

FEATURE:
DEVELOPMENTS OF NARA BUDDHISM
IN KAMAKURA JAPAN (II)

The Life of Eizon¹

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EIZON'S EARLY DAYS: FROM OFFICIAL TO RECLUSIVE MONKHOOD

Eizon's Image

EIZON 叡尊 (1201–1290, cloister name Shienbō 思円房) is well known as the monk who “revived” (in quotation marks because it was not simply a matter of reviving) strict adherence to the Buddhist precepts at the Nara temple of Saidaiji 西大寺. The precepts of course refer to those rules, including the observance of sexual abstinence (*fujain* 不邪淫), said to be established for the Buddhist monastic community by Śākyamuni himself. Moreover, Eizon is also famous for his relief work, which he began with his disciples such as Ninshō 忍性 (1217–1303), for those afflicted with leprosy. In contrast to the monks of the schools of the so-called Kamakura New Buddhism (*Kamakura shin bukkyō* 鎌倉新仏教) typified by Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262) and others, Eizon has been regarded as a reformer working within the schools of established Buddhism (*kyū bukkyō* 旧仏教). However, great strides have been made in recent years on research into the various activities of Eizon's movement, and there is now a tendency to treat him more as a representative figure of Kamakura New Buddhism rather than as a reformer of established Buddhism. Here I will try to describe Eizon's life from this standpoint. Unless noted otherwise, the following paper will be based mainly on Eizon's autobiography *Kongō busshi Eizon kanjin gakushōki* 金剛仏子叡尊感身学正記 (hereafter *Gakushōki*).²

¹ This is a translation of an article originally published as “Eizon no shōgai” 叡尊の生涯 in *Jikai no seija: Eizon, Ninshō* 持戒の聖者：叡尊・忍性, ed. Matsuo Kenji 松尾剛次. Vol. 10 of *Nihon no meisō* 日本の名僧. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2004.

² This text is included in *Saidaiji Eizon denki shūsei* 西大寺叡尊伝記集成 (hereafter abbreviated as SEDS), pp. 1–63.

Eizon's Youth

Eizon was born at the very beginning of the thirteenth century, in the fifth month of 1201 (Kennin 建仁 1) at Mita 箕田 in the Sō no kami 添上 district of Yamato province (in present-day Yamato Kōriyama 大和郡山 city, Nara prefecture). His father was Kyōgen 慶玄 (n.d.), a scholar-monk of Kōfukuji 興福寺, and his mother was a member of the Fujiwara 藤原 clan. Eizon's father is said to have been a descendant of Kiso Yoshinaka 木曾義仲 (1154–1184) of the Minamoto 源 clan.

In the ninth month of 1207 (Jōgen 承元 1), when Eizon was seven years old, his mother died, leaving behind three children. The loss of his mother at such an early age made a strong impact on Eizon, and in a vow (*ganmon* 願文) of the ninth month of 1245 (Kangen 寛元 3), he pledged to transfer the merits acquired through his practice of “spreading the Dharma and benefiting sentient beings” to his deceased mother.³ Since his family was very poor, in the following year he was adopted into the family of a female shrine attendant (*miko* 巫女) residing near Daigoji 醍醐寺 in Kyoto (present-day Fushimi 伏見 ward, Kyoto).

In 1211 (Kenryaku 建暦 1), his adoptive mother died, and Eizon was taken in by the family of her elder sister, also a shrine attendant. Perhaps due to poverty, this family subsequently turned the child over to Eiken 叡賢 (n.d.), a monk at the Hōdōin 宝幢院 cloister of Kamidaigoji 上醍醐寺. Under Eiken's guidance, Eizon started picking flowers for the Buddha enshrined at the temple and burning incense before this image every day. Three years later, Eizon was transferred into the charge of Eijitsu 栄実 (n.d.) of the An'yōin 安養院 at Shimodaigoji 下醍醐寺.

Eizon as an Official Monk

The year 1217 (Kenpō 建保 5), when Eizon was seventeen, was an important turning point in his life. In the middle of the twelfth month of this year, he became a monk under the guidance of the Great Dharma Master Esō 恵操 (n.d.) of Daigoji, took the precepts at Tōdaiji's ordination platform, and resolved to study esoteric Buddhism. Thus, Eizon started his monastic career as an esoteric Buddhist monk within Daigoji. Like his master Esō, who held the rank of Great Dharma Master (Daihosshi 大法師), Eizon also became a so-called official monk (*kansō* 官僧, or *kanryōsō* 官僚僧). Subsequently, he undertook the esoteric “fourfold preparatory practices” (*shido kegyō* 四度加

³ SEDS, p. 128.

行), and at the age of twenty-eight received the “Dharma transmission consecration” (*denbō kanjō* 伝法灌頂 or *guji kanjō* 具支灌頂), the highest esoteric ordination, becoming a full-fledged *ācārya* or master of esoteric Buddhism. However, during this period, while there were times when he was unable to undertake esoteric practices due to his poor economic conditions, there were also times when he was able to leave Daigoji to practice under Jōkei 静慶 (1150–1243) of the Ryōzen’in 靈山院 cloister at Chōgakuji 長岳寺.

Toward an Awareness of the Importance of the Precepts

Although Eizon had become an official monk trained in esoteric Buddhism, at the age of thirty-four, he experienced a second turning point in his life. Ten (or seven) years had passed since he had been recognized as a full member of the esoteric school and performed a great many ascetic practices. However, he had always had the following nagging doubt. That is, even among those esoteric monks who had received the esoteric teachings properly transmitted from master to disciple, many had apparently (or so it seemed to him) fallen into the path of demons, just like Śāriputra who, it is said, had fallen into such a path upon abandoning the Mahayana teachings. Why was that? After having reflected for a number of years on this point, Eizon concluded, based on his reading of such texts as the *Yuikai* 遺誡 by Kūkai 空海 (774–835), that this was because they had abandoned the pure precepts established by Śākyamuni. In the *Yuikai*, it is written, “Even if you arouse the aspiration for enlightenment and have resolved to strive toward the distant (goal of buddhahood), you cannot proceed forward without legs. How could the Buddhist path be fulfilled without the precepts? . . . Rather give up your own lives, than break the precepts. Those who transgress them intentionally are not disciples of the Buddha . . . they are not my disciples.”⁴

As this shows, Eizon, even though he had aroused the aspiration to attain enlightenment as an esoteric monk, observed around him those who had fallen into evil ways, and concluded that this was because they had broken the precepts (i.e., had behaved in a way unworthy of disciples of the Buddha). Out of his desire to become a proper disciple, he became aware of the need to “revive” the precepts. Precisely at that time, at the urging of Son’en 尊円 (n.d.) of the Kaizen’in 戒禅院 (later known as Chisokuin 知足院) cloister at Tōdaiji 東大寺, it was decided to appoint six monks charged with observing the precepts (*jisaisō* 持斎僧) to reside at the Hōtōin 宝塔院 (Treasure

⁴ The quotation from the *Yuikai* cited in the *Gakushōki* is found in SEDS, p. 7.

Pagoda Cloister, also called Tōtō 東塔 or the Eastern Pagoda) in Saidaiji 西大寺. When Eizon heard of this, he visited Son'en, and received permission to reside at the Hōtōin, where he moved on 1/16/1235 (Katei 嘉禎 1). From that point on, Son'en became Eizon's mentor. Afterwards Eizon attended lectures by Kainyo 戒如 (n.d.), Kakushō 覺証 (n.d.), Ensei 円晴 (1180–1241) of Kōfukuji, and others, on texts such as the *Sifenlü xingshi chao* 四分律行事鈔, a commentary on the *Sifenlü* (hereafter *Vinaya in Four Parts*). He devoted himself to the study of the precepts, and became deeply aware of the fact that, until that time, he had been living in violation of them.

Self-ordination

In the seventh month of the following year, Eizon met Kakujō 覺盛 (1149–1249) at the Jōkiin 常喜院 cloister of Kōfukuji. Kakujō told Eizon of his plan to perform a self-ordination from the first to the fourth of the ninth month at Tōdaiji together with Ensei and Ugon 有嚴 (1186–1275), and Eizon promised to join them in it. The ordination is a ceremony in which one vows to keep the precepts; in order to become a full-fledged monk, it was usually necessary to vow to keep the 250 precepts of the *Vinaya in Four Parts* before ten accomplished monks (that is, three *vinaya* masters and seven witnesses). In contrast to this method of receiving ordination in the presence of *vinaya* masters, which is called “receiving the precepts from others,” in self-ordination the vow is made before Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In other words, it was a kind of ordination directly conferred by the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas. This self-ordination, based on such texts as the *Zhancha jing* 占察經, was a special procedure to be undertaken when there was no *vinaya* master available to confer the precepts. Taking self-ordination was an unprecedented act at the time, inasmuch as ordination by three masters and seven witnesses was still being performed at the ordination platform of Tōdaiji.

However, Kakujō and his companions believed that no proper *vinaya* master could be found in the days of the Latter Dharma in which they were living, and sought to receive ordination directly from the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Before proceeding with self-ordination, it was necessary to receive a “sign” (*kōsō* 好相, generally an auspicious dream following purifications). Eizon, after having received the sign twice, underwent self-ordination on 9/4/1236 before a statue of Kannon 觀音 at Tōdaiji's Hokkedō 法華堂. This self-ordination was the beginning of the so-called “revival” of the precepts by Eizon and his companions.

There is a tendency to see this merely as a revival of the precepts, but an important feature of the self-ordination undertaken by Eizon and his companions was that it was a comprehensive ordination which included the bodhisattva precepts. This meant that Eizon and his companions perceived themselves as becoming bodhisattvas through their ordination. In a comprehensive ordination, one receives all the three types of pure precepts for bodhisattvas: precepts that encompass all good deeds, precepts concerning the liberation of all living beings, and precepts to abstain from doing evil acts. This type of ordination contrasts with what is referred to as a particular ordination, where one receives only the last of the above three precepts. At official ordination platforms, such as Tōdaiji's, only these particular ordinations were performed. Through their self-ordinations, Eizon and his companions saw themselves as becoming bodhisattvas striving, not only for the attainment of their own awakening, but for the liberation of others as well.⁵ These self-ordinations with the bodhisattva precepts eventually became the basis for the impressive charitable activities undertaken by Eizon and his group, including their work for the salvation of those affected by leprosy. One should pay attention to the fact that, after their self-ordination, Eizon and his companions were called "reclusive" (*tonsei* 遁世) monks, which I will discuss in more detail in the next section.

The four monks who took self-ordination at that time, that is to say Eizon, Kakujō, Ensei, and Ugon, are called "the four wise men who undertook self-ordination" (*jisei shitetsu* 自誓四哲). Eizon carried out the "revival" of Saidaiji, Kakujō of Tōshōdaiji 唐招提寺, and Ensei of Fukūin 不空院. These four self-ordained monks first attempted to carry out a lifestyle based on the precepts at Jōkiin. However, when there arose, as a result of a petition by Kōfukuji, the possibility that an armed conflict might erupt between the temple and the *bakufu*, the monks moved to Tōdaiji's Aburakura 油倉.

This petition was related to a dispute that had arisen the previous year between the Takigi 薪 estate of Iwashimizu Hachimangū 石清水八幡宮 and the Ōsumi 大住 estate of Kōfukuji over water rights. The Kamakura *bakufu* suppressed Kōfukuji through the use of force and appointed a provincial constable and various estate stewards for Yamato province. As a result, the estates of the various temples in that province were appropriated by the stewards and fell into ruins. At the end of the ninth month Eizon's three companions returned to Kōfukuji, and Eizon himself returned for a short

⁵ Translator's note: On Eizon's understanding of the precepts, see the following article by Minowa.

period to Saidaiji. But because of the terrible devastation there, Eizon, following Son'en's advice, ultimately moved to Kairyūōji 海竜王寺.

ACTIVITIES AS A RECLUSIVE MONK

Life at Saidaiji

Kairyūōji was founded in the Nara period (710–794) within the grounds of the residence of Fujiwara no Fuhito 藤原不比等 (659–720). The temple declined during the Heian period (794–1185), but was rebuilt by Jōkei 貞慶 (1155–1213) in the Kamakura period (1185–1333). When Eizon moved to Kairyūōji, the so-called “precepts of the Northern Capital” (i.e., Kyoto; *hokkyō ritsu* 北京律), transmitted from China by Shunjō 俊苒 (1166–1227) and practiced at his temple, Sen'yūji 泉涌寺 in Kyoto, were being observed there. This was because Jōshun 定舜 (n.d.–1244), a disciple of Shunjō, had visited the temple and lectured there. Perhaps Eizon moved to Kairyūōji and started his movement for the “revival” of the precepts there for this reason. At this temple, Eizon ordained Gennin 玄忍 (1212–1247), Kyōgen 教玄, Gansai 願西, Gonjō 嚴貞, and Kenshin 賢真, and began to train his group of disciples. Thus started Eizon's activities for the “revival” of the precepts.

Evidently, however, there were people who harbored ill will toward Eizon's activities. They obstructed his efforts by writing graffiti on the main gate, and shooting arrows at the monks' quarters. Thus, also on Son'en's advice, Eizon returned to Saidaiji on 8/5/1238 (Ryakunin 暦仁 1). From then on, he continued his movement to “revive” the precepts based at Saidaiji.

Saidaiji was originally built on the order of Empress Shōtoku 称徳 (718–770) during the Nara period. Its origin dates to 764 (Tenpyō-hōji 天平宝字 8) when the empress ordered the erection of gilt bronze statues of the Four Heavenly Kings (Shitennō 四天王) to pray for victory in quelling a revolt by Fujiwara no Nakamaro 藤原仲麻呂 (706–764). Originally, this temple was a magnificent complex consisting of many buildings such as the Shiōdō 四王堂 enshrining the Four Heavenly Kings, Yakushi Kondō 薬師金堂 dedicated to the Healing Buddha (Yakushi 薬師), Miroku Kondō 弥勒金堂 dedicated to the future Buddha Maitreya, Jūichimendō 十一面堂 enshrining the Eleven-Faced Kannon, and the eastern and western pagodas. Moreover, it was located on an immense tract of land thirty-one *chō* 町 (approximately 520,000 square meters) in size, making it far larger than other temples at that time, including Kōfukuji.

However, following the death of Empress Shōtoku, the temple rapidly

declined, and by the time Eizon returned, it was in ruins. The only surviving structures were the Shiōdō, the dining hall, and the Hōtōin. Among the thirty-six estates that it had originally possessed, twenty-seven had been lost and the others belonged to the temple in name only. When he returned to the temple, Eizon made the following compassionate resolution: “Without any concern for my life, I will reside at this temple and work for the prosperity of the Right Dharma (*shōbō* 正法), aspiring to benefit all sentient beings.”⁶ At that time, this temple was a branch temple of Kōfukuji and was managed by an administrator (*bettō* 別当) appointed by Kōfukuji who supervised the other official monks (also called “white-robed monks” or *byakue kata* 白衣方), who were based primarily in the Shiōdō. On the other hand, Eizon’s activities were based in the Hōtōin, and he and his disciples eventually came to be known as black-robed monks (*kokue kata* 黒衣方) or Ritsu 律 (*vinaya*) monks. Eizon became institutionally more powerful than the white-robed monks only when he was granted the right to manage the entire Saidaiji by the administrator Jōhan 乗範 (1230–n.d.) on 7/18/1278 (Kōan 弘安 1).

Incidentally, on 8/8/1238 (Ryakunin 1), Eizon performed a ritual reciting the *Jinguangming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經 in the *tendoku* 転読 style at Shiōdō. This was because he knew from Saidaiji chronicles that this hall had been a site dedicated to the practice of reciting this sutra. It may be recalled that this sutra describes how the Four Heavenly Kings will appear to help the country when faced with calamities if its ruler is a devout Buddhist. Eizon also vowed that he would recite this sutra in the hall if he succeeded in “reviving” Saidaiji. It can be said that these two points—the emphasis placed on conducting prayers for the protection of the state, symbolized by the recitation of state-protecting sutras (such as the *Jinguangming zuisheng wang jing*), and the undertaking of bodhisattva practices—are the characteristic features of Eizon and his religious community.

Boundaries and Ordinations

On 10/28/1238 (Ryakunin 1), Eizon established the boundaries (*kekkaï* 結界) of Saidaiji. This event has been almost completely overlooked by earlier scholars, but it is extremely significant because the boundaries fixed the limits within which the grounds were to be kept purified. According to the *vinaya*, the monks could live and perform their various rituals only within this area. For this reason, when Empress Shōtoku first established Saidaiji,

⁶ SEDS, p. 13.

the temple boundaries must also have had been fixed. However, Eizon's act of fixing the boundaries anew in spite of the fact that monks had been living there since its founding, is tantamount to his establishing a new temple. Most likely, these boundaries were established only around the area of Hōtōin. In this action, we can perceive Eizon's strong determination to conduct his daily life based on the precepts. On the twenty-ninth, he conducted the *shibun fusatsu* 四分布薩, an assembly for reflecting on one's own actions on the basis of the rules of the *Vinaya in Four Parts*, and on the thirtieth he undertook the *bonmō fusatsu* 梵網布薩, a similar assembly based on the set of precepts found in the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經. It is reported that Eizon's comrade, Kakujō, was so deeply impressed by the fact that this *shibun fusatsu* was conducted in conformity with the *vinaya* rules that he could not stop crying.

The precepts of the *Vinaya in Four Parts* are said to be those followed by people who were in search of their own individual awakening only, while *bonmōkai* 梵網戒, or precepts of the *Fanwang jing*, are those observed by bodhisattvas. However, since the *bonmō* precepts can be kept by both monks and lay people, Eizon, who was a monk, thought that he should also follow the precepts of the *Vinaya in Four Parts*. Thus, he and his companions followed the precepts of the *Vinaya in Four Parts* as monks and those of the *Fanwang jing* as bodhisattvas. In short, Eizon's ideal was that of the bodhisattva-monk, or bodhisattva-*bhikṣu*.

Henceforth, Eizon and the others no longer secluded themselves in the temple, but worked to spread the Dharma and benefit sentient beings while keeping the precepts. In the third month of 1240 (Ninji 仁治 1), Eizon's top disciple Ninshō joined the religious community. He was followed by a number of other monks, and Eizon's community gradually increased. In the second month of 1244 (Kangen 寛元 2), Kakujō left Kōfukuji and started the movement for the "revival" of the precepts at Tōshōdaiji.

In the first month of 1245 (Kangen 3), Eizon became chief priest (*jūshoku* 住職) of Seiryōin 清涼院 at Ebaraji 家原寺 in Izumi province. This temple is said to have been the birthplace of Gyōki 行基 (668–749). From then on Eizon's devotion to Gyōki became very strong. Not only did Eizon emulate Gyōki in conducting various social welfare activities such as building and maintaining bridges, reservoirs and roads, he also made efforts to revive those temples associated with Gyōki. In addition, Eizon was involved in the revival of a nunnery, Hokkeniji 法華尼寺, and on 9/4/1245, he ordained a group of female novices, or *shamini* 沙弥尼. This provided the starting point

for the Ritsu order of nuns. On 2/6/1249 (Kenchō 建長 1), he also ordained the first *bhikṣunī* or full-fledged nun.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that, during his life, Eizon performed the esoteric Dharma transmission consecration for six nuns. This was one of the important rituals in esoteric Buddhism, performed for those who were extremely advanced in esoteric practices. Therefore, one can say that Eizon placed great emphasis on the salvation of women.⁷

It should also be noted that on 9/13/1249 (Kenchō 1), Eizon, along with Kakujō and others, served as preceptors for the ordination of a total of twenty-six monks at Ebaraji. Actually, from the point of view of the *vinaya*, this ordination was quite exceptional. Although it was necessary to have been a full-fledged monk for ten years before one could become a preceptor, in the case of Eizon and his companions, only nine years had passed since 9/1236 (Katei 2), which they considered the year of their ordination.

However, although ten years had not yet passed, Kakujō and Eizon thought that their commitment to work for the benefit of others required them to confer the precepts. In this ordination, they openly performed an original version of a particular ordination that was identical in character to the one that was held at Tōdaiji's ordination platform. Therefore, they were criticized by the official monks of Nara, who complained that their actions made the particular ordinations conducted at Tōdaiji's ordination platform superfluous.

The Difference between Tonsei and Shukke

It is highly significant that Eizon and his companions were perceived as being reclusive monks (*tonseisō* 遁世僧). The expressions *tonsei* 遁世 (literally "recluse") and *shukke* 出家 (literally "those who have left home," meaning "those who have left the life of a householder and entered monastic life") originally had the same meaning, so it was not unusual for these terms to be used interchangeably. However, in the medieval period, these two frequently came to be used to indicate different things. That is to say, when the term "reclusive monk" was used in contrast to "*shukke*," the former indicated those monks who pursued their practices by renouncing their status as official monks with monastic ranks and positions in monastic institutions. In a sense, they were those who had "left home" (*shukke*) twice: once when they received ordination and became official monks, and once

⁷ On this point, see Matsuo 1998.

again when they gave up their status as official monks and became reclusive ones.⁸

In understanding Kamakura New Buddhism, this concept of “recluse,” which implies monks who had “left home” twice, is decisively important because most of the founders of the religious orders of Kamakura New Buddhism were monks who had “left home” twice, i.e., who had severed their ties with the world of the official monks. Moreover, those who joined orders formed in the Kamakura period, including the Zen, Ritsu, and nenbutsu schools, were referred to as recluses.

In short, Eizon and his companions were reclusive monks. In contrast to those official monks of the early thirteenth-century Kōfukuji, Tōdaiji, and Saidaiji temples, who wore the traditional white robes, Eizon and his group wore black robes and for this reason were called “black-robed.” One can say that, because Eizon and his comrades had taken a stance as reclusive monks, they were able to participate in various activities such as working for the salvation of lepers and the officiating at funerals, which would have been restricted by their positions as official monks.

VISITING KANTŌ AND “OFFICIALIZATION” BY THE *BAKUFU*

The Activities of Eizon’s Disciples

After 1245 (Kangen 3), the influence of Eizon’s order gradually increased. On 3/13/1249 (Kenchō 1), sixteen monks, nine Buddhist artisans and two carpenters were sent from Saidaiji to Seiryōji 清涼寺 in Kyoto to create a copy of the statue of Śākyamuni Tathāgata, Seiryōji’s central object of worship (*honzon* 本尊). This copy was to be enshrined at the Shiōdō as Saidaiji’s new object of worship. I will discuss the significance of the creation of the Seiryōji-style Śākyamuni statue and other related matters in greater detail below, but here I will simply point out that this reflects the importance placed on the worship of Śākyamuni in Eizon’s order.

Eizon sent his disciples to various places, deciding their destinations through lottery. In 1252 (Kenchō 4), for example, Ninshō set off for the Kantō area, reaching Mimura 三村 in Hitachi 常陸 province (near present-day Oda in Tsukuba, Ibaraki prefecture) on the fourth of the twelfth month of the same year. After living there for ten years, he moved to Kamakura,

⁸ Translator’s note: On the difference between official and reclusive monks, as well as the role of the latter in the formation of the new schools of Buddhism in the Kamakura period, see Matsuo 1997.

where he first stayed at the Shakadō 釈迦堂 and Tahōji 多宝寺. Later he based himself at Gokurakuji 極楽寺, where he attracted important officials of the Kamakura *bakufu* as his followers, thus laying the foundations for the dramatic spread of Eizon's order. Moreover, back in Nara, Hamuro Sadatsugu 葉室定嗣 (known as Jōnen Shingetsubō 定然心月房 after taking tonsure), an important figure in the cloister government of retired Emperor Go-saga 後嵯峨, entered the monkhood as Eizon's disciple in 10/1260 (Bun'ō 文応 1). Through these and similar events, Eizon's order became influential among the leading figures of the imperial court and the *bakufu* government. It may also be added that Jōjūji 浄住寺, which was originally Hamuro Sadatsugu's mountain villa, became one of the bases of Eizon's order in Kyoto.

A particularly crucial event in the development of Eizon's order was his journey to Kantō, which took place in 1262 (Kōchō 弘長 2). Most likely, Hōjō Sanetoki 北条実時 (1224–1276) and his circle, who had heard of Eizon's reputation from Ninshō, made plans to invite Eizon to Kamakura, and gained the approval of Hōjō Tokiyori 北条時頼 (1227–1263), the regent of the Kamakura *bakufu*, to put the plan into effect.

Trip to Kantō

On 10/8/1261 (Kōchō 1), a messenger from Hōjō Sanetoki, Gen'amidabutsu 見阿弥陀仏, visited Eizon from Kantō. Along with two letters from Hōjō Sanetoki offering to donate a complete set of Buddhist sutras and Shōmyōji 称名寺 in Kanazawa (present-day Kanazawa ward in Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture) to Eizon, the messenger relayed Sanetoki's intention to invite Eizon to Kamakura. Eizon returned the letters and firmly refused the invitation. On the twenty-fifth of the eleventh month, there arrived another missive from Sanetoki stating his desire to donate the complete set of scriptures to Eizon regardless of whether the latter would come to Kamakura or not. The sutras were delivered to Saidaiji on the eighteenth of the twelfth month.

On 1/2/1262 (Kōchō 2) Gen'amidabutsu delivered another missive from Hōjō Sanetoki. Moreover, word spread that Tokiyori, the most powerful figure in Japan at that time, was hoping to undergo self-ordination under Eizon's guidance in order to assist in the spread of Buddhism. Having no alternative, Eizon accepted the invitation to go to Kantō and left for Kamakura on the fourth day of the second month. Since Eizon was advanced in age, being sixty-two years old, and the trip to Kamakura was

extremely long and arduous, many of his followers feared that this might be the last time to see their master. Therefore, many people made requests to be ordained before his departure.

Eizon, accompanied by Jōshun 定舜, Jōhen 盛遍, Shōnyo 性如, Shōkai 性海, and others, left on 2/4/1262 and arrived in Kamakura on the twenty-seventh of the same month. The events of this trip, which lasted more than seven months, is documented in detail in Shōkai's *Kantō ōgenki* 関東往還記.⁹ During his journey to Kamakura, Eizon performed additional ordinations. For example, on the fourteenth of the second month he ordained, at Chōmoji 長母寺 in Owari 尾張 province (present-day Aichi prefecture), thirty-three monks residing at the temple as well as 197 lay people. The following day he performed the *nehankō* 涅槃講 (service to commemorate Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa*) and the *bonmō fusatsu*. It is said that the number of those attending amounted to 3,077. Thus, Eizon's travel to Kantō played an important role in spreading his teachings along the Tōkaidō 東海道, the main highway between Kyoto and Kamakura.

When the group reached Kamakura, it stayed at a residence at the western gate. Hōjō Sanetoki visited him that night and expressed his desire to become Eizon's lay disciple.

The Development of the Order

Since Eizon had earlier refused Sanetoki's offer of Shōmyōji in Kanazawa, he decided to stay at the Shakadō, a temple with "no connections" (*muen* 無縁, i.e., a poor temple). This temple enshrined a statue of Śākyamuni modeled after the one at Seiryōji. Based at the Shakadō, Eizon started his missionary efforts, undertaking various activities such as ordaining a wide range of people, from the leprosy sufferers living in Kamakura to Hōjō Tokiyori himself.

For example, Tokiyori was ordained on the eighteenth of the third month, and on the first of the fifth month Eizon sent Ninshō and Raigen 頼玄 (n.d.) to two Hidenin 悲田院 cloisters (institutions for the accommodation of the sick and orphans) located near the seashore and the statue of the Great Buddha (*daibutsu* 大仏), respectively, to distribute food and confer the ten good precepts (*jūzenkai* 十善戒) for lay Buddhists on the people residing there.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that Eizon's order also found adherents among monks of other schools (which were different from present-day

⁹ This text is found in SEDS, pp. 70–104.

religious institutions), especially among nenbutsu practitioners. It is quite significant in this regard that a “leader of nenbutsu practitioners” like Dōkyō 道教 (n.d.), the administrator of Shinzenkōji 新善光寺, received instructions from Eizon and became his disciple. Apparently, many nenbutsu practitioners in Kamakura joined Eizon’s order en masse at this time. Nowadays, when we hear the words “nenbutsu practitioner,” we immediately think of the followers of the exclusive nenbutsu movement (*senju nenbutsu* 専修念仏) of Hōnen and Shinran, but the nenbutsu order that was most popular in Kamakura at the time was the Seizangi 西山義, which placed great emphasis on the precepts. Hence, these nenbutsu practitioners found it quite easy to associate themselves with Eizon and his followers, who based themselves on the precepts and recognized the need to undertake various other types of Buddhist practices as well.

Eizon returned to Saidaiji on 8/15/1262. As the account above shows, he had achieved great success during the half year or so that he spent in Kantō, and his ties with the Kamakura *bakufu* were progressively strengthened. As a result, following a petition by Ninshō in 1298 (Einin 永仁 6), thirty-four temples including Saidaiji were appointed as institutions for offering prayers to the Shōgun and his family. In this and other ways, Ritsu monks began to be treated as though they were “official monks” of the *bakufu*. Thus, Eizon’s trip to Kantō was crucial for the development of his order, and, notably, for establishing its ties with the Kamakura *bakufu*.

The Significance of the Mantra of Light Ceremony

The Mantra of Light Ceremony (*kōmyō shingon’e* 光明真言会), first performed in 9/1264 (Bun’ei 文永 1), served to strengthen the ties between the monks and nuns of Eizon’s order, and played a crucial role in attracting followers to the order. Hence, it deserves to be discussed in some detail.

The Mantra of Light refers to the mantra of Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来. It was believed that all of the obstructions to buddhahood arising from one’s transgressions would be expiated by hearing this mantra, and that the deceased could attain buddhahood in the afterlife if the sand on which this mantra was chanted was scattered upon their corpses and tombs. The Mantra of Light Ceremony was begun on 9/4/1264, the anniversary of the death of the Empress Shōtoku who, as noted above, was instrumental in founding Saidaiji. For seven days and nights, the mantra was recited for the welfare of the deceased and for the worldly benefits of the living. During this time, monks gathered from various branch temples to take part in the

service while staying at Saidaiji. This ceremony eventually became the greatest annual event for Eizon's order, serving to strengthen the cohesion between the members of Eizon's order. Moreover, on this occasion, the death registers of those who had died that year were read out aloud. The register contained names of those who had especially contributed to the order by, for example, donating land (i.e., the right to collect a part of the crops of that land) equivalent to one *tan* 反 (approximately 1,000 square meters). Since having one's name read in the ceremony was said to ensure one's buddhahood, the number of people offering contributions to Saidaiji increased. Moreover, the Ritsu monks of Eizon's order conducted funerals, and during these rituals they chanted the Mantra of Light. By ensuring the buddhahood of the deceased in this way, the Ritsu order succeeded in attracting many believers. Additionally, as is evident from the performance of the Mantra of Light Ceremony, we must not forget that Eizon and his companions did not cease being esoteric Buddhist monks when they entered the Ritsu order.

Of course, Eizon's order was not only given official recognition by the Kamakura *bakufu*, but was also respected by the imperial court. In particular, Eizon's fame increased when the prayers he conducted during the Mongol invasions in 1274 and 1281, known as the Bun'ei Disturbance (Bun'ei no eki 文永の役) and the Kōan Disturbance (Kōan no eki 弘安の役), respectively, were credited with saving Japan. I will treat this point in greater detail below.

The Pilgrimage to Ise Shrine

Another interesting point is Eizon's pilgrimages to Ise 伊勢 Shrine which he undertook on three different occasions, the first in the third month of 1273 (Bun'ei 10), the second in the third month of 1275 (Bun'ei 12), and the third in the third month of 1280 (Kōan 3). Eizon's purpose for visiting the shrine, which was undertaken at the request of Inner Shrine Chief Priest Arakida 荒木田, was to pray for the defeat of the Mongols. At Ise Shrine, the separation of *kami* and Buddhas was enforced quite strictly, and monks were not allowed to enter the shrine precincts. For this reason, Eizon's pilgrimage was an epoch-making event. On the occasion of these pilgrimages, Eizon founded Ritsu temples such as Kōshōji 弘正寺 at Ise, and laid the theoretical foundations for Ryōbu Shintō 両部神道 which postulates the unity of the Sun Goddess (Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神) and Dainichi Nyorai. It may also be mentioned in passing here that many shrines, such as Usa Hachiman

宇佐八幡, Iwashimizu Hachimangū and Ōmiwa 大三輪 Shrine, were administered by branch temples of Eizon's order. However, it must be said that the relationship between Eizon's order and Ryōbu Shintō has yet to be sufficiently investigated.

EIZON'S LAST YEARS AND DEATH

The Deep Affection for Eizon as Seen in His Sculpture

In 1278 (Kōan 1), Eizon was granted the right to manage the entire temple of Saidaiji by Jōhan, the administrator who was appointed by Kōfukuji. As mentioned above, there were two distinct religious communities at Saidaiji: the administrator and the temple monks subordinated to him (the official or white-robed monks), and the Ritsu monks centered on Eizon (the reclusive or black-robed monks). After Jōhan granted complete administrative powers to him, Eizon came to exert great influence on the temple monks as well.

The year 1280 (Kōan 3) was a particularly significant time for Eizon in his twilight years. He was then eighty years old, and, on the twenty-sixth of the sixth month, he moved to the newly-built Nishisōbō 西僧房 ("western monks' quarters," also called Nishimuro 西室, facing the east side of the present-day Aizendō 愛染堂). Also in the eighth month, Eizon's sculpture was completed and installed in the Nishisōbō.

The inner cavity of this sculpture was entirely covered with inscriptions and filled with an immense number of offerings. The statue and its contents were investigated by the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties in 1963. Among the inscriptions inside were the "seed-letters" (*shujiji* 種子字, Skt. *bījākṣara*, the representation of a deity using a single Sanskrit letter) for Juntei 准胝 (Skt. Cundī) Kannon, Ichiji Kinrin Butchō 一字金輪仏頂 (Skt. *Ekākṣarabuddhauṣṇīṣacakra*); the mantra for Hōshō Nyorai 宝生如来 (Skt. *Ratnasambhava Tathāgata*); a selection of essential passages from Buddhist scriptures compiled by Sōji 惣持 (n.d.); and the vow to undertake the creation of the sculpture written by Kyōe 鏡恵 (n.d.). The date "8/26/1280" was also inscribed along with the names of four of its sculptors, including Zenshun 善春 (n.d.). From these inscriptions, it is apparent that the project of making the sculpture was initiated by Eizon's disciples, Sōji and Kyōe, and that it was created by Zenshun and the other sculptors.

The offerings placed inside the sculpture included a woodblock print edition of the *Jinguangming zuisheng wang jing*, a record of the benefactors

of Saidaiji called the *Saidaiji uon kakochō* 西大寺有恩過去帳 (A Register of Deceased People Associated with Saidaiji), and the *Jubosatsukai deshi kyōmyō* 授菩薩戒弟子交名 (A List of People Who Received the Bodhisattva Precepts) interred by Kyōe; a gilt bronze octagonal reliquary; the sixth and seventh fascicles of the *Beihua jing* 悲華經 (Skt. *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka sūtra*); an account of Eizon's self-ordination entitled *Jisei jukaiki* 自誓受戒記; and even bones thought to be those of Eizon's parents.¹⁰ Through these offerings, an attempt was made to transmit Eizon's achievements to posterity. Moreover, his disciples expressed their desire to continue their practice eternally by his side. We may appreciate this as the product of their strong devotion to the founder of their order, Eizon.

It is worth noting that, in addition to relics that were considered to be Śākyamuni's bones, the statue contained the sixth and seventh fascicles of the *Beihua jing*, which recounts how Śākyamuni in one of his past existences made five hundred great vows in front of Ratnagarbha Buddha, practiced the bodhisattva path, and finally attained buddhahood in this defiled world. Since, according to this sutra, Śākyamuni had attained buddhahood in this defiled world, Eizon and his order, who also sought to undertake practice and attain buddhahood in the present defiled world, believed that this Buddha provided them with the most appropriate model for conducting their practice. The fact that this sutra was interred in Eizon's statue is another expression of the Śākyamuni cult within Eizon's order.

For seven days and nights from the first to the seventh of the seventh month of 1281 (Kōan 4, this seventh month was an intercalary month), Eizon performed a ritual at the Iwashimizu Hachimangū praying for the defeat of the Mongol invasion. Eizon had already conducted similar prayers at shrines and temples in various places, starting at Shitennōji 四天王寺 in 1268 (Bun'ei 5). However, his prayers in 1281 were particularly significant. In the sixth month of that year, the Mongol army invaded Japan for the second time. Eizon went to the Iwashimizu Hachimangū and, together with more than 560 Ritsu monks from Nara and Kyoto, performed his prayers for seven nights. After completing this ritual, Eizon returned to Jōjūji on the eighth and learned that the Mongolian army had been destroyed by violent winds on the day he had begun the esoteric ritual. Of special interest here is the fact that the legend recounting how the arrow in the hands of the statue of Aizen Myōō at Saidaiji flew west and destroyed the Mongolian army also began to circulate around this time.

¹⁰ The texts placed inside the statue are reprinted in SEDS, pp. 337–402.

However, according to the *Gakushōki*, Eizon's prayers contained the invocation that "may the eastern winds blow the warships back to their own country, and, without causing harm to those on board, burn up the ships on which they have boarded."¹¹ The fact that he prayed for the safety of the enemy soldiers reveals how Eizon sought to pray for the protection of the country even while upholding the precept against killing living beings. The perceived success of his prayers in defeating the Mongol invasion definitively established Eizon's reputation. Devotion by prominent figures such as the retired emperor, the emperor, and powerful figures in the *bakufu*, increased, and Eizon came to be seen as a living buddha.

Appointment as Administrator of Tennōji and Fund-raising Activities

In 9/1284 (Kōan 7), Eizon was appointed administrator of Tennōji by decree of the retired emperor. At that time, however, it was customary for monks from Enryakuji 延暦寺 or Onjōji 園城寺 to be appointed to the office of Tennōji administrator, but Eizon was selected because the two temples were engaged in an intense dispute over who would be appointed to that position. At first Eizon firmly refused. However, because of his strong devotion to Prince Shōtoku 聖徳, Eizon eventually relented. He accepted the post in order to work for the revitalization of Tennōji, one of the temples and shrines this prince is said to have built. Despite his being a reclusive monk, Eizon was appointed as administrator, not only because he was well accepted by both the court and the *bakufu*, but also because he was thought to be appropriate for the position since the administrator's primary responsibility was to oversee the construction of and repairs to temple buildings. That is to say, Eizon's order is thought to have included groups of people specializing in public works projects and the collection of money. To give one example, his disciple Ninshō undertook projects to repair temples, bridges and roads. From late antiquity to the middle ages, money for such repairs was acquired through fund-raising (*kanjin* 勧進) campaigns. Originally, *kanjin* was a Buddhist term meaning to encourage people to enter the Buddhist path, perform good deeds and accumulate merit. However, by the end of the Heian period, this term had come to indicate the act of encouraging people to contribute rice and money for the construction and repair of halls, pagodas and Buddhist statues in temples and shrines. Those who practiced these fund-raising activities were called *kanjin hijiri* 勧進聖. Eizon, Ninshō and their group systematically organized *kanjin hijiri*

¹¹ SEDS, p. 50.

and placed them under their supervision. It was for this reason that Eizon was believed capable of reviving Tennōji.

However, the only project that Eizon is documented to have personally directed in the available sources was the repair of the Uji 宇治 bridge in the eleventh month of 1286 (Kōan 9). On that occasion, in addition to managing the repair of the bridge, Eizon ordered the removal of wickerwork fishing traps in the Uji river and demanded that all fishing tackle be buried at the bottom of the river in order to force the fishermen there to uphold the precept against killing. He also encouraged those fishermen who had lost their jobs due to the prohibition against killing to cultivate tea, which is said to be the origin of tea cultivation in Uji.

Eizon's Death

On 8/4/1290 (Shōō 正応 3) Eizon fell ill, and on the twenty-fifth he died. A manuscript entitled *Saidaiji Kōshō bosatsu nyūmetsuki* 西大寺興正菩薩入滅記 (hereafter *Nyūmetsuki*),¹² which records this event in detail, is found in Gokurakuji 極楽寺 in Kamakura. This is an interesting document, not only because it provides a detailed description of Eizon's last days, but also because it reveals the way in which people confronted death in that age. Therefore, let us consider it in some detail. On the fourth of the eighth month, Eizon suddenly became ill with dysentery and "his excretions would not stop." Medicines were also ineffective, and there was much concern about his life. His disciples worked frantically to nurse him. Meanwhile, from the twenty-third to the twenty-fifth, on Eizon's behalf, the Lifespan Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* was read and lectured on at Gokokuin 護国院. Similarly, the *Jinguangming zuisheng wang jing* was read and lectured on at Shitennōji.

On the twenty-fourth, Eizon shaved his head and asked to be bathed. However, he only washed the lower half of his body, and made himself presentable by wearing a clean garment. On the morning of the twenty-fifth, he got up, prepared his mind and body, ate a little gruel and twice drank water flavored with miso. He formed his hands into a mudra and meditated for a while. At noon, he ate only three bites of food.

The weather was fine that day, without a single cloud in the sky, and the wind was mild as in spring. However a purple cloud floated above Saidaiji. For this reason, many people in Nara, fearing that Eizon had died, came to Saidaiji. Since this was not the case, they returned home. As can be inferred

¹² SEDS, pp. 289–98.

from this description, in the middle ages a purple cloud was considered an auspicious sign of the attainment of buddhahood (or birth in the Pure Land). Since it was believed that Eizon would achieve buddhahood, the purple cloud over Saidaiji was assumed to indicate his death.

At about two in the afternoon, Shōgen 証玄 (1220–1292), the elder of Tōshōdaiji, arrived at Saidaiji and spoke with Eizon. On that occasion, Eizon said:

Even in this evil world of the Latter Age, I was born as a human being, and have encountered the Buddhist teachings. I renounced my life and entered the Buddhist path, shunning reputation and profit, and practiced to attain awakening. I revived the Right Dharma which had ceased to exist, and I spread the precepts which had died out. As a result, at first I was alone, but the five types of monastics (*bhikṣu*, *bhikṣuṇī*, *śikṣamāṇā*, *śrāmaṇera*, *śrāmaṇerī*) increased in number in various provinces, and the teaching of both the Diamond and Womb Mandalas came to be transmitted at various temples. Unexpectedly, I have succeeded in bringing the Buddhist Dharma to prosperity. I am now ninety years old and severely ill. This is the end of my life, but I pray that the Buddhist tradition may continue, that it may not disappear.¹³

These last words convey to us the goal aspired to by Eizon, who devoted his life to spreading the Dharma and benefitting sentient beings.

Aware that his death was approaching, Eizon washed his hands, rinsed his mouth, took off his *gojō gesa* 五条袈裟 (robe made from sewing together five strips of cloth), and changed into *nijūgojō gesa* 二十五条袈裟 (a more elaborate robe made from sewing together twenty-five strips of cloth). Then he performed mudras facing west, sat in the lotus position, closed his eyes and regulated his breath. At sunset, he finally passed away, just as if he had entered a state of meditation. His disciples gathered from nearby areas. Among them, one called Sadatsugu 定継 (n.d.) wished to make Eizon's portrait, and as a result the monks and lay people together drew a picture of their master passing into nirvana. From about six in the evening to twilight, purple clouds were seen floating in the sky to the west of the temple. On the twenty-seventh, a grove to the northwest of the

¹³ SEDS, p. 290.

temple (present-day Oku-no-in 奥の院, where Eizon's grave now exists) was chosen as the site for cremation, which was then performed there. On the twenty-eighth, Eizon's bones were collected. Upon deliberation, it was decided that a five-ringed stupa (*gorintō* 五輪塔) measuring one *jō* 丈 one *shaku* 尺 (approximately 3.3 meters) would be built on the cremation grounds after fifty days.

Eizon's Abode After Death

Also noteworthy is the issue of where Eizon was reborn after he died, especially in light of the fact that he had made a vow to remain in this world as an *icchantika* of great compassion, that is, a bodhisattva who vows to stay in the world to continue his or her practice to alleviate the suffering of others until all living beings have attained buddhahood. However, many people reported dreams of Eizon's rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven, and there were still other signs of him being welcomed into the Pure Land, such as purple clouds, music, unusual fragrances, and flower petals falling from the sky. Finally, it was agreed that Eizon had been reborn in Tuṣita Heaven, since he had performed all the necessary practices to attain rebirth there. From the fact that this was taken up for discussion, we can see that the question of where a person (particularly an eminent monk) was reborn after death was considered a matter of utmost importance. Also notable is the fact that Eizon was believed to have been reborn, not in Amida Buddha's Pure Land, but in Tuṣita Heaven, since it indicates that Eizon's order did not greatly emphasize devotion toward Amida, but rather, its focus was on Śākyamuni as I will discuss later.

Up to now, I have briefly presented the events related to Eizon's life. Let us now look at the main points of his thought.

EIZON'S THOUGHT AND UNDERTAKINGS

The Multifaceted Character of Eizon's Thought

Fundamental issues concerning Eizon's approach to religious salvation are still being debated and are difficult to resolve. For example, on the basis of his prayers for the defeat of the Mongols, some scholars have described Eizon as an official monk with a strong interest in conducting rituals for the protection of the state. On the other hand, those who focus on his work for the relief of the *hinin* 非人 (typically those affected by leprosy or perceived to be suffering from leprosy often had to make their living as beggars or

grave diggers) see him as a champion of individual liberation. Finally, still others have observed that Eizon, while positively affirming this world, directed his devotion to various objects of adoration such as the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, Prince Shōtoku, and the Buddha's relics, and put much effort into the "revival" of the precepts. Although the arguments presented by these scholars are occasionally mistaken, it must be recognized that they all highlight important aspects of Eizon's thought and practice.

However, if these different elements are treated separately, his thought cannot be understood holistically. This is because, at first glance, Eizon and his order did indeed hold a pluralistic attitude toward practice. However, still more important is the fact that earlier scholars made no attempt to see the thought and activities of his group in a systematic way. What I suggest is that beyond this apparent plurality, there is a consistent framework to Eizon's thought. Starting from such an assumption, I will attempt to clarify his thought below in a systematic way.

The Doctrine that All Beings Have Buddha Nature

In contrast to people like Shinran, who held an equalitarian approach to the salvation of all beings, it is often thought that Eizon accepted the traditional doctrine of *goshō kakubetsu* 五性各別 (the theory that all beings are innately divided into five groups) found in the Hossō 法相 school, which is a tradition founded during the Tang Dynasty by Kuiji 窺基 (632–682), also known as Cien 慈恩. Its *goshō kakubetsu* theory holds that, as far as their capacity to attain enlightenment is concerned, all beings can be distinguished into the following five groups: (1) *shōmon jōshō* 聲聞定性, the fixed nature of *śrāvakas* (literally "hearers," meaning those who attain awakening by listening to the Dharma); (2) *engaku jōshō* 緣覺定性, the fixed nature of *pratyekabuddhas* (those who attain awakening on their own without availing themselves to the teachings of the Buddha); (3) *bosatsu jōshō* 菩薩定性, the fixed nature of bodhisattvas (those who attain awakening by undertaking practices, not only for their own enlightenment but for the salvation of all beings); (4) *fujōshō* 不定性, the indeterminate nature (those whose nature has not been determined, thus having the potential to practice more than one of the three spiritual paths above); and (5) *mushushō* 無種性, those lacking the seeds for buddhahood (those who by nature cannot attain awakening at all). According to this theory, only the third type of people and those of the fourth type who, while having the potential to practice more than one of the three paths of *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*

and bodhisattvas, eventually commit themselves to the bodhisattva path, can attain buddhahood. The other types of people are innately incapable of attaining buddhahood.

In actuality, however, Eizon did not hold to the doctrine of *goshō kakubetsu*, but instead took the position that since all beings possess Buddha nature, everyone has the capacity to achieve buddhahood. For example, in a section entitled “Hito o uyamaubeki koto” 可恭敬人事 in Eizon’s *Chōmonshū* 聴聞集, we find, “all living beings possess identical Buddha nature. What distinctions are there between them?”¹⁴ In other words, this means that Eizon took the position that all beings possess Buddha nature, and, moreover, that he maintained the even more advanced theory that all beings possess exactly the same Buddha nature. Eizon thought that the same Buddha nature was also possessed by those affected by leprosy, and encouraged them to take the precepts in the hope that they might eradicate their “transgressions” and attain buddhahood. As this shows, when it comes to the theory of Buddha nature, Eizon took a position that differed from the traditional attitude maintained by the Hossō temple of Kōfukuji.

It has long been argued that Eizon held a discriminatory view concerning liberation. For example, we know that he believed that the blind, the deaf, and leprosy sufferers had fallen into their lot—being forced to suffer in solitude and make their livelihood by begging for food and clothing—because they had slandered the Mahayana teachings in their previous lives. In this view, their present conditions were punishments for their actions in the past meted out by Buddhas (*butsu-batsu* 仏罰). In other words, Eizon held that their afflictions arose from karma (or as punishments by Buddhas). Such a view is found in texts like the *Lotus Sutra*. Although this goes against common sense of present-day people and is considered erroneous, it was a common assumption shared by Buddhist practitioners of the Kamakura period. However, it can be emphasized that, in spite of the fact that he shared such ideas, Eizon maintained that, as far as Buddha nature was concerned, all beings not only have Buddha nature, but that they all possess the identical Buddha nature.

The Relationship between Esoteric Buddhism and the Precepts

Recent scholarship has contributed greatly to clarifying the profound influence of esoteric Buddhism on Eizon and his disciples.¹⁵ There is no

¹⁴ See Tanaka 1971, p. 212.

¹⁵ See Oishio 1995, pp. 180–203.

doubt that they were not only followers of the precepts but were specialists in esoteric Buddhism as well. Therefore, I would like to discuss here how Eizon interpreted the relationship between esoteric Buddhism and the precepts.

The *Fushokuki* 附属記, which Eizon granted to Shinkū 信空 (1231–1316) in 1269 (Bun'ei 6), is important in understanding Eizon's ideas in this regard. From this text, it is apparent that Eizon considered the precepts and esoteric Buddhism as being "like the sun and the moon."¹⁶ That is, for him, the precepts and esoteric Buddhism form a unity, and their relationship is like that of yin and yang. This expression was perhaps used widely as a rhetorical device, but it should be noted that the sun and the moon do not stand respectively for esoteric Buddhism and the precepts, but exactly the opposite: Eizon likened the sun to the precepts and esoteric Buddhism to the moon. In other words, we may assume that for him the precepts came first and esoteric Buddhism was subordinate. This prioritization can also be clearly seen from the fact that they were referred to as Ritsu monks.

The Foundations of the "Revival" of the Precepts

Earlier scholars have maintained that Eizon's order was pluralistic in its attitude toward worship. Of course, if one compares its devotional approach with that, for example, of Shinran and other Kamakura figures, it cannot but be defined as pluralistic. (However, it should also be remembered that Shinran was deeply devoted to Prince Shōtoku as well as to Amida Buddha.) It is also evident that Eizon and his followers were esoteric Buddhist monks, that they stressed the importance of the precepts, and that they directed their devotion to Mañjuśrī, Prince Shōtoku, the Buddha's relics, and Gyōki, among others. Therefore, it cannot be denied that, from one perspective, they were indeed pluralistic in their worship and that each of these factors is important in understanding the activities of Eizon and his community.

However, these activities were formerly treated separately and have not been approached in a systematic way. But there must be some underlying unity between them. On my part, I think that the worship of Śākyamuni lies at the core of Eizon's faith, and that we can understand his various devotional activities holistically if we look at them in relationship to his Śākyamuni worship.

As I mentioned above, even though Eizon began his career as an esoteric monk, he was appalled to find that esoteric monks were falling into the path of demons. He perceived that this was because they were breaking

¹⁶ SEDS, p. 125.

the precepts (i.e., not behaving as disciples of the Buddha). Then, from his desire to become a proper disciple of the Buddha, he realized the need to “revive” the precepts, and became a reclusive monk. As this reveals, Eizon’s “revival” movement was based from the beginning on his devotion to Śākyamuni.

Moreover, through the analysis of texts such as Eizon’s vows, it becomes even more apparent that the worship of Śākyamuni represents the devotional core of Eizon’s order. Unfortunately, these vows were not fully utilized by earlier scholars. In these vows, Eizon often speaks of himself as “Śākyamuni’s remaining disciple,”¹⁷ “Eizon, the monk who follows the teaching left behind by Śākyamuni,”¹⁸ and “Eizon, the *bhikṣu* who follows the teaching left behind by Śākyamuni.”¹⁹ From these expressions, it is clear that Eizon had a strong awareness of being Śākyamuni’s latter-day disciple.

Furthermore, in these vow texts, Eizon proclaims his desire to emulate the five hundred great vows of Śākyamuni described in the *Beihua jing* (which was placed inside Eizon’s sculpture). For example, Eizon proclaimed a set of vows at the Monjudō 文殊堂 in Ebaraji during the particular ordination performed there on 9/13/1245 (Kangen 3). In these vows, he pledged to practice the bodhisattva path in order to benefit those living beings after Śākyamuni’s death who had not heard the Dharma, and also to attain supreme enlightenment in this life.²⁰ This proclamation is modeled on Śākyamuni’s five hundred great vows and also expresses Eizon’s awareness that he was a disciple of Śākyamuni.

The Present Defiled World

The first point to consider regarding Eizon’s devotion to Śākyamuni which was largely based on the *Beihua jing* is that, in contrast to the Pure Land teachings which held that one attains buddhahood after birth in Amida’s Pure Land, this sutra places emphasis on the significance of Śākyamuni’s attainment of buddhahood in this defiled world. In their devotional attitudes, Eizon and his companions took Śākyamuni as their model and aspired to buddhahood in this defiled and evil world, which necessarily implies that Eizon’s order understood this world to be as such.

Earlier scholarship has argued that, since Eizon and his followers prac-

¹⁷ SEDS, p. 128.

¹⁸ SEDS, p. 147.

¹⁹ SEDS, pp. 153–54.

²⁰ SEDS, p. 128.

ticed esoteric Buddhism in addition to keeping the precepts, they had a positive view of this world.²¹ The main source for such an assumption lies in an entry of the *Gakushōki* dated 1239 (En'ō 延応 1), where it is written that “without disliking this defiled world, and without aspiring to (birth in) the Pure Land, I just feel sorry for Ninshō's future suffering.”²² However, when read in context, these words are clearly a description of the state of mind of Ninshō's mother as she was passing away, deeply concerned for her son's future. That is to say, these words were spoken by Ninshō in the context of asserting the need to perform a memorial service for his mother to pacify her spirit, in view of the fact that the spirit was still strongly attached to this world. Therefore, this passage cannot be interpreted as an expression of how Eizon and his community understood the world.

However, in a vow dated 4/25/1247 (Hōji 宝治 1), nine people, including Eizon and Ninshō, declared this world to be a “defiled and evil place,”²³ and a “land filled with pollution and evil.”²⁴ Also, in a vow composed by Eizon's comrade Kakujō dated 7/1/1247, one can find the expression “the body belongs to this defiled world.”²⁵ Therefore, it is clear that Eizon and his group considered this present world to be a defiled realm and sought to emulate Śākyamuni, who proclaimed his five hundred great vows to attain buddhahood in this defiled world. Various items preserved at Saidaiji, such as the *Shiza kōshiki* 四座講式,²⁶ are likewise products of his devotion to Śākyamuni. The Seiryōji statue was believed to be an accurate portrayal of Śākyamuni made during his lifetime, and the fact that Eizon specifically chose to make a copy of this image to be installed at Saidaiji reveals the depth of his devotion to Śākyamuni. Similarly, the fact that Eizon performed several ceremonies for the veneration of *arhats* during his journey to Kamakura, also shows the importance attached to the worship of Śākyamuni. If we assume that this was the core element of his devotional activities, then it is also possible to understand other forms of devotion, such as those directed toward Prince Shōtoku, the Buddha's relics, and Mañjuśrī.

²¹ See Hosokawa 1994, p. 143.

²² SEDS, p. 14.

²³ SEDS, p. 130.

²⁴ SEDS, p. 132.

²⁵ SEDS, p. 342.

²⁶ These are liturgical manuals for four ceremonies associated with Śākyamuni, venerating (1) Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa*, (2) the sixteen *arhats*, (3) the sites associated with Śākyamuni, and (4) Śākyamuni's relics and his statue.

Other Expressions of Devotion to Śākyamuni in Eizon's Order

It is well known that devotion to Prince Shōtoku was one of the notable features of Eizon's order. For example, on the twenty-second, the day of the prince's death, they held a ceremonial assembly in his memory (*Taishikō* 太子講). Moreover, various temples associated with Prince Shōtoku, such as Eifukuji 叡福寺 (which administered his mausoleum) and Tachibanadera 橘寺 (the prince's birthplace), were made branch temples of the Ritsu school. Efforts were made to revive Tennōji and Hōryūji 法隆寺, both of which were related to the prince, and Ritsu sub-temples were constructed at these branch temples, including Tennōji's Yakushiin 薬師院, and Hōryūji's Kitamuro 北室. Eizon's devotion to Prince Shōtoku also included an element of reverence for the prince's role as the first Japanese secular protector of Buddhism.

Eizon's group was also characterized by its devotion to the Buddha's relics. Eizon's base of operation was the Hōtōin with its five-storied pagoda at Saidaiji. A pagoda, of course, enshrines the Buddha's relics, and can thus be considered a center for relic worship. The *Gakushōki* contains many passages praising the relics and describing the miraculous events associated with them. In the *Saidaiji den'en mokuroku* 西大寺田園目録, a registry of the land held by Saidaiji, there are altogether nine instances of donations given as "offerings for relic memorials,"²⁷ and "contributions for lamp oil to be used as offerings to the relics of the Nishimuro iron pagoda."²⁸ Such relic worship, inasmuch as it is a form of devotion toward Śākyamuni's bones, can be considered an example of Śākyamuni worship.

Formerly, scholars have emphasized the relationship between Eizon's devotion to Mañjuśrī and his activities for the salvation of the *hinin*.²⁹ However, from a vow dated 5/25/1247 and signed by a group of eleven people including Eizon and Ninshō, it can be inferred that Mañjuśrī was worshiped because he was considered to be the model of a practitioner in the Buddha-less world after the death of Śākyamuni.³⁰

Thus, what can be superficially perceived as the pluralistic thought and practice of Eizon's order can be understood holistically by seeing them as aspects of their devotion to Śākyamuni. In contrast to Amida Buddha, who

²⁷ Found, for example, in SEDS, pp. 418, 426, 431 and 438.

²⁸ SEDS, p. 425.

²⁹ Translator's note: It is well known that Eizon and his order believed Mañjuśrī manifested himself as *hinin*. See Quinter 2007.

³⁰ SEDS, pp. 133–34.

promises birth for all people in his Pure Land, Śākyamuni proclaimed his five hundred great vows, undertook practices to liberate all beings from suffering in this defiled world, and attained buddhahood. This, needless to say, was for Eizon and his order the model to be emulated in their own quest for liberation.

Eizon was a leading figure of the movement for the “revival” of the precepts. As I have briefly mentioned above, his resolve to uphold the precepts, arising from his sense of being a disciple of the Buddha, was also modeled on Śākyamuni’s great vows described in the *Beihua jing*. This can be understood, for example, from the fact that in the 487th vow found in the *Shijia rulai wubai dayuan jing* 釈迦如来五百大願經 (a text enumerating the 500 vows of the *Beihua jing*), Śākyamuni pledged that he would keep the precepts without violating them in the slightest for “countless, limitless hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of *asaṃkhyā kalpas*”³¹ wherever he may be.

One could object that for Buddhist practitioners, devotion to Śākyamuni was quite normal, and thus not particularly distinctive of Eizon’s order. However, this devotion based on the *Beihua jing* and directed toward Śākyamuni, who had proclaimed the five hundred great vows and attained buddhahood in this defiled world, was antithetical to Amida worship, as exemplified by Hōnen’s movement, with its stress on birth in the Pure Land and the forty-eight vows. Hence, it was especially emphasized by the religious communities led by Myōe 明恵 (1173–1232)—who was extremely critical of Hōnen’s Pure Land movement—and Eizon.

ON THE RELATIONSHIP WITH KŌFUKUJI

The Activities of Eizon’s Order

The base for Eizon’s activities, Saidaiji, was a branch temple of Kōfukuji. Similarly, Koshinji 己心寺, which was a sub-temple of Daianji 大安寺, and where the Ritsu monks of Eizon’s order resided, was also a prayer temple (*kitōji* 祈祷寺) of Kōfukuji’s Daijōin 大乘院. As these examples show, there was an extremely close relationship between the branch temples of Eizon’s order and Kōfukuji. For this reason, it has been argued that the activities of Eizon’s community should be regarded as part of those of Kōfukuji.³² In this last section, I will discuss this relationship.

³¹ Narita 1979, pp. 68–69.

³² See Ōishi 2004, pp. 88–126.

It is true that Kōfukuji, which essentially governed medieval Yamato province, exerted great influence on temples throughout the province, even those located outside the city of Nara. The Ritsu monks of Eizon's order engaged in fund-raising and conducted funerals held at official temples like Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji, but they also engaged in activities for "individual" salvation, including activities to aid leprosy sufferers. (It should be added that the word "individual" is placed in quotation marks because I want to distinguish it from the modern meaning of this term.)

To begin with, it may be argued that when a monk is venerated by another monk, or when one monk asks another monk to perform a prayer privately for him—as in the case of Kōgaku 孝覚 (1319–1368) of Daijōin and Koshinji's founder Kōenbō 光円房 (n.d.)—this bespeaks the difference in the roles played by official and reclusive monks. The primary duty of the official monks was to pray for the protection and prosperity of the state and people. Prayers for individual needs were left to those faithful reclusive monks. This was because their primary duty was to pray for "individual" salvation.

Thus, there was cooperation (but also, in some respects, antagonism) between Kōfukuji and Eizon's order, based on a division of religious labor. It is worth noting, however, that Eizon's order was active not only in Yamato province, which was under the powerful influence of Kōfukuji, but throughout Japan, including such places as the Kantō area, which did not have even the slightest connection with Kōfukuji. In other words, if we focus solely on the activities of Eizon's order in the Yamato area, it may be somewhat difficult to discern their independence from the Kōfukuji, but when seen from a broader perspective, it can be affirmed that they were by no means part of the latter temple.

In the six sections above, I have illustrated Eizon's achievements. As we have seen from these, Eizon, as a reclusive monk who "dropped out" from official monkhood, cannot be categorized simply as a reformer of established Buddhism. Rather, he should be acknowledged as one representative monk of the New Kamakura Buddhism.

(Translated by Ugo Dessi)

ABBREVIATION

SEDS *Saidaiji Eizon denki shūsei* 西大寺叡尊伝記集成, ed. Nara Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kenkyūjo 奈良国立文化財研究所. Kyoto: Hōzōkan. 1977.

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