

Christoph KLEINE *

The *Separate Biography* of Hōnen:

A Translation and Critical Analysis of the *Betsu-denki*

Introduction

The *Separate Biography* (*Betsu-denki* 別伝記) of Hōnen-bō Genkū 法然房源空 (1133-1212), the alleged founder of the first independent Pure Land sect in Japan, has two outstanding features. It is perhaps the oldest of the more than fifteen biographies of Hōnen written during or before the Muromachi period (1393-1573), and is certainly the shortest. The *Betsu-denki* constitutes one of the six parts of a compilation of documents which were discovered in the fifth or sixth year of Taishō (1912-1926) in the treasure vault of the Sanbō-in 三宝院, a temple belonging to the compound of the Daigo-ji 醍醐寺, the head temple of the Shingon-shū / Daigo-ha, located in south-east Kyoto. Owing to the place of its discovery the *Hōnen-shōnin-denki* — which is the original title of the collection — is commonly known as the ‘Daigo text’ (*Daigo-bon* 醍醐本). Among the six parts of the existing version which were copied and published by Gien 義演 (1558-1626), the 79th abbot of the Sanbō-in, the *Betsu-denki* is the only text which is purely biographical in character. The other parts are:

1. *The Story of One Life* (*Ichigo-monogatari* 一期物語)
2. [*Hōnen's*] *Replies to Zenshō-bō* (*Zenshō-bō e no kotae* 禪勝房への答)
3. *The Explanation of the Threefold Mind* (*Sanjin-ryōken-ji* 三心料簡事);
4. *Diary of His (Hōnen's) Last Hour* (*Go-rinjū-nikki* 御臨終日記);
5. *The Record of His (Hōnen's) Attainment of Samādhi* (*Sanmai-hottoku-ki* 三昧発得記).

The different sections of the Daigo text were probably written neither by the same person nor at the same time. TAMURA (1983: 19-23) suggests

* PhD and part-time lecturer at Marburg University. The author would like to thank Ian Astley and Denise Gimpel for their helpful suggestions and for correcting the English text.

that the *Ichigo-monogatari* was completed after *The Private Diary of Genkū Shōnin*¹ (*Genkū-Shōnin-shi'nikki* 源空聖人私日記; hereafter *Shi'nikki*) because it seems to have been influenced by the latter. The *Shi'nikki* must be dated to a time before 1227 since no mention is made of the so-called Karoku persecution, a major event in the history of the Pure Land movement, which took place in 1227. However, TŌDŌ (1960: 2) suggests that the *Ichigo-monogatari* was in all likelihood written between 1216 and 1227, because whereas it mentions Kōin's 公胤 (1145-1216) death in 1216 it does not refer to the Karoku persecution. In a similar manner SANTA (1966: 96) tries to prove that the *Betsu-denki* must have been written before 1216, since otherwise the death of Kōin, who plays an important role in the *Betsu-denki*, would have been mentioned in the text.

The author of the *Betsu-denki* is unknown. At the beginning of the Daigo text, however, a phrase, following the title, suggests that the text is based on what Hōnen's disciple Seikan-bō Genchi 勢観房源智 (1183-1238) had seen and heard². Moreover, at the end of the *Sanmai-hottoku-ki* we learn that Genchi hid the record of his teacher's attainment of *samādhi* until his own death (HDZ 790b). Thus we may presume that the Daigo text is based on firsthand information — whether written or orally transmitted — handed down by Genchi to (at least) one of his disciples. SANTA (1966: 99) believes Shukuren-bō 宿蓮房³ (d. u.) to be the editor of the first version of the *Hōnen-shōnin-denki*, i. e. the original text of the manuscript Gien copied and published almost 400 years later in Daigo.

As regards content, there are some striking differences between the *Betsu-denki* and all the other biographies. By comparing certain accounts given in the *Betsu-denki* to the expanded and embellished stories which were created from these accounts by later biographers, the text enables

- 1 Author unknown. The original text was probably written around 1218 in classical Chinese. It is contained in Shinran's *Saihō-shinan-shō*, compiled in 1256, which is preserved in the Senjū-ji 専修寺 of Takada.
- 2 The exact meaning of the phrase is not quite clear yet. It runs 見聞出勢観房 in the original (Ishii gives this reading in HSZ 435) although Ikawa gives 見聞書勢観房 (HDZ 773a). For a discussion of this problem see KAJIMURA 1993: 63-75.
- 3 Unknown. It appears in Shōgei's *Dentsūki-nyūshō* 16 伝通記糅抄 (JZ 3.372). According to Ryōchū's *Dentsūki-genki* 3 伝通記玄記 (JZ 2.148), Shukuren-bō possessed some original texts written by Hōnen.

us to investigate the development of Hōnen's hagiographical tradition. One example even shows how the misinterpretation — whether it be conscious or involuntary — of passages in the text, which is written in classical Chinese (*kanbun* 漢文) and can thus sometimes be read in various ways, may cause absurd errors to appear in subsequent biographies. The following translation is based on Gien's version of the text as edited by Ikawa Jōkei (HDZ 787b-788a).

TRANSLATION

Separate Biography [of Hōnen Shōnin] says

Hōnen Shōnin was a man from the province of Mimasaka 美作. His family name was Uruma 漆間. His first teacher in the same province was Chikyō-bō 智鏡房 (originally a mountain priest). When the Shōnin was fifteen years of age, the teacher said: "This is no ordinary man. I want him to go up to the holy mountain [Hiei-zan, to study Buddhism]."

The affectionate father of the Shōnin said [to his son]: "I have an enemy." After the Shōnin had already ascended the mountain, he heard that [his father] had been attacked by his enemy and thus had to go to the next world. That is to say, [Hōnen] was fifteen years old when he climbed the mountain. He made Jigen-bō 慈眼房 of Kurodani 黒谷 his teacher and [Jigen-bō] conferred the precepts upon him. But meanwhile his affectionate father was slain by his enemy. For this reason the Shōnin visited his teacher to say goodbye to him and told him that he wanted to retire from the world (*tonsei* 遁世). [However,] to be ignorant is bad for a hermit, too. Consequently [Jigen-bō] began to lecture about the three works [of Zhiyi] namely the [*Miaofa lianhua jing*] *xuanyi*, the [*Miaofa lianhua jing*] *wenju* and the [*Mohe*] *zhiguan*.⁴ Every day [Hōnen] worked

4 In the Tendai-shū also known as the *Three Works in Sixty Volumes by Tiantai* (*Tendai-sandaibu-rokujukkan* 天台三大部六十卷); i. e. three works of Zhiyi: (1) the *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* 妙法蓮華經玄義 (a ten-volume commentary on the hidden meaning of the *Lotus Sūtra*; T#1716), (2) the *Miaofa lianhua jing wenju* 妙法蓮華經文句 (a ten-volume line-by-line commentary on the *Lotus Sūtra*; T#1718), (3) *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (a ten-volume work on concentration [Skt. *samatha*] and insight [Skt. *vipāśyanā*]; T#1911) and the corresponding commentaries written by the sixth patriarch of Chinese Tiantai

his way through the three works and consequently, after three years, he had no further questions about the sixty volumes. After that he confined himself to the scripture hall of Kurodani to peruse all the scriptures, and involved his teacher in dialogues. Eventually his teacher remained silent and actually became [Hōnen's] disciple. He said: "Wise men are made teachers. Now I, in turn, make the Shōnin my teacher."

Moreover, [Hōnen] examined the scriptures and commentaries of the Kegon school and decided to go to Daigo where an outstanding priest of the Kegon school lived. This master, who was called Keiga, The Bridge of the Dharma 法橋鏡賀, said:

I am officially legitimized to transmit these [Kegon] teachings, but I do not understand them to the degree [Hōnen does]. Following the Shōnin [in his explanations] various [formerly] unclear points have [now] been revealed.

Therefore Keiga became [Hōnen's] disciple and received the precepts according to the *Brahmajāla* [sūtra from him].⁵ Once [Kakushō the prince of] Omuro 御室 had Keiga present a judgement about the superiority or the inferiority of the Kegon and the Shingon [teachings]. Thus Keiga thought that it was an awesome thing that the Buddha wisdom perceives [every sentient being] and illuminates [them], and that this made Shingon superior. Thereupon the Shōnin appeared at Keiga's place and the monk [Keiga] joyfully said [to Hōnen]: "Omuro has such a wish ..." The Shōnin asked: "In which way did you judge this intellectual problem?" The monk spoke as [quoted] above. The Shōnin's reaction was contrary to [Keiga's] expectations. He said that Genkū wanted to express one thought and each point in which the Kegon-shū is superior to

Buddhism, Zhanran 湛然: (1) *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* 法華玄義釈籤 (T#1717), (2) *Fahua wenju ji* 法華文句記 (T#1719), (3) *Zhiguan fuxingchuan hongjue* 止觀輔行伝弘決 (T#1912).

5 *Bonmō no shinji-kaihō* 梵網ノ心地戒品. Literally "the various mind-based precepts of the Brahma net" which denotes the ten major and forty-eight minor precepts given in the *Fanwang jing Lushana foshuo pusa xindi jiepin di shi*, Jap. *Bonmō-kyō-roshana-bussetsu-bosatsu-shinji-kaihō-daijū* 梵網經盧舍那仏説菩薩心地戒品第十 (tr. Kumārajīva, T#1484). The so-called Mahāyāna precepts described in this sūtra provided the basis for Saichō's establishment of the Japanese Tendai school. 梵網ノ心地戒品 can also designate explanatory texts about Saichō's Mahāyāna precepts.

the Shingon-shū was revealed by [him]. Consequently, the monk acquiesced and told Omuro the reasons for the superiority of the Kegon as his answer [to Omuro's question].

Later Chikyō-bō came from Mimasaka to the capital and became the Shōnin's disciple. However, he received the Shingon teachings from the Minor Captain *Ācārya* of Nakagawa 中河少将阿闍梨.

[Hōnen] chose Zōshun 藏俊 (1104-1180) [as his interlocutor] to examine the Hossō doctrines. Zōshun, in return, became his disciple. The above mentioned four teachers [of Hōnen] all became his disciples.

Seal of the Dharma Jōken 法印静賢 of the Chikurin-bō 竹林房 accepted the Shōnin's *nenbutsu* belief immediately. (His writings [belong to] the doctrine of the one mind.)

Kōin of the Mii[-dera] 三井[寺] unfolded seven doubtful points to the Shōnin in the palace.

After the Shōnin had become old and weak, he had not seen the holy teachings for thirty years. Then a disciple of the mountain priest [Jōgon] from Chikuzen 筑前 who was about to give a lecture (*ryūgi* 竖義), visited the Shōnin and discussed the doctrines with him privately. The lecturer spoke:

[Hōnen] said that he had not seen the holy teachings for thirty years, and yet he understands every single point quite clearly. [His understanding] even goes beyond that of the most diligent scholars of our time. He is no ordinary man.

Kōin saw a dream and spoke thus:

In his true nature (*honji-shin* 本地身) Genkū is the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Jap. Daiseishi bosatsu 大勢至菩薩). He came to this world repeatedly in order to teach sentient beings.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT

1. Place and date of Hōnen's birth

The *Betsu-denki* provides only scant information about the place of Hōnen's birth, and no information about its date. While this biography mentions only the prefecture where Hōnen was born, namely Mimasaka which is now a part of today's Okayama Prefecture 岡山県, the *Shi'nikki* which, according to SANTA (1966: 140), was written around 1218, i. e. shortly after the *Betsu-denki*, gives more details. According to the author

of the *Shi'nikki*, possibly Hōren-bō Shinkū 法蓮房信空 (1146-1228) or one of his companions, Hōnen was born in the second year of the Chōjō period (1233) in a village called Inaoka 稲岡 in the southern part of the township of Kume 久米 (HDZ 769a). Later biographies pretend to know not only the year but even the day and the hour of Hōnen's birth. Moreover, although later biographies, starting with the *Shi'nikki*, depict Hōnen's birth as a miraculous event accompanied by mysterious omens, the *Betsu-denki* completely refrains from such description,

2. Hōnen's descent

From the *Betsu-denki* we learn nothing about Hōnen's descent except for the fact that his family name was Uruma, i. e. an indication of his patriarchal lineage. According to the *Shi'nikki* and succeeding biographies his father was a man named Uruma Tokikuni 漆間時国. While the *Shi'nikki* confines itself to describing the position of Hōnen's father as that of a government official (*chōkan* 庁官), Tankū's 湛空 (1176-1253) *Illustrated Transmission of Hōnen Shōnin's Teachings*⁶ (*Hōnen-shōnin-denbōe* 法然上人伝法絵; hereafter *Denbōe*) in four volumes, for instance, asserts for the first time that Tokikuni held the high rank of military chief (*ōryōshi* 押領使).⁷ Shunjō's 舜昌 (1255-1335) *Illustrated Life of Hōnen Shōnin*⁸ (*Hōnen-shōnin-gyōjō-ezu* 法然上人行状絵図; hereafter *Gyōjō-ezu*) in 48 volumes adapts this account and asserts that the lineage of the Urumas can be traced back to the emperor Ninmyō 仁明 (834-850).

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- 6 The real name of this first illustrated biography, which was completed in 1237, is *Honchō-soshi-denki-ekotoba* 本朝祖師伝記絵詞. The illustrations are by Kankū 観空. The oldest available manuscript of this text was copied by Kan'e 寛惠 in 1294 and is preserved in the Zendō-ji 善導寺 of Chikuzen. The text is written in Japanese.
- 7 "A provincial official rank created in 878 at the time of a revolt of the Ezo or Ainu. ... The occupant of this office, though limited in his jurisdiction to two or three counties, was really more powerful than the provincial governor, because his office was hereditary, while that of the latter alternated every four years" (COATES and ISHIZUKA 1949: 105).
- 8 Also known as *Shijūhachikan-den* 四十八卷伝 (The Forty-eight Roll Biography). Written by Shunjō during the years 1311-1323 in Japanese. This illustrated text, which is regarded as the authoritative biography of Hōnen by the Chinzei-ha (i. e. the denomination nowadays commonly known as Jōdo-shū), is mainly based on

The lack of any information about Hōnen's mother and her family in the earlier biographies, including the *Betsu-denki*, the *Shi'nikki*, and the *Denbōe*, is doubtless attributable to the low regard in which Buddhist authors of this period usually held women. Probably the first written source to discuss Hōnen's mother is the *Record of the Rise and Fall of the Minamoto and the Taira*⁹ (*Genpei-seisui-ki* 源平盛衰記; hereafter *Seisui-ki*). This work claims that Hōnen's mother was an offspring of a clan called Hada 秦. The Hadas are said to be descendants of the Korean prince Yuzuki no Kimi, who for his part was a descendant of the Chinese Qin 秦 dynasty (221-206 B. C.), the character for Hada or Hata being the same as that for the Qin dynasty. Yuzuki no Kimi allegedly went to Japan in the year 283 accompanied by a large number of his countrymen. During the reign of emperor Nintoku 仁徳 (313-399) members of the clan were sent to different parts of the country to teach sericulture (PAPINOT 1992: 144, 762).¹⁰

From the *Betsu-denki* we learn nothing about Hōnen's childhood name. The *Gyōjō-ezu* maintains that Hōnen received the name Seishi-maru 勢至丸 at his birth. The underlying intention of this assertion is evidently to suggest a connection between Hōnen and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, one of the attendant bodhisattvas of Amida Buddha. The Japanese name for Mahāsthāmaprāpta is Dai-seishi 大勢至, more commonly called Seishi. Since "maru" in Seishi-maru is merely an affix indicating a male child, Hōnen's name was — according to Shunjō — simply the name of the bodhisattva with whom he was actually identified quite early, as we shall see below.

3. The attack on Hōnen's father

One of the most interesting discrepancies between the *Betsu-denki*

the nine-volume *Hōnen-shōnin-denki* 法然上人伝記 (also known as *Kukan-den* 九卷伝 [Nine-Roll Biography]; see note 16) by the same author. The original text is preserved in the Chion-in 知恩院, the head temple of the Jōdo-shū. The *Hōnen-shōnin-gyōjō-ezu* was translated into English by Coates and Ishizuka in 1925.

9 A historical work in 48 volumes, treating the period from 1160 to 1185, attributed to Hamuro Tokinaga 葉室時長.

10 There are some discrepancies concerning the year of Yuzuki no Kimi's immigration and the proper writing of his name. According to Santa it should be 弓削君 instead of 弓月君 as Papinot asserts. See SANTA 1966: 16 and COATES and ISHIZUKA 1949: 105.

and all the other biographies lies in the details the fate of Hōnen's "affectionate father". Other biographies, beginning with the *Shi'nikki*, teach us that Tokikuni was killed in an attack by his enemy Sada'akira Akashi no Gennai 定明証源内, a descendant of the Minamoto 源 clan and headman of Inaoka, when Hōnen was only nine years old. Following this event he left his home and began a religious career. According to the *Betsu-denki*, however, his father was killed when Hōnen had already begun to study Tendai on Mount Hiei. Thus, the reason for Hōnen's leaving his mother and father so early was presumably his parents' fear that their son might become a victim of the enemy's aggression. On the other hand, Hōnen supposedly once said to his disciple Benchō 弁長: "I did not have any partifular [sic] reason when I decided to be a priest, but since I was young I had been struck by the religious zeeling [sic]." (TŌDŌ 1960: 2-3) This statement could be an indication of the correctness of the *Betsu-denki*'s account in contrast to the other biographies.

4. Hōnen's first teacher, Chikyō-bō

According to our text, Hōnen's first teacher was a priest in the same province of Mimasaka called Chikyō-bō, a "mountain priest" (*sansō* 山僧), a term indicating that he was an adherent of the Sanmon 山門 wing of the Tendai-shū, founded by the followers of Ennin 円仁 (Jikaku Daishi 慈覚大師; 794-866) and based on Mount Hiei. In most biographies after the *Shi'nikki*, this priest is called Kangaku 観覚 of the Bodai-ji 菩提寺. We may presume that Kangaku is identical with our Chikyō-bō; hence his full name must be Chikyō-bō Kangaku. Chikyō-bō Kangaku held the clerical rank of a *tokugō* 得業, i. e. a monk who had given three public lectures (*ryūgi*). These were: (1) a lecture on the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Yuima-e* 維摩会)¹¹ and (2) on the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Hokke-e* 法華会) in the Kōfuku-ji 興福寺 as well as (3) a lecture on the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra* (*Saishō-e* 最勝会) in the Yakushi-ji 薬師寺 (BDJ 1019c). Thus we can judge from the title *tokugō* that Chikyō-bō had studied not only on Mount Hiei but also in Nara. In fact the *Gyōjō-ezu* (HDZ 7) informs us that Kangaku studied Hossō in Nara and was given the nickname *hisashi tokugō* ひさし得業¹² because for a long time he was not able to obtain the

11 For details see also VISSER 1935: 596-605.

12 First appearance in the *Denbōe* (HDZ 471).

coveted title. Apart from Tendai and Hossō, Kangaku dealt with esoteric Shingon as well, as we shall see below. Such a religious versatility was common in the Heian period when Buddhist sectarianism, as witnessed in later Japanese religious history, was not yet known.

5. Hōnen's ascent to Mount Hiei

There are two major theories concerning the exact date of Hōnen's move from Mimasaka to Mount Hiei, the center of Tendai Buddhism north-east of Kyoto.¹³ Some of the biographies follows the *Betsu-denki* in asserting that Hōnen climbed the sacred mountain for the first time when he was fifteen years of age. The other sources rely on the *Shi'nikki* and maintain that he arrived there in the second year of the Tenyō period (1145) when he was only thirteen years old. TAMURA (1983: 74-75) argues in favour of the *Shi'nikki*'s account by taking the *Ichigo-monogatari* (HDZ 773a) into consideration. There it says that the ascent took place during Hōnen's childhood (*yōshō* 幼少), quite an inappropriate term for a fifteen-year-old juvenile. Moreover, it would seem most unlikely for a young man to arrive on Mount Hiei at the age of fifteen and to be fully ordained in the same year, as the *Chion-kōshiki* 知恩講私記 (HDZ 1035a)¹⁴ and — probably following this text — the *Kotoku-den*,¹⁵ the *Kukan-den*,¹⁶ and the *Gyōjō-ezu* claim. Neither the *Betsu-denki* nor the *Shi'nikki*, however, gives any detail about the date of Hōnen's ordination. We may presume that later biographers mistook the textual sequence of the account of Hōnen's arrival on Mount Hiei and his ordination in the *Betsu-denki* for an actual chronology of events.

An interesting variant in the *Betsu-denki* lies in the at least implicit assertion that Hōnen's first teacher on Mount Hiei was a priest named

13 According to Gyōkan's *Senchakushū-hishō* 選択集秘鈔 (JZ 8.336a), Hōnen arrived on Mount Hiei when he was fourteen, became Eikū's disciple at the age of fifteen and received ordination when he was sixteen years old.

14 The original manuscript of this biography was probably completed between 1218 and 1225 by Ryūkan 隆寬 (1148-1227). It is written in *kanbun*.

15 Full title *Shūi-kotoku-den* 拾遺古徳伝. Written by Kakunyo 覚如 (1269-1351), a disciple of Shinran, in 1301 and illustrated by Tosa Hōgen 土佐法眼. The original manuscript is preserved in the Jōfuku-ji 淨福寺 of Urizura, Ibaraki.

16 *Hōnen-shōnin-denki* 法然上人伝記. Written by Shunjō in Japanese. According to its postscript it was completed one hundred years after the death of Hōnen. The original manuscript was burnt during the Second World War (TÖDÖ 1960: 5).

Jigen-bō [Eikū]. Only Kakuyū Gyōkan 覚融行観 (1241-1325) accords with this statement in his *Senchaku-shū-hishō* 選択集秘鈔 (JZ 8.336a). The *Shi'nikki* mentions a priest of the northern valley of the western section (Saitō Kitatani 西塔北谷), named Jihō-bō (Genkō) 持法房¹⁷(源光), as Hōnen's first teacher on Mount Hiei. This name is missing in the *Betsu-denki* as well as in the Zōjō-ji version of the *Hōnen-shōnin-den*.¹⁸ Gyōkan presents Genkō as the second teacher on Mount Hiei but gives his full name as Konsen-bō Genkō 金仙房源光 (JZ 8.336b). From Tankū's *Denbōe* onward the *ācārya* Kōen 皇円 (?-1169) of the Kudoku-in 功德院, a priest from Higo (the ancient name for Kumamoto in Kyūshū), appears as another teacher of Hōnen. "Kōen was the eldest son of Shigekane 重兼, the Vice-Governor of the province of Mikawa 參河, and the fourth descendant of Michikane Fujiwara 藤原道兼 [961-995] of Awata, the *Kwampaku* of the emperor Ichijō 一条 [987-1011]"¹⁹ (COATES and ISHIKAWA 1949: 132). Hōnen's disciple in later years, Ryūkan 隆寛 (1148-1227), was his nephew. Kōen studied the exoteric doctrines under Kōkaku 皇覚 and the esoteric teachings under Jōen 成円 (KIKUCHI 1985: 19).²⁰ As a successor of Kōkaku, Kōen stood in the tradition of the Eshin-ryū 恵心流, one of the two major streams of orthodox Tendai Buddhism, founded by the famous Genshin 源信 (942-1017; also called Eshin Sōzu 恵心僧都), although his temple belonged to the Danna-ryū 檀那流.²¹ Thus, it is most likely that Hōnen already came into contact with Genshin's Pure Land teachings while studying under Kōen.²²

17 The characters used for the name differ in the various biographies.

18 法然上人伝. Author unknown. This incomplete but illustrated biography in two volumes was presumably completed around the same time as the *Denbōe*. It is written in Japanese.

19 I have supplied the characters and the dates in square brackets.

20 See also TAMURA 1983: 81.

21 Eshin-ryū and Danna-ryū constitute the two major streams of exoteric Tendai Buddhism in Japan. The Eshin-ryū was founded by Genshin of the Eshin-in 恵心院 (942-1017), the Danna-ryū by Kakuun 覚運 (952-1007) of the Danna-in 檀那院. Both Genshin and Kakuun were disciples of Ryōgen 良源 (911-985), the 11th chief priest of the Tendai-shū. The distinction between the two factions was not very strict in the Heian period (TAMURA 1983: 81).

22 In the thirtieth chapter of the *Gyōjō-ezu* (HDZ 193-194) it is said, however, that Kōen was unacquainted with the Pure Land doctrines.

6. Hōnen's retirement

Another striking difference between the *Betsu-denki* and other biographies can be seen with regard to the circumstances of Hōnen's retirement from the noisy and secular life around the Enryaku-ji 延暦寺. The *Betsu-denki* alone claims that Hōnen expressed his wish to live a life as a *hijiri* 聖 ("holy man"; hermit or ascetic) in the solitude of the forest to Jigen-bō Eikū 慈眼房叡空. In all the other biographies which follow the *Denbōe*, however, we learn that Eikū's hermitage in Kurodani was the very place Hōnen chose for his retirement. Another peculiarity of the *Betsu-denki* lies in the fact that it presents the news of his father's death as motivation for Hōnen's renouncing the world, while the other biographers consider this sad event the reason for Hōnen's first retirement from the secular life in leaving his home at the age of nine.

The *Betsu-denki* fails to inform us of the place of Hōnen's retirement as a practitioner. In all likelihood, however, Hōnen spent his life as a *bessho-hijiri* of Mount Hiei in Kurodani, the place he identified himself with until his final days. This can be deduced from the fact that he called himself "[Hi]eizan Kurodani *shamon* [i. e. monk, Skt. *śramaṇa*] Genkū 叡山黒谷沙門源空" at least until 1205 (HSZ 794).²³

In spite of the lack of any clear evidence, there is certainly some probability that Hōnen chose Eikū as his teacher and the "separate place" (*bessho* 別所) Kurodani as the place of his retirement because he was eager to study and practise the *nenbutsu* teachings that were handed down by Ryōnin 良忍 (1072-1132) to Eikū. Eikū's hermitage was renowned as an important meeting point for Tendai *hijiri* connected with the Kajii monzeki 梶井門跡.²⁴ Moreover, the "western section", where Kurodani is located, has an old tradition of *nenbutsu* practice, due to the fact that as early as 893 a training hall for the practice of the classical Tendai *nenbutsu*, the so-called "constant walking *samādhi*" (*jōgyō-zanmai* 常行三昧), was erected there. Genkō's temple belonged to this section of the Hiei-zan as well (KIKUCHI 1985: 13). Again, Kōen's Kudoku-in

23 According to Hōnen's letter to the Sanmon priests, *Sō-sanmon-kishōmon* 送山門起請文, written in 1205. See also YOSHIDA 1992: 82.

24 Also called Enyū-in 円融院 or Sanzen-in 三千院, one of the temples which were governed by an imperial prince; it is located at Ōhara (Kyoto, Sakyō-ku).

maintained close relations with the Kajii monzeki, which largely dominated the “eastern section” of the mountain. Thus we may suggest that Hōnen was a monk with strong ties to the Kajii monzeki and that he came into contact with Pure Land Buddhism relatively early. Therefore, his decision to retire to Kurodani was quite natural (KIKUCHI 1985: 19-20).

As a *bessho* Kurodani was mentioned for the first time in connection with a monk called Myōshū 明秀, who, after he had made up his mind to search for enlightenment, retired to Kurodani at the age of forty to recite the *Lotus Sūtra* (KIKUCHI 1985: 8-9).²⁵ In the Shinpuku-ji version of the *Shūi-ōjō-den* 後拾遺往生伝 (JZ-Z 17. 34b) the priest Jōi 淨意 is called Kurodani Shōnin 黒谷聖人 and the same epithet is applied to Zen'i 善意, who died in Kurodani in 1129, in the *Goshūi-ōjō-den* 後拾遺往生伝.²⁶ Zen'i devoted himself to various practices of both an esoteric and exoteric nature and recited the *Diamond Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*²⁷ daily. In addition, we learn from the *Hōgen monogatari* that Kurodani was a place where the ritual of the “twenty-five samādhi” (*nijūgo-zanmai* 二十五三昧) in the tradition of Genshin and his confraternity — the *Nijūgo sammai-e* (*Samādhi* society of twenty-five) — was performed (INOUE 1989: 306). Thus, Kurodani was evidently a *bessho* from early times but, unlike Ōhara for example, it was not exclusively a place to practice the *nenbutsu*. The cult of the *Lotus Sūtra* and traditional Tendai practices were of equal importance even in Hōnen's times (KIKUCHI 1985: 11-18). Accordingly, Hōnen was most probably engaged in all these practices besides the *nenbutsu*, as most of the biographies actually assert.

25 According to the *Konjaku-monogatari* 今昔物語 (13.29), a document written by Minamoto Tokikuni 源隆国 in the late Heian period. Myōshū's teacher was Senga 暹賀, a disciple of Ryōgen, who was appointed the 22nd abbot of the Enryaku-ji in 993. A collection of documents compiled by Hōnen's disciple Kakumyō-bō Chōsai, contains a text, titled *Shin-jūgi-ron* 新十疑論, whose author is said to be Zenyu 禪瑜 of the Sanmon-wing of the Tendai-shū from Kurodani. This Zenyu was a contemporary of Ryōgen. From this fact Kikuchi concludes that Kurodani must have been a *bessho* even before Myōshū's retirement.

26 The reading of the term *shōnin* in this text is 上人 instead of 聖人 (JZ-Z 17. 113a).

27 Skt. *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*; Ch. *Jingang banruo lemi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經; J. *Kongō-hannya-haramitsu-kyō*; T#235 (Tr. Kumārajīva).

7. Hōnen and Jigen-bō Eikū

The *Betsu-denki* gives no details concerning Hōnen's relationship to his teacher Jigen-bō Eikū apart from the scanty notice about conversations of unknown content and the alleged conversion of Eikū by his former disciple. 法然上人絵詞

Other biographies, like the Rin'a version of the *Hōnen-shōnin-ekotoba*,²⁸ the *Kotoku-den*, the *Kukan-den*, and the *Gyōjō-ezu*, are much more precise with regard to what the two were talking about. If their accounts are not mere embroidery, the main point of controversy was the question of whether the recitative *nenbutsu* as favoured by Hōnen was superior or inferior to the meditative *nenbutsu* as preferred by Eikū. While Eikū argued in accordance with what he had learned from his teacher Ryōnin, Hōnen reportedly chose Shandao 善導 as his authority. Furthermore, the *Gyōjō-ezu* (HDZ 11) tells of another passionate debate between teacher and disciple, concerning the essence of the perfect commandments advocated by Saichō 最澄 (767-822). TAMURA (1983: 101-102) believes that Hōnen finally left Mount Hiei in 1175 because his interpretation of Pure Land Buddhism brought him into conflict with Eikū and the other Sanmon priests. SANTA (1971: 11-46) questions this theory and maintains that Hōnen moved from Kurodani to Hirodani in the western hills surrounding Kyoto (Nishiyama) in order to release Eikū from a dilemma regarding the question of his succession. As Eikū's eldest and perhaps most talented disciple, Hōnen should have become his successor, but he had formerly promised Fujiwara Akitoki 藤原顯時 (1110-1167) to appoint the latter's grandson, Shinkū, as his successor. Thinking over the difficult situation Eikū was in, Hōnen decided to leave Kurodani and to visit the well known *nenbutsu hijiri* Yūren-bō Enshō 遊蓮房円照 in his *bessho* in Hirodani. This Enshō, whose secular name was Korenori 是憲, was the brother-in-law of Shinkū's father Yukitaka 行隆 and a son of Fujiwara Michinori 通憲 (?-1159) and as such a brother of the famous Kōya *hijiri* Myōhen 明遍 (1142-1224). Furthermore, Enshō was an intimate friend of Shinkū, Hōnen's "Dharma brother" from 1157.

28 法然上人絵詞. An illustrated biography written in Japanese by an unknown author around 1301. A complete copy of the nine volumes, preserved in the Myōjō-in 妙定院 of Shiba prefecture, was probably written in the Tokugawa period.

In order to indemnify Hōnen for not being appointed his successor, Eikū bequeathed his belongings to him, as we can learn from a document called *Motsugo-yuikaimon*, supposedly written in 1198 by Hōnen.²⁹

Of Hōnen's conversion to the exclusive *nenbutsu*, celebrated by other biographers as an event of major importance not only for Hōnen but for all sentient beings, the *Betsu-denki* says absolutely nothing. Consequently, the text provides no information that could help to settle the question whether his conversion was caused by Genshin's *Collection of Essentials for Birth [into the Pure Land]* (*Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集), Shandao's *Commentary on the Meditation Sūtra*, or a *gāthā* by Zhanran 湛然 (711-782).³⁰

8. Hōnen's study trip to the south

In spite of some variations, all biographies report Hōnen's trip to the south. The earliest sources, namely the *Betsu-denki* and the *Shi'nikki*, however, refuse to tell us when Hōnen travelled to the south in order to discuss the Dharma with representatives of other doctrinal schools of Japanese Buddhism. The majority of the biographies claim that Hōnen set out for Nara after a seven-day period of prayer, in search of the Dharma in the Śākyamuni Hall (Shaka-dō 釈迦堂) of the Shōryō-ji 清涼寺 at Saga in the first year of the Hōgen period (1156). The *Chion-den*, written by Chishin 智心 (?-1313) the fifth abbot of the Hyakumanben-Chion-ji 百万遍知恩寺, however, asserts that Hōnen went back to Kurodani immediately after his retirement for prayer. This is not the only reason for Santa to deny any connection between Hōnen's prayer in the Śākyamuni Hall and his trip to the south. It is indeed most unlikely that Hōnen would have travelled from Kyoto to Nara while the so-called Hōgen war (*Hōgen no ran* 保元乱) between the Minamoto 源 and the Taira 平 was raging. The biographers have most probably connected two formerly independent accounts, namely the seclusion and the trip to the south. Consequently, Hōnen might also have travelled to Nara in 1175, as SANTA (1971: 27-34) suggests.

29 沒後遺誠文, also called *Motsugo-kishōmon* 沒後起請文 (HSZ 783-786).

30 This *gāthā* is part of the *Zhiguan fuxingchuan hongjue* 止觀輔行伝弘決. In the *gāthā* there is a passage which says: "In various sūtras, the one who is often praised is Mida" (諸經所讚多在弥陀); T46.182c.

Be that as it may, the fact that Hōnen actually made the study trip can hardly be denied. No mention is made in the biographies, however, of what exactly Hōnen wanted to ask the outstanding scholars of the other schools. In all likelihood he set out for the south to study the Pure Land tradition of the so-called Nara schools, although the biographers remain silent about this matter (ŌHASHI 1977: 126).³¹ On Mount Hiei Hōnen had earnestly studied the prevailing Pure Land doctrines of his school. What we may term the orthodox Pure Land tradition of the Tendai-shū in the late Heian period was based upon two principal works: Zhiyi's *Great Concentration and Insight*, which teaches the *nenbutsu* practice of the constantly walking *samādhi*, and Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū*. In addition, Hōnen certainly practised the *samādhi* of twenty-five and was confronted with the ideas of Ryōnin's *yūzū-nenbutsu* 融通念仏. All these kinds of *nenbutsu* practice, however, were basically meditative and thus somehow difficult to conduct. It must be considered natural that Hōnen was eager to study the Pure Land tradition of the Nara schools as well, of which he may have heard through travelling *hijiri* who frequented Kurodani. Interestingly enough, the only biographies which recognize the impact of the southern Pure Land thinkers as a part of the Japanese Pure Land tradition up to Hōnen are the *Chion-kōshiki* (HDZ 1036a), attributed to Ryūkan, and the *Gugan-bon* (HDZ 536a). The following Pure Land masters are presented as forerunners of Hōnen.

Chinese thinkers: Tanluan 曇鸞 (476-542), Daochuo 道綽 (562-645), Shandao (613-681) and Huaigan 懷感 (7th century)

Japanese thinkers: Kōya 空也 (903-972), Genshin, Yōkan 永觀 (1032-1111) and Chinkai 珍海 (1092-1152)

As a matter of fact, the formative teachings of independent Pure Land patriarchs such as Daochuo and Shandao had been adopted by the Pure Land thinkers of the south rather than by Tendai scholars, including Genshin. Of primary importance for the development of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism from the eighth century were the Sanron priests Yōkan, Chikō 智光 (709-775) and Chinkai, the Hossō priest Zenju 善珠 (723-797) and the Kegon priest Chikei 智憬 (?-754). Moreover, practically all important works of Chinese Pure Land scholarship were available in the

31 See also ŌHASHI 1986: 39ff.

temples of Nara. The foremost representative of Tendai Pure Land teachings, Genshin, on the other hand, quotes only from the first volume of Shandao's *Commentary to the Meditation Sūtra*, but does not explicitly treat the last three volumes, including the fourth about the "meaning of good [deeds performed] in a state of distraction" (*sanshan yi* 散善義), the very part of the scripture which exerted the same influence on Hōnen as Paul's letter to the Romans did on Luther. In contrast to this, Yōkan, in his *Ten Conditions for Birth [in the Pure Land]*, *Ōjō-jūin* 往生拾因,³² as well as Chinkai, in his *Collection of [Passages concerning] Certain Birth*, *Ketsujō-ōjōshū* 決定往生集,³³ quote the passage which supposedly initiated Hōnen's conversion in 1175. This passage runs:

To concentrate single-mindedly and whole-heartedly on the Name of Amida, whether walking or standing still, whether seated or lying down, without considering whether the time involved is long or short and without ceasing even for an instant. This is called the Right Established Act. It is so called because such a practice agrees with the intent of Amida's Vow (T 37.272b).³⁴

From the fact that Genshin does not quote this passage, or any other from the *sanshan yi* section, we can conclude that Ryōchū 良忠 (1199-1287) is right in saying that only the first chapter was available to Genshin when he was writing his work (JZ 15.287).³⁵ TSUBOI (1982: 83-88) infers from an analysis of the content of the *Ōjōyōshū* that Genshin knew the fourth volume of Shandao's *Commentary*, but had no access to it. It is indeed conceivable that Hōnen had no opportunity to read the complete *Commentary* on Mount Hiei and therefore wished to travel to the south where all four volumes of the scripture had been available since 748 (INOUE 1989: 46).

Shandao's work, however, was not only preserved in Nara but also in the Byōdō-in 平等院 of Uji, south of Kyoto, which Hōnen must have passed on his way to Nara. As a matter of fact, Gyōkan asserts that Hōnen

32 T#2683. Yōkan quotes the passage only partially: 一一心專念阿弥陀名号。[行住坐臥不問時節久近念念不捨者] 是名正定之業。順彼仏願故。T84.100c. (The characters enclosed in brackets are the parts which were omitted by Yōkan.)

33 T#2684.

34 Quoted from KONDO and AUGUSTINE 1983: 6.

35 *Ōjōyōshū-giki* 往生要集義記.

actually went to Uji in order to read the complete *Commentary on the Meditation Sūtra* (JZ 8.340b).³⁶ Although there is no other source for the theory that Hōnen went to Nara, whether by way of Uji or not, and on this occasion read Shandao's *Commentary* in four volumes, it is the most plausible theory by far. However, ŌHASHI (1986: 43, 46) suggests that Hōnen saw the above quoted passage for the first time when studying Yōkan's *Ten Conditions for Birth*. If we accept the former explanation, it is hardly conceivable that Hōnen went to Nara in 1156, read Shandao's *Commentary*, debated with scholars of other schools and returned to Kurodani, only to be converted in 1175 by a passage he had already known for 19 years. We may presume that the biographers did not only confuse the stories about Hōnen's seclusion in the Shaka-dō and his study trip, but were also eager to veil the fact that Hōnen's Pure Land doctrine did not stem solely from orthodox Tendai traditions but was strongly influenced by the southern Pure Land teachings as well.

According to the *Betsu-denki*, Hōnen first visited a priest named Keiga at Daigo to discuss the Kegon doctrine with him. There are considerable disagreements between the biographers respecting this priest. The *Shi'nikki*, for instance, mentions only a great scholar of the Sanron school whom Hōnen visited at the Daigo-ji, without giving any name. Shunjō (*Gyōjō-ezu*, HDZ 13) maintains, however, in accordance with Kakunyo (*Kotoku-den*, HDZ 596a), that the priest whom Hōnen met at Daigo was a Sanron scholar called *gon-risshi* 權律師 (Provisional Preceptor) Kanga 寬雅. This Kanga, but not the temple in which he lived, is mentioned in the Rin'a book (HDZ 550b) and the *Kukan-den* (HDZ 345) as well. The *Ichigo-monogatari* (HDZ 773a) like the *Shi'nikki* (HDZ 769b) mentions a Sanron scholar living at Daigo, but remains silent about his name. Perhaps the accounts of the *Ichigo-monogatari* and the *Shi'nikki* on the one hand, and of the Rin'a book on the other, have simply been combined by Kakunyo and Shunjō.

Again, Bridge of the Dharma Keiga 慶雅法橋, a "great counsellor" of the imperial court (*dainagon* 大納言), is introduced in the *Gyōjō-ezu* (HDZ 13) as a priest of the Ninna-ji 仁和寺 who frequently visited the Daigo-ji and was therefore also called Bridge of the Dharma of Daigo.

36 *Senchaku-hongan-nenbutsu-shū-hishō* 選撰本願念仏集秘鈔.

The characters used to write the name Keiga differ. While the *Betsudenki* uses 鏡賀 (which also may be read as Kyōga), the Rin'a book, (HDZ 550b) *Kotoku-den* (HDZ 596a), *Kukan-den* (HDZ 345), and *Gyōjō-ezu* use 慶雅. Gyōkan (HDZ 336b) combines these two versions — so to speak — by choosing the characters 慶賀. If this Keiga is supposed to be the son of Minamoto Akimasa 源顯雅 and the teacher of the famous Kegon revivalist Kōben Myōe 高弁明恵 (1173-1232), the proper characters should have been 景雅. The confusion becomes even worse when we look at the *Chion-kōshiki*, where it says that Hōnen met a priest of the Kōfuku-ji 興福寺 (which certainly refers to Zōshun) and a priest of the Tōdai-ji. The identity of the latter monk remains obscure, although TAMURA (1983: 89-90) suggests that this might refer to Keiga.

The biographers largely agree with regard to Hōnen's discussion with the Hossō priest Kyōmyō-bō Zōshun 教明房藏俊 of the Kōfuku-ji at Nara. The assertion that this famous priest of noble descent eventually accepted Hōnen as his teacher, despite the fact that the latter was a monk of no rank, of comparatively low descent and moreover Zōshun's junior by almost 30 years, is hardly conceivable (ŌHASHI 1986: 40). Hōnen may have come into contact with Zōshun via Yūren-bō Enshō, whose brother Kakken 覚憲 was one of Zōshun's foremost disciples (SANTA 1971: 33).

It would be interesting to know whether Hōnen met other *nenbutsu hijiri* affiliated to the Henjōkō-in 遍照光院 founded by Myōhen 明遍 (1142-1224) in the Lotus Valley (Renge-dani 蓮華谷) on Mount Kōya 高野山, or the Sanron-oriented group based at the Kōmyō-sen 光明山, a *bessho* of the Tōdai-ji 東大寺. Myōhen, for instance, appears as an acquaintance, if not a disciple, of Hōnen in later years. This Myōhen was not only a Kōya *hijiri* and *nenbutsu* practitioner, but also another brother of Enshō. Furthermore, Hōnen might have met the famous Tōdai-ji restorer Shunjō-bō Chōgen 俊乗房重源 (1121-1206) on this trip as well. Both priests, Myōhen and Chōgen, attended the public lecture Hōnen held at the Hiei-zan *bessho* of Ōhara, a stronghold of Tendai oriented *nenbutsu hijiri*, in 1186.

The stories about Hōnen's discussions with famous scholars of other sects offer no historical detail, and provide practically no useful

information regarding their content. These accounts are presented for the single purpose of underscoring Hōnen's excellent gifts and his acquaintance with all doctrinal schools of his times.

9. Keiga and Omuro

The *Betsu-denki* gives no details regarding the contents of Keiga's conversation with Omuro. The name Omuro, which is used as a synonym for Ninna-ji, refers to the ordained prince (*hō-shinnō* 法親王) Kakushō 覚性, the fifth son of Emperor Toba 鳥羽 (1108-1123). This imperial prince had studied Shingon under prince Kakuhō 覚法 (1091-1153), the fourth son of Emperor Shirakawa 白河 (1073-1086) and abbot of the Ninna-ji. Kakushō was himself appointed abbot of the Ninna-ji in 1153. He died in 1169. Hence it is most unlikely that Omuro would really have asked Hōnen for his opinion as to whether Shingon or Kegon was superior. Before Hōnen left Mount Hiei in 1175 he was certainly almost completely unknown, and there is no reason to believe that Keiga, even if he knew Hōnen at this time, would have chosen a young and unknown monk of the Tendai school to act as a mediator in a doctrinal dispute concerning the Shingon and the Kegon teachings, two doctrines he (Hōnen) was not really familiar with. The purpose of this dubious account is evident.

10. Hōnen and Jitsuhan

The assertion of nearly all biographies, beginning with the *Denbōe*, that Hōnen received the so-called Hinayāna precepts from Jitsuhan 実範, learned the mysteries of the Shingon from him or transmitted the *shibun* precepts to Jitsuhan is obviously absurd. When Jitsuhan — son of the major-general Fujiwara Akizane 藤原顕実 — died in 1144, Hōnen was only twelve years old. The source of this error seems to be, though through no fault of its own, our *Betsu-denki*. In this text the person who received the Shingon teachings from Jitsuhan is clearly Hōnen's first teacher Chikyō-bō Kangaku. Kangaku came to Kyoto in order to visit his former disciple, whom he ultimately came to regard as his teacher. This is found only in the *Betsu-denki*. Were this not the case, we would be unable to explain who the four teachers mentioned in this context should have been if not Chikyō-bō, Eikū, Keiga, and Zōshun. Including Jitsuhan there would have been five teachers. Gyōkan (JZ 8.336b), on the other

hand, agrees with the later biographers that Hōnen received instructions in the Shingon teachings. The Shingon master in question, however, was, according to Gyōkan, an *ācārya* from Sagami called Kōju-bō 光樹房. Interestingly enough, although Jitsuhan is remembered as a transmitter of the commandments as they were introduced to Japan by Jianzhen 鑑真 (688-763), nowhere is he appreciated for the contributions he made to the systematization of esoteric *nenbutsu* belief by influencing Kakuban 覚鑿 (1095-1134), the precursor of the Shingi-shingon-shū 新義真言宗.³⁷

11. Hōnen and Jōgon

The real name of the “Seal of the Dharma” and abbot of the Chikurin-bō, a temple located in the southern part of the eastern section of the Enryaku-ji compound, was not Jōgen 靜賢 (also pronounced Jōken), but Jōgon 靜巖 (SANTA 1966: 36). This Jōgon was the first teacher of Hōnen’s later disciple, Seikaku 聖覚 (1167-1235).³⁸ According to the *Gyōjō-ezu* (HDZ 55-56), Jōgon visited Hōnen in Yoshimizu in order to confirm his own conviction and eventually was convinced by the latter that the evil disposition of man is no hindrance to birth in the Pure Land as long as one relies totally on Amida’s Original Vow. This account may be considered a mere embroidery of the *Betsu-denki*’s terse remark.

The meaning of the interlinear comment which states “其文者一心義也” and which can be literally translated as, “this text belongs to the doctrine of the one mind (*isshin-gi* 一心義)”, is somewhat unclear. It might also be understood as, “his (i. e. Jōgon’s) scriptures represent the doctrine of the one mind”. The doctrine of the one mind is usually counted as one of the fifteen currents of the Pure Land school. Goa[mida-butsu] 悟阿[弥陀仏] (?-1283) is commonly regarded as the founder of this doctrine.³⁹ Very little is known about the doctrine of one mind, because all of the hundred volumes Goa allegedly wrote have been lost. Gyōnen

37 Note for instance that Jitsuhan is mentioned as one of the six founders of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism in Gyōnen’s 凝然 (1240-1321) *Jōdo-hōmon-genru-shō* 淨土法門源流章 *Essay about the Origins of the Pure Land Doctrines* (T 84.196a). The other five are Chikō, Shōkai 昌海, Genshin, Yōkan and Hōnen.

38 TAMURA (1983: 146-148) strongly doubts the traditional view held by the Jōdo-shū of Seikaku’s being Hōnen’s disciple.

39 According to Shōsō’s 聖聡 (1366-1440) *Jōdo-sangoku-busso-denshū* 淨土三国仏祖伝集 (JZ-Z 17.330b).

(1240-1321) in his *Essay about the Origins of the Pure Land Doctrines*, presents Goa's interpretation of Amida's Original Vow in the following words:

It is the same if [you conduct the practice propagated in] the Original Vow or if [you conduct the practices which are] not [explained in] the Original Vow [as long as you] follow the 18th Vow (T 84.201b).

Jōgon, however, lived before Goa, and when the *Betsu-denki* was written Goa must have been a child. From this fact we may draw three possible conclusions: (1) the *isshin-gi* doctrine was not first established by Goa but by someone prior to him; (2) the interlinear comment has been added to the *Betsu-denki* later in order to provide some information regarding Jōgon's interpretation of the Pure Land doctrine which may have shared some characteristics with Goa's *isshin-gi* doctrine; or (3) *isshin-gi*, in this context, has nothing to do with Goa's doctrine at all.

12. Hōnen's conversation with Jōgon's disciple

The name, "mountain priest from Chikuzen", whose disciple visited Hōnen, clearly refers to Jōgon. Who this disciple was is completely unknown. Only the *Gyōjō-ezu* adopts and embroiders the story about Jōgon's disciple who was preparing for a public examination. Clearly the whole intention of this account is to underline Hōnen's image as a priest endowed with immensely detailed knowledge of the Buddhist teachings.

From the assertion that Hōnen had not seen the holy teachings for thirty years we may conclude that his conversation with Jōgon's disciple probably took place shortly before Hōnen's exile in 1207. In all likelihood, Hōnen had terminated his theoretical studies after his final conversion in 1175 for the sake of undivided devotion to the practice and propagation of the recitative *nenbutsu* based on Amida's Original Vow.

13. Hōnen and Kōin

The abbot of the Onjō-ji, Kōin 公胤 (1145-1216), who was also called "Bishop Daini 大貳僧正" since his father was the first secretary (*daini* 大貳) to the Governor of Chinzei (Kyūshū), had at first been a critic of Hōnen's *nenbutsu* doctrine. In reaction to Hōnen's *Senchaku-shū* he wrote a three-volume work called *Jōdo-ketsugi-shō* (浄土決義鈔 *Determining the meaning of the Pure Land*),⁴⁰ to criticize Hōnen's

⁴⁰ According to Kakunyo's *Kotoku-den* (HDZ 625b) the *Ketsugi-shō* consisted of only two volumes.

interpretations. It is said that Kōin finally changed his mind, regretted his false views, converted to Hōnen's Pure Land doctrine, and eventually burned his critical work. Consequently the text is no longer extant. According to the *Denbōe* (HDZ 498), Kōin functioned as the officiating priest (*dōshi* 導師) in charge of the last of the seven memorial services for the deceased Hōnen.

The account of Hōnen's conversation with Kōin inside the imperial palace as such is neither informative nor unambiguous. The sentence may also be understood as indicating that Kōin explicated seven dubious points to Hōnen. According to the *Gyōjō-ezu* (HDZ 253-255), however, it was Hōnen who clarified seven points which were unclear to Kōin. In other words, Kōin disclosed (*kai* 開) seven unsolved questions to Hōnen, who was able to settle them. This is certainly what the author of the *Betsu-denki* had in mind, too. Shunjō maintains that Hōnen and Kōin first met when the two were called to the imperial palace by Gishū Mon'in 宜秋門院 (1174-1238), the consort of the Emperor Go-Toba 後鳥羽 (1184-1198). The empress then was pregnant, and sought magical aid for an easy birth from the two priests. The child she was about to give birth to was the future princess of first rank who was later given the name Shōshi 昇子 (HDZ 254).⁴¹ There must be an error in the dating of the event by Shunjō. Princess Shōshi was born in 1195, i. e. three years before Hōnen had written the *Senchaku-shū*. Consequently, Kōin cannot possibly have withdrawn his criticism of the *Senchaku-shū* as formulated in the *Jōdoketsugi-shō* at this occasion. *Kotoku-den* (HDZ 626a) and *Kukan-den* (HDZ 445b) assert that Hōnen and Kōin met in the palace when Gishū Mon'in was pregnant with Prince Morinari, the later Emperor Juntoku 順德 (reigned 1210-1221), who was born in 1197. From the inconsistency of these accounts we may judge that there was presumably no connection between Kōin's conversion to Hōnen's doctrine and the meeting in the palace at the request of Gishū Mon'in. There can be no doubt, however, that Hōnen actually visited Gishū Mon'in in the palace, an event which provoked some criticism among the members of the court, because it was considered quite inappropriate to allow an insignificant monk like Hōnen to enter the imperial palace. According to the diary of Gishū Mon'in's

41 The name of the princess is not given in the *Gyōjō-ezu*. See COATES and ISHIZUKA 1949: 659.

father, Regent (*kanpaku* 関白)⁴² Fujiwara Kanezane 藤原兼実 (1147-1207), the most important noble patron and supporter of Hōnen, the latter visited the empress in the palace for the first time on the 23rd day of the ninth month in the second year of the Kenkyū period (1191) and for the second time only six days later (HDZ 966b). In addition, Sanjō Nagakane 三条長兼 in his diary *Sanchō-ki* 三長記 notes, that Hōnen was indeed called to the palace by the pregnant Gishū Mon'in on the third day of the seventh month in the sixth year of Kenkyū (1195), which Shunjō implicitly claims to be the year Hōnen and Kōin met in the palace. The *Sanchō-ki*, however, asserts that Hōnen fulfilled his fifty days' ritual for the easy birth alternating with Insai 印西 and Tangō 湛毫 (HDZ 969b). Again, on the seventh day of the 10th month in the first year of Kennin (1201) Gishū Mon'in took the vows and formally forsook secular life (*Meigetsuki* 明月記 [*Record of the Clear Moon*], HDZ 967b). Kōin, however, is mentioned in none of these contexts. In all likelihood Shunjō's account of the meeting between Hōnen and Kōin in the palace, their discussion about seven doubtful points concerning Buddhist doctrine, and Kōin's subsequent conversion must once more be considered a rather arbitrary combination of biographical notes taken from earlier documents such as the *Betsu-denki* and the *Sanchō-ki*.

The *Betsu-denki* finishes with a rendering of a dream Kōin allegedly had. There can be no doubt that the author presents the last part of Kōin's dream to depict Hōnen as an incarnation of Amida's attendant, the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta. The notion of Hōnen's being a bodhisattva in his true nature, incarnated in this world to lead sentient beings to liberation, was seemingly current from quite early after his death or perhaps even during his lifetime. As mentioned above, this identification may have been responsible for Shunjō's assertion that Hōnen's childhood name was Seishi-maru. Although the *Gyōjō-ezu* makes several suggestions regarding Hōnen's identity with Mahāsthāmaprāpta, it does not mention Kōin's dream, in contrast to the *Kukan-den* written by the same author.

The rendering of Kōin's dream may constitute the most important

42 Kanezane was appointed *sesshō* 摂政 (regent during the minority of an emperor) in 1184, *daijō daijin* 太政大臣 (prime minister) in 1189 and *kanpaku* (regent of an adult emperor) in 1190 (PAPINOT 1992: 100).

clue for determining the actual date of the *Betsu-denki*'s completion. According to various sources⁴³ Kōin had his dream on the 26th day of the fourth month in the fourth year of the Kenpō period (1216). If this dating is true, Santa cannot be right in maintaining that the *Betsu-denki* was completed in 1214. We might consider this account the *terminus post quem* then, i. e. the *Betsu-denki* must have been written in 1216, or to be more precise, between the 26th day of the fourth month and the 20th day of the sixth month in 1216 (the day of Kōin's death). If, on the other hand, the quotation from Kōin's dream has been added to the text later, the historical trustworthiness of all documents which are no longer extant as original manuscripts must be doubted on principle.

Conclusion

Besides the peculiarities of content discussed above, the most outstanding feature of the *Betsu-denki* lies in its brevity and the lack of various biographical accounts which are presented in other biographies as events of major significance. In particular, the omission of the following points is astonishing:

(1) stories about miraculous apparitions and Hōnen's supernatural powers as they are described in the *Shi'nikki* and have been largely adopted by later authors;

(2) details about the date and the cause of Hōnen's conversion to the single-minded and exclusive *nenbutsu* (*ikkō senju nenbutsu* 一向専修念佛) in 1175;

(3) Hōnen's encounter with Shandao in a dream;

(4) the event of the so-called founding of the Jōdo-shū by Hōnen in 1175;

(5) references to Hōnen's public lecture at the *nenbutsu-hijiri* stronghold of Ōhara at the request of Kenshin 顯真 (1130-1192) in 1186;

(6) the compilation of Hōnen's major work, the *Senchaku-shū* in 1198;

(7) Hōnen's attainment of *samādhi* through the constant practice of the recitative *nenbutsu* in 1198;

(8) references to the persecution of the *nenbutsu* movement and

43 See, for example, Shinran's *Saihō-shinan-shō* (T 83.866a), Shunjō's *Kukan-den* (HDZ 448b) and Kakunyo's *Kotoku-den* (HDZ 643).

Hōnen's subsequent banishment from 1207.

The lack of any miraculous story about Hōnen is characteristic of the Daigo text in general. Although Hōnen's high abilities are strongly emphasized, the whole compilation does largely without the attempt to present Hōnen as an extraordinary being. It is the rendering of Kōin's dream alone which suggests a fundamental identity of Hōnen and the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta. However, contrary to other biographers, the author of the *Betsu-denki* maintains a distance from this "apotheosis" by merely presenting the quotation without adding his own comment. The reader is not forced to believe Hōnen to be an incarnation of the bodhisattva, although in medieval Japan dreams were often regarded as a source of prophetic predictions, especially if the dreamer was a famous and well respected man. TAMURA (1983: 22) presumes that the lack of miraculous tales is due to the attempt of the editor of the Daigo text to avoid any resemblance to the Holy Path (*shōdō* 聖道) which was rejected by Hōnen.

But why does the *Betsu-denki* withhold all the other significant events in Hōnen's life listed above? Were these accounts added to the scanty details given by the *Betsu-denki* at a later date, thus making them mere embroidery? According to SANTA (1966: 95), the *Betsu-denki* may not be regarded as an isolated text but as a part of the Daigo text as a whole. He believes that the editor of the Daigo text placed the main emphasis on the *Ichigo-monogatari*. The previously written *Betsu-denki* might have been an independent and complete biography in its own right called *Hōnen-shōnin-denki*, the very title which was later conferred on the Daigo text in general.⁴⁴ Parts of the original version of the *Betsu-denki* or *Hōnen-shōnin-denki* were incorporated in the *Ichigo-monogatari*, which indeed constitutes an incoherent mixture of biographical and doctrinal statements. The *Betsu-denki* in its present form might thus be regarded as a supplement to the *Ichigo-monogatari* or fragmentary remains of a formerly complete and independent biography, containing mainly events of minor importance. This theory sounds plausible as we find all the missing accounts in the *Ichigo-monogatari*, apart from miraculous stories and a record of Hōnen's attainment of

44 In TSUKAMOTO (1973) it is suggested that the title *Hōnen-shōnin-denki* was first given to the *Ichigo-monogatari* (BDJ 4637b).

samādhi which constitutes an isolated part of the Daigo text called *Sanmai-hottoku-ki*. By (re)incorporating the biographical details from the *Ichigo-monogatari* we might be able to reconstruct the oldest biography of Hōnen as a coherent text.

However, some suspicion as to the correctness of this theory remains. As we have seen above, the *Betsu-denki* notes that Hōnen had four teachers, a number which clearly refers to Chikyō-bō, Jigen-bō, Keiga and Zōshun. The *Ichigo-monogatari*, on the other hand, mentions another scholar of the Sanron school who subsequently surrendered to Hōnen's superior understanding. The name of this scholar is not mentioned, but if added to the other four persons presented in the *Betsu-denki*, the correct number of Hōnen's teachers who were finally converted by their former disciple must have been five. We might argue, however, that the *Ichigo-monogatari* contains not only biographical notes taken from the *Betsu-denki* but those derived from other sources as well. In the case of the Sanron scholar of Daigo, we may presume that the original source was the *Shi'nikki*. The same seems to be true for other parts of the *Ichigo-monogatari* (TAMURA 1983: 270-277). The question still remains, however, of why the compiler of the *Ichigo-monogatari* should have taken some accounts from the *Betsu-denki* and some from the *Shi'nikki* or other sources, although there is no apparent difference between these accounts with regard to their significance for the reevaluation of Hōnen's life.

Furthermore, if we presume that some parts of the original version of the *Betsu-denki* have been cut out of the text, only to be worked into the *Ichigo-monogatari*, the question of the correct date of its completion must be taken up once again. Santa's argument for his thesis that the *Betsu-denki* must have been written before 1216, because Kōin's death is not mentioned here, becomes weak when we imagine that this account, too, might have been transferred from the *Betsu-denki* to the *Ichigo-monogatari*, where the event is mentioned. On the other hand, SANTA (1966: 140) suggests that the *Shi'nikki* was probably written on the occasion of the seventh anniversary of Hōnen's death in 1218, although in this biography, too, no mention is made of Kōin's death. Indeed, determining the year in which a text was composed simply by choosing

certain events as *termini ante quem* is a more than dubious method. Especially in our case, where the text in question mainly contains events of minor importance, it is quite impossible to conclude from the lack of any mention of Kōin's death — an event which was in itself of minor significance — that it was written before 1216. Even the fact that the Karoku persecution is not referred to in the *Betsu-denki* can hardly serve as evidence that the biography was completed before 1227. The *Betsu-denki* confines itself to the presentation of some details of Hōnen's life and does not constitute a description of the young Pure Land movement's early history. None of the names of Hōnen's five major disciples — Ryūkan 隆寛 (1148-1227), Shōkō-bō Benchō 聖光房弁長, Jōkaku-bō Kōsai 成覚房幸西 (1163-1247), Zen'e-bō Shōkū 善慧房証空 (1177-1247), and Kakumyō-bō Chōsai 覚明房長西 (1184-1266) — is to be found in the text and nothing is said about the first persecution of the *nenbutsu* community or Hōnen's banishment, both of which would certainly have been more noteworthy than Kōin's death.

KAJIMURA (1993: 71) on the other hand, thinks that all parts of the Daigo text except the *Betsu-denki*, had been preserved by Genchi and were discovered by one of his disciples after his death. Because this unknown disciple felt that the *Hōnen-shōnin-denki* would be incomplete without any account of Hōnen's childhood and youth, he wrote a short biography by himself and added it to the collection before publishing it. Thus, Kajimura disagrees with Santa, who believes the *Betsu-denki* to be the oldest part of the Daigo text. TAMURA (1983: 22), however, shows that the *Betsu-denki* was in all likelihood completed before 1237, since the *Denbōe*, which was written in 1237, obviously bases its account of Jitsuhan on a misinterpretation of the *Betsu-denki*. Thus, we may assume that the *Betsu-denki* cannot have been written before 1216, provided that Kōin had his dream about Hōnen in this year, as Shinran, Kakunyo, and Shunjō unanimously maintain, and that the latest possible date of its composition must be 1237. When we compare the three different theories concerning the year of the *Betsu-denki*'s completion, I find that Tamura's is the only convincing one.

Taking the above into account, we may conclude that the *Betsu-denki*, which was found by a disciple (Shukuren-bō?) of Genchi in the

latter's estate, was written between 1216 and 1237. The contents of this amazingly brief document may have confused the monk who compiled and published the collection Gien copied four centuries later, because it deviated to a considerable degree from the prevailing stories about Hōnen. For this reason, perhaps, Genchi's disciple, not knowing what to do with the document but unwilling to throw it away, bestowed the title *Separate Biography* upon the text, indicating the fact that it presented another, differing version of Hōnen's life. This is, I admit, mere speculation for the time being. The lack of external evidence, however, forces us to construct a theory based upon internal evidence and rational speculation.

List of Abbreviations

- BDJ *Mochizuki Bukkyō daijiten*. Ed. Tsukamoto Zenryū
 HDZ *Hōnen-shōnin-den zenshū*. Ed. Ikawa Jōkei
 HSZ *Hōnen Shōnin zenshū*. Ed. Ishii Kyōdō
 JZ *Jōdo-shū zensho*.
 JZ-Z *Jōdo-shū zensho zoku*.
 T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaikyoku.

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