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Hōnen's *Senchaku* Doctrine and His Artistic Agenda

As the founder of the Pure Land School, Hōnen (1133–1212) had a profound impact on the doctrines of the medieval period. His teachings on the exclusive selection of invocational *nenbutsu* generated a new doctrinal matrix with far-reaching social and theological implications. Less well understood is the relation between Hōnen and the visual images of Pure Land Buddhism. A fresh examination of Hōnen's writings illuminates the monk's novel interpretation of a key soteriological icon: the paintings of Amida's welcoming descent with his celestial assembly. Special attention is given to the *Gōshō mandara* and its role both as a manifestation of Hōnen's doctrines and as a prototype for later paintings of Amida's welcoming descent with twenty-five bodhisattvas.

KEYWORDS: Hōnen – *Senchaku hongan nenbutsushū* – Pure Land Buddhist art – *raigō* – *Gōshō mandara*

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IT IS WELL KNOWN that Japanese Pure Land Buddhism was revolutionized by the doctrinal transformations of the medieval period. Major shifts in salvific practices and in the modes of disseminating the faith are attributed to the impact of Genshin 源信 (942–1017), Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), and Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262). These figures have been extensively examined in religious studies, but art historical investigations treating religious imagery within contemporaneous doctrinal matrices are devoted almost exclusively to Genshin and Shinran. Genshin has been recognized as the developer of an important genre of Pure Land Buddhist painting termed *Amida shōju raigōzu* 阿弥陀聖衆来迎図 (painting of Amida’s welcoming descent with his celestial assembly, hereafter, *raigō* painting).¹ These images were conceived within the framework of Genshin’s *kannen nenbutsu* 観念念仏 (contemplative *nenbutsu*), a meditative practice that emphasized the visualization of Amida, the Western Pure Land, and the Amida group’s welcoming descent to dying devotees.² The salient artistic features of the early *raigō* paintings have been analyzed in relation to Genshin’s doctrinal expositions. The study of Shinran is enriched by many surviving pictorial works. The portraits of Shinran and the paintings of Amida’s name have been shown to reflect the monk’s doctrinal rejection of the corporeal features of the Amida and his welcoming descent.

The prolific and productive studies on Genshin and Shinran contrast sharply with the paucity of investigations into Hōnen’s impact on art, and in particular, on the *raigō* genre. The reasons for this dearth of scholarship are traceable to the traditional art historical perspective on Hōnen, which holds that his exclusive selection (*senchaku* 選択) of the *shōmyō nenbutsu* 称名念仏 (invocational

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1. “Amida *raigō* painting” is usually a collective term that encompasses various types of paintings in the genre of *raigō* (welcoming descent). In this paper, “*raigō* painting” designates *Amida shōju raigō* painting, which are images in hanging scroll format and include Amida and his attendants, in addition to Kannon 観音 and Seishi 勢至. A subgenre of *raigō* painting is the *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* 二十五菩薩来迎 painting, which is characterized by twenty-five bodhisattvas.

2. The concept of *raigō* stems from the nineteenth of Amida’s forty-eight vows in the *Muryōjūkyō* 無量寿經 (*Larger Sutra*). In this vow Amida promises his appearance in front of devotees at the moment of death. The *raigō* concept became popular in Japan in the decades surrounding 1052, the year that was considered to be the beginning of *mappō* 末法 (latter days of the Buddhist law).

nenbutsu) practice precluded the creation and use of *raigō* paintings.³ Most art historians treating the impact of Pure Land Buddhist doctrinal transformations on religious imagery have claimed that the central role of *raigō* paintings within the context of Genshin's contemplative *nenbutsu* was diminished by Hōnen's invocational *nenbutsu*.⁴ Hōnen propounded that the incantation of *namu Amida butsu* 南無阿彌陀仏 would bring salvation to any devotee, and as a result, *raigō* paintings in the time of Hōnen are thought to have become a stagnant medium for simply instructing the concept of the welcoming descent.⁵

Yet in viewing the panorama of the development of *raigō* paintings in the medieval period, we cannot help but notice the great transformation of the genre at the end of the twelfth century. The *raigō* paintings had their inception during the tenth century in the doctrines of the Tendai master Genshin. In the *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集 (985), Genshin treats the visualization of the welcoming descent of Amida and his bodhisattvas as an aid for rebirth in the Western Pure Land (*Ōjōyōshū*, 85a).⁶ Devotees soon sought *raigō* paintings as a tangible focus for their prayers both during daily practices and at the time of death, and the images became the salvific icon of Genshin's central doctrine. The standard views of *raigō* paintings have seen the subsequent development of the genre through the lens of Genshin's impact and have traced his legacy into later works dated to the thirteenth and the early fourteenth centuries.⁷ However, this

3. Scholars sometimes note Hōnen's connection with the *Amida dokuson raigōzu* 阿彌陀尊來迎圖 (painting of the descent of Amida) and *Amida sanzō raigōzu* 阿彌陀三尊來迎圖 (painting of the descent of Amida triad), on the basis of accounts in the *Hōnen shōnin eden* 法然上人繪伝 (known also under the titles *Shijūhakkān den* 四十八卷伝, *Hōnen shōnin gyōjō ezu* 法然上人行狀繪図, *Shijūhakkān eden* 四十八卷繪伝, and *Chokushū Enkō daishi zuden* 勅修円光大師図伝), and in the *Hōnen shōnin denki* 法然上人傳記. Hōnen's interest in the descent of the Amida triad is recorded in vols. 1, 7, 8, 37 of the *Shijūhakkān den* and in vol. 3 of *Hōnen shōnin denki*. See *Hōnen shōnin eden*, vols. 1, 11, 65, 68, and vols. 3, 5; *Hōnen shōnin denki*, 126b, 137b, 138b. See also HAMADA 1989, p. 64; SHINBO 1985, p. 31; and ISHIDA 1991, pp. 94–5. However, these studies have not gone beyond mere observation of the connection.

4. Hōnen treats the eighteenth vow of Amida in the *Muryōjūkyō* with special emphasis. The vow is: "May I not gain possession of perfect awakening if, once I have attained buddhahood, any among the throng of living beings in the ten regions of the universe should single-mindedly desire to be reborn in my land with joy, with confidence, and gladness, and if they should bring to mind this aspiration for even ten moments of thought and yet not gain rebirth there. This excludes only those who have committed the five heinous sins and those who have reviled the True Dharma" (GÓMEZ 1996, p. 160). Hōnen reads in the vow that Dharmakara (future Amida Buddha) put aside all manifold practices, including contemplation, and selected the wholehearted recitation of Amida's name. See *Senchaku hongān nenbutsushū*, 5b.

5. A similar discussion is found in several works. For example, see ŌGUSHI 1983, pp. 172–77; NAKANO 1960, p. 48; and HAMADA 1975, pp. 163–65.

6. While invocational *nenbutsu* is powerful enough to extinguish sins at the moment of death, on ordinary occasions it does not always work and is dependent on the devotee's fervor. However, contemplative *nenbutsu* can extinguish sins on both occasions.

7. On the one hand, the archaic hallmarks of *raigō* paintings created during the time of Genshin, such as frontal composition, seated figures, and a correspondence with the contents of the *Ōjōyōshū*, continued to be depicted in the genre through the early fourteenth century. On the other hand, later *raigō* paintings without such features have also been connected with Genshin; for instance, the paintings

approach has been unable to account for two aspects of the later *raigō* paintings. First, the numerous surviving images of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries attest to the continuing popularity of the genre more than two hundred years after the celebrity of Genshin had been eclipsed by younger Pure Land Buddhist masters.⁸ Secondly, later *raigō* paintings underwent typological developments that are manifested in thematic and stylistic changes, including: (1) a preference for a diagonal composition; (2) a predilection for a gilt, standing image of Amida; (3) the popularity of an image containing twenty-five bodhisattvas entitled *Amida nijūgo bosatsu raigōzu* 阿弥陀二十五菩薩来迎图 (painting of the descent of Amida with his twenty-five bodhisattvas, hereafter, *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* painting), some of which represent the highest rebirth in the Western Pure Land; and (4) the insertion of a dying devotee's portrait into the paintings.⁹ These novel features remained dominant in *raigō* paintings until the early fourteenth century, yet the genesis of such artistic innovations is unattributable to Genshin's legacy. The characteristics of the later *raigō* paintings likely stem from the congruity of the imagery's devotional meanings and functions with contemporary Pure Land doctrines and practices. The search for catalysts must start with a fresh look at the concurrent doctrinal changes expounded by Hōnen.

In this paper, we first review the aspects of the *senchaku* doctrine that art historians have over-generalized and misinterpreted to the point of purporting that Hōnen was aloof to the devotional role of the visual image. Secondly, we will

dated to the thirteenth through fourteenth centuries with inscriptions reading "painted by Genshin." These are as follows: the *Descent of Amida with His Celestial Attendants* at Sairaiji 西来寺 dated to the thirteenth century, the *Descent of Amida with His Celestial Attendants* at Anrakuritsuin 安楽律院 dated to the thirteenth century, the *Descent of Amida with His Celestial Attendants (Jin'un raigōzu 迅雲来迎图)* at Saikyōji 西教寺 dated to the thirteenth century, the *Descent of Amida with His Twenty-Five Bodhisattvas* at Shōkakuji 正覚寺 dated to the thirteenth century, the *Amida Appearing over the Mountains* at Konkai Kōmyōji 金戒光明寺 dated to the thirteenth century, the *Descent of Amida with His Forty-Nine Manifestations* at Kōmyōji 光明寺 dated to the thirteenth century, and the *Descent of Amida with His Celestial Attendants* at Sanzen'in 三千院 dated to the thirteenth century. In current scholarship, the *raigō* paintings dated to the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries are still connected with Genshin, rather than with later Pure Land Buddhist monks. For example, OKAZAKI 1977, pp. 94–129.

8. The typological variety is evidenced by the archaic style of *raigō* paintings, *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings, paintings of Amida's crossing over the mountains, and several variants of *raigō* paintings including the *Gōshō mandara* 迎接曼荼羅 at Seiryōji 清涼寺, *Descent of Amida Triad with His Forty-Nine Manifestations* at Kōmyōji, *Descent of Amida in His Ten Manifestations* at Chionji 知恩寺, *Budha of Heavenly Virtue* at Sakurai Raigōji 桜井来迎寺 and Dainenbutsuji 大念佛寺 and *Painting of Shaka Sending the Faithful from This Bank and Amida Receiving Him on the Yonder Bank* at Unpenji 雲辺寺 and Kannonji 観音寺. Such variants coexisted during this period.

9. The highest rebirth is sometimes called the upper birth of the upper grade of the nine degrees of rebirth. The nine degrees of rebirth are derived from the fourteenth to sixteenth visualizations in the *Kanmuryōjyūkyō* 観無量寿經 (*Meditation Sutra*), in which the rebirth of devotees is classified into nine degrees according to the acts of piety and evil doings accomplished during their lifetime. Each degree is uniquely delineated by the manner in which Amida and attendants receive the devotee and the circumstances in which the devotee finally attains rebirth in the Western Pure Land.

shed new light on the monk's doctrines through an examination of his surviving writings, including personal correspondence. We will see that Hōnen had a keen doctrinal interest in visual images and even favored specific representational features. Thirdly, we will explore a *raigō* painting entitled the *Gōshō mandara* 迎接曼荼羅 and identify its association with Hōnen, as well as its impact on the later development of the genre.

Hōnen's Senchaku Doctrine

A major doctrinal shift occurred in Pure Land Buddhism when Hōnen abandoned the Tendai contemplative *nenbutsu* for the single practice of invocational *nenbutsu*. The new teaching is detailed in his *Senchaku hongan nenbutsushū* 選擇本願念佛集 (Passages on the Selection of the *Nenbutsu* in the Original Vow, written in 1198, hereafter, the *Senchakushū*). In this work, Hōnen selected “the five right practices” (*shōgyō* 正行) of reading and reciting the sutras, contemplating, prostrating, uttering the name of Amida, and giving praises and offerings. All these practices are designated “auxiliary acts” (*jōgō* 助業), except for the chanting of *nenbutsu*, which should become the focal point of devotion.¹⁰ The monk writes:

One should set aside the auxiliary right acts and resolutely select the rightly established act (*shōjō no gō* 正定之業) and follow it exclusively. The rightly established act is uttering the name of Amida Buddha. Those who utter the name will unfailingly attain birth, because it is based on Amida's original vow.

(*Senchaku hongan nenbutsushū*, 19a; SENCHAKUSHŪ ENGLISH TRANSLATION PROJECT 1998, p. 148)

In other works Hōnen underscores the superiority of reciting *nenbutsu* to revering visual objects. In the *Hōnen shōnin eden* 法然上人絵伝 (dated 1307–1317), we read:

Recent practitioners, do not pursue contemplative practice. Even if success is achieved in meditating on Amida, the vision will never rival the masterly carvings of sculptors like Unkei 運慶 or Kōkei 康慶. The vision of the Pure Land cannot be as luxurious as the real flowers of the cherry, plum, peach, or apricot trees. Believe only that Amida's original vow will never fail and that all sentient beings surely attain rebirth in the Pure Land through *nenbutsu*. Thus, deeply relying upon the original vow, exclusively utter Amida's name.

(*Hōnen shōnin eden* 2: 185)

Further explication of this tenet is found in a letter of Hōnen to his disciple, Kumagai Naozane 熊谷直実 (Dharma name: Rensei 蓮生, 1141–1208), in which the master notes that *raigō* imagery is important, but secondary, to the wholehearted recitation of the name of Amida (*Kumagai no nyūdō e tsukawasu on henji* 熊谷の

10. The doctrinal sketch of Hōnen in this section relies on SENCHAKUSHŪ ENGLISH TRANSLATION PROJECT 1998, pp. 35–55.

入道へつかはず御返事, 646a). In a letter to another disciple, Tsunoto no Saburō Tamemori 津戸三郎為守 (1163–1243), Hōnen remarks that the creation of an image of Buddha accumulates merit and forms a tie with the deity, but it is not worth interrupting or neglecting the rightly established act of *nenbutsu* (Tsunoto no Saburō *nyūdō e tsukawasu on henji* 津戸三郎入道へつかはず御返事, 562b). From such statements, it is thought that Hōnen counseled devotees to subordinate their engagement with visual images, including the acts of creation and visualization, to invocational *nenbutsu*.

Hōnen's emphasis on invocational practice is widely recognized, but less well understood is his appreciation of the merits of visual images. In none of Hōnen's works does he deny the value of creating or employing visual images. Indeed, contemporary and later documents reveal that Hōnen himself revered visual images, taught the efficacy of certain types of images, and even engaged in the creation of a devotional image. Several surviving textual sources attest to Hōnen's treatment of images as visual agents for his doctrines. In his *Yōgi mondō* 要義問答 (date unknown), Hōnen encourages the carving and painting of the Amida image, or the image of Amida with two bodhisattvas, as one of four important modes of religious practices (*shishū* 四修), commenting that such activities demonstrate piety toward the Pure Land Buddhist deities (*Yōgi mondō*, 547).¹¹ Further, when Hōnen opened the eyes of Amida triad sculptures for Tsunoto no Saburō Tamenari, he announced that the creation of Buddhist statues brings auspicious merit (*Ippyaku shijūgo kajō mondō* 一百四十五箇条問答, 793a).¹² We know that he, like Genshin, considered visual images as beneficial objects for the moment of death, based on the *Ippyaku shijūgo kajō mondō*. The document relates that Hōnen was posed a question: Which hand of the Amida image should pull the five-colored threads (referring to the practice of connecting a hand of a pictorial or sculptural Amida image with the hand of a dying devotee)? In his response, the master does not repudiate the use of the Amida image on the deathbed, but rather he answered that both hands should pull the devotee (*Ippyaku shijūgo kajō mondō*, 589b). For Hōnen, then, pictorial and sculptural images were both revered and meritorious objects for ordinary devotional use, and they were beneficial for rebirth in the Western Pure Land at the hour of death. We now turn to the identity of the images favored by Hōnen.

Gilt Standing Amida Images in Raigō Mode

Hōnen showed a marked preference for a particular devotional image, that of the gilt standing Amida image in *raigō* mode. This image was not new in the

11. This passage may suggest his association with the image of the descent of the Amida triad (see note 3), but here I take it as evidence of Hōnen's general reverence for visual images.

12. *Ippyaku shijūgo kajō mondō* is rendered "One Hundred Forty-Five Questions and Answers," and was probably written around 1201.

time of Hōnen, as both sculptural and pictorial standing *raigō* images had already existed from the twelfth century (HAMADA 1976, pp. 29–33).¹³ However, until the thirteenth century the predominant portrayal of Amida was in seated position. During the thirteenth century, the gilt standing Amida images in *raigō* mode surpassed the popularity of seated images. Based on the surviving *raigō* paintings, the seated image of Amida seems to have been depicted consistently in works dated up to the twelfth century, yet the standing image did not emerge until its appearance in a variant of *raigō* paintings, the *Gōshō mandara*, dated around 1200. After this time, the standing image appears to have become more popular than the seated image. I would suggest that the dramatic popularity of the gilt standing image of Amida in *raigō* mode and its penetration into the medium of paintings in the thirteenth century should be attributed to the impact of Hōnen's doctrines.¹⁴

We can begin by considering the teachings for the use of this image at the *gyakushu* 逆修 (preemptive funeral). In the *Gyakushu seppō* 逆修説法 (Record of the Preemptive Funeral), Hōnen gives instructions for the creation of a standing Amida sculpture in *raigō* mode that was to be used for the ardent praying of Amida's nineteenth vow of welcoming descent (*Gyakushu seppō*, 386a).¹⁵ The *Hōnen shōnin goseppō no koto* 法然上人御説法事 (written in 1257), which is the kana version of the *Gyakushu seppō*, comments that the Amida sculpture was modeled on a three-*shaku* standing image, and it was in the mode of welcoming

13. The earliest Japanese sculpture of the standing Amida may go back to around 1000. The possible early examples are those at Shinshō Gokurakuji 真生極楽寺 dated to Shōryaku 正暦 3 (992) and the Amida in *raigō* mode commissioned by Atsuakira Shin'ō 敦明親王 in the *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記 (Kantoku 寛徳 2 [1045]). However, until the twelfth century, Amida sculptures were largely in the form of seated statues. In the twelfth century, the sculptural standing Amida emerged, but seated statues still comprise nine-tenths of the surviving examples. With regard to the pictorial standing images of Amida or the Amida triad, the stylistic transformation from the seated to standing figure was contemporaneous with the changes in sculptures. Although there are no surviving paintings of a standing Amida or of the Amida triad before the thirteenth century, we know from medieval documents that such images were employed at Buddhist services in the twelfth century.

14. Other reasons are sometimes suggested for the change from a seated to a standing image of Amida, including the advocacy of the Tendai monk Sensei 瞻西 (?–1127, see *Asabashō* 阿娑縛抄, 350b), the influence from imports of Song sculptures and paintings by Chōgen 重源 (1121–1206), and the inspiration of the standing Amida as depicted in the later copy of the *Taima Mandara* dated after 1237. See HAMADA 1976, p. 35. Yet these possibilities have problems. While Sensei may have had a role in the emergence of the image in the twelfth century, his death occurred well before the culmination of the popularity of the standing images, including the appearance of the image in *raigō* paintings. The latter two suggestions may have been good sources for models of the new standing images, but they were unlikely to have been the direct, fundamental causes of a major artistic change. Instead, we should seek a dramatic doctrinal shift that would motivate a change in religious emphasis from a seated to a standing Amida. Hōnen's doctrines propounding the significance of the gilt standing Amida in *raigō* mode must have been the immediate stimulus for the production of the new image.

15. The service in the *Gyakushu seppō* was probably conducted by Hōnen in 1194 for Zenmon 禪門 or Nakahara Morohide 中原師秀, father of Anrakubō Junsai 安楽房遵西, ?–1207, and the account was written before 1254.

descent (*raigō injō* 来迎引接) appropriate for the moment of death (*Hōnen shōnin goseppō no koto*, 848a). Although the Amida sculpture was created specifically for this service, it is evident that the image could be efficacious for praying Amida's original vow at any occasion, be it daily, ritual, or the moment of death.

Hōnen's esteem for the standing Amida in *raigō* mode stems from a text with its origin in China, Shandao's 善導 *Guan wuliangshou jing shu* 觀無量壽經疏 (written in the seventh century). This commentary on the *Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經 (Jp. *Kanmuryōjūkyō*, hereafter *Meditation Sutra*) was a major source of enlightenment for Hōnen and inspired him toward the exclusive selection of invocational *nenbutsu*. In fascicle three of the *Guanjing shu*, entitled *Dingshan yi* (Jp. *Jōzengi* 定善義), Shandao remarks:

The standing posture of Amida in midair reveals that if one turns their thought in a state of mindfulness to pray for rebirth in his land, one can attain it immediately. A question may be asked. Amida's virtue is foremost. His dignity never makes him behave heedlessly. He has never given up the original vow and comes with his great compassion. Why does he not come while in his seated position? The question will be answered. The reason is because of a hidden meaning separate from Amida. In this world of suffering, various evils reside, and eight great sufferings quickly attack and avenge people. Six bandits always follow, and the possibility exists that one might fall into the fire of the three evils. If Amida sits cross-legged and does not save us from this chaos, there is no way to avoid the prison of karma. For this reason, Amida is in a standing position ready to go. The Amida in seated position cannot seize the moment. (*Dingshan yi*, 44b)

Shandao notes that the Amida stands in midair poised to make his welcoming descent at the proper moment, as promised in his nineteenth vow. Since Hōnen assimilated Shandao's commentary, he was undoubtedly conversant with this image of the compassionate standing Amida in *raigō* mode waiting to save devotees at the critical moment. In later times, the benevolent, standing posture of Amida was extolled in the commentaries on the *Meditation Sutra* written by Hōnen's followers, such as Shōkū 証空 (1177–1247) and Zen'a Ryōchū 善阿良忠 (1199–1287).¹⁶ Shōkū notes, "Amida's midair standing position is the form of welcoming descent" (*Kangyōsho jōzengi tahitsushō* 觀經疏定善義他筆鈔, 73a) and "Amida's midair standing position is the welcoming descent at the moment of death" (*Kangyō hiketsushū* 觀經秘決集, 300b).¹⁷ Ryōchū's commentary on the *Dingshan yi*, entitled the *Kangyō jōzengi denzūki* 觀經定善義傳通記

16. Ryōchū is a monk of the Chinzei 鎮西 sect of the Pure Land Buddhist School, which is known for its faithfulness to Hōnen's doctrines.

17. *Kangyō jōzengi tahitsushō* is dated between 1226–1244, and *Kangyō hiketsushū* is dated to the early thirteenth century.

(date unknown), attributes Amida's standing posture to his compassion for the welcoming descent. The relevant section tells us:

At the right time, [Amida] never fails to keep the original vow of the welcoming descent, and he comes in a rush. Whether the occasion is daily life or death, the prayer for [Amida's] coming should be the same. He then responds and appears in front of the devotees out of his great compassion. Since Amida comes in response to the prayer with his great compassion just before the time, how can he be in the seated position? (*Kangyō jōzengi denzūki*, 336b)

Here, Ryōchū has remarked that the prayers for Amida's welcoming descent during daily devotions and at death should be the same, and the comment suggests that the standing Amida in *raigō* mode is the proper image for use in prayer on all occasions. Ryōchū's conviction concerning the appropriateness of the standing image for prayers on any occasion was probably inherited from Hōnen. In fact, in Hōnen's *Motsugo yuikaimon* 没後遺誠文 (written in 1198), it is noted that he himself owned a three-*shaku* standing Amida sculpture in *raigō* mode, which had been created by Jōchō 定朝 (*Motsugo yuikaimon*, 446a). Such documentary evidence attests that Hōnen regarded the Amida sculpture in standing position as the ultimate visual representation of Amida's great compassion, for the deity was charged with vitality for his imminent, salvific descent.

Hōnen's affinity for the *raigō* mode is also motivated by the salutary impact of the welcoming descent on devotees. Three noteworthy benefits emerge from the *Gyakushu seppō*. First, the *raigō* brings right mindfulness (*shōnen* 正念) to devotees in the consternation of approaching death. Hōnen notes that at the moment of death, even the strongest person finds it difficult to keep right mindfulness without being distracted by love attachments (*san'ai* 三愛) to belongings (*kyōgaiai* 境界愛), self (*jitaiai* 自体愛), and this life (*tōshōai* 当生愛) (*Gyakushu seppō*, 72b–74a).¹⁸ The approach of Amida and the bodhisattvas in assurance of *ōjō* 往生 (rebirth in Amida's Western Pure Land) soothes devotees so that they can maintain the right mindfulness necessary for the perfection of their salvation. Secondly, the apprehensions of the dying devotee can also be palliated by the guidance provided in the *raigō* that leads them at the beginning of their long journey to the Western Pure Land. The descent of the deity assures practitioners that their guide is approaching and that they can now reach the final destination without anxiety and without straying.¹⁹ Thirdly, the *raigō* can eradicate all demonic hindrances to the attainment of *ōjō*. Thus for Hōnen, the *raigō* provides the prerequisite elements for the successful conveyance of the devotee to *ōjō*.²⁰

18. The three kinds of love bonds are also described in *Ōjō jōdo yōjin* 往生淨土用心, 654a.

19. For such guidance, Hōnen suggests using the pictorial or sculptural image of Amida for the moment of death.

20. This view contrasts with that of Genshin, who posits that *raigō* is the result of right mindfulness and is the confirmation of *ōjō*.

The golden color of Amida's body is mentioned in such Pure Land Buddhist sutras as the *Muryōjukyō* 無量壽經 (*Larger Sutra*) and the *Meditation Sutra*. Hōnen took special notice of this attribute and stated that the color of gold should be used for visual images of Amida as well as for the bodhisattvas. In the *Senchakushū*, Hōnen turned his attention to Amida's third vow and interpreted it as follows:²¹

The third vow is that everyone should be golden color. In the buddha lands there are some wherein both yellow [gold] and white [silver] human and divine beings live together. There are also buddha lands wherein all beings are of a pure golden color. Thus, Dharmākara²² selected to reject the coarse and inferior lands in which there existed yellow [gold] and white [silver] beings, and he selected for his own the good and refined lands where the color of all beings is of pure gold.

(*Senchaku nenbutsu honganshū*, 5a–b; *Senchakushū*
English Translation Project 1998, p. 75)

Hōnen further explains the reason for the employment of gold for the Amida images in the *Gyakushu seppō*:

Among colors, white is genuine, and the bodies of buddhas also seem to be white. But, white will fade, whereas gold never will. All buddhas should show the attribute of unchangeableness. For this reason, they appear in gold. This is according to the *Kanbutsu zanmaikyō* 觀佛三昧經. For the creation of images of buddhas, various colors are not unable to obtain merits, but gold should be used because of its immutability. Thus, the person who creates a Buddha in gold will obtain through virtue a rebirth in the Western Pure Land. Even though it is impossible at the end of this life, it will certainly be attainable at the end of the third life.

(*Gyakushu seppō*, 383b)

In this passage Hōnen elucidates several explicit motivations for the use of the golden color. Hōnen attributes the golden color to the qualities of the Western Pure Land as described in Amida's third vow, and thus, not only Amida but also all bodhisattvas should be golden. Hōnen also observes that the nature of gold suitably represents the immutability and genuineness of the buddhas' nature. And most importantly, Hōnen promises that devotees who create a golden image of the Amida will receive an enduring merit for their eventual salvation. In the three Pure Land sutras, gold was simply an auspicious attribute of Amida's body. But Hōnen elevated the significance of the golden color to a representation of the invariableness of Amida's power to bestow salvation.

The doctrinal emphasis on the golden color is reflected in a dramatic increase in

21. Amida's third vow in the Larger Sutra is as follows: "May I not gain possession of perfect awakening if, once I have attained buddhahood, the humans and gods in my land are not all the color of genuine gold." *Muryōjukyō*, 267c. For the translation, GÓMEZ 1996, p. 166.

22. The monk Dharmākara was Amida in a previous life.

the color's employment in Pure Land Buddhist art of the thirteenth century. The use of gold pigment (*kindei* 金泥) for the entire body (*shikkai konjiki* 悉皆金色) of the Amida sculpture first appeared in the late twelfth century.²³ The parallel use of gold pigment became popular in the genre of *raigō* paintings dated to the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Examples include the twenty-one *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings, an *Amida Appearing over the Mountains* at the Kyoto National Museum and another at Konkai Kōmyōji, the *Descent of Amida with His Forty-Nine Manifestations* at Kōmyōji, and the *Sākyamuni Sending the Faithful from This Bank and Amida Receiving Him on the Yonder Bank* at Unpenji.²⁴

Hōnen's patent explications of the virtues associated with the golden standing Amida sculptures in *raigō* mode had a remarkable consequence. The gilt standing image of Amida was popularly depicted as an element in *raigō* paintings from the thirteenth century. The significance of this development becomes apparent when we compare the immediate and contemporaneous impact of Hōnen's doctrinal proclamations on visual images with the lack of influence generated by Genshin's simple referral to the same image in the *Ōjōyōshū*. Genshin mentioned a comparable gilt standing Amida sculpture in *raigō* mode, which he cited from the *Chong-guo benzhuan* 中国本伝, as a part of the setting for the *rinjū no gyōgi* 臨終の行儀 (*nenbutsu* observance rite). Yet his reference to the image is made without emphasis or explanation of its appropriation and efficacy for the moment of death. Indeed, until the promulgation of Hōnen's *Senchakushū*, the sacred depictions of Pure Buddhism, both sculptural and pictorial images, remained largely in seated position (*Ōjōyōshū*, 69a). The seated Amida on the lotus pedestal, which is mentioned in the section entitled "Kanzatsu mon" 観察門 (*Nenbutsu* Contemplation) in chapter four of the "Shōshu *nenbutsu*" 正修念仏 (Proper Practice of *Nenbutsu*) in the *Ōjōyōshū*, carried substantial meaning for Genshin's contemplative practice (*Ōjōyōshū*, 53b). The seated Amida was the very focus for Genshin's contemplative practice, and he detailed a systematic contemplation of the image. The seated image was also compatible with his Tendai Esotericism, since seated deities are a

23. The earliest Amida sculpture entirely covered in gold pigment is documented in the diary of Fujiwara no Tadachika 藤原忠親 (1131–1195), the *Sankaiki* 山塊記 (the twentieth day of the ninth month of Genryaku 元暦 1 [1184]). See *Sankaiki*, 222. Regarding pictorial images, the painting of *Amida's Welcoming Descent with His Celestial Assembly at Mount Kōya* is one of the earliest surviving examples of the use of gold pigment for the entire body of the Amida. According to Izumi Takeo, the moderate use of gold pigment in the painting at Mount Kōya indicates a trial stage before the completion and culmination of the standard technique. See IZUMI 2002, p. 2.

24. Twenty-three *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings have survived, and of these the following twenty-one contain gold pigment: Guhōji 弘法寺 (Kyoto), Shōju Raigōji 聖衆来迎寺 (Shiga), Shōganji 勝願寺 (Saitama), Jōfukuji 淨福寺 (Kyoto), Shōdōji 小童寺 (Hyōgo), Chion'in 知恩院 (Kyoto), Henmyōin 遍明院 (Okayama), Shōgakuji 正覺寺 (Aichi), Shin Chion'in 新知恩院 (Shiga), Nezu Institute of Fine Arts, a private collection (Nara), Freer Gallery of Art (Washington, DC), Daizōji 大藏寺 (Nara), Kongōji 金剛寺 (Nara), Fukushima Prefectural Art Museum 福島県立博物館, Zenkōji 善光寺 (Nagano), Yūgensai Collection 幽玄齋コレクション, Kōmyōji 光明寺 (Kanagawa), Jōgon'in 淨嚴院 (Shiga), Zenrinji 禪林寺 (Kyoto), and the Fukui Prefectural Museum of Art (*Fukui kenritsu bijutsukan* 福井県立美術館).

familiar feature of Esoteric Buddhist mandalas. The seated Amida of Genshin's *shōshu nenbutsu* had no need to be replaced by the standing image until Hōnen abandoned the contemplative *nenbutsu* and introduced the significance of the standing image. Therefore, the popularity of the gilt standing Amida image in *raigō* mode had to await the explicit catalyst of Hōnen's pronouncements in the thirteenth century.

The Gōshō Mandara

The earliest surviving painting showing the standing Amida is the *Gōshō mandara* at Seiryōji 清涼寺 (FIGURE 1A), dated around 1200.²⁵ Although the image is in poor condition, its composition and content are facilitated by a fifteenth century copy at the same temple (FIGURE 1B). The original silk hanging scroll depicts two scenes: the descent of Amida with thirty bodhisattvas along the mountain to a dying devotee awaiting in a hut, and their return (the number of bodhi-sattvas being decreased to twenty-seven) to the seven-jeweled palace in the Western Pure Land. The *Gōshō mandara* belongs to the subcategory of *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings that were first produced between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Many characteristics of the *Gōshō mandara* are shared by the *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings. The scene can be identified as the highest rebirth on the basis of the palace and the multitude of created bodhisattvas, both described in the relevant passage of the *Meditation Sutra* (*Kanmuryōjyūkyō*, 344C; RYŪKOKU TRANSLATION CENTER 1984, p. 81) and found in some *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings that show the highest rebirth.²⁶ Other shared features are the standing Amida, the diagonal descent of the group from the upper left to the lower right, the three crouching bodhisattvas (including Kannon and Seishi) leading at the front, and the three dancing bodhisattvas holding small drums descending just ahead of Amida.²⁷ These features were inherited by the later *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings, which may be exemplified by the image at Chion'in, dated to

25. The designation *Gōshō mandara* indicates the specific painting, and the term is different from the old name of the category now termed *raigō* paintings.

Yoshimura Toshiko dates the *Gōshō mandara* to before 1195. As discussed later in this paper, the date is more likely to be 1204. See YOSHIMURA 1989, p. 130. A few surviving copies of the *Gōshō mandara* are at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, dated to the fourteenth century, and at Hakata Zendōji 博多善導寺 dated to the sixteenth century. A print version has also survived at Shimizu Bunko 志水文庫, Ashiya 芦屋.

26. Six *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings at Guhōji, a private collection in Kyoto, Chion'in, Shin chion'in, Daizōji, and Kongōji depict a palace as an indication of the highest rebirth.

27. Some *Descent of Amida with Twenty-Five Bodhisattvas* show a vanguard of crouching or dancing groups that contain two rather than three bodhisattvas. For example, paintings at a private collection in Kyoto and at Henmyōin depict two bodhisattvas in the crouching group and three bodhisattvas in the dancing group. Paintings at Shōdōji and at Shōju Raigōji include three bodhisattvas in the crouching group and two bodhisattvas in the dancing group. However, these four paintings are compositionally similar to the *raigō* scene in the *Gōshō mandara*.



FIGURE 1a. *Gōshō mandara*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 1204, 116.7 × 54.6 cm, Seiryōji, Kyoto (Courtesy of Nara National Museum).



FIGURE 1b. Copy of *Gōshō mandara*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, fifteenth century, 116 × 54.6 cm, Seiryōji, Kyoto (Courtesy of Nara National Museum).



FIGURE 2. *Descent of Amida and his Twenty-Five Bodhisattvas*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, fourteenth century, 145.0 × 155.5 cm, Chion'in, Kyoto (Courtesy of Nara National Museum).

the fourteenth century (FIGURE 2). The close connection in composition and features reveals that the early *Gōshō mandara* must have been a prototype for the *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings.²⁸

28. The scholarly consensus has been that during this period Shōkū developed and circulated the *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings. This view is grounded in four observations. First, Shōkū's close association with visual images is well known from his efforts in circulating copies of the *Taima mandara* 当麻曼荼羅. Secondly, the *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings are stylistically similar to the scene of the descent of Amida with his twenty-five bodhisattvas in the *Taima mandara engi emaki* 当麻曼荼羅縁起絵巻 at Kōmyōji, which was thought to have been created as part of the effort to spread *Taima mandara* belief in the mid-thirteenth century, a project advocated by Shōkū. The stylistic similarities are: the descent in a diagonal composition from the upper right to the lower left (often toward the dying devotee waiting inside a structure), the twenty-five bodhisattvas (three bodhisattvas, including Kannon and Seishi, and a separate group of dancing bodhisattvas preceding Amida), and the standing figures of Amida and bodhisattvas, as opposed to the seated figures of earlier paintings. Thirdly, Shōkū's doctrines allow manifold practices (*shogyō* 諸行) in addition to invocational *nenbutsu* 念仏. These manifold practices include the performance of contemplative *nenbutsu* in association with

Hōnen's connection with the *Gōshō mandara* is evidenced by several documents and by the image's harmony with his doctrines.²⁹ The *Gōshō mandara yurai* 迎接曼荼羅由来 (Origin of the *Gōshō mandara*), traditionally dated to the mid-fourteenth century, relates that Hōnen painted the *Gōshō mandara* based on his dream of Kumagai Naozane's attainment of the highest rebirth. The account also notes that Hōnen gave the painting to Naozane as a primary icon (*honzon* 本尊) for the further practice of *nenbutsu* (*Goshō mandara yurai*, 89–91).³⁰ The history of the paintings is confirmed by a private document of the Kumagai family dated to 1331 (the fifth day of the third month of Gentoku 元徳 3) and by the *Hōnen shōnin eden* (2: 82, 83, 212; *Kumagaike monjo* 熊谷家文書, 50–57). The association of this sacred image with Hōnen is also buttressed by the appearance of the standing Amida and the return journey of his celestial group. As noted earlier, to Hōnen the standing posture was the ideal bearing for a compassionate Amida. The inclusion of the return journey of the Amida group reminds us of Hōnen's teaching that a significant feature of *raigō* is the leading of devotees to the Western Pure Land.

The *Gōshō mandara* has been dated to before 1195. The date is derived in part from the *Kumagai Rensei okibumi utsushi* 熊谷蓮生置文写 (Document of the Kumagai family), written on the ninth day of the second month of Kenkyū 建久 6 (1195), which recounts that Kumagai Naozane owned the *Gōshō mandara* in 1195. Yet the authenticity of this document has been rightly challenged (MIYAJIMA 1990).³¹ In addition, scholars typically assign to the *Gōshō mandara* the same functionality as other works in the *raigō* genre. It is thought that this image was a visual aid for contemplative practice that must have been utilized during Hōnen's earlier adherence to visualization (before the composition of the *Senchakushū* in 1198). I

visual images, as well as reading and reciting sutras, doing prostration, and making Buddhist images and temples. Furthermore, his doctrines bear a direct relation to the new elements of the *raigō* paintings, such as the standing positions of Amida and the twenty-five bodhisattvas. Lastly, Shōkū's aristocratic followers were also instrumental in the creation and circulation of costly images containing these standard stylistic features. See the following discussions of Shōkū's involvement with *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings: SAEKI 1979; IWATA 1986; ISHIDA 1992; and ITO 1993.

Since Shōkū accepted "auxiliary acts", including the contemplation of visual images, the production of *raigō* paintings was supported by his doctrines. Amida's standing position is explored in the *Kangyō jōzengi tahitsushō* (written from 1226 to 1244) and the *Kangyō hiketsushū*. See Shōkū, *Kangyō jōzengi tahitsushō*, 73a. See also, *Kangyō hiketsushū*, 300b. There is no passage in the works of Shōkū that explicitly describes twenty-five descending bodhisattvas. However, Itō Shinji discusses Shōkū's view of twenty-five bodhisattvas as treated in the *Kannen yōgishaku kanmongishō* 観念要義釋観門義鈔 (written in 1221–1222). See ITO 1993, p. 27. See also *Kannen yōgishaku kanmongishō*, 1–66. The date and the authenticity of writings attributed to Shōkū have been open to argument.

29. Studies on the *Gōshō mandara* include: YOSHIMURA 1989; HAMADA 1979; AKAMATSU 1966; and MIYAJIMA 1990.

30. The *Gōshō mandara yurai*, the *Kumagai Naozane jihitsu seiganjō* 熊谷直実自筆請願状 (Handwritten Prayer by Kumagai Naozane), and two letters of Hōnen and Shōkū to Naozane have survived at Seiryōji.

31. The document is a copy of the original that was supposedly written by Kumagai Naozane.

will argue for a new dating of the *Gōshō mandara* based on the emergence of an emphasis on the highest rebirth at the pinnacle of Hōnen's doctrinal development that was subsequent to the completion of the *Senchakushū* in 1198.

Although the *Senchakushū* was finished in 1198, we have no reason to believe that Hōnen had then reached the culmination of his doctrines concerning the exclusive selection of invocational *nenbutsu*. As Itō Yuishin points out, Hōnen's doctrines fully matured after several experiences of *samādhi* (Jp. *sanmai* 三昧),³² in which the monk had visions of Shandao, Seishi, and the Amida triad during his *nenbutsu* practice between 1198–1206 (Itō 1981, p. 102). In the *Senchakushū* Hōnen regards such *samādhi* as assurance of future *ōjō*, and the experience provided him with compelling confirmation of the efficacy of the single practice of invocational *nenbutsu* (*Senchaku nenbutsu honganshū*, 19a; SENCHAKUSHŪ ENGLISH TRANSLATION PROJECT 1998, p. 148). His confidence in the practice is revealed in his teachings, conversations, and correspondence, especially after 1198. For example, the *Nenbutsu tai'i* 念佛大意 (written by Hōnen around 1204) states:

Keep the single-practice of vocal *nenbutsu* in your mind repeatedly and believe nothing else, and practice the *nenbutsu* at all times without negligence. Many of those who practice the *nenbutsu* can attain their *ōjō* in this present age.

(*Nenbutsu tai'i*, 517a)

Contrast the confidence and conviction of this exhortation with Hōnen's earlier instruction in the *Muryōjukyō shaku* 無量寿經釋 (1190):

The *nenbutsu* practitioners, in contemplating on the Buddha's auspicious marks or on his bright white knot, by taking of refuge in him and welcoming his advent, and by calling whole-heartedly name of Amida, are carrying out the *nenbutsu* practice.

(*Muryōjukyō shaku*, 323b)

Since it was after 1198 that Hōnen derived the notion of the highest rebirth from a complete reliance on the power and promise of Amida's original vow, the dating of the *Gōshō mandara* to earlier than 1195 appears too early for Hōnen to have acquired a firm conviction regarding salvation through the *nenbutsu* practice. If we set aside the Kumagai family document of 1195 due to its questionable authenticity, a new date of 1204 emerges from several considerations.³³ To begin with, we have the record of a prayer for the highest rebirth offered by Kumagai Naozane, a former soldier who became a prominent disciple of Hōnen and the owner of the *Gōshō mandara*. The prayer for the highest

32. The *samādhi* is a form of Buddhist practice in which one enters into an inner, serene, blissful state through focusing thought on one object. Visualizing a buddha is regarded as a sign of reaching the state. Hōnen treats *samādhi* as the highest goal of seeing Amida through invocational *nenbutsu*.

33. Indeed, the Kumagai family document of 1195 includes several lexical items and stylistic elements that are incongruent with a date of 1195. The document is probably a later forgery that attempted to substantiate Hōnen's gift of *Gōshō mandara* to Naozane.

rebirth is documented for the thirteenth day of the fifth month of Genkyū 1 (1204) in the *Kumagai Naozane jihitsu seiganjō* 熊谷直実自筆請願状 (Handwritten Prayer by Kumagai Naozane) at Seiryōji, and Naozane's acquisition of the image in the same year is plausible.³⁴ The pursuit of the highest rebirth was to be an advanced quest for experienced devotees, so it seems reasonable that Naozane would attempt this only after an extended apprenticeship, and indeed his formal aspiration for the highest rebirth is recorded in 1204, eleven years after he became Hōnen's disciple in the exclusive selection of the invocational *nenbutsu* practice (*Kumagai Naozane seiganjō*, 67–81). The date of 1204 also matches the evidence of the *Gōshō mandara yurai*, which relates that the painting was made five years before Naozane's death in 1208 (*Gōshō mandara yurai*, 85). Hence, the *Gōshō mandara* was probably created in 1204 when, with his fuller absorption into the *nenbutsu* practice, Hōnen emphasized the highest rebirth in his interactions with other devotees, including Hōjō Masako 北条政子 (1157–1225), Tsunoto no Saburō Tamemori (1163–1243), and Ōgo no Tarō Sanehide (?–1246). It is known that in his correspondence, Hōnen encouraged Hōjō Masako, Ōgo no Tarō Sanehide, and Tsunoto no Saburō Tamemori to pray for the highest rebirth (*Kamakura no nii no zen'ni e shinzuru on henji* 鎌倉の二位の禅尼へ進ずる御返事, 534a; *Ōgo no Tarō Sanehide e tsukawasu on henji* 大胡太郎実秀へつかはす御返事, 557b; *Tsunoto no Saburō nyūdō e tsukawasu on henji*, 564a–b).³⁵ It is also worth noting that Hōnen gives explicit instructions regarding the attainment of the highest rebirth after daily *nenbutsu* practice in his *Ōjō jōdo yōjin* 往生浄土用心 (written after 1198) (*Ōjō jōdo yōjin*, 647b).

Hōnen saw two novel roles in the creation of the *Gōshō mandara*. First, the image encouraged experienced devotees towards the deeper pursuit of the single *nenbutsu* practice. The image represented the goal of the highest rebirth that could be obtained only through full reliance on Amida's original vow. In fact, Hōnen teaches that after gaining a firm foundation of faith devotees could return to the five right acts, which had once been set aside for the sake of the invocational *nenbutsu*. The reappropriation of the acts, including contemplation on an image, allowed devotees to refine their *nenbutsu* practice (*Senchaku nenbutsu honganshū*, 7c; SENCHAKUSHŪ ENGLISH TRANSLATION PROJECT 1998, p. 87).³⁶ Thus, visual images like the *Gōshō mandara*, which reflected Amida's promise of bestowing even the highest rebirth, became suitable for mature devotees as they sought

34. The authorship of the calligraphy in the *Kumagai Naozane jihitsu seiganjō* has been verified. Due to the ambiguity of the syntax, it is possible to interpret the passage as stating Naozane became interested in the highest rebirth in 1194 or 1204. Current scholarship has adopted the former date. *Kumagai Naozane seiganjō*, 67–81.

35. His correspondence with Hōjō Masako is dated to 1200 or 1205. His letter to Ōgo no Tarō Sadahide is dated to the fourteenth day of the third month (perhaps of 1198). His letter to Tsunoto no Saburō Tamemori is the eighteenth day of the ninth month (before 1200).

36. For further explanation, see SENCHAKUSHŪ ENGLISH TRANSLATION PROJECT 1998, p. 38.

affirmation of their salvation in invocational *nenbutsu*. Secondly, in the highest rebirth Hōnen envisioned the salvation of all humanity. His doctrines espoused an egalitarian accessibility to paradise that ran counter to the privileged access enforced by earlier forms of Buddhism.³⁷ To effect his vision of universal salvation, Hōnen urged devotees who were able to attain the highest rebirth to return to our world to save all sentient beings. This remarkable exhortation is apparent in his correspondence to his most pious disciples. In the aforementioned letter of Hōnen to Hōjō Masako dated to 1200 or 1205, he instructs that she should strive to attain salvation in the highest rebirth and then come back to this world to save sentient beings who have no faith in Amida (*Kamakura no nii no zen'ni e shinzuru on henji*, 534a). Similar tutelage is found in his letters to Ōgo no Tarō Sanehide and to Tsunoto no Saburō Tamemori (*Ōgo no Tarō Sanehide tsukawasu on henji*, 557b; *Tsunoto no Saburō nyūdō e tsukawasu on henji*, 564a–b).

The *Gōshō mandara* gave rise to the later *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings, which bore a great resemblance in compositional features. But an enigma exists in the depictions of the bodhisattvas. The *Gōshō mandara* contains two groups of bodhisattvas (thirty descending and twenty-seven returning), as opposed to the twenty-five of the eponymous paintings. The number twenty-five has been attributed by some to Hōnen's disciple Shōkū, who included twenty-five bodhisattvas in his *Taima mandara engi emaki* dated to the mid-thirteenth century and who mentioned them in his *Kannen yōgishaku kanmon gishō* 観念要義釋観門義鈔 (written in 1221–1222) (Itō 1993, pp. 25–27). However, I suggest that the emergence of twenty-five descending bodhisattvas in the *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings had its origin much earlier, when there was a fusion of the twenty-five protective bodhisattvas of the *Jūōjō Amida bukkokukyō* 十往生阿彌陀佛國經 (*Sutra of Ten Births*) with the descending bodhisattvas of the Amida group. The amalgamation of the two cohorts was presaged by Hōnen in his *Senchakushū*, which reads:

It is stated in the *Shih wang-sheng ching* (*Sutra of Ten Births*) that if there are sentient beings who think of A-mi-t'o Fo and desire birth, then that Buddha will dispatch twenty-five bodhisattvas to protect these practitioners. Whether [it is] in the daytime or night, at whatever time or in whatever place, devils and evil spirits will be kept from coming into contact with them. And again it is said in the *Kuan [wu-liang-shou] ching* (*Meditation Sutra*) that if anyone recites the name of, prostrates himself or herself before, and meditates on A-mi-t'o Fo and

37. His vision of universal salvation is explained in a passage from the *Senchakushū*: “We should know that if the original vow required us to perform the manifold practices mentioned above, then those who are able to attain birth would be few, while those unable to do so would be very many. For this reason, the Tathāgata Amida, in the distant past when he was bhiku Dharmākara, moved by impartial compassion and wishing to save all beings universally, did not select the manifold practices, such as making images of the Buddha and building stūpas, as corresponding to his original vow concerning birth. Instead he selected the single practice of reciting the *nenbutsu*.” see SENCHAKUSHŪ ENGLISH TRANSLATION PROJECT 1998, p. 78.

desires to be born in his land, then that Buddha will send an innumerable host of transformation buddhas and Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta in countless transformation bodies to protect such a practitioner. Further, *together with the above-mentioned twenty-five bodhisattvas, they will surround this person in hundreds and thousands of rows; whether he or she is walking, standing still, sitting, or lying down, at all times and in every place, day or night, they will never leave this person* (emphasis mine). Since this supreme benefit to be relied on is available, I fervently hope that all the practitioners should each seek birth with utmost sincerity.

(*Senchaku hongan nenbutsushū*, 18a–b; SENCHAKUSHŪ ENGLISH TRANSLATION PROJECT 1998, p. 143)

Here, the earlier, separate roles of twenty-five protective bodhisattvas (including Avalokiteśvara [Jp. Kannon] and Mahāsthāmaprāpta [Jp. Seishi]) in the *Sutra of Ten Births* and of the countless descending created buddhas, Kannon, and Seishi in the *Meditation Sutra* are integrated by Hōnen into a more powerful group of deities, who are sent by Amida to protect devotees at any time, including the moment of death portrayed in the *raigō* images. Kannon and Seishi, whose descent at the moment of death is described in the original *Meditation Sutra*, are omitted in Hōnen's rendering, perhaps because of their inclusion with the twenty-five protective bodhisattvas. The new image of the twenty-five descending bodhisattvas is believed to have first appeared in the *Mujō kōshiki* 無常講式, which was a copy of the works of Emperor Go-Toba 後鳥羽 (1180–1239) (*Mujō kōshiki*, 164).³⁸

Consequences

By the end of his career, Hōnen had laid the doctrinal and pictorial foundation for the popularization of the *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Yet Hōnen's *Gōshō mandara* was not duplicated for wider circulation until the mid-fourteenth century, in part because it was tightly held within the Kumagai family.³⁹ In addition, the *Gōshō mandara* was not conceived as a visual aid for use in contemplation by all devotees, since the functionality of the image seems to have been intended for advanced practitioners who had already established their faith through their exclusive engagement into *nenbutsu* practice and who then aspired to a higher spirituality. The narrow scope of the painting's utilization was also motivated by the persecutions experienced by Hōnen's Pure Land Buddhist School from 1204.

38. The copy itself is dated to 1249.

39. Since the second oldest surviving *Gōshō mandara*, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, is dated to the mid-fourteenth century, it is possible that other *Gōshō mandara* were not created until the Chinzei sect of the Pure Land Buddhist School, which of all the sects most retained Hōnen's doctrines, increased in power around 1300. The Chinzei sect became more influential after Ryōchū's move to Kyoto in 1276 (YOSHIDA 1992, pp. 238–40).

Hōnen's school, which suggested the use of a facile salvific practice for the masses, was harshly persecuted as a dangerous heterodoxy in the exoteric-esoteric (*kenmitsu* 顯密) system. Three waves of persecution rose against Hōnen: the Genkyū 元久 persecution of 1204, the Ken'ei 建永 persecution of 1207, and the Karoku 嘉祿 persecution of 1227, after his death. The opposition to Hōnen's steadfast conviction in the single practice of invocational *nenbutsu* was generated largely by Hōssō monks at Kōfukuji and Tendai monks at Enryakuji. The imperial court reacted by punishing Hōnen's school. The persecution reached its peak in 1207, when Hōnen and seven of his disciples were exiled to Tosa 土佐 in Shikoku, while his disciples Jūren 住蓮 and Junsai 遵西 were sentenced to death. After Hōnen's death in 1212, his followers were still active and had separated into five sects led by his leading disciples, among whom Ryūkan 隆寛, Kōsai 幸西, Shōkū, and Chōsai 長西 were in Kyoto, while Shōkō 聖光 was in Kyushu.⁴⁰ In the Karoku persecution, the monks at Enryakuji desecrated Hōnen's grave, and his disciples Ryūkan and Kōsai were exiled. Shōkū's Seizan and Chōsai's Kuhonji 九品寺 sects avoided exile and remained in Kyoto, continuing Hōnen's legacy in their teachings on the *nenbutsu* practice. The Seizan sect, in particular, grew rapidly during the persecution. As its leader, Shōkū advocated doctrinal changes that allowed a wider employment of visual images; thus, he became a proliferator of *nijūgo bosatsu raigō* paintings (KANDA 2002, pp. 226–42).

In addition to the *Gōshō mandara*, it is known that Hōnen facilitated the creation of paintings entitled *Sesshu fusha mandara* 撰取不捨曼荼羅 (all-embracing mandara).⁴¹ Unfortunately, none has survived, but contemporaneous accounts relate that the images depicted the light of Amida shining upon lay *nenbutsu* practitioners, while simultaneously eschewing the scholars and monks of other schools. For Hōnen, the all-embracing mandalas epitomized Amida's impartial compassion that would bring salvation to all, even to the poor and destitute. Such universal salvation ran counter to the ensconced social stratification of traditional Buddhist schools, whose funding was leveraged by the possibility of esteemed positions in paradise for the rich and highborn. In fact, the all-embracing mandalas were destroyed by orthodox sects threatened by their revolutionary message. Nevertheless, the brief existence of the all-embracing mandalas, as well as the far-reaching impact of the *Gōshō mandara*, illuminates Hōnen's vigorous visual orientation. He assigned to these images a functionality that transcended the

40. The five sects are: Kōsai's Ichinen sect 一念派, Shōkō's Chinzei sect 鎮西派, Ryūkan's Ta'nen sect 多念派, Shōkū's Seizan sect 西山派, and Chōsai's Kuhonji sect 九品寺派.

41. We know that the *Sesshu fusha mandara* were designed by Hōnen's followers on the basis of the *Kōfukuji sōjō an* 興福寺奏狀案 (Kōfukuji petition), dated to the tenth month of Genkyū 2 (1205). See *Kōfukuji sōjō*, 257b–262a. The translation reads, "The error of establishing a new image: some of Hōnen's followers have designed a *mandara* that depicts the rays of light that emanate from Amida Buddha embracing those who practice the exclusive *nenbutsu* but not those engaged in other practices." SENCHAKUSHŪ ENGLISH TRANSLATION PROJECT 1998, p. 17. I assume that the *mandara* was also employed as an image of encouragement.

internal focus of the traditional, ritualistic, and meditative images of Buddhism. In the dynamic milieu of medieval Japan, the two types of images traversed both religious and social boundaries with an agency that encapsulated Hōnen's assertive visual agenda in the promulgation of his spiritual ideals.

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