

POPULAR BUDDHISM OF KAMAKURA PERIOD

1185-1392

- capital moving from Heian (Kyóto) to Kamakura in the east
- social changes, raising of the samurai class, break up of the feudal system supporting the aristocracy in the capital
- concept of mappó- fully enrooted in the Japanese mind at this time (*Morrell)
- emergence of new sects of Buddhism- characterised by increased engagement with the masses and gradual independence from the aristocracy
 - Zen sects: Sótó, Rinzai
 - Pure Land Schools: Jódo shú, Jódo Shinshú
 - Nichiren sect
- founders of these schools came from the original Buddhist establishment- the Tendai Hieizan (Hónen, Shinran, Nichiren, Eisai, Dógen)
disillusioned with the more worldly interests of the institutions to which they belonged
- Individuals within the Buddhist order were active in establishing, redefining the teaching of their schools
- They emphasized a type of Buddhism directed towards the needs of people at large; doctrine of universal salvation, wisdom of a layman, and wisdom of a laywoman
- The new sects of the Kamakura period exposed concern for the common people, for the masses- as reflected in the vernacular literature
- Kamakura Buddhism- new, but the accession of the new doctrines was gradual, they did not instantly replace the older Buddhist establishment
f.e. Tendai continued to be a major force in Japanese Buddhism well into the 16th century, until the great Hiei complex was razed to the ground by Óda Nobunaga in 1571 and Tokuwaga Neo-Confucianism was officially sponsored a few decades later
- Pure Land thought- salvation occurring not in the present world, but in the Pure Land of Amida

HÓNEN 法然 1133-1212

- religious training at Hieizan, and in Nara temples alike
- belonged to a *nenbutsu* chanting group at one of the mountains of the Hieizan complex- introduced to Geshin's Ójyóshú + study of the PL sutras

- doubtful of one's liberation he searched the scriptures for other ways of practice, more suited for a general audience

'He became convinced that Japan was now so far advanced into the Latter Days of the Dharma that what Genshin had talked of as a last resort for those incapable of other forms of meditation- namely intoning the phrase *Namu Amida Butsu*- was in fact the only path to salvation left.' (Bowring, p. 246)

- Chinese commentary on the Meditation Sutra advised keeping the name of Amida **in mind at all times** to guarantee rebirth in PL
Even the most unworthy will attain rebirth in PL by relying on the power of Amitábha's vow to save all beings who call upon his name

=> *senju nenbutsu* 専修念仏

single-minded attention to *nenbutsu*

the sole *nenbutsu* practice

the last remaining technique (in the times of mappó)

simplest and most efficacious practice

- Senchakushú- [Choosing the *nenbutsu* as the fundamental vow]
competition of selected passages from a variety of PL texts
'aims to prove that verbal recitation of Amitábha's name was the highest form of practice' (ibid.)

=> total reliance on the saving power of Amida- *tariki*- 他力

(in contrast to the employment and reliance on one's own saving powers- *jiriki*-

自力, as propagated by f.e. the Zen schools: meditation is concentration onto

one's own mind, and enlightenment is attainable through one's own efforts)

Hónen intending to provide himself with a lineage running back to China-

establishing legitimacy for his branch of PL teaching

1175- Hónen leaving Hieizan, gaining 'some sort of patronage since he was soon able to construct two small buildings and gradually won recognition for his learning'

senju nenbutsu:

- a logical extension of Maháyána universalism
- a step to making Buddhist practice more relevant to a wider audience
- immediate salvation guaranteed to the lowest of the low through verbal repetition of Amida's name

- open to people without specific religious training, which caused a problem
- since the key to salvation was being offered to everyone, with no reference to social class or karma

=>questioning the very heart of the monastic enterprise

=> annulling the distinction between ordained members of the sangha and the laymen

- a threat to the Buddhist order, but mostly to the Enryakuji monks (at least 12 documented instances of suppression of one or more PL factions between 1207-1330, all instigated by Tendai monks)

‘It was always going to be difficult for the Buddhist establishment to face up to the fact that it was losing exclusive access to the rights of salvation.’ (Bowring, p. 252)

Pure Land School- 浄土宗 Jōdo shū

- first independent PL school in Japan
- the first new school of Buddhism to be founded in Japan outside of and without the sanction of imperial authority
- preaching to lay and monastic order alike of the sole practice
- exclusion of traditional Buddhist precepts
- Chionin

Hōnen advocated *nenbutsu* as the sole practice in the mappō times, when people did not have any ability to effect their liberation; he urged reliance on the other-power of Amida.

SHINRAN 親鸞 1173-1262

- member of lower aristocracy, born in Kyōto
- educated at Hieizan, where he became a dōsō 堂層- a monk who practices the perpetual *nenbutsu* and practice of circumambulating an image of Amida while reciting the *nenbutsu*
- follower of Hōnen- exiled- turned to layman
free of monastic regulations and duties, yet he felt he was neither here nor there, called his lifestyle ‘neither monk nor layman’

married- 'which may be seen as an illustration of precisely the kind of outrageous behaviour Hónen's teaching was encouraging' (Bowring) as it broke the fundamental rule of monastic life
moved to Kanto- proselytizing PL faith in eastern Japan

- elaborating his own theory about the recitation of *nenbutsu*:

one single recitation was enough as long as it was done in faith

Shinran thought that whoever places his faith in Amida is assured of salvation from the first *nenbutsu* spoken. Every *nenbutsu* that follows is not a repetition of this assurance, but rather an act of gratitude for the salvation already assured.

- complete denial of the power of an individual to save himself

Faith is not a path to salvation through one's own efforts, it is rather a total reliance on the power of Amida- *tariki*.

- followed mainly by the rural poor and the illiterate
- establishing local congregations in private homes- *nenbutsu dōjō* 念仏道場
- establishing an egalitarian movement
- refused to be venerated, traditionally honoured as a master or a founder

1224- work *Kyōgyōshinsō* 教行信証 [Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Attainment]

- his major and only work written in Chinese (otherwise his left behind writings are mostly letters, tracts and commentaries written in Japanese)
- selected passages and quotations from various PL texts with Shinran's commentaries to advocate his theory

1235- moving back to Kyōto; the Kamakura military authorities placed a ban on any *nenbutsu* teaching in and around Kamakura

True Pure Land School- 浄土真宗 Jōdo Shinshū

- largest of Japan's schools of Buddhism
- believers could do nothing for themselves, but had to rely **exclusively** upon the grace of Amida
- after true faith had arisen, one invocation of Amida's name suffices since the Buddha has all the power necessary to save the individual
- doctrine of other-power *tariki*
- elimination of monastic order

- autonomous character of the sect, equality of its members
- Honganji- Temple of Original Vow

NICHIREN 日蓮 1222-1282

- provincial origins, study at Mt. Hiei
- his main interest was not in a salvation in some other world, but in a this-world form of salvation for individuals and the Japanese as a nation at large alike
- Nichiren's teaching- intended to guide both spiritual and political affairs; and to ensure the country's peace and tranquility- strong political dimension
- Lotus Sutra- the basis of his teachings
the truth and power of the Lotus are concentrated in the title:
Namu Myóhó Renge Kyó 南無妙法蓮華教 [I take refuge in the LS]
he embraced the LS exclusively- accessible to all
- similarities with Hónen, Shinran- confirmation of faith by intoning a sacred name
- Nichiren perceived himself as a specially ordained prophet; he was attacking all other schools of Buddhism, as well as their teachers
too critical- finally arrested by the *bakufu* and sent to exile

IPPEN 一遍 1239-1289

- Hieizan training
- revelation- rebirth in PL will only be assured under the condition that one chants the *nenbutsu* fervently
no matter whether one has faith or not
no matter whether one is a sinner or a criminal
the *nenbutsu* transcends all human intentions and weaknesses
- to spread the belief, Ippen travelled the length of Japan incorporation of native beliefs in the power of kami and spirits, and as such made the teaching compatible with the beliefs of the masses
- denied any need for reflection or introspection of the believer, he did not focus on the believer's mental state but rather emphasized the practice as such

- gave up doctrinal systematization for the benefit of proselytizing activities
 - he would gather congregations of believers to intone the *nenbutsu* and dance to its rhythm
- participation in dancing and *nenbutsu* chanting- religious experience for the ordinary people

KAMAKURA BUDDHISM:

- developed from communities that were founded around priests who had left the established Buddhist order (Tendai)
- founders- charismatic and well-learned figures of contemporary Buddhist order, all versed in Buddhist scriptures, left behind erudite writings; they came to be revered and worshipped only after their deaths
- the schools developed as well-defined groups of society
- their followers belonged to different social classes or even different geographical areas
- it was the teaching of the founder that provided the strongest bond for the believers
- Hónen, Shinran- doctrine of total reliance on the saving power of Amida
 - => complete denial of self

salvation attainable to all=> all are equal; equality of teachers and disciples
- Shinran- resistance to formal religious organization in a hierarchical manner [impossible within the Zen schools]
- importance of faith
- enlightenment available to all
- orientation towards internal experience of humans
- spread among the common people
- Buddhism incorporating native Japanese elements