

## The Tradition of Faith

— the Nembutsu Faith of Seikaku and Ryūkan

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Hōnen's magnum opus *Senjaku-hongan-nembutsu-shū* is subtitled as

“Namu-amida-butsu: as the act that leads to birth in the Pure Land, the nembutsu is taken to be fundamental”.

And we also notice that Hōnen in the last line of *Ichimai-kishōmon* or parting message states that

“Thus without pedantic airs, you should fervently recite the name of Amida Buddha and that alone.”

Thus he asks that we should keep nembutsu alone abandoning such sundry practices as observing precepts, accumulating merits of offering money, building temples and etc. in expectation of the welcoming of Amida to the Pure Land at the moment of passing away from this world.

However, after Hōne's death, disputes arose among disciples on the problem of how accepting nembutsu which the late master had taught.

According to Mochizuki Shinkō or a modern notable Buddhist scholar, the disputes were mainly between two parties, kigyō school (emphasizing on nembutsu-practice) and anjin school (emphasizing on nembutsu-faith). He counts Shōko, Ryūkan and Chōsai as the representative Pure Land masters of the kigyō school (=orthodox), while Kōsai, Shōku and Shinran as those of Anjin school (=unorthodox).

In this paper, I would like to shed light on the nembutsu-faith tradition before Shinran, focusing on Seikaku (1167-1235) and Ryūkan (1148-1227). Both buddhists belonged to Tendai school, but acted as nembutsu practitioners. Shinran respected them calling 'yoki hitobito' or good teachers. He recommends to read *Yuishinshō* (“Essentials of Faith Alone”), *Gosemonogatari-kikigaki* (“On the Afterlife”) and *Jirikitariki* (“Self-power and Other

Power”) in the letters to disciples in Kanto area.

“Ultimately, you should read carefully and constantly such writings as *Yuishinshō*, *Gosemonogatari* and *Jirikitariki*, and not diverge from their message. Please tell this to all people, wherever they may be”. (*A Collection of Letters* 1)

Shinran even authored *Yuishinshō-moni* or the exegesis of Seikaku’s *Yuishinshō* and *Ichinentanen-moni* or that of Ryūkan’s *Ichinentanenhunbetsuji*.

Then, how have they become nembutsu follower and what were their nembutsu faith? Scholars have so far dealt with these problems, but it seems there still remain some questions unresolved. My paper here is attempting to make clear nembutsu-faith tradition in the case of both Seikaku and Ryūkan, in terms of their works *Yuishinshō* and *Gosemonogatari-kikigaki*.