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# Buddhism and Fine Arts in Kyoto

## Part II

### TSUKAMOTO ZENRYŪ

#### *5. Kyoto and the Tendai Sect on Mount Hiei*

Saichō, also known by his posthumous title, Dengyō Daishi, founded the Tendai sect and established its first training hall on Mount Hiei. He was born in 767, toward the end of the Nara period, at Shiga in Ōmi (present Shiga prefecture), where the hills on the east side of Mount Hiei slope down to the shores of Lake Biwa, Japan's largest lake. There, in a setting of great natural beauty, he spent his boyhood. The year before his birth, the Dōkyō Incident (an attempt to invest the Nara priest Dōkyō with supreme political power) came to a head, pointing up the decadence that pervaded Nara Buddhism.

Such was the deterioration of monastic Buddhism when Saichō, aged twelve, left home to enter the priesthood at Nara. After studying the Buddhist scriptures, he took his vows at the age of nineteen on the ordination platform at the Tōdai-ji. But Saichō was unsatisfied with the scholastic Buddhism he found in Nara and, seven months later, he returned to Ōmi and climbed Mount Hiei, where he built a hut and began a solitary life of austere religious discipline. The young priest must have been motivated by a truly strong religious need to have chosen such an isolated religious life in the mountains.

When he was twenty-two, Saichō built the first Buddhist structure on

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\* The first half of this translation appeared in the *Eastern Buddhist* XIX, 1 (Spring 1986).

Mount Hiei, the Ichijōshikan-in (which later became the Komponchūdō of the Enryaku-ji). In it he enshrined a wooden image of Yakushi, the Healing Buddha, before which he made a five-article vow and declared his firm resolve to realize it.

“No matter what I see or hear in my external surroundings, I shall not lose my purity,” he declared. “Until I become a real Buddhist who does not go astray, I shall not concern myself with worldly affairs. I shall take no part in Buddhist ceremonies sponsored by lay donors. Moreover, any virtues that accrue to me shall not be for myself; I shall distribute them to all living creatures, in the hope that we may proceed together to enlightenment. I will not partake of the excellent flavor of enlightenment nor receive the excellent fruit of peace and comfort found in enlightenment, until I receive them together with all others. May the forest in which I now stand receive divine protection.” After making this vow, he devoted himself even more earnestly to his religious practices.

Although the Emperor Kammu was involved with the difficult conquest of the distant Tōhoku region, he was also pushing forward the construction of the new capital. In the eleventh month of 795 celebrations were held to commemorate the official transfer of the capital from Nagaoka to Kyoto. About this time Saichō concluded that the Tendai teaching of the One Vehicle as expounded in the Lotus Sutra, which he regarded as transmitting the final and ultimate preaching of Shakamuni Buddha, could be the means of protecting the new capital at Kyoto.<sup>1</sup>

In November 798, Saichō held a religious service to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Chigi (Chih-i, 538-597), the founder of Chinese T'ien-t'ai. At this meeting lectures were given on each of the ten chapters of the Threefold Lotus Sutra. (This was the beginning of the annual *Shimotsuki* [Eleventh Month] Meeting which is still held.) On this occasion Saichō is said to have made up his mind to make Mount Hiei the center for Tendai training, because there was still no place in Nara where monks could devote themselves to the study and practice of Tendai teachings.

In 804 Emperor Kammu gave Saichō permission to travel to China in

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<sup>1</sup> After only ten years at Nagaoka, the capital had again been moved, this time to Kyoto, where it remained until 1868.

order to study T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and introduce its teachings to Japan. Upon his arrival in China, Saichō went directly to Mount T'ien-t'ai, the headquarters of the sect, and during his stay of about a year he studied not only T'ien-t'ai teachings but esoteric Buddhism, Zen, and the Mahayana precepts. The warm support that Emperor Kammu gave both to Saichō and Kūkai (founder of the Shingon sect) in their pursuit of the Dharma is eloquent testimony of his confidence in them as the men most suitable to help him with the political and religious reforms he had set in motion.

In 806, when Saichō was forty years old, Kammu issued an imperial edict licensing the yearly ordination of two Tendai priests, the same number allotted each of the Nara sects. From this time until his death in 822, Saichō, as the head of the Tendai sect, was the dominant figure in the Buddhist world of Kyoto.

Emperor Kammu died in March of 806 at the age of seventy. He had spent his life in a determined effort to bring about political and Buddhist reforms through the implementation of bold and courageous policies. The uncompromising stance he took with regard to religious reform can be seen from his own statements: "There are altogether too many temples in the old capital and far too many priests and nuns. We often hear reports of their misconduct. They should be investigated and, if necessary, prosecuted." "The duty of a priest is to uphold the precepts. Those who fail to do so are no different from laymen. They are neither entitled to live in temples nor to hold religious services."

Kammu's ideas for a Buddhist reformation were first translated into action by the "mountain-based" sects established by Saichō and Kūkai, in which discipline and practice were made the primary concerns. In time both Saichō and Kūkai earned reputations as the leaders of Heian Buddhism.

The first two Tendai monks officially ordained in 806 were assigned specific tasks: one was to read the *Dainichi Sutra*, the basic scripture of esoteric Tendai, and the other to study Chigi's *Maka-shikan* (Chinese, *Mo-ho chih-kuan*; "Treatise on Samatha and Vipasyana"), a meditation manual considered one of the three principal texts of Tendai Buddhism. The nature of these assignments is revealing. Japanese Tendai, having obtained official sanction to open a monastery on Mount Hiei and to operate as an independent sect was, on one hand, incorporating esoteric teachings, and on the other, focussing on a fundamental Ten-

dai manual of religious discipline. These two facets of practice-oriented Tendai were to greatly influence the development of a powerful Tendai art.

Official recognition as a sect, and the appearance after Saichō of a succession of remarkable priests such as Ennin (792-862) and Enchin (814-889), both of whom studied in China and were very active after returning to Japan,<sup>2</sup> combined to guarantee the prosperity and rapid growth of Tendai throughout the country.

Mount Hiei, where Tendai was first established, had been a center of native Japanese worship from ancient times. Topographically, it was extremely advantageous. Located at the northeast end of the low range of hills (Higashiyama) that border Kyoto on the east, Mount Hiei looked down upon the new capital. The northeast was called the Kimon or Demon Entrance, that is to say the quarter from which, according to Chinese geomancy, malign influences might enter the city. So Mount Hiei, like Mount Kurama due north of the city, was essential for the continued peace of Kyoto. Those who took up residence in the new capital must have been reassured by the Tendai presence on this prominent peak, where they knew monks were engaged in rigorous religious discipline, and undoubtedly they prayed that Tendai would protect them and their city. The faith and prayers of Kyoto residents thus also supported the Tendai monastery from its earliest stages. As the sect grew and prospered, its comprehensive Buddhist teachings spread among the populace.

Owing to the natural features of the Kyoto basin, the humid Ukyō ward in the west of the city declined in importance, whereas the Sakyō ward bordering the beautiful eastern hills flourished. By the tenth century, when the Fujiwara clan was at the height of its ascendancy, this difference had become markedly apparent. The situation is described in the *Nihon Ōjō-gokuraku ki* ("Accounts of Birth in the Pure Land among the Japanese"), written by Yoshishige Yasutane (a friend of Genshin Sōzu, 942-1017, the Tendai monk celebrated as the author of the *Ōjō Yōshū*, "Essentials of Birth in the Pure Land").

"I have watched the eastern and western sections of Kyoto for the last twenty years. In the west, houses are now rare and nearly all of

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<sup>2</sup> Both became heads (*zasu*) of the Tendai sect.

them are empty. People move away but no one new moves in; houses fall to ruin and are never rebuilt.”

A similar account is given by Keiji Hōen, writing in 982 in his *Chiteiki*:

“North of Shijō street the eastern section throngs with people from all levels of the social scale. The gates of great houses and temple halls line the roads. Small dwellings stand side by side, their eaves almost touching. If a neighbor's house catches fire, you have no hope of escaping the blaze.”

The area in and around the foothills of Mount Hiei prospered together with the Buddhist establishments on the mountain and soon became thickly populated. Many nobles built residences, temples, and villas in the Sakyō ward, and the Tendai sect established numerous temples on the Kyoto side of the mountain. In this way mountain-based Tendai came into close contact with the upper classes, a situation which laid the groundwork for the Buddhism on Mount Hiei to enter the city itself. Members of the dominant Fujiwara clan ascended the mountain and became Tendai priests, a number of them rising to the position of head abbot, and powerful lay nobles went to Mount Hiei to take part in religious rites. Its intimate association with the Fujiwaras placed the Tendai sect in a position to guide the spiritual life of the capital and to become the dominant Buddhist sect in Kyoto. Secular involvement may have been against Saichō's original intention to reform Buddhism by severing all ties to the political and financial circles at Nara, but by the mid-Heian period the Tendai sect, with its close links to the nobility, had become the center of Kyoto's religious life.

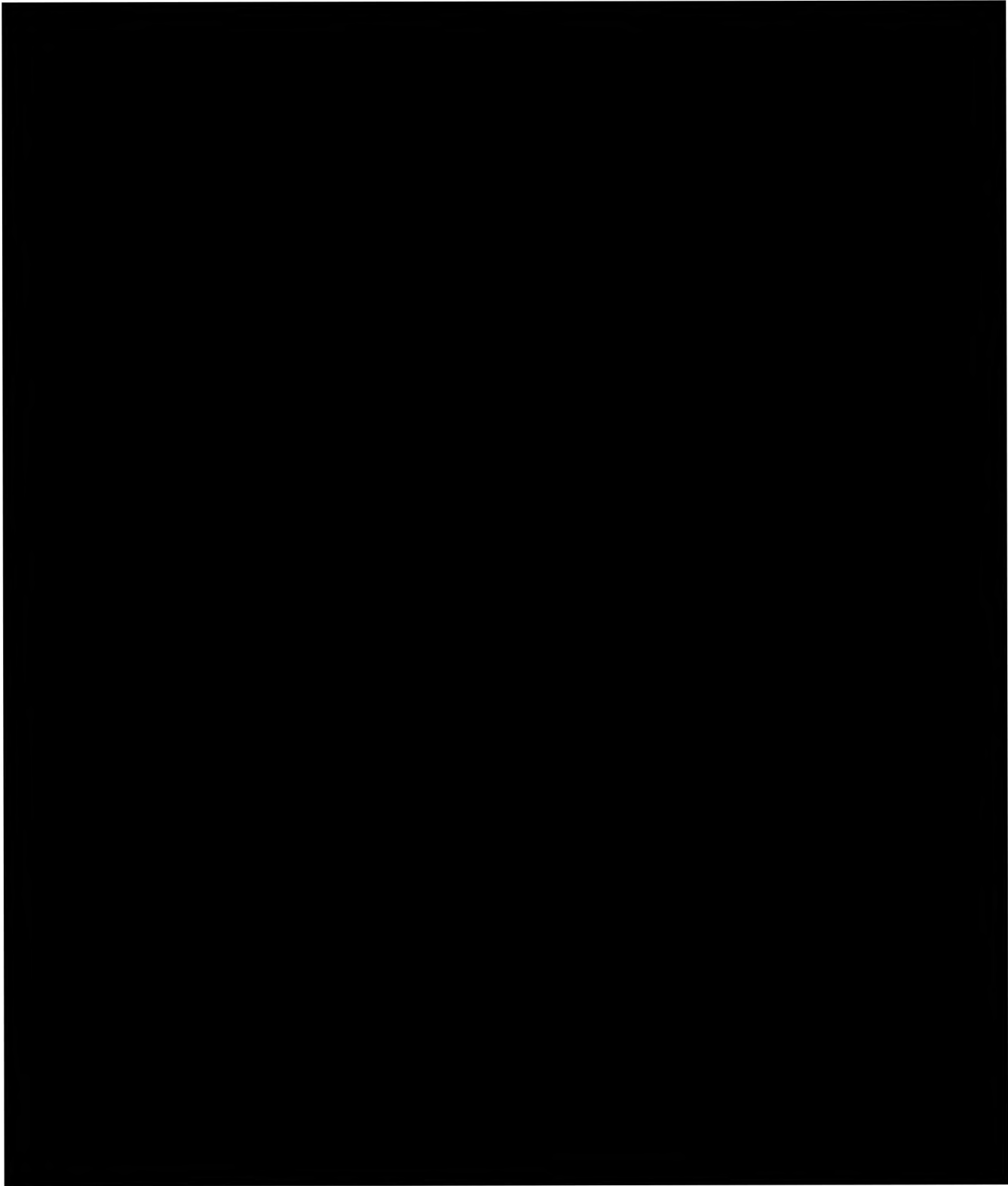
Although Japanese Tendai was built on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra as set forth by Chigi, the founder of Chinese T'ien-t'ai, Saichō introduced elements from the Zen, esoteric, and precepts traditions as well. Later, his successors incorporated additional esoteric practices and placed greater emphasis on Taimitsu, the esoteric branch of Tendai, in order to counter the growing influence of Shingon esoterism. Later Tendai abbots were successful in establishing the authority of the Mahayana precepts, a development which enabled them to remain free of control by Nara Buddhism. Saichō's successors also adopted the Nembutsu practice (repetition of the name of Amida Buddha and belief in rebirth in his Pure Land) and added Zen-type meditation. In

consequence, Mount Hiei flourished as a syncretic, broadly based training center for Japanese Buddhism as a whole.

The most important difference between Tendai and the older schools of Nara lay in its reliance on the Buddhist sutras. Whereas the Nara sects based their doctrines on the shastras, commentaries written long after the death of the Buddha (the Hossō on the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, the Sanron on the Three Shastras, the Jōjitsu on the *Satyasiddhi Shāstra*, and the Kusha on the *Abhidharma-kosha Shāstra*), Tendai went directly to the sutras, scriptures believed to have been preached by the Buddha himself. A position of special importance was accorded the Lotus Sutra, which Tendai believed represented the Buddha's last, and ultimate, teaching.

As a result, the Lotus Sutra with its rich literary content was the scripture most widely revered, recited, and copied by the Kyoto nobility. Without being well versed in this sutra it was next to impossible to participate in the elegant social world of the aristocrats, which revolved around the salons of the Fujiwaras. Some knowledge of the Lotus is required to understand properly much of the secular literature of the time. Major works such as the *Tale of Genji*, and the diaries of the nobility, are filled with references to Lotus-connected Buddhist services such as the popular Hokke-hakkō, which consisted of lectures on the Threefold Lotus Sutra. Even the fans used by the nobility, which had been painted with Yamato-style motifs, were superinscribed with passages from the Lotus Sutra. Elegant copies of the entire sutra were written out in beautiful calligraphy and mounted as gorgeously ornamented horizontal scrolls. Subjected to the refined sensibility of Kyoto's aristocratic society, sutra-copying, which during the Nara period had been patterned on the Chinese model, now took on a definite Japanese cast. I have already described how the esoteric incantations and prayers adopted on Mount Hiei to compete with Shingon ritual practices found their way into the capital and stimulated the development of a diversified art movement.

But this, and the dominant position of the Lotus, were both soon overshadowed by the Amidist belief of Pure Land Buddhism. From practices within the Tendai sect on Mount Hiei, Amida worship spread to Kyoto where from the mid-Heian period it rapidly became the dominant belief. It too generated a large number of sublime religious art



*Amida Triad, Heian period. Sanzen-in, Ōhara*

works, many of which survive and may be seen in the temples of the city. The Nembutsu teaching at the center of the Pure Land faith took strong root in the religious spirit of the upper classes at the height of Fujiwara hegemony and became the basis of a new and elegant Pure Land art that was given expression in temples such as the Hōjō-ji, built by Fujiwara Michinaga and his wife, the Phoenix Hall of the Byōdō-in at Uji, and the Sanzen-in at Ōhara.

The custom of Tendai priests reciting the Lotus Sutra each morning and the Nembutsu each evening became an established part of the Ten-



dai tradition. It was from this that the Pure Land teachings of Genshin and Hōnen emerged.

6. *The Jōgyō Hall (Jōgyō-dō)—The Spread of the “Mountain Nembutsu”*

Of the two new Tendai priests ordained yearly, one was required to devote himself to the study of a manual, the *Maka-shikan*, which sets forth the disciplines necessary to lead a practitioner toward the goal of enlightenment. This practical emphasis remained fundamental to Japanese Tendai, having its precedent in the life of its founder Saichō, who sequestered himself from the world and devoted himself to long, demanding religious practice in strict adherence to the Buddhist precepts.

The *Maka-shikan* outlines a program of practical training for the unification of body and mind through four kinds of samadhi: the *Jōza* or Constant Sitting Samadhi, the *Jōgyō* or Constant Walking Samadhi, the *Hangyō-hanza* or Half-Walking, Half-Sitting Samadhi, and the *Higyō-hiza* or Not-Walking, Not-Sitting Samadhi. The *Jōgyō* or Constant Walking Samadhi, undertaken for a 90-day period and centered on the worship of Amida Buddha, is designed to enable the practitioner to enter into a deep state of samadhi. The practice of the *Jōgyō* Samadhi was taken into the program of training on Mount Hiei upon being introduced from T'ang China by Ennin (Jikaku Daishi, 792-862), and a special hall, the *Jōgyō-dō*, was built for it. The Nembutsu practice performed there attracted aristocratic Buddhists in large numbers to the *Jōgyō* Hall. It spread initially in Kyoto and from there throughout the country, thus laying the groundwork for the enormous success of the *Senju* or Single-practice Nembutsu promulgated by the great Pure Land teachers Hōnen (1133-1212) and Shinran (1173-1262) in the Kamakura period.

The culmination of the *Jōgyō* Samadhi practices on Mount Hiei, which also came to be known as the “Mountain Nembutsu,” coincided with the full moon of the 15th of the 8th lunar month. A passage in the *Eiga Monogatari* (“Tales of Power and Glory”) tells us that no less a figure than Fujiwara Michinaga, chief advisor to the Emperor, cancelled both state and private business in order that he might attend the

*Jōgyō* Samadhi at the *Jōgyō* Hall. The "Mountain Nembutsu" became extremely popular among the Kyoto nobility and led to the development of various forms of Pure Land art consonant with aristocratic tastes. The *Jōgyō* Hall, which at first had enshrined an esoteric grouping of five Bodhisattvas, in time came to be decorated with paintings of the Pure Land Paradise and of the Raigō (a depiction of Amida descending to welcome the spirit of the deceased) and enshrined Amida as its principal image. As the practices performed in the *Jōgyō* Hall increasingly reflected the Pure Land faith of the Heian nobility, its original purpose as a training hall for disciplines leading toward the goal of enlightenment was superseded, and the hall became the center for Nembutsu practices performed to the strains of beautiful religious music for people who yearned for birth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha.

In the *Hanju-sammai Sutra* (Sans. *Pratyutpanna Samadhi Sutra*), the earliest text in which mention of the *Jōgyō* Samadhi appears, it is described as a practice which enables one to see before his eyes all the myriad Buddhas of the ten directions. It is called "Constant Walking" because it consists of continuous circumambulation of a Buddhist image. One must separate oneself from relatives, home, and friends; in short, anything that creates an obstacle to contemplation. Alone one enters the hall, which has been furnished with offerings, and for a period of 90 days strives to constantly keep Amida in one's thoughts, to constantly invoke his name with one's mouth, and to constantly circumambulate his image with one's body. The purification of mind that results from this exercise allows one to see standing before him in the hall the figure of Amida and all the other Buddhas in the universe. Upon hearing the preaching of these Buddhas one gains a deepened awareness of the path to enlightenment. The main purpose of the practice is to enable one to enter a concentrated state of samadhi so as to see the Buddhas and hear their preaching; it is not to seek rebirth in the Pure Land.

The walking Nembutsu which was practiced in the *Jōgyō* Hall on Mount Hiei was a "musical" Nembutsu (Goe Nembutsu) chanted rhythmically in accordance with the notes of the Chinese pentatonic scale. It was brought to Japan by Ennin, who learned it during his pilgrimage to Mount Wu-t'ai in China. The Goe Nembutsu was started by Hosshō (Chinese, Fa-chao, 766-822), a Pure Land priest of the mid-

T'ang dynasty who, because of his success in reviving Nembutsu teaching, was regarded as a reincarnation of Zendō (Chin. Shan-tao), father of the Chinese Pure Land tradition.

Hosshō was born in Szechuan province. After becoming a priest he visited teachers at mountain monasteries throughout the country. He was converted to the Nembutsu practice while studying under a Pure Land teacher named Shōon (Chinese, Ch'eng-yuan) at Mount Nan-yueh. The Goe Nembutsu was said to have been transmitted to Hosshō directly by Amida Buddha, who appeared before him in a vision. This experience made him a firm believer in the efficacy of the Nembutsu. Hosshō made the long pilgrimage from Nan-yueh to Mount Wu-t'ai in the northern part of Shansi province. Mount Wu-t'ai was thought to be the dwelling place of Manjushri Bodhisattva, and it was believed that by going there one could enter into spiritual communion with him. Pilgrims from as far away as India came to Wu-t'ai shan, which at the time seems to have been regarded as the holiest site in the entire Buddhist world.

Hosshō made the pilgrimage with ten other Nembutsu practitioners, seeking Manjushri's divine assistance. Manjushri revealed to him that the Goe Nembutsu was the most suitable practice for people in the present period of the latter-day Dharma to attain rebirth in the Pure Land. Convinced now beyond all doubt of the truth of this new method of chanting the Nembutsu, Hosshō began to practice it and to teach it to others during his travel between Mount Wu-t'ai and the capital Ch'ang-an. It spread widely throughout the populace and was instrumental in bringing about a resurgence of Pure Land faith.

Ennin's visit to Mount Wu-t'ai took place shortly after Hosshō's death. Upon witnessing a meeting at which the Goe Nembutsu was performed, he determined to learn it and take it back to Japan. Ennin, later a head abbot of the Tendai sect, was a gifted administrator. His tenure as abbot coincided with the golden age of Buddhism on Mount Hiei, when many new halls and temples were built. His introduction of the Goe Nembutsu rites in the *Jōgyō* Hall was an important factor in the sharp rise of the sect's fortunes. It became fashionable in Kyoto and throughout the rest of the country to construct *Jōgyō* halls for the practice of this musical Nembutsu.

Ennin's Mountain Nembutsu appealed to the deep aesthetic sense of the nobility, and in their hands it took on an even more other-worldly

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character. The sounds of the chanting were said to be the music of the birds and trees in Amida's Pure Land singing the praises of the three treasures; the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The nobles believed that during the ceremony they were conveyed in spirit to the Pure Land, and that participation assured them of birth there in the next life. In this way the Goe Nembutsu deepened the religious faith of the lay nobility and became an important part of their refined way of life. As the following *waka* poems show, the Mountain Nembutsu and the full moon became a favorite poetic subject for the nobility, one which fed their belief in Amida's Western Paradise.

(Listening to the unceasing sound of the  
Nembutsu in the *Jōgyō* Hall)

Unceasing all night long,  
The sound of the Nembutsu  
Pulled my heart to the west,  
Penetrating is the sound  
Of the raging storm.

(from the *Gyokuyo Wakashū*)

O forested hills!  
The lingering strains  
Of 'Namu-amida-butsu'—  
The moon this autumn night  
Edges slowly to the west.

(from the *Shugyoku-shū*)

The following passage from the *Eiga Monogatari* gives an account of a Mountain Nembutsu ceremony that took place in the Seihoku-in of the Hōjō-ji, a Kyoto temple erected at the beginning of the 11th century by Lord Michinaga and his wife Michiko.

“Soon after that, a service of Nembutsu recitation began which continued for three days and three nights without interruption. This followed the form of the 'Mountain Nembutsu.' The young priestlings selected to perform the service were all under fifteen, most being twelve to fourteen years of age. They were summoned together at the Western Pagoda, the Eastern Pagoda, and the Yokawa precincts of Mount

Hiei, and at Yamashina-dera, Ninna-ji, and Mii-dera. Although the participants were young priests, only those who were children of noblemen of the 4th and 5th ranks were summoned. . . . As the service began and the novices gathered, they looked exceedingly beautiful. They were all in the same night-duty garments which had been given them by Lord Michinaga. The service began and as they walked round the hall reciting the Nembutsu, they looked the very picture of nobility. Their teachers watched and smiled at their loveliness.

“Some of the youths wore loose-fitting trousers made of dark or light purple fabric, which were tailored about two feet longer than their height, so that the trousers trailed behind as the young priests walked. Some wore undergarments of light gray, some wore starched fabric of figured design, and some plain, or tightly-woven, silk. Some wore six-layered cotton quilting of a lustrous thin modern material. Their outer robes were of light texture, some light gray and some impregnated with incense so that they were exceedingly fragrant. Some walked as if dancing, drawn by their clothes, which gave them an exaggerated air. Their heads seem to have been covered with flowers, and their faces rouged and whitened. They looked exquisite and noble, exact replicas of the little Jizō Bodhisattva. Their youthful voices were finely pitched and delightful and made the onlookers wish they could hear them forever. They sounded like the sweet notes of the Kalavinka bird found only in the Pure Land.”

At the end of the 10th century, when the Mountain Nembutsu introduced by Ennin was rapidly gaining adherents among the nobility, the eminent priest Genshin of Mount Hiei published his great work the *Ōjō-yōshū*. It was followed by the *Nihon Ōjō-gokuraku ki*, by Yoshishige Yasutane, Genshin's friend in learning and faith. These two works played an important part in further propagating Pure Land beliefs.

But, even before they had appeared, in the mid-10th century, the itinerant preacher Kūya (903-972) had been greatly successful in spreading Pure Land faith among the common people by teaching them the practice of the Nembutsu. The *Nihon Ōjō-gokuraku ki* alludes to the sudden rise in the popularity of the Nembutsu and Amida worship in all classes of society that followed upon Kūya's death. Kūya's work was carried on by a number of later Nembutsu priests. They came from temples that had now grown into large monasteries

and from the aristocratic temples on Mount Hiei and Mount Kōya. These men left their positions and temples and, living as itinerant preachers without rank or title, dedicated themselves to the popularization of the Nembutsu.

Hōnen and Shinran also were among those who were greatly influenced by the *Ōjō-yōshū* and *Nihon Ōjō-gokuraku ki*. They grew up during the period when the Mountain Nembutsu of the Tendai sect was very popular, and they greatly admired Kūya and his followers and their way of life. Both Hōnen and Shinran left Mount Hiei to preach their own concepts of Pure Land Buddhism to the common people based on the exclusive practice of the Nembutsu. The era during which Hōnen and Shinran lived and proselytized saw the collapse of the political and economic bases of aristocratic society and the emergence of a new period of military rule, the Kamakura.

With the widely growing popularity of the musical Nembutsu of the *Jōgyō* Hall and the rapid spread of Pure Land beliefs, *Jōgyō* halls began to appear specially designed for Amidist type practices that were directed toward the goal of rebirth in the Pure Land. There was a great demand for images of Amida. At first these were rendered according to the canons of Tendai's esoteric Taimitsu tradition, but gradually they too came to reflect Pure Land beliefs. Amida images were enshrined amid magnificent interiors decorated with depictions of rebirth in the Pure Land, and illustrations (*raigō*) showing Amida with attendants descending to welcome believers to his Land of Bliss.

Buddhism in Kyoto thus became dominated by the practice of the Nembutsu. Everywhere voices recited the Nembutsu. Sculpted images of Amida were enshrined in temples of all the Buddhist sects, as well as in the private residences and villa-like temples of the nobles. Pure Land paintings, making free use of traditional Japanese landscapes and Yamato-style paintings, depicted such Raigō motifs as the Yamagoe Raigō (Amida Crossing the Mountain). All this combined to produce a rich variety in the fine arts which continued through the Kamakura period. Examples of Heian Pure Land art such as those in the Hōjō-ji, the Phoenix Hall of the Byōdō-in at Uji, and the Sanzen-in at Ōhara, were produced by artists who lived in a world like that described in the *Genji Monogatari*—a world characterized by a strong sense of elegance, tranquillity, and romantic idealism. The following Kamakura period produced art which was strong, dynamic, human, and realistic—

an inevitable consequence of the great transition that had taken place with the rise to power of the warrior class.

### *7. Introduction of Buddhist Art of the Sung and Yuan*

During the transformation in which the T'ang-inspired culture of the Nara period became more Japanese in character, and new and brilliant flowerings emerged over the whole of Heian culture, the upper classes still continued to hold Chinese models in great respect. Diplomatic missions to the continent had been halted, but cultural relations between the two countries had not been completely cut off. In one particular area, the exchange of Buddhist priests, this was especially true. In the 11th century, when Michinaga was regent, such eminent Japanese priests as Chōnen, Jōjin, Jakushō, and Jūgen traveled to Sung China to study, and in the twelfth century, the Taira clan (who then held power) actively promoted trade with the mainland.

Chōnen (d. 1016), a priest of the Tōdai-ji, brought back the famous sandalwood statue of Shakamuni Buddha (now designated a National Treasure) which is enshrined in the Seiryō-ji in the Saga district of Kyoto. This image, an example of continuing Chinese cultural influence, became the center of a great wave of popular belief. It had considerable impact on Buddhist sculpture as well. Beginning in the late Heian and continuing through the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, scores of replicas were made that were patterned on the image in the Seiryō-ji.

An unusual discovery was made recently during an investigation of the statue. Silk replicas of the Buddha's five internal organs were found inside the body, along with various documents, Buddhist woodblock prints, and sutras. From the information contained in these documents we know that Chōnen hoped to create a Kyoto center for Nara Buddhism which would regain for it the prestige it had lost when the capital was moved from Nara. With this in mind, he set out for Sung China, vowing that on his return he would erect a large temple on Mount Atago, a high mountain to the northwest of the capital. The image of Shakamuni he brought with him on his return to Japan in 980 was a copy of a statue said to have been transmitted from India. It was believed to have been carved during the Buddha's lifetime and to represent

*Shakamuni Buddha, Northern Sung period, Seiryō-ji*



his actual appearance. The style of its hair and the "flowing water" pattern of its robe, which are believed to retain Indian or Central Asian sculptural motifs, give the statue an exotic air. It had a feeling decidedly unlike that of any of the familiar images of the Nara and Heian periods. In Japan too, the Seiryō-ji Shakamuni came to be venerated as a physical likeness of the Buddha.

When Chōnen became abbot of the Tōdai-ji, he had to turn his attention to the formidable task of repairing the temple buildings, and his great dream of constructing a temple on Mount Atago to enshrine this statue of Shakamuni and to give new life to Nara Buddhism in Kyoto was never realized.

In Kyoto's Saga district, not far from the foot of Mount Atago, a large villa belonging to a son of the Emperor Saga had been converted into a temple after his death. This temple, the Seika-ji, enshrined esoteric images of Amida Buddha and his two attendant Bodhisattvas Seishi and Kannon. Within the compound a Shaka-dō (hall dedicated to Shakamuni Buddha) later was built. This was the beginning of the present Seiryō-ji, or to give it its full name, the Godai-san Seiryō-ji, which is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese Wu-t'ai shan Ch'ing-liang-ssu, the name of the temple Chōnen had visited in China. Devotees in great numbers from all levels and ranks, irrespective of sect, were attracted to this hall and to the worship of the image which they believed showed the actual features of the historical Buddha.

With the rise of the military class and the decline in aristocratic influence, the fortunes of the palatial Seika-ji fell sharply. But the Shaka-dō attached to it, which had already been opened to the general public, prospered. Eventually, it annexed its one-time mother temple.

The following story, contained in a book titled the *Takaramono-shū* ("Collection of Treasures"), gives some idea of the popularity of the Shakamuni cult at the Seiryō-ji at the end of the Heian period. When Taira Yasuyori returned from exile on a remote island, the first news of importance that reached his ears was a rumor that the statue of Shakamuni Buddha in the Seiryō-ji was disgusted with the sorry state of Japanese society and about to return to India. Kyoto was said to be filled with hordes of pilgrims on their way to Saga to pay their respects to the Buddha before he left. Yasuyori, being impressed by the gravity of the situation, hastened to the Seiryō-ji himself.

In the spring of his 23rd year (1156, the year the capital was con-

vulsed by the Hōgen Insurrection) the Pure Land teacher Hōnen left the solitary life of religious study he had been leading on Mount Hiei to offer prayers to the Seiryō-ji Shakamuni. When the Nembutsu school Hōnen founded began to grow in popularity, it incurred the enmity of influential Nara priests who wanted to reassert the primacy of their own teachings. They endeavored to counter the success of the new sect by establishing a Nembutsu cult of their own with Shakamuni as the chief object of worship. Eizon (d. 1290) of the Nara Saidai-ji, with the help of Buddhist sculptors, carved a copy of the Seiryō-ji image and enshrined it in his temple. Today, a number of images of Shakamuni in the distinctive Seiryō-ji style remain in Nara temples. Many other copies, some dating as early as the latter half of the Heian period, are scattered throughout the country, and several have been designated important cultural assets.

During the Heian period when the Japanization of culture was in full sway, this Indian-style Buddhist image believed to represent the living Shakamuni was brought from Sung China and many copies were made of it. Well into the Muromachi period (1333-1573), the Seiryō-ji Shakamuni remained the center of a vigorous religious movement. In the long history of Buddhist art this may have been only a trifling phenomenon; but one of interest nonetheless, occurring as it did at what was perhaps the high point in Japanese popular belief in the miraculous efficacy of sacred places and sacred Buddhist images.

#### *8. Buddhist Art and the Turbulence that Brought the Warrior Class to Power*

From the middle Heian period on the great Buddhist centers such as that on Mount Hiei, contrary to the basic Buddhist principles of peace and harmony, became the source of serious civil discord which extended even to the taking of human life. To press secular and religious demands, Tendai warrior-monks caused disturbances by bringing a sacred tree and portable shrine down from Mount Hiei and running with them through the streets of the city, and by circulating wild rumors among the populace. These unruly monks constituted a major problem for the governing class. Mountain-based Buddhism, like Nara Buddhism before it, had become decadent.

## BUDDHISM AND FINE ARTS IN KYOTO

The insurrections of Hōgen (1156) and Heiji (1159) mark a turning point after which the situation in the capital took a sudden and marked turn for the worse. The warriors whom the nobles had brought to Kyoto turned the city into a veritable armed camp, and many of its great temples were burned to the ground. These violent upheavals intensified the general mood current in society that the latter day was at hand. It was believed that the world had entered the final period of the Dharma, when, according to the Buddha's prediction, Buddhism would disappear as a living force.

The peaceful capital was now no more than a dream. It had been dominated by a nobility whose narrow lives consisted of going to court and enjoying refined aesthetic pastimes. The rough, masculine warrior class who now rose to power had been nourished on the hard fare of provincial life in close proximity to the natural world. This brought great changes to the spiritual side of Japanese life during the Kamakura period, changes which were directly reflected in its religious art. The introduction of the Zen (Ch'an) school and the exchange of Zen monks between China and Japan was particularly significant. The Zen teaching turned peoples' minds from the elegant pastimes of Heian society and directed them toward the simpler pleasures of the natural world. By appealing directly to the individual existence and stressing an intuitive understanding of human life, Zen opened the way to closer contact with the reality of Nature.

In Buddhist art, the new spirit of the age manifested itself in the shift from silent, passive images to active ones; for example, in representations of highly human Deva kings (Niō), realistic portrait paintings, and sculpted effigies of eminent priests that emphasized the personal features of the individual.

It is gratifying to see the growing number of Japanese who make pilgrimages to old temples in the Kyoto area to admire their Buddhist statuary. This enables them to appreciate their religious legacy, the spiritual life their ancestors led a thousand years ago. Contact with such traditional beauty will help to engender a quiet and peaceful pride in country. But it must be remembered that these Buddhist images are the fruits of religious faith. For more than a thousand years untold numbers of people have purified themselves by disclosing their sufferings to and offering prayers before these statues. The people who

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created them could never have dreamed that one day their images and paintings as well as the temples which house them would become part of a sightseeing boom and that people would view them and argue their respective aesthetic merits as works of art.

When we Japanese of today stand before a Buddhist statue in one of these old temples, we should, before admiring them aesthetically, give thought to the deep religious faith that created them. Instead of us admiring their beauty, we should let them bathe us in their religious radiance and so purify us. When temples become only sightseeing meccas, Buddhism is dead. Transformed into objects of aesthetic enjoyment, Buddhist images lose their religious significance and become mere idols. Temples and religious orders may grow rich and prosper, but without true religious faith, as mere storehouses for cultural properties, such prosperity is meaningless.

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