

Jōkei and the Rhetoric of “Other-Power” and “Easy Practice” in Medieval Japanese Buddhism

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In medieval Japan, Hōnen and Shinran appropriated the rhetoric of “other-power” and “easy-practice” to validate their radical doctrines and draw dividing lines between themselves and the established schools of the day. In this essay, I argue that these are not useful categories for understanding the religious dynamics of the period. Like the rhetorical distinctions of Mahāyāna/Hīnayāna and sudden/gradual in earlier Buddhist debates, these polemical labels had only a marginal relationship to the schisms of the day. An examination of the writings and practices of Jōkei (1155–1213), a prominent monk of the Hossō school and contemporary of Hōnen, reveals that “other-power” and “easy-practice” were, in fact, valued features on both sides of the debate. As a representative of “established” Buddhism, Jōkei was not unique in this respect, but he serves as a useful example to problematize the frequent adoption of these categories in interpretations of “Kamakura Buddhism.”

Keywords: Jōkei — *jiriki* — *tariki* — Pure Land — Kamakura Buddhism — *nenbutsu* — Hōnen — Shinran — *kōshiki*

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.

—JŌKEI, *Busshari Kannon Daishi Hotsuganmon*

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 supernatural intervention (*myōga* 冥加).

—JŌKEI, *Shin’yō shō*

SELF-POWER/OTHER-POWER (*Jiriki/tariki* 自力/他力) and difficult practice/easy practice (*nangyō/igyō* 難行/易行) were well-established rhetorical categories within Buddhism dating at least to fifth-century (CE) China and have even appeared as analytical categories in the study of religion more broadly. Within the medieval Japanese context, they became purported dividing lines between opposing forces in the transformation and interpretation of Buddhism. These rhetorical distinctions were especially central to the teachings of the so-called “New Kamakura” founders Hōnen 法然 and Shinran 親鸞.

While recent scholarship on medieval Japanese religion has clearly progressed beyond simplistic distinctions between “new” and “old” Kamakura Buddhism based on categories such as self/other power or difficult/easy practice, the influence of these dualities persists and is still perpetuated in popular literature. For example, the popular novelist Hiroyuki ITSUKI writes the following in the preface to a recent book detailing his personal and philosophical odyssey toward illumination entitled *Tariki: Embracing Despair and Discovering Peace*.

Tariki is one of the most important concepts in Japanese Buddhism, one which first emerged during a period of tremendous upheaval and suffering in Japan, a time that called into question humanity’s efforts to control its destiny. *Tariki* stands in contrast to “Self-Power,” or *jiriki*. Since its beginnings in India, Buddhism has taught a long and arduous path of practice to reach enlightenment. This personal effort made to achieve enlightenment is a manifestation of Self-Power. *Tariki*, on the other hand, is the recognition of the great, all-encompassing power of the Other—in this case, the Buddha and his ability to enlighten us—and the simultaneous recognition of the individual’s utter powerlessness in the face of the realities of the human condition. It is, in my opinion, a more realistic, more mature, and more quintessentially modern philosophy than Self-Power, and it is a philosophy that can be a great source of strength to live in our world today. (2001, xvi–xvii)

While I in no way mean to demean the spiritual benefit Itsuki appears to have discovered in the concept and teaching of *tariki*, this passage reflects clearly the perpetuated sectarian, but woefully inaccurate, Pure Land rhetoric of *tariki* as a “new” concept of the Kamakura period (discovered by Hōnen and Shinran) and the depiction of all prior Buddhism as a “self-power” teaching. The assertion that the “new” Kamakura schools represented the first forms of Buddhism available to the masses, precisely because they offered simple, more accessible

practices, remains surprisingly prevalent.¹ Much recent scholarship, stemming in part from the ground-breaking insights of Kuroda Toshio, focuses on the socio-political dimensions of the Buddhist transformation taking place during the late Heian and early Kamakura periods. But here as well, there is an enduring tendency to draw strict distinctions between “new” and “old” Buddhism based more now on a socio-political rubric of interpretation as opposed to the dichotomies noted above.² These socio-political interpretations are invariably linked to, and in some ways based on, the doctrinal and soteriological rhetoric of figures like Hōnen and Shinran. So there remains an often unacknowledged connection with the old interpretive framework (self-power vs. other-power, difficult practices vs. easy practices, and aristocratic Buddhism vs. popular Buddhism). Though there is not space to explore this issue further here, suffice it to say that we have not fully transcended the simplistic distinctions evident in Itsuki’s excerpt.

In this essay, I would like to examine more closely the categories of other-power and easy practice in the writings of Jōkei 貞慶 (1155–1213), a prominent monk of the Hossō school and oft-noted critic of Hōnen’s *senju nenbutsu* 専修念仏 movement. I will begin with an overview of the early development of the analytical distinctions between difficult/easy practices and self-/other-power in China and their adaptation to the medieval Japanese context. I will then review Jōkei’s own use of the terms, especially in the context of his broader religious worldview and practice. I hope to show that the “new” Kamakura founders did not hold a monopoly on the advocacy of “other-power” or the offering of more accessible practices in the pursuit of Buddhist liberation. Characterizations of monks within estab-

¹ For relatively recent examples, see SUZUKI (1988, p. 46) and MACHIDA (1999, p. 5). 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 “founded” sects) “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.” He goes on to assert that Hōnen’s *senju nenbutsu* teaching was “epoch-making” because “for the first time Buddhism’s path of salvation was opened to people without specialized religious training or discipline” (ŌSUMI 1993, pp. 546–48).

² For example, TAIRA Masayuki draws a sharp distinction between new and old Buddhism and interprets the exclusive soteriological claims of the former as implicit protests against the *kenmitsu* orthodoxy and the socio-political system that it legitimated. Thus, he argues that “simple practices” within *kenmitsu* orthodoxy were simple in name only and it took Hōnen’s radically universal and soteriologically egalitarian teaching of the *senju nenbutsu* to truly live up to the label (1992, pp. 197–98). For other examples of this tendency to dichotomize “new” and “old” Buddhism, see SASAKI KAORU (1988, pp. 87–92), SATŌ HIROO (1987, pp. 147–55), and ŌSUMI and NAKAO (1998, p. 14).

lished Buddhism, both by the new founders and contemporary scholars, as “self-power” extremists are seriously flawed and gravely distort the religious and social dynamics of the period.

Easy Practice and Other-Power in China and Japan

The distinction between difficult/easy practices and the rubric of “*jiriki-tariki*” had a long history well before the time of Jōkei and Hōnen. It is perhaps not too presumptuous to assume that such rhetoric is an extension of the trend toward devotional worship within Buddhism from the first century forward. This was augmented by early Mahāyāna developments in cosmology, including myriad Buddha-lands and a growing population of deified buddhas.³ Early Mahāyāna sutras and commentaries emphasized that the accumulated merit of buddhas and advanced bodhisattvas, the byproduct of their spiritual cultivation, represented, as it were, reservoirs of “other-power” that ordinary beings might draw from through acts of devotion. Thus, one might well argue that the notion of “other-power” is at least suggested in the trend toward devotionalism within the Buddhism of this time and even the stūpa worship of earlier Buddhism. By the time Buddhism began to proliferate in China, many popular texts were more explicit about these “other powers.” For example, in the *Amitābha Contemplation Sutra* (*Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* 觀無量壽經; J. *Kanmuryōju-kyō*), a text now considered almost certainly a Chinese apocryphon, Śākya-muni emphasizes to the king’s consort Vaidehī the importance of the three acts of merit—upholding moral virtues, following the precepts, and awakening the aspiration for enlightenment—and then declares, “By the power of the Buddha, everyone will behold the Pure Land as though seeing their own reflection in a polished mirror” (T 12, 341c). And an explicit distinction between “difficult path” and “easy path” appears in the *Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā-śāstra* (J. *Jūjū-bibasha-ron* 十住毘婆沙論, T 26, no. 1521), a commentary on the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* (doubtfully) attributed to Nāgārjuna for which only a Chinese version, translated by Kumārajīva, survives (WILLIAMS 1989, p. 257). In expounding on the pursuit of the stage of non-retrogression (first *bhūmi*), “Nāgārjuna” contrasts the bodhisattva path of austerity and self-effort, which he likens to a long journey on foot, with the path to liberation through the power and mercy of the Buddha, which is comparable to a journey by ship.

³ It is not unreasonable to connect this trend within Buddhism to the wider pan-Indian bhakti movement that appeared around the third century BCE. Alan ANDREWS, among others, has noted this connection in tracing the origins of the *nenbutsu* practice (1973, pp. 5–6).

T'an-luan 曇鸞 (J. Donran, 476–542), an early Chinese Pure Land devotee, relying on Kumārajīva's fifth century translation of Nāgārjuna's commentary, maintained the distinction between the Path of Difficult Practice and the Path of Easy Practice in realizing the stage of non-retrogression (INAGAKI 1998, pp. 65–69). He appears to have been the first to use the term “other-power” with respect to Amitābha and Amitābha's vow. Tao-ch'o 道綽 (J. Dōshaku, 562–645), the second patriarch of the Jōdo-shū according to Hōnen's lineal construction, is considered the first to articulate the distinction between the Path of Sages (*shōdōmon* 聖道門) and the Path to Birth in the Pure Land (*jōdomon* 淨土門) in the *An-lo chi* 安樂集 (*Collection on the Land of Bliss*; J. *Anraku-shū*) based on his reading of the *Amitābha Contemplation Sutra*. Tao-ch'o asserted that those born in the time of the Final Age (*mappō* 末法) should rely on Amitābha to achieve birth in the Pure Land. Tao-ch'o's most famous student Shan-tao 善導 (J. Zendō, 613–681) adopted this distinction between the Path of Sages and the Pure Land Path, ensuring its widespread adoption within Pure Land circles. Also worth noting is Chan-jan 湛然 (J. Tannen, 717–782), the ninth patriarch and well-known restorer of T'ien-t'ai in China, who emphasized the “other-power” of Amitābha in his *Discourse on the Ten Doubts Concerning the Pure Land Birth*.⁴ And, finally, Japanese Heian monks such as Genshin 源信 (942–1017), Yōkan 永觀 (1033–1111), and Chinkai 珍海 (1091–1152), among others, all emphasized the other-power of Amida in their Pure Land teachings.⁵ In short, the dichotomy between difficult practices (e.g., meditative practices requiring years of monastic training) and easy practices that were accessible to the common lay practitioner was indelibly linked to the distinction between self-power and other-power. Various expressions of this rubric had wide precedence throughout all of the schools in Japan during the Heian period. Moreover, the growing use of these categories is perhaps related, in part, to the increasing emphasis on the perceived hindrances of *mappō*. An obvious point here is that such distinctions were not new even among monks of the established schools in Japan prior to the Kamakura period. Thus, we will see that

⁴ *Ching-t'u shih-i lun* 淨土十疑論, T 47, no. 1961. See INAGAKI's translation of this portion of the text (1995, pp. 121–23).

⁵ Jichihan 實範 (d. 1144) is often included in this list of Japanese Pure Land patriarchs. However, as Marc BUIJNSTER's recent study (1999) reveals, Jichihan (Jippan) was somewhat unique in his esoteric interpretation of Pure Land practice. He emphasized the non-dual or undifferentiated nature of Amida's Pure Land and this world, and rarely mentioned being “born” in Amida's paradise. Buijnsters notes that Jichihan's *Byōchū shugyōki* (病中修行記) differs from more conventionally esoteric texts such as Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū* in that it does not advocate reliance on the other-power of Amida but rather on the practitioners own efforts (1999, pp. 65–67).

it was quite natural for Jōkei, without any provocation from Hōnen, to incorporate such concepts into his own teachings.

HŌNEN, SHINRAN, AND “OTHER-POWER”
IN THE RHETORIC OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM

Although the Chinese patriarchs adopted the rhetoric of easy practice and other-power to promote Pure Land devotion, it does not appear that they ever intended to abandon the traditional monastic practices. Rather, these labels became rhetorical axes in competing efforts, among other reasons, to appeal to broader audiences beyond the monastery proper. Hōnen was the first to appropriate such rhetoric within a soteriologically exclusive framework.

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 (*gokuraku* 極樂; Sk. *sukhāvati*). In 1198, Hōnen wrote the *Senchaku hongan nenbutsu shū* 選択本願念仏集 (Passages on the Selection of the Nenbutsu in the Original Vow; hereafter, *Senchakushū*) at the behest of Chancellor (*kanpaku* 関白) Kujō Kanezane 九条兼実, a text that delineates the doctrinal and scriptural basis for an independent Pure Land sect.⁶ The central thesis of the *Senchakushū*, as implied by its title, is the assertion that only the vocal *nenbutsu* yields birth (*ōjō* 往生) into Amida’s Pure Land.⁷ Hōnen adopted the term *senju nenbutsu* (exclusive *nenbutsu*) for this radical doctrine. Most of the text endeavors to justify why *nenbutsu* **recitation** is the only efficacious practice for achieving *ōjō*. Because the world had entered the last age of the Dharma (*mappō*), Hōnen argued that no one has the capacity to follow the traditional practices.⁸ Borrowing from Chi-

⁶ 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 guess 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 sufficient clues from Hōnen’s public lectures and hearsay for the established schools to discern the gist of his ideas. A petition sponsored by Tendai monks at Enryaku-ji 延暦寺 was submitted to the court in 1204, which precipitated Hōnen’s apologetic Seven Article Pledge (*Shichikajō kishōmon*). And Jōkei’s *Kōfuku-ji-sōjō* 興福時奏状 petition to the court in 1205 makes it readily evident that the fundamental tenets of the *Senchakushū* were widely known by that time.

⁷ For Hōnen, the vocal *nenbutsu* is the repeated recitation of the phrase “namu Amida butsu” or “I pay homage to Amida Buddha.”

⁸ 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. See STONE 1985 and NATTIER 1991.

nese devotees to Amida Buddha—namely T’an-luan, Tao-ch’o, and Shan-tao, as well as tenth-century Japanese monk Genshin, who wrote the *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集—Hōnen makes the familiar distinctions between the Path of Sages and the Pure Land Path, difficult and easy practices, and right practices and miscellaneous practices. Hōnen rarely uses the specific terms *jiriki* and *tarik* in the *Senchakushū*, but it is readily evident that the sagely practices are difficult precisely because one must rely on self-power.⁹ Hōnen then proceeds to justify his abandonment of the path of sages altogether:

Now, the reason why [Tao-ch’o], in this [*An-lo chi*], set up the distinction between the two gateways of the Holy Path and the Pure Land was to teach people to reject the gateway of the Holy Path in favor of entering the gateway of the Pure Land. There are two reasons for this preference: one is that the passing away of the Great Enlightened One has now receded far into the distant past, and the other is that the ultimate principle is profound while human understanding is shallow.

(SETP 60; T 83, 2a20–23)

Thus, Hōnen asserts that Tao-ch’o abandoned the traditional practices in favor of Pure Land devotion because of the temporal distance from Śākyamuni and the concomitant deterioration of human spiritual capacity.

Critical, of course, is Hōnen’s emphasis on Amida’s selection (*senchaku* 選択) of the *nenbutsu*, which he interpreted as a rejection of all other practices.

It is therefore clear that since the *nenbutsu* is easy, it is open to everyone, while the various other practices are not open to people of all capacities because they are difficult. Was it not in order to bring all sentient beings without exception to birth that he [Dharmākara] in his original vow cast aside the difficult practice and selected the easy one?

(SETP 77; T 83, 5c23–25)

Hōnen goes on to dramatically assert in chapter seven that the “Light of Amida does not illuminate those who engage in other practices, but embraces only those who practice the *nenbutsu*” (SETP 96; T 83, 9a17–18).

Hōnen deviated from Tao-ch’o, Shan-tao, and Genshin in two

⁹ This is made explicitly clear in Hōnen’s reliance on T’an-luan who noted that practices are difficult or easy precisely because they rely on self-power and other-power, respectively. See *Senchakushū* T 83, 2a26–28.

important ways. First, he rejected the efficacy of all practices other than recitation of the *nenbutsu*. And second, he contended that the meaning of “*nenbutsu*” or “*nien-fo*,” within both Amida’s vows and Shan-tao’s interpretation, is “verbal recitation” only. He effectively reduced all prior classifications of *nenbutsu* practice (such as 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 (ANDREWS 1993, pp. 8–9; STEVENSON 1995, pp. 361–62). In other words, it is inaccurate to say that Shan-tao stressed only the verbal *nenbutsu*.

As many have noted, there is also a problematic tension between Hōnen’s exclusive *senju nenbutsu* rhetoric and his own personal practice that included devout adherence to the monastic precepts, a variety of contemplative practices, and various ritual performances. George TANABE conjectures that Hōnen’s more conventional personal practices may have been an intentional facade to deflect criticism of his more radical teaching (1992, p. 88). This is a difficult explanation to accept because it would mean that the preponderance of Hōnen’s personal religious life was a deception.¹⁰ A more plausible explanation is offered by Soho MACHIDA who fully acknowledges this tension with respect to Hōnen’s personal contemplative practices and the “mystical” experiences that grew out of them:

It is unlikely that such an experience did not influence his view of *nenbutsu*. As a rule, however, he kept the visions to himself because making them public would have shaken the foundations of his own teaching, exclusive-*nenbutsu*. Hōnen surely practiced what he preached, but he did not preach all that he practiced. (1999, p. 66)

This appears to be an explicit admission by one sympathetic scholar that Hōnen’s “exclusive-*nenbutsu*” teaching was more a rhetorical strategy than absolute principle.

Shinran, the most prominent of Hōnen’s disciples, carried his master’s teaching to its logical conclusion by emphatically dismissing all practices and teachings other than the oral *nenbutsu* as well as the fundamental distinction between monks and lay folk. He was also notably more explicit in framing the dichotomy in terms of self-power and other-power. While the *Tannishō* 歎異鈔 is not, strictly speaking, the work of Shinran’s direct hand, there is little doubt that the following well-known passage is a fair representation of his teaching:

¹⁰ See HIROKAWA 1998, pp. 41–44, for another innovative, though somewhat convoluted, hermeneutical effort to overcome this apparent tension.

Even a virtuous man can attain Rebirth in the Pure Land, how much more easily a wicked man! But ordinary people usually say: “Even a wicked man can attain Rebirth in the Pure Land, how much more easily a virtuous man.” At first sight, this view may appear more reasonable, but it really goes quite contrary to the intention of the Other Power of the Original Vow. The reason is that since a man who does deeds of merit by his own effort lacks total reliance on the Other Power, he is self-excluded from Amida’s Original Vow. But as soon as his attitude of self-effort is redirected and he dedicates himself exclusively to the Other Power, his Rebirth in the True Land of Reward is at once assured.

(SHŌJUN and STEWART 1980, p. 61)

For Shinran, radical and absolute faith in Amida’s vow was essential for rebirth and this precluded any notion of self-effort. He took the rhetorical category of “other-power” to its extreme and, in doing so, tried to overcome an implicit tension in Hōnen’s own message. Any notion that one can effect birth in Amida’s paradise even remotely is foolish and self-centered. It is only the grace of Amida that enables this as even a possibility and one must have complete faith in this blessing.

In his *Shinran’s Gospel of Pure Grace*, now in its ninth printing, Alfred BLOOM describes the tension within the self-/other-power rhetoric and Shinran’s resolution this way:

From T’an-luan to Hōnen, the practice [of the recitation of the *nenbutsu*] was regarded as a *means for acquiring the necessary merit to gain birth* in the Pure Land. The devotee could view his practice as his own effort to attain it, albeit the practice was given by Amida Buddha and rooted in Other Power. At the heart of Pure Land faith there was a mixture of the conceptions of self power and Other Power. The practice as established by Amida Buddha is Other Power, because its ultimate effect is dependent on the virtue of Amida Buddha’s name resident in the formula. However, the recitation depends on the volition of the devotee, else the virtue of the name could never be realized.... Therefore, in the tradition before Shinran there was an implicit reliance on self in the attainment of salvation. He declared for the first time in the Pure Land tradition a clear understanding of absolute Other Power and the implications of this perspective for faith and practice. (1965, p. 25)

Shinran thus attempted to resolve an underlying variance in the rhetoric of self-power and other-power.

Even if Amida graciously transmits his meritorious power through the simple recitation of the *nenbutsu*, many have pointed out that there still appears to be some measure of self-power or intentional volition in the very act of recitation by the practitioner. This leaves aside the more obvious conflict with various Pure Land passages, pointed out by Jōkei, Myōe, and later Nichiren, that emphasize the importance of moral virtues and precept adherence. Shinran, following to some degree in Hōnen's footsteps, shifts the emphasis from the objective practice to a particular subjective state of mind (*shinjin* 信心) achieved not through one's volitional choice nor even the realization of one's necessary dependence on Amida's power and compassionate gift. Rather, "faith" for Shinran was aroused through Amida's very vow within the mind of the devotee. As profound as Shinran's insight might be, it is difficult to argue that he fully resolved the tension between self-power and other-power in the phenomenological manifestations of Pure Land practice any more than Kierkegaard's radical "leap of faith" resolved the issue within the Christian tradition. Thus, this tension continues to be a problem within contemporary Shin theology.¹¹

Jōkei and the Rhetoric of Self-Power and Easy Practice

I will pursue two broad objectives in the following analysis. First, for those unfamiliar with Jōkei, this will serve as an introduction to his life and important dimensions of his religious practice. Second, I will endeavor to examine Jōkei's own use and perspective of the rhetorical categories reviewed above.

JŌKEI: A BIOGRAPHY

Jōkei (1155–1213), posthumously known as Gedatsu Shōnin 解脱上人, was born into the once-powerful Fujiwara clan.¹² At the ripe age of seven, Jōkei was sent to Kōfuku-ji in Nara due largely to the exile of his father Sadanori subsequent to the Heiji disturbance. Four years later, he took the tonsure at Kōfuku-ji and trained under his uncle Kakuken 覚憲 (1131–1212), who later became superintendent of Kōfuku-ji, and Zōshun 藏俊 (1104–1180), a prominent Hossō scholar-monk. Available records tell us little of Jōkei's early years of study, but

¹¹ See for example HIROTA's discussion of the "turmoil over three kinds of religious acts" (*sangō wakuran*) during the mid-eighteenth century (2000, pp. 8–12) and his effort to overcome the implicit tension between faith and practice in Shin doctrine (pp. 47–50).

¹² There are several useful biographical overviews of Jōkei. In particular, see HIRAOKA Jōkai (1960, pp. 576–648), TANAKA Hisao (1971, pp. 461–69), and UEDA Sachiko (1977, pp. 27–46). In English, see MORRELL (1987, pp. 66–75) and FORD (1999, pp. 12–23).

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 維摩会 at Kōfuku-ji and within four years (1186) held the prestigious position of lecturer (*kōshi* 講師) for the same assembly.¹³ This was followed by at least six appearances at the major yearly lectures over the next five years. Following his performance in the 1191 Hōjō-ji lectures, held on the anniversary of the death of Kujō Kanezane's eldest son, Yoshimichi 良通, 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*).¹⁴

Kanezane, chancellor 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 Kasagi-dera 笠置寺, a somewhat remote mountain temple about twelve kilometers northeast of Nara and Kōfuku-ji. Despite appeals from Kujō Kanezane (and even the Kasuga deity, if we are to believe the *Kasuga Gongen genki-e* 春日権現験記絵), Jōkei actually did move in the fall of the following year.¹⁵ Though this did not prove to be a complete disengagement from worldly affairs, it was nevertheless a clear move toward a life of reclusion (*tonsei* 遁世). It also turned out to be a decided rejection of what had every indication of becoming a very successful career in the Kōfuku-ji 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.¹⁶

¹³ This was the annual lecture on the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* given at Kōfuku-ji in the tenth month.

¹⁴ Quoted in KKB, 462. For the original text, see *Gyokuyō* 玉葉, vol. 3, 662.

¹⁵ 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’” (TYLER 1990, p. 274).

¹⁶ The traditional reason offered for Jōkei's reclusive move is based on a biography of Jōkei in the *Genkō shakusho* 元享釈書 of the early fourteenth century (BZ 101:203b–204a). That text describes Jōkei's righteous indignation at the ill-treatment he received from other monks at the *Saishō-kō* 最勝講 lectures in 1190 because of the simple robes he wore. Repulsed by the superficial values pervading the monastic world, he decided then to seek a life of serious study and practice. Hiraoka rightly questions the historicity of this episode since Jōkei had already appeared at these lectures and, given his aristocratic background, would

Kasagi-dera was not, however, an altogether obscure temple. It featured a massive cliff-carved image of Miroku 弥勒 (Sk. Maitreya) dating from the eighth century and claimed many prominent visitors.¹⁷ Over the next fifteen years at Kasagi-dera, Jōkei was involved in various *kanjin* 勧進 (solicitation) campaigns, temple reconstructions, and numerous public appearances. He also promoted a wide variety of Buddhist devotions and practices among lay folk. It was during these years at Kasagi, in 1205, that Jōkei wrote the *Kōfuku-ji sōjō*, his now famous petition to the court on behalf of the eight established schools appealing for a censure of Hōnen's *senju nenbutsu* teaching. Three years later in 1208, after expanding Kasagi-dera considerably, Jōkei moved to Kaijusen-ji 海住山寺, another remote temple dedicated to Kannon Bodhisattva 觀音菩薩 (Avalokiteśvara).¹⁸ 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.

Research on Jōkei is miniscule in comparison to studies of most other prominent figures of the Kamakura period, especially the new sect founders. Nevertheless, he is widely recognized as one of the most revered monks of his lifetime. As a result, he is often referenced in historical overviews, but with little detail or analysis. These references tend to highlight three aspects of Jōkei's life. First, he is perhaps most famous for authoring the *Kōfuku-ji sōjō*. Second, he is often cited as a “revivalist” of Nara Buddhism or a “reformer” of “old Buddhism” (*kyū-Bukkyō*). Here, many scholars highlight his efforts to “revive” the traditional monastic precepts. Finally, he is distinguished for his highly eclectic collection of devotions and practices, in contrast to the exclusive, single practice teachings of the “new” Kamakura founders. We will touch on each of these dimensions in this analysis.

One of the overriding themes throughout Jōkei's religious life is his

certainly have known of the dress protocol. HIRAOKA suggests other reasons for Jōkei's reclusive move including his desire for rebirth in Miroku's Pure Land, anxiety over his own health, and his unrest concerning the scholarly life at Kōfuku-ji (1960, p. 588). UEDA offers another very plausible explanation. She points out that in 1182, Jōkei vowed to participate in a collaborative effort, dedicated to Kasagi-dera, to copy the entire six hundred fascicles of the *Daihannyakyo*. The completion of this project in 1192 coincides with Jōkei's decision to move to Kasagi-dera. UEDA conjectures that this decision may have been a result of Jōkei's frustration at only having copied one fascicle of the sutra in eleven years (1977, pp. 28–29).

¹⁷ Examples include Fujiwara Munetada in 1118, Fujiwara Yorimichi (regent to the throne) during the Manju era (1024–1027), and Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa during the Angen era (1175–1176). See GOODWIN 1994, pp. 50–51.

¹⁸ Both Kasagi-dera and Kaijusen-ji qualify as cultic centers and exemplify the continuity between the new and old forms of Buddhism during the Kamakura period. James DOBBINS has proposed cultic centers as a possible model for understanding the dynamics of medieval Buddhism. Such a model, he argues, “attenuates the distinctions typically posed between Old and New Buddhism” (1998, p. 37).

emphatic affirmation of the necessary reliance on other-powers in the universe. We see this in a number of inter-related dimensions of his religious life and teachings. Here I would like to focus on three areas—his eclectic devotions, practices, and Pure Land aspirations. As we will see, Jōkei never advocated “exclusive” reliance on “other-power,” but it was clearly a necessary component for spiritual progress.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL CATEGORY OF “DEVOTION”

In the following analysis, I will frequently reference Jōkei’s “religious devotion.” By devotion, I am referring not to the broad category of religious worship, but to a specific form that centers on a personal manifestation of ultimate reality. Dale CANNON defines the way of devotion as the “cultivation of a personal relationship to *ultimate reality* of whole-hearted adoration, devotional surrender to its transforming grace, and trust in its providential care” (1996, p. 58). While this understanding of devotion is most commonly associated with theistic religions, Pure Land Buddhism is often cited as an exception to this rule (KINSLEY 1987, p. 322). In truth, the objects of religious devotion range far beyond theistic representations. Ancestors, spiritual leaders such as saints and gurus, Sage Kings in Confucianism, and of course buddhas and bodhisattvas are but a few examples of the divine personages that are the objects of devotion in various traditions. Relics, ritual objects, and sacred texts are also prominent examples. In most cases, these objects are deemed to possess sacred power and proper devotional practices are believed to be a means of accessing that power.

Within Hinduism, devotion came to represent a distinct religious path known as *bhaktimarga* or the “path of devotion” that involved establishing a personal relationship with a divine figure. This path developed from about 500 BCE through the first millennium CE and is reflected in the epic narrative traditions (e.g., *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*), the mythological accounts known as Purānas, and Tamil poetry collections.¹⁹ There is little question that this devotional tradition had a significant influence on early Buddhist practices including relic and stūpa worship, pilgrimages to sacred sites, and veneration of Śākyamuni and prominent Buddhist saints (*arhant*). David KINSLEY notes that, in the context of competing religious paths, there are often similar arguments for the efficacy of devotion (1987, pp. 321–26; see also CARMAN 1987, pp. 130–33). We find that in both Hinduism and Buddhism, the devotional movement prospered most

¹⁹ For a useful overview of the bhakti tradition within Hinduism, see FLOOD 1996, pp. 103–47.

when there was a growing belief in the degenerate state of the world. In Buddhism, of course, this was evidenced by the “discourse of decline” with respect to the Buddhist Dharma (see NATTIER 1991). A similar and perhaps influential theory was also present in Hinduism known as *kaliyuga* (the “age of Kali”). Given this widespread belief and the consequent limitations on human spiritual capacities, “devotion” is said to be an easier path to salvation than ascetic practices, rigorous meditation, or philosophical inquiry for example. Interestingly, the emergence of this “devotional” dimension within Indian religion did not engender exclusive claims concerning salvation. Though one might be a devotee of Shiva, Vishnu, or Kali, one still participates in the communal rituals such as those to Sarasvatī, the fire god Agni, or countless other deities featured in annual festivals.

JŌKEI'S BUDDHIST PLURALISM—OTHER-POWERS AND EASY PRACTICES

Jōkei's religious life is perhaps best characterized by its pluralism in terms of both devotional objects and religious practices.²⁰ This pluralism is evident in the most prolific category of Jōkei's writings, which might be labeled “devotional” texts.²¹ Virtually all these texts advocate certain practices and/or devotion to particular figures or objects. Currently, there are at least thirty-nine of Jōkei's extant texts that can be classified under this rubric. Among these are twenty-nine *kōshiki* 講式 texts, a literary genre in which Jōkei authored almost twice as many as any other figure.²² These texts generally praise the virtues of a particular buddha, bodhisattva, or sacred scripture and were broadly intended to enhance piety toward the featured object of devotion (*honzon* 本尊). The ritual, conducted on an annual or sometimes monthly basis before an image of the featured object, was highly performative, involved audience participation, and has been characterized as a *min-*

²⁰ “Pluralism” is not a term without problems. In its modern usage within the context of religious studies, it often refers to the multiplicity among or between a variety of religious systems. That is clearly not my intention here since Jōkei was fundamentally “Buddhist” and did not recognize soteriological alternatives beyond Buddhism proper as far as we can tell. Nevertheless, pluralism seems to me to be the best term to describe Jōkei's recognition and advocacy of the many efficacious practices, objects of devotion, texts, and so forth within the Buddhist tradition that any devotee might turn to for help. Thus, “pluralism” here is limited by the adjective “Buddhist” to recognize this constraint.

²¹ Jōkei's extensive corpus also included texts on Hossō doctrine, Indian logic, and monastic precepts.

²² For a useful overview of *kōshiki*, see TSUKUDO 1966. In English, see GUELBERG 1993, pp. 67–81. Twenty-nine of Jōkei's *kōshiki* texts are extant. The next most prolific authors were Myōe (16), Kakuban (16), and Genshin (10). For an up-to-date listing of extant *kōshiki* texts by author, see the *Kōshiki Database Website* maintained by Niels Guelberg at <http://faculty.web.waseda.ac.jp/guelberg/koshiki/datenb-j.htm>.

shūteki (popular) form of *hō-e* 法会.²³ A *kōshiki* audience was made up largely of laypersons of various social backgrounds depending on where the ritual was conducted.

Jōkei’s prominence within this genre suggests that he must have been a charismatic performer since one had to be invited to write and deliver such liturgies. Also, given the rather “popular” audience that attended such services, accusations of established Buddhism as “elitist” would appear to be wide of the mark as far as Jōkei is concerned. I would contend that *kōshiki* texts and their attendant rituals may legitimately be seen as part of an effort to broaden the appeal of and access to Buddhism beyond the monastery proper. This will become more apparent as we examine the content of these texts. Śākyamuni, Miroku, and Kannon were each the focus of at least five of Jōkei’s devotional texts. The Kasuga deity 春日 (3), Jizō 地藏 (Kṣitigarbha) (2), Yakushi 藥師 (Bhaiṣajyaguru) (1), and the *Lotus Sutra* (1), among others, also drew the notice of his devotional pen.²⁴ Such *kōshiki* and *ganmon* 願文 rituals were designed to foster a karmic connection (*kechien* 結縁) between participants and the featured object. In this sense, these rituals were not unlike the *pūja* of Indian religion.

Some scholars perceive a logical pattern to Jōkei’s devotional eclecticism. For example, a number argue that beneath all of these is an unwavering devotion to Śākyamuni and a longing for a return to the origins of Buddhism.²⁵ Others discern confusion in Jōkei’s multiplicity.²⁶ I, on the other hand, argue that at the core is a devotion to what I call the “triumvirate” of Śākyamuni, Kannon, and Miroku (FORD 1999, pp. 92–109). As noted above, there are no less than fifteen texts devoted to these illustrious figures that represent the past, present, and future,

²³ Tsukudo Reikan considers *kōshiki* a *minshūteki* ritual performance because of the general audiences it attracted. In contrast, *hō-e* were considerably more elaborate and performed before largely monastic and aristocratic audiences (TSUKUDO 1966, pp. 324–450). Myōe was known to perform in the open air or in the house of followers if the weather was severe (GUELBERG 1993, p. 265).

²⁴ See the References for a list of selected *kōshiki* authored by Jōkei.

²⁵ See, for example, YASUI (1981, p. 38), NARITA (1958, pp. 72–75), HAYAMI (1971, pp. 193–202), and IMAHORI (1979, p. 650). All of these scholars perceive Jōkei’s emphasis on *shari* worship as well as precept revival, both of which are evident to the end of his life, as manifestations of his fundamental devotion to Śākyamuni.

²⁶ MATSUNAGA and MATSUNAGA describe the members of the “old Nara sects” during the Kamakura period as follows: “To a certain degree multi-practice represented indecision, and ultimately led to hodge-podge,” (1976, p. 283). Royall TYLER, though not taking this perspective himself, observes that “Compared to the teachings of Hōnen and Shinran, the religious faith of Gedatsu, Myōe, and others of their background appears confusing, even chaotic. Lost in a forest of ideas, practices, oracles, and dreams, one gladly concludes that these men must all have been searching for what Hōnen found: an intelligible principle at last” (1990, p. 96).

respectively, of the Dharma's manifestation in the world. In most instances, Jōkei specifically advocated aspiration for birth in the sacred realms of these figures, which I will discuss at more length below.

The link between "place" and the object of devotion within Jōkei's evangelism and corpus of writings is important to note here as well. *Kōshiki* rituals were usually performed before the featured object and most likely at a temple that claimed the object as its main image. Several scholars have noted the perceptible link between Jōkei's devotional emphasis and his residing temple.²⁷ For example, Kasuga and Śākyamuni receive most of his attention while he was residing at Kōfuku-ji. Both of these figures were closely linked to Kōfuku-ji's sister shrine, Kasuga.²⁸ We have already noted the close link between Kasagidera and Miroku as well as Kaijusen-ji and Kannon. While scholars may debate the merits of Jōkei's eclecticism or the relationship between his mixed textual focus and his own personal faith, I merely want to highlight the diverse devotional emphasis in Jōkei's proselytizing efforts. He was emphatic about the necessity for establishing a karmic link with any number of sacred figures.

PURE LAND ASPIRATIONS

The prominence of Śākyamuni, Kannon, and Miroku must also be seen in the context of Jōkei's promotion of the aspiration for birth in the realms of these sacred figures. In this respect, Jōkei reflects the ethos of his time and the overriding emphasis on the most immediate soteriological goal of birth in a buddha-realm. There were, of course, competing theories over the merits of a particular buddha-realm and, more importantly, qualifications for achieving birth. However, there is not space here to delineate in detail the complex correspondences between buddha-bodies, buddha-realms, and qualifications for birth according to one's progress on the bodhisattva path.²⁹ Generally

²⁷ Most notably, Kusunoki Junshō has written several articles examining the relationship between Jōkei's devotional life and his doctrinal views. See, in particular, his two-part series "Jōkei no Jōdōkan to sono shinkō" (KUSUNOKI 1985 and 1986). KUSUNOKI perceives a shift in Jōkei's personal devotion related to his move from Kasagidera to Kaijusen-ji. On the basis of on what I consider to be rather thin evidence (one textual passage that is not dated), he concludes that Jōkei's view of Miroku and Tosotsu changed such that he considered birth in Tosotsu comparable in difficulty to Gokuraku. Therefore, Kusunoki contends that Jōkei abandoned his aspirations for Tosotsu and shifted to Kannon's Mt. Fudaraku (1986, pp. 5-6). See also TOMIMURA 1976, pp. 23-24.

²⁸ Śākyamuni and Kannon, via the *honji-suijaku* 本地垂迹 theory, were associated with two of the five sanctuaries of Kasuga Shrine. And Miroku was the primary image of the Hokuendō, the subtemple where Jōkei resided in his early years at Kōfuku-ji. For a detailed description of the *honji-suijaku* relationships at Kōfuku-ji, see GRAPARD 1992, pp. 74-82, TSUJI 1944-1955, p. 472, and FORD 1999, pp. 117-23.

²⁹ For a detailed analysis of these correspondences, see FORD 1999, pp. 134-45.

speaking, the higher, more subtle classification of a buddha, the more difficult it is to achieve birth in his realm. Within the three-fold theory of buddha-bodies (*sanshin* 三身; Sk. *trikāya*), Amida was generally classified as a Reward Body (*hōjin* 報身; Sk. *saṃbhogakāya*), a subtle body transcending ordinary perception except in elevated states of *samādhi*. It is so titled because it is the “reward” for fulfillment of a buddha’s vows and practices. According to the most traditional view, and one maintained by the Hossō school, to achieve birth in Amida’s Pure Land one must have aroused the aspiration for enlightenment (*bodaishin* 菩提心; Sk. *bodhicitta*) and reached the third of five stages of a bodhisattva (*go-i* 五位) outlined in Vasubandhu’s *Trimiśikā* (Thirty Verses on Consciousness-Only). It is at this point that one realizes the wisdom free of delusion or without outflows (*muro-chi* 無漏智, Sk. *anāsrava-jñāna*) and actually enters the first of the ten stages of bodhisattva practice. This is a fairly advanced stage on the bodhisattva path and presented a challenge for those advocating aspiration for Amida’s Pure Land. Chih-i overcame this problem by asserting that Amida should properly be classified as a Transformation Body (*nirmāṇākāya*; *ōjin* 応身 or *keshin* 化身) (INAGAKI 1995, p. 108). In contrast, Shan-tao held the more conventional view that Amida was a Reward Body, but asserted that Amida’s vow was powerful enough to overcome the shortcomings of the devotee’s progress. In his *Hsüan-i fen* 玄義分 (*Essential Meanings*), he writes:

QUESTION: If that Buddha and his land are those of a Recompensed [Reward] Body, the nature of a Recompensed Land is too high and too subtle for lesser sages; how could ordinary beings with impurities and hindrances enter there?

ANSWER: Speaking of the impurities and hindrances of sentient beings, it is indeed difficult for them to aspire to and attain birth there. But by the powerful working of the Buddha’s Vow the beings of the five different paths can all equally enter there. (INAGAKI 1995, pp. 108–90)

Hōnen and Shinran adopted this argument as well.³⁰ Jōkei, on the other hand, embraced the more traditional taxonomy of buddhas and buddha-realms. He favored Miroku and Kannon’s realms, Tosotsu 兜率 (Sk. Tuṣita) and Fudaraku-sen 補陀洛山 (Potalaka), respectively, because they are more accessible for the average person. Miroku resides in the heavenly realm of Tosotsu, just as Śākyamuni did before

³⁰ Shinran also asserted that Amida possesses aspects of all three Buddha-bodies. Thus, even the most deprived sentient being can perceive Amida’s Pure Land and attain birth there. See INAGAKI 1995, pp. 190–91.

his final incarnation, from whence he shall descend at the conclusion of this final age of the Dharma. And Kannon, classified as a “celestial” bodhisattva of the final tenth stage, resides on Mt. Fudaraku somewhere on the southern coast of India. Each of these realms reside within Śākyamuni’s “impure” buddha-field (i.e., our *sahā* 娑婆 world).³¹

Given this view of buddha-realms, Jōkei advocated aspiration for Tosotsu and Mt. Fudaraku over Amida’s Gokuraku. In the *Shin’yō shō* 心要鈔 (Essentials of the Mind [Intent Upon Seeking Enlightenment], ca. 1206), for example, Jōkei promotes Miroku, as opposed to Amida, as the most efficacious figure for contemplative *nenbutsu* practice.

QUESTION: Now what buddha should we contemplate?

ANSWER: Contemplate Miroku Buddha. After this life, you will attain birth in the inner realm of Tosotsu Heaven. This is truly my desire.

QUESTION: In most cases, the various sutras praise Amida. Amida’s great vow promises to save [all beings of the] *sahā* world. The only basis for the *nenbutsu sanmai* is this buddha. Why not contemplate him?

ANSWER: The virtue of the various buddhas of the past, present, and future is equal. In accordance with one’s capacity, they confer predictions [of future enlightenment] that cannot be disputed. Jison [Miroku] is the great teacher who in one more lifetime will become the supreme teacher. Those who hear him preach but one phrase of the Dharma will certainly meet him when he descends and achieve [the stage of] non-regression (*futai* 不退). Among the successors to the Buddha in the last age (*mappō*), whether one has upheld the precepts or violated them, whether one has received the precepts or not, all who attend Miroku’s Dragon Flower Assembly will achieve liberation (*gedatsu* 解脱). (ND 63: 344a6–14)

Thus, Jōkei contends that because Miroku is the next buddha, he is the most appropriate object of devotion in the time of *mappō*. Moreover, it does not matter whether one has violated the precepts or not (i.e., whether or not one possesses defiled karma), Miroku will still welcome the practitioner into Tosotsu Heaven. And from there enlightenment is assured. In short, achieving birth in Tosotsu is easier than achieving birth in Gokuraku because the requirements are less severe.

³¹ For a coherent overview of the Mahāyāna taxonomy of Buddha-fields, our *sahā* world, and the understanding of “pure” and “impure” therein, see WILLIAMS 1989, pp. 224–27.

Similarly, in the three-part, 1201 version of the *Kannon kōshiki* 觀音講式, Jōkei argues that birth on Kannon’s Mt. Fudaraku is easier for ignorant beings than reaching Gokuraku. In the third and final section of this text entitled “Praying to be led and received [on Mt. Fudaraku] in the future” (*ki-raisei-insetsu* 祈來世引攝), he writes,

It is the way of unenlightened beings to commit countless sins. One life is like a dream [ending] at the river of the three crossings. The origin of these sins does not go beyond the three poisons—desire, anger, and ignorance. For those who commit many such sins, if they constantly contemplate Kannon, they will in all cases be separated [from their sin]. If even the roots [of sin] will be eradicated, how much more so for the branches and leaves! And once evil deeds are removed, how could you receive the fruit of suffering?... Thus, when you revere [Kannon’s] august form and personally appeal to [his] vow within your mind, then without transformation of your present body, you will behold the wonders of the realms of the great teacher Shaka’s Vulture Peak (*Ryōzen-jōdo* 靈山淨土) or the Inner Realm of Miroku’s Tosotsu. What merit could be equal to this! Even in your present body, you will encounter such honored ones—all the more so in the future. As for birth in the West, this corresponds particularly to [Amida’s] original vow. Amida was Kannon’s original teacher and Kannon is Amida’s assistant (*fusho*) in the Land of Bliss.³² He will surely, with the holy retinue, come to welcome [the dying person]. He himself carries the Lotus pedestal and he leads us [to the Pure Land]. That which he vowed is simply this. *If there is someone whose practice and karma are not yet mature and has hindrances to birth in the Pure Land, he can first reside on Mt. Fudaraku.* That mountain is in the great sea south-west from here.... Even though it is different in size, it [Fudaraku] is like facing the Pure Land. Thus, it is part of the *sahā* world but it is not like the *sahā* world. Among the wise men and sages, who would not aspire to it? It is a Pure Land but not a Pure Land. *Birth there is truly easy for the unenlightened (bonpu 凡夫).* Kannon himself urged practitioners saying, “You will surely be born in my pure

³² The latter part of this sentence might also read that Kannon “will be the next buddha of Gokuraku, the Land of Bliss.” *Fusho* generally means “succeeding disciple,” which is indeed possible here since the *Kuan-shih-yin p’u-sa shou-chi ching* (*Sutra on Prediction to Avalokiteśvara*, T 12, 353c27) notes that on Amida’s passing into nirvana, Kannon will become the next Buddha in Gokuraku. This is admittedly problematic from a doctrinal standpoint (given Amida’s bodhisattva vow), but it is a possible reading. For reference, see INAGAKI 1995, p. 94, and also footnote 138, p. 213.

buddha-realm and together with me practice the bodhisattva way. As for my Pure Land, in the distance there is the Land of Bliss in the west and here at hand is Mt. Fudaraku.” This bodhisattva path is the compassionate teaching of Kannon’s original vow. From our father, mother, and relatives in this life to our teachers and those toward whom we have obligations and affection from prior lives, all together on that mountain will practice the Buddha path. (T 84, 886c25–887a25)

There are numerous elements to note in this passage. First of all, Jōkei argues that birth in Kannon’s realm is easier because it is part of the *sahā* world.³³ It is the closest of all buddha-realms. For this reason, ignorant beings (*bonpu*) still burdened with karmic defilements can achieve birth there. It is even easier, he notes, than achieving birth in the realms of Śākyamuni or Miroku. Second, it is also worth noting that Jōkei actually emphasizes Kannon’s relationship to Amida in this passage. Kannon is, of course, one the two principal attendants to Amida. Jōkei asserts that if one achieves birth on Mt. Fudaraku, then it will be easy to realize birth in Amida’s Pure Land in one’s next life. Given the general popularity of Amida devotion, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Jōkei was attempting to borrow from that popular capital in his promotion of Kannon.

There is not space to review Jōkei’s Pure Land aspirations in detail here. The purpose of this overview is to highlight his emphasis on this soteriological goal and his stress on the simplicity of achieving birth in Miroku or Kannon’s realms. This goal is related directly to his evangelical devotion to these two figures and the practices associated with them.

Returning to our topic of “other-power,” we will see that this emphasis on devotion in Jōkei’s life and corpus was directly linked to the implicit (sometimes explicit) assumption that the power of these figures was an essential ingredient for one’s spiritual progress. Moreover, the plurality of other-powers evident in Jōkei’s evangelism is grounded in the Mahāyāna tradition more broadly and an emphasis on “place” in pre-modern (and modern) Japanese religiosity. Ian READER and George TANABE, in their recent study of “this-worldly benefits” (*genze riyaku* 現世利益) in Japanese religion, past and present, note the importance of “place” in defining the efficacious power of a particular deity (1998, pp. 50–70). The healing or soteriological power of Kannon, Miroku, or Śākyamuni, from this perspective, is directly proportional to one’s spatial proximity to an auspicious image

³³ For a detailed analysis of Jōkei’s perspective here, see TOMIMURA 1976.

of sacred sites related to these figures. Hence, evangelization efforts tend to center on the primary image of the temple where they were being conducted.³⁴ In promoting devotion to the triumvirate of Śākyamuni, Miroku, and Kannon, Jōkei emphasized their efficacious powers for both this-worldly and other-worldly matters.

EASY PRACTICES

Let us turn now to some of the practices advocated by Jōkei that were, in a sense, the means of accessing these “other-powers.” While Jōkei did at times praise the merit of the traditionally “difficult” practices such as precept adherence, “mind-only” contemplation (*yuishikikan sanmai* 唯識觀三昧), sutra copying, and so forth, he also promoted many “easy” practices including *nenbutsu* and *dhāraṇī* 陀羅尼 recitation, relic worship, and participation in *kōshiki* ritual performances.

The *nenbutsu* was of course most prominent in devotion to Amida and was the means of accessing Amida’s power according to Hōnen and earlier Pure Land patriarchs. In article seven of the *Kōfuku-ji-sōjō*, Jōkei criticized the vocal (as opposed to meditative) dimension of *nenbutsu* practice as “coarse and shallow” (KKB 314). But Jōkei was not always so dismissive of this practice. In the *Shin’yō shō*, for example, he offers a more accommodating interpretation. The sixth chapter of that text specifically addresses the teaching of the *nenbutsu*. In the following passage, Jōkei cites the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* 觀無量壽經 (*Amitābha Contemplation Sutra*) to demonstrate the power of the vocal *nenbutsu*. He concludes, however, by equating the vocal *nenbutsu* with contemplation:

The *Contemplation Sutra* says: “For sentient beings who have produced unwholesome acts such as the five cardinal sins or the ten evils, ... if suffering closes in [at death] and he is unable to contemplate the Buddha, then a good friend will say, “If you are not able to contemplate the Buddha you should recite [the name of] the Buddha of Infinite Life.³⁵ In this way, by exerting your mind and causing your voice not to be cut off, you will be able to achieve ten thoughts of the Buddha and chant ‘*namu muryōjubutsu*.’ By calling the Buddha’s name, within each thought you will erase eight billion kalpas of samsaric evil deeds and in the space of one thought you will

³⁴ 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 (see FOARD 1998, pp. 109–11).

³⁵ The term Jōkei uses is “Muryōbutsu,” an abbreviation for Muryōju-butsu. This is an epithet for Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Life.

achieve birth in the world of utmost bliss.”³⁶ *For those unable to contemplate (nen), because contemplation is its basis, vocal recitation is also contemplation. For this reason [by chanting the name] one can achieve samadhi and see the Buddha.* (ND 63: 343a14–343b2)

He then goes on to categorize the vocal *nenbutsu* as an “easy” practice.

QUESTION: The various practices are not the same; why [practice] only the *nenbutsu*?

ANSWER: The *Shih-chu lun*³⁷ states that there are difficult and easy practices; the *nenbutsu* is an easy practice and is like traveling on the ocean [vs. walking]. (ND 63: 343b4–5)

Later in this chapter he delineates five different types of *nenbutsu* according to the object of contemplation. These include the Buddha’s name or title, various characteristics or marks, virtues, original vow, and dharma body. In this particular text, Jōkei promotes Miroku as the most efficacious buddha for these practices. At any rate, the first of these *nenbutsu* is the vocal recitation of the buddha’s name (345a–346b). Jōkei contends that vocal *nenbutsu* practice is not just uttering the name but embodies a contemplative quality. In fact, this interpretation is probably not far from the traditional understanding of the vocal *nenbutsu* practice. Jōkei notes that Shan-tao advocated the vocal *nenbutsu* for those who are unable to practice *samādhi*, but it is still a contemplative practice. As with Shingon *dhāraṇī*, the vocal aspect of the *nenbutsu* was widely viewed as a “device” to aid in meditation.

For Jōkei, the power of the buddhas and bodhisattvas works concomitantly with the very practices they cultivated and left behind. It is in this sense that he writes the following in the *Kan’yu dōhōki* (Encouraging Mutual Understanding of the Dharma):

Even though the merit of self-practice is not vast or great, the powers of the buddhas and the Dharma will surely be added to them. The buddhas and bodhisattvas of the past and present all cultivated this path and [thereby] realized enlightenment. And the same shall be true of bodhisattvas in the future.

(ND 64: 10a 7–10)

Thus, Jōfuku Masanobu forcefully argues that for Jōkei the true benefit of the various methods of contemplation lay not in the self-effort required but in the intervening power of the buddhas and bodhisattvas that such practices embody (1993, pp. 661–65). In other words, Jōkei understood “simplification” of practice not just in terms

³⁶ Jōkei is actually paraphrasing this portion of the sutra.

³⁷ This refers to the *Daśabhūmikavibhāsā-sāstra* discussed above.

of advocating easy practices (though he clearly did this), but by also asserting that even practices like mind-only contemplation (*yuishiki sanmai*), conventionally understood as “difficult,” are “easy” because of the other-power they embrace. This appears comparable to the traditional contention in early Pure Land circles that the *nien-fō* practice, contemplative and oral, embodies “power” by virtue of Amida’s vow, not just by the self-effort required.

As already evidenced by the excerpt from the *Shin’yō shō*, Jōkei’s *nenbutsu* practice was not aimed primarily toward Amida. In addition to advocating the *Miroku-nenbutsu*, he also initiated two *Shaka-nenbutsu* assemblies—the first at the Eastern Hall of Tōshōdai-ji in 1202 and the second at Hōryū-ji’s Jōkanō-in in 1204 (FUKIHARA 1969, p. 114). Jōkei wrote the *Tōshōdai-ji shaka nenbutsu ganmon* 唐招提寺釈迦念仏願文 (Vow for the *Nenbutsu* to Śākyamuni at Tōshōdai-ji) for the first of these, which promoted the merits of Śākyamuni *nenbutsu* recitation. That assembly met during the ninth month for three subsequent years. While this was certainly a monastic assembly, it does evidence the plurality of Jōkei’s *nenbutsu* recitation practices. He also authored a brief text entitled *Yuishin nenbutsu* 唯心念仏 (Mind-only *Nenbutsu*, date unknown) that promoted the merit of a contemplative *nenbutsu* practice signifying Hossō’s “mind-only” truth.

Among other accessible practices, Jōkei advocated relic worship and the recitation of various *dhāraṇī*. The latter is something of a mnemonic device, often the quintessence of a sutra, believed to possess inordinate mystical power and protection. Despite the prevalent “exoteric” characterization of Nara Buddhism, *dhāraṇī* recitation was widely practiced during the period for countless “this-worldly” ends such as protection from demons, thieves, diseases, and so forth. As Ryūichi Abé has recently shown, though the category of “esoteric Buddhism” was not so clearly delineated until Kūkai, *dhāraṇī* may be seen as clear manifestations of “esoteric” logic during the Nara and early Heian period. Kūkai in fact effectively transformed the understanding of *dhāraṇī* through the rubric of esoteric mantra. Largely as a result of the precedent set by Kūkai, mutual exchange characterized the relationship between Shingon practitioners and the Nara schools (ABÉ 1999, pp. 168ff.) This was especially evident at Kōfuku-ji where Jōkei received training in esoteric doctrine and practice and very likely was exposed further through the Shugendō practitioners at Kasagi-dera and Kaijusen-ji.³⁸ In the *Busshari Kannon daishi hotsuganmon* 仏舍利

³⁸ Royall Tyler has demonstrated the strong links between Kōfuku-ji and Shugendō as early as the beginning of the tenth century. He also highlights the strong Shugendō connections at Kasagi-dera and Kaijusen-ji, the latter being one of the “Thirty-Six Sendatsu” of early Tōzan Shugendō (TYLER, 1989).

観音大士発願文 (Vow to the [Buddha's] Relics and the Great Sage Kannon), Jōkei praises the power of a *dhāraṇī* offered by Kannon:

How many there are who, by relying, from the remote past, on the causality of subduing evil and taking refuge in Kannon's original vow without worrying about success or failure, have profoundly aroused their specific vows and always recite the sacred *dhāraṇī* and have long practiced prostration and always contemplate and praise [this *dhāraṇī*'s] subtle virtues! Ah, to be able to remove the sins of the four roots is the wondrous function of this sacred *dhāraṇī*. Of illusion or [evil], what could remain? Causing all to be achieved is Kannon's specific virtue.... Those who contemplate the sacred *dhāraṇī* maintained by Kanjizaison (Kannon), when they discard this body, will gain birth on Mt. Fudaraku. (ND 64: 33b3–12)

This text promotes a *dhāraṇī* offered by Kannon that enables one to access the power of the Buddha's relics and achieve birth on Mt. Fudaraku. Similarly, in the *Kanjin shōjo enmyō no koto* 観心為清淨円明事 (Contemplation on the Pure and Perfect Enlightenment), Jōkei proclaims:

Seeing the buddhas of the ten directions at the end of one's life, being born in the land of utmost bliss, and Kannon's realization of the [stage of] acquiescence to the non-production of the dharmas,³⁹ this is the power of this incantation. This being the case, one can say this, one can say that, but in all cases this is just the extremity of the inconceivable (*fushigi* 不思議). The Buddha's disciples, even if they have passed sixty years in vain, if they contemplate and recite it for several days, or for two hours, or only for one utterance without intent, this *dhāraṇī* will be inscribed in their mind. Its merit equals that of the great Arhants. By means of its majestic power, you will be newly born on the treasure mountain [Fudaraku-sen]. How can this be difficult? If you complete this vow, there is nothing else. We can only say that it is inconceivable. So for those who constantly contemplate this sacred *dhāraṇī* in their minds and do not discriminate merits, then they will all return to the inconceivable and that is that. (ND 64: 23b13)

Both of these passages demonstrate Jōkei's emphasis on the simple

³⁹ *Mushōnin* (S: *anutpattika*), sometimes translated as the "cognizance of non-arising," is a standard term relating to one of the bodhisattva stages, perhaps 7, 8, or 9, the means by which one perceives *dharmadhātu*.

nature of this *dhāraṇī* recitation and its inherent power. They also reflect the pervasiveness of esoteric ideas within Hossō practice.

Finally, relic devotion is another relatively simple means Jōkei advocated for accessing the other power of Śākyamuni. Of course, relic worship dates back to India and was central to Buddhist lay devotion throughout Asia. In Japan the role of relics served many of the same functions as in India and China, though perhaps with increasing multivocality.⁴⁰ In the *Busshari Kannon daishi hotsuganmon*, Jōkei extols the power of Śākyamuni’s relics, specifically in helping one achieve birth on Kannon’s Mt. Fudaraku. He proclaims,

Even manifesting the great fruit of progress in the present (*genzai* 現在) 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 to realize birth (*ōjō*) in the Southern Sea and see the great sages by means of the skillful means (*hōben* 方便) of the Tathāgata’s relics. (ND 64: 33a17–33b2)

Thus, by relying on the power of the Buddha’s relics, one can attain enlightenment. How much easier must it be to achieve birth on Kannon’s Mt. Fudaraku. In addition to these texts, Jōkei authored three *Shari kōshiki* 舍利講式 texts that praised the merit and devotion to Śākyamuni’s relics.⁴¹ These are just some examples of the simple, more accessible practices Jōkei endorsed and advocated.

JŌKEI’S PLURALISTIC PERSPECTIVE AND THE RHETORIC OF OTHER-POWER

We have now overviewed, if only briefly, the eclectic nature of Jōkei’s devotion and practice. The degree to which Jōkei advocated practices that were accessible to the least talented devotees should be evident. Anyone was capable of reciting the *Shaka nenbutsu* or the *dhāraṇī* offered by Kannon. While it is not entirely clear whether Jōkei considered his time to be within final age of the *mappō*, it is apparent that he

⁴⁰ For overviews of the cult of relics, see FAURE (1996, pp. 158–68) and RUPPERT (2000, especially pp. 16–36 and 59–86). Brian Ruppert’s recent ground-breaking study of the role of Buddha relics within medieval Japan reveals the diverse role of relics in medieval religiosity. The emperor appropriated relics to legitimate his physical status and authority; esoteric monks viewed them as the key to their ritual and thaumaturgical powers; warriors perceived relics as a symbol of kingship and authority, and employed them accordingly; and lay believers, including women, perceived relics as a means to salvation. Relics, Ruppert points out, derived their extraordinary authority and power from their link to Śākyamuni’s physical body and enduring presence. Ruppert and Faure both document the various benefits of venerating relics including increased good fortune, improved karma, easy childbirth, protection, fortunate rebirth, and ultimately, assurance of buddhahood.

⁴¹ The first is dated 1192, the second 1203, and the third is undated. See bibliography for a selective list of Jōkei’s *koshiki*.

saw it as a critical time for the Dharma.⁴² In short, we can easily infer that Jōkei perceived the necessity for other-powers and easy practices. He clearly recognized the widely accepted view that people no longer had the capacity to achieve enlightenment on their own. But Jōkei was often quite explicit in declaring the necessity of “other-power” or “super-natural intervention” (*myōga* 冥加). For example, in the *Busshari Kannon daishi hotsuganmon*, written between 1208 and his death in 1213, he promoted the power of the Buddha’s relics (*busshari* 仏舍利) and cautioned 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 that he has left behind and that are the object of worship of his disciples, the holy retinue of the Southern Sea, and Kanjizaison [Kannon], 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. (ND 64: 33a7–11)

As already evidenced by the prior excerpt from the same text, he goes on to promote the power of a *dhāraṇī* offered by Kannon. In the *Shugyō yōshō* 修行要鈔 (1213), Jōkei emphasizes the importance of mind-only contemplation. But in response to an interlocutor’s concern regarding the feasibility of actualizing this difficult practice, Jōkei presents a more accessible alternative in the form of a verse of praise conferred by Miroku (*Jison*):

QUESTION: What are the verses of praise that are conferred in the teachings?

ANSWER: The verse says,⁴³ “The bodhisattva engaged in medi-

⁴² Jōkei is not entirely consistent in his views concerning *mappō*. In the *Kōfuku-ji sōjō*, there are no less than six references to the time as *mappō*. And in the *Kairitsu kōgyō gansho* (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.” He then goes on to lament the fact that “decline is a function of the times” (MORRELL 1987, pp. 7–8). Another example may also be found in the *Kasuga kōshiki* (HIRAOKA 1960, p. 217). Like so many of his contemporaries, Jōkei lamented the time as “inferior, without wisdom or precepts, ... without practice or virtue” (*Busshari Kannon dashi hotsuganmon*; ND 64: 33a1–3). On the other hand, TAIRA Masayuki cites three instances in which Jōkei clearly saw himself at the end of the Imitation Dharma (1992, p. 129). In the *Kasuga daimyōjin hotsuganmon*, for example, Jōkei explicitly states that “now is the time of the Imitation Dharma (*zōbō*)” (ND 64: 32a4).

⁴³ This verse appears in the *Shē ta-ch’eng-lun shih* (J. *Shō daijōron shaku*) T 31, 418a, and the *Ch’eng-wei shih lun* 成唯識論 (J. *Joyuishiki-ron*) T 31, 12.

tation contemplates the fact that images are only this mind. The illusion [of those images] is extinguished and he contemplates only things as they actually are in themselves. In this way, dwelling within the mind, he knows that there is nothing to be grasped and also that there is nothing that can grasp.” After that he achieves the state of being free from delusion (*mushotoku*).⁴⁴ In addition to this, even though there are two lines (*gyō*) and eight phrases, its [meaning] is expansive and difficult to exhaust. So if you only recite the one phrase *kan'yō yuijōshin*,⁴⁵ it is just like one who contemplates the Buddha and calls upon the Buddha's name. (ND 64: 19a8–12)

This is but one example of Jōkei's emphasis on the importance of mind-only contemplation and its underlying Hossō doctrine, while simultaneously offering a simpler alternative. Though he does not call this phrase a “*dhāraṇī*,” it seems to function similarly as a means to the other-power of Miroku. And in the following excerpt from the *Shin'yō shō* (ca. 1206), Jōkei again states explicitly the necessity of “other-power”:

All the more so, the karmic causes for birth in the Pure Land, in accordance with ones capacity, are not the same. Finding the nectar largely depends on supernatural intervention (*myōga* 冥加). (ND 63: 353a16–353b)

It should be more than apparent that Jōkei advocated the necessary reliance on any number of other-powers.

All of this does not make Jōkei unique within the world of pre-modern Japanese Buddhism. 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 or as aristocratic elitists. Virtually all of the devotional practices he promoted were accessible to the population at large and his *kōshiki* rituals were integral to his evangelizing efforts beyond the monastery proper. Other-power and easy practice were oft-used categories within all spheres of pre-modern Japanese Buddhism. While most scholars have abandoned these categories as the distinguishing features of “new” Kamakura Buddhism, many continue to draw sharp distinctions between the new sects and the established schools based on a socio-

⁴⁴ Literally this term translates as “nothing to be attained.” In the *Joyuishiki-ron*, it is used to characterize the state of enlightenment in which one overcomes all false discriminations of the mind (T 31, 49c).

⁴⁵ Literally, “contemplate [the fact that] images are only this mind.”

political rubric of interpretation. Hōnen and Shinran *were* unique in their exclusive soteriological claims, which, it is argued, were designed to undermine the social and political authority of the established schools and temple complexes. The fact remains, however, that it was Hōnen and Shinran's creative appropriation of the rhetorical labels of "other-power" and "easy practice" that validated their exclusive claims. These were the rhetorical axes for reimagining a new paradigm of liberation. This study is in many ways intended to contribute to the ongoing effort to nuance our understanding of Japanese religiosity during the late Heian and early Kamakura period, which is so often distorted by contemporary analysis or unreflective appropriation of the rhetoric of figures like Hōnen and Shinran. Despite their claims, reliance on other-power or easy, more accessible practices were simply not unique to "new" Kamakura Buddhism.

THE "MIDDLE WAY" BETWEEN SELF-POWER AND OTHER-POWER

Jōkei differed from Hōnen's rhetoric in at least one fundamental way. Other-power alone is not sufficient for ultimate salvation. We must contend with our own inherited karmic disposition. For Jōkei, other-power operates in conjunction with the fundamental law of causality. Underlying Jōkei's eclectic mix of practices is the basic assumption that people embody different capacities for enlightenment. At the conventional level, people, like dharmas, are different. Consequently, there are different sects, different practices, different textual emphases, and even different buddhas and bodhisattvas to worship in accordance with one's nature and circumstance. As he writes in the *Kōfuku-ji 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. (MORRELL 1987, p. 76)

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 aeons. Now to be attached to the name of a single Buddha is completely to obstruct the paths essential for deliverance. (MORRELL 1987, p. 78)

And finally, in the *Kan'yū dōhōki* (date unknown), Jōkei writes that

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 (*kleśa/bonnō* 煩惱) 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. (ND 64: 11b4–11)

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.

In the face of the extraordinary diversity within Buddhism, this was, and is, the most traditional response. It is nothing less than an articulation of the principles of *upāya* (*hōben* 方便) or “skillful means,” what James FOARD has called “the great universalizer of salvation” (1998, 110). Jōkei’s entire life and corpus has been characterized by one Japanese scholar as the “*upāya*-ization” of Hossō doctrine and practice, and this is not too far off the mark (KUROSAKI 1995, pp. 6–21). We can also say that karmic causality, though interpretations of it may vary, is an essential element of Buddhism’s universal discourse. 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 as well as soteriological implications. Jōkei relied on the doctrine of *upāya* to reconcile the diversity within Buddhism with Mahāyāna’s universal soteriology. In this way, Jōkei represents the broader universal Buddhist discourse.

While Jōkei emphasized the implications and importance of karmic causality, he also praised the benefits of powers beyond our own. He recognized the power of bodhisattva vows, the Buddha’s relics, and the recitation of a sacred *dhāraṇī* and *nenbutsu*. 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 sufficient. Despite accusations to the contrary, he never denied the importance of “other-power.” What he denied was “exclusive” reliance on other-power. It seems that there is a persistent failure to see beyond the estab-

lished analytical dualities such as ascetic practice versus Pure Land devotion, self-power versus other-power, or between easy practice and difficult practice.

I would propose that we see Jōkei as representing a “middle-way” between the extremes of “self-power” and “other-power.” He was not necessarily unique in this respect since this was the predominant, though perhaps unarticulated, perspective within the rubric of traditional Buddhism—this despite the rhetorical efforts of figures like Hōnen and Shinran to paint the established schools as “*jiriki*” extremists. I would suggest, however, that Jōkei is distinctive in expressing this middle-way as explicitly as he does.

To the degree that Hōnen and, more specifically, Shinran emphasized “absolute” reliance on other-power, they were distinct from Jōkei’s more traditional and balanced understanding. But here we must again differentiate between rhetoric and reality with respect to the lives of Hōnen and Shinran and to later developments within the Pure Land traditions. Hōnen, as noted above, is particularly problematic for the Jōdo-shū apologists because of his undeniable use of other meditative practices and rituals, and his strict adherence to the monastic precepts. Just as there is a wide gulf between Zen rhetoric against icons, texts, and rituals and the pervasive reality of iconographic forms, sacred texts, and elaborate rituals throughout the tradition, so also we must acknowledge the tension within the Pure Land traditions. “Absolute reliance on the other-power of Amida” becomes a mantra of sectarian identity and difference, but it does not accurately characterize the historical manifestation of the traditions. In the conclusion to his important study of Jōdo Shinshū, James DOBBINS suggests that if we “demythologize” Shin Buddhism (i.e., Shin stripped of its “specific” forms), then the “religious sensibilities and practices remaining are not significantly different from those found in lay Buddhism throughout Asia. They are faith-oriented and devotional” (1989, p. 160). He goes on to assert that

Shin has not created a new form of Buddhism, but rather idealizes the lay dimension of the religion. What is unique about Shin is not the beliefs and practices it propounds but its advocacy of the lay path over the clerical one. (1989, p. 160)

Dobbins is merely acknowledging that the actual manifestation of Shinran’s tradition, despite its radical rhetoric, is not appreciably different from other forms of lay Buddhism.

Final Reflections

We can now draw a number of conclusions from this examination of other-power and easy practice rhetoric. First of all, these were clearly well-established rhetorical categories in China and Japan well before the emergence of the new Kamakura sects. Like the doctrinal classification systems within the various “schools” or textual/doctrinal lineages, “other-power” and “easy practice” were signifiers within a competitive discourse. They were, in particular, integral to efforts to expand the appeal of Buddhism beyond the monastic universe. Virtually every lineage claimed that it offered an easier path to enlightenment. And as the belief in the degenerate age (*mappō*) became more widespread, this too fostered increasing claims of soteriological assurance, perhaps to address the growing anxiety and hopelessness. By the same token, we should acknowledge that *mappō* could also be creatively appropriated and even underscored to authorize radical departures from well-established Buddhist traditions.

Second, we can also conclude that Hōnen and Shinran were indeed the first to use these terms in such an exclusive manner by claiming that oral recitation of the *nenbutsu* was the *only* efficacious practice for Pure Land aspirants. Moreover, the implication of their teachings was that all other soteriological goals were pointless and obsolete in the age of *mappō*. It is in this “exclusive” sense that other-power and easy practice become the discourse for sectarian dividing lines in the same way that “Mahāyāna” and “sudden enlightenment” became rhetorical dividing lines in prior Buddhist debates. But in each case, these were the rhetorical distinctions of only one side in each debate. It should be clear by now that Jōkei did not reject the merit of “other-power” or haughtily dismiss “easy practices.” In fact, various other-powers were promoted and recognized by all of the established schools throughout the Heian era and even before. Esoteric Buddhism, which permeated all facets of Heian Buddhism, is grounded in the other-powers invoked through ritual.

The tradition of appropriating dualistic rhetoric to distinguish one form of Buddhism from another appears well established historically in sectarian disputes. Mahāyāna proponents pejoratively labeled those following the ideal of the *arhant* as Hīnayānists (followers of the “small vehicle”). Later advocates of the esoteric teachings (e.g., Chen-yen in China and Shingon 真言 in Japan) broad-brushed all prior Buddhism as “exoteric.” The early followers of Amitābha, as we have already seen, distinguished their “Pure Land Path” from the traditional “Path of Sages.” And finally, Southern Ch’an is noted for its claim to “sudden” enlightenment in opposition to the “gradual” enlightenment of

Northern Ch'an.⁴⁶ In each case, it is the newly formed sect that distinguishes itself from the established and consequently oppositional form of Buddhism in an effort to validate its divorce from the tradition (or, perhaps, its claimed "recovery" of the "true essence" of the Dharma). This appears to be a not uncommon characteristic of sectarian rhetoric across all religious traditions.⁴⁷ One can certainly see this strategy within both the early and later traditions of Christianity toward its parent Judaism.⁴⁸ In most cases, the rhetorical and often dualistic labels adopted to distinguish the new movement from the parent tradition become standard terminology within the new movement. And in many cases (e.g., Mahāyāna/Hīnayāna and Ch'an's sudden/gradual distinction), these labels have been accepted unreflectively by scholars interpreting historical developments. This has also been the case with the rhetorical categories of self-power/other-power and difficult/easy practices.

To conclude, "other-power" and "easy practice" may be useful heuristic nomenclature at times to draw a distinction between degrees of emphasis. Certain forms of monotheistic religion advocate absolute reliance on God that contrasts markedly, for example, with early forms of monastic Buddhism that emphasized complete self-reliance. But such differences are more often measured in degrees and rarely in absolute terms. Indeed, in the case of Hōnen and Jōkei, it is clear that Hōnen advocated a more exclusive reliance on Amida's power in contrast to Jōkei's more balanced path. But again, we must recognize

⁴⁶ See FAURE (1991), McRAE (1986), and SHARF (1992) for examples of recent scholarship that deconstruct the received version of the Northern/Southern split. Bernard Faure asserts that this rhetorical doctrinal difference is really being used to legitimate Ch'an's "passion for difference" (FAURE 1991, p. 41). He also points out how the privileged claims of Ch'an with respect to the paradigms of mediacy/immediacy, sudden/gradual, etc., served specific social and ideological functions and helped legitimate the Ch'an institution. And so, the same might well be said of the Japanese Pure Land schools' use of "other-power" and "easy practice" vis-à-vis the established schools.

⁴⁷ James FOARD classifies some of the new Kamakura movements as "sects," as distinguished from cults or orders, precisely because of "their insistence that their particular devotions alone were effective and all others useless or worse" (1980, p. 282).

⁴⁸ The Synoptic Gospels depict first-century Judaism as politically corrupt, oppressive, xenophobic, and overly concerned with purity laws of separation. Jesus, on the other hand, is seen as compassionate, egalitarian, and inclusive. More recent feminist theology depicts Judaism as patriarchal and severely oppressive toward women in contrast to Jesus who is seen as fully gender-inclusive. While the teachings of Jesus may be fairly characterized along these lines (with a proper understanding of his broader apocalyptic worldview), Judaism cannot be so reductively portrayed. But early and later Christians felt compelled to distinguish themselves from their parent tradition by means of such rhetorical dualism. As I heard Amy Jill Levine, a Jewish New Testament scholar, recently declare, "Christianity does not need to make itself look good by making Judaism look bad" (Wake Forest Divinity School Lectures, Feb. 6, 2001).

the gap between rhetoric and reality. Hōnen continued to follow the precepts, engage in meditative and visualization practices, and participate in a variety of ritual ceremonies that would appear to contradict his other-power rhetoric. We certainly cannot fault Hōnen or Shinran for creatively adapting these well-established labels for their own proselytizing ends. But we must dismiss these sectarian rhetorical categories as legitimate analytical categories in the study of Kamakura Buddhism.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- BZ *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本佛教全書, ed. Bussho Kankōkai, 150 vols. Tokyo: Bussho Kankōkai, 1913–1922.
- KKB *Kamakura kyū Bukkyō* 鎌倉旧仏教. Nihon Shisō Taikei, vol. 15, ed. Kamata Shigeo and Tanaka Hisao. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971.
- KKK *Taishō daigaku sōgō Bukkyō kenkyūjo nenpō*, 1991–1995. Kōshiki kenkyū-kai 講式研究会.
- ND *Nihon daizōkyō* 日本大藏經, 100 vols. Tokyo: Suzuki Research Foundation, 1973–1976.
- SETP *Hōnen’s Senchakushū: Passages on the Selection of the Nenbutsu in the Original Vow. Senchakushū* English Translation Project, trans. and ed. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1998.
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