

**The originator of Japanese Pure Land  
Buddhism, St. Hōnen**  
— **His Life and Thought** —

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*Part I. The Life of Hōnen*

—All biographical information base on the book *Hōnen shōnin no goshōgai* [The Life of St. Hōnen] ed. by Prof. Dr. Shun-ei Tsuboi & Prof. Dr. Kyōshun Tōdō, Sō-honzan Chion-in, Fukyōshikai; 85 pp, Kyoto, 1974—

Year: A. D. 794

Heian-period begins.  
.....

About 1052

Beginning of “Map-pō” period  
.....

Hōnen’s age; birth: 1133/7. April

Hōnen is born at Mimasaka in Okayama, the son of the powerful family Uruma (漆間). He is called Seishi-maru (勢至丸).  
.....

9 years old: 1141

His father Tokikuni (時國) is attacked by a local official Sadaakira Akashi (明石定明) and dies. When Tokikuni dies, his last words to his son are: “You must not take your revenge upon the killer of your father, because it will cause quarrels to the future generations.” These words impress deeply his heart, and in his native place he becomes a monk under the priest Kangaku (観覚).  
.....

13 or 15 years old : 1145 or 1147

He goes up to Mt. Hiei (比叡山) near Kyoto, at that time the center of Japanese Buddhism, and becomes a pupil of the priest Genkō(源光).

.....

15 years old : 1147 / Nov.

He accepts the precepts of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

.....

18 years old : 1150 / Sept.

He moves from the center of Mt. Hiei to the steep valley Saitō-Kurodani, “to live in seclusion.” Someone names him Hōnen-bō-Genkū. (Hōnen-bō is the cell-name and Genkū is the priest-name.) He trains and studys earnestly.

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24 years old : 1156

In order to study, he visits Nara, the center of Japanese Buddhism that was influenced by Chinese Buddhism (Nanto Bukkyo, 南都仏教), where many great priests are active.

.....

43 years old : 1175

He reads the words of Zendō (Shan-tao, 善導) who is the most famous of the three establishers in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, and is converted by them. He provides his own religious doctrine about the Pure Land Buddhism, “Rikkyō-kaishū” (立教開宗), the foundation of “Jōdo-shū.” He moves from Saitō-Kurodani (西塔黒谷) to Higashiyama-Yoshimizu (東山吉水) in the capital.

.....

52 years old : 1184

A famous aristocrat Shigehira Taira (平重衡) embraces Hōnen’s doctrine.

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57 years old : 1189

The chief minister of state (Kanpaku, 関白), Kanezane Kujō (九条兼実) converts to Hōnen’s Jōdo-doctrine.

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58 years old : 1190

In Tōdaiji-temple, Nara, he preaches about the triple Pure Land sutras (浄土三部經) to many learned priests and various believers.

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60 years old : 1192

Kamakura period begins.

.....

65 years old : 1197

Benchō (弁長), later the successor of Hōnen, becomes his pupil.

.....

66 years old : 1198

Hōnen lectures on *Senchaku-hongan-nembutsu-shū* (選択本願念仏集), “Collection of passages on the Nembutsu chosen in the Original Vow” at the request of Kanezane.

.....

69 years old : 1201 / Dec.

Hōnen answers 145 questions which people asked him about a life of faith and the daily life ; *Ippyaku-shijūgo-kajō-mondō* (145 dialogues, 一百四十五箇条問答).

Shinran (親鸞, 1173-1262), later the originator of the Shin-sect (Jōdo-shinshū, 浄土真宗), becomes his pupil.

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70 years old : 1202

The chief minister of state, Kanezane Kujō becomes a monk under Hōnen. A lot of people, both common and aristocrats, embrace Hōnen’s religious doctrine, and mostly come together in order to listen to Hōnen’s preachings.

.....

72 & 73 years old : 1204 & 1205

The followers of Enryakuji-temple(延暦寺) on Mt. Hiei and of Kōfukuji-temple (興福寺) in Nara send a bill of indictment to the emperor, and in this indictment they insist on prohibiting the Nembutsu (Recitation of Amida’s name).

.....  
75 years old: 1207 / 18. Feb.

At last, the emperor prohibits the Nembutsu, and Hōnen is exiled to Tosa (土佐) on the island of Shikoku (四国). Shinran is exiled to Echigo (越後) in Hokuriku (北陸).

Hōnen preaches to all kinds of people, whom he meets on his way to Tosa, for example, prostitutes, fishermen, farmers, and others.

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75 years old: 1207 / 8. Dec.

The emperor rescinds Hōnen's exile. He comes back to Katsuo-ji temple (勝尾寺) near Ōsaka (大阪), and lives there for a few years.

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79 years old: 1211

Hōnen goes back to Higashiyama-Yoshimizu (東山吉水).

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80 years old: 1212 / 23. Jan.

He writes his last words, *Ichimai-kishōmon* (一枚起請文).

.....

80 years old: 1212 / 25. Jan.

Hōnen passes away.

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About 1274

Ryōe Dōkō (了慧道光) collects Hōnen's words and preachings: *Wago-tōroku* (和語燈録) and *Kango-tōroku* (漢語燈録).

## *Part II. Hōnen's thinking about Pure Land Buddhism*

*—The history of Japanese Buddhism and Hōnen's thought of Pure Land Buddhism, especially about his religious teachings and today's situation—*

### *1. The history of Buddhism in Japan*

#### *a) before the Kamakura Period*

The man, Gautama, had become an enlightened Buddha. This historical event was about B. C. 566. After Gautama Buddha's death, his many disciples preached his teachings to the Indian people. After a while, the thought of Buddhism developed into two currents, the southern and the northern. One is called Hīnayāna, the other Mahāyāna. Generally speaking, according to the teachings of Hīnayāna, a man must keep the Buddhist precepts himself in order to become a Buddha. On the other hand, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, men can be saved by the Buddha. We can say that it is based on the teaching which conveys all sentient beings to Buddhahood.

Mahāyāna Buddhism went from India to China. After that, in A. D. 538 or 552 it came down from China to Japan by way of Korea. For such reasons, Japanese Buddhism is influenced deeply by the Chinese. It was the Crown Prince Shotokutaishi (574-622) who first converted to the Buddhist faith.

In the Nara period (till 793) there were the Nanto-roku-shū (six schools) which came from China: Sanron, Jōjitsu, Hossō, Kusha, Kegon, and Ritsu. They retained their Chinese characteristics in Japan. Many members of the aristocracy were interested in Buddhism but not in the religion, only the culture.

The next period was the Heian period from 794 to 1191. In this period, the priests Kūkai (空海, Kōbō-daishi, 774-835) and Saichō (最澄, Dengyō-daishi, 767-822) who both had visited China for the purpose of study, established the Shingon-sect and the Tendai-sect. These were the first local sects or religious bodies. But, the characteristic

tendency of these two sects was clearly the mixing of politics and religion (Chingo-kokka-thought). They were interested more in political influence than in the relief of the individual.

Here, we must pay attention to a Tendai monk, Genshin (源信, 942-1017). He was a great exponent of Pure Land Buddhist thought in this period. He lost his father when he was young, and went up to Mt. Hiei to study Buddhism under the priest Ryōgen (良源). His main book *Ōjyō-yōshū* (往生要集, The essential collection concerning birth in Amida's Pure Land), which won him great renown in Japan, laid the foundation for the Japanese Pure Land Buddhist teachings. He is also known as the founder of the Eshin school of the Tendai sect.

*b) Kamakura period and the Buddhist situation*

After the Heian period came the Kamakura period (1192-1333). At the end of the Heian period, Japanese society, where the aristocrat class had great political power, came under the control of the warrior (Samurai). At this time, the masses experienced many great disturbances, calamities and social confusion. They were conscious of "the last days" in their actual world in which they had to carry out their lives.

After Gautama Buddha's death, Buddhists had a special kind of view of history. It had been described already in various sutras. It is called "Mappō" (末法) thought, in which one divides the history of Buddha's Dharma into three periods, called Shō-bō (正法, the true Dharma), Zō-bō (像法, the semblance Dharma), and Mappō (末法, the last Dharma). In the Shō-bō period, lasting 500 (some say 1000) years, the Buddha's teaching is properly practised and enlightenment can be attained. In the Zō-bō period, lasting 1000 (some say 500) years, the teaching is practised but enlightenment is no longer possible. In the Mappō period, lasting 10000 years, only the teaching exists. In Chinese Buddhism men believed that Mappō period began around A. D. 550. In Japanese Buddhism, Mappō began A. D. 1052.

When the Japanese people gazed at the insecure, threatening social situation and chaos, they gradually began to earnestly have a concrete

desire to escape from such a world. They hoped always to find their own salvation, and to be born in the cheerful Pure Land of Amida Buddha. We can say that men in this time were subjectively aware of the source of their sins in this actual, insecure and chaotic world. It signified a very important, spiritual situation for Japanese Buddhism. Through such a trying situation, the direction of Japanese Buddhism necessarily changed, because it had to answer to the religious and spiritual problems which the masses experienced. Japanese Buddhism itself experienced a great transformation. In this period, Hōnen (法然, 1133-1212) and his pupil, Shinran (親鸞, 1173-1262) and then, Eisai (榮西, 1141-1215) and Dōgen (道元, 1200-1253), and Nichiren (日蓮, 1222-1282) preached their teachings of salvation for the masses. We must pay attention to the fact that during only one hundred years so many saintly priests worked their ways in this world. It is said usually that this remarkable event was certainly a reformation of Japanese Buddhism, just like M. Luther in Christianity.

Hōnen and Shinran taught the Pure Land thought. Hōnen, who had lectured on the *Senchaku-hongan-nembutsu-shū* (選択本願念仏集) in 1198, is the originator of the Jōdo sect, and Shinran, who had written *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* (教行信証), 1224, is the originator of the Jōdo-shin-sect. Eisai, who had written *Kōzen-gokoku-ron* (興禪護国論), and Dōgen, who had written *Shōbō-genzō* (正法眼藏), 1147, were based on the thoughts of Zen Buddhism. Eisai is the originator of the Rinzaizen-sect in Japan, and Dōgen the originator of the Sōtō-zen-sect. On the other hand, Nichiren emphasized homage to the sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma, and he, who had written *Risshō-ankoku-ron* (立正安国論), 1260, is the originator of the Nichiren-sect. Today, every sect develops itself as an active religious body.

## 2. Hōnen's religious doctrine and the Jōdo-shū-sect

### a) Hōnen's life and his encounter with Zendō-daishi's (*Shan-tao*) words

As already mentioned above, Hōnen was born at Mimasaka (美作), the

son of a powerful family. When he was 9, his father was attacked by a local official and died. As his father Tokikuni died, he said his last words to his son; “You must not take your revenge upon the killer of your father, because it will cause quarrels to the future generations.” These words impressed Hōnen’s heart deeply. Essentially, they had a meaningful religious content. So, being conscious of his father’s words, at first he became a monk in his native place when 9. Then, he went up to Mt. Hiei, in those days the center of Japanese style Buddhism, and became a pupil of the priest Genkō (源光).

The most important questions for Hōnen were the following: What is suitable for my mind, and which practice is possible for me? How can I answer to the people’s religious requests and how can all people realize salvation? Such questions become by degrees stronger and deeper.

Finally, when he was 43 years old, he happened to read the conclusive words of Zendō-daishi (善導大師, Shan-tao, 613-681) in his commentary *Kangyō*: “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 Rightly Established Act. It is so called because such a practice agrees with the intent of Amida’s Vow.” (*Commentary on the Meditation Sutra, Jōdo-shū-zenshō*, vol. 2, p. 58).

Hōnen related his thoughts about these impressive words of Zendō-daishi to his follower, Shōkō (聖光); “Although there are many teachings in Buddhism, after all it is nothing but ‘the three learnings (*Kai, Jō, and E-no-Sangaku*),’ the Precepts, Meditation, and Wisdom. But I myself cannot keep even one precept in practice, cannot practise even one meditation, cannot take even one right wisdom which cuts off my afflictions. I am very regretful. What am I to do? One such as I is already a ‘not-three-learnings being,’ a man who cannot practise the three learnings (*Sangaku-hiki*). I asked many wise men and inquired of many scholars, whether, besides the three learnings, there is a gate to the Dharma which is suitable for my mind, a practice which is pos-



sible for me. But no one was able to suggest one to me. Then I looked more by myself, desperately, and suddenly came upon Shantao's words, which are written in the commentary on the Meditation Sutra (*Kangyō-sho*). After I saw this passage, I understood that ordinary men such as we ought to depend on it and to practise the uttering of Amida Buddha's Name, which assures us rebirth into the Pure Land. The words 'It is so called because such a practice agrees with the intent of Amida's Vow.' were deeply dyed into my spirit, and I accept them fully in my mind!" (*Shōkōshōnin-densetsu-no-kotoba*, Part. 3, *Hōnen's complete works*, pp. 459-460).

Reading those words, Hōnen turned his heart to Zendo's Pure Land Buddhism, really sure of his salvation. He was convinced that only this Buddhism of Zendo was suitable for his mind, a practice which was possible for him. Hōnen was also convinced that such a teaching could answer the people's religious requests and could lead to their salvation. We can say that these convictions of Hōnen signified the establishment of his own Pure Land Buddhism, the foundation of Jōdo-shū-sect (*Rikkyō-kaishū*, 立教開宗, 1175). It is the most essential and important thing only to utter single-mindedly and whole-heartedly the Name of Amida.

Generally speaking, Pure Land Buddhist thoughts are based on the triple Pure Land sutras (*Jōdo-san-bu-kyō*, 淨土三部經) which are said to have been preached by Buddha; that is: *Sukhāvati-vyūha* (*Muryō-ju-kyō*, 無量壽經); *The smaller Sukhāvativyūha* (*Amida-kyō*, 阿彌陀經); and *Meditation-sutra* (*Kan-muryōju-kyō*, 觀無量壽經). Also, that which Zendo commented *Kanm-uryōju-kyō* (*Kangyō-sho*). The main point of *Muryōju-kyō* is that Dharmākara Bhikṣu became Amida Buddha after his many practices with his wishes, and then, Amida Buddha realized for men the 48 Original Vows. In *Amida-kyō*, is written teachings about Amida Buddha and the Pure Land which the Amida had built. *Kan-muryōju-kyō* preaches that all people can be surely saved by uttering Amida Buddha's Name. In *Kangyō-sho* Zendo emphasized especially that to concentrate single-mindedly and whole-heartedly on the Name of Amida is called the Rightly Established Act

which agrees with the intent of Amida Buddha's Vow. Thus, the religious doctrine of Hōnen is based on these three sutras plus Zendō's *Kangyō-sho*.

As mentioned above, it is the most serious practice in Hōnen's religious doctrine to utter always the Name of Amida Buddha (*Namu-amida-butsu*). Hōnen preached that the uttering of Amida's Name is the purest and simplest practice of all Buddhist teachings, so called, easy way, because every man can practise it always and plainly. Hōnen preached actively such a teaching, by which he could be saved himself, to the emperor and the masses, the prostitutes, fishermen, farmers, and all people of the various social strata.

#### b) Hōnen's religious doctrine

Hōnen's main words, which he preached or later men collected, are the following four works: *Senchaku-hongan-nembutsu-shū* (選択本願念仏集), in short, *Senchaku-shū*, so called, a collection of passages on the Nembutsu chosen in the Original Vow, which he lectured in 1198 as the systematic teaching of Pure Land Buddhism for his pupils; *The interpretation of the triple Pure Land Buddhist sutras* (浄土三部経講説), which was preached in 1190 at Tōdaiji temple in front of the priests and believers of all Nara Buddhist sects; *Many dialogues* (問答・法語類), which he gave as an answer to the questions of various people whom he met in different places; and last, *Ichimai-kishōmon* (一枚起請文), in which are Hōnen's last words to his pupils two days before his death 1212. We can say that his religious doctrine, which came originally from his actual religious experiences, has deep and meaningful characteristics.

(1) According to Hōnen's thought, generally, the common people are sinful sentient beings who are not able to practise the traditional Buddhist ways. Hōnen said of himself: I am not a being who can practise the three learnings (*Sangaku-hiki*). For this reason, the true practice which the sinful sentient beings can really follow is only the uttering of Amida Buddha's Name all the time. If every sinful sentient

being utters every time earnestly Amida's Name (*Namu-amida-butsu*), he can be saved by the power of the original vows which Amida Buddha set up.

Hōnen says in chapter 16. of *Senchaku hongan nembutsu shū*: "If anyone considers these matters carefully and wishes to quickly escape from the cycle of birth and death, then he should decide between the two types of the excellent Dharma, relinquish for awhile the Holy Path, and choose to enter through the Gateway of the Pure Land. If anyone desires to enter through the Gateway of the Pure Land, he should decide between the Right Practices and the Miscellaneous Practices, relinquish for awhile the various Miscellaneous Practices, and choose to take refuge in the Right Practices. If anyone desires to exercise himself in the Right Practices, he should decide between the one Right Practice and the auxiliary Right Practices, set aside the auxiliary practices and should resolutely choose the one Right Established Practice and follow it exclusively. This one Right Established Practice is simply uttering the Name of Amida Buddha. Those who utter the Name will unquestionably attain Rebirth because they rely on Amida's Original Vow." (*Senchaku-shū*, Chap. 16, p. 126).

(2) In compliance with the uttering of Amida's Name, all sentient beings can be reborn surely and indiscriminately into the Pure Land, the so called Buddhist paradise (*Ōjyō Jōdo*, 往生淨土). It is called by Hōnen *Byōdō-ōjyō* (平等往生). Hōnen's way of thinking, as we mentioned above already, is based on *the commentary on the Meditation sutra* (*Kangyō-sho*) by Zendō: "When you utter Amida Buddha's Name, you can experience rebirth into the Pure Land with certainty, because the uttering of Amida Buddha's Name agrees with the intent of Amida's Vow" (*Jōdo-shū-zensho*, vol. 2, p. 58).

When we ground ourselves upon the teaching of *The smaller Sukhāvativyāha*, the Pure Land is the land in the west where Amida Buddha lives and preaches right now. It is completely pure and free from all worldly events. *The meditation sutra* says "utter the name of Amida Buddha in one's mouth." Thus, only the man who wishes to be born into the Pure Land and utters earnestly Amida Buddha's

Name, can be so equally by the power of Amida's original Vow.

(3) The practice of uttering Amida Buddha's Name, *Namu-amida-butsu*, is called *Kushō-nembutsu* (口称念仏) in Japanese. 'Namu' is 'Namas' in Sanskrit; it means 'to depend on something absolutely.' 'Amida-butsu' means 'a personal, unmeasured Buddha who has become Amida as Saṃbhoga-kāya (*Hōshin-Amidabutsu*, 報身阿弥陀仏). *Namu-amida-butsu* means that one depends absolutely upon the personal, eternal Amida Buddha.

Hōnen emphasized the practice of uttering Amida Buddha's name (*Shōmyō-nembutsu*), which is indeed based on Amida's original Vows. What is *Nembutsu*? Hōnen wrote: "The *Nembutsu* is superior, the other practices are inferior. This is because his Name is the container into which all of Amida's uncountable virtues have flowed. That is to say, in his Name are contained all the merits and virtues of Amida's inner enlightenment, such as the four wisdoms, the three bodies, the ten powers and the four fearlessnesses. Also contained in it are all the merits and virtues from which his outward activities flow, such as the major and minor bodily characteristics, the emanations of light, the preaching of the Dharma and the granting of benefits to sentient beings. For these reasons, the merits and virtues of the Name are incomparably 'superior.' The other practices are not the same as this: each one of them is only good for producing a limited portion of merit and virtue" (*Mantoku-shoki*, 万徳所歸) (*Senchaku-shū*, Chap. 3, p. 31).

The man who practises the *Nembutsu* moves naturally into a pure state of mind, and at last achieves rebirth into the Pure Land. Is the *Nembutsu* 'to utter' or 'to think'? Hōnen based his thoughts on those of Zendō (Shan-tao), and thus said the following: "How should we understand the meaning of 'think of' and 'utter'? I would say in answer that 'think of' and 'utter' are in fact one thing. It is clear that 'utter' means 'think of' and 'think of' is the same as 'utter'" (*Nen-shō-zeichi*, 念称是一) (*Senchaku-shū*, Chap. 3, p. 37).

(4) Only by uttering Amida Buddha's Name which common men can carry out at any time, does Amida Buddha meet personally with those

who utter his Name and really brings them his power of relief which comes from his original Vows.

The act of uttering with the lips realizes the religious world, in which one is related to Amida Buddha through the dynamics of the uttering and the uttered Name of Amida. Quoting the passages of Shan-tao's *Kangyō-sho*, Hōnen wrote: "When sentient beings arouse themselves to practise and always utter with their lips the Name of the Buddha, the Buddha will hear them. When they constantly and reverently bow down to the Buddha, the Buddha will see them. When they continually think of the Buddha in their hearts, the Buddha will know them. When sentient beings remember the Buddha, the Buddha also remembers them. In these three acts, the Buddha and sentient beings are not separate from each other. Hence, they are called the Intimate Relations" (*Shin-en*, 親縁) (*Senchaku-shū*, Chap. 2, p. 17 & Chap. 7, p. 57). Here we recognize a real, concrete correlation between a man, who utters with his lips Amida's Name, and Amida Buddha.

Hōnen advocated the plainest and most dynamical religious doctrine in the history of Japanese Buddhist tradition. In this meaning, the characteristic of Hōnen's religious doctrine is, namely, "only to practise the uttering of Amida Buddha's Name." At this point it means essentially a reformation in the history of Japanese Buddhism.

*c) The Jōdo-shū-sect after Hōnen*

After Hōnen's death, the religious body of the Jōdo-shū came to be formed by degrees. From the originator Hōnen, to the second successor Shōkō (聖光, 1162-1238) and then to the third successor Ryōchū (良忠, 1199-1287), and so on, the Jōdo-shū has been traditionally inherited from one to another until today. So, in response to the requests which every period had, new opportunities for the Jōdo-shū doctrine happened. But essentially the Jōdo-shū-sect bases always and fast on the eternal spirit of St. Hōnen's religious doctrine. This spirit has been kept through each period down to today.

What the Buddha preached in the three sutras of the Pure Land, and

Zendō stated in his *Kangyō-sho* and Hōnen mentioned, always expresses to us the essential religious truth. Thus can be said that this truth gives a deep religious response to the various ways of thinkings in each period.

### 3. *The modern Jōdo-shū Buddhism and today's situation*

In the Meiji period (1868-1912) and Taishō period (1912-1926) two religious movements of Jōdo-shū, which reflected the religious demands of those periods, appeared. One is the movement *Kōmyō-shugi* (光明主義) advocated by Bennei Yamazaki (山崎弁榮, 1859-1920), and the other is the movement *Kyōsei-kai* (共生会) advocated by Benkyō Shiio (椎尾弁匡, 1876-1971). These two religious movements influenced in many ways widely the Jōdo-shū sect and modern Japanese culture. On the other hand, since 1967 a new religious movement which is called the *Otetsugi-undō* (おてつき運動) is led actively by the main temple Chion-in. Based on Hōnen's religious doctrine, they emphasize more the faith of the individual than that of the family. So, we can say now, that they are three of the most active Buddhist religious movements in today's Japan.

As a characteristic of Japanese Buddhism, we can say that it's religious ground is essentially ancestor-worship, and that every Buddhist believer has a family altar in his house and belongs to some temple as a parishioner. For these reasons, the temple and its parishioner are connected closely. Thus, Buddhism concretely influences Japanese society. Today, the believer invites the priest who is connected to him to his house, in order to hold a funeral or the anniversary of a death, and to listen to the priest's preaching.

Just now, the religious body of Jōdo-shū-sect has about 7000 temples, 9500 priests and about 6,000,000 believers in Japan. Also, 4 universities, more than 10 high schools and over 400 infants' schools are administered by the religious spirit of Jōdo-shū Buddhism. These practise actively the religious education which is based on Hōnen's teachings of Pure Land Buddhism.

*Part III. The Hōnen-Literature  
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### 訳著者あとがき

拙稿は、先に出版したドイツ語による拙著『*Begründer des japanischen Amida Buddhismus, Heiliger Hōnen—Biographie·Dialoge·Denken—*』（日本浄土教の開創者 法然上人 一生涯・問答・思想—）〔出版：東方界，1987年2月，56ページ〕の生涯・思想篇を基本にして、英語訳したものである。生涯篇は年譜の翻訳であり，思想篇は筆者の論文である。いずれ，ドイツ語本との姉妹著書として英語版を，近日，出版したいと思っている。

拙稿の第3部で紹介したように，法然上人のものの欧米語での出版は，本格的なものとしては，Hans Haas の『*Amida Buddha, unsere Zuflucht*』（ドイツ語，1910年出版）と Coats & Ishizuka, R. の『*Hōnen—the Buddhist Saint*』（英語，1925年初版，1949年3版）しか見当たらない。いずれも，すでに60年以上もの昔日の出版であり，注目されるころではあるが，今日的な国際的・学際的な状況からみると，充分とは言えないというのが大方



の意見である。

特に、第二次世界大戦後(1945年)、教義的・思想的・歴史的な諸領域に於ける法然上人研究は、めざましく発展したが、一方では、上記のような現状のままである。最近、Kondō. T. & Augustine. J. M. による『*Senchaku hongan nembutsu shū*』が出版されつつあり、英語訳の『選択集』として内外で注目を浴びているが、われわれにとって偉大な宗祖・法然上人が各々の時代の学問的・宗教的状况の中で積極的に意義づけられうる努力を払うことこそ、足下に横たわる今一つの課題ではなからうか。——言うまでもなく、この課題が一個人の仕事たるべき範囲を大きく越えていることは、自明である。

本稿のような形で思いがけず、英訳が迅速に進展したのは、筆者のもとに浄土教を求めて滞在した西ドイツからの神学者 M. レップと K. H. レルヒ、そして今、熱心に日本浄土教を研究している、西ドイツ・マールブルク大学の C. クライネ君との自由な討議の御蔭でもある。事実、多くの欧米の研究者達が、日本浄土教とりわけ法然上人のそれに深く具体的な学問的関心を持ち始めつつあることを、無視はできないのである。

なお、上記のような観点から、拙著『実存的宗教論の研究』(平楽寺書店刊、昭和61年)所収の英文概要“*A Study of the Existential Theory of Religion*”(p. 1-pp. 40)、そして、拙稿「法然学徒の課題」(法然学会論叢、第五号、昭和60年刊)及び拙訳「法然についての研究文献への問い——西ドイツにおける法然研究の現状——」(J. ラウベ著、浄土宗学研究、第15・16合併号、昭和61年刊)等を併読して頂きたい。

また、昭和62年度の浄土宗教学院研究助成を受けて、大正大学の広川堯敏・大南竜昇両講師と筆者のグループに宗内若手学徒を加えて、「英独仏語になる法然浄土教研究著書・論文出版目録」を作成しつつある。

この翻訳・著述論文は、昭和62年度仏教大学学会特別研究助成の成果の一部であることを付記しておく。(昭和62年10月30日)