

# Originary Enlightenment

Tendai *Hongaku* Doctrine and  
Japanese Buddhism

Ruben L. F. Habito

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## Preface

*Tendai hongaku-shisō*, or the doctrine of originary enlightenment<sup>1</sup> handed down in the Japanese Tendai tradition, has been described as a common matrix out of which the major forms of Japanese Buddhism arose and developed. (Hazama 1988; Tamura 1965, 1969; Ono 1982) On the one hand, it has been hailed as a uniquely Japanese contribution to Buddhist thought, the result of a felicitous blending of universalistic Buddhist ideas and indigenous Japanese elements (Tamura 1969, 1973). On the other, it has been criticised as a heretical thought-movement that is behind the degenerate and discriminatory elements in Japanese society and the Japanese way of thinking.<sup>2</sup>

Two scholars have led a multi-pronged attack on this doctrine and ideas associated with it, arousing a veritable hornets' nest in Japanese academic and sectarian Buddhist circles. The assertion of these scholars, backed by textual research and sophisticated philosophical arguments, is that much of what has passed for Japanese Buddhism is, after all, "not (truly and genuinely) Buddhism." They direct their volleys not only on *hongaku shisō*, as developed in Japanese Tendai tradition, but

also on related notions from Indian Mahāyāna and Chinese Hua Yen philosophy, such as *tathāgatagarbha*, Buddha nature, and other concepts that found prominence in the Ch'an/Zen tradition. In their critiques of these doctrines/notions, they propose a revisionary stance which they are calling "critical Buddhism" (*hihan-Bukkyō*), contrasting it to the "topical" (from *topos*, or place = *basho*) philosophy that characterizes the prevailing forms of Japanese religion and ethos, which they claim is incompatible with the Buddhism of Śākyamuni.<sup>3</sup>

The ongoing controversy on the status of Japanese Buddhism generated by the provocative works of the two scholars, Profs. Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shirō, both of Komazawa University, has had and will continue to have repercussions on discourse regarding other aspects of Japanese society and culture, specifically in discourse on "Japanese identity," or "Nihonjin-ron."<sup>4</sup> More thoroughgoing assessments of these critical views and the responses to them are called for, and scholars in other parts of the world have become aware of the significance of what is going on, in terms of their implications for questions of religious and academic import, including not only doctrinal and textual issues, but also social, ethical, and political issues.<sup>5</sup>

This monograph is intended as one minuscule contribution, first to provide some reference material related to the above discussion. The articles included here take a closer look at what has come to be the focal point of the critiques, namely *hongaku-shisō* that developed in the Japanese Tendai tradition. One of the results of the above discussion is to accentuate the need for further historical research and textual studies that will lead to a better understanding of this thought-movement and its place in Japanese religious history.

This collection is offered in the hope of filling in the lacuna in Western language material on this important

debate going on in Japanese academic circles. These studies aim to situate Tendai *hongaku-shisō* in historical context, providing descriptive accounts of its background, content and mode of transmission, and noting its radical approach to traditional Buddhist notions.<sup>6</sup>

The postscript will sketch in very rough outline the key points raised in the criticism of *hongaku-shisō*, and also summarize some responses to these made by prominent scholars of Japanese Buddhism, hoping at least to give an account of key issues raised in the ongoing discussion, and indicate some tasks ahead.

As I offer these papers in revised form for the IIBS Occasional Papers Series, I would like to express my indebtedness and gratitude to all my mentors and colleagues during my graduate studies at Tokyo University from 1972 to 1978. First, an enduring debt is owed to the late Prof. Tamura Yoshirō, for the privilege of having been able to attend the seminars on *Tendai Hongaku-shisō* that he conducted for several years until his retirement. I also express my heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Nakamura Hajime, who was chair of the Department of Indian Philosophy at Tokyo University at the time I was admitted to graduate studies there, and to Prof. Hirakawa Akira, who advised and supervised me in my dissertation writing on the notion of *dharmakāya* in the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*. Prof. Takasaki Jikidō, who took over as my adviser after Prof. Hirakawa's retirement, continues to be a mentor, guide, and friend.

Here I also acknowledge deep-felt gratitude to Prof. Mayeda Sengaku for his continuing guidance and support, for his invaluable help not only on academic but also personal matters especially during the time of my transfer from Sophia University in Tokyo to Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University in Dallas. The second article in this collection was originally dedicated in his honor and published in a *Festschrift* commemorat-

ing his sixtieth birthday. (See p. 74, note 6 for the full title of the volume.)

Prof. Sueki Fumihiko, a colleague since graduate school days, has kept me up on recent literature on *hongaku-shisō* and developments in the study of Japanese Buddhism. Profs. Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shirō, also colleagues since graduate school days, have sent me items that kept me up to date on their work. The latter especially went out of his way to send his impressive tome *Zen-shisō no Hihanteki Kenkyū* soon after it was published. The enduring bond with the above mentioned mentors and colleagues goes beyond the academic, and certainly transcends the differences in standpoint and perspective on the issues covered, and I bow to them in deepest respect and gratitude.

Here on this side of the Pacific, I have been helped by many colleagues in getting acquainted with the “state of the art” in Buddhist studies since my move from Japan in 1989. Dr. Richard Payne opened doors when he invited me to participate in a series of panels on “Reevaluating Kamakura Buddhism” for the Association for Asian Studies and the American Academy of Religion in 1990. The first article in this monograph comes out of my paper presented in that series. Profs. Paul Groner of the University of Virginia, and Jacqueline Stone of Princeton University, who were working on some related themes, gave some valuable suggestions, and we were able to put together a panel addressing some questions on *hongaku shisō* for the 1993 AAR annual conference held in Washington, with the participation of Profs. Sueki Fumihiko and Matsuo Kenji, who came over from Japan for the conference. The fourth article in this monograph is based on a paper originally intended for delivery in that panel but which was rescinded for various reasons. This was then rewritten for publication in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (Vol. 22, 1/2, Spring 1995) together

with revised versions of the papers by Profs. Sueki, Groner, and Stone. I thank Dr. Paul Swanson, editor of JJRS, for allowing me to include this paper in this collection.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Richard Payne, Dean of the Institute of Buddhist Studies, for his suggestion to present some of my work on *hongaku-shisō* in this form. Much of the burden of the recompilation and revision of the articles has been eased with technical help from Lucy Cobbe, Mary Ann Marshall, and Terry Smith of Perkins School of Theology, Karen Andrews of the Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley, California, Bob Curry, of the Maria Kannon Zen Center, and Steve Flora of Information Technology Services at Southern Methodist University.

Finally, I would like to express my special thanks to Prof. Hara Minoru, President of the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies, a mentor and guide since graduate school days, for his encouragement and support, particularly in the publication of this manuscript. Gratitude also to Dr. Yotsuya Kōdō, Acting Director of the International Institute for Buddhist Studies.

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## Chapter 1

### Tendai *Hongaku* Doctrine and Kamakura Buddhism

Many scholars in Japanese medieval history and religion have been calling for a “new look” at the Buddhism of the Kamakura era, in a way that would overcome the limitations of previous sectarian-based studies, and would present a more comprehensive picture of the religious life of the period.<sup>1</sup>

The religious movements that originated during this period, inspired by the personalities and teachings of the likes of Hōnen, Shinran, Ippen, Dōgen and Nichiren, are usually referred to as “New Buddhism” (*J. shin bukkyō*), to distinguish them from the established and powerful sects, notably Tendai, Shingon and the Nara-based schools, referred to as *kyū bukkyō* or “old Buddhism” (Kamata and Tanaka, eds., 1971; Morrell, 1987). “Kamakura Buddhism” can be validly used as an inclusive term for the Buddhist world of this period of Japa-



nese history, encompassing both the new movements as well as the "old" established schools, and not just as a term exclusively referring to the former, which only in later periods became the powerful sectarian entities they now are.

As one contribution in the cooperative venture toward a more comprehensive view of "Kamakura Buddhism," this chapter will map out the features of the Tendai doctrine of "originary enlightenment" (*hongaku*), a thought-movement which in different ways influenced both the established schools and the new Buddhist movements of the period.<sup>2</sup>

We will first trace the prehistory and then in broad strokes mark the lines of development of the doctrine of originary enlightenment. We will then consider its mode of transmission and some of its basic themes, as a way of understanding its character as doctrine. Third, we will note critiques of the doctrine made as early as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Fourth, we will outline the relation of this doctrine with the politico-religious establishment of the late Heian and Kamakura periods. Fifth, we will summarize Tamura Yoshirō's arguments regarding its supposed influence on the major figures of the New Buddhisms of the Kamakura period, as treated in his celebrated work, *Kamakura Shin-bukkyō no Kenkyū*,<sup>3</sup> and offer critical observations.

## I. HONGAKU DOCTRINE IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Continuing speculation on the key Mahāyāna notion of *śūnyatā*, which led to the development of Mādhyamika and Yogācāra currents of Buddhist thought, also gave rise to another current, intertwining with the above two but which nevertheless took on a distinct development of its own — the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* (J. *nyōraizō-shisō*).<sup>4</sup>

This doctrine, already noted in sūtras composed in the second and third centuries C.E., was given systematic presentation in a treatise called *Ratnagoṭravibhāga Mahāyānōttara-tantrasāstra*, attributed to Sāramati, and written sometime in the early fifth century.<sup>5</sup> Its main thesis is that “all sentient beings have the original capacity of becoming Buddha,” as they are the *garbha* (“matrix,” as well as “embryo”) of the *tathāgata*. The term *garbha* is used here also in a way synonymous with *dhātu* (“field” or “realm”). Sentient beings (*sattvāḥ*) are affirmed as *tathāgatadhātu*, or the “field of the *tathāgata*.” When rid of all extraneous defilements and coverings, this field is manifested as no other than the perfection of Buddhahood itself.

This doctrine was transmitted into Tibet (Ruegg 1969, Hookam 1991), but did not find place in the mainstream of Buddhist thinking in this country. In contrast, it became pivotal in the development of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese (East Asian) Buddhism. (See Takasaki and Kimura, 1995.)

The *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* was translated into Chinese around 510 by Ratnamati (T. 1611). Its central notion of *ju lai tsang* (*J. nyoraizō*) however, did not find popular reception in China. It was another treatise, the *Fo hsing lun* (T. 1610), a purported translation of a Sanskrit original by Vasubandhu (but which has been shown to be a Chinese reformulation of the basic teachings of the *Ratnagoṭra*) which found wide acceptance with its introduction of the term “Buddha nature” (Ch. *fo hsing*, *J. busshō*). In this latter treatise, all sentient beings are affirmed as possessing this innate Buddha nature, and this affirmation became a foundational one in the development of the major strands of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Buddhism.

The notion of Buddha nature innate in all sentient beings came to be expressed by another term, *pen chüeh*

(J. *hongaku*) which appears in the sūtras *Jen wang hu kuo po je po lon mi to ching* (T. 246) and *Chin kang san mei ching* (T. 273). In these contexts the basic meaning of the Chinese compound alludes to the notion of original purity of mind (*jishō shōjō-shin*), connected with the all-pervading wisdom of enlightenment inherently residing in all sentient beings. In the *Ta ch'eng ch'i hsin lun*, a treatise that integrates the doctrine of the innate Buddha nature in all living beings with the teaching of the mind-only school, and which was widely read in China as well as Japan, *pen chüeh* or original enlightenment is set in contrast with *shih chüeh* (J. *shikaku*) or actualized enlightenment and *pu chüeh* (J. *fukaku*) or non-enlightenment (T. 1666, vol. 32, p. 576b). Here *pen chüeh* is presented as an immanent principle underlying this evanescent world of birth and death, which becomes manifest as it is actualized (*shih chüeh*) in an individual sentient being through religious discipline and meditative practice.

In Hua-yen philosophy, this notion of *pen chüeh* also assumes a prominent role. In his commentary on the *Ch'i hsin lun*, Fa Ts'ang (643 to 712) expounds on *pen chüeh* as a principle which is the seed of enlightenment (T. 1846, vol. 44, p. 256a). Further, in his major commentary on the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* (*Hua yen ching t'an hsüan chi*) he identifies it with the wisdom of the Buddha which is immanent in all sentient beings, as the ground of enlightenment (T. 1733, vol. 35, p. 279b).

Ts'ung mi (780 to 841) later uses *pen chüeh* in a compound with the true heart-mind (*pen chüeh chen hsin*) identifying this with the *tathāgatagarbha* (*ju-lai tsang*) and with Buddha nature (*fo-hsing*) (T. 1884, vol. 45, p. 710a). (See Gregory 1994.)

In sum, in the Hua-yen school in China we see the treatment of *pen chüeh* having different nuances in its identification with other key Buddhist terms.

Ironically, in Chinese T'ien-t'ai, we see little development in the treatment of this term. Chih-li (960 to 1028) mainly reiterates the distinction made in the *Ch'i hsin lun* between *pen chüeh* and *shih chüeh*, based on a T'ien-t'ai emphasis on the practice leading to enlightenment (T. 1784, 1786, vol. 39, pp. 15c, 42b, 85c).

It is with the Esoteric Buddhism of Kūkai (774 to 845) that the term *hongaku* takes on new nuances in Japan. Kūkai frequently quotes the *Che mo ho yen lun*,<sup>6</sup> a commentary on the *Ch'i hsin lun*. In many of Kūkai's references to *hongaku*, he notes its distinction from *shikaku*, and gives a description of *hongaku* as an immanent principle underlying phenomena. In these, he basically follows the teaching of the *Ta cheng ch'i hsin lun*. Some of Kūkai's expositions, however, reveal a new understanding of the term. In short, Kūkai develops the idea of *hongaku* from that of an immanent principle that underlies all phenomena (*sheng mieh men*, J. *shōmetsu-mon*) to a notion identified with suchness itself (*chen ju men*, J. *shinnyo-mon*), synonymous with Buddhahood fully accomplished from all eternity. Kūkai's understanding of *hongaku* in this way comes closer to the absolutist monistic view that prevailed in later writings expounding this doctrine.

Saichō (767 to 822), founder of Japanese Tendai, uses the term in his work *Shugokokkaishō*, still in the context of the innate Buddha nature covered by defilements, and made fully manifest in the elimination of these latter (DDZ, vol. 2, p. 231). Esoteric influence began to enter into Tendai teaching, becoming more prominent in Ennin (794 to 864) and Enchin (814 to 891). The amalgam of Tendai and Esoteric Buddhism reaches a high point in Annen (9th century). With the latter, the notion of *hongaku* begins to be understood as an absolutized monistic principle.<sup>7</sup>

Works attributed to Ryōgen (912 to 985) and Genshin (942 to 1017) are also found expounding this doctrine of originary enlightenment as an absolutized monistic principle. However, many of the *Tendai Hongaku* documents handed down to us are often attributed to a major figure (including Saichō, etc.), but as these reveal telling marks of a later period, we are made aware of the need for a closer scrutiny of many texts attributed to famous masters.

Texts expounding the doctrine of originary enlightenment in the Tendai tradition continued to be written for several centuries, until the *Byaku Jahen* (Compilation of Erroneous Views), written by Reikū Kōken (1652 to 1739) in 1689. This treatise severely criticized the doctrine, and thereby marked the decline of its influence within the Tendai tradition (Tamura 1973, p. 478).

The doctrine of originary enlightenment did not remain confined within Tendai Buddhist circles, and has left its mark on many facets of Japanese medieval life and thought. Its influence on the works of Watarai Yūkitada and Ieyūki (13th and 14th centuries) as well as the works of Yoshida Kanetomo (1435 to 1511) and others who provided the theoretical foundations of Shinto thought, is of particular interest. *Hongaku* doctrine is noted also as having made its impact in art forms such as the *nō* and *kyōgen*, and *ikebana*, as well as literary works (Tamura 1969, pp. 129-43). This notion of *hongaku* was incidentally also in the background of the development of the doctrine that grass and trees as well as inanimate beings likewise possess Buddha nature (*sōmoku-kokudo-shikkai-jōbutsu-setsu*), an issue raised in Chinese Buddhist circles, but which was fully affirmed in Japan (LaFleur 1973; Sueki 1990, 1994, 1995a).

In short, such influence on or association with elements regarded as characteristic of “Japanese culture” or “the Japanese way of thinking” make the doctrine of

originary enlightenment a significant element to consider in pursuing the question of the noted *Nihonjin-ron* debates, "what makes the Japanese Japanese?"<sup>10</sup>

## II. BASIC FEATURES OF *HONGAKU* DOCTRINE

In presenting the basic features of this doctrine, it would do well first to understand the process by which it had been handed down and the background of the literature discovered which transmits its content to us.

There are four phases marked out by Tamura Yoshirō in the development of the doctrine of originary enlightenment in Japan: 1) the oral transmission phase (up to late Heian, or twelfth century) which includes also transmission through slips of paper called *kirigami* which were also probably used as memory aids by disciples as they received the doctrines directly from the Master; 2) the documentation phase (late Heian through Kamakura period, or thirteenth century) wherein writings appear which present the basic doctrines in coherent and more or less organized form; and 3) the systematization phase, concurrent with 4) the commentarial phase (late Kamakura until the Muromachi period, or fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) (Tamura 1973, pp. 521-41).

The oral mode of transmission of esoteric elements lies in the background of *hongaku* doctrine. Chih-i (538 to 597) expounds on this mode of transmission in his *Mo ho che kuan* (T. 1911). In Japanese Tendai, Saichō refers to the need for oral transmission from master to disciple in order for a difficult doctrine to be understood and duly transmitted (DDZ vol. 2, p. 266). The entry of esoteric (tantric) elements into the Tendai tradition also had an important role in the transmission of the doctrine of originary enlightenment.

In the process of the transmission of doctrine, fragmentary writings in slips of paper (*kirigami*) began to be

employed. Collected pieces of such slips of paper then became the basis for writing short treatises. These were in turn given further systematization and commentary in subsequent periods.

As pointed out above, the authorship of writings handed down as transmitting this doctrine of originary enlightenment in many cases is attributed to a famous master of a past age; thus, we find the name of Saichō, Ennin, Ryōgen, Genshin or others as the purported “authors” of these texts. However, close examination and comparison with authenticated works of these figures will indicate that those texts expounding *hongaku* doctrine in developed form come from a different hand or from a different era altogether.

What are the basic features of this doctrine, taught at Mt. Hiei, the seat of Tendai Buddhism, and which later spread to wider circles of Japanese society during the medieval period?

The first point to note is the view of this world of birth-death in terms of its relation to the absolute world of enlightenment. The *Gozuhōmon-yōsan*, attributed to Saichō (but most likely written between 1150 and 1200) states in a subsection entitled “Birth-Death-Nirvāna” (*shōji-nehān*):

At the time of birth one does not come, at the time of death one does not go. Birth is True Birth, Death is no other than the Perfect Death. Birth and Death are one. Emptiness and Being are non-dual...

The living beings of the three worlds, in their erroneous view of birth-death, are submerged in the six realms of samsāra; wishing to cut off birth-death, they do not escape birth-death; wishing to attain nirvāna, they do not attain nirvāna.

Birth-death is originary bliss. Human beings mistake this and see it as suffering. Remove this errone-

ous view immediately, and you will reach Buddha-land. (Tada, et al., 1973, p. 38)

In short, it is a view that cuts through the duality of birth-death and nirvāna, and affirms nirvāna *in* birth-death. Again, the same *Gozuhōmonyōsan* affirms: "My body-mind itself is the originary Buddha." (p. 35)

*Hongaku* doctrine is also to be noted for its view of time. In the *Makura no sōshi*, dated between 1200 and 1250, the following passage appears:

Time in the ancient past, time of today, and time of the future are all one (*ittai*)... There is no distinction between beginning nor end. Why then talk about the ancient past and today? (DNBZ, vol. 32, pp. 112-113)

In other words, time is not seen as a linear movement from past to present to future, but as an eternal now, and every moment is absolutized as an eternity.

The various texts expounding *hongaku* doctrine abound in expressions of this sort, which cut through all the dualities of human existence, and make a radical affirmation: "this very reality right before me *is* the ultimate itself, full and manifest. Birth-death *is* nirvāna, ordinary being *is* Buddha, *now* is eternity."

In understanding the doctrine, it is helpful to keep in mind its original mode of transmission in esoteric tradition.

Oral transmission of esoteric doctrine from master to disciple presupposed a context of religious discipline and meditative practice. Under the master's direction the disciple at some point comes to the realization of *śūnyatā* as an experiential event that is considered the arrival at enlightenment.



It is from this standpoint that the absolute affirmations are made—"birth-death is no other than nirvāṇa," "ordinary being is no other than Buddha," "delusive passions are no other than the purity of enlightenment," "now is no other than eternity," etc. In other words, birth-death, ordinary being, delusive passions, now—are experienced as the very manifestations of *śūnyatā*.

Such absolute affirmations, however, separated from the context of rigorous discipline and meditative practice—in other words, apart from the standpoint of *śūnyatā*—can be highly problematic. Affirmations that "birth-death is nirvāṇa," "ordinary being is Buddha," "defilements and delusions themselves are enlightenment" (*bonnō soku bodai*), taken at face value, militate against the continuance of religious discipline and practice, based on the reasoning that "if I am already enlightened right from the start, what is the point of breaking my bones in going through this discipline?"

This is where the doctrine of originary enlightenment has led to the attitude of an indiscriminate affirmation of anything and everything, even of inordinate desires and evil actions. It has fostered an attitude leading to the abandonment of religious practice and even of responsible action. This pitfall lurks where indiscriminant affirmations of non-dualism are made apart from the standpoint of *śūnyatā*. And this is where the doctrine of originary enlightenment came under criticism by those concerned with the integrity of Buddhist teaching and practice, and who warned against this pitfall.

### III. EARLY CRITIQUES OF THE DOCTRINE

The earliest recorded critiques of *Tendai Hongaku shisō* date back to Hōchibō-shōshin, a scholarly Tendai

monk (12th century, exact dates undetermined). Shōshin wrote his critique of *Tendai Hongaku* doctrine in the seventh chapter, called *Hokkegengi-shiki*, and the eighth chapter, entitled *Hokkeshō-shiki*, of his larger work *Hokkesandaibu-shiki* (Personal Notes on the Threefold Lotus), begun in 1165-1166 and continued until publication in 1207 (DNBZ vol. 21, p. 286; see Tamura 1984).

In the former, i.e., the seventh chapter, he points out the fundamental error of Tendai *Hongaku* doctrine, namely, its neglect of practice and discipline toward the attainment of enlightenment. Shōshin points out this basic error on four counts, citing 1) a sūtra passage about the long process of discipline and practice undertaken by the Awakened One in reaching his enlightenment, 2) an illustrative example giving five hundred myriad *kalpas* as the length of time for this process, 3) a passage from a commentary on the attainment of final nirvāṇa as a result of this process and 4) an argument of Chih-i's on the nature of cause-effect relationships, which would be contradicted if one is to follow the implications of the notion of *hongaku*, or original enlightenment (that is, that one can arrive at enlightenment independently of religious practice). Shōshin caps his critique by questioning the very authenticity of certain texts dealing with the doctrine of originary enlightenment.

Dōgen (1200 to 1253) is also noted for his critique of Tendai *hongaku* doctrine. His criticisms are likewise based on what he saw as the contradiction in carrying out the ultimate implications of the doctrine of originary enlightenment, namely the loss of the sense of the necessity of the religious search and of religious practice.

First, we must recall that Dōgen's own doubts about the meaning and role of practice in Buddhism led him to come down from Mt. Hiei and seek true Buddhist teaching elsewhere, a search that led him to China and to the encounter with Ch'an Master Ju-ching (1163 to 1228)

that determined the course of his later life.<sup>11</sup> This question of practice in its relation to enlightenment marks the dividing line between Dōgen and those who took the Tendai doctrine of ordinary enlightenment as the making light of or even abandonment of practice. Dōgen presents his criticism in several passages of his major works, either citing *hongaku* explicitly, or alluding to it in attacking heresies with which its teachings coincide.<sup>12</sup>

In short, Dōgen's critique of the doctrine of ordinary enlightenment is made from his position on the relation between enlightenment and practice. For Dōgen, practice centered on zazen, or seated Zen meditation, is not a *means* towards attaining the goal of enlightenment, but is in itself the very clear and direct manifestation of that very world of enlightenment. Enlightenment is given concrete expression in the very acts of religious practice as well as in everything in daily life. For Dōgen, the fallacy of the doctrine of *hongaku* is in the attitude tending to the neglect of practice. Practice for him is not the "cause" or "condition," but the very manifestation and embodiment of enlightenment itself, and thus the genuineness of enlightenment is tested in its manifestation in practice.

#### IV. HONGAKU DOCTRINE AND ESTABLISHMENT BUDDHISM

By "Establishment Buddhism" we refer to the Tendai and Shingon sects which rose to prominence and power during the Heian period, as well as to the schools which flourished under imperial court patronage since the Nara times. The works of Kuroda Toshio have succeeded in bringing to light the fact that these temple complexes continued to wield influence and power during the late Heian, Kamakura, and throughout the medieval period of Japan, correcting the previously widely held

view that they were overshadowed by the new Buddhist movements that arose in Kamakura times (Kuroda 1975, 1990).

After Saichō (767-822), founder of the Japanese Tendai tradition centered at Mt. Hiei, this center of Buddhist practice and learning took a turn toward the adaptation of tantric practices. Concurrently, Mt. Hiei also came into closer relations with the ruling nobility of the time. One may see this as an ironical development, as Saichō had sought a new place for religious practice and learning in Mt. Hiei precisely to be away from the direct control of the imperial court as the Nara temples had been under. Even before and especially after their respective returns from China, both Ennin (794-764) and Enchin (814-891) enjoyed the patronage of the powerful Fujiwara clan and the imperial court, and both monks on several occasions administered tantric initiation rites (*kanjō*), for which they had received authorization during their Tang sojourn, to many of its leading members.

Such zeal on the part of the court nobility to submit themselves to tantric rites need not be attributed only to a pure religious motivation; rather, it was commonly believed that partaking in these tantric rites bestowed some kind of mystic power which would assist one even in worldly objectives, such as gaining advancement in social status, winning victory over rivals in the clan intrigues in court, etc. (Kasahara 1977). In turn the nobility were generous with their favors and endowments toward the religious leaders and institutions who served their interests.

Thus in the late Heian period, Buddhist temples, irrespective of particular sectarian affiliation, tended heavily toward the performance of tantric rites as they attempted to answer the needs of a ruling class as well as of a populace growing more and more uneasy with the turbulence of the times. It was during this period of

Japanese history that the consciousness of having entered the Latter Days of the Dharma (*Mappō-ishiki*) came to be prevalent, and gave rise to various kinds of religious responses, such as the spread of Pure Land devotion, the quest after extraordinary religious experiences as those related in the so-called Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sutra (*Hokke-genki*), etc. (See Hayami 1986, p. 236ff.)

With tantrization of the Buddhist temples of the different sects at the time and with the support of the ruling elite toward these, there came about the consolidation of a socio-politico-economic power structure supported by religion, and vice versa, a religious establishment allied to the interests of that power structure. This power structure, called *Kenmitsu Taisei* (Kuroda 1975)<sup>13</sup> came to be the prevailing social force in the Japanese medieval period. It was the tantrization of the Buddhist establishment that provided the adhesive for such a consolidation.

It is also in the context of such tantrization that we find the backgrounds for the rise and development of *Tendai Hongaku-shisō* in the Heian period of Japanese history. Buddhist centers of training beginning with Mt. Hiei tended to place less emphasis on doctrinal points (*kyōsō*) and to place a premium on concrete modes of ritual practice (*jisō*). And this meant primarily the particular tantric rites and practices that were being handed down from master to disciple. Different streams of Tantra distinguished themselves from each other, based on concrete modes of ritual practice (such as *mudrā*, *mantra*, etc.), handed down in secret in direct and oral transmission. For example, in the Esoteric lineage founded by Kūkai centered at Tōji or the Eastern Temple (called *Tōmitsu* as distinguished from Tantric Tendai or *Taimitsu*) there were at least twelve streams, or as many as thirty-six according to some counts, that branched off

from two main streams (the Ono and the Hirosawa). In Tantric Tendai, there were at least thirteen streams that arose (Hayami 1986, pp. 250-251; Shimizudani 1975).

In this tradition of oral transmission an influential person was Kōkei (977-1049) who himself left no writings but had disciples who made names for themselves. One of these disciples, Shōhan (996-1077) was successful in integrating Kukai's lineage of oral transmission within Tantric Tendai practice, and thus lay the foundations for further transmission of what is now known as the *Tendai Hongaku-shisō*. (Hayami 1986, p. 252)

What began as oral transmission gradually found its way in pieces of paper most probably used in master-disciple sessions as notes to aid the memory, and as these were collected and compiled, the content of oral transmission came to be available in written form, read among inner circles. As time went by these were further systematized and commented upon in other writings. And these are what we now have as the different kinds of written material which expound *Tendai Hongakū-shisō*.

The fact that they were originally based on notes for something that is basically handed down in oral transmission is an important factor to consider in appreciating the significance of these "writings," as they were initially composed and transmitted in a context of secrecy and trust between the master imparting the message of wisdom and the disciple receiving it, with the implicit understanding that the recipient was engaged not only in learning the ritual aspect but also in some form of meditative practice (*kanjin*) guided by the master. (See Chapter IV for the implications of this context of transmission.)

As noted above, it was not only Tendai, however, that underwent the process of tantrization (*mikkyō-ka*). The other traditional sects that had powerful temples in different localities, seeking a way to maintain them-

selves in good favor with the political and economic powers-that-be and likewise a way to cater to the needs of the populace for religious rites aimed at attaining various forms of worldly benefit (*genze-riyaku*), came to make use of tantric rites as part of their customary service.

The practical business of the various temples came to take on a markedly worldly orientation with the acquisition and maintenance of huge landholdings (*shōen*) that had tenants who tilled the land and assured the temple of considerable income.

The "old" sects, then, constituting Establishment Buddhism, continued to prevail not only during the Kamakura era, but throughout the whole medieval period as such. The temples were part and parcel of the circle of power and authority, with the court/nobility and the *bakufu* as the other constituents (Kuroda 1975, pp. 452-68).

The entry of tantric elements into the practices of the various sects of Establishment Buddhism, practices oriented to the attainment of worldly benefits which supporters sought and looked to temples for, was another manifestation of the worldly orientation of Buddhist temples. The rites for "worldly benefit" performed in these temples in this context included not only those requested by the common populace for personal gain or family welfare, but also those offered for the success of political goals, as well as for the protection of the nation (*chingo-kokka*) requested by powerful personages such as members of the court and *bakufu*. And it was the Tendai doctrine of originary enlightenment that lent theoretical support for this kind of orientation (Kuroda 1975, 442-7).

In other words, characteristic expressions of this doctrine, such as the affirmations: "ordinary being as Buddha manifest," "this-world as nirvāna," "delusive

passions as bodhi-mind," etc., gave ideological expression to the worldly character that Establishment Buddhism had come to assume. *Hongaku* doctrine thereby offered a religious discourse that bolstered the power and authority and worldly influence of the established sects. It came to be identified with the religious establishment intertwined with the economic and political power structure of the time.

#### V. *HONGAKU* AND THE FOUNDERS OF THE NEW BUDDHISM

The "influence" of the Tendai doctrine of originary enlightenment on the founders of the new Buddhist movements of the Kamakura period, notably Hōnen, Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren, has been argued by Tamura Yoshirō in a well-known study.<sup>14</sup> Here we will summarize the highlights of Tamura's arguments, and offer suggestions for further investigation.

Hōnen (1132 to 1212) entered monastic life in Mt. Hiei at the early age of fifteen, and remained there for many years. It is this long stay at the Tendai center of practice and learning that leads Tamura to assume that Hōnen knew about the doctrine of originary enlightenment being propagated there, at least theoretically. At the age of forty-three, struggling with basic religious questions, he comes upon a work of Shan-tao, a Chinese master who taught Pure Land Buddhism, and is led to a decisive religious experience centered on the utterance of the name of Amida. Leaving Mt. Hiei, he began to propagate the doctrine and practice of *nembutsu*, and attained a following among warriors and especially among those from the lower strata of society. These were ones who, from the orthodox Buddhist standpoint, were considered "sinners" and "evil persons," because of their occupation or state of life (such as those involving the



taking of life, either of other humans in warfare, or of animals for the sake of livelihood, etc.).

Hōnen's teaching centers on rebirth in the Pure Land in the next life being available to anyone and everyone, through the practice of frequent utterance of the name of Amida. Tamura characterizes this teaching as one of radical dualism (*zettai-teki-nigenron*), looking down on this world with its miseries and sufferings, and conversely looking up to the next life with the promise of rebirth in the Pure Land.

Tamura explains Hōnen's dualistic stance as a negative reaction to the this-worldly orientation and absolute-monistic position of the doctrine of originary enlightenment that he learned at Mt. Hiei (Tamura 1965, pp. 506-524).

In contrast to Hōnen's other-worldly piety, his disciple Shinran (1173-1262), who also lived and practiced at Mt. Hiei for twenty years before coming under Hōnen's influence, appears to take a Pure Land teaching that takes a more affirmative posture vis-a-vis this-worldly realities. Shinran's teaching on the possibility of realizing the promise of Pure Land with one *shinjin*-filled utterance of the name of Amida, and his de-emphasis on the attitude of expecting the Pure Land in the afterlife (*raigō-shisō*) is pointed out as a stance affirmative of this world (*genjitsu-kōtei*).

Tamura also interprets Shinran's proclamation of the possibility of salvation of even the most wicked of this world through Amida's all-encompassing compassion (*akunin-shōki*) as a this-worldly affirmation deriving from *Tendai Hongaku shisō* influence. Further, the teaching on the equality in stature between the tathāgata and the person of faith or *shinjin* (*nyorai-tōdō-setsu*) is taken by Tamura as coming from the influence of a key *hongaku shisō* theme on the identity of Buddha and ordinary being (Tamura 1965, pp. 525-548).

Regarding Dōgen, Tamura of course considers the critical stance taken vis-a-vis the doctrine of originary enlightenment (treated in section 3, above), but points out how Dōgen's writings nevertheless abound in expressions that bear close resemblance to themes of *Tendai Hongaku shisō*. The non-duality of practice and enlightenment, of birth-death and nirvāṇa, as well as the unity of being and time, resonate through Dōgen's writings, and Tamura points these out as coming from the influence of the doctrine of originary enlightenment. In Tamura's assessment, in criticizing *Tendai Hongaku shisō*, Dōgen reverts to a dualistic standpoint (Tamura 1965, pp. 548-575).

The religious career of Nichiren (1222-1282) is seen by Tamura as marked by three distinct phases. The earliest phase is characterized by optimism as to the realization of his project of transforming society based on the *Lotus Sutra*, a phase wherein Tamura traces the influence of the doctrine of originary enlightenment. In the middle phase, Nichiren encounters adversities in his mission, and begins to reconsider his basic stance. In the last phase, Nichiren has borne the brunt of persecutions, and has come to be less optimistic concerning the realization of his vision of the Lotus land. In this phase Nichiren dissociates himself from the world-affirming stance of earlier years, and looks more toward the afterlife to be united with Śakyamuni at the Vulture Peak. (Tamura 1965, pp. 571-651).

Examining Tamura's arguments on the "influence" of the doctrine of originary enlightenment on the above founders of new Buddhist movements of Kamakura, one cannot help but note the one-dimensional character of the schema that comes out. First of all, Tamura takes a clear position of an enthusiastic and unquestioning acceptance of the doctrine of originary enlightenment as "the climax of Buddhist philosophical thought," and as

the “unique Japanese contribution to the development of Buddhism.”<sup>15</sup> This uncritical acceptance of the doctrine of originary enlightenment is the measure for his evaluation of the Kamakura founders, setting them up against this doctrine as a backdrop.

For example, Hōnen is depicted as a reactionary, “regressing” into a dualism that opposes this world and the Pure Land, as one who could not find satisfaction with the absolute monistic affirmations of the doctrine of originary enlightenment. Such a characterization, however, is unable to account for the complexities involved in Hōnen’s religious experience. It likewise is unable to appreciate the significance of Hōnen’s critique of and challenge to the religio-political orthodoxy of the time, based on his decisive religious experience of the efficacy of Amida’s vow, a critique and challenge that led to his exile and persecution.

In the same way, the picture of Shinran that appears in Tamura’s schema fails to do justice to the existential struggles of Shinran that were at the background of his religious teaching on the salvation of the wicked and the equality of Buddha with the person of *shinjin*. Nakanishi Chikai has suggested that rather than attributing every element in Shinran that appears to be an affirmation of this-worldly reality or of the unity of tathāgata and ordinary beings, such as the teaching on the salvation of the wicked or the teaching of equality of tathāgata and the person of shinjin, to the “influence” of the doctrine of originary enlightenment, we need to take a look at Shinran’s profound awareness of karma (*shukugō*) and his deep existential experience of Amida’s all-embracing compassion, for the bases of his religious teaching (Nakanishi 1967).

Dōgen comes out in Tamura’s schema as taking an ambivalent position, criticizing the doctrine of originary enlightenment on the one hand, and yet being profoundly

influenced by it on the other. Tamura thus judges Dōgen as also “regressing” to dualism with the latter’s critique of *Tendai Hongaku shisō*. However, again Dōgen’s worldview which centers around a transformative enlightenment experience, the expression of which Dōgen made ample use of the logic of *śūnyatā* as well as traditional Ch’an paradoxical affirmations of opposites, is not given due justice with the one-dimensional characterization in Tamura’s treatment, based on dualism/monism as a backdrop.

In the case of Nichiren, Tamura offers a critical principle for evaluating issues of authenticity of texts attributed to Nichiren based on the appearance or non-appearance of *Tendai Hongaku shisō* terminology in these writings. Though this does provide one set of helpful criteria for such evaluation, yet this need not be the only guideline in determining such issues (See Stone 1991). For example, Nichiren’s statements referring to a mystic unity with Śākyamuni Buddha in authenticated writings belonging to the last phase would present a problem in Tamura’s rather simplistic schema.

Tamura’s highly acclaimed study has no doubt succeeded in calling attention to the doctrine of originary enlightenment as a thought-current to be considered in understanding the development of the religious teachings of the founders of the New Buddhism of Kamakura. His work attempts to elucidate the philosophico-religious stance of these founders using the polarity of monism and dualism as a vector, with the founders’ attitudes toward worldly realities as reference point. While such a schema allows for comparison of these founders based on a common framework, situating each one in relation to the others within the given framework, such a schema shows the defect of tending to oversimplify issues, and as mentioned above in several cases, fails to do justice to the different dimensions of the religious

vision presented by the Kamakura founders. In other words, while the consideration of their teachings vis-a-vis the doctrine of originary enlightenment does provide one basis for looking at the founders of the New Buddhism of Kamakura in a common framework, exclusive reliance on this framework can lead to a type-cast view, and thus impoverish our picture of these founders.

Further investigation on the above figures in terms of their respective religious experiences, how such experience affected their stance toward historical realities, and their expression of this stance as Buddhist teaching, would throw greater light on their underlying commonalities as well as differences, and break the stereotypical molds in which they have been cast by standard treatments.

#### CONCLUSION

This essay has described in broad strokes the Tendai doctrine of originary enlightenment as an element to be considered in the background of Kamakura Buddhism. As noted at the outset, by "Kamakura Buddhism" we refer simply to the different forms of Buddhism already active or which came into existence during what is called the Kamakura period of Japanese history. Following the usage of many scholars, we made the general distinction between "Establishment Buddhism" (or what used to be referred to as "Old Buddhism") and "New Buddhism" (referring to those forms that came into existence during this period).

Our main point in this essay, having presented a rough sketch of the prehistory, backgrounds, and basic features of the Tendai doctrine of originary enlightenment, has been to show how this doctrine has made its imprint on both kinds of Buddhism in this period, though in different ways.

As is now widely known (and as described in Chapter

Four and in the Postscript), this doctrine has come to be the target of criticism on several counts (Hakamaya 1989, 1990; Matsumoto 1989, 1993). These criticisms and the ensuing academic (and extra-academic) discussions have encouraged scholars to take a new look not only at this “species” called Japanese Buddhism, but also at East Asian Buddhism in general, toward reconsidering the specific ways the Teaching of the Awakened One has been transmitted, received, taken root in, and in return influenced the formation and development of the various cultures of East Asia.<sup>16</sup>



## Chapter 2

### The Self as Buddha: A Question of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis

This chapter will look at material expounding *Tendai Hongaku-shisō* and focus on a prominent feature therein, i.e., the notion of the *self as Buddha*, in order to shed further light on this thought-movement and its import in Buddhist history. It will then examine similar strains of teaching, i.e. of the *self as Buddha*, in the writings of Shinran (1172-1263), Dōgen (1200-1253), and Nichiren (1222-1282), not so much looking for purported influences (à la Tamura 1965) but highlighting the crucial differences that divide the standpoint of the latter three from the Tendai Hongaku position.

#### I. THE SELF AS BUDDHA, EVERYTHING AS BUDDHA

We will look at excerpts of writings which are considered to come out of the “ripened” stage of *Tendai Hongakū-shisō*, that stage of its development from 1200 on.\*



The three views, i.e. of empty, provisional, and middle, are to be shown in this way. As it is said in the First Book of the *Mo ho Chih Kuan*, "Of every shape, of every fragrance, there is nothing that is not of the Middle Way. The realm of the self, the realm of Buddha, and the realm of sentient beings are thus likewise." The realm of self is the practitioner's own mind. The realm of Buddha is the myriad Buddhas of the ten directions. Sentient beings are all living beings. Every shape and every fragrance means grass, trees, bricks and stones, mountains and rivers, the Great Earth, the Great Sea, the sky, and all other kinds of inanimate things. Of all these myriad things, there is nothing that is not of the Middle Way. There are different names, not one. For example, this is called Suchness, True Reality, Dharma Realm, dharma-body, dharma essence, tathāgata, Highest Truth, and so on. Of these many terms, the term "suchness" by far is the one that brings to light the View of the Middle Way in the sutras and commentaries.

As one thinks of attaining Buddhahood, of inevitably being born in the Land of Bliss, one is to think this way: My very mind – this itself is the truth of Suchness. As one thinks that the Suchness which pervades throughout the dharma-realm is my own body, then I myself am the dharma-realm, and one is not to think that there is anything other than this. As one is enlightened on this, the myriad Buddhas of the dharma-realm and all the bodhisattvas all dwell within my very body. Apart from my own body, looking for Buddha elsewhere is to lack the realization that my very own body is Suchness itself. If I realize that Suchness and I are one and the same thing, Śākyamuni, Amitābha, Bhaisajya-guru and all the

myriad Buddhas of the ten directions, Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya and the myriad bodhisattvas are not apart from my very own body. Again, the Lotus Sutra and others of the eighty thousand dharma treasures and Twelve Kinds of Scriptures, as well as the myriad meritorious practices and myriad virtues which are fruits of such practices, the innumerable virtues connected with practices for self-benefit and the benefit of others, all these are all somehow contained in my very own body. (pp. 120-121)

Concerning the way to become Buddha, the bodhisattvas of the provisional teaching who do not know the contemplation of suchness do not spare their very life and for innumerable kalpas go into difficult and painful practice in order to become Buddha. But this is not real Buddha, only a provisional fruit, like a dream. The one who knows the contemplation of suchness becomes Buddha instantaneously. In any case, to become Buddha is an exceedingly important matter, and through many kalpas in this evil world, even if I break my bones climbing a mountain of swords, burn my body in raging fire, all this is worth nothing more than mere dust. It is a mistake to suffer through innumerable pains and difficulties. What more so, in order to attain peerless enlightenment, that I break my bones, and shrugging the pain of it all, through innumerable kalpas, to bear exceedingly unbearable suffering, in the search for enlightenment, when at this very moment, without breaking any bones at all, without casting away one's life, but simply as one bears the thought that 'I am Suchness,' in an instant one becomes Buddha...

If one inquires into what the original intention was of the Buddhas of the ten directions and three worlds for appearing in this world, it is to let all sentient beings know as quickly as possible this truth of Suchness. Thus, this is not different from what is written in the chapter on Expedient Means (of the Lotus Sutra), that the Buddhas of the ten directions and three worlds appeared in this world in order to let all the sentient beings be Buddhas. It is simply to let them know this: that 'I am Suchness.' Thus, what we call the Lotus Sutra is just that which lets all sentient beings know that 'I myself am Suchness.' This is the cause and the reason for the Great Event of the Buddhas of the three worlds, the original intention of their coming into this world. (p. 128)

Therefore, we are the body of Suchness: as one thinks thus, in the evening and in daylight, in action, standing still, sitting and lying down, without forgetting, and keeps it in one's mind, there is no doubt about the fact that this very body itself is Buddha. If so, then, believing in the teaching of the Esoteric (Shingon) Sect, wherein one is enjoined to think: 'I am Mahāvairocana,' this very body itself is Buddha. All my actions and movements become the sign of Suchness. Therefore, every utterance of the tongue, every word, is itself true mantra. Every form of the body, every movement, is itself the secret *mudrā*. Every thought and every memory is the Central Point of Veneration (*Honzon*). Every delusive idea and thought is itself Esoteric contemplation. Have this mind in you, do not forget: as you keep it in mind always, this very body itself is Buddha. I myself am Suchness. I myself am Mahāvairocana. These are all but the same thing. (p. 148)

It is a question often asked: in the attainment of Buddhahood, the nine realms (of beings from bodhisattva and below) decrease, and the realm of Buddha increases, etc.. The teaching of our school is this: not so! It is of the view that originally all the ten realms are eternal and abiding. Therefore, all the ten realms attain enlightenment. Know this. The teaching of the provisional sutras is not to talk of the ten realms as abiding, and so they say that sentient beings are to undergo change and attain the Buddha-body, etc. The Perfect Teaching does not speak about sentient beings being changed in attaining the Buddha-body. Rather, realize that sentient beings, as sentient beings, and the Buddha realm, as Buddha realm, are together abiding and eternal. There is nothing to gain, nothing to lose, no increase, no decrease. (p. 176)

The above passages give us an idea of the kind of language and message of the advanced stage of the doctrine of originary enlightenment. In plain language, it is the message that *this very self is Buddha*, that there is nothing that is not Buddha and that the so-called attainment of Buddhahood aspired for in Buddhism is nothing other than an awakening to the fact that one is already Buddha!

In the earlier stages of development of *Tendai Hongaku-shisō* the reception of such a message presupposed a context of observance of the Buddhist precepts and assiduous practice in meditation guided by a master. But as the observance of the precepts grew lax, a tendency already noted even in Annen's (841?-889?) time (see Groner 1987), there came about a situation of progressive rupture between the doctrine and the practice it presupposed. The process of oral transmission came to be linked mainly with the performance of tantric rites, with

the neglect and even denigration of and contempt for the more arduous and demanding meditative practice traditionally considered indispensable in the realization of enlightenment. The message came to be: "Why break your bones to become Buddha, when you are already that, even before you lift a finger?" And the prevalence of such an attitude led such persons as Hōchibō-shōshin (twelfth century) and Dōgen to criticize and point out the pitfalls of *Tendai Hongaku-shisō*. (See Tamura 1984)

## II. THE SELF AS BUDDHA IN SHINRAN, DŌGEN, AND NICHIREN

In this section we will consider three figures who present in their teaching a theme that strikes a chord of resemblance to the basic emphasis of the doctrine of ordinary enlightenment. We can only give a very rough outline here, and leave more ample development as a future task.

In Shinran's later years, we see a feature of his thought that puts the true believer on par with the Buddha. For example, in one of his letters, he writes:

What you inquire about in your letter is a passage which states; "one who attains *shinjin* and joy is equal to the Tathāgatas." This is from the *Garland Sutra* and means that the person who rejoices in *shinjin* is equal to all Tathāgatas. This is also indicated in Śākyamuni's statement about those who realize *shinjin* and greatly rejoice: "The person who sees and reveres and attains great joy — that one is my true companion!"<sup>1</sup>

There are other passages in Shinran's writings that bring up this theme of "being equal to the Tathāgatas,"

and Shinran situates this teaching in hallowed tradition, quoting Nāgārjuna and T'an-luan for support.

In all this however, it is to be noted that Shinran's attitude continues to be one of a total self-effacing humility. This attitude is grounded in his fundamental religious experience which one can only characterize as the dissolution of the ego in light of the overwhelming power of Amida's all-pervading compassion, the experience of which overturned Shinran's life. It is an attitude ever consistent throughout Shinran's whole religious career, wherein the sense of being "equal to the Tathāgatas" does not lead to an inflation of the ego nor to a subtle kind of religiously motivated pride, but to an ever deeper realization of one's own powerlessness and to a deeper grounding in the practice of *Nembutsu* as an act of continuing gratitude. Even in stressing that the person of *Shinjin* is "equal to the Tathāgatas," Shinran never says as "I am Tathāgata," which sets his fundamental stance in clear contrast with that of the proponents of *Tendai Hongakū-shisō*.<sup>2</sup>

Dōgen likewise presents expressions in his writings that echo similarities with *Tendai Hongaku* themes, but his over-all stance is decidedly critical of the latter. Dōgen's critique of *Hongaku-shisō* has already been the subject of detailed studies by Sōtō Zen scholars, and we have these in the background as we make some summary observations.<sup>3</sup>

In the *Genjō-kōan*, Dōgen writes thus:

To learn the Buddha-way is to learn about oneself. To learn about oneself is to forget oneself. To forget oneself is to realize oneself in all things. To realize oneself in all things is to cast off one's own body-mind as well as others' body-mind. There is ceasing of every trace of enlightenment, and one leaves out forever

every trace of enlightenment which has ceased. (DZZ 1, pp. 7-8)

For Dōgen, the term “all things” (*mampō* = ten thousand myriad dharmas) is given concreteness in another image that frequently appears in his writings: “mountains and rivers and the Great Earth.”

These mountains and rivers are all the sea of Buddha nature... furthermore, there is no inside nor outside nor middle. This is because to see mountains and rivers is to see Buddha nature. To see Buddha nature is to see the chin of donkeys and the mouth of horses (and such ordinary things.) (DZZ 1. p. 17)

Passages like this throughout Dōgen’s writings indeed give the reader the impression that Dōgen equates the self with Buddha nature and sees all things as the self. (The chapter on Buddha nature, among others, is also to be noted in this regard.) But a closer reading reveals how Dōgen is careful in his use of terms. He is adept in his use of allusions, and never clearly and unequivocally equates the self with Buddha nature or Buddha. Rather, he keeps stressing the need to cast off all conscious thought of being Buddha or of Buddha nature: “when the Buddhas are indeed Buddhas, there is no need to be conscious of the fact that the self is Buddha. Nevertheless, there is Buddha realized, and one goes on realizing Buddha.” (DZZ 1, p. 7)

Dōgen’s clear difference from *Tendai Hongakū-shisō*, as has been pointed out again and again in various studies, is his unwavering stance on the continuing need for practice, wherein one keeps on casting away “every trace of enlightenment” as one lives the ordinary events of daily life, even as one realizes oneness with “moun-

tains and rivers, the Great earth, the moon and the stars," as well as with "donkey's chins and horse's mouths."

In the case of Nichiren, the influence of Esoteric teachings and of *Tendai Hongakū-shisō* is pointed out in the early part of his career. (Tamura 1965, pp. 575-651) His earliest known writing, entitled *Kaitai-sokushin-jōbutsu-gi* (The Body of Vinaya and The Meaning of This Very Body Becoming Buddha), written at twenty-one years of age, contains passages such as the following:

When we attain the enlightenment of the Lotus Dharma, this body and mind of ours subject to Birth-Death is the body of No-Birth and No-Death. So likewise with the land and country: this land and country, with its calves and horses and six kinds of animals are all Buddha. The grass, the trees, the sun, the moon are all the Holy Saṃgha.

The realization of the *Lotus Sutra* is to know this: that this land and country and our body and the Blessed *śarīra* (body) of Śākyamuni are one and the same... Thus we sentient beings are the Blessed *śarīra* of Śākyamuni Tathāgata. Therefore the many-treasured *śarīra* is our very own body. Secondly, Buddha means the dharma-body which is our very own body. (NI Vol. 1, p. 14)

Nichiren's career from thereon is marked by twists and turns, and as he experiences adversities in carrying out his religious mission of propagating the *Lotus Sutra*, i.e. in being persecuted and exiled by the ruling authorities, etc., his self-understanding as well as his understanding of his historical tasks undergoes significant transformation. The pivot of this transformation is his exile at Sado, which marks a deepening of his religious experience as well a sense of mission of being a Messen-



ger of the *Lotus Sutra*. This mission called upon him to challenge the established order of his time, to make it conform to the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*, from which in his perception it had gone astray: the message of the Lotus calls for the transformation of this phenomenal (*sahā*) world into the Lotus Land. In the fulfillment of his mission, he balked at no difficulty or adversity, and continued in this stance of selfless devotion to his tasks.

Nichiren's whole career was grounded in his understanding of himself as a reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Jōgyō, himself persecuted for his devotion to and propagation of the *Lotus Sutra*. But also, more significantly, he was empowered in his whole mission by a concrete sense of being one with none other than Śākyamuni himself, not as the historical Buddha but the Buddha which abides in the mind of sentient beings and which pervades throughout history. A very significant (and also controversial) passage in his major work *Kanjin-honzon-shō* gives us a glimpse of his view of Śākyamuni's all-pervading presence in sentient beings and throughout history: "The Śākyamuni in our very own mind is that timeless ancient Buddha from the immeasurable past and who has been manifested in the three bodies." (NI Vol. 1, p. 712)<sup>4</sup>

Here one may point out a remaining influence of his earlier Esoteric-inclined period, but of course the vicissitudes of his career up to this time have come to make a significant difference: this is no mere easygoing affirmation of a "Buddha in us all" separated from practice in the mode of *Tendai Hongaku-shisō*, but an intimation of a mystical union with Śākyamuni the Lord of the Lotus, transcending history but yet ever concerned with sentient beings in their suffering and appearing in various guises and forms and exercising expedient means (*upāyakaūśalya*) in different times to save these beings from their suffering. In other words, this passage about the

self as Buddha gives us an intimate glimpse of the inner life of Nichiren the religious activist.

### III. CONCLUSION: ORTHODOXY AND ORTHOPRAXIS IN JAPANESE BUDDHISM

Above we have taken a look at passages that expound the basic viewpoint of *Tendai Hongaku-shisō* on the self as Buddha, and have also taken a cursory look at a few passages from Shinran, Dogen, and Nichiren on a similar theme, noting their differences. We have considered the connection between Buddhist teaching and practice as a point of reference, seeing how the rupture between the two is what led to the degeneration of *Tendai Hongaku-shisō*.

As we have described in the previous chapter, the context within which it arose already contained in it factors that would militate against assiduous religious practice: the tantrization of Buddhism and the rather blatantly "worldly" ways in which tantric rites were looked upon and actually employed, the situation of proximity and mutual self-aggrandizement that characterized the relationship between the political and the religious establishment of the time (with which the proponents of *Tendai Hongaku-shisō* were identified), presented too many pitfalls for individuals to engage in genuine and efficacious practice.

It was in such a situation that those who took their religious search and practice seriously had to make a clear-out break from the "orthodox" (i.e. in the sense of Kuroda 1975) religious establishment of the time, in falling out of the mainstream and finding their own forms of religious expression, as the Hijiri or Holy Ones who dissociated themselves from established temples and lived close to the common people, and the recluses who retreated from society and led lives of contemplation.

Japanese religious and cultural history is given new breathings of life throughout different ages by such individuals who "fall out of the mainstream," as it were, and follow the religious impulse relentlessly and in their unique and creative ways.

Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren, among others, were such individuals who chose to place themselves outside of the mainstream: they had at one time been monks at Mt. Hiei, but found themselves moving out of this august institution precisely in order to follow their religious search through and through. They put themselves outside of the religious establishment, and in so doing regained the freedom of spirit to deepen their practice, to rediscover the dynamism that lies at the wellsprings of the Buddhist tradition (Sasaki 1988).

*Tendai Hongaku-shisō* arose and developed within the religious establishment circles of Japanese society during the Heian period, becoming identified with the "orthodoxy" of the time, and in the process, functioned as an ideological buttress for the socio-politico-economic institution that held sway in the medieval ages of Japan. It was an "orthodoxy" that had come to be alienated from orthopraxis, and it was one that was challenged by the advent of persons like Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren. Their fresh and vigorous religious message progressively gained a following among the people, but it is an irony of history that their followers went on to set up new religious institutions that would reclaim their place in the establishment from which their founders found a need to dissociate themselves.

## Chapter 3

### Buddha-body Views: The Use or Misuse of the *Trikāya* Theory

The answer to the question “What is Buddhism?” is inseparable from the understanding of what it means to be Buddha (an awakened or enlightened one). The history of Buddhist thought then can be mapped out with the history of the development of modes of understanding of what it means to be an (or the) enlightened one as a point of reference. Thus, the view of the mode of being of a/the Buddha, or Buddha-body view (*busshin-kan*) is seen as a key factor in understanding the different ways Buddhism developed through the ages (See Habito 1978, 1986).

This chapter addresses a theme, frequently appearing in *Tendai Hongaku* writings, which is central to Buddhism itself, i.e. the understanding of the mode of being of Buddha. An examination of the Buddha-body views in these writings will also provide insights into the character and import of this thought-movement that reached a flowering in the late Heian period and went on

to influence various developments in Japanese thought and culture for ages to come.

It deserves note that the writings refer often to the three-body (*trikāya*) theory (*sanshin-setsu*), developed in Indian commentarial treatises and given further systematic elaboration by the Chinese Buddhist masters. But then they go on to present a distinctive standpoint taking off from the traditional *trikāya* theory, revealing facets of the particular character of *Tendai Hongaku-shisō*.

To summarize, there are five notable features in the literature expounding the doctrine of originary enlightenment as regards the treatment of the *trikāya*.

1. Three (bodies) equals one, one equals three. (*san soku ichi, ichi soku san*)
2. Three bodies always in action expounding dharma. (*san-shin seppō*)
3. Three bodies no other than the mind of sentient beings. (*san-shin soku shujō no isshin*)
4. Three bodies no other than all things in the universe. (*san-shin soku issai hō*)
5. Ordinary beings as such precisely as the three bodies. (*bonpu koso san-shin = musa no san-shin*)

The following are passages which illustrate the features in the treatment of the *trikāya* summarized above in the given order.

- (1) [On the difference of the superior teaching of the Lotus Sutra vis-a-vis the other sutras that preceded it:] The teaching of the Lotus (Sutra) is that it does not talk about the distinction of essence and function in the three bodies, but only that one equals three, and three equals one. Also, since three bodies are in the very same locus as one body, it is not the same as the

teaching of the previous sutras at all. And since the three bodies interpenetrate and are interchangeable, this is also in accord with the teaching of the Lotus (Sutra). This is because it locates the three bodies in one place at the same time. *Sanjūshika-no-kotogaki*. (pp. 152-153)

Question: What does it mean to say that in the teaching of the provisional gate (of the Lotus Sutra) there is an overt and a covert aspect?

Answer: In the provisional gate, there is inevitably an overt and a covert side. This is to be understood by the following simile. For example, say one looks at the moon reflected in the water without looking at the moon in the sky. Although it is the one and same moon in the sky, because it is reflected in different bodies of water, even though it is one, it resides in a long-shaped body of water, a short-shaped body of water, a square body of water, a round body of water. In this case, in knowing the particular aspect of each, as one thinks that there are many (different kinds of moon), there is the overt and the covert aspect (i.e. the reflections and the moon in the sky.) In the true gate (of the Lotus), one does not consider the reflection in the water at all, but right from the start sees the one moon in the sky. Thus, one knows the essence, sees the essence. One knows that there is only one moon residing in many bodies of water. The essence is the one moon in the sky. The essence is the one body (of Buddha). One knows there are only three names. Keep this a secret. (*Sanjūshika-no-kotogaki*, pp. 164-165)

- (2) Question: On the three bodies always active and expounding the dharma, what is the form of the dharma-body always active and expounding the

dharma? (Translator's note: the dharma-body is considered to be the essence of truth itself without form and shape — and hence the question of its possibility of being active in expounding the dharma has been problematic in Buddhist tradition. Sutra-based teaching or *ken-gyō* holds to non-activity, while Esoteric teaching or *mikkyō* stresses the perennial activity of the dharma-body in expounding dharma throughout the universe = *hosshin-seppō*).

Answer: If one considers the dharma-body of the tathāgata, since it does not come nor go, it has no beginning and has no end. Responding to each situation, it expounds the dharma to all. "To all" means human beings and heavenly beings and others in the realm of universal truth. The reason is that humans and heavenly beings and others possess the purity of the one mind, as it manifests the eighth level of consciousness coming from the store of suchness. In considering the act of expounding the dharma by the enjoyment and transformation bodies, these transform every word of chatter of the dharma-body. Therefore, the three bodies altogether expound the dharma. (*Honri-daikōshū*, p. 12)

- (3) The three bodies is the Mind that is in one thought by us sentient beings. Thus the different kinds of consciousness are nothing other than the one Mind; the one mind is nothing other than the different kinds of consciousness. In the same way, the three bodies (of Buddha) are no other than the one Mind. (*Sanjūshikano-kotogaki*, p. 162)
- (4) All things in the universe are originally the three bodies (of Buddha) and dwell in the Land of Tranquil Light. As there is not even one thing (dharma) that is separate from the three bodies, the fruit of the three

bodies is the essence of the Lotus. (*Shūzenjiketsu*, p. 92)

Śākyamuni Tathāgata is endowed with the three bodies. Vairocana is the dharma-body. The dharma-body is all-pervading in the dharma-realm. The two bodies of enjoyment and the transformation are also all-pervading in the dharma-realm... The three bodies of Śākyamuni are all-pervading in the dharma-realm. And therefore in every little particle of dust before my eye there reside all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the worlds of the ten directions... (*Shinnyo-kan*, p. 134)

From the beginningless time, originally, all things are the essence of the three bodies. This is not according to the work of Buddha, nor the work of *asuras* nor heavenly beings. Naturally from the way things are, there is nothing that is not the three bodies. Thus, even every illusory thought of ours is the total essence of the enjoyment body of wisdom, the four states (of action, standing, sitting or lying down) are the essence of the body of transformation, and the heavy burdens of this way of suffering (in the world of birth and death) are the essence of the myriad virtues of the dharma-body. (*Sanjūshika-kotogaki*, p. 173)

It is said: every dharma and every particle of dust is the three bodies of the original self-nature. The unborn self-nature is the dharma-body. The wisdom of enlightening discernment is the enjoyment body. That which is endowed with form and shape is the transformation body. Since all dharmas, though they be distinct from one another, all are the three bodies, it is said: "all dharmas are originally Buddha-dharmas." (*Kankō-ruiju*, p. 200)



- (5) It is said, in considering the self-nature of all things, that is in appreciating the original essence of everything, if one realizes the effortless three bodies (*musa no san-shin*), then there is no thing at all that is not the effortless three bodies. That is why it is called Lotus. (*Shūzenjiketsu*, p. 90)

As it is said in the (Lotus) sutra: "Since I attained enlightenment a long period of time has elapsed. The length of my lifetime is equivalent to immeasurable kalpas, and I am always abiding and deathless." This points to the truth of the nature of the self, and "self" means that the self-nature of all things is originally always abiding, and is the effortless three bodies of perfection. At this time there is no distinction between the real (Buddha) and the phenomenal (sentient beings), and everything is but the inner enlightenment of Buddha. (*Shūzenjiketsu*, p. 84)

The above are passages taken from the different writings expounding *Tendai Hongaku-shisō* on the three bodies of Buddha manifesting the five given features in order. It must be borne in mind that these writings are expanded versions of what were originally notes circulated in secrecy based on oral transmission, and/or commentaries upon these. Based on the above readings, we can glean that the treatment of the three bodies of the Buddha departs from the traditional ways these have been developed in sutras and commentarial literature in India and China.

The theory of the three bodies arose in the light of speculation concerning the relationship between the historical Buddha Śākyamuni and the dharma which he grasped and embodied and expounded to all hearers, and further, in the context of speculation on the relationship between the historical and the trans-historical as under-

stood in the Buddhist tradition, as well as the relationship between wisdom and compassion, between self-oriented and other-oriented action, etc. The authors of the different sutras and commentarial literature through the ages thus came up with different theories concerning the modes of relationship of the elements mentioned, and so we have the two-body, three-body, four-body, ten-body theories, etc., presenting ways of understanding the relationship of the historical and the trans-historical, etc., in the mode of being of the/an enlightened one.

The *Tendai Hongaku* writings take a short cut, as it were, departing from the kind of questioning and prescinding from the context that gave rise to the different Buddha-body theories, and simply take the “prepacked” notion of the three bodies of the Buddha and other related notions, “cooking” them and dealing them out in line with a particular menu, that is the affirmation of all phenomenal reality as absolute and abiding, the affirmation not only of the potential Buddhahood (as in Tathāgatagarbha thought) but the actual Buddhahood of all beings. In other words, the notion of the three bodies of the Buddha is taken from its historical context and made to fit the *Tendai Hongaku* doctrines, or better, is used in the exposition of these doctrines, about the underlying as well as virtual unity and abiding nature of all phenomena, the non-duality of sentient beings and Buddha, the innate as well as actual Buddhahood not only of sentient beings but also of inanimate beings as mountains and rivers, stones and rocks, etc.

As noted earlier, the status of *Tendai Hongaku-shisō* within Buddhist circles has been problematic since the time of Hōchibō-shōshin (twelfth century) and Dōgen (1200-1253), who brought serious criticisms against this thought-movement as it tended to the neglect and even denigration of practice, and thus to lax and irresponsible behavior on the part of its proponents.

The above examination of the buddha-body views, particularly the *trikāya theory* as treated in the writings of *Tendai Hongaku-shisō*, on the one hand, appears to support the assessment that, in addition to what its traditional critics point out, namely that it has the tendency to neglect practice and to give in to a lax attitude and lax behavior in ordinary life, (i. e. in the assumption, or presumption, that one is already Buddha), it also manifests the tendency to neglect rigorous thinking in favor of facile generalizations and easy equations that simply ignore the historical context of traditional Buddhist notions and their import, using them in its own arbitrary way. But on the other hand, this is where one must also admit the freshness and originality in the way the writings deal with these notions to open an entirely new perspective. It is this possible function of *hongaku* writings that we will now consider in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### The Logic of Nonduality and Absolute Affirmation: Deconstructing Tendai *Hongaku* Writings

*Hongaku shisō*, or the doctrine of originary enlightenment can be described as espousing the proposition that “there is no distinction whatsoever between the phenomenal and the absolute (i.e. between *samsāra* and *nirvāna*, delusive passions and enlightenment, ordinary being and Buddha, etc.).”

Critics assert that *hongaku shisō* is a heterodox set of ideas influenced by Japanese non-Buddhist indigenous elements, including a kind of naturalism and a pragmatic this-worldliness, which have tainted much of what has passed for “Japanese Buddhism” through the centuries. They maintain that *hongaku shisō*, with the attitudes and world-views related to it, must be repudiated in order to be able to return to the “pure” form of Buddhism taught by Śakyamuni.<sup>1</sup>

There have been many prongs in the criticism leveled against *hongaku shisō*, but for purposes of conve-

nience these can be generally classified on two levels, one ontological, the other, socio-ethical. The ontological critique points out that *hongaku* thought is non-Buddhist, in that its basic ideas are built upon an underlying, substantialistic notion that the early orthodox Buddhists guarded against, a notion stemming from Brahmanical philosophical views that Śākyamuni disclaimed. This critique does not confine itself to *hongaku* thought as found in the Japanese Tendai tradition, but extends to its precursors, to cover the notion of "buddha nature" which developed and was widely accepted in China, and the Indian Mahayana notion of *tathāgatagarbha* of which the former notion was an adaptation. These notions and those surrounding them as expounded in various sutras and commentaries are also "exposed" as "not Buddhist," that is, as implying a substantialistic principle at their basis, incompatible with the basic Buddhist view of *anātman*.<sup>2</sup>

The socio-ethical critique maintains that *hongaku* thought has led to a pernicious tendency in Japanese "Buddhism," which can be described by the phrase *aku-byōdō* ("evil equalization"). This is the tendency to use the doctrine that obliterates the distinction between absolute and phenomenal, between sacred and profane, between holy and defiled, in a way that legitimizes the existing inequalities and historically conditioned attitudes and structures of discrimination against certain sectors of Japanese society (mainly, but not exclusively, those referred to by the term *hisabetsu-buraku-shusshinsha*, or descendants/members of the discriminated groups) (Hakamaya 1989, pp. 134-58). By extension, the socio-ethical critique looks at the wartime militaristic and nationalistic stance taken by prominent Buddhist leaders and intellectuals, notes their failure in ethical judgment, and attributes this to the influence of this doctrine that conflates the absolute with historical

realities. A similar nationalistic stance moving in the direction of militarism is also pointed out as a motivating factor behind actions and words of certain prominent intellectual and political leaders of the contemporary scene.

Another prong of this socio-ethical critique of *hongaku* thought points to its role in Japanese history as an ideological buttress for the powerful politico-religious establishment that in many ways controlled the life of the masses and maintained a rigid and and oppressive hierarchical structure during the medieval period (Hakamaya 1990, pp. 47-92).

In the wake of the recent controversy surrounding *hongaku* thought and its role in the formation of Japanese religion and culture especially as precipitated by the above critiques, there has come about a felt need for greater precision in mapping out the historical parameters of this thought-movement and the set of ideas it espouses, as well as for greater clarity in delineating the content and intent of the various texts identified with it. This paper is one modest contribution in this regard.

Texts belonging to the *hongaku* cluster abound in statements that negate conventional dualities, that is, terms normally found in polar opposition, such as the cycle of birth-death (*samsāra*) and *nirvāna*, defilements (*kleśa*) and enlightenment (*bodhi*), ordinary being and Buddha, and so on.<sup>3</sup> We will examine certain *hongaku* texts in an attempt to understand the logic of nonduality and absolute affirmation presented in these texts.<sup>4</sup> Based on this textual study, we will offer some reflections relating to the on-going discussion on *hongaku* thought and its role in Japanese religion and society.

## I. Birth-Death and Nirvāna: The *Hongaku* Logic of Nonduality

The negation of dualities, a recurrent theme in Japanese Tendai *hongaku* writings, needless to say, is also a central theme in Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition as a whole. Nāgārjuna's treatises expounding Madhyamika philosophy built on this theme, and the various philosophical schools that arose subsequently in China, Tibet, Korea and Japan continued in the development of their particular logic of nonduality, with the various nuances that these presented within the context of their respective systems. One question that arises then is, whether there is a logic of nonduality in Japanese Tendai *hongaku* texts that distinguishes these writings from previous others in the Mahāyāna tradition.<sup>5</sup>

To pursue this question, let us examine a passage from the *Gozuhōmon-yōsan*, a text placed in the late twelfth century. (Tamura 1973, pp. 553-556)

All the awakened ones are not separate from the realm of birth-death, and at the same time are separated from birth-death; they do not cling to nirvāna, and thus attain nirvāna. Having abandoned the way and its practice, they are in Eternity, Bliss, Self, Purity.

The living beings of the three worlds, due to their views of birth and death, are submerged in the six realms; wishing to cut themselves off from birth and death, they do not escape birth and death; wishing to hold on to nirvāna, they do not attain nirvāna.

The Effortless (*musa*) Birth-death is from the outset (*moto*) beginningless and endless. In the Perfect Teaching (of our school), the phenomenal world and emptiness fall neither into the eternalistic nor the nihilistic view. Contemplate this, and do not fear

birth and death. Birth-death is originary bliss (*shōji wa moto raku nari*). Human beings are deluded and perceive this as suffering. Remove this erroneous view at once, and you will arrive at Buddha-land. (Tada 1973, p.38)

The negation of the conventional opposition between birth-death on the one hand, and nirvāṇa on the other, which is the central theme of this text, echoes other Mahāyāna texts on the nonduality of the cycle of birth-death (*samsāra*) and nirvāṇa. Examples in *Prajñāpāramitā* literature can be pointed out, such as the following:

Maitreya: If, O Lord, the Bodhisattva in the interest of others does not renounce *samsāra*, how is it that through his nonrenunciation of *samsāra* he has not also renounced nirvāṇa? If the Bodhisattva has in his own interest not (completely) renounced nirvāṇa, how is it that as a result of his nonrenunciation of nirvāṇa he has not also renounced *samsāra*?

The Lord: Here, Maitreya, the Bodhisattva, the great being who courses in perfect wisdom, neither discriminates *samsāra* as *samsāra*, nor nirvāṇa as nirvāṇa. When he thus does not discriminate, they, i.e. *samsāra* and nirvāṇa, become exactly the same. And why? Because, when he does not discriminate *samsāra* as *samsāra*, he does not become alarmed by *samsāra*; and so, when he does not discriminate nirvāṇa as nirvāṇa, he does not fall away from nirvāṇa. Thus one should know that for one who is established in the indiscriminate realm there can for this reason be no renunciation of *samsāra* and no renunciation of nirvāṇa. (Conze 1975, 650-651)



The well-known verses in Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyama-kārikāh* on the nonduality of samsāra and nirvāna also loom in the background.

There is no difference whatsoever between samsāra and nirvāna.

There is no difference whatsoever between nirvāna and samsāra.

The boundary of samsāra is the boundary of nirvāna.

Between these two there is not the slightest space-in-between. (MMKXXV, 19,20)

Needless to say, these affirmations of nonduality in Mahāyāna sutras and commentaries are developed in the context of attempts at a logical exposition of *śūnyatā*.<sup>6</sup> Here we will not develop the argument but simply acknowledge our indebtedness to recent Buddhist scholarship, especially for those studies that have demonstrated how these expositions of *śūnyatā* in the Mahāyāna tradition are meant to lead to an illuminative understanding of the term as a "soteriological principle," more than simply as an ontological notion or as a concept, view or belief regarding ultimate reality.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the proper understanding of *śūnyatā* does not merely involve a "notional assent," to employ the classic categories of John Henry Newman, but leads to a "real assent" that transforms the subject in the very act of understanding. (Newman 1947)

The expositions of nonduality therefore, as found in many Mahāyāna treatises and commentaries through India, Tibet and China, among others, are meant to be read in the context of the endeavor to realize *śūnyatā*, that is, to come to an illuminative understanding that is at the same time transformative of the one who understands.

If the above framework is to be adopted as a presupposition to be taken in the reading of certain texts in the Mahāyāna tradition, it follows that situating one's reading of these passages in the context of Buddhist enlightenment practice, that is, from a stance of engagement in the quest for enlightenment, would underlie the "proper" (i.e. in the sense of the Latin *proprius*, that is, "referring to its own particular character") understanding of these passages. This of course does not mean to dismiss other ways of reading as "improper," nor invalidate or deny the possibility of other readings for different purposes, but simply accepts the proposition that the consideration of the soteriological dimension as noted above can be a decisive factor in the reading of certain texts in this tradition.

Our suggestion here is that the present *hongaku* text before us, likewise, can be seen and hopefully better understood within the particular context of enlightenment practice. This suggestion is supported by what we know of the actual background in which *hongaku* documents came to be written and read.

Oral transmission (*kuden*) from teacher to disciple in the context of Tendai tantric practice is the matrix out of which short note-like writings in separate pieces of paper (*kirikami-sōjō*) came into use. These short writings, which conceivably served their purpose as prompt-notes in a face-to-face encounter of teacher and disciple as part of enlightenment practice, were further expounded, systematized and commented upon by later writers. The short writings, expositions, systematizations, and commentaries have been handed down in different manuscripts, and are now made available to us (See Tamura 1973, p. 479).

If what we have before us then is a passage from a text which was written in the context of enlightenment practice, that is, one whose intended readership was not

the general public nor even the intellectuals of the time, but those who were engaged in meditational and devotional practices in conjunction with their pursuit of the questions addressed in these written texts, it goes without saying that our reading of these texts needs to take this into account, as this may offer significant clues in their "proper" understanding.

To go back to our passage, the perception of birth-death as suffering and nirvāna as bliss is described as based on a deluded view. It is the very yearning for a nirvāna, mistakenly thought to be beyond this realm of birth-death, that plunges sentient beings all the more deeply into the world of suffering, and prevents them from truly realizing nirvāna. The various statements in the passage converge in the direction of leading the reader (practitioner) to recognize, and overcome the erroneous view that birth-death and nirvāna are separate, oppositional realities.

On one level, the nonduality of birth-death and nirvāna appears to be grounded on notions highly susceptible to the charge of substantialism. For example, the notions of Eternity, Bliss, Self, and Purity (*jō-raku-ga-jō*), terms which began to appear in sutras and commentaries expounding the doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* (see Takasaki 1975), are lined up as attributes of the mode of being of an awakened one. The appearance of such terms, as well as those of One Mind (*isshin*), Suchness (*shinnyo*), Dharma-realm (*hokkai*) etc., in many *hongaku* texts, serve to confirm critics in their charge that we are dealing with a form of *dhātu-vāda*. (Matsumoto 1989)

However, if we are to consider the point suggested above, namely, that the text is to be read in the context of enlightenment practice, in a way that is meant to lead the reader to a transformative experience of awakening, then perhaps there is something more to the passage

than the exposition of a conceptual framework supported by substantialistic notions.

The statement "Birth-death is originary Bliss," is one instance of what is described as "an absolute affirmation of phenomenal reality." Similar affirmations are found in different expressions throughout *hongaku* texts and taken as characteristic of this cluster of writings in general. But our question is, is there a way of reading these statements generally characterized as an "absolute affirmation of phenomenal reality" that does not fall into self-contradiction, nor into the pitfall of substantialism?

A clue can be found in the short disclaimer: "In the Perfect Teaching (of our school), the phenomenal world and emptiness fall neither into the eternalistic nor the nihilistic view." In short, Birth-death is the very field wherein that Middle Path that avoids these two extreme views is realized. If this apparently casual statement that cautions against falling into the two extreme views is to be taken for its full import, the pitfall of substantialism (as that of eternalism) may be avoided. In short, the affirmation that immediately follows ("Birth-death is originary Bliss") is to be taken in such a way that heeds the following caution: neither the phenomenal world characterized by the facticity of birth and death, nor the world of emptiness identified with *nirvāna*, is to be hypostatized as eternal, yet neither are they to be denied or dismissed as nothingness. To spell this out in detail, Birth-death is not to be denigrated, *nirvāna* is not to be hypostatized, but also conversely, *Birth-death is not to be hypostatized* (i.e. eternalized), *nirvāna* is not to be denied (i.e. viewed simply as extinction).

Right after this disclaimer, the pivotal statement is made: "Do not fear Birth-death. *Birth-death is originary Bliss.*" In other words, right after the disclaimer described above, the reader qua practitioner is not only enjoined *not* to look for a *nirvāna* beyond or separate from

this phenomenal world of birth and death. "What you are looking for, what you yearn for as true Bliss, is to be found right from the start in this very world of birth-death, and nowhere else."

We must note (again) that this comes after the above disclaimer, cautioning the reader not to take this statement "Birth-death is originary Bliss" simply as another affirmation of eternalism, that is, not to fall into the opposite mistaken view of hypostatizing birth-death. An absolute affirmation is made, yet, in a manner that is not to be confused with the extreme view of eternalism, already repudiated with the disclaimer.

How are we to understand such an absolute affirmation? If we are to take the disclaimer in a straightforward way, we may also affirm that this Birth-death that is the subject of the absolute affirmation as originary Bliss is no longer the world of birth-death that is viewed in opposition to nirvāna: this latter "birth-death" is the world of suffering that no human (or sentient) being can ignore or deny as a reality of everyday experience. In this sense, "Birth-death is originary Bliss" cannot be taken as an unrealistic statement that simply is oblivious of this fact, i.e. that "birth-death is suffering." The subject of the affirmation that "Birth-death is originary Bliss" is not the birth-death that is suffering, but the Effortless (*musa*) Birth-death that transcends all oppositions, Birth-death that is beginningless and endless (that is, totally independent of linear time). And likewise, the "originary Bliss" that is predicated of this Effortless Birth-death is not the nirvāna that is viewed in opposition to birth-death, but precisely the Originary Bliss that transcends the opposition of birth-death and nirvāna, suffering and bliss.

The substantialistic nuances of such terms as Eternity, Bliss, Self, Purity, of course, remain a problem. The very same criticism would apply to treatises employing

these terms in their description of the absolute, most notably the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, and *Ta-cheng chi hsin lun* ("The Awakening of Faith"), among others.

It is helpful to recall in this regard that behind the writing of these treatises was an avowed concern to counter the other extreme view of nihilism in the interpretation of *śūnyatā*. In the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, for example, the notions of *tathāgatagarbha*, *tathāgatadhātu*, *dharmakāya*, as well as the notions of Supreme Eternity, Bliss, Self, and Purity (*nitya-sukha-ātma-śubhāpāramitā*) which characterize the dharmakāya in its perfected state (Nakamura 1962, p. 65:20-23) are presented as "positive notions" which play a pivotal role in the development of the argument of the whole treatise, and are presented as antidotes to nihilistic interpretations of *śūnyatā*. (Takasaki 1964, 54-57)

In the Awakening of Faith, the key notion that ties the whole treatise together is that of the One Mind (*yi-hsin*), another term that occurs frequently and figures prominently in *hongaku* texts. Again, the description of the positive attributes of this One Mind also derive from notions similar to the above as expounded in previous sutras and treatises in the *Tathāgatagarbha* lineage. (Hirakawa 1973, pp. 71ff.; Takasaki 1975, pp. 751-771)

Yet, notwithstanding the prima facie evidence for and proliferation of notions with substantialistic nuances, there are also important disclaimers and reminders made in these treatises, indicating that their authors were not unaware of this problem. While being cautioned against the extreme view of nihilism in the understanding of *śūnyatā*, the reader is also cautioned not to fall into the opposing false view of eternalism.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, though at surface reading the notion of a substantial absolute would appear to be implied in the whole argumentation of these texts, the disclaimers imbedded in the text itself can be said to *deconstruct* the

substantialistic notions, and bring the reader back to the matter at hand: how to overcome the erroneous view that keeps sentient beings trapped in a dualistic world, suffering in the realm of birth-death and seeking bliss in nirvāna. The disclaimer ruling out eternalism and nihilism leaves the reader qua practitioner left without a conceivable and coherent way of resolving the issue.

In the above *hongaku* passage, it is by paying attention to the deconstructive power of these disclaimers imbedded in the text that a “way out” is opened. In this case, the expression “phenomenal world and emptiness fall into neither the eternalistic nor the nihilistic view” deconstructs the substantialistic interpretation not only of the terms “Eternity, Bliss, Self, Purity,” etc., which appeared earlier in the passage describing the ultimate state of an awakened one, but also of the following affirmation, “Birth-death is originary Bliss.” But this disclaimer can do more than deconstruct the substantialistic reading of terms that appear in the text: more significantly, it can open the reader qua practitioner to a new understanding of what the text may be intended to convey beyond the actual words of the text itself.

In giving way to the deconstructive power of the disclaimer (“neither eternalistic, neither nihilistic”), the key statement (“Birth-death is originary Bliss”) may serve to open one to a new dimension of understanding that is no other than an experience of awakening. “Remove this erroneous view, and at once you will realize Buddha-land.”

However, the same statement “Birth-death is originary Bliss” may also be read simply as a *proposition making an absolute affirmation* (i.e. as a statement “affirming the absoluteness of birth-death as originary Bliss.”) In this latter case, this discourse about “absolute affirmation” itself succumbs to a crucial pitfall, namely,

the *conceptualization of "absolute affirmation."* The logical difficulties inherent in such a proposition making an absolute affirmation can easily be pointed out on several grounds. For one, the very use of the key terms ("Birth-death," "Bliss") goes beyond the boundaries of conventional usage with which these terms are employed: Birth-death is normally understood as the realm of suffering, and Bliss is normally understood as the opposite of this suffering. The proposition then, from a linguistic analytic point of view, makes no sense. Or, if the proposition is to be understood as intending to bring the reader or listener beyond the parameters of normal discourse by going beyond the conventional meaning of the terms involved, the preceding arguments do not make the case at all, and simply begs the question. Or, granted that one assents to the proposition, in other words, taking the predicate "originary Bliss" as a notion that applies to the subject "Birth-death," and accepting an understanding of Birth-death as qualified by this predicative notion ("originary Bliss") in an absolute way, (i.e. despite experiential evidence to the contrary, that Birth-death involves suffering, etc.), one is bereft of ways to explain oneself out of the conceptual contradictions involved in such a proposition. Accepting the proposition (no matter what, that is, in an absolute manner), the very same passage leads not to an illuminative understanding but to a more subtle form of delusion than the dualistic view it was meant to deny: an ontological position not warranted by ordinary experience and the ordinary usage of terms involved.

The above passage from the *Gozuhōmonyōsan* on the nonduality of birth and death offers us one example wherein a first-level, cursory reading presents a substantialistic view as suggested by the terms used (Eternity, Bliss, Self, Purity, etc.), and espouses an absolute affirmation built on weak premises or contradictory



implications and thus leading to indefensible conclusions. The ontological critique levelled at *hongaku* texts is indeed made with good reason.

But a consideration of the specific context (the use of the text in enlightenment practice) and a closer examination of casual disclaimers imbedded in the text enables us to detect a deconstructive function with liberative power latent in the text: an “emptying” of concepts that opens to an illuminative understanding.

The “logic of nonduality” apparent in this *hongaku* passage being considered thus can be described as involving a threefold layer (though not in chronological order of description in the present text). The first layer is the recognition of the situation of sentient beings as lost in the dualistic mode of thinking, despising birth-death and aspiring for nirvāḥa. (“The sentient beings of the three worlds are sunk deep in the six realms due to their erroneous views of birth and death.”) A second layer involves the affirmation that birth and death and nirvāḥa are not separate: truly awakened ones (Buddhas) do not seek to separate themselves from birth and death “in order to” attain nirvāḥa, and precisely because of this are they liberated from their attachments (to nirvāḥa). By this very fact, they dwell in nirvāḥa. The third layer is the dimension opened by the disclaimer, which denies both that this nirvāḥa is eternal and that birth-death is nothingness, and also vice versa, denies both that nirvāḥa is nothingness and that birth-death is eternal. Freed from the above erroneous views by this disclaimer, and left with no logically defensible alternative, the reader/practitioner is prepared for an absolute-affirmation-leading-to-awakening: “Birth-death is originary bliss.”

II. AS SUCH — THE LOGIC OF  
ABSOLUTE AFFIRMATION

Let us examine two other passages, to test the possibility of reading *hongaku* texts in a way that can take us beyond the surface meaning of the concepts and propositions involved. The notion of Effortless Three Bodies (*musa no sanjin*) is one that finds frequent mention in different *hongaku* texts, and the following is but one example, from the *Sanjūshika-no-kotogaki*.

By the term “originary effortless three bodies” (*honji-musa no sanjin*) is usually meant that at the time of the first realization of the path the three bodies (of the Buddha) came to be the effortless three bodies. Now we say, consider carefully the term “originary effortless.” There is no beginning whatsoever to the three bodies. By “originary effortless three bodies,” we do not mean the three bodies that attained enlightenment in the first realization of the path. Everything (*issai no shohō*), being beginningless and originary, is the embodiment of the three bodies. It is not due to the effort of the Buddha, nor to the effort of asuras and heavenly beings. Everything is just as it is at the outset, and since there is nothing that is not an embodiment of the three bodies, each and every delusive thought of ours is the entirety of the wisdom of the Glorious Body. All our activity, passivity, sitting or lying down, is the embodiment of the Body of Transformation. All the sufferings and the onerous tasks we carry in this world of birth-death are the embodiment of the Dharma-body in fullness of perfection. It is thus with sentient beings (*shōhō*) as well as with the environment (*ehō*). Cherry trees and plum trees, peaches and apricots and the like, what more, the inexhaustible myriad of phenomena are all the em-

bodiment of the body of transformation. Also, flowers and fruits and the inexhaustible variety of such things, as they grow and mature and come to be from moment to moment, are no other than the Glorious Body. Everything twisted and straight, everything that comes to be from moment to moment, is just as it is, and embodies the Dharma-body. Sentient beings as well as the environment are already the three bodies. However, sentient beings as such, as sentient beings, are the three bodies, the environment as such, as the environment, is the three bodies. There is no point even in calling them "the three bodies." As sentient beings as such, they embody all the qualities of the three bodies. As environment as such, they embody the qualities of the three bodies. (p. 173)

First, a note the background of the key term, the "three bodies." This notion of the threefold body of the Buddha is of course a product of a long history of development in Mahāyāna Buddhist speculative thinking (See Chapter 3). The various Buddha-body views in the history of Buddhist thought can be seen as attempts to address questions of the relationship between the historical and the transhistorical, the phenomenal and the absolute, as well as between practice and enlightenment, self-oriented and other-oriented action, wisdom and compassion (Habito 1978, 1986).

In the Japanese Tendai *hongaku* texts, the three bodies are frequently referred to as part of the conceptual apparatus in the Buddhist heritage, among many other Buddhist technical terms. As I have argued earlier in Chapter 3, *hongaku* texts simply "take the pre-packed notion of the three bodies of the Buddha and other related notions, 'cooking' them and dealing them out in line with a particular menu, that is, the affirmation of all phenomenal reality as absolute and abiding." (p. 45)

This description remains valid, but a second look at some of these texts referring to the three bodies, notably where the term appears in the context of the compound *musa no sanjin*, may reveal something more than a simply a naive (conceptual) “affirmation of all phenomenal reality as absolute and abiding.”

The above passage in particular offers a perspective that suggests something more than a conflation of concepts or a proposition about the absolutization of phenomena. Our clue again is in the disclaimer, “there is no point even in calling them ‘the three bodies.’” The passage is one that invites the reader (practitioner) to cast aside the very concept of the three bodies, and simply to encounter “cherry trees, plum trees, peaches and apricots and the like,” as such.

In other words, after the preliminary conceptual identifications of cherry trees, etc., as the embodiment of one of the three Buddha-bodies are made, the disclaimer is made. With this the text invites the reader/practitioner to take cherry trees as cherry trees (that is, to overturn the initial predication of the notion of “three bodies” to the subject “cherry trees”), plum trees as plum trees, etc. Taking this cue, it invites the reader to an awakening experience that takes every particular event, encounter, or element, “as such, just as it is.” It is an invitation to take “all our activity, standing up, sitting, or lying down,” “all the sufferings and the onerous tasks we carry in this world of birth-death,” as such, and to *not predicate the concept of “three bodies of the Buddha,”* or any concept for that matter, to these concrete particularities on one’s experience. And it is in the very midst of very experience of all these particular things (activity, standing up, sitting, lying down, as well as all the sufferings and onerous tasks in this world of birth and death as such,) that an illuminative understanding, an awakening, can take place.

The first part of the passage sets the stage for this awakening by the affirmation that "all our activity, etc." is the embodiment of the Body of Transformation, that "all the sufferings, etc." are the embodiment of the Dharma Body in fullness of perfection. But to stop here would leave one simply with a conceptual identification (conflation) of "all our activity, etc." and "all our sufferings, etc." with one or other of "the three bodies of the Buddha." To rest content with this affirmation would be to stop at notionally assenting to a proposition "about absolute affirmation," and thus to succumb to the pitfall of essentialism, or substantialism, among other things. But the passage goes on with the crucial disclaimer as described, and thus overturns this conceptual identification, with the invitation to simply take things "as such, just as they are."

This same kind of disclaimer is found in another passage expounding on the relationship between the realm of Buddha and the realm of sentient beings.

In the Perfect Teaching (of our school), we do not say that sentient beings are transformed and attain Buddhahood. Realize that sentient beings as such, and Buddha- realm as such, are both abiding (as they are). (p. 176)

The point here is that, after building up careful arguments backed by explanations of traditional Buddhist concepts toward affirming the nonduality of sentient beings and Buddha, the oneness of the phenomenal and the absolute, the disclaimer comes: the conceptual identification of sentient beings and Buddha is overthrown. But this overthrowing of the conceptual identification of sentient beings with Buddha, being made right after the said identification, cannot be interpreted as a mere return to the other extreme standpoint, that is, the naive

denial of the nonduality of sentient beings and Buddha. What this rejection, or disclaimer does, is that it serves to deconstruct the *conceptual* absolute affirmation, and thus open the reader/practitioner to a transformative awakening experience, wherein erroneous views are eliminated. In this case, “as such” (*nagara*) functions as a turning word with a deconstructive effect.

The passages above from the *Sanjūshika-no-kotogaki* expound on the nonduality of sentient beings and Buddha in a way that first builds up arguments for an absolute identity of these two polar terms, and at a crucial point, deconstructs the argument with a disclaimer. But what we have in each is not a self-contradictory passage, an untenable argument or a “proposition that does not hold water” in the ordinary sense of the phrase, but a carefully crafted text which, when read in the context of enlightenment practice, can serve to open the reader/practitioner to a transformative awakening experience.

The logic of absolute affirmation in the above texts likewise exhibits a threefold layer, and can be summarized then in the following manner. The first layer is the level of ordinary delusive thinking, wherein “cherry trees” are identified as cherry trees and no other, that is, as not plum trees, nor human beings, nor hungry ghosts, much less bodies of the Buddha. The second layer is one that we could call the level of conceptual absolutization, wherein “cherry trees... the inexhaustible myriad of phenomena are all the embodiment of the body of transformation.” And the third, crucial layer, is the disclaiming of this conceptual affirmation, wherein one is opened anew to the fact that cherry trees are cherry trees, *but with a difference*. This “difference” is the dimension opened to the reader/practitioner, now awakened to the realization of “cherry trees,” devoid of conceptual content, absolutely affirmed *as such*. This third layer is

made manifest with the “emptying of concepts” effected by the disclaimer.

The above are only limited examples of how at least some *hongaku* texts, while being susceptible on first reading to various conceptual or logical difficulties as well as to critiques of substantialism, may be conveyors of something more than the conceptual content of the terms employed, if read within the context of enlightenment practice. Our suggestion in this paper is that this context can be truly decisive in assessing the content and intent of particular texts in the *hongaku* cluster.

The final entry in the *Sanjūshika-no-kotogaki*, which prefaces a transmission lineage chart situating the supposed author (Kōkaku) in the Eshin lineage, corroborates this suggestion.

This Teaching of Thirty-four Items is the transmission of our school, a compendium of contemplative practice (*kanjin*). If this Teaching is transmitted perfectly and completely, everyone will understand all the doctrines. Herewith the main points of our school are brought to clarity. It has been handed down from teacher to disciple in a six-generation lineage down to this Stupid One (*gushin*). For the purpose of handing it down to later disciples, I manifest it here in writing, and venture not to leave out any profound teaching. Indeed, may later generations of disciples find herein a looking-glass mirror. Even at the cost of one's life, this should not be given (to those unworthy). Because this deals with profound teaching, both teacher and disciple will fall into hell if such is the case. But if there is someone who has the capacity to receive this teaching, and only then, at last must it be transmitted. Because this is the profound teaching that has been transmitted in our lineage, one must be very discreet, very discreet indeed. If there is no one that

can be found who has the capacity to receive this, let this be buried deep beneath the walls. Those of you who are disciples of this lineage, take this intent to heart. If anyone violates this intent, such a one is not a disciple, much less a teacher. (pp. 184-85)

This entry makes it clear that the particular document at hand was not meant for a general audience, but suggests how it was possibly meant to be used as a “companion text” in face-to-face teacher-disciple encounters that are part of enlightenment practice, to be given only to “worthy ones,” those deemed disposed (i.e. as discernible from their state of practice) to their “proper” reading.

In these Tendai *hongaku* documents, therefore, we are dealing with texts that are (meant to be) read in the context of enlightenment practice, whose primary use was in the context of instructions given by a teacher to a disciple in a face-to-face encounter. In this kind of encounter, needless to say, there is much more that takes place other than what can be preserved in written form. Here the disciple-practitioner is repeatedly challenged by the teacher to show one’s grasp of the matter at hand, not only in words in the form of propositional statements, but through other ways of expression, including gestures, sounds, or even silence. The very manner in which one makes gestures or utter sounds or enters into silence is itself part and parcel of one’s “presentation” of one’s understanding of the text at hand. The teacher responds by offering an appropriate word or gesture, meant to lead to a conceptual impasse that can open the disciple to an awakening experience, that is, meant to deconstruct concepts still held onto by the disciple that may fall into one or other of the extreme views. Thus, it can also happen that the deconstructive disclaimer (in other words, the “turning word,” to borrow Ch’an/Zen vocabulary) that breaks down the concepts and which leads to awakening



may be uttered or presented in the face-to-face encounter, and not leave a trace in the written text.

The understanding of the context in which these texts were used and read will serve to caution any prospective reader from taking the passages “out of context” and making definitive pronouncements on their content and intent. The above caution of course, about definitive pronouncements, applies likewise to this paper, presented as but one attempt toward shedding some light on a possible way of reading Tendai *hongaku* texts, in a manner that hopefully does not fall entirely off the mark.

#### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

This chapter has explored the possibility of reading certain passages from texts of the *hongaku* cluster in a way that takes into consideration the particular context of enlightenment practice out of which they may have arisen, precisely as a clue to the reading. By no means can we generalize from our very limited and piecemeal efforts and be able to present any conclusions that apply to *hongaku* texts in general, beyond saying that further attempts along these lines may yield fruit in a better understanding of the content and intent of some other texts as well.

Our attempt is corroborated by evidence that the earliest versions of those texts identifiable as part of the Tendai *hongaku shisō* cluster, notably the ones that came to be transmitted in the form of loose sheets of paper (*kirikami sōjō*) were originally handed down as written notes to supplement or supplant oral transmission in the Japanese Tendai tradition. (Tamura 1973, p. 479) For a fuller understanding of the content and intent of *hongaku* writings, therefore, various aspects of enlightenment practice in the Tendai tradition, such as the disciplined

life in a monastic context, contemplation (*kanjin*), and individual study, not to mention the tantric rituals that came to be adapted in Tendai practice based on Shingon influence, need to be included in the picture. Further studies on these aspects of practice will inevitably throw fresh light on *hongaku shisō* and present it in wider context than those (including this one) simply based on textual, philological and philosophical considerations.<sup>9</sup> One suggestion then that can be made based on our meager attempts in this paper is that this multi-faceted enlightenment practice, as the original context in which the texts expounding *hongaku shisō* arose, needs to be given their due in the reading of *hongaku* texts. It is precisely the consideration of this context that may make a difference in the way we read some of those texts. And it is indeed ironical that these texts which were originally composed out of the matrix of Tendai enlightenment practice later came to be regarded as leading toward laxity in practice, or even as espousing the abandonment of practice altogether.

The critiques of Hōchibō Shōshin, a Tendai monk of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, and Dōgen (1200-1253) directed against *hongaku* thinking are indicative of the kind of reputation that the content of this cluster of texts had come to take on already at that time. (Tamura 1984)

Such a reputation of course may not have been entirely uncalled for, given a cursory reading of even some of these texts. "All the Buddhas...abandoning the path and its practice altogether, are in Eternity, Bliss, Self, Purity" (Tada 1973, 38); "Without our subjecting ourselves into difficult practice for innumerable kalpas, without practicing the six pāramitās, now, for a moment, if one bears in mind the thought that 'this body of mine is suchness itself,' one becomes a Buddha and comes to know the way to birth in the land of bliss" (p. 123); "At this

very moment, without breaking our bones at all, without casting away our life, but simply as we bear the thought that I am suchness itself, in an instant one becomes Buddha" (p. 128). These are some random examples of statements in Tendai *hongaku* texts that are difficult to defend in the face of the criticisms made against them, from ancient to recent times.

The fact that these criticisms were made then (i.e. by the likes of Shōshin and Dōgen and conceivably by others who sought to reemphasize the importance of practice) provides evidence that these texts were also read and interpreted in ways divorced from their original context of enlightenment practice even at that point of time. It is not difficult then to also conceive that writings expounding *hongaku* ideas, especially those produced after the earlier stage of their use as prompt-notes in loose sheets, specifically, the writings that belong to what Tamura calls the stages of systematization and commentary, were of the kind that would be hard to defend vis-a-vis such a criticism.

Incidentally, the *conceptual framework* offered by the *hongaku* texts was precisely the kind that proved useful as an ideological buttress for the religio-political establishment of the time. Tendai *hongaku shisō* thus came to represent the "orthodoxy" upheld by, and conversely, which upheld the Buddhist establishment at the time. (Kuroda 1985, 1991) But it was an "orthodoxy" that we can describe as one that is divorced from "orthopraxis." (See Chapter 2)

The ontological and the socio-ethical critiques levelled against *hongaku* thought call for serious consideration, and raise important implications for the way we regard various aspects of Japanese religion and society. This chapter is one attempt at demonstrating how the ontological critique, or the charge of substantialism, may be avoided at least in some texts by a reading that takes

into account the context of enlightenment practice. Our hope has been to show that at least in some cases sweeping charges levelled on *hongaku shisō* as a whole may be tantamount to throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater. What we do not intend however, is to maintain that the baby remain unwashed, much less that we keep the bathwater.

The ontological critique against *hongaku shisō*, though daunting, may be not be insurmountable, and some prominent Buddhist scholars have already presented thoughtful responses in this regard.<sup>10</sup> (See Post-script.) The socio-ethical critique continues not only to question the role of *hongaku shisō* in Japanese society and culture, but also to challenge the Japanese Buddhist establishment, past and present.



## Postscript

The work of Tamura Yoshiro and others succeeded in calling attention to the significance of *hongaku shisō* in Japanese religious history. It has been highlighted as a unique Japanese contribution to the history of ideas, and even described, perhaps somewhat exaggeratedly, as “the climax (or apex) of Buddhist philosophy” (Tamura 1973, p. 478, echoing Shimaji 1926).

Recent critiques, on the other hand, turned these superlative assessments upside down, attacking *hongaku shisō* and its associated notions as the source of all that was wrong with “Japanese Buddhism.” First, its Buddhist status has been emphatically denied. Secondly, its “pernicious” role in grounding and exacerbating Japanese ethnocentrism and discriminatory attitudes has been exposed.

The argument questioning its status as Buddhism has been articulated by Matsumoto Shirō (Matsumoto 1989, 1993). The gist of Matsumoto’s thesis is that *hongaku shisō* derives from a presupposition of a substantial ground underlying all things, a presupposition which Buddhism has precisely rejected with its key notions of *anātman* and *sūnyatā*. In making this critique,

Matsumoto presents his understanding of the core of Buddhism centered on his development of *pratītya-samutpada* and *śūnyatā*, and criticizes those notions that contradict or are not compatible with this core as heretical streams. Among these are *tathāgatagarbha*, as well as *dhātu*, key terms in the development of the notion of buddha nature (*buddha-dhatu*), which are in turn foundational for the doctrine of original enlightenment. And in criticizing these notions as heretical to Buddhism, Matsumoto also names prominent scholars whose understanding of Buddhism is “tainted” by such heretical notions.<sup>1</sup>

The “pernicious” nature of the doctrine of originary enlightenment has been presented on several fronts by Noriaki Hakamaya (Hakamaya 1989, 1990). Relying also on Matsumoto’s arguments, Hakamaya lashes out at “Japanese Buddhism” in general for straying from what Śākyamuni taught as “true” Buddhism. And the root cause of this departure from “true” Buddhism for Hakamaya is the unquestioned affirmation of Japanese indigenous elements incompatible with or even inimical to the spirit of Buddhism itself, leading to a “syncretistic” way this religious tradition was transmitted into this (Japanese) culture. Among the elements to be noted in this regard would be a this-worldly attitude that admits no room for a transcendent dimension, and an uncritical attitude that tends to accept the status quo and to give in to authority, elements pointed out as stemming from the “Japanese way of thinking.” (Nakamura 1974) Such then are the indigenous Japanese attitudes that prepared the soil for the development of the doctrine of originary enlightenment.

In a series of articles criticizing different aspects of Japanese society and culture, Hakamaya points out the doctrine of originary enlightenment as connected with attitudes exacerbating Japanese ethnocentrism as well

as attitudes condoning discrimination within Japanese society.<sup>2</sup>

Hirakawa Akira, president of the Japanese Association for Indian and Buddhist Studies, has been one of the first to respond in a systematic way to Matsumoto's critiques. In an article taking up Matsumoto's arguments, he shows how the terms *dhātu*, *gotra*, etc., although in ordinary usage may presuppose a "substantial ground" that Matsumoto criticizes as incompatible with Buddhism, are used in Buddhist treatises developing these notions in a way that is based on an understanding of *śūnyatā*. As such, they are to be understood only in the light of *śūnyatā*, and are therefore not necessarily incompatible with the core message of Buddhism. (Hirakawa 1990)

Prof. Hirakawa's response, however, limits itself to Matsumoto's critique of *dhātu*, etc., and does not go into the issues raised by Hakamaya regarding the doctrine of originary enlightenment and its negative influence in Japanese Buddhism in general.

Takasaki Jikidō has basically echoed Hirakawa's position in a more recent article, conceding to Matsumoto that the doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha*, as well as the philosophy of Yogācāra, undoubtedly would fall under the latter's categorization as *dhātu-vāda*, a mode of thinking opposed to the orthodox Mahayana Buddhist *śūnyavāda*. (Takasaki 1994) However, he argues that this need not necessarily imply a substantialistic position, as long as one keeps in mind that this *dhātu* is also *anātman*.

Takasaki also criticises Matsumoto's extreme "purist" stance that rejects all non-Buddhist elements of the Indic religious tradition as incompatible with Buddhism as such. Matsumoto's gauge for Buddhist orthodoxy is solely the notion of *pratītya-samutpāda*, and as such, *dhyāna*, *mokṣa*, and *nirvāna* would fall outside "genuine" Buddhism by this measure.



In short, taking a cue from the responses of Hirakawa and Takasaki, there is ample ground for reexamining the particular arguments presented by Matsumoto and Hakamaya in their rejection of Buddhist status to key notions associated with *hongaku shisō* in the history of Buddhist thought, and this remains an ongoing task for scholars of Buddhism.

Sueki Fumihiko, Tamura's successor to the Chair of Japanese Buddhism at Tokyo University, has responded to Hakamaya's as well as Matsumoto's critiques in separate essays. We cannot go into detail here on the various arguments presented nor even be able to summarize the nuances of Hakamaya's thinking. We can only mention here that vis-a-vis Hakamaya's social critique, he concedes the validity of the charge that *hongaku shisō* may have served to rationalize certain acts and attitudes of discrimination in Japanese society. However, he also cites an instance wherein a group under the influence of this doctrine were actually the ones who stood out most strongly against discrimination. (Sueki 1993, pp. 312-318)

With regard to Matsumoto's critique, he concedes that a major challenge has been hurled in the understanding of "true" Buddhism. Here Sueki offers directions towards a look at the history of the transmission and transformation of Buddhism throughout the various cultures of Asia in a way that need not fall into the two pitfalls of essentialism ("Buddhism must be like this") and of indeterminism (whatever calls itself Buddhism must be Buddhism). Taking a cue from Edward Said's widely discussed work *Orientalism*, and taking into account Japan's double-edged position in the context of Said's critique, Sueki joins these insights with those of Mizoguchi Yūzō (*Hōhō to shite no Chūgoku* [China as Method], Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1989) and proposes an approach he terms "Buddhism as method,"

which considers the problem of self and other in a pluralistic world taking the history of Buddhism and its encounter with various cultures of East Asia as a model.

One point that needs to be clarified in the discussion is that Hakamaya uses *hongaku shisō* in a way that generalizes beyond the Japanese Tendai thought-movement that is the subject of the articles in this monograph. He explicitly defines his usage of the term to mean “the idea that fundamentally at the root of all phenomena there is one underlying ‘essence’ or ‘thusness’ called *hongaku*— all kinds of ideas that also have this structure, i.e. of encompassing all things within a single principle, can also be called *hongaku shisō*, though it must be admitted that there are various degrees of this.” (Hakamaya 1989, pp. 7-8) This usage has had the unfortunate effect of taking elements from different stages in the history of Buddhist thought in a way that blunts their differences and their historical significance in their respective contexts. Thus, this generalized discourse on *hongaku* which would tend to lump the notions of *dhātu*, *tathāgatagarbha*, Buddha nature, thusness, etc., under one general principle impoverishes one’s understanding of Buddhist history and misses the complexities of the various contexts in which these terms arose and found relevant usage. There is a twofold task then, first to recover the historical nuances of the various terms labelled and criticised as *hongaku shisō* in Indian and Chinese Buddhist texts, and second, to further elucidate and highlight in a renewed way the specifically (though not necessarily “uniquely”) Japanese development called *Tendai hongaku shisō* in its historical contours and significance. Thus, research on Japanese Tendai *hongaku shisō* is given a new spur with the above discussions. (See Sueki 1995)

One noteworthy outcome in this regard is the projected publication of a five-volume series entitled *Higashi*

*Ajia Bukkyō* (East Asian Buddhism) (Takasaki and Kimura, eds., 1995, and forthcoming). This series would give special focus on the transmission and transformation of Buddhism in East Asia (as distinct from India and Sri Lanka or South Asia, and Thailand, Burma, etc., or Southeast Asia). East Asia is defined as the pluriform region (comprised of different cultures and languages) where nevertheless one common feature in the usage of Chinese ideograms in the written forms of the languages (the so-called “Kanji-culture” region). This is a geographically vast region where Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures came to be disseminated and accepted as Scripture. Incidentally, this is a region where notions of *tathāgatagarbha*, Buddha nature, Suchness, etc., played a key role in the popularization of Buddhist doctrine.

On another point, Hakamaya’s attacks are also levelled against the Japanese Sōtō Zen establishment for its “departure” from the stance of Dōgen, its founder. Bolstering his attacks, Hakamaya, taking the cue from respected Dōgen specialists, asserts that the twelve-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* represents Dōgen’s true and mature view, in that it accentuates the latter’s severe criticism of *hongaku shisō*. Behind this assertion is the implication that the other (earlier) works (notably the seventy-five fascicle volume of the same title) attributed to Dōgen need to be read with caution, as these were “tainted” by *hongaku shisō* and other heterodox elements. Hakamaya also cites the Sōtō Zen tradition’s focus on the phrase *honshō-myōshū* (originary enlightenment, wondrous practice), as a distortion of the “true stance” of Dōgen. (Hakamaya 1989, pp.319-348) This assertion has of course provoked lively discussions and new questions for research among Dōgen scholars. (See Kagamishima and Suzuki, eds., 1991, and Heine 1994.)

Thus, the critiques of Hakamaya and Matsumoto have generated renewed vitality in academic discussions

among scholars, and is spurring further historical and textual studies. But the prong of their critiques that perhaps has yet to receive adequate response is that which points to the “pernicious” role of *hongaku shisō* in grounding and fomenting attitudes 1) of ethnocentrism that led to Japan’s aggressive role in the Second World War, 2) of a false sense of superiority vis-a-vis other Asians, and 3) of discrimination against certain groups of people within Japan itself.

It is from this angle that those who have been critical of various aspects of Japanese society and culture, including the elements of ethnocentrism and militant nationalism, discriminatory attitudes and policies, as well as oppressive structures on different levels, including the religious, and are working actively to transform these elements of Japanese society and culture, have found in “Critical Buddhism” an ally for their cause. Thus, further development of argumentation along these lines by those sympathetic to the socio-ethical critique would be expected in the ongoing discussion. (For example, see Monteiro 1995.)

In an article entitled “Buddhist World-View and Ethnocentrism,” Sueki Fumihiko admits that “it is difficult to assess the (role of the) doctrine of originary enlightenment, but one important feature that can be said about it is that it is a kind of logic that has brought about the self-destruction of Buddhism.” (Sueki 1993, pp. 94-124)

A systematic and critical, thoroughgoing evaluation of the role of Tendai *hongaku shisō* in Japanese religion and society remains an ongoing task.<sup>3</sup> It is clear in any case that the Tendai doctrine of originary enlightenment is a significant element that cannot be ignored, either in pursuing that elusive “Japanese character and identity,” or in cracking the “myth of Japanese uniqueness” (Dale 1986).



## Abbreviations

DDZ	<i>Dengyō Daishi Zenshū</i>
DNBZ	<i>Dai-Nihon Bukkyō Zensho</i>
DZZ	<i>Dōgen Zenji Zenshū</i>
NI	<i>Showa Teihon Nichiren Shōnin Ibun</i>
SSZ	<i>Shinran Shōnin Zenshū</i>
T	<i>Taishō Shinshū Daizō-kyō</i>

## Notes

### PREFACE

- <sup>1</sup> The term *hongaku-shisō* has been translated in various ways, including the direct but awkward “original enlightenment thought,” “doctrine of innate enlightenment,” “teaching on inherent awakening,” etc. There are difficulties noted for each of these attempts at translation (see Swanson ed. 1987, p. 74), so any English rendering inevitably either misses some nuances of the Japanese term, or suggests some nuances not intended. The Chinese/Japanese ideogram for “hon” (for *hon-gaku*) is a rich mine of nuance that includes

“original,” “innate,” “inherent,” and more— “present” or “current,” “at hand,” “realized,” “authentic,” also come into the picture. With all these in mind, I use the translation “originary,” superseding the translations used in my works published earlier.

<sup>2</sup> See Hakamaya 1989, 1990. Matsumoto 1989, 1993. Also, see Swanson 1990, 1993 for summary accounts of the issues involved.

<sup>3</sup> See Hakamaya 1990, pp. 3-7, translated in Swanson 1995.

<sup>4</sup> A prominent advocate of a well-defined “Nihonjin-ron” position is Umehara Takeshi, a prolific writer whose works also include journalistic commentaries on Japanese Buddhist figures in history. One published work is a one-to-one conversation with Tamura Yoshiro on the implications of *hongaku-shisō* for Japanese culture (Tamura and Umehara 1970), and Umehara has taken off from Tamura’s ideas to build up some of his own views on the “unique Japanese character and identity.” See also Nakazawa and Yamaguchi 1991, for a “Nihonjin-ron” discussion with *hongaku-shisō* as a key theme.

<sup>5</sup> A panel was offered in the Buddhism section of the American Academy of Religion at its Annual Conference in 1993 (Washington), entitled “Critical Buddhism: Issues and Responses to a New Methodological Movement,” with papers by Steven Heine, Dan Lusthaus, Nobuyoshi Yamabe, and Jamie Hubbard, with Paul Swanson responding. Matsumoto Shirō was an invited guest, and offered some comments on his and Hakamaya’s work. Also, a volume comprising of a collection of articles in English, with contributions by Japanese and non-Japanese scholars, is in preparation, edited by Jamie Hubbard of Smith College and Paul Swanson of Nanzan University, addressing various aspects and implications of “Critical Buddhism.”

<sup>6</sup> The articles offered here are revised versions presented or published papers. "Tendai *Hongaku* Doctrine and Kamakura Buddhism" is based on a paper delivered at a panel on the theme "Reexamining Kamakura Buddhism" at the annual conference of the Association for Asian Studies in 1990 (Chicago), organized and chaired by Dr. Richard Payne of the Institute of Buddhist Studies. "Self as Buddha— A Question of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis" first appeared in a collection dedicated to Prof. Mayeda Sengaku on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday anniversary, entitled *Ga no Shisō (Atmajñāna—Professor Sengaku Mayeda Felicitation Volume)*, Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1991). "Buddha-body views— The Use and Misuse of the Trikāya Theory" is based on a Japanese original delivered at the annual conference of the Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies held at Tohoku University in Sendai, Japan, in 1990, and translated and published in the *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies (Indogaku-Bukkyō-Gaku-Kenkyū)* 39 no. 2 (1991). "The Logic of Nonduality and Absolute Affirmation" was previously published in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22:1-2 (Spring 1995).

CHAPTER 1: TENDAI *HONGAKU* DOCTRINE  
AND KAMAKURA BUDDHISM

- <sup>1</sup> For a list of recent studies calling for such a new look, see Habito 1991, Taira 1992; Sueki 1992, 1993; Nihon Bukkyō Kenkyūkai, ed., 1994; Satō 1995; Stone 1995. See the latter's work (Stone, Forthcoming) on the problem of the "new" and the "old" in Kamakura Buddhism. See also Payne (forthcoming).
- <sup>2</sup> See Hazama 1988; Tamura 1965, 1973, 1987, 1990; Asai 1975, 1991; Sueki 1987 also presents a survey of research on this thought-movement.



- <sup>3</sup> This work merited Tamura the prestigious Imperial Prize from the Japanese Academy shortly after it was published in 1965. Here again I acknowledge my indebtedness and express my gratitude to the late professor Tamura Yoshirō for his guidance, especially for the privilege of having attended his seminars on *Tendai Hongaku shisō* at the University of Tokyo which spanned several years in the early 1970s.
- <sup>4</sup> See Yamaguchi 1975, Ruegg 1989, and Harris 1991. Takasaki 1974 presents a comprehensive study of the backgrounds of this doctrine. For Western language studies, see Takasaki 1966; Ruegg 1969, 1981; King 1991; Hookham 1991.
- <sup>5</sup> See J. Takasaki 1966 for an English translation based on an edition prepared by E. H. Johnston in 1950. Nakamura 1962 is a Sanskrit edition with the Chinese translation. Nakamura 1967 presents the Tibetan text with Japanese translation.
- <sup>6</sup> T. 1668. For a study on the backgrounds of this text, see Nakamura Masafumi, "Shakumakaenron no Seiritsu ni Kansuru Shoshiryō," in Hirakawa Akira, ed., *Bukkyō Kenkyū no Shomondai*, Tokyo: Sankibō, 1987, pp. 97-128.
- <sup>7</sup> See Tamura, "Tendai Hongaku-shisō Gaisetsu," Tada Kōryū, et. al., *Tendai Hongaku-ron*, Tokyo: Iwanami, 1973, pp. 512-5; also, Misaki Ryōshū, "Godaiin-Annen to Hongaku-san," in Asai 1991, pp. 149-70; see also Sueki 1993, 1994.
- <sup>8</sup> On the question of "authorship" of Tendai Hongaku texts, see Tada, et al., 1973, pp. 549-93. Based on Tamura's and other's findings, reexaminations of many texts included in standard collections attributed to well-known figures are now being undertaken.
- <sup>9</sup> See Tamura, "Hongaku-shisō to Shintō Riron," in Tamura 1991, vol. 1: *Hongaku-shisō Ron*, pp. 443-455.
- <sup>10</sup> For examples of discussions of "Nihonjin-ron" that

consider the role of *hongaku-shisō*, see Nakazawa Shinichi and Yamaguchi Masao, "Nihon Genri no Kairo," *Āgama*, vol. 118 (Feb., 1991), pp. 8-41, and the articles in Ueyama et al., *Kikan Bukkyo* special edition, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> See *Dōgen-zenji Gyōfuku Kenseiki*, a biography of Dōgen, *Sōtō-shū Zensho*, vol. 17, pp. 15-35.

<sup>12</sup> See for example, Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, Chapter on Daishugyō, Iwanami edition, vol. 3, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> Kuroda's thesis has come to be well accepted among scholars of Japanese medieval history. He uses the concept "orthodoxy" to refer to the prevailing religio-political establishment of the time, ideologically supported by the amalgamation of Exoteric or sutra-based Buddhist teaching (*Ken-gyō*) and Esoteric teaching (*Himitsu-kyō* or *Mikkyō*), hence the term *Ken-Mitsu*.

<sup>14</sup> See Habito 1991 for a critical review of Tamura's central theses. This present section condenses parts of the 1991 article.

<sup>15</sup> Tamura 1973, p. 478. His book *Nihon Bukkyō-shi Nyūmon*, 1969 is written around this very idea.

<sup>16</sup> See Takasaki and Kimura, eds., 1995 and forthcoming. See also the Postscript, esp. pp. 73-75.

## CHAPTER 2: THE SELF AS BUDDHA

\* Textual references are from Tada, et al., 1973. Translations are my responsibility.

<sup>1</sup> Translation based on Shin Buddhism Translation Series, Hongwanji International Center, Kyoto, Japan, with some emendations. *Mattōshō*, SSZ 3, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Profs. Asai Narumi and Shigaraki Takamaro of Ryūkoku University for taking time to guide me in readings on Shinran. and to the Institute of Buddhist Culture of the same university for sponsoring a summer of Shinran studies in Kyoto.

<sup>3</sup> Here I acknowledge gratitude to Professor Suzuki

Kakuzen of Komazawa University also for guidance in Dōgen studies. I hope to repay this debt by following his hints in future writings.

- <sup>4</sup> The interpretation of this passage in a cause for division among later followers, precisely centering on the issue of Nichiren's sense of identity vis-a-vis Śākya-muni, as well as the tantric (Esoteric) influence on Nichiren's mature thought.

#### CHAPTER 4: THE LOGIC OF NONDUALITY AND ABSOLUTE AFFIRMATION

- <sup>1</sup> Three basic features of this "pure" form of Buddhism are described by Hakamaya (1989, pp.9-10) as adherence to the law of causation (*pratītya-samutpāda*), the stance of anātman, and a view of reality informed by faith (*śraddhā*) and wisdom (*prajñā*). See Swanson 1992, pp. 126-28.
- <sup>2</sup> Matsumoto has coined the term *dhātu-vāda* to describe the standpoint that implies this substantialistic principle, as a corollary view to the heretical *ātma-vāda*. See Matsumoto 1989, pp. 1-9.
- <sup>3</sup> See Tada, et.al. 1973, for a handy anthology of important texts of this cluster. These are but a few of those already identified as espousing Tendai *hongaku* ideas.
- <sup>4</sup> For a background study on different kinds of nonduality, see Loy 1988.
- <sup>5</sup> Tamura Yoshirō presents a neat schema tracing the development of different logics of nonduality (*sōsoku-ron*) from the "fundamental logic of nonduality" (*kihonteki sōsoku-ron*) found in Mādhyamika texts to the "immanent" (*naizaiteki*) logic of nonduality of *tathāgatagarbha* thought, the "manifestational" (*kengenteki*) logic of nonduality of early T'ien-T'ai and Hua-yen thinkers, and finally the "actualized" (*kenzaiteki*) logic of nonduality found in *hongaku* writ-

ings. This schema places this latter as the “climax” or “apex” of the development of Buddhist thinking. (See Tamura 1973, pp. 480-483). But it is precisely Tamura’s hyperbolic claims about the place of *hongaku shisō* in the history of Buddhist thought that has been challenged by its critics, and so we will not rely on this schema and reexamine the textual evidence anew in the light of the recent critiques.

- <sup>6</sup> To offer a sweeping summary, the Mādhyamika conception of the Two Truths and the Yogacāra conception of the Three Natures, can be seen in this light as attempts to provide a logical framework for the affirmations of nonduality in the Buddhist tradition. (See Harris 1991) Likewise, the doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* can be seen as an attempt at providing a systematic framework based on a nondual standpoint. (Takasaki 1964, 1975. Ruegg 1969, 1989) Further, the T’ien-T’ai conception of the Threefold Truth, and the Hua-Yen conception of Interpenetration of Part and Whole, are systematic philosophical expositions of nondual standpoints. (Swanson 1989, Cook 1977)
- <sup>7</sup> See Streng 1967, for notable study that called attention to the soteriological implications of the epistemological process involved in understanding *sūnyatā*. In this paper I am simply adapting Streng’s use of this term “soteriological,” described “in a broad sense to mean ‘ultimately transforming;’ and it is this transformation which is seen in terms of ‘purifying,’ ‘becoming real,’ ‘being free,’ and ‘knowing the truth’ in various traditions all over the world.” (p. 171) See also Huntington 1989, p. xii, “the significance of the words and concepts used within the Mādhyamika system derives not from their supposed association with any objectively privileged vocabulary supporting a particular view of truth or reality, but from their special efficacy as instruments which may be applied in daily life to the

sole purpose of eradicating the suffering caused by clinging, antipathy, and the delusion of reified thought... The critical distinction here is between systematic philosophy, concerned with the presentation of a particular view or belief (*dr̥ṣṭi*), and edifying philosophy, engaged in strictly deconstructive activity (the Mādhyamika *prasāṅgavākya*). The central concepts of an edifying philosophy must be ultimately abandoned when they have served the purpose for which they were designed. Such concepts are not used to express a view but to achieve an effect: They are a means (*upāya*).”

<sup>8</sup> In the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, the Jewel of the Dharma is described as “neither non-being nor being, nor both being and non-being together, and neither different from being nor from non-being” (Nakamura 1952, pp. 17-18; Takasaki 1964, p. 163, for a translation). This classic disclaimer stems from the fourfold negation expounded in the *Madhyamaka-kārikā* (I,7), also found in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (VI,1) *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, etc., and is an expression of a basic Mahāyāna standpoint. In the Awakening of Faith, there is a noted phrase suggesting that knowledge of the ultimate (*shinnyo*, “suchness”) is through a process whereby “words are used to eradicate words.” For a commentary, see Hirakawa 1973, pp. 71-75.

<sup>9</sup> The studies of Michael Saso on tantric rituals (see for example, his “Kuden: The Oral Hermeneutics of Tendai Tantric Buddhism” in Swanson 1987, pp. 235-246) can be mentioned in this regard as venturing into an important area that calls for further exploration. On another plane, findings in the still-developing academic field of Ritual Studies need to be considered for a more well-rounded understanding of elements involved in texts of the *hongaku* genre.

<sup>10</sup> See Hirakawa 1990, pp. 78-96; Takasaki 1994; Schmithausen 1991, pp. 53-62; Sueki 1993, pp. 312-317, 1995, pp. 2-24.

POSTSCRIPT

- <sup>1</sup> Among these he mentions Ui Hakuju, Watsuji Tetsurō, Hirakawa Akira, Tamaki Kōshiro, Fujita Kōtatsu, and others, considered as pillars in Buddhist studies in Japan. The very title of Matsumoto's earlier book, *Engi to Kū* (*Pratītya-samutpāda* and *Śūnyatā*) captures his thesis well.
- <sup>2</sup> Such comments are made throughout the series of essays of Hakamaya, but see esp. "Sabetsu-jishō wo Umidashita Shisō-teki Haikei ni Kansuru Shiken," in Hakamaya 1989, pp. 134-158, and "Wa no Han-Bukkyōsei to Bukkyō no Hansensei," in Hakamaya 1991, pp. 275-304.
- <sup>3</sup> In her *Ideas of Original Enlightenment in Medieval Japan*, (University of Hawaii Press, Forthcoming), Jacqueline Stone breaks new ground in scholarship on this theme, questioning previous scholarly assumptions and offering a new schema of understanding this mode of thought that prevailed in Medieval Japan. In considering *hongaku* thought in its relationship to the "new" forms of Buddhism that arose during the Kamakura period (focusing on Nichiren's Lotus Buddhism), Stone questions the "matrix" theory and the "radical break" theory of previous scholars, and describes a common ground with the new forms in terms of their soteriological presuppositions and implications.



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## Glossary of Japanese Terms

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| aku-byōdō 悪平等                            | moto 本   |
| akunin shōki 悪人正機                        | musa 無作  |
| bonnō soku bodai 煩惱即菩提                   | nyorai-tōdō-setsu 如来等々説                          |
| bonpu koso sanshin<br>凡夫こそ三身             | nyoraizō (Oh. ju lai tsang)<br>如来蔵               |
| busshin-kan 仏身観                          | pen chueh chen hsin (ch.)<br>本覚真心                |
| busshō (Ch. fo hsing) 仏性                 | raigō shisō 来迎思想                                 |
| chingo kokka 鎮護国家                        | sanshin seppo 三身説法                               |
| ehō 依報                                   | sanshin soku ichi 三身即一                           |
| fukaku (Ch. pu chueh) 不覚                 | sanshin soku issaihō<br>三身即一切法                   |
| genjitsu kōtei 現実肯定                      | sanshin (sanjin) setsu 三身説                       |
| genze (i) riyaku 現世利益                    | sanshin soku shujō no isshin<br>三身即衆生の一心         |
| gushin 愚身                                | shikaku (Ch. shih chueh) 始覚                      |
| hisabetsu buraku shusshinsha<br>被差別部落出身者 | shin-bukkyo 新仏教                                  |
| hokkai 法界                                | shinjin 信心                                       |
| hongaku shisō 本覚思想                       | shinnyo 真如                                       |
| honji musa no sanshin<br>本地無作の三身         | shinnyo-mon (Ch. chen ju men)<br>真如門             |
| hosshin seppō 法身説法                       | shōen 莊園   |
| isshin (Ch. yi hain) 一心                  | shōho 正報   |
| jishō shōjōshin 自性清浄心                    | shōji wa moto raku nari<br>生死は本楽なり               |
| jisō 事相                                  | shōmetsu-mon (ch. sheng mieh men)<br>生滅門         |
| jō-raku-ga-jō 常楽我浄                       | sōmoku-kokudo shikkai jōbutsu-setsu<br>草木国土悉皆成仏説 |
| kanjin 観心                                | shukugō 宿業                                       |
| kanjō 潰頂                                 | zettaiteki nigenron<br>絶対的二元論                    |
| kēngyō 顯教                                |  |
| kenmitsu taisei 顕密体制                     |  |
| kyosō 教相                                 |  |
| kyū-bukkyō 旧仏教                           |  |
| mampō 万法 (or banpō)                      |  |
| mikkyō 密教                                |  |