

In Search of a Lost Reformation : A Reconsideration of Kamakura Buddhism

James H. FOARD

In the study of Japanese religion, Kamakura Buddhism holds a special place. Every scholar who has written on the subject has perceived a fundamental change in the Buddhism of the period as it moved beyond the aristocracy into the lives of peasants, traders, craftsmen, and warriors in conjunction with the emergence of feudal political, economic, and social structures. Exactly what this change was, however, has yet to be thoroughly or convincingly defined. On the surface, such a definition would seem simple enough. Japanese scholars have long referred to a "New Buddhism" (*shin bukkyō*) of the Kamakura period arising in opposition to the "Old Buddhism" (*kyū bukkyō*) of the Heian and Nara periods. By these terms, they divide Japanese Buddhism along sectarian lines, grouping the various sects according to the age of their founding. The "New Buddhism" of the Kamakura period, and hence "Kamakura Buddhism," has come to mean, then, five sects represented by five founders: the Jōdo Shū founded by Hōnen (1133-1212); the Jōdo Shinshū founded by Shinran (1173-1262); the Nichiren Shū or Hokke Shū founded by Nichiren (1222-1282); the Rinzai Shū founded by Eisai (1141-1215); and the Sōtō Shū founded by Dōgen (1200-1253). Such simplistic limitations hardly seem tenable anymore, but the term "Kamakura Buddhism" still suggests these five sects and, even more peculiarly, these five founders.

Several interpretations. Even with this traditional definition, Kamakura Buddhism has been interpreted in several

ways. One suggestion, which has passed away in Japanese scholarship only to find eternal life in the West, is that the new Kamakura Buddhist groups were somehow more Japanese than those which had gone before, an idea embalmed in the frequently used catch phrase that "Buddhism in Japan" had turned into "Japanese Buddhism" (Eliot 1935, p. 258; Saunders 1964, p. 187; Kitagawa 1966, p. 110). This notion should be laid to permanent rest. The only possible evidence for it is that these new groups were the first truly mass movements in Japanese Buddhism and that even today they continue to hold the largest numbers of adherents. To say, however, that their popularity alone means that they are more Japanese than others is to deny cultural borrowing on all but the most elite of levels, an indefensible presupposition. In any event, the assertion of a uniquely Japanese character is simply not true. All the new sects except the Nichiren Shū had strong precedents in China, and knew it. In addition, powerful arguments could be made that the earlier Heian Buddhism exhibited many distinctly Japanese characteristics, including its close association with the state, its adoption of mountain religious practices, its accommodation of the indigenous religion, and even, perhaps, its occasionally superficial foreign imitation.

A recent and more telling interpretation of Kamakura Buddhism has come not from any particular interest in Kamakura institutions and culture, but from interests engendered by the study of Japan's modernization—however that may be understood—and its appearance or invisibility in the contemporary Japanese value system. For those who specialize in such things, the challenge Japan presents is that of understanding how it became a modern state without the great shift in values and symbol systems that Weber and Parsons have led them to expect. More specifically, they miss the equivalent of the Protestant Reformation,

with its unmediated salvation, its consequent individual autonomy within society, and its profound effects in economics, culture, and politics. In tandem with Japanese criticism of the lack of transcendent values in modern Japan, this strain of inquiry can only be fascinated by Kamakura Buddhism—but as a reformation that failed.

Bellah's view. Robert Bellah has been the most articulate and influential proponent of this view of Kamakura Buddhism.¹ Bellah sees in the Kamakura founders, most notably Shinran, a personal discovery of transcendence that had the potential for challenging the immanent sacrality of feudal Japan, and, further, “made possible a new kind of social organization within the religious collectivity. Indeed, only these religious organizations ever challenged the rising feudal order of medieval Japan” (1974, p. 9). In the end, says Bellah, the failure of this breakthrough was institutional:

The note of transcendence was soon lost. It was drowned out by the ground bass, so to speak, of the Japanese tradition of this-worldly affirmativeness, the opposite of denial. Why was this moment of transcendence not actualized, not institutionalized in an ongoing tradition... The question has not yet by any means been fully answered (1970, p. 119).

Far from being the distinctive “Japanese Buddhism,” then, Kamakura Buddhism to Bellah is distinctive in that it was *not* typically Japanese. Indeed, if Bellah is right, then Shinran must be considered one of those figures who loom large in certain kinds of exemplary or “church” histories simply because they were so extraordinary for their age—and therefore represent it so poorly. In other words, if Shinran’s breakthrough was so unusual and such a failure then we might wonder why we are to look to him for

“Kamakura Buddhism” at all. Yet Bellah shares with his predecessors their belief in what constituted Kamakura Buddhism—a set of five discrete sects initiated by five extraordinary figures, within whose remaining writings we will find Kamakura Buddhism. Bellah has, then, rendered this limited notion of Kamakura Buddhism untenable, and then clung to it.

Bellah is still correct in his basic insight that the Kamakura period produced a breakthrough to unmediated, per-

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1. Bellah uses the term “reformation” only once to describe Kamakura Buddhism, and then not because of Protestant parallels, but only because the sectarian reformers sought to recover the religious experience of Buddhism’s founder (1974, p. 4). His very reluctance to use the term with all its Protestant overtones, however, stems from his view described here that Kamakura Buddhism was a reformation that failed to become institutionalized (1970, pp. 36–37). Bellah’s opinion was undoubtedly shaped by the importance of Shinran for Ienaga Saburō (Bellah 1965). Robert Lee (1977) develops Bellah’s idea of “submerged transcendence” in some important ways, notably by tying it to the issues in the life of the twentieth century Christian, Uchimura Kanzō.

Weinstein (1973) and Lai (1978) both use the term “reformation” to describe Kamakura Buddhism, Weinstein without any real definition of the term, and Lai because “the Kamakura sects did represent a reform from within that captured the aspirations of the populace. The reformers simplified or condensed doctrines and provided a more immediate means to salvation or enlightenment” (pp. 258–59). Weinstein thoroughly outlines common tendencies in the thought of the five founders and Ippen, but does not measure their social impact in history, a step necessary to justify using “reformation.” Lai shares Bellah’s error: what he sees as distinctive of the sects was not, in the Kamakura period, at all unique to them. He, like Bellah, sees a failed reformation, here described as “the big divide between (Japanese and European) post-reformation cultures”: “the religious sense of total dependence or dedication was grafted onto the idea of serving the feudal values of natural communities” (p. 259)...and “localized loyalty doubtlessly strengthened the sect as an ongoing organization, but it did so at the cost of undermining the original faith” (p. 264). His explanation is that the European Reformation began at the end of a feudal period, while the Japanese occurred at the beginning. I agree with this, but it remains necessary to show not just the social but the religious context of the sectarian assertions, in order to understand what was truly distinctive about them for their time such that they would have had the social impact Lai describes.

sonal paths to salvation, and that this breakthrough did not result in a new individual autonomy because it was not institutionalized in the way the European Reformation was. But, if we continue to see Kamakura Buddhism as founded by five reformers initiating five sects which in their institutionalization negate the breakthroughs of their founders, this insight fails us in two ways: first it is self-contradictory, since it chooses as exemplary for an age those whom it claims are extraordinary; and second, it cannot explain the institutional "failure"—the lost reformation—it sees. These two difficulties are, in fact, the same, for as long as "Kamakura Buddhism" retains its limited, inaccurate connotations, the historical context of the rise of the sects will remain hidden, and the question of why the breakthroughs of the famous reformers did not produce a reformation will remain as Bellah has found it—unanswerable.

Search for a new model. In other words, the questions arising from the reformation model of Kamakura Buddhism cannot be answered with the restrictions which that very model places on the data. Only when the reformation model is abandoned can we approach an accurate understanding of Kamakura Buddhism, an understanding that includes far more than the famous sects. In particular, we must see such sectarian founders as Shinran only in the context of a more inclusive complex of interrelated changes in Buddhist doctrine, practice, leadership, social organization, and proselyting techniques. Seen in this light, "Kamakura Buddhism"—in so far as that term refers to the distinctive Buddhism of the Kamakura period—is far better represented by Chōgen and Ippen than by Shinran.

No religious assertions, and certainly not those of protest, appear in a religious situation as complex as medieval Japan's except as alternatives to other assertions. It is

impossible to assess their meaning, let alone praise or condemn their social impact, simply by their apparent parallels to similar religious assertions made at other times in other places. Before that can be done, they must be seen in their historical context, in order to discover what they offered that appeared to the people of their time as distinctive. This article will propose a more accurate definition and morphology of Kamakura Buddhism, one which will show the religious context within which the sects appeared as religious alternatives. Only by seeing this larger context, long hidden by the notion of a Kamakura "reformation," can we understand what was distinctive about what the sects offered the Japanese masses in medieval times, and thus assess the sociological impact of the sects as something other than as a reformation that failed.

KAMAKURA BUDDHISM AS POPULAR BUDDHISM

The worst damage wrought by the notion that Kamakura Buddhism consisted of five sects is that it has separated the similar and lumped together the dissimilar. Any characterization of Kamakura Buddhism must embrace kindred movements, whether they be found within the established Buddhist institutions or the new sects. It must also exclude certain significant Buddhist developments of the Kamakura period, which, while not entirely unrelated to the central changes of the age, display fundamentally different historical origins and religious structures. I am referring specifically to the attempt to revitalize the Buddhist *vinaya* (rules of monastic discipline) and to Zen. Both were essentially monastic and we will focus on decidedly non-monastic movements, ones that found their social base in the general populace. Also, Zen was spurred by renewed contacts with China, while the other Kamakura developments grew strictly from domestic sources.

A new affirmation. The central religious change of the Kamakura period,² considered in this fashion, resulted from a new affirmation: that an individual of any social or ecclesiastical standing could immediately reap the full benefits of Buddhist salvation, or such lesser benefits as health and prosperity, through some form of direct, personal devotion to a particular Buddha, bodhisattva, sutra, or saint. This affirmation radically altered Buddhist practice, leadership, social organization, and proselyting techniques, as I will describe presently. For now, we should simply note that it was this affirmation which first gave Japanese Buddhism mass appeal. As certain previously impenetrable social and ecclesiastical barriers were obliterated, or perhaps sidestepped, the distinctions between "big" and "little" traditions were blurred or lost altogether. Before, the peasant did not participate in Buddhist ceremonies to protect the state, as the Buddhist priest in the capital did not pacify the peasant's ancestors with crude Buddhist charms. Now, both continued their special practices, while fearing the same hell and longing for the same paradise.

These Kamakura movements, then, belong to a category of Japanese religion which I wish to call "popular," a term which designates those beliefs which have a universal appeal to the Japanese people, regardless of class, leaning, or particularistic local or familial cult. Such beliefs are potentially open to all—although they might not be accepted by all

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2. Since the rise of Kamakura political and social structures grew not from an abrupt cataclysm, but from a gradual shift of power over a long period of violence, historians of virtually all specialties must include as part of Kamakura culture its roots which extend back through the eleventh century. I will do the same. In the following discussion, then, "Kamakura Buddhism" will replace the stricter but clumsier "late Heian and Kamakura Buddhism," and will refer to certain Buddhist movements which were born in the eleventh century and reached maturity in the thirteenth.

—and stand in marked contrast with the relatively closed religious worlds of both the rarefied elite and local folk. Popular religion usually has reverberations in both the elite and folk worlds, and certainly draws believers from both, as well as from those of middle class and moderate sophistication, such as the warriors, traders, and townsmen whom the middle ages thrust to the forefront of the historical stage. Kamakura Buddhism was not the only popular Buddhism in Japanese history, but it was the first, opening up a whole new range of religious possibilities for individuals regardless of social or clerical status.

Breaking through barriers. Prior to the Kamakura period, the full richness of Buddhist salvation—final release from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth—was open only to the clergy. Individuals did not pursue their own spiritual perfection by any lay route. The clerical route itself was at least nominally arduous, and defined by a carefully controlled, orthodox transmission of office, rather than by personal spiritual attainments. Also, the various worldly benefits obtained by lay believers, and eventually even clerical status itself, were in accordance with a rigid system of social status. There were almost no specifically religious lay groups.³ Buddhism instead reinforced and worked through the established social groups of family, clan, and state. In Kitagawa's words, Buddhism was a "religion of the court and clergy" (1966, p. 110), the former monopolizing its worldly benefits and the latter its salvation.

3. The term "specifically religious groups" is taken from Wach (1962, pp. 109–112). The possible exceptions to this statement, the *chishiki*, were short term cooperatives, generally among people of means for some immediate benefit. Often they were actually clan groups (Nakamura 1973, pp. 25–26; Kasahara and Kawasaki 1973, pp. 29–30). The building of the Tōdaiji was also nominally a *chishiki* project, in which the whole nation became a *chishiki* (Hori 1953–55, vol. 1, pp. 195–207).

Through its affirmation of direct, individual access to transcendent powers, Kamakura Buddhism broke through these barriers. "No one," declared Genshin (942-1017), "whether ordained or lay, exalted or lowly, will be refused (into the Pure Land)" (Ishida 1970, p. 10). This breakthrough was initially shaped by two interrelated religious tendencies of the middle and late Heian period: a new concern for the fate of an individual after death, and the idea of *mappō*. The first grew from widespread acceptance of the doctrines of the six paths of rebirth (*rokudō*), and the eight burning hells (*hachi netsu jigoku*) which constituted one such path. *Mappō* refers to the period of "latter *dharma*," in which great social and natural disasters were supposed to occur, and in which the attainment of Buddhahood would become impossible. Calculated to begin in 1052, the emergence of this period was confirmed by a flurry of natural disasters and political upheavals, and by the obvious corruption of the Buddhist clergy. Under these circumstances, the social and religious elite began to place heavy reliance upon the grace of certain transcendent powers which then became objects of popular devotion. All were unworthy, but all could be saved. This breakthrough was to bring great changes in Buddhist leadership, social organization, practice, and proselyting techniques.

Leadership and social organization. There remained of course, a clergy in Kamakura Buddhism, but clerical status was no longer related to the possibility of salvation. Both clergy and laity followed the same path of devotion and found salvation in the same grace. Whether temple cleric or wandering holy man, the leadership of Kamakura Buddhism guided the laity along this path, its pastoral role prevailing over, but hardly eliminating, its priestly. The leadership no longer merely served and manipulated sacred power for others; a believer, instead, was ultimately respon-

sible for his own personal communion with the sacred.

Religious leadership was increasingly seen as a function of spiritual progress and not of orthodox ordination. The state, accordingly, lost much of its control over this kind of clergy. Stripped of his official clerical status, Shinran found himself "neither priest nor layman," but continued to guide his followers (Bloom 1968, p. 17). As clerical status was no longer related to salvation, the whole Buddhist *vinaya* was undercut, leading ultimately to a married clergy, first in the Pure Land tradition and later in others.

An individual salvation also rendered established social divisions irrelevant, giving Japan its first specifically religious groups, in which people of all classes were brought together by bonds of faith alone. "There are no people who desire rebirth," wrote Jakushin (c. 1200-1270), "whether ordained or lay, male or female, with whom I do not have a connection (*kechien*)" (Inoue and Ōsone 1974, p. 11). Genuine efforts were made to bring about the salvation of all people in their present station in life. Among these efforts, the inclusion of two kinds of people was particularly significant: women and those called *akunin*.⁴

Practice and proselyting techniques. In order to include the sophisticated and the unsophisticated alike, Kamakura Buddhism greatly simplified Buddhist practice, or more properly, the practice essential for salvation. Included were such things as the chanting of certain short phrases, the possession of charms, sutra chips, printed pagodas, and other objects, and devotional practices centered on specific images. Possible for all people, these practices offered no advantages for the cleric or the wealthy over the average

4. *Akunin* translates literally as "evil people," and in this case refers to those who break Buddhist precepts such as those against killing animals. Included are people who do so as part of socially accepted occupations, such as fishermen warriors.

householder.

To suit its more inclusive clientele, Kamakura Buddhism found appropriate proselyting media. For the first time, Buddhist dogma was presented in Japanese and not Chinese, as exemplified by “Japanese hymns” (*wasan*) in the popular idiom. Above all, Kamakura Buddhism relied upon and greatly enriched the tale literature known as *setsuwa bungaku* since Buddhist *setsuwa* were largely a product of popular preaching, both within temple grounds as sermons and in villages as employed by itinerants (Nagai 1966, vol. 1, pp. 11–259; Kikuchi 1972, pp. 21–135).

Kamakura Buddhism also produced important new visual media as well, giving much of Kamakura religious art an “explanatory character.” A picture of Jizō for example, might be bordered with panels of the hells from which he saves souls, and we can easily imagine this as a preaching device. The most telling evidence of this didactic character lies in the drastic change in the meaning of the word *maṇḍala*, which came to mean in the Kamakura period virtually any kind of diagram used to explain something religious, even a temple or shrine map. The various *emaki-mono* of the period were also important tools of the itinerant preacher.

Virtually nothing in Kamakura Buddhism was in itself new to the Mahāyāna, least of all the assertion of universal salvation. What was new was the dramatic appearance in Japanese history of truly popular Buddhist devotions based on that assertion, and the consequent developments in Buddhist leadership, lay groups, practice and proselyting media. The Buddhism that embraced this new devotionism thrived, that which did not fossilized or disappeared—this is true whether we are speaking of the new sects or of the older Buddhist institutions. To comprehend the Buddhism of the Kamakura period on its own terms, and not merely according to what has survived best, we must see this rise of

popular Buddhist devotionalism as occurring within Buddhism generally and not just—or even primarily—in the new devotional sects. Nor should we imagine that this devotionalism had only Amida and the Lotus Sutra as its objects—Maitreya (Miroku), Jizō, Kannon, Prince Shōtoku, and others were of comparable importance.⁵

THE SOCIOLOGY OF KAMAKURA BUDDHISM

The word "sect". The failure to see the breadth of Kamakura Buddhism can be blamed on the lack of accurate sociological terms to describe its variety. By "sociological" here, I am not referring to the inquiry into what kinds of people were attracted to what particular group, but to the precise description of, and distinctions among, types of religious groups. Specifically, the problem is the word "sect." As a translation of the word *shū*, it is not half bad, though some might argue for "school." But the word "sect" means in the sociology of religion only one specific kind, among many possible kinds, of religious groups. If we are to believe our language, what a boring tradition Japanese Buddhism must be—there are no priesthoods, cults, secret societies, brotherhoods, orders, schools, disciples, or confraternities—just sects. The problem, of course, runs deeper than mere monotony, for this monotony of terms either reflects or causes a failure to see certain changes and distinctions. In particular, the habitual use of "sect" distorts the sociology of Kamakura Buddhism, not just by hiding its distinction from what had gone before, but by forcing

5. The cult of Maitreya, in particular, was far more important in Kamakura times than is generally reflected by contemporary scholarship. Devotions directed towards him were for rebirth in the Tuṣita heaven (*tosotten*) or as a human when he descended. As part of these devotions, people buried containers of sutras (*kyōzutsu*) for use at his coming, and, as in Pure Land belief, chanted his name (Hayami 1971; Tsuji 1944-55: *Chūseihen*, vol. 1, pp. 115-128).

us to look only at groups which became totally independent of earlier institutions.

Before the Kamakura period, there were, strictly speaking no Japanese Buddhist sects at all. In the case of Nara Buddhism, we might more properly speak of "schools" rather than "sects," and many scholars make this distinction for good reasons: there was a single, overall institutional and clerical organization run by the state; there were no appreciable doctrinal divisions among the laity; and, while certain temples become loosely defined centers for different doctrines, many priests—and all notable ones—studied several bodies of thought at more than one temple.

Our problem lies more with Tendai and Shingon, which are universally referred to as "sects." Out of custom, they will probably remain so, but this use of the word signifies merely any division within a religion which is both doctrinal and institutional. Certainly the founders of these groups, Kūkai (774-835) and Saichō (767-822), separated themselves from the Buddhist establishment at Nara out of disgust with its corruption and from a failure to find salvation within its ranks. Nevertheless, this cannot be considered a total break; neither man lost or rejected his ordination, for example, and Kūkai maintained close relation with the older institutions. Although Saichō fought bitterly for Tendai's ordination rights, the fact that he did so at all shows he recognized a continuum of authority within the ecclesiastical establishment of the state. At no time did either man rely exclusively on personal charisma. Instead, they appealed successfully to the court for an official status, one which largely replaced that of Nara Buddhism in the new capital of Heian. Tendai and Shingon might therefore be considered as competing priesthoods, which, along with imperial Shinto, constituted the religious organs of the state. Their economic base lay essentially in land grants, with aristocratic families providing an additional, but often tem-

porary clientele. Through great systems of canon, rituals, and deities, they sought a catholicity with respect to the Buddhist tradition, and a hegemony with respect to the state and nation. We miss what Wach calls the placing of "intensity above universality" which characterizes sects (Wach 1962, p. 201).

In contrast, the popular, devotional Buddhism of the Kamakura period manifested itself in three new sociological types: cults, orders, and sects. The sequence in which I list them reflects two things: the order, roughly, in which they appeared in history; and their relative autonomy—in their theologies, practices, and institutions—from Nara and Heian Buddhism.⁶ Each fits the description of Kamakura Buddhism given above, and indeed they must be considered together as one movement.

Devotional cults. Kamakura Buddhism began in devotional cults. Here, as in most anthropological and religious studies literature, I use the word "cult" to mean the worship of a particular devotional object which may have its own special ritual, rationale, and social grouping, but which is nevertheless seen, even by its most ardent devotees, as only one of many paths to salvation within a wider set of religious possibilities. These cults, then, grew within the established temples themselves, and even within certain Shinto centers such as Kumano, in two ways—by the transformation of formerly scholastic and aristocratic temples into centers for popular devotion, and by the emergence of devotional confraternities on the peripheries of established institutions.

If the main image of a temple represented one of the objects of popular devotion, the transition of the temple

6. This scheme has been influenced by Wach (1962, pp. 156-205), whose typology of religious protest I have greatly simplified to fit the particulars of the Kamakura case. My three types can be divided into *ecclesiola in ecclesia* (the first two) and secession (the sects).

into a center for popular devotion could be quite simple, as was the case at Zenkōji.⁷ More often, however, new devotional halls were constructed; Amida halls (Amida-dō) even achieved their own distinctive architectural style.⁸ In some cases, popular devotions eventually became the major religious activity of an older temple, overwhelming what had gone on before. Elsewhere, such as Mt. Kōya, the old and new functions of a temple existed side by side, and careful distinctions were maintained between ordained clergy and holy men catering to popular devotions (Gorai 1965, p. 12). However the transition occurred, its justification lay in the particular temple's *engi*, and thus the late Heian and Kamakura periods witnessed not only the development of these temple legends into fantastic and entertaining narratives, but also their expression in media appropriate to popular propagation.

The transition of temples into centers for popular devotions was a long and slow process, culminating only in the development of popular pilgrimage in the late Muromachi (Shinjō 1964, p. 425). Of more immediate importance for the Kamakura period were confraternities of both lay and clerical devotees which grew on the peripheries of the established institutions. Wach (1962, p. 177) and Kitagawa (1966, p. 77) have seen these groups as examples of *collegia pietatis*: loosely organized pietistic groups which do not break away from larger religious institutions, but which "strive to attain higher spiritual and moral perfection than can be realized under prevailing conditions" (Wach 1962, p. 175). The first such group of any importance, the Nijūgo Zanmai E (The samadhi society of twenty-five),

7. As early as the middle of the Heian Period, the image of Amida at Zenkōji was thought to be nothing less than a "living Buddha." (Kanai 1975, pp. 37-39).

8. Inoue (1975, pp. 190-198) lists 96 Amida halls built between 1020 and 1219.

can serve as an example. Begun in 986 by a layman, Yoshi-shige Yasutane, and the renowned Tendai priest Genshin, it met every month at Genshin's retreat at Yokawa near Mt. Hiei. Mornings were devoted to the Lotus Sutra, and evenings to the Pure Land. Each of the twenty-five members also pledged himself to work for the salvation of all the others (Itō 1964, pp. 282-317).

The institutions founded by such clerical retreatants and their followers were often called *bessho*, literally "separate places." Three large clusters of *bessho* are of great fame: those surrounding Mt. Kōya, Shitennōji, and Mt. Hiei. This last group was the most important, and included *bessho* in the suburbs of the capital and in areas northwest of the mountain, especially Ōhara, Kurodani (Hieizan Saitō), and, as we have seen, Yokawa (Inoue 1979, pp. 203-213, 257-267, 305-306, 326-382; Gorai 1965, pp. 98-114; Itō 1964, pp. 98-117; Akamatsu, Ienaga, and Tamamuro 1968, vol.2, pp. 304-305). Takagi Yutaka has exhaustively researched these and lesser known *bessho* and shown that most maintained their own economic existence under a kind of charter arrangement with parent temples. Some, however, eventually became independent, taking full temple names for themselves (Takagi 1967).

These confraternities form a well known chapter in the history of Pure Land devotions, but we should not ignore those which formed around other devotional objects. The group surrounding Myōe Shōnin (1173-1232) at Mt. Takao, for example, was devoted to Shaka; that of Gedatsu Shōnin (1155-1213) to Miroku. Similar groups also centered on Kannon, Prince Shōtoku, Jizō, and the Lotus Sutra (Akamatsu, Ienaga and Tamamuro 1968, vol.2, pp. 292-307). The confraternities endured as a tradition in their own right, and were even recognized as an important phenomenon by Jesuits in the sixteenth century (Takagi 1967, pp. 26-27).

Devotional orders. Only limited numbers of people, of course, could have been affected by the devotional cults. Far more Japanese encountered popular, devotional Buddhism through the work of mendicant orders. By "order," I mean any group of religious professionals that specializes in a particular mission or practice, that acknowledges the authority of and remains within a larger religious establishment, and yet is distinct from the regular clergy. Within the popular, devotional Buddhism of Kamakura Japan, there appeared two kinds of orders: the *bessho hijiri*, who served individual temples; and the *yūzū nenbutsu* and the Jishū, which united the *bessho hijiri* across their temple affiliations, at first ideologically and, finally, in the Jishū, institutionally.

The term *hijiri*, or "holy man," had a long history before the Kamakura period, but it was only in the Kamakura period that we find permanent orders of holy men established at virtually all the great temples, generally at their *bessho*. These holy men were engaged in mendicant fund-raising called *kanjin* and were hence known as *bessho hijiri* or *kanjin hijiri*. The earliest *hijiri* orders of any significance arose on Mt. Kōya, and were responsible for the popularization of legends about Kōbō Daishi throughout the middle ages (Gorai 1965, pp. 201-227). The most influential such group, however, was that organized by Shunjōbō Chōgen (1121-1206), who was appointed in 1181 to rebuild the Tōdaiji temple which had burned in the Genpei Wars. Recalling Gyōgi's work for the original building, and having first hand experience with the *hijiri* of Mt. Kōya, Chōgen organized a group of *kanjin hijiri* at the Tōdaiji *bessho* to solicit funds throughout the country. Not only were his efforts successful, and hence a model for others to emulate, Chōgen was also able to organize permanent status and institutions for the *bessho hijiri*, so that they became more than ad hoc fund raisers, but instead a permanent

part of Tōdaiji's institutional and financial structure (Nakao 1977). The destruction of war and the decline in *shōen* revenues meant that virtually every great temple and even many shrines adopted this system in the Kamakura Period (Gorai 1964, p. 8; Akamatsu, Ienaga, and Tamamuro 1968, vol. 2, p. 368).

Although Kamakura sources refer often to these mendicant *hijiri*, we would have little concrete knowledge of their activities were it not for the archeological evidence uncovered in the reconstruction of the Gokurakubō of Gankōji in 1943 (Gorai 1964). The *hijiri* of the Gokurakubō catered to a variety of popular devotions: Pure Land, Jizō, Prince Shōtoku, Kōbō Daishi, and others. Their *kanjin* required that they solicit funds from vast numbers of contributors, enrolling their names in registers (*kanjinchō*) kept at the temple or even within a statue if that was what the funds provided. For their part, contributors would be given an amulet and were said to have established a salvific connection (*kechien*) with the particular devotional object they had supported.

As the Gankōji evidence shows, the types of popular devotions which the *kanjin hijiri* propagated could often be quite different from the ideological and iconographical orientation of the parent temple. In other words, the symbolic world of the *hijiri* was largely their own, and even united them across temple affiliations. By the thirteenth century, many *hijiri* groups defined their activities in terms of the *yūzū nenbutsu*, said to have been founded by Ryōnin (1094-1132) in 1117. In that year, so the story goes, Amida announced to Ryōnin in a vision that the *nenbutsu* practices of each individual would benefit all other individuals until all were saved together. With this doctrine, Ryōnin is said to have traveled around the country enrolling devotees in a *kanjinchō*. To understand the significance of *yūzū nenbutsu*, we must not confuse it with the Yūzū

Nenbutsu Shū, a sect which appears only in the Edo Period. In the Kamakura period, the legend of Ryōnin served as a mythic and ideological justification for the proselyting activities of *kanjin hijiri*, as shown in the numerous copies of the *yūzū nenbutsu engi*, preserved in museums throughout Japan, which served this proselyting (Gorai 1957).

The culmination of the devotional orders came with the Jishū founded by Ippen (1239–1289). Ippen himself was a “wayfaring hijiri” (*yugyō hijiri*) or “hijiri who has thrown away” (*sute hijiri*) all earthly ties, a sort of free-lance *hijiri* not tied to any particular group or temple. At Kumano in 1274, Ippen experienced a vision that not only defined his religious life but also transformed the meaning of the *kanjin* activities performed by many *bessho hijiri* groups. In this vision, explicitly modeled on Ryōnin’s vision by Ippen’s biographer,⁹ the Kumano Gongen, a manifestation (*suijaku*) of Amida, told Ippen that the *fuda* (“talisman”) bearing the phrase “Namu Amida Butsu” would effect the salvation of all beings. Ippen and his followers accordingly distributed these *fuda* and enrolled names in *kanjinchō*. In many respects, the Jishū resembled the earlier *bessho hijiri* groups, but it both maintained its own institutions and absorbed many temple-based *bessho hijiri*. In this fashion, the Jishū emerged as the leading medieval mendicant order. It is often called the Ji“sect”—even though the shū (衆) in its name was not the shū (宗) normally translated as “sect”—and deemed a minor sect at that, in comparison with the Jōdo Shū and the Jōdo Shinshū. It was, in fact, no sect at all, for Ippen and his followers embraced all the established Buddhist and Shinto institutions of the day as worthy of devotion, since all gods and buddhas were manifestations of Amida. Nor was the Jishū minor; as the leading mendicant order, it was probably the most

9. Shōkai, Ippen’s half brother, author of the *Ippen Hijiri E* (1299).

significant single source for the propagation of Pure Land Buddhism until the middle of the fifteenth century (Foard 1980).

Devotional sects. The popular, devotional sects were the final stage in Kamakura Buddhism, and both ideologically and sociologically represent its greatest autonomy from the Buddhism which had gone before. Under the definition of Kamakura Buddhism given above, there were three, not five, such sects: the Jōdo Shū, the Jōdo Shinshū, and the Nichiren Shū.

These groups and their founders are too well known to discuss here, but it is important to note that they were the first real sects in Japanese Buddhism. Each of their founders broke with Tendai over its corruption and their failure to find salvation within its ranks, and these breaks were total, involving loss of ordination and exile. After finding assurance of salvation in their respective devotions, each attracted a circle of disciples by personal charisma alone. The preaching of the reformer and his disciples, in turn, attracted, small, permanent congregations (Latin: *secta*) in various areas of the country. The members of these new congregations looked back to one of these reformers as the founder of their sect and followed his teaching and example. The founder's religious career, particularly his experience of the certainty of his own salvation, became the focal point of the later sect, as he was thought to have demonstrated a devotional path to salvation superior to all others. This mode of salvation was deemed nothing less than the exclusive consummation of the Buddhist tradition, offering all that Buddhism could possibly offer, while all other forms of the religion were inferior, impossible, or downright dangerous—a sectarian drive quite different from the widely inclusive systems found in Tendai and Shingon.

Based upon the teachings of their founder, these sects

maintained strictly defined bodies of dogma and orthodoxies of practice which were to be kept intact and free from adulteration. While open to all, their permanent congregations demanded the exclusive devotion of their members, and supported independent temples and clergies. As Max Weber observed, "it is the distinctive characteristic of every sect, in the technical sense of the term... that it is based on a restricted association of individual local congregations" (Weber 1971, p. 65).

THE PLACE OF THE SECTS WITHIN POPULAR BUDDHISM

Each of the three sociological forms of Kamakura Buddhism—cult, order, and sect—exhibits the features of popular, devotional Buddhism described above. Each asserted that anyone regardless of clerical status could seek mundane or absolute rewards through Buddhist devotions. For each, then, clerical status was not a prerequisite for salvation. To a remarkable degree, too, their lay organizations were similar. Winston Davis (1977, pp. 28–35) has shown that the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries witnessed the spread of adventitious deities on the village level, and that this spread, whether initiated by *bessho hijiri* or by the sects, produced voluntaristic confraternities of local believers, although these were most often called *monto* by the sects and *kō* or *kechienshū* by the wayfaring orders.

Media for propagation. The media for propagation (*shōdō*) employed by popular Buddhism was virtually the same for the cults, orders, and sects. In this area, the debt of the sects to the other two is deep and obvious, as can be seen by their use in proselyting of such genres as *wasan* and *setsuwa*, which were originally developed in cults and orders. Most impressive, however, are the demonstrations by Takagi Yutaka (1965) and Laurel Rodd (1980) of the use of *setsuwa* in the preaching and letters of Nichiren. We might also see

Nichiren's famous *honzon* as an example of the explanatory mandala originally used in the period by the cults and way-faring orders.

The cults, orders, and sects, then, all brought to the Japanese masses in the Kamakura period popular Buddhist messages of universal salvation couched in largely identical media, and organized their followers in roughly similar lay organizations. Thus, Kamakura Buddhism was not initiated by, but only reached its most extreme form in, the autonomous devotionism of the sectarian founders. Their popular devotions were preceded by and in many ways resulted from those of the cults and orders that emerged within established Buddhism. What distinguished the sects from the other two were not their assertions of individual salvation and unmediated access to the transcendent, but their insistence that their particular devotions alone were effective and all others useless or worse. Whereas the cults and orders accommodated and even served the diverse and established religious world of medieval Japan, the sects were ruthlessly selective.¹⁰ *It was this selectivity—not their breakthroughs to transcendence that reverberate with the Protestant Reformation in Western ears—that distinguished them in their historical context and that was to dictate their role in medieval society.*

Changing role of the sects. This role changed as medieval society changed. While quantification is impossible, it seems

10. Even Ippen, who founded the most independent mendicant order in Kamakura Buddhism, embraced the worship of virtually every sacred being in the Japanese pantheon. His devotion to Shinto shrines is striking (Tamura 1959, pp. 401-412), while the *honji suijaku* theory, which was basic for his Kumano experience, both permitted him to maintain his own religious obligations as a warrior, and provided the Jishū with one of its basic appeals to the *bushi* elite (Foard 1977, pp. 176-177; Akamatsu 1957, pp. 174-178). Many in the Jishū served as *bessho hijiri* for established temples.

obvious that in the Kamamura period the other kinds of popular devotionism—and not those of the sects—dominated Japanese Buddhism. In any reading of the battle epics that best represent Kamakura literature, or of Kamakura social, political, and cultural history, one cannot help being surprised at how rarely, if ever, one meets the three devotional sects; yet if one then picks up a standard history of Japanese religion, they loom over the age. On the other hand, Kamakura literature and history are replete with the popular devotions of cults and orders, and yet standard religious histories, if they mention these at all, subordinate them to the sects.

The explanation for all this is quite simple: the dramatic growth of the sects did not occur in the Kamakura period at all, but in the Muromachi period with the growth of the *ikki* organizations in both the Nichiren Shū and the Shinshū (Weinstein 1977). In the case of the Shinshū at least, this dramatic growth itself drew sustenance from over two centuries of Pure Land propagation by mendicant orders. Rennyo's *ofumi*, for example, often show him denouncing the adherence of local congregations to doctrines that appear to be either the esoteric interpretations of the *nen-butsu* typical of *bessho hijiri*, or distinctive to those of the Jishū.¹¹ Other evidence has led Akamatsu Toshihide (1957, pp. 189-195) to conclude that Rennyo and the Honganji incorporated many local Pure Land congregations that had initially been oriented to the Jishū, and this could well ex-

11. Beliefs which Rogers (1980) cites as esoteric heresies which Rennyo denounced, and which were most probably propagated by *bessho hijiri*, include: *fuhai hiji*, "a secret teaching that devotion to Amida is unnecessary since all beings are Buddhas already," and *ichiyaku bōmon*, a belief "that there is only one blessing, not two, and that the single blessing, attainment of nirvana, is realized here and now." Rennyo specifically condemns the Jishū doctrine of *jikkō anjin* (Weinstein 1977, p. 352), which holds that the salvation of all beings occurred ten kalpas ago when Hōzō became Amida.

plain Rennyō's strong denunciation of Jishū doctrines.

In the Kamakura period, then, these sects were only a part—and not the most prevalent part—of a general growth of popular Buddhist devotions. Only later did they emerge as mass movements on a national scale, even drawing upon the other devotional groups that had preceded them. Why they, among the varieties of Kamakura Buddhism, should have reached such prominence is well indicated by the sociological morphology outlined above. The Muromachi period saw fundamental social, economic, and political realignments on both the village and national levels (Hall and Toyoda 1977, pp. 87–123; Davis 1977, pp. 58–59). In the course of these realignments, the sectarian claim of an exclusive consummation of the Buddhist tradition served as a religious focal point for new and often rebellious coalitions of power (Kuroda 1953). Before, the popular devotions of the cults and mendicant orders brought Buddhist salvation to the masses without challenging the religious structures which undergirded the social order; now, in the midst of rapid social change, the exclusiveness of the sects became a catalyst for new loyalties and social groupings under the banner of Nichiren or the Honganji. In this context, though, the very sectarian claims that led some to see these sects as constituting a “reformation” served not as religious bases for individual autonomy, but as icons for group solidarity. In other words, the sectarian founders' breakthroughs to transcendence which Bellah and others see as so promising of a Buddhist Reformation, served, in their historical context, not as models for each individual to emulate, but as autonomous sources of authority for new loyalties of a traditional type.

THE KAMAKURA “REFORMATION”

The new sociological morphology I have outlined explains why the Kamakura “reformation” was lost, or, more pre-

cisely, why the breakthroughs to transcendence achieved by the sectarian founders were not institutionalized in the same way as in the Protestant Reformation. With the old understanding of Kamakura Buddhism—that it was initiated by five sectarian founders—the only explanation available lay in resorting to tiresome appeals to Japanese “ways of thinking” or, in the case of Bellah, to aquatic or musical imagery (“submerged transcendence,” “ground bass”). In other words, with the traditional understanding of Kamakura Buddhism, no explanation was possible, for these pseudo-explanations answer the question of why x happened in Japan by saying that it is characteristic of Japan that things like x happen.

Moreover, it should be recalled that this conventional understanding of Kamakura Buddhism carried an inherent paradox in that it held as exemplary or definitive for the age those whom it concluded were exceptional, an historiographic fallacy that can never serve historical explanation. Indeed, the reformation model has led to this fallacy since it, coupled with a surprisingly enduring tradition of sectarian historiography, naturally led to exclusive concentration on the sectarian founders; yet in doing so, this model raised historical questions that its limitations on the data rendered impossible to answer, primarily because it failed to provide the historical context for the breakthroughs of the founders that it saw. Although their systematic writings—and Shinran’s in particular—exhibit striking parallels with those of the Protestant Reformation (Ingram 1971; Bloom 1965, p. vii), they were promulgated in a very different religious and social setting, so that their sociological impact was inevitably different. By outlining a more complete and exact morphology of popular Buddhism in Kamakura Japan, I have indicated what that setting was.

Given this setting, the notion of Kamakura Buddhism as a lost reformation can no longer serve us. In the first

place, it rests upon an assumption of what Kamakura Buddhism was which is so limited that it distorts rather than explains the period. Secondly, when Kamakura Buddhism is examined fully and accurately, those sects which were deemed the doomed harbingers of the reformation appear only as fractions of a much wider set of popular Buddhist devotions with which they share—and from which they borrow—much, including their fundamental assertions of individual salvation through devotions. Finally, that which distinguished the sects from the other popular devotions—their insistence upon exclusive faith, practice, and membership—led to their ascendance in the Muromachi period only because their exclusiveness better served the social realignments on the local level; hence, they reinforced group loyalties over individual autonomy, the very antithesis of the social significance of the Protestant Reformation.

GLOSSARY

<i>akunin</i> 悪人	<i>hijiri</i> 聖
Amida 阿弥陀	Hokke Shū 法華宗
Amida-dō 阿弥陀堂	Hōnen 法然
<i>bessho</i> 別所	Honganji 本願寺
<i>chishiki</i> 智識	<i>honji suijaku</i> 本地垂迹
Chōgen 重源	<i>honzon</i> 本尊
Dōgen 道元	<i>ichiyaku bōmon</i> 一益法門
Eisai 榮西	<i>ikki</i> 一揆
<i>emakimono</i> 絵巻物	Ippen 一遍
<i>engi</i> 縁起	Jakushin 寂心
<i>fuda</i> 札	<i>jikkō anjin</i> 十劫安心
<i>fuhai hiji</i> 不拝祕事	Jishū 時衆
Gankōji 元興寺	Jizō 地藏
Gedatsu Shōnin 解脱上人	Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗
Genshin 源信	Jōdo Shū 浄土宗
Gokurakubō 極楽坊	<i>kanjin</i> 観進
Gyōgi 行基	<i>kanjinchō</i> 観進帳
<i>hachi netsu jigoku</i> 八熱地獄	Kannon 観音

kechien 結縁
kechienshū 結縁衆
kō 講
 Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師
 Kūya 空也
 Kūkai 空海
 Kumano 熊野
 Hurodani 黒谷
 Kyōzutsu 經筒
kyū bukkyō 旧仏教
mappō 末法
 Miroku 弥勒
 Myōe Shōnin 明恵上人
 Nichiren 日蓮
 Nichiren Shū 日蓮宗
 Nijūgo Zanmai E 二十五三昧会
ofumi 御文
 Ōhara 大原
 Rennyō 蓮如
 Rinzai Shū 臨濟宗
rokudō 六道
 Ryōnin 良忍

Saichō 最澄
setsuwa bungaku 說話文学
 Shaka 釈迦
shin bukkyō 新仏教
 Shingon 真言
 Shinran 親鸞
shōdō 唱導
 Shōkai 聖戒
shū 宗
 Sōtō Shū 曹洞宗
sute hijiri 捨聖
 Takao 高雄
 Tendai 天台
 Tōdaiji 東大寺
tosotten 兜率天
wasan 和讃
 Yoshishige Yasutane 慶滋保胤
 Yokawa 横川
yugyō hijiri 遊行聖
yūzū nenbutsu 融通念佛
 Zenkōji 善光寺

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