

Jōkei and Hōnen: Debating Buddhist Liberation in Medieval Japan—Then and Now

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AS ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES, “universal” and “particular” carry a variety of connotations in religious studies. They sometimes represent the metaphysical opposition between the One and the many or, in Buddhist jargon, the Absolute and phenomena. “Universal” may also designate those religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism that offer salvation to all human beings; religions that may be geographically or ethnically specific are, on the other hand, considered particularistic. And within any specific religion, there may be debates concerning the relationship between its universal soteriology and the particular doctrines, practices, and/or devotions advocated by various traditions. Mahāyāna Buddhism, for example, generally claims that there are many “particular” forms of practice and devotion that can lead to liberation. Articulated through the doctrine of *upāya* or skillful means, there is a traditionally fluid relationship between Buddhism’s universal soteriology and its particular forms of devotion and practice.

What has come to be called “new” Kamakura Buddhism in Japan represents a peculiar turn in this understanding of the universal and particular in Buddhism. I would like to examine here the debate in the early thirteenth century between Jōkei (1155–1213) of the Hossō school and Hōnen (1133–1212), founder of the Pure Land school in Japan. In many ways, this controversy epitomizes the fundamental doctrinal divide between the broader Buddhist tradition and particular regional forms that emerged in Japan during and after the Kamakura period (1185–1333). To call this a debate is somewhat of a misnomer since there was never any formal debate between these two figures. However, they were contemporaries and in various writings they do articulate radically different perspectives such that we can, I venture, imagine at least the principles upon which such a debate might have taken place. From Hōnen, we have the *Senchakushū* (Passages on the Selection of the Nembutsu in the Original Vow). And from Jōkei, we have the *Kōfukuji sōjō*, a petition to the Court calling for the prohibition of the Hōnen’s *senju nembutsu* movement, as well as a number of other texts that reflect his broader views concerning Buddhist salvation and practice. Before we consider this debate, it might be

useful to introduce Jōkei since he has not been widely studied, especially in the West, despite the fact that he was clearly one of the most prominent monks during his lifetime. Hōnen, I am assuming, needs little introduction.

JŌKEI'S BIOGRAPHY

Jōkei (1155–1213), posthumously known as Gedatsu Shōnin, was born into the once-powerful Fujiwara clan. At the ripe age of seven, Jōkei was sent to Kōfukuji, the prominent Hossō temple in Nara, as a result of the exile of his father Sadanori subsequent to the Heiji disturbance (1159–60). Four years later, he took the tonsure at Kōfukuji and trained under his uncle Kakuken (1131–1212), who later became superintendent of Kōfukuji, and Zōshun, a prominent Hossō scholar-monk. Available records tell us little of Jōkei's early years of study, but he must have been prodigious given his later prominence as a scholar-monk. By 1182, at the age of twenty-seven, he was a candidate at the Yuima-e at Kōfukuji, one of the most prestigious annual public lectures, and within four years (1186) held the prestigious position of lecturer (*kōshi*) for the same assembly. This was followed by at least six appearances at the other major yearly lectures over the next five years. Following his performance in the 1191 Hōjōji lectures, held on the anniversary of the death of Kujō Kanezane's eldest son Yoshimichi, Kanezane writes of Jōkei in his diary:

His exposition of the Dharma is profound. It is unfortunate that his voice is so soft, but whether he is discussing or expounding, he is clearly one of the wise and virtuous men of this degenerate age (*mappō*).¹

Kanezane, chancellor (*kampaku*) to Go-Shirakawa and Go-Toba, was the most powerful Court official until he was pushed out in 1196.

In 1192, Jōkei resolved to move to Kasagidera, a somewhat remote mountain temple about twelve kilometers northeast of Nara and Kōfukuji. Despite appeals from Kujō Kanezane (and even the Kasuga deity, if we are to believe the *Kasuga Gongen genki*²), Jōkei actually did move in the fall of the following year. Though this did not prove to be a complete disengagement from worldly affairs, it was a clear move toward a life of reclusion (*tonsei*). It also turned out to be a decided rejection of what had every indication of becoming a very successful career in the Kōfukuji hierarchy. The reasons for this unexpected move are not altogether clear but at least some evidence suggests that Jōkei was annoyed with the highly politicized environment in Nara and sought a more sedate and spiritual

lifestyle. Scholars offer different reasons for Jōkei's radical move, but it seems clear that Jōkei sought a more secluded and spiritual lifestyle.³

Kasagidera was not, however, an altogether obscure temple. It featured a massive cliff-carved image of Miroku (Skt. *Maitreya*) dating from the eighth century and claimed many prominent visitors. Over the next fifteen years at Kasagidera, Jōkei was involved in various *kanjin* (solicitation) campaigns, temple reconstructions, and numerous public appearances. He also promoted a wide variety of Buddhist devotions and practices among layfolk. It was during these years at Kasagi, in 1205, that Jōkei wrote, on behalf of the eight established schools, his now famous petition to the Court appealing for a censure of Hōnen's *senju nembutsu* teaching. Three years later in 1208, after expanding Kasagidera considerably, Jōkei moved to Kaijusenji, another remote temple dedicated to Kannon Bodhisattva (*Avalokiteśvara*). Over the remaining five years of his life, he was active in a precept "revival" campaign and wrote a number of important treatises on Hossō doctrine.

HŌNEN AND THE *SENJU NEMBUTSU* TEACHING

Let us turn now to the dispute between Jōkei and Hōnen. Hōnen was of course the "founder" of the Pure Land sect (*Jōdo-shū*) in Japan. After more than twenty years of training within the Tendai system on Mt. Hiei, it appears that Hōnen gravitated gradually toward devotion to Amida Buddha and specific aspirations for birth in Amida's Western Pure Land. In 1198, he wrote the *Senchakushū* at the behest of Kujō Kanezane, a text that delineates the doctrinal and scriptural basis for an independent Pure Land sect. Despite its 1198 date, the readership of the *Senchakushū* was purportedly confined to Hōnen's close followers for approximately fourteen years until soon after his death in 1212. At that time, the text was officially published. We can only conjecture the reason for this "secret" period, but based on its contents, Hōnen surely knew the reaction it would provoke. Even so, there must have been enough clues from Hōnen's public lectures and hearsay for the established schools to discern the gist of his ideas. A petition, sponsored by Enryaku-ji, was submitted to the Court in 1204, which precipitated Hōnen's apologetic Seven Article Pledge (*Shichikajō kishōmon*).⁴ This pledge was addressed and submitted to the Tendai abbot Shinshō, signed by approximately one hundred ninety of Hōnen's followers, and was to serve as a guide for the conduct of all *senju nembutsu* practitioners. Additionally, Jōkei's petition in 1205 makes it readily evident that the radical nature of the teachings within the *Senchakushū* were widely known by that time.

The central thesis of the *Senchakushū*, as implied by its title, is the assertion that only the vocal *nembutsu* yields birth into Amida's Pure

Land. For Hōnen, the vocal *nembutsu* is the repeated recitation of the phrase “*namu Amida butsu*” or “I pay homage to Amida Buddha.” Hōnen adopted the term *senju nembutsu* (exclusive *nembutsu*) for this radical doctrine. It seems evident that there are actually two dimensions of “exclusivity” in the *Senchakushū*—one with respect to the soteriological (relating to salvation) goal and the other with respect to the means of achieving that goal. For Hōnen, birth in Amida’s Pure Land (*ōjō*) is the only achievable soteriological goal for humans to strive for in this lifetime. This claim seems to be an underlying assumption of the text and is only briefly dealt with directly. Most of the text endeavors to justify why *nembutsu* recitation is the only efficacious practice for achieving *ōjō*. Because the world had entered the last age of the Dharma (*mappō*), Hōnen argued, no one has the capacity to follow the traditional practices.⁵

Borrowing from Shan-tao (613–681), the Chinese devotee to Amida Buddha, Hōnen made the familiar distinctions between the Path of Sages and the Pure Land Path (*shōdōmon/jōdomon*), difficult and easy practices (*nangyō/igyō*), right practices and miscellaneous practices (*shōgyō/zōgyō*), and self-power and other-power (*jiriki/tariki*). Critical, of course, was Hōnen’s interpretation of “*senchaku*.” In contrast to Shan-tao, Hōnen emphasized Amida’s “choice” of the *nembutsu*, to the exclusion of all other practices, as opposed to the personal “choice” of Buddhist followers. Thus, Amida’s “choice” of the *nembutsu* in his eighteenth vow was for Hōnen a “rejection” of all other practices. In chapter three, he argues that Amida specifically chose the verbal *nembutsu* and guaranteed it with the eighteenth vow.⁶ In chapter six, he argues that this is the most appropriate practice for the degenerate age (*mappō*).⁷ And in chapter twelve, Hōnen explicitly rejects other practices such as meditation, discipline, sutra recitations, and meritorious deeds because Amida did not include them in his eighteenth vow.⁸

Hōnen deviated from both Shan-tao and Genshin (914–1017) in two important ways. First, he rejected the efficacy of all practices other than recitation of the *nembutsu*. And second, he asserted that the meaning of “*nembutsu*” or “*nien-fo*,” within both Amida’s vows and Shan-tao’s interpretation, is “verbal recitation” only. That is, Hōnen reduced all prior classifications of *nembutsu* practice (i.e., meditation and visualization) to its vocal dimension. Allan Andrews has demonstrated that Hōnen’s selective hermeneutical method as applied to Shan-tao is problematic at best.⁹

JŌKEI’S CRITIQUE OF THE *SENJU NEMBUTSU* TEACHING AND ITS MODERN (MIS)INTERPRETATIONS

The *Kōfukuji sōjō* was a petition to the Court, authored by Jōkei on behalf of the eight established schools, appealing for the suppression of

Hōnen's *senju nembutsu* teaching. Jōkei lists nine specific errors in Hōnen's teaching. Let me first briefly summarize the arguments in each of these.¹⁰

1. *The error of establishing a new sect:* Jōkei points out that there have been eight sects transmitted to Japan, either by foreign monks or Japanese monks traveling to China, and each was sanctioned by the Court. He argues that Pure Land worship was never a separate school (*shū*) in China, nor did Hōnen receive a direct transmission.

2. *The error of designing new images for worship:* This article attacks the mandala popular among Hōnen's followers known as "The Mandala Embracing All and Forsaking None" (*sesshu fusha mandara*). In it, the light shining forth from Amida (*kōmyō*) embraces only those practicing the verbal *nembutsu* and leaves other practitioners and scholar-monks in the dark. The problem, of course, is the implicit claim that birth in Amida's Pure Land is reserved *exclusively* for those practicing the verbal *nembutsu*. This, in effect, denies the efficacy of the traditional practices of meditation, morality, and good works.

3. *The error of slighting Śākyamuni:* Jōkei claims that *senju nembutsu* practitioners say: "With our bodies we do not worship other Buddhas and with our voices we do not call upon other Names." Consequently, by proclaiming exclusive allegiance to Amida, they are in essence rejecting Śākyamuni, the "Original Teacher" (*honshi*), and one of the Three Treasures that all Buddhists take as refuge.

4. *The error of neglecting the varieties of good deeds:* Jōkei asserts that some disciples of Hōnen (though not Hōnen himself) go so far in promoting the practice of the *nembutsu* as to slander other teachings such as recitation of the *Lotus Sutra*, meditation, or various esoteric practices.

5. *The error of turning one's back on the holy gods of Shintō:* Similarly, *nembutsu* followers reject the kami (*shinmei*) and do not honor the great shrines or Imperial sanctuaries (*sōbyō*).

6. *The error of ignorance concerning the Pure Lands:* Jōkei cites various Pure Land texts and masters in an effort to demonstrate that they all acknowledged and exercised a variety of religious practices. Birth in the Pure Land necessarily requires the development of other practices and cannot simply be reduced to the verbal recitation of the *nembutsu*.

7. *The error of misunderstanding the nembutsu:* Jōkei argues that the reduction of "nembutsu practice" to verbal recitation (*kushō*) is erroneous because it abandons the essential aspects of medita-

tion (*kan*) and concentration (*jō*). Moreover, Jōkei argues that there is no basis for choosing only the eighteenth vow and dismissing the authenticity of Amida's forty-seven other vows.

8. *The error of vilifying the followers of Śākyamuni*: This article reiterates the importance of practice, especially discipline according to the precepts (*kairitsu*). Jōkei emphasizes the mutual relationship between meditation, moral practice, and realization. By openly violating and refuting the traditional precepts, *nembutsu* followers disparage the monastic tradition established by Śākyamuni and the traditional precepts upon which the *sangha* has been preserved.

9. *The error of bringing disorder to the nation*: Jōkei asserts that there is a mutual relationship between the Buddha's Law (*Buppō*) and Imperial Law (*ōbō*). If the practitioners of the *senju nembutsu* succeed and the Eight Sects decline (along with adherence to the Three Learnings of morality, wisdom and meditation), then this mutual relationship will be threatened and social chaos is inevitable.

Jōkei's petition might be condensed to four essential points. First, he asserts that Hōnen abandoned all traditional Buddhist practices (i.e., the Path of Sages) other than the verbal recitation of the *nembutsu*. Second, Hōnen rejected the importance of karmic causality and moral behavior in the pursuit of Buddhist liberation. From Jōkei's perspective, these two consequences of Hōnen's teaching represent, in effect, a complete refutation of almost two-thousand years of the Buddhist tradition. Third, Hōnen falsely appropriated and misinterpreted Shan-tao with respect to *nembutsu* practice. And finally, Jōkei contends that there are negative social and political implications to Hōnen's teachings. By undermining the traditional Buddhist doctrines and moral construct, Hōnen's movement will engender social and political disorder.

It is clear that articles one, five, and nine contend, at least in part, that the *senju nembutsu* movement represents a threat to State authority and social stability. At the same time, these articles reflect a concern for the impact of the movement on the established sects of Buddhism. When Jōkei's petition is cited by scholars, it is very often reduced to these "political" concerns. For example, scholars such as Fukihara Shōshin, Sasaki Kaoru, and Satō Hiroo characterize the petition as a primarily politically motivated text.¹¹ The Matsunagas offer a classic example of this perspective as well. They write:

But the question arises, why a recluse would compose such a worldly document, primarily concerned with accusations of a

political rather than theological nature? In this respect, the petition appears to represent a sectarian reaction rather than a true idealist concern.¹²

In other words, Jōkei's critique is interpreted by these scholars as a defensive and politically motivated response to the growing popularity of the *nembutsu* movement. He saw it as a perceived threat to the status quo and established temple authority. In this framework of interpretation, of course, Hōnen's movement is viewed as a liberating force, both soteriologically for the masses and institutionally for the Pure Land school.

This reductionistic reading is problematic for a number of reasons. It is first worth reminding ourselves that the intended audience for this petition was the Court. Given this, we should probably expect it to appeal to the Court's primary interests. That is, we should expect Jōkei to emphasize the potential threat to the state's authority and control latent in the *senju nembutsu* movement. From the Court's perspective, this aspect of the petition, more than its doctrinal content, may have been the most persuasive component.

Moreover, this "political" interpretation discounts Jōkei's genuine concern with the social impact of Hōnen's *senju nembutsu* teaching and followers. Jōkei laments their criticism of other practices and their intentional violation of fundamental Buddhist precepts. By asserting only one path to salvation, although it is equal for everyone, Hōnen fostered tension between his followers and the existing Buddhist groups and undermined the traditional support for proper ethical and moral behavior. Sueki Fumihiko considers this to be one of the principle elements in Jōkei's critique. He emphasizes the tension between the religious and social dimensions of Hōnen's teaching. Religiously, Hōnen offered universal and equal access to salvation to people of all social levels. But he appears naive to the potential social impact of such a teaching. Thus, Sueki contends that Hōnen cut off his religious perspective from social reality.¹³ Ueda Sachiko makes a similar point. Jōkei, she claims, held a broader perspective in contrast to Hōnen, who focused only on the individual and lost site of the individual within society.¹⁴ It is the potentially adverse social impact of Hōnen's teaching that concerns Jōkei most when he complains of the behavior of *senju nembutsu* followers and stresses need for censure.

In addition, this dominant "political" reading of Jōkei's petition and motivations ignores or minimizes the essence of his doctrinal critique that is far from obscure. In fact, I would contend that recent scholarship appears to corroborate the more fundamentally doctrinal aspects of Jōkei's critique. First of all, Hōnen's claim of a preexisting, independent Pure Land school in China is suspect.¹⁵ Second, it is clear that Tao-ch'ō and Shan-tao, Hōnen's chosen patriarchs, were never exclusive in their advocacy of the *nembutsu*. They both emphasized the importance of precept adherence

and three of five of Shan-tao's extant works are actually liturgical guides for ritual worship.¹⁶ And third, it is also clear that Tao-ch'ō, Shan-tao, and even Genshin did not interpret *nembutsu* practice to be only verbal recitation. They recognized and even advocated the traditional contemplative forms of the practice.¹⁷ The point here is not to declare Jōkei the "winner," but to acknowledge the substantive aspects of his petition that have been too often dismissed or ignored.

Not only has Jōkei's critique been minimized, but interpretations of Kamakura Buddhism tend to adopt uncritically the very terms and categories of Hōnen's treatise. It is in this sense that this debate has carried on in some ways within contemporary scholarship. The division between the "new" Kamakura schools and the traditional schools is often articulated in terms of the distinction between self-power and other-power, difficult practice and easy practice, or the way of the sages and the way of the Pure Land. For example, the Matsunagas assert that Jōkei possessed a "sectarian inability to appreciate the true meaning of the 'Other-power' single-practice *nembutsu*."¹⁸ Narita Jōkan argues that Hōnen's *jōdomon/shōdōmon* categories truly represent the basic distinction between Hōnen and Jōkei.¹⁹ And Miyajima Shinichi contends that Jōkei denied the other-power *ōjō* and the way of easy practice.²⁰

The new schools are also characterized as "popular" in that they made "simple" practices available to the masses for the first time. For example, Ōsumi Kazuo, in his overview of Buddhism of the Kamakura period in the recent Cambridge history of Japan volume on medieval Japan, writes that the establishment of Kamakura Buddhism (by which he means the newly established schools) "was a pivotal event in Japanese history, because through it Buddhism was adapted to the Japanese ways and thus made accessible to the common people."²¹ He goes on to assert that Hōnen's *senju nembutsu* teaching was "epoch-making" because "for the first time Buddhism's path of salvation was opened to people without specialized religious training or discipline."²² Ōsumi reflects an enduring tendency to see Kamakura Buddhism as the final "Japanization" of Buddhism and the first expansion of Buddhism to the common people. Similarly, Soho Machida, in his recent study of Hōnen, characterizes the *senju nembutsu* movement as the "'liberation theology' of medieval Japan" which "generated a liberating potential against the hierarchic nature of the Old Buddhism...."²³ Such interpretations echo the rhetoric of the "new" Kamakura founders, especially Hōnen and Shinran, and their subsequent traditions. As we shall see, however, such interpretations seriously distort the nature of Buddhism within the established schools and gloss over widespread popular practices of the Heian period.²⁴

These scholars, among others, claim that the basic differences between Jōkei and Hōnen mirror the broader divisions between "new" and "old" Kamakura Buddhism. In contrast, I would argue that Hōnen's dualistic

categories (self/other power, difficult/easy practice, etc.) are in many ways largely polemical and only marginally relate to Buddhist practice of the day. A brief look at Jōkei's life and practice tends to corroborate this point.

JŌKEI'S PLURALISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Jōkei's religious life reflects a broad and eclectic range of beliefs and practices. The Kasuga deity, Miroku, Kannon, Jizō, and certainly Śākyamuni were all, at one time or another, the focal point of his devotion and evangelistic efforts. Among the practices that he followed and proselytized were mind-only contemplation (*yuishiki sammai*), recitation of various *nembutsu* and sacred *darani*,²⁵ worship of Buddha-relics (*busshari*), precept adherence (*kairitsu*), solicitation (*kanjin*) campaigns, temple construction, and various ritual performances and lectures. How to make sense of all this has been a challenge for scholars. Interpretations have ranged from those who perceive a unifying theme (e.g., devotion to Śākyamuni) to others who contend that Jōkei was a lost soul searching unsuccessfully for what Hōnen and Shinran found—certitude in simplicity. Here I want to point out, first, that the self/other-power or difficult/easy practice oppositions, like the polemical distinction between Mahāyāna and Hinayāna or the sudden-gradual debate within Ch'an/Zen Buddhism, are often rhetorical devices used to denigrate those who followed the traditional practices. Unfortunately, scholars have been hasty in unreflectively adopting such rhetorical labels in their historical overviews and interpretations, as we have seen above. Only recently have we come to realize the pejorative connotation of labels like Hinayāna or "gradual practice." And second, these two-dimensional labels rarely had any true relation to reality on either side of the debate. Hōnen continued "*jiriki*-type" practices to the end of his life; and Jōkei, as we will see, *emphasized* the necessity of "other-power."

While Jōkei stressed the implications and importance of karmic causality, he also praised the benefits of powers beyond our own. He recognized the power of Amida's vows (as well as those of Kannon, Miroku, and Śākyamuni), the Buddha's relics, and the recitation of various *nembutsu* and *darani*, among other sources of other-power. For him, the compassion of the various Buddhas and bodhisattvas in providing such supernatural mechanisms was beyond compare. In short, Jōkei recognized the well-accepted notion of his time that self-power alone was not enough. Despite accusations to the contrary, he never denied the importance of "other-power." What he denied is the "exclusive" reliance on other-power.

Although it remains unclear whether or not Jōkei considered his time to be within *mappō* (final age of the Dharma), it is quite apparent that he

saw it as a critical time for the Dharma.²⁶ He recognized that people no longer had the capacity to achieve enlightenment on their own. Thus, he continually argued for the necessity of “other-power” or “super-natural intervention” (*myōga*). In the *Busshari Kannon daishi hotsugammon* (Vow to the Buddha’s Relics and the Great Sage Kannon), written between 1208 and his death in 1213, Jōkei promotes reliance on the power of Buddha relics and aspiration for birth in Kannon’s realm known as Fudaraku-sen, a mountain located off the southern coast of India. He cautions against sole reliance on self-power:

If by means of self-power one attempts to eradicate these sins, it is like a moth trying to drink up the great ocean. Simply relying on the Buddha’s power, you should single-mindedly repent your errors. We humbly pray that the relics which he has left behind and which are the object of worship of his disciples, the holy retinue of the Southern Sea, and Kanjizaison, will shine the beams of the sun of wisdom and extinguish the darkness of the sins of the six roots, and, by means of the power of this great compassion and wisdom, eradicate the offenses of the three categories of action.²⁷

He goes on to emphasize the necessity of relying on some “other-power,” in this case the Buddha’s relics, to achieve birth in Kannon’s realm:

Even manifesting the great fruit of progress in the present (*genzai*) is from relying on the majestic power of the relics. Moreover, it is not difficult. How much easier it will be in one’s next life (*jinji*) to realize birth (*ōjō*) in the Southern Sea and see the great sages by means of the skillful means (*hōben*) of the Tathāgata’s relics.²⁸

And in the *Shin’yō shō* (Essentials of the Mind [Intent Upon Seeking Enlightenment], ca. 1206), perhaps Jōkei’s most studied text that emphatically promotes Miroku devotion, he states:

All the more so, the karmic causes for birth in the Pure Land, in accordance with one’s capacity, are not the same. Finding the nectar largely depends on super-natural intervention (*myōga*).²⁹

Some have contended that such statements are a direct response to the popularity of Hōnen’s movement. But a broader look at Jōkei’s religious life indicates that his emphasis on eclectic devotion and a variety of “accessible” practices were present from very early on. For example, according to extant records, Jōkei was the most prolific author of *kōshiki* texts, a genre of liturgical texts that praise the powers of and advocate

devotion to various Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other sacred objects.³⁰ Jōkei's texts extol the powers of the Kasuga deity, Miroku, Kannon, Jizō, Buddha relics, and the *Lotus Sutra*, among others. Through participation in such liturgical ceremonies that involved performance and congregational chanting, one acquired karmic merit and established a spiritual connection (*kechien*) with the object of devotion.

As evident in the *Busshari Kannon* passage above, Jōkei also advocated aspiration for birth in the pure lands of Miroku (Tosotsu), Kannon (Fudaraku-sen), Śākyamuni's Vulture Peak (Ryōzen-jōdo), and Amida. There is not space to review the pure land debates here, but Jōkei, reflecting the conventional Hossō view, argued that Amida's Land of Bliss (Gokuraku) existed outside the realm of desire (*shaba*; Skt. *sahā*). In order to achieve birth there, one must have aroused the aspiration for enlightenment (*bodaishin*) and advanced to the third of five bodhisattva stages (*go-i*) outlined in Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikā* (Thirty Verses on Consciousness-only). At this point, one will have realized the wisdom free of delusion (*muro-chi*, Skt. *anāsrava-jñāna*) and is sufficiently "pure" to enter Gokuraku. This was considered a rather advanced stage on the bodhisattva path. The realms of Miroku, Kannon, and Śākyamuni, on the other hand, reside within the realm of desire and, thus, one need only have aroused the aspiration for enlightenment in order to achieve birth there. Thus, in the 1201 (three-part) version of the *Kannon kōshiki*, he writes: "If there is someone whose practice and karma are not yet mature and has hindrances to birth in [Amida's] Pure Land, he can first reside in Fudaraku-sen. . . . Birth there is truly easy for the unenlightened *bonpu*."³¹ Jōkei advocated aspiration for Miroku and Kannon's realms precisely because they were easier to attain than birth in Gokuraku.

Jōkei's evangelism, evident most notably in these *kōshiki* texts, also speaks to the importance of "place" in Japanese religiosity, then and now. *Kōshiki* ceremonial rituals were usually linked to the primary image (*honzon*) of the temple where they were performed. They were considered especially efficacious precisely because of their proximity to the auspicious figure that was at the center of the devotional ritual. Ian Reader and George Tanabe make this same observation in their significant study of the "this-worldly" (*genze riyaku*) character of contemporary Japanese religion.³² The healing or soteriological power of Kannon, Miroku, Jizō, etc., is directly proportional to one's spatial proximity to an auspicious image of these figures. It is in part for this reason, as James Foard has observed, that the teachings of Hōnen and later Shinran were so threatening to the established temple network. They represented a "delocation of sacrality" by undermining the fundamentally geographic principle that defined religious devotion, then and now.³³ Moreover, by reducing Buddhism to one practice and one object of devotion, Hōnen undermined the principle of plurality underlying the Mahāyāna tradition.

To conclude this section, it should be evident that Jōkei, despite representing one of the most conservative of the traditional schools, argued emphatically for the necessity of relying on some external power. And there were a plurality of powers and practices that one could turn to. All of this does not make Jōkei unique within the world of pre-modern Japanese Buddhism, however. Reliance on the various sacred forms of power within Buddhism was emphasized since its introduction into Japan. Jōkei simply highlights the problem of depicting “old” Kamakura Buddhists as monastic “self-power” extremists.

Hōnen and Jōkei do, in fact, share a number of characteristics, both biographically and religiously. For example, both emphasize aspiration for pure land birth, reliance on “other-power,” and easier, more accessible practices. Both also spent most of their lives outside the established institutions where their careers originated. At the same time, neither was a complete recluse. Each maintained relations with ranking political and aristocratic figures who were important in the development of their careers. Finally, they are both perceived as dedicated and disciplined monks who upheld the precepts throughout their lives. Nevertheless, there were important differences.

FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES

Jōkei differs decidedly from Hōnen in at least one fundamental way. Other-power alone is not sufficient for ultimate salvation. We must contend with our own inherited karmic disposition. Other-power can never fully overcome the basic law of causality. Underlying Jōkei’s eclectic mix of practices is the fundamental assumption that people possess different capacities for enlightenment. At the conventional level, people, like dharmas, are different. Consequently, there are different sects, different practices, and even different Buddhas and bodhisattvas to worship in accordance with one’s nature. As he writes in the *Kōfukuji sōjō*:

Although polemics abound as to which is greater or lesser, before or behind, there is for each person one teaching he cannot leave, one method he cannot go beyond. Searching his own limits, he finds his proper sect. It is like the various currents finding their source in the great sea, or the multitudes paying court to a single individual.³⁴

Later in the petition he adds:

Numerous sectarian positions arise as occasion demands, and we partake of the good ambrosial medicine [of the Buddha’s varying

teachings] each according to our karmic predispositions. They are all aspects of the True Law which our great teacher Śākyamuni gained for us by difficult and painful labors over innumerable eons. Now to be attached to the name of a single Buddha is completely to obstruct the paths essential for deliverance.³⁵

And finally, in the *Kan'yū dōhōki* (Encouraging Mutual Understanding of the Dharma, date unknown), Jōkei writes:

The spiritual capacity of bodhisattvas is assorted and different. Some are inclined toward sudden realization and others toward gradual realization; some excel in wisdom while others excel in compassion; some are intimidated by defilements (*bonnō*; Skt. *kleśa*) while others are not; and so forth. And there are further distinctions within each of those. Some rely on their innate seeds of enlightenment. Others rely on the capacity of beings they teach. Whether they follow the original vow of the Buddhas who teach or the meritorious power of hearing the true Dharma, at the very first they arouse the aspiration for enlightenment and vow to seek the way.³⁶

The point is that there are various practices within the Buddhist tradition and various Buddhas and bodhisattvas to lead us for a reason: we are not all the same. We each have different “karmic predispositions” and stand at different points along the bodhisattva path. Nevertheless, Jōkei argues that these teachings are all true and consistent with each other just as all dharmas merge into one from the perspective of absolute truth.

In the face of extraordinary diversity within Buddhism, this was, and is, the most traditional response. It is nothing less than an articulation of the principles of *upāya* or “skillful means,” what James Foard has called the “great universalizer of salvation.”³⁷ We may also add that karmic causality, though interpretations of it may vary, is one of the most fundamental doctrines in Buddhism. So, from Jōkei’s perspective, to argue for absolute reliance on the vow and compassion of a particular Buddha was contradictory to fundamental Buddhist doctrine. It was equivalent to abandoning the most basic principles of Buddhism and had significant social implications. Jōkei relied on the doctrine of *upāya* (*hōben*) to reconcile the diversity within Buddhism with Mahāyāna’s universal soteriology.

Faced with the state of medieval Buddhism in Japan, Hōnen and Jōkei represent two forks in the road. Hōnen broke with tradition altogether and, one may argue, introduced an entirely “new” religion around selective Buddhist iconography and textual sources. There were predecessors, but no one had renounced the monastic ideal, the importance of discipline, the

diverse practices, etc., so radically. Here, Hōnen was quite explicit even though his personal life speaks otherwise.

Jōkei, on the other hand, envisioned restoring the monastic ideal, while at the same time expanding the soteriological opportunities for layfolk. He recognized the hypocrisy rampant throughout the established monastic community and was no more satisfied with the status quo than Hōnen. Unlike Hōnen and Shinran, however, Jōkei sought to amend the system based on normative Buddhist values. To call this a “Nara Revival” is problematic if that means to suggest, as it often does, that the goal was to return to the “heyday” of Nara Buddhism. So often explicit in this characterization is the goal of reacquiring the “power” once held by the major Nara sects. I rather see in Jōkei’s efforts an attempt to cling to the idealized tradition of Buddhism. From this perspective, his was a valid normative critique of all the *senju nembutsu* represented. The essence of “*nembutsu* only” was to erase two thousand years of tradition and practice. From Jōkei’s perspective, Hōnen and Shinran did not represent a “reformation,” but an “apostasy.”

CONCLUSION

Returning to the themes of universal and particular, Hōnen and Jōkei offer interesting contrasts. Both would embrace Buddhism as a soteriologically “universal” religion—Buddhist liberation is universally accessible. But Hōnen claimed that only one particular goal and one particular practice is ultimately efficacious. Jōkei, with his differentiated view of human capacity based on the law of causality, perceived the many “particular” practices as a necessity. Put simplistically, spiritual plurality (based on karmic causality) leads to plurality in practice and doctrine, which *enables* universal salvation. The variety of Buddhist teachings and practices are provisional manifestations of the Buddhas’ wisdom and compassion.

In our contemporary world of extraordinary and undeniable religious plurality, Jōkei’s pluralism, while decidedly Buddhist, has striking resonance. One may find Hōnen’s emphasis on singular devotion to Amida and the *nembutsu* or Shinran’s emphasis on “faith” more persuasive or appealing. But we should not allow their rhetorical categories to distort the views of established monks like Jōkei who were neither self-power extremists nor intent upon limiting Buddhist liberation to a chosen few. In fact, I would contend that Jōkei’s emphasis on place and plurality resonates remarkably with contemporary Japanese religion. Jōkei’s eclectic mix of practice and devotion may appear confusing at first; but examined from the perspective of “place,” both physical and anthropological, we can begin to understand the logic underlying it. Though the new Kamakura sects appear dominant

in contemporary Japan, one might well argue that Jōkei's vision and practice has more in common with contemporary Japanese religion than that of his adversaries Hōnen and Shinran. As noted earlier, Reader and Tanabe emphasize the pluralistic character of contemporary Japanese religion. Almost all temples feature a variety of auspicious images offering different practical and religious benefits, and this plurality is true of Pure Land temples as well.³⁸ It is in this pluralistic respect, at least, that contemporary Japanese religion is so fundamentally confluent with pre-modern Japanese religion. Some Pure Land proponents lament that their tradition has lost the truly radical nature of Hōnen and Shinran's vision.³⁹ What these scholars see as lost, namely the radically exclusive claims of Hōnen and Shinran, are the very elements that differentiated them so much from established figures like Jōkei.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Tanaka Hisao, *Kamakura kyū Bukkyō* (hereafter, *KKB*), *Nihon shisō taikei*, vol. 15, eds. Kamata Shigeo and Tanaka Hisao (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971), p. 462. For the original text, see Kujō Kanezane, *Gyokuyō* (Tokyo: Kunaichō Shoryōbu, 1994), p. 662.
2. According to the *Kasuga Gongen genki* (Miracles of the Kasuga Deity), the Kasuga deity appeared in the form of a woman before Myōe. She professed her devotion for Jōkei and especially Myōe. But just before departing, she asked Myōe to pass along an appeal to Jōkei. The *genki* states: "'As for Gedatsu-bō,' she then went on, 'consider that both of you are the same age. It is extraordinary how deeply one feels for him!' She repeated this four or five times. 'However,' she continued, 'I cannot accept his living in seclusion. Do tell him so.'" Royall Tyler, *Miracles of the Kasuga Deity* (New York: Columbia University, 1990), p. 274
3. The traditional reason offered for Jōkei's reclusive move is based on a biography of Jōkei in the *Genkō shakusho* of the early fourteenth century. That text describes Jōkei's righteous indignation at the ill-treatment he received from other monks at the *Saishō-kō* lectures in 1190 because of the simple robes he wore. Hiraoka and Ueda question the historicity of this episode and offer other possible reasons such as his aspiration for birth in Miroku's realm, concern for his health, and, most persuasively from my perspective, his longing for a more serious and less distracting spiritual environment. See Hiraoka Jōkai, *Tōdaiji Sōshō Shōnin no kenkyū narabini shiryō* [hereafter, *TSS*], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkō Kai, 1960), p. 588 and Ueda Sachiko, "Jōkei no shūkyō katsudō ni tsuite," *Historia* 75 (1977), pp. 28–29.
4. This is the *Shichikajō kishōmon*, a pledge addressed to the Tendai abbot Shinshō that was to serve as a guide for the conduct of *senju nembutsu* practitioners. It was submitted in 1204 and signed by approximately 190 of Hōnen's disciples although many signatures are duplicated. For an overview of its contents, see Takagi Yutaka, ed., *Ronshū Nihon Bukkyōshi: Kamakura jidai*, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Yūzankaku Shuppan, 1988), pp. 19–20. Jōkei refers to this text in the final summation of the *Sōjō*. He writes: "In particular, after he had taken up his brush to write his pledge (*kishō*) on the day when the monks of Mount Hiei sent a messenger with additional queries, his disciples told his lay followers: 'The Shōnin's words are all two-sided and don't go to the heart of the matter. Don't be influenced by what you hear from outsiders!' . . . Afterwards there was no change at all in the cleverness of his heretical views. Will the apology this time be the same as the one before?" Robert E. Morrell, *Early Kamakura Buddhism: A Minority Report* (Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1987), p. 88.

5. This was based on a prevalent belief that the Buddhist teachings (Dharma) would degenerate in three distinct stages of time after the Buddha's death. *Mappō* is the third and final of these stages. Various theories existed regarding the length of each period and the date of the Buddha's death, but in Japan, the year 1052 was widely considered to be the threshold of *mappō* in which it was believed that no one could follow the practice of the Buddha's teachings or achieve enlightenment.
6. *Senchaku hongan nembutsu shū*, Taishō shinshū daizōkyō (hereafter, *Taishō*), 85 vols. eds. Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaigyoku (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–34), vol. 83, pp. 4b–6c.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 8b–9a.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 14c–17a.
9. See Andrews, "Hōnen and Popular Pure Land Piety" (unpublished paper, 1993), pp. 8–9. See also Daniel Stevenson, "Pure Land Buddhist Worship and Meditation in China," in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 361–62.
10. For a translation of the entire text, see Morrell, *Early Kamakura Buddhism*, pp. 75–88.
11. See Fukihara Shōshin, "Gedatsu shōnin to sono nembutsu," *Nihon Bukkyō gakkai nenpō* 34 (1969): p. 111; Sasaki Kaoru, *Chūsei kokka no shūkyō kōzō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1988), pp. 87–90 and particularly page 92; and Satō Hiroo, *Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1987), pp. 147–55.
12. Daigan Matsunaga and Alicia Matsunaga, *Foundations of Japanese Buddhism*, vol. 2, *The Mass Movement* (Los Angeles: Buddhist Books International, 1976), pp. 275–76.
13. Sueki Fumihiko, *Nihon Bukkyō shisōshi ronkō* (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1993), pp. 403–405.
14. Ueda, "Jōkei no shūkyō katsudō ni tsuite," p. 45.
15. Both Allan Andrews and Daniel Stevenson conclude that Pure Land was not an independent school in China in the sense that Hōnen and the Japanese Pure Land schools suggest. See Allan Andrews, "The *Senchakushū* in Japanese Religious History: The Founding of the Pure Land School," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 15-3 (1987), p. 481 and Stevenson, "Pure Land Buddhist Worship and Meditation in China," p. 359.
16. Stevenson, "Pure Land Buddhist Worship and Meditation in China," p. 266.
17. See, for example, Andrews, "Hōnen and Popular Pure Land Piety," pp. 8–9.
18. Matsunaga and Matsunaga, *Foundations of Japanese Buddhism*, vol.2, p. 283.

19. Narita Jōkan, "Hōnen Shōnin to Gedatsu Shōnin: jukkai to nembutsu o chūshin toshite," Bukkyō daigaku, ed. *Hōnen Shōnin kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1961), p. 237.
20. Miyajima Shinichi, "Gedatsu Shōnin sakuzenshū," *Gekkan bunkazai* 274 (1986): p. 47.
21. Ōsumi Kazuo, "Buddhism in the Kamakura Period," in *The Cambridge History of Japan: vol. 3 Medieval Japan*, ed. Yamamura Kozo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 546.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 548.
23. Soho Machida, *Renegade Monk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 5.
24. Sueki Fumihiko provides an insightful analysis of factors contributing to this "popular" characterization of new Kamakura Buddhism. In particular, he notes the ideological agenda of the twentieth century Marxist historians who wanted to discern a socially egalitarian revolution in the teachings of Hōnen and especially Shinran. Later *ikkō* uprisings were highlighted to substantiate the revolutionary seeds in the teachings of these figures. As a result, "new" Kamakura Buddhism is labeled "popular" and "egalitarian" while established Buddhism is characterized as "elite" and "aristocratic." Sueki concludes that this ideological interpretation of the period is highly anachronistic and inaccurate. See Sueki Fumihiko, *Kamakura Bukkyō keiseiron: Shisōshi no tachiba kara* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1998), pp. 410–13.
25. *Darani* is a phrase, often the quintessence of a sūtra, that purportedly possesses inordinate mystical power. As with the oral *nembutsu*, recitation of a *darani* evokes those mystical powers. It is also the basis for a fundamental practice within esoteric Buddhism.
26. In the *Kōfukuji sōjō*, there are no less than six references to the time as *mappō*. And in the *Kairitsu saikō ganmon* (Vow for the Restoration of the Precepts), he states that "the Law of the Buddha in these Latter Days [*matsudai*] is not free from considerations of fame and profit" (Morrell, *Early Kamakura Buddhism*, p. 7). On the other hand, Taira Masayuki cites three instances in which Jōkei clearly saw himself at the end of the Imitation Dharma (*zōbō*) based on the traditional Hossō view that 1392 marked the beginning of *mappō*. In the *Kasuga daimyōjin hotsugammon*, Jōkei explicitly states that "now is the time of the Imitation Dharma." See Taira Masayuki, *Nihon chūsei no shakai to Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1992), pp. 129ff.
27. *Busshari Kannon daishi hotsugammon*, in *Nihon Daizōkyō* (hereafter, *ND*), vol. 64, *Hossōshū-shōso* (Tokyo: Suzuki Gakujutsu Shuppan, 1973–78), p. 33a7–11.

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28. *Ibid.*, pp. 33a17–33b2. Note that this is at least one instance in which Jōkei specifically uses the term *ōjō* to designate birth in a land other than Amida's Gokuraku.
29. *Shin'yō shō*, *ND*, vol. 63, pp. 353a16–353b.
30. Twenty-nine of Jōkei's *kōshiki* texts are extant. The next most prolific authors were Myōe (16), Kakuban (16), and Genshin (10). See the *Kōshiki Database Website* maintained by Niels Guelberg at <http://faculty.web.waseda.ac.jp/guelberg/koshiki/datenb-j.htm>.
31. *Kannon kōshiki*, *Taishō*, vol. 84, p. 887a.
32. See Ian Reader and George Tanabe, *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), pp. 50–70.
33. See James H. Foard, "What One Kamakura Story Does: Practice, Place, and Text in the Account of Ippen at Kumano," in *Re-Visioning "Kamakura" Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), pp. 109–11.
34. See Morrell, *Early Kamakura Buddhism*, 76; for original text, see *KKB*, p. 312.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 78; for original text, see *KKB*, 313.
36. *Kan'yū dōhōki*, in *ND*, vol. 64, p. 11b4–11.
37. James Foard, "What One Kamakura Story Does," p. 110.
38. Observing this dimension of contemporary Japanese religion, Reader and Tanabe write: "Temples and shrines recognize the importance of plurality and hence of reinforcing the power of prayers for practical benefits by utilizing more than one deity or shrine, especially in times of great need" (Reader and Tanabe, *Practically Religious*, p. 189).
39. See, for example, Machida, *Renegade Monk*, p. 152.