

Sōtō Zen *Nenbutsu* Movements in the Early Meiji Period

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DURING the early years of the Meiji 明治 period (1868–1912), there were at least four attempts by Sōtōshū 曹洞宗 Zen 禅 priests and teachers to standardize Sōtō teaching for their lay members in ways that might seem surprising given the sectarian doctrinal boundaries among Japanese Buddhist sects today. All four advocated a *nenbutsu* 念仏 practice—the first two focusing on Śākyamuni (Jp. Shakamuni 釈迦牟尼) and the latter two on Amida 阿弥陀 Buddha. None of these were fringe movements but rather each had some degree of support from leading Sōtō authorities. A close comparative study of these four movements allows us to think more deeply about issues in two fields of related inquiry: (1) the study of modern Japanese Buddhism (*kindai bukkyō* 近代仏教) generally, and (2) the study of how individual Buddhist sects developed into modern institutions, in this case looking closely at how Sōtō Zen reinvented its teaching in order to appeal to lay parishioners.

The academic study of modern Japanese Buddhism is largely a postwar development, and the initial decades of research by such groundbreaking scholars as Yoshida Kyūichi 吉田久一 (1915–2005) and Kashiwahara Yūsen 柏原祐泉 (1916–2002), among others, tended to focus upon studies of the Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 (True Pure Land School) denominations and the unarguably critical role these played in moving Buddhist sects away from the feudal institutional structures of Buddhism in the Edo 江戸 period (1603–1867) and toward becoming modern organizations. Though this tendency to focus upon Jōdo Shinshū thinkers and institutions still predominates, from the 1970s another groundbreaking and prolific scholar of modern Japanese Buddhism, Ikeda Eishun 池田英俊 (1929–2004), began pointing out the need to recognize the contributions made by other Buddhist sects to this modernization process, demonstrating in his own research the important role that Meiji-period Sōtō Zen figures

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played in this regard.¹ The attempts to institute a *nenbutsu* practice among Sōtō laity, for example, are among those contributions.

The modern reinvention of Sōtō teachings culminated in the adoption of a newly compiled document, the *Sōtō kyōkai shushōgi* 曹洞教会修証議 (The Meaning of Practice and Verification for the Sōtō Laity; hereafter *Shushōgi*), as the official summary of Sōtō teachings (*shūkyō no taii* 宗教の大意) in 1890. This document remains today at the core of the Sōtō sect's official proselytization strategy as found in Article 5 of the current *Sōtōshū Constitution*.² Though I will briefly discuss the *Shushōgi* below, the focus of this essay will be upon the *nenbutsu* movements mentioned above that preceded the creation of this document and provided both the impetus for its creation and much of its underlying logic. Even after the adoption of the *Shushōgi*, the terms and logic of the arguments for and against each of the *nenbutsu* movements continued to inform Sōtō doctrinal debates for much of the twentieth century.

In order to understand why Sōtō sect leaders would have tried to implement *nenbutsu* practices for their lay followers, one must have a sense of the extremely precarious position in which Buddhists found themselves in early Meiji-period society. All Buddhist institutions faced existential threats from both domestic and international forces. Domestically, there were at least three such forces: (1) nativist (*kokugaku* 国学) anti-Buddhist ideologies of the Edo period provided a justification for the violent attacks upon thousands of temples occurring mainly between 1868 and 1871, often referred to as the *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈 (abolish the buddhas, destroy Śākyamuni) campaigns; (2) the government forcibly enrolled Buddhist priests to teach in the Daikyōin 大教院 (Great Teaching Academy) and the Kyōbushō 教部省 (Ministry of Doctrine)—newly created institutions for the dissemination of a national doctrine—and put strictures on their ability to teach Buddhism;³ and (3) the resentment of many commoners toward Buddhist priests on account of the latter's often corrupt and heavy-handed implementation of the *terauke* 寺請 (temple registration) system during the Edo period no longer needed to be repressed due to the loss of state support for Buddhist temples under the Tokugawa 徳川 shogunate. International pressure came in the form of Christian missionaries who were permitted to reside in Japan in the provisions of the unequal treaties forced upon it by

¹ See especially Ikeda 1994, which brings together in one volume much of his previous research.

² The passage, found in Ōtake 1997, p. 32, reads as follows: “Teaching (*kyōgi* 教義). Article 5: The Sōtō school follows the four principles of the *Shushōgi* and takes as the fundamental tenet of its teaching the practicing of the sublime realization of *zenkai ichinyō* 禪戒一如 (the equivalence of *zazen* 座禪 and the precepts) and *shushō funi* 修証不二 (practice and realization are not distinct).” This and all translations below are by the author.

³ Tanigawa (2014) has forcefully argued that Buddhist priests were able to exercise quite a bit of agency vis-à-vis government efforts to restrict their teaching of Buddhism and in fact continued to do so on the local level.

Western imperial powers from the 1850s. Buddhist leaders of all sects greatly feared the loss of their parishioners—and thus the loss of significant income streams—to Christian groups.

The question of how to retain the loyalty of parishioners was thus a burning one for Buddhist institutions in a time of such unprecedented social change.⁴ During the Edo period, Buddhist sects, generally speaking, held the feudal, hierarchical view that the majority of their followers were “ignorant commoners” (*gumin* 愚民) not capable of understanding the subtleties of Buddhist doctrine. If they would attempt to engage the laity with something other than funerary or prayer services at all, it would often take the form of a simple, ethical teaching based on the Buddhist principles of the “ten kinds of wholesome behavior” (*jūzen* 十善), particularly in the form popularized by the Shingon 真言 priest, Jiun Onkō 慈雲飲光 (1718–1804). The Sōtō approach to its teachings at this time was likewise two-tiered and hierarchical. The more difficult path, geared primarily to monastics, was encapsulated in the phrase “directly pointing to the mind, see into one’s nature, and become buddha” (*jikishi ninshin kenshō jōbutsu* 直指人心見性成佛), and this was to be achieved through the practice of *zazen* 座禪, or sitting meditation, culminating in an experience of *satori* 悟, or awakening.⁵ The lower path geared to lay followers was neither sect-wide nor systematic and taught generalized Buddhist ethical principles, often in the form of the *jūzen* as taught by Jiun.

Ōuchi Seiran 大内青巒 (1845–1918)—an esteemed lay Buddhist (*koji* 居士) teacher and scholar of the Sōtō sect who will figure prominently in the narrative below—lamented this haphazard and unskillful approach to educating the Sōtō laity.⁶ Because of this, he felt that of the various Buddhist sects Sōtō was now particularly ill-placed to win over the hearts and minds of its parishioners.⁷ So, when the Daikyōin and the Kyōbushō were dissolved in 1875 and 1877, respectively, and Buddhist schools were given a modicum of freedom to teach the laity according to their own doctrines, Sōtō priests had no ready formula with which to do so. The Sōtō sect headquarters thus

⁴ Ōuchi 1926, p. 18.

⁵ For more on Sōtō’s two-tiered approach during this period, see LoBreglio 2009, pp. 78–88.

⁶ Ōuchi was in fact not only a major figure in Sōtō Zen but was one of the most important of all Meiji (and early Taishō 大正 period [1912–1926]) Buddhists. In addition to being an extraordinarily prolific author, he published the *Meikyō shinshi* 明教新誌—the most important Buddhist newspaper of the period—fifteen times per month from 1874–1901 and founded some of the most influential *kyōkai* 教会 and *kessha* 結社 (teaching assemblies and lay societies) of the period, among numerous other activities aimed at promoting Buddhism in Japanese society. Ishimoto and Naberfield 1943, p. 358, states that Ōuchi had the nickname “Vimalakirti of the Meiji period.” Ikeda Eishun once described Ōuchi to me in a private conversation as “Meiji bukkyō no Reonarudo” 明治仏教のレオナルド—the “Leonardo [DaVinci] of Meiji-period Buddhism.”

⁷ See Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, pp. 435–38; Ōuchi 1926, pp. 17–18.

told its priests that they were free to decide upon the content of their sermons.⁸ Many continued to rely on ethical teachings such as the *jūzen*, but others, such as the four *nenbutsu* movements described below, began to explore the vast, pluralistic resources of the various Buddhist traditions in order to find novel ways to address the spiritual needs of their parishioners.

NAMU SHAKAMUNI BUTSU: RECITING THE NAME OF ŚĀKYAMUNI BUDDHA

During the 1870s and 1880s there arose within Sōtō circles throughout Japan a movement that professed “Śākyamuni is the only Buddha” (*Shakuson ichibutsu* 釈尊一仏) and took as its primary practice the recitation of the phrase “*namu Shakamuni butsu*” 南無釈迦牟尼仏, or “praise be to the name of Śākyamuni Buddha.” In his 1902 anthology of, and commentary on, Sōtō proselytizing during the preceding decades, Yoshikawa Yūgo 芳川雄悟 (d.u.) stated that this practice was so “widely accepted” within Sōtō that it was described as the “rampant development of a new *nenbutsu* sect.”⁹ Approximately half a century after the events, Ōuchi Seiran also recalled that this movement was widespread: “There were some people earnestly engaged in this way of proselytizing, and because of their influence it reached the point where many elderly men and women were chanting ‘*namu Shakamuni butsu*.’”¹⁰ The most influential of the people Ōuchi refers to were the Sōtō priests Sumikawa Kōgan 栖川興巖 (1822–1889) and Tsuji Kenkō 辻顕高 (1824–1890), as well as Yoshioka Shingyō 吉岡信行 (d.u.–1886), who taught an Amida *nenbutsu*.¹¹ The significance of this movement cannot be underestimated, as the teaching of a Shaka *nenbutsu* 釈迦念仏 became the de facto basis for the instruction of Sōtō laity with the publication of Tsuji’s *Sōtō kyōkai sekkyō taii narabi ni shinan* 曹洞教会説教大意並指南 (Outline of the Teachings of the Sōtō Teaching Assembly with Guided Instructions; hereafter *Sekkyō taii*) in 1879 and remained so through the late 1880s.

Sumikawa Kōgan

The earliest advocate of a *Shaka nenbutsu* was Sumikawa Kōgan, head priest of the Shōgōzan Myōjuji 稱號山妙壽寺 temple in Osaka. In 1873, he created an illustrated diagram depicting religious practices centered on the worship of Śākyamuni and, carrying this, began traveling on foot throughout the entirety of Japan advocating the

⁸ See *Sōtōshū kyōkai jōrei* 曹洞宗教会条令 (Regulations for the Teaching Assemblies of the Sōtō School), Meiji 9 (1876), notification no. 26, in *Sōtōshū Shūmukyoku* 1872–89, pp. 87–90.

⁹ Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 1, p. 420.

¹⁰ Ōuchi 1926, p. 19.

¹¹ Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 1, p. 420.

recitation of “*namu Shakamuni butsu*.”¹² While his call to have this practice recognized as official Sōtō teaching and ritual was ultimately not accepted, later Sōtō authorities such as Nukariya Kaiten 忽滑谷快天 (1867–1943), Sakurai Shūyū, and Kagamishima Genryū have since noted the great influence that Sumikawa had upon the subsequent development of Sōtō lay education, with Nukariya going so far as to consider him “the most important person among those who attempted to reform Sōtō proselytizing in the Meiji period.”¹³

Sumikawa’s most important text, and the one that best encapsulates his teaching, is the *Zuiki shōmyō jōbutsu ketsugi sanmaigi* 随喜称名成仏決議三昧儀 (Joyfully Invoking [the Buddha’s] Name, Becoming a Buddha, [Developing] Resolve and [Attaining] Samadhi; hereafter *Sanmaigi*). He first published this in *kanbun* 漢文 in 1876 and later that year went on to publish two more versions of the tract, written in simplified styles of Japanese and geared for lay followers. The central teaching of all three versions, and of his proselytizing activities, is the importance of faith in Śākyamuni, the only true Buddha, and the ultimate soteriological efficacy of reciting his name in the ritual phrase “*Namu hōō Shakamuni nyorai muryō jumyō Seson*” 南無法王釋迦牟尼如来無量寿命世尊 (“Praise be to the name of the Dharma King, Śākyamuni Buddha, World-Honored One of immeasurable life span”). While Sumikawa recommends three recitations followed by three prostrations for ritual practice, he teaches that even a single recitation (*ichinen* 一念) done with joyful gratitude (*zuiki* 随喜) and wholehearted concentration is sufficient for the practitioner to be immediately welcomed into the Land of Tranquil Light (Jakukōdo 寂光土) and “to become a buddha in this very body” (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏).

The power of this incantation is grounded in Sumikawa’s cosmological assumptions, which derive largely from that preeminent Buddhist scripture in East Asia, the *Lotus Sutra*. In the climactic sixteenth chapter, Śākyamuni reveals that he is not merely the prince of the Śākya clan who recently attained buddhahood, but rather he became a buddha immeasurable lifetimes ago and has been, and is, constantly teaching the Dharma for the salvation of sentient beings. Despite this, Sumikawa observes, human beings are still mired down in their desires and sufferings. They do not realize that they too are endowed with buddha nature. To rectify this situation comprises Śākyamuni’s mission and is the sole reason for his appearance in this world (*ichidaiji innen* 一大事因縁), as he famously reveals in the second chapter, “Expedient Means,” of the *Lotus Sutra*. Śākyamuni, in his compassion, took pity on us and vowed to enter this realm of ours in order to show us how to move beyond suffering, return to the Land of Tranquil

¹² This campaign is mentioned in Kagamishima 1982b, p. 387; Kosugi 2009, p. 36.

¹³ Nukariya 1934; Sakurai 1982b, p. 16; Kagamishima 1982a, pp. 367–68; Kagamishima 1982b, pp. 387–90.

Light, and attain our true buddha nature. The notion of Śākyamuni's taking vows (*seigan* 誓願) to save sentient beings, though, does not derive from the *Lotus Sutra* but rather from the *Shobosatsu honjuki bon* 諸菩薩本授記品 section of the *Hikekyō* 悲華經 (Compassionate Flower Scripture), in which Śākyamuni makes five hundred vows in this regard.¹⁴ The parallel here with the forty-eight vows taken by Amida in the *Muryōjūkyō* 無量壽經 (Sutra of Immeasurable Life) is conspicuous, and the power of the *seigan* is as central to Sumikawa's teaching as it is in the Pure Land traditions.

The reason that Śākyamuni's vow is particularly efficacious, Sumikawa teaches, is that in fact all of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three worlds are but manifestations (*bunshin* 分身) of Śākyamuni's Dharma body (*hosshin* 法身)—from the “three bodies [of buddha]” (Skt. *Trikāya*; Jp. *sanjin* 三身) teachings—whose names did not exist prior to his appearance in this world. Thus, Śākyamuni is really the only Buddha, the Dharma King (Hōō 法王) and the original source of the Buddhist teachings. Those who take refuge in him, recite his name, and perform Buddhist services will immediately have access to the blessings (*kudoku* 功德) he bestows.¹⁵ These include the full range of this-worldly benefits, such as the avoidance of various illnesses, for which Sumikawa provides specific dharani and name recitations (*myōgō* 名号).¹⁶ The following explanation of how the power of the Shaka name recitation is effected is perhaps the clearest account in Sumikawa's text:

The way [to dispel ignorance] is to create a karmic connection to the Buddhist path. A karmic connection to the Buddhist path is called “entrusting mind” (*shinjin* 信心). That is to say, hearing about the vastness of the original teacher Śākyamuni Buddha's long life span produces an instant (*ichinen*) of faith. If one then recites the name with joyful gratitude, an instance of karmic connection to the Buddhist path is secured. One becomes confirmed in one's faith (*ketsujō* 決定), extinguishes the causes of the suffering of the three worlds, and is reborn in the Tathāgatha's Pure Land.¹⁷

Here Sumikawa is clearly describing an immediate spiritual transformation and not a rebirth in another realm in a subsequent life. Attaining to true faith, though, does

¹⁴ Kosugi 2009 p. 38.

¹⁵ It is interesting to note that Sumikawa seems to have invented this practice of Shaka name recitation and its soteriological efficacy. It is not found in the *Lotus Sutra*, yet in his *Sanmaigi*, Sumikawa interpolates the following sentence within a passage from the “Nyorai juryōbon ge” 如来寿量品偈 section of that sutra: “With your mind, reflect with faith upon the Buddha, with your mouth recite the Buddha's name, with your body prostrate before the Buddha, and be reborn in the Buddha's Pure Land.” See Kosugi 2009, p. 38.

¹⁶ See Sumikawa 1876 in SS, vol. 4, pp. 8–12, for an extensive list of these. See Blum 2002, p. 447, and Hirota et al. 1997, p. 195, for explanations of the term *myōgō*.

¹⁷ Sumikawa 1876 in SS, vol. 4, p. 14.

indeed have consequences for the next life. It brings about a confirmed spiritual peace (*anjin ketsujō* 安心決定) that allows one to enter a deep state of Zen meditation—free from delusion—at the moment of death, thus allowing for subsequent rebirth in the Tathāgatha’s Pure Land.¹⁸

The extended use of Japanese Pure Land idiom here (*ichinen, shinjin, anjin ketsujō, jōdo* 浄土) and the centrality of Śākyamuni’s *seigan*, mentioned above, are striking. And if one were to substitute Amida Buddha for Śākyamuni, this might well pass as an exegesis of Shinran’s understanding of Buddhist religious experience. It is thus easy to see how subsequent Sōtō intellectuals, such as Yoshikawa writing in 1902, could curtly dismiss Sumikawa’s teaching as “his own bizarre type of *nenbutsu*” and “nothing more than a strained version of Pure Land teachings.”¹⁹ Even a more fair-minded interpreter like Sakurai concludes that “it is hard to avoid the interpretation that Sumikawa’s teaching is a confused jumble of Zen and Pure Land ideas.”²⁰ While in the end it is indisputable that Sumikawa’s teaching is both idiosyncratic and modeled upon the teachings of the Pure Land sects, the charges of being “bizarre” and “confused” detract attention from the fact that it entails a logic that is not foreign to either the Zen or Pure Land traditions and that it struck a chord with many Sōtō priests at this time. In addition, this logic reflects an earnest attempt to overcome the dilemma faced by Sōtō priests of how to make abstruse Buddhist doctrine accessible to relatively uneducated followers.

Yoshikawa’s charge that Sumikawa’s teaching inclines toward a “being reborn in a Pure Land” type of doctrine reflects the common, though mistaken, interpretation of Shinran’s teaching as being merely directed toward a postmortem rebirth in Amida’s Pure Land.²¹ In fact, except for his substitution of Śākyamuni for Amida, Sumikawa’s version is consistent with that of Shinran’s and seeks to demonstrate that this has significant common ground with traditional Zen teachings. As explained above, for Sumikawa “rebirth” is not exclusively a post-death event that occurs in a transcendent realm but rather one that can occur immediately, on this earth, as well as at the moment of death. It is *both* the attainment of a heightened spiritual awareness in the here and now that one is already a buddha, and an assurance of a favorable rebirth. This heightened awareness is, as evident from the title of the tract, a meditative state (*sanmai* 三昧; Skt. *samādhi*) in which one becomes the buddha (*jōbutsu* 成仏) that one already is. Such a recognition is, of course, the traditional soteriological goal of the Zen traditions. The problem with Sumikawa’s version,

¹⁸ SS, vol. 4, p. 15. Blum 2002, p. 443, defines *anjin* as “the state of attainment whereby one’s religious anxieties have been relieved or eliminated,” and provides possible translations as “pacified mind” and “settled mind.” Blum also states that it is “usually synonymous with *shinjin*.”

¹⁹ Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 4, p. 421.

²⁰ Sakurai 1987, p. 201.

²¹ Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 1, p. 420.

though, according to Yoshikawa, is that there is no evidence in the writings of Sōtō patriarchs to suggest that reciting the name of Śākyamuni can bring this recognition about.²²

While this seems to be the case, the importance of Sumikawa's approach lies in his attempt to bridge the gap between the Zen and Pure Land traditions at the structural level. That is, he urges Sōtō priests to reject and transcend the oft-cited distinction between the Pure Land traditions as teaching an "other power" (*tariki* 他力) practice leading to rebirth in Amida's Pure Land and the Zen traditions as teaching a "self power" (*jiriki* 自力) practice leading to "becoming a buddha." Rather, a Shaka recitation done with joyful gratitude and wholehearted concentration cannot be categorized according to such a dichotomy. He likens the relationship between human beings and the Buddha to that of a fetus in the womb of its mother. Just as the being of mother and fetus are one, and there is no thought of "self" and "other," so too as the benevolence of the Buddha is ever present, there can be no distinction between the self power of human beings and the other power of the Buddha.²³ While the metaphor may not resolve the long-standing debates between Pure Land and Zen advocates concerning the types of "power" that bring about spiritual salvation, and Sumikawa's teaching did not win the day in Sōtō circles, the fact that he employed such Pure Land idiom and sought to transcend the traditional terms of debate would have a significant impact upon the subsequent negotiations concerning the codification of Sōtō teachings for the laity.

His understanding of the *jiriki-tariki* dichotomy seems also to be related to his view of the relationship between Buddhist priests and their lay followers. While he continues to assume the traditional division between the priestly and lay paths, the Shaka name recitation serves ultimately to transcend this division and unite the two types of practitioners. Priests are to engage in ascetic practices (*zuda* 頭陀), while lay followers are expected to maintain the five cardinal precepts of Confucianism (*gojō* 五常) and the five Buddhist precepts (*gokai* 五戒) and to practice the ten kinds of wholesome behavior.²⁴ Both paths establish the basis for attaining the highest fruits of the Buddhist path, namely, the common goal of becoming a buddha. This is ultimately achieved, however, by practicing the Shaka name recitation and receiving the blessings gained thereby. As Sumikawa urges both priests, who are to teach the Shaka name recitation, and lay followers, to engage in this practice, we see here a very early, and perhaps the first, Sōtō attempt to bridge the gap between the priestly and lay paths by creating a common practice leading to a common soteriological goal.²⁵ Seen against the backdrop of the traditional rigid two-tiered division, Sumikawa's pedagogy, while maintaining the division, nonetheless subsumes it into a higher synthesis, much like

²² Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 1, p. 420.

²³ Sumikawa 1876 in SS, vol. 4, p. 5.

²⁴ Sumikawa 1876 in SS, vol. 4, p. 7.

²⁵ Sumikawa 1876 in SS, vol. 4, pp. 15–16.

the metaphor of the fetus in the mother's womb. He invokes the traditional trope of "directly pointing to the mind, see into one's nature, and become buddha" that is emblematic of the rarified monastic path, but he does so without reference to the practice of *zazen* and thus makes this highest of Zen religious goals—normally the preserve of a priestly elite—immediately accessible to the laity as well.²⁶

While Sakurai tells us that Sumikawa met much resistance from within Sōtō,²⁷ and Yoshikawa, writing three decades after Sumikawa began his campaign, wrote scathingly of such *Shaka nenbutsu* practices and considered advocates to be heretics (*i'anjin sha* 異安心者) deserving of expulsion from the sect,²⁸ there seems to be no contemporaneous documentation of an outright rejection of Sumikawa's teachings. Yoshikawa wrote at a time when the precepts-oriented teachings of the *Shushōgi* had already become the orthodox, codified teaching for the Sōtō laity. From this perspective, Sumikawa's teachings could easily be interpreted as heretical. However, they had a substantial following prior to this as both Yoshikawa and Ōuchi have related. It is also clear that at least through 1880, Sumikawa had some support at the highest echelon of Sōtō authority as evidenced by the fact that Koga Kankei 久我環溪 (Koga Mitsun 密雲; 1817–1884), who was abbot of Eiheiji 永平寺 temple at the time, provided a prefatory epigraph to the 1880 republication of his *Sanmaigi*.²⁹ In an essay that traces heretical teachings in Sōtō history, Sakurai impartially concludes that while some, like Yoshikawa, viewed Sumikawa's teachings as heresy, one must remember that even as late as 1934 so prominent a sect leader as Nukariya Kaiten admired Sumikawa to such an extent that he published a volume of lectures that he had delivered on Sumikawa's *Sanmaigi* together with selections from that work.³⁰ In this work, Nukariya praises Sumikawa as "the most important person among those who planned the reformation of Sōtō proselytizing in the Meiji period."³¹ This is an extraordinary statement considering the notably obscure position that Sumikawa continues to occupy in Sōtō historiography. Kosugi Mizuho, a contemporary Sōtō priest, has in recent years attempted to resurrect Sumikawa as an important model for Sōtō priests. While acknowledging that Sumikawa's Buddhological understanding may well be at odds in places with orthodox Sōtō teachings, he nonetheless considers Sumikawa's unshakable faith in the salvific power of Śākyamuni and his vow to be something that many contemporary priests lack, and he considers the cultivation of such faith essential for successful religious teaching.³²

²⁶ Sumikawa 1876 in SS, vol. 4, p. 7.

²⁷ Sakurai 1982b in SS, vol. 1, p. 16.

²⁸ Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 1, pp. 452–53.

²⁹ Kawaguchi 2002, p. 157.

³⁰ See Sakurai 1982c, p. 43; Nukariya 1934.

³¹ Quoted in Kagamishima 1982a in SS, vol. 4, p. 367.

³² Kosugi 2008, Kosugi 2009.

Tsuji Kenkō

The prominence and centrality of the Shaka *nenbutsu* for Sōtō priests in early Meiji times comes sharply into focus with the commissioning by the Sōtō sect headquarters (Sōtōshū Shūmukyoku 曹洞宗宗務局) of Tsuji Kenkō—considered to be the leading scholar among Sōtō priests of the day—to produce an authoritative explanation of this practice as the standardized teaching for the sect’s laity. Tsuji’s commission was in accordance with two resolutions adopted at the first session of the General Assembly of Sōtō Temples (Daiichiji Matsuha Sōdai Giin Kaigi 第一次末派総代議員会議) in January of 1875 to establish both a set of sutras to be recited daily by lay followers and to compile a set of instructions for priests to use when preaching.³³ Tsuji responded by first producing in 1878 the *Sōtō kyōkai kaishū nikka kyōju narabi ni shiki* 曹洞教会会衆日課經咒並式 (Daily Sutras and Mantras of the Sōtō Teaching Assembly and Congregation as well as Services; hereafter *Daily Sutras and Mantras*). It was published by the Sōtōshū Daikyōin 曹洞宗大教院 on December 19, and on the following day, Sōtō sect headquarters sent a notification to the heads of all its teaching assemblies throughout the nation to implement its use.³⁴ This was the first time that the scriptural passages and procedures to be used in religious services by the Sōtō laity had been standardized.

The daily protocol prescribed by this text shows that reciting sutras and dharani (*darani* 陀羅尼) was the primary ritual activity expected of laypeople, the underlying logic of which is as ancient as Buddhism itself. Namely, such recitation is part of a “matrix of reciprocity”³⁵ in which the merit (*kudoku*) gained from the activity is offered for the repose of the dead, who in turn bestow blessings upon those doing the reciting. Each morning and evening, lay followers were to light a candle and incense before their *butsudan* 仏壇 (Buddhist altar), join their hands in prayer, and chant “*Namu daion kyōshu Shakamuni butsu*” 南無大恩教主釈迦牟尼仏 (“Praise be to the name of our great benefactor, lord of the teachings, Śākyamuni”) three times, doing a prostration each time. They were then to recite the *Sangemon* 懺悔文 (Verse of Penitence) three times to repent of all their previous transgressions. This was followed by the reciting of the *Hannya shingyō* 般若心經 (Heart Sutra) and the *Shōsaiju* 消災咒 (Disaster-Preventing Dharani), offered to Śākyamuni, Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), and Keizan 瑩山 (1268–1325) in order to repay the merciful blessings bestowed by them. Next, the devotee was asked to recite the *Shari raimon* 舍利禮文, a mantra paying homage to the relics of the Buddha for the benefit of all previous generations of their ancestors. If one had the time, or were particularly motivated, one could then also recite the *Daihiju* 大悲咒 (Dharani of Great Compassion), the *Nyorai juryōbon* 如来寿量品 (the “Longev-

³³ Okada 1986, p. 9.

³⁴ Details about, and excerpts from, this text may be found in Kawaguchi 2002, pp. 334–35.

³⁵ Reader 1991, p. 27.

ity of the Tathāgata” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*), and/or the *Kannon fumon* 觀音普門 (the “Universal Gate” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*). Lastly, again to repay one’s indebtedness, the follower was to recite the Buddha’s name “ten times, or one hundred times” before performing three more prostrations and withdrawing.³⁶

Two aspects of this new, standardized ritual are especially deserving of attention: the fact that a *Shaka nenbutsu* is the central practice, coming both at the beginning and end of the service, and the fact that the ritual is designed expressly for the laity, thus reaffirming the traditional two-tiered division of Sōtō members into householders (*danka* 檀家) and those who leave house and family behind (*shukke* 出家). Tsuji then provided an explanation both of this centrality of the *Shaka nenbutsu* and the necessity for maintaining distinct paths of religious practice in the following year, 1879, with the publication of the first two installments of his *Sekkyō taii*. The third installment followed in 1881. This text was Tsuji’s response to the second of his commissions mentioned above. It was intended as an instruction manual for the priests who would be implementing this new practice and, as a complement to the *Daily Sutras and Mantras*, was the first official attempt to standardize teachings for the laity at all Sōtō temples.

The commissioning and production of this text demonstrates that whereas Sumikawa’s version of the *Shaka nenbutsu* was, for reasons that are not entirely clear, not deemed acceptable, there was nonetheless significant support within the Sōtō hierarchy to attempt to implement the *Shaka nenbutsu* practice itself as official sect policy.³⁷ Tsuji’s *Sekkyō taii* should be read against the backdrop of Sumikawa’s teachings with the aim of trying to elucidate the intriguing question of why Tsuji’s version of the practice was deemed more acceptable than Sumikawa’s. In fact, it is the similarities between the teachings in Sumikawa’s *Sanmaigi* and Tsuji’s *Sekkyō taii* that are most striking, and it requires a careful analysis of the texts to tease out any significant differences in content. It is thus instructive to introduce the central elements of Tsuji’s text vis-à-vis those already described in Sumikawa’s work.

The most obvious difference between Sumikawa’s *Sanmaigi* and Tsuji’s *Sekkyō taii* is a formal one: Tsuji’s work is much longer, more detailed, and more systematic. Sumikawa’s *Sanmaigi* comprises only fifteen pages in its modern printing, four of which merely list dharani and name recitations (*myōgō*). Tsuji’s text, on the other hand, comprises eighty-six pages, the bulk of which provides a systematic exegesis of the first seven of the thirteen articles he concisely lays out in the introduction to the work.³⁸ An

³⁶ The protocol described in this paragraph is found in Kawaguchi 2002, pp. 334–35.

³⁷ See Okada 1986, pp. 7–14; Kagamishima 1982a, pp. 368–69; Kagamishima 1982b, p. 387; Sakurai 1982b, p. 17; Kawaguchi 2002, pp. 334–38.

³⁸ Tsuji originally intended the *Sekkyō taii* to be even longer. As it stands, the first three installments of the work comprise the introduction and exegeses of Articles 1 through 7. A fourth installment was

overriding concern of this exegesis is to provide evidence of scriptural authority for the Shaka *nenbutsu* practice. Here we find the second glaring formal difference from Sumikawa's text, which aside from its invoking of the *Lotus Sutra*, does not attempt to provide canonical grounding for his teaching—something for which he has indeed been criticized.³⁹ Tsuji seems to be consciously attempting to rectify this shortcoming in Sumikawa's work by providing precise bibliographic references in support of his exegesis from a range of Buddhist scriptures, especially the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Hikekyō*, and the works of Dōgen and Keizan. The inclusion of scriptural support from these two founders of Sōtō may likewise be seen as an attempt to legitimize the “Shakuson ichibutsu” movement by defending it against claims that it had no basis in the Sōtō tradition. These formal differences are not surprising given Tsuji's commission to produce a manual to be used by priests for the instruction of the laity, and they indicate that far from rejecting Sumikawa's interpretation of Shaka *nenbutsu* practice, Tsuji's aim was to supplement, refine, and provide it with an authoritative basis.

As with Sumikawa, faith in the salvific power of Śākyamuni Buddha expressed in the meditation upon, and recitation of, his name forms the core of Tsuji's portrayal of Sōtō Zen instruction for its laity. In the *Sekkyō taii*, Tsuji shortens the phrasing of the *myōgō* from “*Namu hōō Shakamuni nyorai muryō jumyō Seson*” found in the *Daily Sutras and Mantras* to the more simple “*namu Shakamuni butsu*.” The doctrinal basis for Śākyamuni's centrality is also the same for both Sumikawa and Tsuji. Namely, Tsuji invokes the same passages as Sumikawa from the *Lotus Sutra* concerning Śākyamuni's *ichidaiji innen*, or mission to save all beings from suffering and elucidate their own buddha nature (Article 1), as well as the *Hikekyō* passage in which Śākyamuni makes his great vows (*taigan* 大願) to dedicate all of his accrued karmic merit toward this end (Articles 5 and 6).⁴⁰ Such doctrinal authority is proof in both Sumikawa's and Tsuji's eyes of Śākyamuni's concern for human beings and his inviolable commitment to their salvation. Indeed, for both of these Sōtō priests, a correct reading of these Buddhist sutras can only lead to the conclusion that all other buddhas have forsaken humanity and have abandoned it here in this realm of suffering, opting instead to dwell in their respective pure lands. For Tsuji, Śākyamuni is the *honji* 本地, or primeval essence, of all buddhas, and while these other buddhas are deserving of respect and veneration as emanations of this primeval essence, wholehearted veneration of Śākyamuni, the sole Buddha (*Shakuson ichibutsu*), is by itself sufficient to bring about an understanding of,

intended to cover the last six articles. There is no evidence for the existence of this last installment. Most commentators agree that Tsuji never produced it. A reasonable conjecture as to why he did not do so could be that support for a Shaka *nenbutsu* practice among Sōtō clergy was not sufficiently widespread at the time he was to begin work on it.

³⁹ Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 1, p. 421; Sakurai 1982b, p. 16; Sakurai 1987, p. 201.

⁴⁰ Tsuji 1879–81 in SS, vol. 4, p. 19.

and faith in, the ultimate soteriological goal—rebirth (*ōjō* 往生) in the Reward Land of Tranquil Light (Jakukō hōdo 寂光報土; Articles 11 and 12).

It is clear from this synopsis that both Sumikawa and Tsuji model their understandings of the lay Buddhist path upon that of Jōdo Shinshū. Not only is Shinshū terminology adopted extensively, but the overall structure of the soteriological path likewise proceeds according to Shinshū religious principles. The primary difference between Tsuji's work and that of Sumikawa in this regard is that whereas Sumikawa's account is discursive and informal, Tsuji provides a systematic representation of a progressive, dialectical path comprised in Articles 6 through 12 of his introduction. As mentioned above, the planned fourth installment of his work was never published, and he only provides detailed exegeses for the first seven articles. Thus, we unfortunately cannot understand in detail the particulars of the concluding moments in this seven-stage dialectic (i.e., Articles 8 through 12). Nevertheless, the pithy descriptions of each of these stages in the introduction do provide enough information to grasp the overall outline and thrust of this proposed religious path. The dialectic progresses according to ever-deepening degrees of *anjin* 安心 (spiritual peace) and *kigyō* 起行 (religious practice) culminating in a deep faith in, and understanding of, the presence and proximity of the Reward Land of Tranquil Light. Thus, the first stage of *anjin* (Article 6) begins with *shinjin* (trusting mind), fledgling though it may be, and is engendered by learning of Śākyamuni's five hundred great vows as found in the *Hikekyō*. Thus, it is vital for priests charged with instructing the laity to make this known convincingly. The *anjin* thus experienced then makes possible the beginning stage of *kigyō*, namely, the recitation of “*namu Shakamuni butsu*” (Article 7). Such practice brings about a deeper sense of *anjin* (Article 8), which in turn inspires still more focused practice and a faith now devoid of doubts (Article 9). Priests are then charged to lead their disciples to the ultimate stage of *anjin* in which they come to understand that all beings are inherently endowed with the wisdom and virtue of Śākyamuni (Article 10). Tsuji attempts to ground this stage in the Sōtō tradition by invoking the passage from Dōgen's “Kenbutsu” 見仏 chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏 that states, “As a rule, all of the buddhas say that to see Śākyamuni and to become Śākyamuni is to attain to the Way and become Buddha.”⁴¹ The imposition of Jōdo Shinshū notions of religious practice and attainment upon a passage such as this seems forced and is a likely reason that subsequent commentators have found Tsuji's exposition unconvincing. In any case, the dialectical movement continues with this ultimate state of *anjin* giving rise to the ultimate stage of *kigyō* in which the practitioner becomes aware for the first time of the possibility of rebirth in a reward land (*hōdo ōjō* 報土往生; Article 11). The dialectical path then culminates in a deep understanding

⁴¹ Tsuji 1879–81 in SS, vol. 4, p. 22.

of, and faith in, the presence and proximity of the Reward Land of Tranquil Light (Article 12).

It is important to note that, in the teachings of both Sumikawa and Tsuji, Śākyamuni is a transcendent being with real ontological status, possessing the power to effect events in this realm. While Tsuji does consciously employ the notion of *hōben* 方便 (expedient means) in his explication of the provisional nature of the various pure lands and the host of buddhas, the transcendental existence of Śākyamuni Buddha is never called into question. As mentioned above, for him Śākyamuni is the *honji*, or primeval essence, from which all other buddhas derive, and his presence in our realm is absolutely central to Buddhist salvation. One must keep in mind that Sumikawa's and Tsuji's Buddhological understandings predate the *Daijō hibussetsu ron* 大乘非仏説論 ("Mahayana Buddhism was not taught by the Buddha") debates of the first decade of the twentieth century, which called into question the reality of the Mahayana pantheon based upon pioneering research into Buddhist history and texts.⁴² For Sumikawa and Tsuji, Śākyamuni is not simply a historical teacher but rather a *buddha* to be worshiped and invoked. This understanding of the meaning of "buddha" was soon, from 1887, to become a central issue in the doctrinal debates engendered by the proposed adoption of the *Shushōgi* as the Sōtō teaching for their laity.

Tsuji's most significant departure from Sumikawa's teaching, it seems, is his insistence upon a two-tiered approach to Sōtō Zen practice. Sumikawa, as we saw, urged priests to engage in the Shaka *nenbutsu*, thus potentially blurring the boundaries between ordained and lay practice. Tsuji's text seems intent on clarifying this situation, affirming in unambiguous terms the traditional Sōtō division between a higher esoteric path of practice and a lower exoteric one. He writes in his introduction that the task of composing such a guidebook for the laity was difficult precisely because of the abstruse nature of Zen teachings. While traditional Zen notions such as the abandonment of language "might be suitable for those of superior abilities, for those of middling or inferior ability, it is like wind across a horse's ear. Or, to use other metaphors, it would be akin to making someone cross the ocean without a boat or raft; or, to removing [a bird's] wings and having it fly across the firmament."⁴³ To attempt to force such difficult teachings upon those not capable of understanding them, he reasons, would not only cause suffering but would contravene the intentions of Śākyamuni to rescue all beings from ignorance and to aid them in becoming buddhas themselves. It is for this soteriological reason that, just as Śākyamuni himself employed expedient means, so too must Sōtō use a simple Buddhist teaching—the power of faith in Śākyamuni—that

⁴² The most well-known figure in these debates was Murakami Senshō 村上專精 (1851–1929). For information on Murakami and these debates, see *The Eastern Buddhist*, n.s., vol. 37, nos. 1/2 (2005), and Klautau 2021.

⁴³ SS, vol 4, p.18.

corresponds to the intellectual capacity of those followers unable to grasp the more direct teachings about absolute truth. Tsuji's distinction here is an important one: it is not a simple division of followers between laity and ordained, but rather one between those whose ability is "superior" on the one hand and those whose is "middling or inferior" on the other. This allows for the possibility of highly learned and motivated lay followers and lay teachers—of which there were indeed many at this point in the Meiji period—practicing the higher, "monastic" path.⁴⁴ It could in theory also allow for less-capable priests to engage in the "lay" path of Shaka *nenbutsu* practice, though there seem to be no such discussions either by Tsuji or other commentators of the period. The assumption, it seems, was that a Sōtō Zen priest, by definition, would have been trained in, and grasped, the higher teachings. Thus, except for this proviso of "superior" lay followers being exempt, Tsuji clearly designed the Shaka *nenbutsu* as a practice for the Sōtō laity.

Even though the overarching similarity between Sumikawa's and Tsuji's Shaka *nenbutsu* teachings, recent commentators have been kinder in their evaluations of Tsuji's place in Sōtō history than of Sumikawa's.⁴⁵ Despite his guidebook being in the end rejected as official Sōtō policy, leading Sōtō scholars such as Sakurai Shūyū and Kawaguchi Kōfū nonetheless consider it a "pioneering work" in the history of Sōtō proselytizing, though they do not explain why they feel this is so.⁴⁶ Fortunately, Ikeda Eishun does help explain the advance made by Tsuji's work, describing it as "an attempt to move away from the monastic orientation of Sōtō and to devise an appropriate educational policy for a religious organization engaged in proselytizing."⁴⁷ In other words, the groundbreaking achievement of this work is that it portrayed "Sōtō" Buddhist teachings as having relevance to the spiritual lives of ordinary people. Until this time Sōtō priests presented Buddhism primarily as an ethical teaching to encourage good, and avoid evil, behavior. In Tsuji's work, and indeed in Sumikawa's as well, the goal for the laity is now much loftier: to overcome ignorance and suffering in this very life. The aim of his guidebook, Tsuji writes, is to awaken "the aspiration for enlightenment (*bodaishin* 菩提心) within society."⁴⁸ We can see in this a response to the widespread criticism of Buddhist temples for their lack of engagement with society both during the Edo period and in the early Meiji period in comparison with that of the Christian churches and their missionaries.

⁴⁴ One of whom, Ōuchi Seiran, played, as we shall see, one of the most significant roles in the shaping of modern Sōtō doctrine.

⁴⁵ This may well have much to do with Tsuji's high status in the Sōtō administration. One telling episode in this regard concerns an 1880 election for positions on a governing Sōtō committee. Tsuji finished seventh in the voting with 365 votes. Sumikawa, on the other hand, finished tied for last place with a mere one vote. See Kawaguchi 2002, pp. 388–89.

⁴⁶ Sakurai 1982b in SS, vol. 1, p. 21; Kawaguchi 2002, p. 338.

⁴⁷ Ikeda 1994, pp. 207–8.

⁴⁸ Ikeda 1994, p. 19.

Notwithstanding a modicum of praise, many of Tsuji's contemporaries, as well as the more recent commentators mentioned above, ultimately judged his Shaka *nenbutsu* project to be an unsuccessful one. Ōuchi Seiran tells us that at the time there were heated debates in which sect members considered the adoption of a “*namu Shakamuni butsu*” recitation an embarrassment that would invite ridicule from the other Buddhist lineages.⁴⁹ Ōuchi himself was a vocal opponent of this proposal, arguing that it had no scriptural basis in the Sōtō Zen tradition. Tsuji's work was, of course, intended precisely to demonstrate such a basis, and so Ōuchi systematically analyzed and disputed the validity and relevance of the scriptural attestations that Tsuji provided. While it is unnecessary to introduce the entirety of his critique here, two aspects of it are of especial relevance. The primary piece of evidence that Tsuji provides for Dōgen's support of a Shaka *nenbutsu* is a poem found in the *Sanshō dōei shū* 傘松道詠集 (Anthology of Enlightenment Poems by the Ancestor of Sanshō) that reads, “Whether asleep or awake in a grass hut, I beg for the compassion [of the Buddha] and recite ‘*namu Shakamuni butsu*.’”⁵⁰ Ōuchi argues that as many of the poems in this collection are considered spurious, this poem, too, may not have been penned by Dōgen. Even if it is authentic, it in no way justifies the position of the “Shakason ichibutsu” movement that the practice of chanting “*namu Shakamuni butsu*” leads either to rebirth in the Pure Land of Eternal Light or to one becoming a buddha (*jōbutsu*). Ōuchi's second trenchant observation is a buddhological one: Śākyamuni in Tsuji's scheme (and indeed in Sumikawa's as well) is construed as the Dharma body (*hosshin*). This contradicts what Ōuchi claims to be the true Sōtō interpretation of this doctrine, namely, Śākyamuni as the *keshin* 化身, or transformation body of the Buddha. For Sōtō, he insists, “Śākyamuni” refers to the person who “left home at nineteen years of age and passed away as an old monk of eighty.”⁵¹ Although Tsuji's position was not adopted, this buddhological dispute was not resolved and would reappear in subsequent debates.

While more recent commentators like Sakurai, Kawaguchi, and Ikeda view Tsuji's systematization of the Shaka *nenbutsu* practice as pioneering, all agree that his attempt to go beyond the traditional approach toward educating the laity was not sufficiently innovative. Sakurai sees it as still stuck in long-established Sōtō ways of teaching and “not sufficiently adapted to the times,” while Kawaguchi similarly considers it “neither

⁴⁹ Quoted in Okada 1986, p. 39; Okada gives the original locus as Ōuchi 1926 but does not provide the page number(s).

⁵⁰ “*Kusa no iori ni nete mo samete mo mōsu koto namu Shakamuni butsu awaremi tamae*” 草の庵にねてもさめても申すこと南無釈迦牟尼仏あはれみたまえ. Quoted in Okada 1986, p. 37; Okada gives the original locus as Ōuchi 1926 but does not provide the page number(s). An explanatory note on the *Sanshō dōei shū* may be found in Tanahashi 1985, p. 259.

⁵¹ Ōuchi 1926, p. 20. Also quoted in Okada 1986, p. 38.

bold nor progressive.”⁵² Ikeda, who applauds Tsuji’s attempt to move beyond a monastic-oriented model of the Sōtō establishment, nonetheless sees it as still trapped within the strictures of that very model. That is, while it rightly sought to bring spiritual peace (*anjin*) to the lives of its lay followers, its reliance upon dual and strictly separated religious paths resulted in the same old “monastic supremacism” (*shukke shijō shugi* 出家至上主義) of the past.⁵³

Despite the dissent generated by the publication of Tsuji’s *Sekkyō taii* and the fact that it was never accepted as the official version of Sōtō’s teaching for the laity as intended, it nonetheless continued to be used for some time as the de facto method of instruction. In 1884, five years after it was first published, Sōtō sect headquarters had Tsuji republish and redistribute copies of his guidebook.⁵⁴ It is thus clear that despite criticism from some quarters, a Shaka *nenbutsu* religious practice for the laity had significant support among the Sōtō hierarchy for much of the late 1870s and early 1880s. It seems to be the practice obliquely advocated in the 1885 *Sōtōshū shūsei* 曹洞宗宗制 (hereafter *Sōtō Regulations*)—a document whose importance we will encounter shortly—and it is likely that a significant number of Sōtō priests continued teaching the Shaka *nenbutsu* until the forerunner of the *Shushōgi*, the *Tōjō zaiki shushōgi* 洞上在家修証義 (The Meaning of Practice and Verification for the Sōtō Laity), was adopted in 1888. It is worth recalling Yoshikawa’s 1902 description of this period as one in which the “rampant development of a new *nenbutsu* sect” took place.⁵⁵

THE WAY OF AMIDA FOR THE SŌTŌ LAITY

During the Edo period, the Amida *nenbutsu* was used by the Ōbaku 黄檗 Zen sect and was accepted by the well-known Rinzaï 臨濟 Zen monk Hakuin 白隠 (1686–1769) as a practice useful “for those of medium and inferior talents.”⁵⁶ This was apparently not the case for Sōtō Zen, which instead sought to distance itself from this practice.⁵⁷ In the early years of the Meiji period, though, Sumikawa and Tsuji employed and transformed the fundamental structures of the Pure Land Buddhist religious path to design teachings and practices for the Sōtō laity. Other Sōtō teachers, though, thought it more effective to simply adopt unadulterated Pure Land doctrine and practice as the teaching for their lay followers. While this does not accord with our contemporary

⁵² Sakurai 1982b, p. 21; Kawaguchi 2002, p. 338.

⁵³ Ikeda 1994, p. 208.

⁵⁴ Okada 1986, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 1, p. 420.

⁵⁶ For discussions of the role of the *nenbutsu* in Ōbaku practice, see Baroni 2000 and Baskind 2008. The quotation from Hakuin is found in Dumoulin 1990, p. 387. And for a broader discussion of the influence of Ōbaku Zen upon both Sōtō and Rinzaï Zen in the Edo period, see Mohr 1994.

⁵⁷ Sharf 2002, p. 322.

understanding of doctrinal divisions between Buddhist schools, the use of Pure Land teachings by Sōtō priests was in no way an infrequent practice and points to a fluidity of intersectarian practices at this time. According to Ikeda Eishun, the *Amidakyō* 阿彌陀經 (Amida Sutra) was the usual scripture Sōtō priests employed when proselytizing in the early Meiji period, and their teaching revolved around the chanting of the Amida *nenbutsu* and reliance upon other power for rebirth in the Pure Land.⁵⁸ Debate among Sōtō priests at this time focused not so much on *whether* to employ Pure Land teachings, but rather on how to combine these with traditional Sōtō doctrine and practice and how to explain their consistency with the latter. The two most comprehensive attempts to systematize and implement combined Sōtō–Pure Land teachings were by the Sōtō priest Yoshioka Shingyō and by the future compiler of the *Shushōgi*, the highly influential lay teacher Ōuchi Seiran. These attempts should not be seen as aberrations from mainstream Sōtō thinking at the time, but rather as variations on themes already in circulation and exemplified in the writings of Sumikawa and Tsuji discussed above.

Yoshioka Shingyō

While Sumikawa was walking throughout Japan teaching his Shaka *nenbutsu*, Yoshioka Shingyō, a native of Izumo 出雲, was spreading his own idiosyncratic combination of Zen and Pure Land teachings among the common people of the Tōhoku 東北 area of northeastern Japan. In the preface to one of Yoshioka's works, *Haja kenshō ron* 破邪顯正論 (Refuting the False and Manifesting the True, 1882), Ōuchi writes that Yoshioka had long harbored the desire to proselytize in this area due to what he perceived as a dearth of satisfactory teachers.⁵⁹ We do not know exactly when he began his mission to the Tōhoku area, but by 1878 or 1879, he was making trips from his temple in Shimane Prefecture to the distant prefectures of Miyagi and Akita in the north, staying at various temples and spending his days both teaching commoners and listening carefully to their questions and concerns about spiritual matters.⁶⁰ By 1882, he had become head priest of Sekiunji 石雲寺 temple in Miyagi Prefecture, and except for a brief return to Shimane in 1883 spent the remainder of his life in Tōhoku, becoming head priest of Kōmyōji 光明寺 temple in Iwate Prefecture until his death in 1886.⁶¹ Yoshikawa, writing in 1902, mentions Yoshioka only briefly, but according to his

⁵⁸ Ikeda 1994, pp. 394–95. Satō 2007, pp. 73–74, also maintains this view of the prevalence of Amidist teaching and practice in Sōtō circles at this time.

⁵⁹ Ikeda 1994, p. 388.

⁶⁰ Ikeda 1994, pp. 392–93.

⁶¹ Kawaguchi 2002, p. 431. Kawaguchi gives an overview of Yoshioka's activities and teachings and discusses the difficulties involved in ascertaining many details about his life on pages 426–37.

assessment, Yoshioka spread his *tariki ōjō* 他力往生 teaching “extensively throughout the Tōhoku region.”⁶² Ōuchi corroborates this, saying that Yoshioka taught in the Tōhoku region “for a long time.”⁶³

Besides this brief sketch of his proselytizing activities and whereabouts, we know very little about Yoshioka Shingyō the man. We do not know when he was born, though Kawaguchi estimates that he had to be more than fifty years old at the time of his death based upon scattered allusions in his writings.⁶⁴ He was a Dharma heir of the influential Sōtō master Ōtori Sessō 鴻雪爪 (1814–1904) and was one of the last Sōtō appointees to the *kyōdōshoku* 教導職 system in 1874.⁶⁵ While this appointment demonstrates that he did have some status within the Sōtō organizational structure, curiously he was more highly regarded outside Sōtō circles than within. His anti-Christian tract, *Haja kenshō ron*, was endorsed in its foreword by fifteen of the most high-profile religious leaders of the Meiji period. These comprised the heads of Shinto organizations, leading lay Buddhists, and the foremost intellectuals and abbots of all of the Buddhist denominations, except, notably, his own.⁶⁶ There is no definitive answer as to why the head abbot of Sōtō, Kōga Kankei, and the head abbot of Sōjiji 総持寺, Aze-gami Baisen 畔上襟仙 (1825–1901), did not endorse Yoshioka’s work. Ikeda contends that this is related to the fact that the issue of what constituted Sōtō orthodoxy was being debated at this time, with the implication being that Yoshioka’s teachings must have been considered heterodox.⁶⁷ The fact that there are virtually no records concerning Yoshioka’s affiliation with Sōtō and that he is included in virtually no subsequent Sōtō literature make it clear that Yoshioka was alienated from the mainstream of sect hierarchy.⁶⁸

⁶² Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 1, p. 420.

⁶³ Kawaguchi 2002, p. 426.

⁶⁴ Kawaguchi 2002, p. 434.

⁶⁵ Jaffe 2001, pp. 96–113, provides an overview of Ōtori’s activities. On page 96 he argues that Ōtori “became one of the most influential Buddhist clerics of the early Meiji period.” For details of Yoshi-oka’s Dharma lineage see Kawaguchi 2002, p. 426. Yoshioka was appointed *kyōdōshoku* of the *kenchū kōshi* 謙中講師 rank on July 9, 1874. Kawaguchi 2002, p. 219, explains that there were five ranks below this and seven above, so while not one of the leading teachers, Yoshioka was placed above the most common ranks.

⁶⁶ The list includes the heads of the two main Shinto organizations at the time, Tanaka Yoritsune 田中頼庸 (1836–1897) and Senge Takatomi 千家尊福 (1845–1918); leading Buddhists such as Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911), Sada Kaiseki 佐田介石 (1818–1882), Fukuda Gyōkai 福田行戒 (1809 [1806?]-1888), Imakita Kōsen 今北洪川 (1816–1892), Ogino Dokuon 荻野独園 (1819–1895), Shaku Unshō 釈雲照 (1827–1909), and Arai Nissatsu 新井日薩 (1830–1888); and the highly influential lay Buddhists Ōuchi Seiran and Yamaoka Tesshū 山岡鉄舟 (1836–1888). See Ikeda 1994, pp. 387–88.

⁶⁷ Ikeda, 1994, p. 388.

⁶⁸ The lone exception is the brief 1902 Yoshikawa reference mentioned above and found in SS, vol. 1, p. 420.

Nevertheless, despite such marginal status there are several reasons why Sōtō authorities were surely aware of Yoshioka's activities and teachings. Not only was he well known among the heads of the other Buddhist lineages and Shinto shrine associations, but he was on close terms with Ōuchi Seiran, who had the ear of virtually all leading Sōtō priests. Ōuchi, in addition to being a signatory to the foreword of Yoshioka's *Haja kenshō ron* mentioned above, also provided a preface for this volume. Yoshioka's activities as a scholar and prolific author would also have garnered the attention of Sōtō authorities. He published ten works comprising over thirty volumes during the last seven years (1879–1886) of his life alone.⁶⁹ While there may be much that we do not know about Yoshioka himself, there is indeed more than enough material in this prodigious body of work to understand his idiosyncratic combination of Zen and Pure Land teachings.

Attempts to synthesize Zen (Ch. Chan) and Pure Land Buddhist teachings have a long history in East Asia and were particularly prominent in Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279) China. The Chan master Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (Jp. Eimei [Yōmei] Enju; 904–975) is often credited with initiating this development and is considered within the Chinese Pure Land tradition to be its sixth patriarch.⁷⁰ It is Yongming's version of Zen–Pure Land synthesis that most influenced Yoshioka's work.⁷¹ Yongming's approach to the vast resources of the Buddhist tradition was comprehensive in scope and inclusive in terms of the range of texts and practices it employed. It considered the reciting of sutras, the taking and observation of precepts, and the recitation of the name of Amida to all be necessary complements to Chan meditation. Yongming was also concerned with popularizing Buddhist teachings for the masses.

Inspired by Yongming, Yoshioka's own synthesis was similarly comprehensive, inclusive, and geared for an audience of commoners. While a detailed exegesis of this would be beyond the scope of this study, an overview of the main elements of his teaching is necessary to understand the issues under debate in Sōtō Zen circles in the 1880s. We know from Ōuchi's preface to the *Haja kenshō ron* that his acquaintance with Yoshioka was the result of their common involvement in the Wakeikai 和敬会—the most influential of the *kyōkai* 教会 and *kessha* 結社 (quasi-independent, cleric-lay Buddhist

⁶⁹ By any measure, this is an extraordinary outpouring of writings, let alone their being accomplished in such a short time. While there does not seem to be a record of any publications by Yoshioka prior to 1879, Ikeda feels that given his productivity, it is likely that there are yet more works to his oeuvre (Ikeda 1994, p. 386). Titles and dates of his known works may be found in Satō 2007, pp. 69–70; Ikeda 1994, pp. 386–97; and Kawaguchi 2002, pp. 426–37.

⁷⁰ Yongming is also considered to be the third patriarch in the *Fayan zong* 法眼宗 Chan lineage. For further information see Dumoulin 1988, p. 235; Chang 1982, pp. 250–53; Ch'en 1972, pp. 404–5; and Shih 1992.

⁷¹ Ikeda 1994, p. 386.

groups) that began forming in the early 1880s.⁷² Yoshioka's laity-focused ideas about proselytization (*kyōka* 教化) were clearly influenced by the Wakeikai's teachings and activities. Buddhist teaching associations such as the Wakeikai were at the height of their activity exactly at this time. This situation allowed for a new relationship between preachers and the laity, one not possible under the often fraught strictures imposed on parishioners by temples under the *danka seido* 檀家制度 (parishioner system) of the Edo period, and Yoshioka has been praised for his pioneering efforts to cater Buddhist teachings to the actual needs and abilities of common people.⁷³ Yoshioka's writings reflect this new relationship as evidenced by the organic, inductive method by which he composed them. During his travels through Miyagi and Akita Prefectures, he would stay at various Buddhist temples and spend his afternoons, often with the resident priest at the temple he was residing at, teaching commoners about Buddhism. He would then return to the temple and spend his evenings writing up what Ikeda considers to be his most representative work, the twenty-volume *Kyūka biryōdan* 求化微量談 (Talks Consisting of Minute Fodder for Seeking [the Way] to Teach [People] about Buddhism, 1879–81), based on the conversations he had with the people he was attempting to educate that day. This work thus emerged simultaneously with, and emerged from, his novel form of engaged proselytizing.

The fact that the *Kyūka biryōdan* was distributed from eighty-eight places situated throughout Japan suggests that Yoshioka hoped for his proselytizing strategy to be accepted extensively in Sōtō circles. It is a compilation of passages from an extensive array of classical Buddhist texts, as well as from Sōtō sectarian writings, that Yoshioka believed would strike a chord with the religious sentiments of common people. The main foci of his exegeses in the twenty volumes are upon the teachings contained in, though not limited to, the following seven sutras: *Daijō honjō shinjikan gyō* 大乘本生心地觀經 (Mahayana Sutra of Previous Lives and the Contemplation of the Mind Ground; hereafter *Shinjikan gyō*), *Sanbukyō* 三部經 (the three Pure Land scriptures),⁷⁴ *Yuikyō kyō* 遺教經 (Sutra of the Deathbed Injunction), *Urabon kyō* 盂蘭盆經 (Ullambana Sutra), and *Bonmōkyō* 梵網經 (Brahmā's Net Sutra). In particular, three main teachings form the core of Yoshioka's strategy for teaching commoners: (1) the four gratuities (*shion* 四恩) as taught in the *Shinjikan gyō*; (2) the ten kinds of wholesome behavior (*jūzen*) as taught by Jiun Onkō in his *Jūzen hōgo* 十善法語; and (3) *nenbutsu* practice leading to rebirth in the Pure Land (*nenbutsu ōjō* 念仏往生), especially as found in the syncretic Zen–Pure Land teachings of Yongming. The first two of these teachings were

⁷² Ikeda 1994 is the groundbreaking and most comprehensive work on *kessha*. For treatments in English see Ikeda 1998 and LoBreglio 2005.

⁷³ Ikeda 1994, p. 89; Kawaguchi 2002, p. 437.

⁷⁴ *Muryōjūkyō*, *Kanmuryōju kyō* 觀無量壽經 (Sutra of the Meditation on [the Buddha of] Immeasurable Life), and *Amidakyō* (Amitābha Sutra, or *Smaller Sukhāvati-vyūha*).

central to the Wakeikai association in which Yoshioka worked alongside Ōuchi as well as to many of the *kyōkai* and *kessha* groups operating during this period; and as mentioned above, the use of Pure Land teachings focused on Amida Buddha by Sōtō Zen priests to proselytize was not uncommon. Yoshioka's eclectic combination of these common elements, though, did produce an idiosyncratic Zen–Pure Land teaching.

Yoshioka created the phrase “*zan-ki-kai nenbutsu*” 懺悔戒念仏 (the repentance-refuge-precepts *nenbutsu*) to sum up what he felt to be an efficacious and easy-to-implement teaching and practice. The mantra relates the stages on the path Yoshioka taught to lay believers: repentance, followed by taking refuge in the Three Treasures, the taking of the *issinkai* 一心戒 (One Mind precepts)—another term for the lay, or bodhisattva, precepts found in the *Bonmōkyō* and based on the *Lotus Sutra*—and then the recitation of the mantra itself followed by the recitation of the Amida *nenbutsu*. He describes the mechanism by which such recitations effect their results as follows:

The *nenbutsu* of repentance-[taking] and refuge-[taking] precepts and of Amida's mysterious salvific power are stored in the *nyorai zōshiki* 如来藏識 [store-consciousness of the Tathāgata] level of our consciousness. They are activated in our bodies and chanted by our mouths. This makes the *nenbutsu* [equivalent to] the principle of “sitting itself is becoming buddha” (*sokuza jōbutsu* 即坐成仏).⁷⁵

The use of the phrase *sokuza jōbutsu*, found in the “Bendōwa” 弁道話 chapter of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, associates and equates these recitations with the teaching of the Sōtō founder and with the Zen soteriological goal of becoming buddha. However, Yoshioka describes the salvific results of his teachings and practices predominantly in a Jōdo Shinshū idiom: the practitioner of the *zan-ki-kai nenbutsu* will achieve the state of being truly settled (*shōjōju* 正定聚) and of attaining spiritual peace and enlightenment (*anjin ritsume* 安心立命) in this life, while being assured of rebirth in the Pure Land following death. According to Ikeda, the fundamental orientation of Yoshioka's “popular Buddhism” (*shomin bukkyō* 庶民仏教) was based on *tariki*, or other power, but it was an “other power” that sublimated the usual *jiriki-tariki* dichotomy into a higher synthesis that sought to highlight the unity of the Zen truth that one's very mind is buddha and the Jōdo Shinshū insight that one is born in the Pure Land the very moment a *nenbutsu* is faithfully entertained in that mind.⁷⁶

Another pioneering feature of Yoshioka's teachings requires mention. Like Sumikawa's teaching of a *Shaka nenbutsu*, and in contrast to that of Tsuji, Yoshioka taught

⁷⁵ Quoted in Ikeda 1994, p. 393. Ikeda provides the reference for the original as *maki 1 zenhen jō* 卷一前編上, pp. 40–41, of the *Kyūka biryōdan*.

⁷⁶ Ikeda 1994, pp. 392–93. The phrase that Yoshioka employed is the rather comprehensive “*jiriki tariki sokushin ichinen ōjō jōbutsu*” 自力他力即心一念往生成仏.

that his practices and services concerning the path he was advocating were open to all—laypeople, priests, men, and women.⁷⁷

Ikeda has suggested that given the fact that Yoshioka was writing at a time when what constituted Sōtō orthodoxy was constantly in question, his novel attempt to systematize Sōtō teachings in *Kyūka biryōdan* was a gamble upon which he undoubtedly risked his career.⁷⁸ The fact that he was ignored by the Sōtō authorities of his day, as discussed above, seems to indicate the result of this wager. Indeed, he continued to be ignored by Sōtō and other Buddhist scholarship until Ikeda recognized his innovative teachings and activities a century later.⁷⁹

Ōuchi Seiran

Ōuchi Seiran was disturbed by the range and unsystematic nature of Buddhist teachings, such as the *nenbutsu* movements described above, that were being presented to the Sōtō laity in an environment where priests were free to teach as they saw fit. In particular, his opposition to the implementation of Tsuji's Shaka *nenbutsu* practice as the religious path for the Sōtō lay members prompted him to argue passionately for the strict separation of the religious paths for monastic and lay members, and for the latter he recommended the wholesale adoption of “the way of Amida” (Midahō 弥陀法) based on the teachings of the Jōdo Shinshū interpretation of Pure Land Buddhism. This conjoining of Sōtō and Jōdo Shinshū teachings, as Ōuchi freely acknowledged, had its roots in his personal pedigree. He had been born into a samurai family of the Sendai 仙台 domain, and his father's family traced its connection to the Sōtō sect back some five hundred years. His mother was a fervent practitioner of the Amida *nenbutsu*, and her family belonged to the Shinshū Honganji-ha 真宗本願寺派. Ōuchi was seven years old when his father died, and he and his mother then went to live in a Sōtō temple.⁸⁰

Ōuchi submitted his proposal for a Midahō-based teaching—a remarkable text entitled [*Tōjō*] *zaike kedōgi* [洞上]在家化導儀 (Protocol for Instruction of the [Sōtō] Laity)—to the abbots of Sōtō's two head temples. Though Okada Gihō, writing in 1939, confirmed that Ōuchi authored a text of this title containing such content, he believed it to be no longer extant.⁸¹ However, a text entitled *Zaike kedōgi* was subsequently discovered reproduced in its entirety in Yoshikawa Yūgo's 1902 anthology *Tōjō fukyō no shōenkaku* 洞上布教の小沿革, though the author of it was anonymous. Given

⁷⁷ Kawaguchi 2002, pp. 432–33.

⁷⁸ Ikeda 1994, pp. 388–89.

⁷⁹ Ikeda 1998.

⁸⁰ Ōuchi 1914, p. 134.

⁸¹ Okada 1986, p. 41. Okada's comprehensive history of the editing process of the *Shushōgi* was first published in 1939 and revised and reprinted in 1986.

that the content matches the views that Ōuchi expressed in other places in support of an Amida-centered lay practice, and reflects his profound knowledge of the Buddhist tradition, it is now accepted that this is indeed Ōuchi's missing text.⁸² As the [*Tōjō*] *zaike kedōgi* (hereafter *Kedōgi*) had to have been written before the release of the *Sōtōshū shūkyō taii* 曹洞宗宗教大意 (Summary of the Fundamental Teachings of the Sōtō School) section of the *Sōtō Regulations* published on May 28, 1885, Sakurai estimates the date of its composition to be either 1884 or early 1885.⁸³ After composing it, Ōuchi petitioned the Sōtō sect headquarters to have it implemented as the teaching standard for the Sōtō laity.⁸⁴

Given Ōuchi's prominent place in the modern reshaping of Sōtō identity, it is important to summarize his argument in the *Kedōgi* as it provides a vivid account of his thinking just prior to his creation of the *Tōjō zaike shushōgi* 洞上在家修証議 (The Meaning of Practice and Verification for the Sōtō Laity) in 1888. It was, in fact, the rejection of his *Kedōgi* that forced Ōuchi to rethink entirely his approach to educating the laity about Buddhism and that was thus responsible for the radically different tack he took in the latter document. The *Kedōgi* comprises eleven and a half pages in its modern printing in the *Sōtōshū sensho* 曹洞宗選書 and is divided into five sections.

The first section seeks to address why Sōtō has never had a method for educating its lay followers about its teachings. The reason, quite simply, is that these teachings are far too difficult for most human beings to understand. Dōgen himself recognized this when reflecting on a passage from the "Expedient Means" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* that reads: "Only buddhas are able to perfectly realize the unsurpassable Way."⁸⁵ Grasping the Dharma in this way can be accomplished only by a rare few. To do so requires an accumulation of blessings in a previous life, encountering the teachings of the Buddha, or having contact with a bodhisattva and then becoming a monastic. One must then engage in ascetic practices for twenty or thirty years. It is for this reason, Ōuchi contends, that Dōgen did not think about the laity and urged disciples to become monastics. Thus, "there is not even one word in the *Shingi* 清規,

⁸² The text has been preserved in Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 1, pp. 435–46, under the title *Zaike kedōgi*. However, Okada 1986, pp. 32 and 41, refers to the text as *Tōjō zaike kedōgi*, and Sakurai 1982a, pp. 474–76, follows Okada in this regard using the slightly longer title. I assume Okada and Sakurai have based this version of the title on some evidence, though none is provided by either. I have used [*Tōjō*] *zaike kedōgi* above to indicate this ambiguity concerning the original title. Sakurai 1982a, p. 474, goes beyond speculation and simply presents Ōuchi as the author of this text.

⁸³ Sakurai 1982a, p. 475.

⁸⁴ Okada 1986, p. 32.

⁸⁵ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, pp. 435–36. Dōgen paraphrases the passage from the "Expedient Means" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* in the opening lines of his "Yuibutsu yobutsu" 唯仏与仏 (Buddhas Alone, Together with Buddhas) chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō*.

Kōroku 公録, or *Shōbōgenzō* about a method for teaching the laity.”⁸⁶ This dearth of provision for the laity is not limited to Dōgen but extends to the Sōtō lineage in Japan as a whole: “If we wish to establish a method for educating the laity, we must first realize that the Sōtō school has never demonstrated even the slightest skill in educating its lay followers. Thus, even if one searches through the writings of the founders, one must realize that they will come up with absolutely nothing.”⁸⁷

Now, however, Ōuchi explains that Sōtō is faced with a new challenge as thousands of lay followers are asking for spiritual guidance. He urges Sōtō teachers to rise to this task and not abandon such seekers to the dangers of “heretical teachings” (*jakyō* 邪教)—a clear, though guarded, reference both to the increasing presence of Christianity in Japan and to “unskillful and dubious” Buddhist teachings such as the Shaka *nenbutsu*.⁸⁸ He warns that such teachings will only keep people mired in suffering and will not provide them with what they need—spiritual peace (*anjin*). He also laments the fact that there are so many conflicting opinions as to just what to teach the laity about Buddhism and insists that Sōtō must settle upon a unified teaching for this purpose. For this, Ōuchi demonstrates an inclusive vision of the Buddhist tradition. As there is no precedent within the Sōtō tradition, he advocates turning to the wider Buddhist canon and other Buddhist lineages for skillful methods of teaching the laity.

In the second section, he argues that the doctrine of rebirth in paradise (*gokuraku ōjō* 極樂往生) according to the way of Amida is by far the best means to provide salvation for ordinary people that the Buddhist tradition has produced. It is fully in accord with Śākyamuni’s primary aim of leading people from suffering to liberation and is, according to Ōuchi, of all the teachings in the vast Buddhist canon, the one that Śākyamuni himself most lectured upon. He did so based upon his vast and unconditional compassion, and in doing so, “initiated a shortcut for ordinary people to enter the Buddhist way.”⁸⁹ Although Śākyamuni taught countless methods for doing this, with various types of expedient means, all of the great Buddhist patriarchs from the various Buddhist lineages have advocated the teaching of rebirth in paradise according to the way of Amida as the path for lay followers. In particular, Ōuchi invokes the great Indian Buddhist patriarchs Aśvaghoṣa (fl. ca. 2nd c.), Nāgārjuna (fl. ca. 2nd–3rd c.), and Vasubandhu (fl. ca. 4th–5th c.) and provides the precise loci in their writings where they support this teaching.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, p. 436. *Shingi* (Pure Rules) refers to a genre of texts containing precepts, in this context most likely referring to the *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui* 敕修百丈清規 of Baizhang 百丈 (720–814). *Kōroku* refers to the *Denkōroku* 傳光錄 of Keizan.

⁸⁷ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, p. 437.

⁸⁸ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, p. 437.

⁸⁹ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, p. 438.

⁹⁰ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, p. 439.

In Ōuchi's reading of Buddhist history, it was in China that the Zen school became focused only upon monastic practice and realization (*seija shushō* 聖者修証)⁹¹ and did not offer a way for laypeople to have access to the Buddhist teachings. Faced with the present need for such a lay teaching, Ōuchi argues for a return to the method employed by the forty-seven Zen patriarchs of India. That is, while there are a great many texts in the Buddhist canon that teach the way of Amida, it is the version found in the three Pure Land sutras that all of the great patriarchs used in common. If Dōgen and Keizan were to appear in our world today, Ōuchi reasons, surely they too would engage in teaching Buddhism to the laity according to this excellent model.

In the third section, Ōuchi sets out to explain in detail the doctrinal principles undergirding the method of lay instruction that he is urging Sōtō to adopt. As he pointed out in the previous section, there were numerous ways of interpreting the role and teachings of Amida in India, and this was likewise the case in China. Starting with the White Lotus Society (Ch. Bailian She 白蓮社) founded by Lushan Huiyuan 廬山慧遠 (334–416), which advocated *nenbutsu* recitation, the teaching of rebirth in a pure land gradually spread throughout the land, and many of China's most famous Buddhist teachers, such as Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542), Tiantai 天台 (a.k.a. Zhiyi 智顛; 538–597), Daochuo 道綽 (562–645), Jion 慈恩 (a.k.a. Kuiji; 632–682), and Shandao 善導 (613–681), wrote tracts explaining this. In addition to these, there were many others who taught this approach to Buddhism, and this resulted in a wide range of interpretations and variations in practice. Although many of these versions portrayed themselves as an “easy [religious] practice based on other power” (*igyō tariki* 易行他力), Ōuchi criticized these as actually being “difficult practices based on self power” (*nangyō jiriki* 難行自力).⁹² For the Sōtō laity, Ōuchi argues, the most appropriate Pure Land teaching is that of *nenbutsu* recitation leading to rebirth in Amida's Pure Land as guaranteed by the eighteenth of Amida's forty-eight vows in the *Muryōjūkyō*. This is the tradition passed down from Shandao via the Japanese Pure Land teachers Genshin 源信 (942–1017) and Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), and it attained its most refined form in the teaching of Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262) and Rennyo 蓮如 (1414–1499) that a single *nenbutsu* recitation may lead a person to become a “truly settled one” (*shōjōju* 正定聚)—someone who is assured of eventual enlightenment.⁹³ Of all the many interpretations of the Pure Land tradition, it is this approach that best understands the circumstances of laypeople and comprises the truest form of an “easy [religious] practice based on other power.” Therefore, he urges that the doctrine of *ichinen ōjō* 一念往生, or the promise of rebirth in Amida's Pure Land upon the recitation of a single *nen-*

⁹¹ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, p. 439.

⁹² Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, p. 440.

⁹³ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, p. 441.

butsu, be adopted as the basis for lay instruction. Moreover, he offers practical grounds for doing so: it would be exceedingly easy to implement.

Ōuchi had a deep knowledge of Buddhist history and teachings and was well-versed in Pure Land doctrine. The concise summary he then provides reflects a profound understanding of Shinran's interpretation of this tradition. In particular, Ōuchi is convinced that because ordinary people are not at all capable of bringing about their own salvation through *jiriki*, or their own efforts, they are in dire need of the "pure *tariki* teaching" (*jun'itsu tariki no hōmon* 純一他力の法門)⁹⁴ that Shinran taught. It is "pure" because it eliminates all pretense that the practitioner is actively engaged in the practice. While it is true that one must perform the Amida *nenbutsu* with single-mindedness (*ichinen*) and deep faith, he argues that the beauty of this path is its recognition that this faith is not generated by the individual, but rather by the power of the Buddhas—Śākyamuni and Amida—who transfer their accrued merit (*ekō* 回向) for this purpose. The result is a profound religious experience in which the practitioner attains *shinjin ketsujō* (信心決定), or simply, *shinjin*, the joyful state of mind that entrusts itself completely to Amida's vow and is convinced of its ultimate salvation. One becomes immediately free of past negative karma in this life and convinced of one's rebirth in the Pure Land upon one's death. Only such a pure *tariki* approach, Ōuchi insists, can at long last provide Sōtō with an appropriate vehicle for providing spiritual peace (*anjin*) for its laity.

Ōuchi seeks to demonstrate in the fourth section that this approach to lay instruction is in complete accord with the innermost teachings of the Sōtō Zen patriarchs. On the surface, the two paths of Amida and of Sōtō are polar opposites. In the former, there is not the slightest need for *jiriki*, while in the latter, there is no need for *tariki*. The former begins with faith, the latter with doubt. The path of Amida conceals its wisdom and employs compassion; the Sōtō path conceals its compassion and employs only its wisdom. But such a clear separation of paths is crucial, Ōuchi insists, because it prevents any confusion arising between lay and monastic approaches to training. They are, and should be, completely different and should not encroach upon each other.

The ultimate aims and teachings of these paths, though, are in Ōuchi's view the same. He draws a series of correspondences between a list of central Jōdo Shinshū and Sōtō doctrines and argues that they in fact express the exact same principles. The faith that induces *shinjin ketsujō*, we saw, comes not from oneself but is a mysterious manifestation of the Buddha's merit. This, according to Ōuchi, is the same as the Zen teachings of *kyōge betsuden* 教外別伝 (a separate transmission outside the teachings), *furyū monji* 不立文字 (not relying on written words), and *honrai jōbutsu* 本来成仏 (original buddhahood)—that human beings are by nature buddhas. Although faith

⁹⁴ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, p. 443.

in Amida's vow comes from merit transferred by the buddhas, one must nonetheless correctly manifest it with one's own mind. In this moment it is neither self nor other that is operating. This, he explains, is equivalent to the Zen notion of the ultimate identity of living things and the Buddha (*shōbutsu funi* 生仏不二). The realization of such identity comprises the central moment in both Jōdo Shinshū and Zen experience, and, while it is called *shinjin* in one tradition and *sokushin zebutsu* in the other, the insight into one's own essential nature is the same. Likewise, in both traditions practice continues after such a moment of ultimate realization. In Jōdo Shinshū, one continues to recite the *nenbutsu* after entrusting oneself completely to Amida's vow as a spontaneous repaying of Amida's benevolence with gratitude. For Ōuchi, this is no different than Dōgen's teaching of "post-realization practice" (*shōjō no shu* 証上の修). From the moment Shinshū devotees are grasped by *shinjin*, they are said to dwell constantly in the light of Amida. How is this any different, he asks rhetorically, than the meditative state attained in Zen meditation? While Ōuchi's exegesis is plainly a rather abbreviated one, it is nonetheless well grounded in a long history of East Asian Buddhist thinking that sees no contradiction between these two Mahayana paths and would have struck a resonant chord with many of his Meiji-period readers.

In the fifth and final section, Ōuchi sets out to resolve two remaining, and thorny, questions that his Sōtō contemporaries were troubled by: First, why have so few Zen patriarchs taught the way of Amida? Second, why should it be implemented at this time? He acknowledges that, except for a few of the earliest patriarchs in China, Zen patriarchs have not taught the way of Amida. The reason, according to Ōuchi, is that it was bitterly denounced in the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (Ch. *Liuzu tanjing* 六祖壇經) and thus rejected by all subsequent patriarchs. A few later Zen teachers such as Yongming and Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲株宏 (1535–1615) did teach this path, and as their teachings were viewed as heresies, they were nearly expelled from the Zen lineage. The problem with the teachings of those such as Yongming and Yunqi, he argues, is that they arbitrarily mixed up teachings about Mind Only (*yuishin* 唯心), the Pure Land, one's own mind (*koshin* 己心), and the practice of Amida and thus confused the distinction between the lay and monastic paths. While not mentioning his Wakeikai colleague Yoshioka Shingyō by name, Ōuchi surely would have had Yoshioka's Zen–Pure Land syncretic teaching in mind when penning this. For the reasons just listed, Ōuchi argues that it is appropriate that such skewed syncretic teachings are rejected and insists that he is not asking for such a teaching to be implemented as Sōtō's method for lay instruction. Rather, he hopes to see the Pure Land teaching as passed down from Shandao through Hōnen and Shinran to be adopted for strict use by the laity alone. This proposal, he insists, is in no way intended to interfere with traditional Zen monastic practice.

Lastly, Ōuchi was aware that there were many critics of his plan to use an Amida-centered teaching for the laity, and he sought to tackle the question of why to imple-

ment this now if it had never before been used in the Sōtō tradition. His answer is an empirical one that responds to the pressing and unprecedented needs presented by the new and unfamiliar social conditions of the Meiji period. While Sōtō has a long history of accepting lay followers, Ōuchi contends that these, such as Hatano Yoshi-shige 波多野義重 (d.u.–1258) and Shigeno Nobunao 滋野信直 (d.u.), who received instruction from Dōgen and Keizan, respectively, were always few in number and of aristocratic backgrounds. Concerning such followers, he writes: “Although they were laypeople in body, they were already monks in their hearts. They were, as they say, lay monks (*zaike no shukke* 在家の出家).”⁹⁵ This was a status rather similar to his own as a lay Buddhist teacher. The situation confronting the Sōtō institution in the 1880s, however, was radically different than that of earlier periods when the only contact that most people—old, young, male, and female—had with Sōtō was when funerals occurred and they were told to chant various things. Simply catering to the dead in this way will no longer do, Ōuchi insists. Rather, Sōtō priests must teach the *meaning* of such chants to the *living* and thereby provide them with the means to attain spiritual peace, or *anjin*. Such concern on Ōuchi’s part back in the mid-1880s indeed seems prescient considering the financial difficulties now facing most Buddhist institutions amid accusations of their being mere *sōshiki bukkyō* 葬式仏教, or funerary Buddhism.

Ōuchi’s “long-cherished desire” (*soi* 素意) to have “the way of Amida” implemented as the official Sōtōshū policy for proselytizing their lay members was ever so close to being realized.⁹⁶ His recommendations in the *Kedōgi* were accepted by the Sōtō authorities, and much of the idiom he used in that document found its way into the first *Sōtō Regulations*, which were submitted to the *naimu daijin* 内務大臣 (minister of internal affairs) in April, approved in May, and sent to all Sōtō temples in June of 1885. In the introduction to Article 4, entitled *Sōtōshū shūkyō taii*, the teachings were clearly divided into two paths—one for priests and those of higher capabilities and one for the laity. The priestly path was based on *jiriki* and described in the following terms: “[Relying] solely on self power, this very mind becomes buddha” (*tanjun jiriki sokushin jōbutsu* 單純自力即心成仏).⁹⁷ In contrast, the lay path was to be based on *tariki* and was described as “a practice [relying] exclusively on other power that [leads to] rebirth in a single moment” (*senju tariki ichinen ōjō* 專修他力一念往生).⁹⁸ While not explicitly mentioning Amida, the strict separation of priestly and lay paths and the reliance on *tariki* and rebirth in a pure land as the teachings for laity were seen as evidence of Ōuchi’s leverage in the doctrinal debates occurring at this time. Nevertheless, Ōuchi was soon to be disappointed.

⁹⁵ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1, p. 446.

⁹⁶ Ōuchi ca. 1884–85 in SS, vol. 1 p. 446.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Sakurai 1982a, p. 475.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Sakurai 1982a, p. 475.

Upon hearing of the inclusion of this *tariki*-based teaching in the sect regulations, many Sōtō priests could not see anything at all of traditional Zen doctrine in this. Faced with growing discontent, the Sōtō authorities began to think twice about implementing this new teaching strategy and in July—less than three months after printing the new *Sōtō Regulations*—issued a special notification repealing Article 4.⁹⁹

THE AFTERLIFE OF THE NENBUTSU MOVEMENTS

A decade after the closing of the Great Teaching Academy, the Sōtō sect was now still without an authorized teaching for its lay members. There were two main reasons that the *nenbutsu* teachings proposed in the four movements described above were rejected: they were seen as *tariki* practices, which was ultimately deemed inconsistent with the fundamental orientation of Zen sects as having to be based on *jiriki* practice, and they were not grounded, historically, in any specifically Sōtō Zen teachings. That each of the four proposals above was either put forth or supported by high-ranking Sōtō officials and/or esteemed scholars and was not a marginal movement led by local priests indicates just how conflicted Sōtō leaders were about the *jiriki-tariki* dichotomy itself: they were simultaneously drawn to *tariki* teachings, despite a lack of precedent in the Sōtō tradition, yet paralyzed to actually break with tradition and implement them as being officially “Zen.”

Disappointed, though undaunted, by the last-minute rejection of his preferred *tariki ichinen ōjō* religious path for the Sōtō laity, Ōuchi immediately set upon a new tack deferring to the de rigueur sensibility that for a teaching to be “Sōtō” it must be a *jiriki* practice and rooted in the writings of Dōgen, the founder of Sōtō in Japan. The result was his *Tōjō zaike shushōgi*, which after a series of revisions by leading Sōtō figures became the official summary of Sōtō teachings in 1890 under the revised title *Sōtō kyōkai shushōgi*.

Writing in 1902, twelve years after the promulgation of the *Shushōgi*, Yoshikawa decried the fact that despite the special notification of July 1885 informing temples that the *tariki* teaching for Sōtō laity had been rescinded, as no new edition of the sect rules had been published, the article was still, in a sense, “on the books.” He called this one of the greatest stains upon the Sōtō sect since the Meiji Restoration and condemned the contemporaneous situation in which a great many Sōtō priests were still trying to disseminate an Amida-centered *tariki* practice (*Amida tariki hō* 阿弥陀他力法), which seems to have had continued grassroots appeal.¹⁰⁰ The *Shushōgi* had officially

⁹⁹ Article 4 is quoted at length in Kagamishima 1982b, p. 388. See Sakurai 1982b, pp. 19–20, for the timeline concerning the submission of the *Sōtō Regulations* and its reception history. The special notification repealing Article 4 is quoted in Satō 2007, p. 73.

¹⁰⁰ Yoshikawa 1902 in SS, vol. 1, p. 447.

settled the matter of what constituted Sōtō belief (*shinkō mondai* 信仰問題), yet for Yoshikawa there in fact seemed no resolution in sight. Indeed, debates concerning the validity and efficacy of the *Shushōgi* to serve as the official teaching not only for the Sōtō laity but for its priests as well intensified in the so-called *anjin* debates of the subsequent two decades, and arguably they have continued ever since.¹⁰¹

The story of how, after the modifications by sect authorities, Ōuchi's proposal was indeed accepted as the Sōtō teaching standard is a complex and important one, but lies beyond the scope of this essay.¹⁰² In order to highlight its connection with the *nenbutsu* movements described above, though, three points need to be made.

First, the substitution of “*kyōkai*” (teaching assembly) for “*zaikē*” (laity) in the title *Sōtō kyōkai shushōgi* was the result of a conscious rejection by Takiya Takushū 滝谷琢宗 (1836–1897), abbot of Eihei-ji, of Ōuchi's position that the religious paths for priests and laypeople should remain distinct.¹⁰³ “*Sōtō kyōkai*” was the term used to encompass the entirety of the Sōtō sect, and the revised title reflects the inclusive approach of those in the Sōtō leadership who recognized that a two-tiered path to religious teaching and practice smacked of the feudal, hierarchical, and patronizing stance that characterized Japanese Buddhist temples during the Edo period—precisely what Buddhists now needed to overcome in order to “modernize.” The most important component of this new approach was to appeal to, and be inclusive of, parishioners who were now free to choose their religious affiliations. Takiya's decision to make the religious path set forth in the *Shushōgi* a practice for both Sōtō priests and laity has been called Sōtō's “Copernican Revolution” and is considered by many Sōtō intellectuals to be the seminal moment in the creation of modern Sōtō identity.¹⁰⁴

Such inclusion of the laity within a unified path of religious practice is an example of the leading role that the Sōtō sect played in Meiji-period reorganizations of Buddhist institutions as pointed out by Ikeda Eishun. In his exhaustive volume on *kyōkai* and *kessha* during the 1880s, Ikeda concluded that whereas prior scholarship focused primarily on the roles of the Higashi Hongan-ji 東本願寺 and Nishi Hongan-ji 西本願寺 temples in this regard, it was in fact the Sōtō sect that led the way toward such necessary reorganization.¹⁰⁵ It is here that the attempts by Sumikawa Kōgan (a Shaka *nenbutsu*) and Yoshioka Shingyō (an Amida *nenbutsu*) described above to overcome the strict separation of priestly and lay religious paths can now be seen as pioneering. Despite the rejection of their actual teachings, their respective emphases

¹⁰¹ See SS, vol. 5, subtitled “*Anjinron*” 安心論 (Debates Concerning Spiritual Peace).

¹⁰² For more details on the full teaching, history, and significance of the *Shushōgi*, see Reader 1985, Reader 1986, Heine 2003, and LoBreglio 2009.

¹⁰³ LoBreglio 2009, p. 91.

¹⁰⁴ Mutai 1991, p. 20, uses the phrase “Copernican Revolution” in this regard.

¹⁰⁵ Ikeda 1994, pp. 431–33.

upon a singular, unified path of religious practice for both ordained and lay members became Sōtō sect policy in 1890 when Takiya overrode Ōuchi's attempt to keep these paths distinct, and this remains so today. It is highly likely that one of the key factors in Takiya's decision to unify these religious paths was the fact that Sōtō (and most other Japanese Buddhist) priests were fast becoming socially indistinguishable from their lay parishioners due to their marrying in increasing numbers.¹⁰⁶ As the presence of married clergy thus called (and continues to call) the very distinction between “cleric” and “lay” into question, Takiya's insistence on a singular religious teaching could perhaps be seen as a prescient reading of the winds of his time.

Second, according to Kagamishima the decision to position Śākyamuni Buddha as the Sōtō *honzon* 本尊, or principal object of worship, is a direct result of the Shaka *nenbutsu* campaigns of Sumikawa and Tsuji described above.¹⁰⁷ In his *Tōjō zaike shushōgi*, Ōuchi had designated the three treasures (*sanbō* 三宝) of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the sangha (*buppōsō* 佛法僧) to serve as the Sōtō *honzon*. Here too Takiya overrode Ōuchi and, intending to establish Śākyamuni as *honzon*, concluded his proposed revision to the *Sōtō kyōkai shushōgi* with the controversial recitation “*namu Shakamuni butsu, namu Shakamuni butsu, namu Shakamuni butsu*” inherited from Sumikawa, Tsuji, and their supporters. This proved too controversial for the committees charged with approving the final version of the *Shushōgi*, and they deleted Takiya's final paragraph, agreeing with Ōuchi's argument that, as we saw above, such a Shaka *nenbutsu* had the air of an inferior *tarikī* practice. As a compromise, though, they agreed with Takiya's proposal that Śākyamuni should indeed become the Sōtō *honzon*—which it remains today.¹⁰⁸

Third, despite the rejection of all four *nenbutsu* movements described above as being *tarikī* practices without basis in the Sōtō tradition, Ōuchi consciously employed Jōdo Shinshū religious concepts when constructing the *Shushōgi* as his resolution to the problem of a lack of a religious teaching for the Sōtō laity. The “harmonization” (*chōwa sareta mono* 調和されたもの) of his dual inheritance of belief in Sōtō doctrine from his paternal lineage and faith in Shinshū teachings from his mother seems to have been the driving force behind his prolific Buddhist writings and activities. The following two passages provide glimpses into his motivation:

¹⁰⁶ This was the result of the 1872 law passed by the Meiji government that ended state enforcement of Buddhist disciplinary codes, which except for the Jōdo Shinshū sects prohibited marriage (as well as eating meat). This left Sōtō and other Buddhist sect authorities powerless to enforce their own Vinaya and thus forced, against their wishes, to accept an increasing married clergy. See Jaffe 2001 for the definitive treatment of this watershed legislation and its legacy.

¹⁰⁷ Kagamishima 1982b, p. 388.

¹⁰⁸ See LoBreglio 2009, especially pp. 89–94, for a more detailed account of the negotiations underlying the establishment of Śākyamuni as *honzon*.

The Buddhism of the future will have to do away with the mistaken understanding of the relationship between Zen and the *nenbutsu* and must concentrate upon the harmonization of their respective spirits.¹⁰⁹

According to the power of *zazen*, great priests understand the principle of the *nenbutsu*; and thanks to the truth provided by the *nenbutsu*, they are easily able to understand the significance of Zen.¹¹⁰

The central moment in the religious path Ōuchi laid out in the *Shushōgi* is the taking of precepts, described in section two under the heading “*jukai nyūi*” 受戒入位 (Receiving the Precepts and Joining the Ranks [of the buddhas]). Ōuchi hereby reinterpreted “practice,” which for Dōgen meant *zazen*,¹¹¹ to mean the “practice” of taking the precepts; and as this required one’s own effort, it was therefore a *jiriki* practice. Years later when commenting on the *Shushōgi*, Ōuchi explained that for Sōtō practitioners, the moment of taking the precepts functions *exactly the same* as the moment the Shinshū practitioner has true faith in Amida’s vow.¹¹² That is, in both cases true faith is the *precondition* for the practice: it allows the Sōtō believer to take the precepts and the Shinshū one to recite the *nenbutsu*.¹¹³ And in both cases absolutely no other practice is required; not even *zazen* for Sōtō followers. In fact, as one “enters the ranks [of the buddhas]” the moment one takes the precepts, there is no need to either keep or understand the precepts one has taken.¹¹⁴ As mentioned above, the *Shushōgi* is the central document used for Sōtō teaching (*kyōgi*) today. The fact that the underlying structural logic of its key religious moment is based on Jōdo Shinshū teachings may well be the most significant legacy of the Sōtō *nenbutsu* movements of the early Meiji period.

ABBREVIATION

SS *Sōtōshū sensho* 曹洞宗選書. Edited by Sōtōshū Sensho Kankōkai 曹洞宗選書刊行会. 20 vols. Kyoto: Dōhōsha Shuppan, 1982.

¹⁰⁹ Ōuchi 1914, p. 134.

¹¹⁰ Ōuchi 1914, p. 135.

¹¹¹ Dōgen discusses this in the “Bendōwa” chapter of his *Shōbōgenzō*.

¹¹² Ōuchi 1926, p. 43.

¹¹³ Ōuchi 1926, p. 48.

¹¹⁴ Ōuchi 1926, p. 61.

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