost sight of its early reformative zeal.

The *Senjakuśū*, Hōnen's declaration of religious independence, fell prey to the rigorous criticism of Myōe's *Saijirin* and *Sbōgonki* after Hōnen's demise, so he himself had no chance to respond to it. The task of attempting to reconcile the thought of these two sages was thus left to posterity.

Besides Myōe's works, other writings criticizing *Senjakuśū* are known to have been published from both Mt. Hiei and Nara. Not a few writings by Hōnen's followers refuting those criticisms also appeared. Of these works, the most systematic and thoroughgoing is Shinran's *Kyōgyōsbinsbō* 教行信證 (Teaching, Practice, Faith and Realizing of the Pure Land), which is deeply sympathetic with Hōnen's own motives. The viewpoint that Shinran's *Kyōgyōsbinsbō* and *Gutokuśū* 愚秃鈔 (The Writing of a Bald-headed Ignoramus) were motivated by Myōe's criticisms is nowadays widely accepted. In the following, let us look into Myōe's life and the philosophical background and character of his two works mentioned above.

II

Myōe Shōnin (1173–1232) of Toganoo's 禪尾 life of sixty years, while not approaching Shinran's ninety, exceeded the average life-span of the age in which he lived, and in view of the quantity and quality of his work his life was undoubtedly one of the most rich and productive of his times. Born in Arita county of Kii Province (present day Wakayama Prefecture, south of Osaka), he lost both his mother and father at the age of eight. He subsequently entered Jingo-ji Temple 神護寺 at Takao 高雄, northwest of Kyoto, through the good offices of his uncle, Jōgaku-bō Gyōji 上覺房行慈, who was a disciple of Mongaku 文覺, and was initiated into the Buddhist teaching. He was officially ordained at the age of sixteen at Tōdai-ji Temple 東大寺 in Nara. At Sonshō-in 尊勝院, one of the sub-temples of Tōdai-ji, he is said to have studied the *Abhidharmakośa* under the tutelage of Rinkanbō Shōsen, scholar of the Kegon (*Avatamsaka*) School, and familiarized himself with such Buddhist writings as the *Tuikyōgyō* 遺教經, the Sutra of Buddha's Last Sermon. At nineteen he was anointed in the Kongōkai (*vajra-dhātu*) ritual by Rimyōbō Kōzen. From

about this time Myōe is said to have frequently seen auspicious visions during practice of the *dhyaṇa* (meditation) called "Butsugen-hō" 佛眼法 (the Method of Buddha's Insight) before the Tantric image of Butsugen Butsumo Son 佛眼佛母尊 belonging to the Taizōkai (*garbha-dhātu*). Thereafter, Myōe's learning and practice centered around the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* and Tantric literature, and was based on strict observance of precepts and frequent practice of various kinds of meditation. His sphere of activity ranged from Takao, Makinoo, and Toganoo in Kyoto to his several hermitages in Arita, Kii prefecture, with occasional visits to Nara.

Myōe's habit of elaborately recording visions he experienced is one of the conspicuous traits of his religious character. His *Tumenoki* 夢之記 or *Record of Dreams*, kept for nearly forty years from his nineteenth to fifty-eighth year (1191-1230), is seemingly indicative of an inherent inclination to fall easily into *samādhi* and also of his serious reverence for such spiritual experiences. Such a proclivity no doubt constitutes one of the most precious gifts of his religious personality and stamps him as a mystic visionary.

Interesting in this connection is that Hōnen himself, the object of Myōe's criticism, is also believed to have been richly gifted with this quality. Hōnen, according to traditional Jōdo sect sources, is credited with a work known as the *Mukan Seisō Ki* 夢感聖相記 (*A Record Perceiving Holy Appearances in a Dream*), which was recorded on May 2nd, 1198, the same year in which he published the *Senjakuśū*. Therein he vividly depicts a mysterious encounter with Shantao of T'ang China while in a Nembutsu *samādhi*:

I (Hōnen) kept up the practice of reciting Nembutsu for many years, never discarding it for even one day. In a dream one night, I saw a great mountain-range stretching far north and south with its ridge extremely high. Along the western slope of that mountain-range, a great river flowed southward from its source in the north. Its banks, spreading widely on either side, were seemingly boundless. Rich foliage grew luxuriantly all along its length without diminishing. Soaring I reached a spot halfway up a nearby hill. As I was commanding a view of the distant range to the west, a drift of purple cloud floated in the air before me about 50 feet above the earth. No sooner had I considered this to be an auspicious sign, indicating that someone somewhere was about

to be born in the Pure Land, than that cloud came to hover above me. Looking up, I saw a number of birds, peacocks, parrots, and the like emerging from out of it to descend upon the riverbank and sport about. These birds, without brilliance of their own yet gloriously resplendent, flew back into the cloud. Nothing could have seemed more wondrous to me. Soon the cloud sped to the north, covering the mountain and the river. I again surmised that it must have gone to receive a Pure Land aspirant residing to the east of that mountain-range. Then in a moment, the cloud, coming over me once again, grew steadily larger until finally it covered the entire universe. A high priest emerged from the cloud suspended in the air before me. Thereupon, as I reverently paid homage and gazed up at his holy countenance, I found the upper half of his body that of an ordinary priest, whereas the lower half was that of a golden Buddha. I put my palms together in reverence, bowed my head, and asked, "Reverend Sir, may I ask you who you are?" "I am Shan-tao of the T'ang period," he replied. Again I asked, "Our ages are far apart; tell me what brings you here?" He replied, "I consider it extraordinary that you are engaged in spreading the way of the singleminded practice of Nembutsu. Thus I have come to testify on its behalf." Then I asked, "Are you sure that those who exclusively practice the Nembutsu are all to attain rebirth?" The dream ended before he answered. Even now, long after the dream, that holy appearance seems present before me.¹

In addition to this, Seikan-bō Genchi, one of Hōnen's main disciples, published a work entitled *Sammai Hottoku Ki* 三昧發得記 (A Record of Receiving Samādhi Revelation), which he edited from his master Hōnen's notes. This might be called Hōnen's version of *Yumenoki*, for it is the record of his dreams for six years (his 66th to 74th years), that is, from 1198 to 1204. Since Myōe had already been recording his dreams since 1191, it thus turns out that Hōnen and Myōe were keeping records of their visions concurrently.

It is well known that Hōnen thought very highly of the virtue of *samādhi*

¹ I have included this record in spite of the fact that scholars now generally believe it to have been written after Hōnen's death by one of his disciples in order to show Hōnen's similarity with the Chinese Pure Land patriarch, Shan-tao, who also had such visions. I feel however that it is fully in keeping with the overall character of Hōnen's religious personality as seen in his writings.

in a religious personality. In his *Senjaku-shū* there is a passage which reads:

Question: In the tradition of Pure Land Buddhism there are a number of distinguished masters such as Chia-ts'ai of Hung-fa Temple and Tz'u-min. Why do you not depend upon those masters and rely on Master Shan-tao alone?

Answer: Indeed, those masters relied on the teaching of the Pure Land, but they did not embody the quality of *samādhi*. Master Shan-tao embodied the virtue of *samādhi*. His attainment of it is evident.

This obviously refers to the story related by Shan-tao himself at the end of his commentary on the *Meditation Sūtra* of the monk who appeared nightly in his dreams and directed him to write the commentary. No wonder then that Myōe took a deep interest in Hōnen, who not only held Shan-tao, an adept in *samādhi*, in deep reverence, but who himself possessed a similar proclivity. Consequently it is difficult to think of the spiritual encounter between Myōe and Hōnen as a mere coincidence.

Although this proclivity toward absorption in *samādhi* must have been, to some extent, inherent in Myōe's nature, he still consciously searched for the method of meditation best suited to him among a number of traditional *samādhi* techniques. He experimented with a wide range of methods, such as the Butsugen-hō 佛眼法, the meditation with Butsugen Butsumo-son 佛眼佛母尊 as the object; the meditation according to the *Engaku-kyō* 圓覺經 (Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment), which he practiced at his Rennyadai 練若台 hermitage in Sekisui-in 石水院 Temple at Togano; the Shinnyokan 眞如觀 or the meditation on Suchness (*bhūta-tathatā*) based upon the teaching of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*; the Gosō Jōshin-kan 五相成身觀 (five-fold meditation to achieve the body of Mahāvairocana Buddha) of Shingon Buddhism; and the Bukkō-kan 佛光觀 or meditation on Buddha's emanating light, based upon Li T'ung-hsüan's 李通玄 *Avatamsaka* commentary. This reminds us that Myōe was not merely a scholar of Kegon philosophy but a practicing Buddhist ever bent on training himself by various methods of meditation. In other words, while he initiated a simultaneous practice of Avatamsaka and Tantric doctrines in which both teachings were beautifully harmonized into a coherent personality, he was also a Brahmācārin (person of pure conduct) to the letter, celibate, strict in observing all precepts, and constantly devoting himself to

the practice of meditation. His vigilance, his repugnance of fame, and his inner aspiration for the ascetic life are already in evidence in his early years.

When Myōe was thirty-three, while he was secluded in a hermitage in Kii prefecture contemplating his long cherished pilgrimage to India, the birthplace of Śākyamuni Buddha, he received a letter from his master Jōgaku in Kyoto requesting him to return to Takao. Myōe declined his master's request:

With the fruit of learning and practice so hard to attain, my only thought now is to risk all in travel through desolate deserts and among green peaks, while keeping the Buddha's name in mind, or the title of a sutra, or even one mantra. I have not a single thought of associating with other people . . .

In his irresistible yearning for the native land of Śākyamuni Buddha, and with certain actualities of his daily life temporarily frustrating fulfillment of his practice, he twice made plans for travelling to India, relying upon such records as Hsuan-tsang's *Travels to the Western Countries*. Yet he gave up his plans when the wife of his patron Yuasa Munemitsu drew two inauspicious oracles from the Dai Myōjin 大明神 of the Kasuga Shrine. This may be said to show the ethnic character of his belief.

This passage in his *Record of Dreams* clearly reveals Myōe's criticism of the state of Nara Buddhism, his disillusionment, and his aspiration for Enlightenment:

Ever since my distant childhood, my constant thought was to seek the Dharma. After coming of age, when I took to the study of various teachings, exoteric as well as esoteric, I heard only voices clamouring for position and fame. I found friends as well as teachers engrossed in fleeting matters, oblivious of the truth of the teaching. I felt forsaken by my karmic link to Buddhist practice. I could not help but be deeply disheartened.

Therefore his attempt to lead an ascetic life in remote Kii prefecture was not mere escapism, but a necessity in order for him to maintain his meditative practice in solitude. It was in the nature of a new renunciation for him.

Symptoms of his sensitivity and vigilance in matters of fame are seen in some rather humorous inscriptions he made at the end of a commentary he copied in his youth at Sonshō-in Temple in Nara:

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

This is a book owned by Jōben [his priestly name at the time], the meanest outcast within this temple; Myōe-bō, a piece of smashed tile from the temple roof; a toilet-cleaner priest.

And,

This is a book owned by the outcast priest Jōben, the meanest beggar monk in the whole of Japan, who will never become a bishop or archbishop, not in this life nor in eternity.

The title *binin* 非人 (outcast) was also used by him when he later wrote *Saijarin* at the age of forty; in the colophon he signed his name with this title. This reminds us of Shinran's "Gutoku" (A Baldheaded Ignoramus), the term of self-reference he began to use after he was sent into exile. Such extreme humility is perhaps common to all the great Buddhist figures.

The painting reproduced in the frontispiece of this journal, of Myōe's solitary figure deeply absorbed in *samādhi* in the branches of a tree in the forests of Takao free from worldly pleasures and fame, is preserved in the Kōzan-ji, and is an extraordinary image of a religious seeker. His resolution in cutting off his right earlobe before the image of Butsugen Butsumo-son at his Kii hermitage to spur himself to greater concentration might strike the modern mind as a somewhat gruesome sacrifice, but in view of his motive, it is, at the same time, indicative of his firmly rooted resolution to avoid all fleshly temptation by disfiguring his own handsome countenance.

In the reply to his master Jōgaku quoted above, Myōe stated, "My only thought now is to risk all in travel through desolate deserts and among green peaks . . ." Despite his genuine aspiration to visit India, a tinge of melancholy, perhaps prompted by a kind of death wish, appears to shroud his words. On the other hand, it may be said that his task of seeking Enlightenment was never unrelated to the matter of life and death. Later, when he was received by the brotherhood of monks at Toganoo and became engaged in educating disciples there, he had come to positively accept the thought of death and had thoroughly sublimated it in his meditation-oriented daily life. This may be seen in his words recorded in the *Kyaku Haimō-ki* 却寝忘記 (Notes To Avoid Falling into Oblivion) by Jakue-bō Chōen, his foremost disciple:

Constantly keep in mind that if someone were going to be beheaded,

MYŌE'S CRITICISM OF HŌNEN'S DOCTRINE

you would be prepared to take his place; then everything, your study included, will succeed. Once the Mind of Enlightenment has awakened in the process of your following the Way of the Buddha, you will be free from any concern over your body and mind.

III

It is clearly coincidental that the publication of Myōe's *Saijarin* came right after Hōnen's death. At the end of the *Senjakuṣū* Hōnen says:

I have been requested by the Lord Kenjitsu Hakuriku 兼實博陸 (Fujiwara Kanezane 藤原兼實) to write this work. I cannot decline. I have therefore presumed to collect important passages on the Nembutsu teaching and have, moreover, pointed out its essential meaning. Only wishing to do his bidding with respect, I did not reflect on my own unworthiness. I now see it was the height of presumption on my part. It is only hoped that once you have graciously glanced at this writing you will hide it in some cavity in the wall and not leave it before the window, to keep slanderers of the Dharma from falling into the evil paths.

Thus it was not Hōnen's intention to have the *Senjakuṣū* published immediately. At first, he allowed only a limited number of his most trusted disciples to copy it. Everything, its Chinese literary style included, indicates that it could not have been meant for the general public. Although opinions vary as to the time of its completion, it is almost certain that it was written after Hōnen was sixty-six years old. Its first publication is believed to have been in September, 1212, a little more than six months after his death on January 25th.

Since Myōe finished writing *Saijarin* on November 23rd of the same year, we cannot but be deeply impressed by the astonishing rapidity with which he wrote this large three-volume book in reply to Hōnen's work. In the first volume of *Saijarin* Myōe writes:

When I examined several different editions of your book, I found that all of them had this character.

This tells us that, already, Myōe had in his hands several editions of the *Senjakuṣū*, and was giving the work an unusually scrupulous reading. And it was

not long, on June 22nd of the following year, before he published a second volume, entitled *Saijarin Sbōgonki*, which is a continuation of the first book. These two works reveal how seriously the forty year old Myōe concentrated himself on the criticism of Hōnen's work, and what astoundingly rich resources of scholarship and insight he had accumulated. It is therefore understandable that in the *Record of Dreams* there should be an entry in which he records seeing Hōnen in a dream.

With the maturing of his character and the ripening of his scholarly attainments, the eremitically-inclined Myōe finally and with reluctance complied with his master's request and took up residence at Toganoō. He founded in the neighborhood a convent called Zenmyō-ji 善妙寺 for the education of nuns, and became engaged in many social activities.

According to the collection of his sayings recorded by one of his disciples, Myōe used to caution his followers against finding fault with others:

Why think and speak of other people's shortcomings, and expose their shameful secrets, disregarding the possibility of causing them life-long disgrace? If somebody is to blame, he himself is at fault; whereas if somebody else makes an issue of this fault, it becomes his own Bear in mind not to speak of such things. However hard it may be to repress your urge to speak out, shut it up deep in your mind, and make sure that you hold your tongue. If it must be said, then admonish him openly to his face.

He also taught:

It is when one is lacking in virtue oneself that one tends to find fault with others. As the ancients used to say, "Toku" 徳 (virtue) is "Toku" 得 (something one gains). It resides in one who loves it. Whoever tends to find fault with others only betrays his own faults and in him no virtue resides.

In another source, he is quoted as saying:

A legend has it that the Venerable Ānanda's sister, who was a nun, fell into hell because she became angry with the Venerable Kāśyapa. Since this holds true for each individual at present too, if anybody gets angry with a monk, it produces karma destining him for hell. However,

MYŌE'S CRITICISM OF HŌNEN'S DOCTRINE

people nowadays, myself included, are deluded into thinking that such a small thing will never be counted as sinful, and so remain unrepentant. How shameful!

From these statements, we learn that Myōe was ever on his guard against the poisonous nature of anger and speaking ill of others. How, then, are we to judge the violent harangues in his *Saijarin* and *Sbōgonki* against Hōnen's *Senjakuśū*?

IV

In summation, Myōe, a strict observer of the Buddhist precepts, led an ascetic life that centered around meditative practice away from the world; he guarded against the allurements of fame and the transgressions of his own words, thoughts, and actions. What, then, brought this retiring man to write books of such violent criticism against Hōnen, a man he had ever held in high respect? Myōe is said to have confided to Jakue-bō Chōen 寂惠房長円, one of his main disciples, "I always feel sad about unreasonable matters. So did I feel when I wrote *Saijarin*." (*Kyaku Haimōki*, part II). This reminds us of the state of mind he was in when as a youth he felt compelled to leave the temples of Nara behind and enter the mountains of Kii. The circumstances which prompted him to write *Saijarin* were, as he himself relates at the outset, as follows: In the autumn of 1212 at a certain place in Kyoto, while giving a lecture on a sutra, Myōe incidentally criticized *Senjakuśū*, mentioning two errors: 1) Its rejection of the Mind of Enlightenment, and 2) Its comparison of the Path of the Holy (those who seek Enlightenment through their own efforts) to that of robbers. Hearing of this, the Nembutsu followers among the congregation that day were offended and a dispute ensued. After that, hearing rumors that the Nembutsu followers might come to storm his residence at any moment for a doctrinal confrontation, he began to write down the main points of his convictions as a memorandum. This proved to be the basis of *Saijarin*.

In the first volume of *Saijarin*, Myōe tries to clarify his contentions through questions and answers. There is a passage where he refers to his reason for writing the book:

Question: Even if you regard it (Hōnen's viewpoint) as false, as long as you do not hold such a view yourself, you will be free from

falsehood. Why is it then that you have taken the trouble of writing this book to refute it?

Answer: As is stated in the text of the precepts in the *Fan-wang-ching*: “When a Bodhisattva sees a non-Buddhist or an evil man, and hears from him even one word abusing the Buddha, he feels as if his heart were pierced by three hundred spearheads.” So is it with this case. Hearing the various false statements made in that book, anyone with a heart would feel as if it were pierced. Anyone who does not feel like that and lets the matter pass, clearly has no real aspiration in the Dharma.

It is obvious that Myōe believed Hōnen’s contentions set forth in *Senjakuśū* to be erroneous, a slandering of Buddhism. This feeling was something he could not merely suffer and remain silent about. He had to speak out in full consideration that Hōnen had already passed away and that there was a good possibility that the future social influence of his thought might be enormous. *Saijarin* was completed by Myōe within a very short space of time. Behind the gentle expression, “I feel sad at unreasonable matters,” which Myōe uttered to Chōen in his later years, at this time he no doubt felt an unbearable anguish. What was it Hōnen preached that would lead Myōe to accuse him of “slandering the Buddha” and “holding false views”?

V

The *Sbōgonki* (1 vol.), published about seven months after *Saijarin*, further develops Myōe’s criticism of *Senjakuśū*. Myōe mentions altogether sixteen errors—thirteen in the former work and three in the latter—contained in *Senjakuśū*. Of the sixteen, the first five mentioned are concerned with the problem of *bodhicitta* (the Mind of Enlightenment).

In the *Kōbukuji Sōjō* 興福寺奏狀 (A Document of Protest submitted to the Imperial Court by Kōbukuji), the draft of which was prepared by Jōkei, the head abbot of Kōbuku-ji, in October 1205, nine errors in the Nembutsu school are mentioned. But these nine points are merely addressed to the external aspects of Hōnen’s teaching, and it is noteworthy that none of them makes an issue of *bodhicitta*. While Jōkei’s name is seen in the list of those present at the discussion meeting held at Shōrin-in Temple 勝林院 of Ōhara in 1186, the

historicity of this meeting is generally held in doubt. And though it is nevertheless probable that Jōkei met Hōnen on other occasions besides this meeting, his actual knowledge of the Nembutsu teaching seems to have been limited at the time he drew up the draft of the *Sōjō* to the behavior of some Nembutsu followers, and, of course, to hearsay, partly because it was written prior to the publication of *Senjakuśū*. Jōkei and Myōe have a number of traits in common. They both occupied leading positions in Nara Buddhist circles; both were very strict in observing the precepts, in avoiding fame, and both had anchoritic dispositions (Jōkei secluded himself in Kasagi 笠置, and Myōe at Takao and Kii); both possessed scholarly and virtuous characters and literary talent, worshiped Shinto deities, and were known as aspirants for Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven. Myōe, however, undoubtedly excelled Jōkei in the firmness of conviction and strength of his insistence that developing the Mind of Enlightenment should be the essence and *sine qua non* of a Buddhist follower. Myōe's two writings mentioned above prove this beyond doubt.

On the one hand, *Saijarin* was a book severely criticizing Hōnen, who, Myōe believed, had neglected *bodhicitta*; on the other hand, it was a thesis elaborating Myōe's own broadly viewed understanding of *bodhicitta*. Anyone who reads it will agree that *Saijarin* is a work of profound scholarship, requiring long years of meditation and study, and that it could never have been hurriedly compiled only for the purpose of controversy. All the appropriate quotations in it drawn from innumerable sources are enough to persuade the reader that, although no more than a few months were needed to complete this book, it is based upon decades of research.

After the sixth of the errors *Saijarin* mentions, several points appear which are similar to those contained among the nine faults outlined in the *Kōbukuji Sōjō*. For example, critical reference to the "Sesshu Fusha Mandara" 攝取不捨曼陀羅 (Maṇḍala embracing all and forsaking none) current at the time, which symbolizes Amida's light illuminating only the Nembutsu followers, can be found in both. It can be concluded from this, I think, that at the time this maṇḍala was widely used among Nembutsu followers. However, while the points of interest shown in the *Sōjō* are mainly centered around institutional matters and social phenomena, Myōe's, as was manifested in his *Saijarin*, largely concentrated on doctrinal matters. This is natural enough in view of the character of *Saijarin*, which deploys detailed argument.

Shōganki may be characterized as a supplement to *Saijarin*, in which additions and some development of argument are made. That their publications were separated by only seven months indicates that Myōe's sense of justice had not quite been satisfied by writing *Saijarin*. This gains support from the number of scathing remarks that appear, the last thing we would expect from this usually gentle and reserved man. Some examples from the former work:

My great ambition lies in one thing alone—to make you throw away this *Senjakusū*!

By making such false statements, you have driven all your followers to dwell in this greatly mistaken view. You are a vile robber destroying the Buddhas' Pure Lands.

By your false statements, you have caused your followers to discard their *bodhicitta*. Are you not a messenger of the devil?

I am now convinced that you are a heinous robber belonging to the Pure Land school. You should not use the title of the son of the Buddha. How could you be entitled free access to the temple precincts? You are a sinner, a reproach to Shan-tao. How could you be a member of his family?

The practice of Nembutsu cannot be established apart from *bodhicitta*. Thus, by slandering both the practices of the Holy Path and the Pure Land Path, you yourself have attained neither of them. You therefore should know that you are to be called "one who is absolutely empty-handed." The wise Brahmācarins (those whose conduct is pure) should never live together in the same place with you.

Among right causes for birth (in the Pure Land), *bodhicitta* must be regarded as the primary path. Nembutsu and other practices may vary according to the practitioner. Yet, by your regarding *bodhicitta* as lacking full consummation and of small benefit, and the Nembutsu as consummate and of great virtue, you are trying to make heaven earth and earth heaven. How perverted your thinking is!

Such vehemence is kept up unabated in the second work:

The culprit who has caused the modern decline of the Dharma is none other than you!

MYŌE'S CRITICISM OF HŌNEN'S DOCTRINE

Since you have not understood the essential significance of all such matters, you should call the maṇḍala of your making the "maṇḍala of no understanding." From now onward, it should never be called a "maṇḍala embracing all and forsaking none."

You should not say, "Our school is reproached," but "Our heretical school is reproached."

That somebody within the Buddha Dharma should give rise to misbehavior owing to the practice of miscellaneous adulterated works related to the three branches of learning (precept, meditation, and wisdom) is an ominous event. Such a person destroys the Dharma of the Buddhas attained during incalculable past time, hundreds of thousands of *kalpas*, as though a worm within the body of a lion were to consume the lion's flesh itself. You are possessed of no other abilities. You have the appearance of righteousness outside, while harboring evil inside. You are indeed the very object of the healing powers of the Buddha's truthful mind. You are a hindrance to birth (in the Pure Land). While you may be possessed of some virtues, you hold in your mind a great heretical view, and thus deceive all you encounter. What I am going to refute now is none other than this great error of yours.

These terse, passionate accusations may be taken as summarizing other extensive arguments Myōe deploys elsewhere. Together with his more elaborate and richly documented argumentation, even a casual glance over them will suffice to show the general orientation of Myōe's argument.

VI

Of the sixteen errors pointed out at the beginning of the *Sbōgonki*, Myōe calls the first ten "great," and the remaining six "small." According to him, the first may be divided into two kinds: 1) the error of rejecting *bodbicitta*, and 2) the error of comparing those of the Holy Path to robbers. He further divides the first of these into five parts, and develops his arguments extensively. Hōnen rejected *bodbicitta*, counting it simply as one of many miscellaneous practices subordinate to the primary practice of Nembutsu; Myōe denounced this, saying that Hōnen regarded *bodbicitta*, which is by nature devoid of substance,

as being substantive, which would be no different from the non-Buddhist view of a creator-god as substance. He defended in detail the absolute necessity of *bodhicitta* in the Way of the Buddha. These arguments seem to be largely concerned with the semantics of *bodhicitta*. Myōe, after Hōnen's death, makes use almost exclusively of quotations from *Senjakuśū* in carrying out his discussions. That was inevitable inasmuch as it was no longer possible for Myōe to get Hōnen's personal responses to his challenges; but it also meant that Myōe, as he subjected Hōnen's definition of *bodhicitta* to rigorous criticism, almost totally neglected the subtle emphasis permeating that definition. Myōe relentlessly pursued his cross-examination of Hōnen's idea of *bodhicitta*, and passed the judgment that Hōnen's acceptance of *sbōmyō* 稱名 (the vocal utterance of Amida's Name) at the expense of the spiritual factor (*bodhicitta*) was tantamount to expecting a fruit to grow without planting a seed. He further denounced Hōnen for decreeing in his *Senjakuśū* that *bodhicitta* is short of ultimacy and of little merit, while *sbōmyō* is paramount and greatly beneficial. This, he says, is an inversion of the truth. He also declares that it is unreasonable to recommend single-minded repetition of Nembutsu to all sentient beings without regard for their different idiosyncracies. He even brings in the verdict that Hōnen should never be called a disciple of the Buddha as long as he rejects or makes light of *bodhicitta*, in spite of the fact, as testified to by various sutras, that it was so cherished by the Buddha himself.

Regarding this discrepancy in their views of *bodhicitta*, we should take into consideration not only their own definitions of it, but their basic motivations as well. Hōnen adopted Nembutsu as the sole way through which all sentient beings, young and old, men and women, might equally be delivered. With this basic motivation, he systematized his personal beliefs and expressed them in his *Senjakuśū*. Although the idea of *bodhicitta* was given a position among the other sundry practices, it does not necessarily follow, I think, that Hōnen, who was acclaimed by his contemporaries for his wisdom and scholarship, failed to grasp the essential significance of *bodhicitta*. As the essence of the Buddha Way it could hardly be discarded. This leads us to suppose that the reason Hōnen viewed *bodhicitta* as one of the sundry practices which he rejected must have stemmed from a belief that *bodhicitta* could not be generated by the practitioner's self-effort.

Myōe, on the other hand, flatly rejects the idea of *bodhicitta* conceived only

as the initial springing up of the Mind of Enlightenment, and adheres uncompromisingly to the formal conception of it as thoroughly permeating the entire Buddha Way. Even the Nembutsu that Hōnen regarded as a practice ensuring absolute non-retrogression is judged by Myōe to be only a means to the attainment of *samādhi* or deep contemplative state. Myōe consistently maintains that the practice of Nembutsu could be consummated solely by *bodhicitta* and that *bodhicitta* in turn would by no means interfere with the practice of Nembutsu. *Senjakuśū*, not written for the purpose of elucidating the meaning of *bodhicitta*, does not contain any specific passage related to it. Yet the following words, ascribed to Hōnen by Shinkū 信空, one of his disciples, might be taken as representing Hōnen's teaching to the disciples closely attending him:

Once Shōnin (Hōnen) stated: Many are the teachers who have expounded the Pure Land teaching. All of them have equally recommended *bodhicitta* and designated the contemplation of the Buddha as an authentic practice. It was Shan-tao alone who, putting aside *bodhicitta*, decided that contemplation of the Buddha was subsidiary to the utterance of Amida's Name. People of this age can never expect to attain birth (in the Pure Land) unless they rely upon Shan-tao's thought
(*Wagotōroku* 和語燈錄 5)

This is indeed in perfect accord with what he says on this same point in *Senjakuśū*. Especially to be noted here is his expression: "People of this age." This reveals, I think, that the structure of Hōnen's religious thought was based neither on a supposition of the accumulation of learning and discipline, nor on some ideal image of what a Buddhist should be, but geared to the actual *status quo* of the majority of the unenlightened. Since Hōnen's basic standpoint was least taken into account in the *Saijariin*, where Myōe's criticism of Hōnen's *Senjakuśū* was made solely on general Buddhist principles, the task of clarifying Hōnen's innermost intention and basic standpoint was naturally relegated to his spiritual successors. Today, few would deny that among the numerous writings defending Hōnen's cause, the most systematic and important *apologia* are found in Shinran's works such as *Kyōgyōshinsō* and *Gutokuśō* (The Writing of a Baldheaded Ignoramus). They are written from Hōnen's own religious standpoint and make up a persuasive reply to Myōe's sweeping critical dialectic. Although Shinran himself nowhere states explicitly that these works

were written in defense of Hōnen, they are generally considered to represent just such a defense.

Both *Kyōgyōshinshō* and *Gutokushō*, written in classical Chinese which could be read only by the intellectuals, emphasize and elaborate that the faith of the individual accorded by Amida's Other Power is nothing but the great *bodhicitta*.

Shinran seems to have intended that his main work should be published in Kyoto, and not the Kantō 關東 (the eastern provinces), so that its appearance would achieve maximum effect in the traditional Buddhist circles at Nara and Mt. Hiei.

A special foreword is attached to the third volume of *Kyōgyōshinshō* in which Shinran deals with the significance of *bodhicitta* in Pure Land Buddhism in relation to the Triple Mind (sincerity, faith, and aspiration for birth in the Pure Land), and with the true meaning of being a Buddhist disciple.

When all these factors taken into account, we are made to realize the central role the defending and clarifying of his master's teaching played in Shinran's life.

Furthermore, in Shinran's *Sbōzōmatsu Wasan* 正像末和讃 (Hymns on the Three Periods after Buddha's Demise), we find successive references to the unenlightened man's difficulty of generating *bodhicitta* by his own self-effort, a standpoint strongly suggestive of Hōnen's own. At the beginning of each of the two volumes of *Gutokushō*, Shinran confesses to "being inwardly ignorant and outwardly wise," which is reminiscent of the accusation Myōe directed against Hōnen toward the end of *Sbōgonki*, when he declared him to be outwardly righteous and inwardly false. Shinran's words must have derived from this source. Though most of Shinran's writings are highly confessional, they may also be characterized as an open response not only to the traditional schools advocating the Holy Path, as represented by Myōe and Jōkei, but to the question posed by the age in which he lived, and by later history as well.

Whereas *Saijarin* and *Sbōgonki* explicitly singled out Hōnen as Myōe's opponent, Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* and *Gutokushō* were addressed to no single individual. This in itself seems to suggest that his response was made in full awareness that Myōe had challenged Hōnen with radical questions of universal significance, valid throughout the entire history of Buddhism and transcending both the individual and his age.