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**Jacqueline I. Stone/Original Enlightenment and the Transformation  
of Medieval Japanese Buddhism**

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Chapter One

# What Is “Original Enlightenment Thought”?

IN THE EARLY DECADES of the twentieth century, Buddhologist Shimaji Daitō (1875–1927) introduced to the Japanese academic world a new interpretive category, which he called “original enlightenment thought” (Jpn. *hongaku shisō*).<sup>1</sup> By this term he meant, in general, those strands of Buddhist thought, most prominent in East Asia and especially in Japan, that regard enlightenment or the ideal state as inherent from the outset and as accessible in the present, rather than as the fruit of a long process of cultivation. More specifically, Shimaji used “original enlightenment thought” to designate the intellectual mainstream of medieval Japanese Tendai Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> In this medieval Tendai context, “original enlightenment thought” denotes an array of doctrines and concepts associated with the proposition that all beings are enlightened inherently. Not only human beings, but ants and crickets, mountains and rivers, grasses and trees are all innately Buddhas. The Buddhas who appear in sūtras, radiating light and endowed with excellent marks, are merely provisional signs. The “real” Buddha is the ordinary worldling. Indeed, the whole phenomenal world is the primordially enlightened Tathâgata. Seen in their true light, all forms of daily conduct, even one’s delusive thoughts, are, without transformation, the expressions of original enlightenment. Liberation is reimagined, not as the eradication of mental defilements or as achieving birth in a pure land after death, but as the insight, or even the faith, that one has been enlightened from the very beginning. Shimaji saw original enlightenment thought as representing the “climax” of Buddhist philosophy and argued that research in this area would shed light, not only on the development of Japanese Buddhism, but on medieval Japanese culture itself, including Buddhist-Shintō interactions, ethics and morality, literature, and the arts.<sup>3</sup>

Subsequent studies have confirmed Shimaji’s assertions about the profound influence of original enlightenment thought, or “*hongaku*

thought,” to use the shorter expression.<sup>4</sup> But there has been little consensus as to how that importance should be understood and evaluated. Periodically, debates over this subject have burst the confines of Tendai studies to enliven the usually staid world of academic Buddhism in Japan with heated controversy. At issue is how the original enlightenment discourse was related to broader trends in Japanese religion and culture. One school of thought has found in notions of original enlightenment an expression, couched in Buddhistic terms, of a pre-Buddhist, archaic Japanese mentality or psychological orientation characterized by the affirmation of nature and accommodation to phenomenal realities. This tendency to harmonize with outer reality is sometimes said to have originated in primitive responses to Japan’s scenic beauty and mild climate, with its orderly progression of the seasons, and even to hold the key to healing the rift between humans and the natural world said to have precipitated the ecological problems of the West.<sup>5</sup> More recently, another group of scholars has made original enlightenment thought the target of a scathing critique. These are the exponents of the intellectual movement known as “critical Buddhism” (*hihan Bukkyō*), of which more will be said in the next chapter. Critical Buddhism charges that notions of original enlightenment introduce into Buddhism the non-Buddhist concept of an *ātman* or metaphysical substrate, subverting the normative Buddhist teaching that all things are empty of independent self-essence. Moreover, despite its superficial semblance of egalitarianism, the claim that all phenomena are enlightened inherently serves to sacralize the given order and thus legitimates social inequities. Notions of original enlightenment, say the critical Buddhists, have served to bolster the emperor system, wartime imperial aggression, and uncritical, self-glorifying Japanism.<sup>6</sup>

These rival polemics have overlapped and interacted with an older controversy about original enlightenment thought, one that concerns its relationship to the new Pure Land, Zen, and Nichiren Buddhist movements of the Kamakura period (1185–1333). These new movements emerged at a time when original enlightenment thought was flourishing, and the writings of their founders contain some points of similarity with medieval Tendai *hongaku* doctrine. What exactly was the relationship between the two? This essay represents an attempt to understand the Tendai original enlightenment discourse, to locate it in its medieval context, and to reconceive the problem of its relation to the new Kamakura Buddhism. First, however, it will be necessary to provide a fairly detailed background. Where did medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought come from? And what are the particular problems—textual and methodological—that confront the researcher in this area? These are the issues addressed in this opening chapter.

### A Genealogy of Original Enlightenment Thought

The original enlightenment thought that characterized medieval Japanese Tendai Buddhism emerged in the latter part of the Heian period (794–1185). It had antecedents in the Buddhist traditions of the Asian continent and in those—particularly Tendai and Shingon—of early Heian Japan. Here, only the intellectual influences contributing to the emergence of medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought will be outlined; its institutional and social contexts will be addressed later.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Continental Antecedents: The Awakening of Faith, Hua-yen and T'ien-t'ai*

Early references to “original enlightenment” (Ch. *pen-chüeh*, Kor. *pon'gak*) occur in the Sinitic apocryphal sūtras *Chin-kang san-mei ching* (Sūtra of adamantine absorption) and that version of the *Jen-wang ching* (Sūtra of the benevolent kings) said to have been translated by Amoghavajra (705–774); however, the most influential early source for the term “original enlightenment” is the treatise *Ta-sheng ch'i-hsin lun* or *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*.<sup>8</sup> Traditionally attributed to the Indian master Āsvaghoṣa, the *Awakening of Faith* is now generally thought to be a sixth-century Chinese apocryphon<sup>9</sup> and represents part of a larger attempt on the part of Chinese Buddhists to clarify the relation between the mind, understood as originally pure, and ignorance.<sup>10</sup> It synthesizes two influential streams of Mahāyāna thought, one concerning the intrinsic nature of enlightenment, and the other, the source of delusion and suffering. The first was expressed as the doctrine of the *tathāgata-garbha*, the originally pure, enlightened mind intrinsic to all sentient beings, conceptualized as the “womb” or “embryo” of Buddhahood. In ordinary worldlings, it is the potential for enlightenment; in Buddhas, the fully realized truth or *dharmakāya*. In China, *tathāgata-garbha* thought would develop into a major Mahāyāna tradition, ranking beside those of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. It reflects an attempt to clarify the ontological basis upon which ordinary worldlings can realize Buddhahood.

However, emphasis on an innate basis for enlightenment gave rise to the question of how ignorance arises in the first place. Within the Indian Mahāyāna, this question had been addressed most explicitly by the Yogācāra doctrine of the *ālaya-vijñāna* or “store consciousness.” This level of mind is imagined as the repository in which all past experiences, wholesome and unwholesome, pure and defiled, are deposited as “seeds” (*bīja*) that shape future deeds. Ignorance has its source in the defiled seeds that have accumulated in the store consciousness since the inconceivably distant past. Only their thorough extirpation can transform and purify consciousness, a process thought to require many successive lifetimes—three incalculable aeons (*asamkhyeya-kalpas*) being a common

estimate. Many Chinese Buddhists of the Sui (581–617) and T'ang (618–907) dynasties were dismayed by so remote a vision of liberation and sought to reimagine it in more accessible ways.<sup>11</sup> In approaching this problem, the *Awakening of Faith* subsumes the *ālaya-vijñāna* concept within that of the *tathāgata-garbha* by redefining the former as the none other than the one pure mind as perceived through unenlightened consciousness. The treatise begins by positing two inseparable aspects of the one mind: the mind as suchness or the mind in terms of the absolute, and the mind as arising and perishing (that is, the *ālaya-vijñāna*). These two aspects correspond respectively to the ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*) and conventional truth (*samvṛti-satya*) in Madhyamaka thought. Because the mind as arising and perishing is grounded in the mind as suchness or the *dharmakāya*, it is said to possess the aspect of “original enlightenment,” the “essence of the mind free from [deluded] thoughts.”<sup>12</sup> However, because of not realizing this identity with suchness, deluded thoughts emerge; this state is called nonenlightenment (*pu-chüeh*). Through contemplative practice, one is able to realize that deluded thoughts have no real status; they are in essence none other than the mind as suchness, which is innately pure. The process of cultivation by which one arrives at such insight is termed “acquired” or “actualized” enlightenment (*shih-chüeh*). As the text says, “Grounded on the original enlightenment is nonenlightenment. And because of nonenlightenment, the process of actualization of enlightenment can be spoken of.”<sup>13</sup> When enlightenment is actualized, one realizes that it is identical to “original enlightenment,” the mind of suchness that one has possessed all along. Thus, in the *Awakening of Faith*, “original enlightenment” is posited in distinction to “actualized enlightenment”; it represents the inherence of suchness in the deluded mind and thus the ever-present possibility of transforming that mind into the mind of awakening.

Via the *Awakening of Faith*, the notion of original enlightenment exerted a formative influence on the development of Chinese and Korean Buddhist thought. It became especially important in the Hua-yen school, which—in addition to its central scripture, the *Hua-yen ching* (*Avatamsaka-sūtra*, Flower Ornament Sūtra)—takes the *Awakening of Faith* as a basic text. The concept undergoes development in the thought of Chih-yen (602–668) and Fa-tsang (643–712), counted as the second and third Hua-yen patriarchs, and of later Hua-yen masters such as Ch'eng-kuan (738–839) and Tsung-mi (780–841), both of whom brought Ch'an elements to bear in their interpretations.<sup>14</sup>

Japanese *hongaku* thought would be indebted not only to the specific category of “original enlightenment” set forth in the *Awakening of Faith* and developed in its commentaries, but more broadly to the great totalistic systems of Chinese Buddhist thought, especially those of Hua-yen and T'ien-t'ai, which envision the world as a cosmos in which all

things, being empty of independent existence, interpenetrate and encompass one another. These systems are both ontological, in explaining all concrete phenomena (*shih*) as nondual with truth or principle (*li*), and soteriological, in showing liberation to consist of insight into this unity.

Hua-yen thought sees all phenomena as expressions of an originally pure and undifferentiated one mind. As Robert Gimello has expressed it: “[T]he full diversity of sentient experience and the experienced world—the subjective and the objective, the true and the false, the pure and the defiled, the latent and the manifest—is seen to rest upon or to grow from a common noetic source.”<sup>15</sup> Hua-yen thinkers developed new theories of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*, *yüan-ch’i*), such as “dharma realm origination” (*fa-chieh yüan-ch’i*), “tathāgata-garbha origination” (*ju-lai-tsang yüan-ch’i*), or “nature origination” (*hsing-ch’i*), to clarify how the one mind manifests itself as the phenomenal world.<sup>16</sup> Often cited in Japanese *hongaku*-related literature is Fa-tsang’s formulation of the two aspects of suchness. In his commentary on the *Awakening of Faith* and elsewhere, Fa-tsang interpreted the two aspects of the one mind as suchness that is absolute or unchanging (*pu-pien*) and suchness that accords with conditions (*sui-yüan*), equating them with principle (*li*) and phenomena (*shih*), respectively.<sup>17</sup> Suchness in its unchanging, quiescent mode is the one pure mind; in its dynamic mode, responding to the ignorance that is the condition of sentient beings, it manifests the phenomenal world. Notions of origination from the mind or suchness are often illustrated with the metaphor of water and waves that occurs in the *Awakening of Faith*: when the water of true suchness or principle (*li*) is stirred by the winds of ignorance, the waves of differentiated phenomena (*shih*) arise, but the waves are no different in substance from the water.<sup>18</sup> Origination from suchness stands in contrast to both the classic “twelve-linked” model of dependent origination as the arising of birth, old age, sickness, and death in dependence upon ignorance, craving, and so forth, and the Yogācāra model in which differentiated phenomena arise from seeds stored within the *ālaya-vijñāna* and are independent of suchness. Both these understandings see the empirical world as inherently delusory, something that must be literally undone if liberation is to be achieved. The teaching of origination from suchness in effect grounds the arising of phenomena in the one pure mind and thus obliterates any ontological distinction between them. It is only because of adventitious nonenlightenment that deluded thoughts appear, producing the distinction of subject and object and thus leading to the notion of self and other as real entities, and to craving, attachment, and enmeshment in samsaric misery. Liberation lies in discerning that the differentiated phenomena of the samsaric world are, in their essence, no different from the one mind and thus originally pure.

The nonduality of principle (*li*) and phenomena (*shih*) as set forth in much of Hua-yen thought is heavily weighted toward the former. The mind is original, pure, and true, while phenomena are in contrast unreal, arising only as the one mind is perceived through human ignorance. A different sort of totalistic vision occurs in the T'ien-t'ai school, whose central scripture is the *Lotus Sūtra*, and which is deeply rooted in Madhyamaka thinking concerning the nonduality of absolute and conventional truth. "Original enlightenment" does not appear as a category in early Chinese T'ien-t'ai, nor was the *Awakening of Faith* an important inspiration for early T'ien-t'ai thinkers. Nonetheless, the T'ien-t'ai tradition represents a crucial antecedent to the development of Japanese *hongaku* thought. In contrast to Hua-yen emphasis on all things arising from the mind, early T'ien-t'ai—as well as the later T'ien-t'ai thought of Ssu-ming Chih-li (960–1028), who attempted to counter Hua-yen influences—denies that the mind is a pure, undifferentiated cosmic principle from which all things arise. In the words of Chih-i (538–597), regarded as the founder of the T'ien-t'ai school: "One may say neither that the one mind is prior and all dharmas posterior nor that all dharmas are prior and the mind posterior. . . . All one can say is that the mind is all dharmas and all dharmas are the mind. Therefore the relationship is neither vertical nor horizontal, neither the same nor different."<sup>19</sup>

For Chih-i, phenomena do not "arise" from principle. Principle is that form and mind are always nondual and mutually inclusive (*hu-chü*); the mutual encompassing of good and evil, delusion and enlightenment, is the "true aspect" (*shih-hsiang*) of all things. This emphasis on the mutually inclusive nature of dharmas and the mind can be seen in the structure of the threefold truth or threefold contemplation that lies at the heart of Chih-i's interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the Indian Madhyamaka tradition.<sup>20</sup> It will be discussed in more detail in chapters 3 and 4. In Chih-i's system of meditation, one contemplates all phenomena from the three perspectives of emptiness (*k'ung*), conventional existence (*chia*), and the middle (*chung*). By contemplating the phenomena of conventional existence as arising through dependent origination, one discerns that they are empty of self-nature; this move, termed "entering emptiness from conventional existence," frees one from attachment to samsaric existence. By a reverse discernment, "[re]entering conventional existence from emptiness," one is freed from attachment to reified notions of emptiness and is able to reengage the myriad phenomena of the world in a soteriologically effective way. And by contemplation of the middle, one gains both discernments simultaneously, the perspectives of "emptiness" and "conventional existence" being mutually illuminated but also negated as one-sided extremes. The status of "conventional existence" as the point from which one begins contemplation, and to which one "returns" for bodhisattva practice, reflects T'ien-t'ai emphasis on

concrete particulars as instantiating ultimate truth: “Of every form and fragrance, there is none that is not the Middle Way.”<sup>21</sup>

T’ien-t’ai emphasis on the mutual inclusiveness of mind and all dharmas obviously ruled out Hua-yen-style notions of a primal purity. “Mind” as the object of contemplation was for Chih-i the deluded thought-moment of ordinary worldlings, which he saw as naturally endowed (*hsing-chü*) with the ten dharma realms from hell to Buddhahood. In T’ien-t’ai thought, even the single thought-moment of the Buddha is endowed with these ten realms and thus continues to possess evil as an innate, though nonmanifested, potential (*hsing-o, shōaku*).<sup>22</sup> Thus purity and impurity are always mutually encompassing. Where Hua-yen develops a discourse of origination from the one pure mind (*yüan-ch’i lun, engi ron*), T’ien-t’ai maintains that all dharmas manifest the true aspect of reality (*shih-hsiang lun, jissō ron*), or that the mind by nature is endowed with all dharmas (*hsing-chü-shuo, shōgu setsu*).

Hua-yen Buddhism had not yet taken shape as an independent tradition in Chih-i’s time; his critique of the position that held the mind to be prior to the dharmas was aimed rather at the mind-only doctrines of the Ti-lun and She-lun schools, which exerted a formative influence on Hua-yen.<sup>23</sup> However, when Hua-yen began to emerge as a rival tradition and sectarian consciousness gained strength, Chih-i’s rejection of an originally pure mind prior to the arising of the dharmas became an axis along which his later followers would define T’ien-t’ai orthodoxy, especially over and against Hua-yen. The sixth T’ien-t’ai patriarch Chan-jan (711–782) drew on the *Awakening of Faith* and also borrowed key Hua-yen terms such as “mind only” and “nature origination”—but he appropriated them, vis-à-vis a largely Hua-yen audience, in the service of a T’ien-t’ai position that “take(s) issue with a one-sided [notion] of a clean and pure suchness.”<sup>24</sup> For example, in his treatise *Chin-kang pei* (The diamond scalpel), Chan-jan used Fa-tsang’s concept of “suchness according with conditions” to assert his famous doctrine that insentient beings have the Buddha nature. If all phenomena are none other than suchness, he argued, then it becomes meaningless to say that sentient beings have the Buddha nature but insentient beings do not.<sup>25</sup> With this doctrine, Chan-jan asserted the superior inclusivity of T’ien-t’ai Buddhism. In its distinctively Japanese incarnation as “the realization of Buddhahood by grasses and trees” (*sōmoku jōbutsu*), the doctrine of the Buddha nature of insentient beings would exert a profound influence on both Tendai thought and Japanese Buddhism generally. After Chan-jan’s time, his use of Hua-yen terminology and concepts tended increasingly to be interpreted by some among his followers in light of *tathāgata-garbha* notions of an originally pure mind. This led, during the Sung dynasty, to doctrinal conflict between the so-called mountain-school (*shan-chia*) and off-mountain (*shan-wai*) factions within T’ien-tai Buddhism. The mountain

school, led by Chih-li (960–1028), identified themselves as the champions of an orthodox T'ien-t'ai definition of "mind" as the mind of the ordinary worldling, over and against the off-mountain side who advocated a more "Hua-yen"-style interpretation in light of notions of an originally pure *tathāgata-garbha*.<sup>26</sup>

In his study of the antecedents of Japanese original enlightenment thought, Tamura Yoshirō has characterized the Hua-yen totalistic vision as "dynamic," in that it explains how the one mind, by encountering conditions, manifests the myriad phenomena. T'ien-t'ai, on the other hand, he characterizes as "concrete," in that form and mind are mutually identified in every phenomenal particular. Hua-yen, Tamura says, moves from *li* to *shih*, emphasizing the exfoliation of particulars from the one mind, while T'ien-t'ai moves from *shih* to *li*, stressing that each particular as it stands encompasses the true aspect of reality.<sup>27</sup> Though their approaches differ, the two traditions addressed similar issues, and the similarity increased with mutual exchanges and borrowings from the latter T'ang period into the Sung. Both T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen can be seen as attempts to reconceive Indian Mahāyāna insights about the empty and dependent nature of the dharmas and express them in terms of Chinese intellectual categories such as principle (*li*) and phenomena (*shih*), essence (*t'i*) and function (*yung*), or nature (*hsing*) and outward form (*hsiang*).<sup>28</sup> This involved a significant shift away from the apophatic language of Indian Madhyamaka—which maintains, in its extreme wariness about the limitations of language, that truth can be verbally illuminated only by stating what it is not—to more kataphatic modes of expression. These new modes attempt neither to reimport into Buddhism notions of metaphysical essence nor to claim that there can be adequate verbal descriptions for truth, but to employ positive language in soteriologically effective ways. Moreover, since principle and phenomena are seen as nondual, and this nonduality is expressed in every particular form, the Hua-yen and T'ien-t'ai totalistic visions also entailed a reconception of the empirical world. No longer was it the product of delusion or a place of suffering to be escaped, but the very realm where truth is to be realized and liberation achieved. This reconception was critical to the sinification of Buddhism and exerted an immense impact on the subsequent development of Buddhism in East Asia.<sup>29</sup>

### Japanese Beginnings: Saichō and Kūkai

Original enlightenment thought in Japan may be said properly to have begun in the time of Saichō (767–822) and Kūkai (774–835). These two men are revered as the founders, respectively, of the Japanese Tendai and Shingon schools, which rose to prominence during the Heian period.<sup>30</sup> The "six schools" of Buddhism in the preceding Nara

period (710–794) were largely under state control, and their temples were located in the capital at Nara. In contrast, the monastic centers established by Kūkai on Mt. Kōya and by Saichō on Mt. Hiei stood at some remove from the new capital of Heian-kyō and enjoyed greater independence from the government. Both Tendai and Shingon introduced remarkable innovations in doctrine and practice. Over and against the gradualist models of liberation upheld by the Nara schools, they regarded enlightenment as accessible in the near future, perhaps even in this lifetime.

Kūkai must be acknowledged as the first Japanese Buddhist to engage seriously the concept of original enlightenment. Heir to a continental tradition of Hua-yen and Chen-yen (Jpn. Shingon) interactions, Kūkai ranked Hua-yen (Jpn. Kegon) just below the esoteric teachings in his doctrinal classification of the “ten stages of mind” and drew heavily on Hua-yen thought in his systematization of the esoteric teachings.<sup>31</sup> In particular, he drew extensively on the *Shih Mo-ho-yen lun* (Treatise interpreting the Mahāyāna), said to be Nāgārjuna’s commentary on the *Awakening of Faith* as translated by Vṛddhimata (dates unknown), but probably an eighth-century Korean apocryphon.<sup>32</sup> This treatise relativizes the distinction drawn in the *Awakening of Faith* between the “mind as suchness” and the “mind as arising and perishing” by postulating a third term, the “nondual Mahāyāna” (*pu-erh mo-ho-yen, funi makaen*) in which both are subsumed; Kūkai identified this “nondual Mahāyāna” with the esoteric teachings. The *Shih Mo-ho-yen lun* also elaborates in great detail on “original enlightenment,” for example, by dividing it into a number of subcategories.<sup>33</sup> Basic to these is a distinction between “original enlightenment as [both] tainted and pure,” and “original enlightenment as clean and pure.” The former is very close to the meaning of “original enlightenment” as it appears in the *Awakening of Faith*: the potential for enlightenment inherent in the deluded mind. In the latter sense, however, it is given a more absolute reading, much closer to suchness itself, or to the ontological basis of the nonduality of beings and the Buddha: “The Buddha nature that is original enlightenment encompasses countless merits and neither increases nor decreases. . . . Since the beginningless past, original enlightenment that is clean and pure has not depended on practice, nor is it obtained by the power of another.”<sup>34</sup> Kūkai drew especially on this latter usage of “original enlightenment” from the *Shih Mo-ho-yen lun* and read it in an esoteric light, for example, as the Dharma body of the Tathāgata Vairocana which is one’s own nature.<sup>35</sup> Where continental thought concerning “original enlightenment,” especially that of Hua-yen tradition, had interpreted this concept in light of the “one mind,” in Kūkai’s thought, it is linked to the esoteric doctrines of identity with the cosmic Buddha and of realizing Buddhahood with this very body (*sokushin jōbutsu*).<sup>36</sup> Kūkai’s un-

derstanding of “original enlightenment” and his use of the *Shih Mo-ho-yen lun* would eventually influence thinkers within the Japanese Tendai tradition, such as Annen (841–?).

Saichō, the founder of Japanese Tendai, did not develop *hongaku* as a doctrinal category; the term as such occurs only once in his authenticated writings, and there, in a quotation from another source.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, he is important to the development of medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought. Though he journeyed to China to further his study of T’ien-t’ai teachings and presented himself as a transmitter of T’ien-t’ai Buddhism to Japan, Saichō was responsible for a number of innovations in thought and practice that, over time, would deeply differentiate Japanese Tendai from its continental predecessor. Without these innovations, Japanese Tendai original enlightenment thought would not have emerged. Medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought thus has two major Japanese Buddhist sources: Kūkai’s appropriation of continental original enlightenment thought as expressed in the *Shih Mo-ho-yen lun*, and Saichō’s innovations in Tendai Buddhism. Among the latter, the most significant are Saichō’s understanding of the one vehicle, his advocacy of bodhisattva precept ordinations, and his insistence on the unity of esoteric and exoteric teachings.

#### Saichō and the One Vehicle

The *Lotus Sūtra* is central to the T’ien-t’ai/Tendai tradition, which regards it as the culmination of the Buddha’s teachings, preached during the last eight years of his life. Some Mahāyāna sūtras deny the validity of the two “lesser vehicles” (Hīnayāna)—the vehicle of the *śrāvaka* or voice-hearer, culminating in the state of the *arhat* and, at life’s end, in final nirvāṇa, and the vehicle of the *pratyeka-buddha* or independently enlightened “private Buddha,” also culminating at death in final nirvāṇa—and supplant both with the bodhisattva vehicle, which leads to supreme Buddhahood. The *Lotus*, however, while maintaining the superiority of the bodhisattva vehicle, subsumes all three within the “one Buddha vehicle.” “Within the Buddha lands of the ten directions,” it says, “there is the Dharma of only One Vehicle. There are not two, nor are there yet three.”<sup>38</sup> The sūtra acknowledges that the Buddha did indeed teach three paths or vehicles, yet this threefold division of the Dharma was apparent, not real; it represents the Buddha’s skillful means (*upāya*, *hōben*) set forth in response to the varying capacities of his followers. His true intention was to lead all beings to the supreme enlightenment represented by the one Buddha vehicle.<sup>39</sup>

Saichō understood the one vehicle in terms of the universal potential for Buddhahood. This was by no means a new idea; virtually all Chinese Mahāyāna traditions upheld that Buddhahood is ultimately attainable by all. The sole exception was the Fa-hsiang (Jpn. Hossō) school,

the branch of Yogācāra that had been established by Hsüan-tsang (602–664) and his disciple K’uei-chi (632–682). In Japan, Hossō had become the most influential of the Nara Buddhist schools, and Saichō developed unique arguments for the universality of Buddhahood in written debate with a Hossō scholar named Tokuitsu. Their debate spanned only four years, from 817 through 821, but Saichō produced the vast majority of his doctrinal writings in this context.<sup>40</sup>

As a Hossō scholar, Tokuitsu distinguished two kinds of Buddha nature: Buddha nature as suchness or principle (*ri-busshō*), which is universal, and active Buddha nature (*gyō-busshō*), which is not. *Ri-busshō* is quiescent and does not manifest itself in the phenomenal world; thus the universality of the Buddha nature in this sense does not mean that all people can become Buddhas. Realizing Buddhahood depends on *gyō-busshō*, which consists of “untainted seeds” present in the *ālaya* consciousness since the beginningless past. Those who possess such seeds can become Buddhas; those who lack them can never attain Buddhahood, no matter how hard they may strive. Hossō thought additionally postulates two other kinds of untainted seeds that a person might possess: seeds enabling one to become a *śrāvaka* or a *pratyeka-buddha*. Some individuals are presumed to have two or three of these different kinds of untainted seeds. Such persons are said to be of undetermined nature (*fujōshō*), in that which of the three kinds of seeds will develop in them—that is, whether they will become śrāvakas or pratyeka-buddhas, who can achieve arhatship, or bodhisattvas, who can achieve Buddhahood—is uncertain. There are also persons lacking untainted seeds altogether, who can never attain liberation of any kind. They can, however, achieve improved rebirths in the human and heavenly realms through religious efforts.

From the perspective of this Hossō doctrine, called “the distinction of five natures” (*goshō kakubetsu*), Tokuitsu argued that the division of the Dharma into three vehicles represented the Buddha’s true intent: some people really were destined to become arhats, pratyeka-buddhas, or bodhisattvas. On the other hand, the *Lotus Sūtra*’s teaching of the one vehicle was a provisional expedient set forth to encourage those of the undetermined group, some of whom might be capable of practicing the bodhisattva path and becoming Buddhas. For Saichō, however, it was just as the *Lotus* declared: the three vehicles were provisional and the one vehicle, true; Buddhahood was the final destiny of all. In support of his position, Saichō drew on a variety of sources. One was Fa-tsang’s commentary on the *Awakening of Faith*, specifically, its distinction between suchness that is unchanging (*fuhen shinnyo*) and suchness that accords with conditions (*zuien shinnyo*). Like Fa-tsang, Saichō argued that suchness has a dynamic as well as a quiescent aspect. In its dynamic aspect, it expresses itself as all phenomena and also has the nature of realizing

and knowing (*kakuchi shō*).<sup>41</sup> Thus there is no need to postulate seeds in the *ālaya* consciousness as the source of the phenomenal world or as the cause, in some individuals, for achieving Buddhahood. Saichō equated suchness in its dynamic aspect with *gyō-busshō*; since suchness is universal, he argued, everyone has the potential to realize Buddhahood.

Saichō's appropriation of the two aspects of suchness was reminiscent of the move made by Chan-jan, who had also drawn on this aspect of Fa-tsang's thought to argue the Buddha nature of insentient beings. Saichō had been ordained under the Kegon (Ch. Hua-yen) master Gyōhyō and had studied texts of the Kegon/Hua-yen tradition—including the *Awakening of Faith* and Fa-tsang's commentary—before being drawn to T'ien-t'ai thought. He also studied in China with two of Chan-jan's disciples, Tao-sui and Hsing-man, who belonged to a generation when Hua-yen terminology and concepts were being incorporated into T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. Thus it is hardly surprising that Saichō's Tendai doctrine reflects some Kegon/Hua-yen ideas.<sup>42</sup> Along with the classic T'ien-t'ai emphasis on the nonduality of pure and impure, delusion and enlightenment, inherent in every concrete phenomenon, Japanese Tendai writings from Saichō on would include elements of a more "Kegon" style, such as notions of an originally pure mind. In this case, however, Saichō's understanding of "suchness according with conditions" had a unique twist not found either in Chan-jan's *Chin-kang pei* or in Hua-yen teachings. Saichō referred to the unchanging, quiescent view of suchness as a "one-sided truth" (*hen shinri*) pertaining to the three vehicles, and to the dynamic view of suchness as "truth according with the middle" (*chū shinri*) and the teaching of the one vehicle.<sup>43</sup> This reading not only acknowledges two aspects of suchness but establishes a hierarchy between the two in identifying the dynamic aspect of suchness—its expression as the phenomenal world—with the T'ien-t'ai category of the "middle" and with the one vehicle of the *Lotus*. This represents a crucial step toward the profound valorization of empirical reality found in medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought.<sup>44</sup>

#### Exclusive and Inclusive Readings

Saichō's interpretation of the one vehicle is also reflected in his contributions to doctrinal classification. The project of doctrinal classification (Ch. *p'an-chiao* or *chiao-p'an*; Jpn. *kyōhan*) developed in China through the efforts of Chinese Buddhists to organize into coherent systems the mass of Buddhist texts introduced from India and Central Asia.<sup>45</sup> Peter N. Gregory has pointed out that these doctrinal classifications served three kinds of purposes: hermeneutical, sectarian, and soteriological. Hermeneutically, they attempt to uncover a unified framework underlying the diversity of Buddhist teachings and within which those teachings can be systematized. Typically, the framework takes the

form of a hierarchy or graded sequence of teachings; thus schemes of doctrinal classification also work to legitimize the claims of particular sectarian traditions to be the most authoritative. And soteriologically, they function as models of the path, in which successive levels of teachings correspond to stages of attainment traversed by the practitioner.<sup>46</sup> Doctrinal classifications range from simple binary schemes (e.g., “sudden” and “gradual”) to highly elaborate systems, such as the “five periods and eight teachings” (*wu-shih pa-chiao, goji hakkyō*) of the T’ien-t’ai tradition.<sup>47</sup>

Within the T’ien-t’ai/Tendai tradition, doctrinal classifications have drawn on the claim that all teachings are “opened and integrated in the one vehicle” (*ichijō kaie*) of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Historically, interpretations of this “opening and integration” have developed in two general directions. From an absolute standpoint (*zettai kaie*), because the one vehicle is all-encompassing, nothing exists outside it to which it might be contrasted. Once grounded in the one vehicle, the distinction between “true” and “provisional” is dissolved; understood in this light, all teachings become expressions of the one vehicle. This is an inclusive reading, in which all teachings in effect become “true.” But from a relative standpoint (*sōtai kaie*), the distinction is preserved between the provisional teachings, which are opened and integrated, and the true teaching, which opens and integrates them. This is an exclusive reading, one that emphasizes the superiority of the *Lotus Sūtra* over all other teachings.<sup>48</sup> Both kinds of interpretations recur throughout the T’ien-t’ai/Tendai tradition, though one mode may predominate depending on the individual work or thinker as well as on historical circumstances. Unsurprisingly, exclusive readings come to the fore in sectarian polemics, where T’ien-t’ai or Tendai positions are being argued against those of other traditions. However, both inclusive and exclusive readings exhibit all three aspects of doctrinal classification schemes—hermeneutical, sectarian, and soteriological—that Gregory has noted.

In his schemes of doctrinal classification, Saichō developed both exclusive and inclusive readings of the one vehicle that would be important to the development of medieval Tendai thought and practice. In his written debates with Tokuitsu, Saichō argued the superiority of the *Lotus* over all other teachings from a number of angles. For example, he asserted that the *Lotus* alone represents the standpoint of “effect,” or the Buddha’s enlightenment (*kabun*); other sūtras, such as the *Avatamsaka*, reflect the standpoint of “cause,” or of those still in the stages of cultivation (*inbun*).<sup>49</sup> He also distinguished the *Lotus* as the “direct path” (*jikidō*) or “great direct path” (*daijikidō*) to enlightenment, in contrast to both the “roundabout path” of the Hīnayāna and the “path requiring kalpas” followed by bodhisattvas of provisional Mahāyāna.<sup>50</sup> In Saichō’s view, a practitioner of the *Lotus* endowed with unusually keen faculties might even be able to realize Buddhahood with this very body (*sokushin*

*jōbutsu*), though he confined this possibility to persons who had already achieved the first abode, or the fifth of the six stages of identity, which, according to T'ien-t'ai doctrine, comprise the Buddhist path.<sup>51</sup> Practitioners of lesser faculties would be able to realize Buddhahood in the next lifetime, or in the lifetime after that.<sup>52</sup> As discussed below, the doctrine of realizing Buddhahood with this very body, as interpreted by Saichō's disciples, was crucial to the development of medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought. Saichō also interpreted the *Lotus Sūtra* as particularly suited to the time and to the capacities of the Japanese people, claims that would be further developed in the thought of Nichiren (1222–1282).<sup>53</sup>

However, based on the idea of its superiority to all other teachings, Saichō also developed inclusive readings of the *Lotus Sūtra*. One sees this, for example, in his concept of the “three kinds of *Lotus Sūtra*” (*sanshu Hokke*), by which he interpreted the sūtra passage: “The Buddhas, by their power of skillful means, with respect to the one Buddha vehicle make distinctions and preach it as three. . . . There is only the one Buddha vehicle.”<sup>54</sup> Saichō wrote: “‘With respect to the one Buddha vehicle’ indicates the fundamental *Lotus* (*konpon Hokke*); ‘make distinctions and preach it as three,’ the hidden and secret *Lotus* (*onmitsu Hokke*); and ‘there is only the one Buddha vehicle,’ the *Lotus* that was explicitly preached (*kensetsu Hokke*). Apart from the [*Sūtra of the Lotus*] *Blossom of the Wonderful Dharma*, there exists not [even] a single phrase of another sūtra.”<sup>55</sup> From this inclusive standpoint, “*Lotus Sūtra*” means not only the actual text of that name (i.e., “the *Lotus* that was explicitly preached”), but the consistent intent underlying the Buddha's lifetime teachings (“the fundamental *Lotus*”), as well as all sūtras other than the *Lotus*, in which, due to the immaturity of his hearers' capacity, that intention is not fully revealed (“the hidden and secret *Lotus*”). This reading would inform doctrinal classifications that developed in the context of medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought.

Most important to the later Tendai tradition, Saichō's attempts to integrate all teachings within the one vehicle of the *Lotus Sūtra* were not merely conceptual but also extended to practice. While in China, he received instruction or ordination in four traditions: T'ien-t'ai doctrine proper; esoteric teachings; Ch'an, of the Ox-head and Northern schools; and the bodhisattva precepts.<sup>56</sup> To some extent, these multiple transmissions reflect the tendency of Chinese T'ien-t'ai monks of the time to adopt elements from other traditions.<sup>57</sup> But they also suggest Saichō's conviction that all teachings could be unified within the one vehicle. It is not altogether clear how Saichō himself envisioned the integration of these four. Based on the *Naishō Buppō kechimiyaku fu*, Saichō's record of the lineages of the transmissions he had received, Paul Groner has suggested that Saichō may have intended to unify them by tracing all four

back to a single Buddha—Śākyamuni, identified with Vairocana (Rushana or Birushana in Japanese), who is the Buddha associated with both the *Fan-wang ching* and the esoteric teachings.<sup>58</sup> The task of systematically unifying these four traditions would fall to Saichō’s disciples and led to distinctive developments within Japanese Tendai that sharply differentiate it from the continental T’ien-t’ai tradition.

### The Bodhisattva Precepts

In Saichō’s day, Buddhist ordinations in East Asia were usually performed by conferring the precepts of the *Ssu-fen lü* (Vinaya in four parts), the *vinaya* or monastic code of the Dharmagupta school, comprising 250 rules for monks and 348 for nuns. Many monastics subsequently received an additional set of “bodhisattva precepts”—guidelines for conduct found in a number of Mahāyāna sūtras—to confirm their commitment to the Mahāyāna. These same bodhisattva precepts were also conferred on lay people to enable them to form a closer connection with Buddhism. The most widely used set of bodhisattva precepts occurs in the fifth-century apocryphal *Fan-wang ching* (Brahmā-Net Sūtra), which includes a list of ten major and forty-eight minor precepts.<sup>59</sup> The Chinese *vinaya* master Chien-chen (Jpn. Ganjin, 688–763), invited by the Japanese court to help regularize monastic ordinations in Japan, is thought to have conferred the *Fan-wang* precepts on Emperor Kōken and more than four hundred others, as well as on Japanese monks whom he had previously ordained with the precepts of the *Ssu-fen lü*.<sup>60</sup> While the *Ssu-fen lü* precepts technically represented the *vinaya* of a “Hīnayāna” school, they were seldom regarded as Hinayanist—a pejorative term—but were interpreted in a Mahāyāna light.<sup>61</sup>

Saichō, as is well known, deprecated the *Ssu-fen lü* as “Hīnayāna precepts” and argued that Tendai novices should be ordained as “bodhisattva monks” with the precepts of the *Fan-wang ching*. With this radical move, Saichō challenged the authority of the Nara schools, who controlled the three state-sponsored ordination platforms, and freed his disciples from the need to interrupt their training on Mt. Hiei to journey to Nara for ordination. He also sought to remove his newly inaugurated Tendai school and its program of education from the jurisdiction of the government Office of Monastic Affairs (Sōgō), which was dominated by prominent monks of the Nara schools, especially of the rival Hossō school.

However, Saichō also had doctrinal grounds for his advocacy of the bodhisattva precepts. He called them the “perfect precepts” (*enkai*), meaning that he assimilated them to the *Lotus Sūtra* and the T’ien-t’ai/Tendai teaching of universal Buddha nature.<sup>62</sup> Of the three kinds of learning (*sangaku*) that comprise the Buddha Way, Saichō held that perfect meditation and perfect wisdom (i.e., doctrinal teachings) had al-

readily emerged within T'ien-t'ai Buddhism; the perfect precepts, however, had yet to be established.<sup>63</sup>

In this connection, Shirato Waka has suggested a possible link between Saichō's understanding of the *Fan-wang* precepts and the later emergence of Tendai original enlightenment thought.<sup>64</sup> The *Fan-wang ching* describes its bodhisattva precepts as "the fundamental source of all Buddhas, the fundamental source of all bodhisattvas, the seeds of the Buddha nature. All sentient beings have the Buddha nature. All things with consciousness, form and mental activity, all sentient [beings] with mental activity, are all included within [the purview of] these Buddha-nature precepts. . . . The fundamental source of precepts for all sentient beings is pure in itself."<sup>65</sup> Here the bodhisattva precepts are said to be grounded in the Buddha nature. Since all beings have the Buddha nature, they incline naturally toward these precepts. Saichō further developed this argument: "These are the precepts which are [based on] the constantly abiding Buddha nature, the original source of all living beings, pure in its self-nature and unmoving like empty space. Therefore, by means of these precepts, one manifests and attains the original, inherent, constantly abiding Dharma body endowed with the thirty-two marks."<sup>66</sup> In this reading, the precepts are no longer an externally imposed set of regulations or moral guidelines, but an expression of innate Buddhahood and also the direct cause for its realization. Because the Buddha nature is innate, all people, clerics and laity alike, can readily practice the bodhisattva precepts, and by practicing these precepts, innate Buddhahood is naturally manifested. This theme is related to Saichō's idea of the *Lotus* as opening the "direct path" (*jikidō*) to the speedy realization of Buddhahood.<sup>67</sup> This view of practice (in this case, of the precepts) as simultaneously both the effect and the cause of Buddhahood would be developed in later Tendai *hongaku* thought.

Saichō's reception of the bodhisattva precepts appears to have influenced later original enlightenment discourse in another way as well. The *Fan-wang ching* precepts stress attitude and intention; they do not include instructions in protocol for monastic assemblies and were not designed to serve as the sole guideline for regulating a renunciate community. In adopting them for purposes of initiating "bodhisattva monks," Saichō himself clearly never intended that high standards of monastic discipline be compromised. He not only mandated twelve years' uninterrupted study on Mt. Hiei but left final instructions for his disciples exhorting them to extreme frugality in matters of food, clothing, bedding, and the like.<sup>68</sup> He also instructed that, after twelve years of training on Mt. Hiei, when they would no longer be in danger of "backsliding," monks should provisionally receive the "Hīnayāna" *Ssu-fen lü* ordination.<sup>69</sup> However, Saichō died before he could fully elaborate his interpretation of the precepts in terms of either doctrine or practical appli-

cation, and understandings differed considerably even among his immediate disciples.<sup>70</sup> Before many decades had passed, under the influence of esoteric interpretations of the precepts and the need to accommodate the lifestyles of growing numbers of aristocrats seeking careers as Tendai monks, lenient readings would prevail. Especially influential in this regard was the *Futsū jubosatsukai kōshaku* (Extensive explanation of the bodhisattva precept ordination) of the ninth-century Tendai monk Annen, systematizer of Tendai esoteric thought, which interprets the bodhisattva precepts as instilling a Mahāyāna attitude, rather than mandating particular forms of conduct.<sup>71</sup> Annen, for example, held that all precepts are inherent in the precept-essence (*kaitai*); by receiving the precept-essence, one realizes Buddhahood in this very body. Through such interpretations, emphasis shifted from observance of the precepts as moral guidelines or institutional regulations to the ceremony of ordination itself, understood increasingly as esoteric initiation and a guarantee of realizing Buddhahood. By the medieval period, notions of formless, originally inherent “perfect and sudden precepts” (*endonkai*), “Lotus one-vehicle precepts” (*Hokke ichijōkai*), or “unproduced diamond precepts” (*musa kongō hōkai*) came to supersede literal adherence to the specifics of the *Fan-wang ching* precepts.<sup>72</sup> These “formless readings” of the precepts put forth within the influential T’ien-t’ai school influenced other Buddhist traditions as well and have been seen by many scholars as contributing to a decline in monastic discipline in the latter Heian period.<sup>73</sup> “Formless” understandings of the precepts, rooted remotely in Saichō’s advocacy of bodhisattva precept ordinations, were also linked to an important strand of early medieval Buddhist discourse, found in both Tendai and some of the new Kamakura Buddhist movements, which denies the validity of precepts in the Final Dharma age (*mappō mukai*) and makes liberation dependent on faith or insight, rather than on the cultivation of morality or the accumulation of merit through good deeds.<sup>74</sup>

### Saichō and the Esoteric Teachings

The esoteric teachings (*mikkyō*) are also known as the Vajrayāna (Diamond Vehicle), Mantrayāna (Mantra Vehicle), Tantric Buddhism, or, in Japan, *shingon*.<sup>75</sup> The major forms of Mikkyō to be established in Japan—the great esoteric systems of Shingon and Tendai—center on Dainichi Nyorai (Skt. Vairocana or Mahāvairocana Tathāgata), who is neither a historical figure nor a supramundane being but the Buddha as Dharma body, that is, the truth without beginning or end that is inherent in all things. All other Buddhas are seen as manifestations of this cosmic Buddha; so indeed is the universe itself. All visible forms are the Buddha’s body, all sounds are the Buddha’s voice, and all thoughts are the Buddha’s mind, though the unenlightened do not discern this. How-

ever, through the practice of the three mysteries (*sanmitsu*)—mūdras, or ritual hand gestures; mantras, sacred syllables or phrases; and meditations on specific objects of worship (*honzon*)—the initiate is able to realize his identity with the cosmic Buddha.<sup>76</sup> Esoteric ritual was also highly valued for its magical achievement of worldly ends, such as good harvests, healing, timely rainfall, the prevention of disaster, prosperity, subjugation of enemies, placation of vengeful spirits, and sexual fulfillment. The perceived power of esoteric rites to effect these and other concrete ends led to widespread patronage of Mikkyō ritualists by the court and by powerful aristocrats. Modern scholars have tended to dismiss esoteric rituals conducted for apotropaic or other wish-fulfilling purposes as inferior to, or even a corruption of, the high soteriological aspects of the Mikkyō tradition; however, there is little indication that esoteric adepts of the premodern period shared this view. To the contrary, the performance of esoteric rites for both spiritual liberation and practical, worldly ends reflected Mikkyō emphasis on the nonduality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, and of ultimate and mundane truth.<sup>77</sup>

While various strands of esoteric Buddhism had existed in Japan since the Nara period, Saichō and Kūkai are generally credited with its formal introduction and establishment. In China, Kūkai was initiated into a recently developed *ryōbu* (two-part) esoteric system that united the lineages of the Diamond Realm (Skt. Vajradhātu, Jpn. Kongōkai) and Matrix Realm (Garbhadhātu, Taizōkai) mandalas, which are based respectively on the esoteric scriptures *Chin-kang-ting ching* (Skt. *Vajraśekhara-sūtra*; Jpn. *Kongōchō-kyō*) and *Ta-p'i-lu-che-na ching* or simply *Ta-jih ching* (*Mahāvairocana-sūtra*, *Dainichi-kyō*).<sup>78</sup> The *ryōbu* tradition was handed down within Kūkai's Shingon school, while the Tendai school was to adopt a three-part system that joined to the lineages of the Diamond and Matrix Realms a third esoteric tradition based on the *Su-hsi-ti ching* (*Soshitsuji-kyō*), a scripture related to the *Ta-jih-ching*. Saichō's own initiation in China into the esoteric teachings had not been as detailed as Kūkai's.<sup>79</sup> Thus for seven years, from 809 through 816, he made a point of borrowing and copying esoteric texts from Kūkai and even received an *abhiṣekha* or esoteric initiation from him, as did several of his leading disciples. However, the initially cordial relations between the two men eventually broke down as a result of their divergent understandings of Mikkyō.<sup>80</sup> Where Kūkai saw the esoteric teachings as fundamentally distinct from and superior to the exoteric teachings (*kengyō*), Saichō maintained the unity of the two and sought to integrate Mikkyō within the framework of the *Lotus*-based teachings of the Tendai school.<sup>81</sup> During Saichō's lifetime, monastic training on Mt. Hiei was divided into two areas of specialization, whereby monks followed either the "meditation course" (*shikangō*), based on Chih-i's great treatise on meditation, the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* (Jpn. *Maka shikan*, Great Calming and Contemplation) or

the “esoteric course” (*shanagō*), focusing on the *Ta-p’i-lu-che-na ching* (Jpn. *Daibirushana-kyō*), on which the Matrix Realm mandala is based.<sup>82</sup> Saichō did not live long enough to work out a thorough synthesis of esoteric Buddhism and the one-vehicle teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and the task would be carried on by his disciples. The integration of Tendai/*Lotus* doctrine and the esoteric teachings (*enmitsu itchi*) would become a major feature distinguishing Taimitsu—the Mikkyō that developed within Tendai—from that of Tōmitsu, the Mikkyō of Kūkai’s Shingon tradition, and was essential to the development of medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought.<sup>83</sup>

### Roots in Early Japanese Tendai

The major figures in the development of Taimitsu thought were Ennin (794–864), Enchin (814–891), and Annen (841–?). Like Saichō, Ennin and Enchin employed the term “original enlightenment” only rarely; even in the works of Annen, where it appears more frequently, most occurrences are in quotations from other writings, and the term is used not in a distinctive sense, but in a manner synonymous with other terms for inherent liberative potential, such as “suchness” or “Buddha nature.”<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, the work of these men, especially Annen, laid the necessary intellectual foundation for the emergence of a distinct “Tendai original enlightenment thought” in the medieval period. Taimitsu thought is too complex to discuss in detail here, nor is it feasible to explore the ideas of these three systematizers one by one. However, it will be useful to outline those general developments within Taimitsu thought that were to prove most significant in shaping the medieval *hongaku* discourse.

#### Esotericizing the *Lotus Sūtra*

In his *Jūjūshin ron* (Treatise on the ten stages of mind), Kūkai established ten stages of religious development, corresponding to ten levels of teaching, among which he ranked Mikkyō the highest.<sup>85</sup> He relegated the Tendai-*Lotus* teachings to stage eight. In contrast, the Taimitsu thinkers, following Saichō, were concerned to establish that the *Lotus Sūtra* and Mikkyō formed a unity. Traditional T’ien-t’ai schemes of doctrinal classification had been developed before the introduction of the esoteric teachings to China and so did not take account of them. Thus, establishing the relationship of the *Lotus* to the esoteric teachings demanded of the Taimitsu scholars a creative rethinking of existing doctrinal classifications and the postulating of new ones. While their arguments varied, all in effect sought to redefine the *Lotus* as an esoteric scripture.

The first to attempt this systematically was Saichō’s disciple Ennin. Ennin put forth the notion of the “one great perfect teaching” (*ichidai en-*

gyō), in which the whole of Buddhism was encompassed.<sup>86</sup> Based on this underlying unity, however, a distinction was to be drawn between esoteric and exoteric teachings. Ennin drew this distinction in various ways: for example, he wrote, the exoteric teachings were expounded in accord with their auditors' capacity (*zuitai*), while the esoteric teachings were expounded from the Buddha's own enlightenment (*zuijū*); exoteric teachings require many kalpas of practice to attain Buddhahood, while in the esoteric teachings, Buddhahood can be realized immediately; exoteric teachings elucidate suchness only in its quiescent aspect (*shinnyo fuhen*) and thus separate the true nature of things from their outward appearance, while the esoteric teachings reveal that suchness manifests the phenomenal world in accordance with conditions (*shinnyo zuien*), thus teaching the nonduality of nature and appearance, and so forth.<sup>87</sup> Within the category of "esoteric teachings," Ennin included such Mahāyāna sūtras as the *Avataṃsaka*, the *Vimalakīrti*, the *prajñā-pāramitā* sūtras, and of course the *Lotus*, along with the *Ta-jih ching* and the *Chin-kang-ting ching*. However, the *Lotus* in fact says nothing about esoteric ritual performance. Having defined it as an esoteric scripture, Ennin found another distinction to be necessary. All esoteric scriptures were equal in principle, he said, in that they taught the nonduality of worldly and ultimate truth, but they differed in their treatment of specific practices. That is, the *Lotus* was esoteric in principle alone (*rimitsu*), while the *Ta-jih ching* and other sūtras that set forth the specifics of mūdras, mantras, and mandalas to be used in esoteric performance were esoteric in both principle and actual specifics (*jiri gumitsu*).<sup>88</sup> In short, Ennin borrowed Saichō's argument that the three vehicles are provisional and the one vehicle is true, and recast it to assert that the three vehicles are exoteric, and the one vehicle, esoteric. However, where Saichō had relegated Mahāyāna sūtras other than the *Lotus* (such as the *Avataṃsaka*) to the status of provisional teachings, Ennin included them in the one, esoteric vehicle; but where Saichō had seen the *Lotus* and the esoteric teachings as equally representing the category of "true teaching," Ennin's distinction between sūtras that are esoteric in principle (*rimitsu*) and sūtras that are esoteric in both principle and practice (*jiri gumitsu*) made it possible to regard the *Ta-jih ching* and *Chin-kang-ting ching* as superior to the *Lotus* in clarifying matters of esoteric performance. This distinction was further developed in the writings of Enchin.<sup>89</sup> Enchin also addressed the issue of where the *Ta-jih ching* was to be placed in the traditional T'ien-t'ai classification of the "five periods" (*goji*) and concluded that it belonged in the fifth and highest period, along with the *Lotus* and *Nivāṇa* sūtras. In so doing, he sought to rebut the arguments of Chinese T'ien-t'ai masters Kuang-hsiu (770–844?) and his disciple Wei-chüan (d.u.), who had relegated it to the third, *vai-pulya* period, which in Enchin's view did not give sufficient weight to the esoteric teachings. But he sought also to counter the claims of Kūkai, who

had ranked the Tendai/*Lotus* teachings in eighth place, two steps below the esoteric teachings, in his ten stages of mind.<sup>90</sup>

A further development in the notion of the “one great perfect teaching” occurs in Annen’s *Shingonshū kyōji gi* (The meaning of teaching and time in the *shingon* school), with his concept of the “four ones”—one Buddha, one time, one place, and one teaching:

All Buddhas are called the one Buddha; all times are called the one time; all places are called the one place; all teachings are called the one teaching. . . . The originally inherent, constantly abiding Buddha who is without beginning or end is called all Buddhas; the [always] equal time that is without beginning or end is referred to as all times; the palace of the dharma realm that is without center or periphery is called all places; and the teaching that pervades all vehicles and makes one’s mind realize Buddhahood is called all teachings.<sup>91</sup>

Annen’s subsuming of all teachings in the one great perfect teaching goes beyond the earlier interpretations of the one vehicle put forth by Saichō and Ennin, in that it includes not only the teachings attributed to the historical Buddha Śākyamuni but those of “all Buddhas throughout the three time periods [past, present and future] and the ten directions [the eight points of the compass, up and down].” Nor is it about the unity of the teaching alone, but of the whole of time and space, which is affirmed as the realm where the originally inherent Buddha constantly and universally preaches to living beings. Annen’s “four ones” were clearly influenced by esoteric concepts of the Dharma-body Buddha whose body and mind are identified with the entire phenomenal world.

Annen’s affirmation of all teachings as the one teaching is made from the standpoint of what he understood to be the Buddha’s own intent. From the standpoint of the Buddha’s preaching according to his listeners’ capacity, however, distinctions were to be drawn.<sup>92</sup> On this basis, Annen established a hierarchical scheme of five doctrinal categories: Tripiṭaka, shared, specific, perfect, and esoteric. These represent the four categories of teaching in the classic T’ien-t’ai *p’an-chiao* scheme, with Mikkyō superimposed as the highest category. Unlike Enchin, who had included Mikkyō and the *Lotus* in the same category, Annen used the distinction between “Mikkyō in principle alone” and “Mikkyō in both principle and actuality” to rank the latter in highest place.<sup>93</sup> Since Mikkyō represented the “one great perfect teaching” of all Buddhas, transcending both time and space, it could not, in his estimation, properly be fitted into a categorization of the teachings of the historical Buddha but must be placed above them. So thoroughly esotericized did Tendai doctrine become in Annen’s thought that he habitually designated his school not as Tendai/*Lotus*, but as *shingon* (*shingonshū*).

In this way, among Saichō's later followers, the traditional T'ien-t'ai "perfect teaching" (*engyō*) based on the *Lotus Sūtra* was fused with Mikkyō in the "one great perfect teaching." Their writings recapitulate Saichō's move to incorporate all teachings within the *Lotus*, but in esoteric terms. That is, rather than encompassing Mikkyō within the framework of the one vehicle of the *Lotus* as Saichō had intended, Taimitsu developed an esoteric reading of the one vehicle that tended to subsume the *Lotus* within Mikkyō, a tendency especially evident in Annen's writings. In any event, the two traditions became inseparably intertwined and came to share a common vocabulary. Medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought would emerge in large part as an attempt to reinterpret traditional T'ien-t'ai/Tendai doctrines through the lense of an esotericized sensibility.

### Redefining the Buddha

As the *Lotus* came to be understood within Taimitsu as an esoteric scripture, a corollary need was perceived to identify its Buddha with the Buddha of the esoteric teachings. Kūkai had argued, as part of his claim for the superiority of the esoteric teachings, that exoteric sūtras (which for Kūkai included the *Lotus*) had been preached by Śākyamuni as the "manifested body" (*nirmāṇa-kāya*), the human Buddha who appears in this world, while the esoteric teachings were preached by Dainichi as the "Dharma body," that is, universal and timeless truth conceived of as the Buddha's "body." If the *Lotus Sūtra* were to be claimed as an esoteric sūtra, it was necessary for the Taimitsu thinkers to overcome this distinction. This they did by finding ways to identify the two Buddhas.

The Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra* appears in that text in two forms. First he is presented simply as the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, who attained enlightenment at the age of thirty under the Bodhi tree. But the eleventh chapter suggests that he is more than this: all Buddhas in the worlds of the ten directions are shown to be his emanations.<sup>94</sup> This foreshadows the dramatic revelation of the sixteenth chapter, called "Fathoming the Lifespan of the Tathâgata" (*Nyorai juryō-hon*), in which Śākyamuni declares that countless myriads of kalpas have passed since he attained Buddhahood, and that ever since then, he has been constantly in this world, preaching the Dharma in various guises and by various skillful means. Chih-i had divided the sūtra into two parts of fourteen chapters each, according to these two presentations of the Buddha.<sup>95</sup> The first fourteen chapters, called the "trace teaching" (*shakumon*), present the Buddha as a "manifest trace" (*suijaku*) or historical appearance, while the latter fourteen chapters, called the "origin teaching" (*honmon*), present him in his original ground (*honji*) as the Buddha who first attained enlightenment in the inconceivably remote past. The relevant passage of the "Fathoming the Lifespan" chapter reads:

In all the worlds, gods, men, and asuras all say that the present Śākyamunibuddha left the palace of the Śākya clan and at a place not far removed from the city of Gayā, seated on the Platform of the Path, attained anuttarasamyak-sambodhi. And yet, O good men, since I in fact achieved Buddhahood it has been incalculable, limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of nayutas of kalpas. For example, one might imagine that in the five hundred thousand myriads of millions of nayutas of asaṃkheya of thousand-millionfold worlds there is a man who pounds them all to atoms, and then, only after passing eastward over five hundred thousand myriads of millions of nayutas of asaṃkheya of realms, deposits one atom, in this way in his eastward movement exhausting all these atoms. . . . If these world-spheres [that the man has passed], whether an atom was deposited in them or not, were all reduced to atoms, and if each atom were a kalpa, the time since my achievement of Buddhahood would exceed even this. . . . My life-span is incalculable asaṃkheya-kalpas, ever enduring, never perishing. O good men! The life-span I achieved in my former treading of the bodhisattva path even now is not exhausted, for it is twice the above number.<sup>96</sup>

A literal reading of this passage suggests that this original realization, however inconceivably long ago, did indeed take place at a specific point in time and thus must be said to have a beginning. Nonetheless, this “original Buddha” (*honbutsu*) of the “Fathoming the Lifespan” chapter lent himself more readily than did the historical Śākyamuni to identification with the beginningless Dharma body of Dainichi or Mahāvairocana. Thus one finds, in Taimitsu writings, the development of a distinct “*honmon* thought” centering on the latter fourteen chapters of the sūtra and its original Buddha.<sup>97</sup> In time, the Buddha of the “Fathoming of the Lifespan” chapter came to be understood, like the cosmic Buddha Dainichi, as timeless, having neither beginning nor end.

Long before the emergence of Japanese Taimitsu, or even of esoteric Buddhism in East Asia, attempts had been made to identify Śākyamuni with the Buddha Vairocana, whose name is transliterated in Chinese versions of the sūtras as either Lu-che-na (Jpn. Rushana) or P’i-lu-che-na (Birushana). Such identifications begin in the sūtra literature. The sixty-fascicle *Hua-yen ching* says that the names “Śākyamuni” and “Vairocana” refer to the same Buddha.<sup>98</sup> The *Fo-shuo kuan P’u-hsien P’u-sa hsing-fa ching* (Sūtra of the Buddha’s preaching on the method of contemplating Bodhisattva Samantabhadra), the capping sūtra to the *Lotus*, reads, “At that time the voice in space will speak these words [to the meditator]: ‘Śākyamuni is called Vairocana Pervading All Places, and that Buddha’s dwelling place is called Ever-Tranquil Light.’”<sup>99</sup> The *Fan-wang ching* presents Vairocana as manifesting individual Śākyamuni Buddhas as his ema-

nations in billions of worlds. Because he is said to have attained these powers as the reward of long efforts in cultivation, Vairocana in this depiction may properly be regarded as a recompense body (*sambhoga-kāya, hōjin*)—the wisdom and supernatural attainments of a Buddha achieved through practice, imagined as a subtle body.<sup>100</sup>

Chinese commentators advanced various theories about the relationship of these Buddhas, often in connection with discussions about the various kinds of “bodies” that Buddhas were said to possess.<sup>101</sup> Chih-i, for example, citing various sources, identified P’i-lu-che-na as the Dharma body, Lu-che-na as the recompense body, and Śākyamuni as the manifested body—noting, however, that the three bodies were inseparable.<sup>102</sup> Elsewhere, in a dynamic synthesis, he interpreted Śākyamuni Buddha of the “Fathoming the Lifespan” chapter as embodying all three bodies in one. When the Buddha’s wisdom grasps the ultimate reality, that which is realized is the Dharma body; and the wisdom that realizes it is the recompense body. For the sake of living beings, this wisdom manifests itself in physical form as human Buddha who teaches in the world; this is the manifested body. Since the recompense body both realizes the truth that is the Dharma body and responds to aspirations of the beings in the form of the manifested body, Chih-i regarded it as central. However, he also rejected any notion of hierarchy among the three bodies, denying that one can be seen as prior to the others.<sup>103</sup> Chih-i’s theories no doubt contributed to Taimitsu developments on three grounds: in strengthening the identification of Śākyamuni with Vairocana; in identifying Śākyamuni with the Dharma body as well as with the manifested and recompense bodies; and in denying that the Dharma body can be seen as prior to the other two. The identification of Śākyamuni with Vairocana was also made by Chinese monks specializing in the esoteric teachings, such as I-hsing (683–727) and possibly Yüan-cheng (d.u.), under whom Ennin studied.<sup>104</sup>

In Japan, this identification is also found in Saichō’s writing.<sup>105</sup> As noted earlier, he may even have seen it as a way to unify the various transmissions and initiations he had received in China by tracing them to a single source.<sup>106</sup> After Saichō’s death, his successors continued to elaborate in esoteric terms the unity of the two Buddhas. While their diverse arguments are too complex to discuss at length, in essence, they redefined Śākyamuni of the *Lotus Sūtra*, not as an individual person who had once cultivated bodhisattva practice and achieved Buddhahood, but as an originally inherent Buddha, without beginning or end.<sup>107</sup> He is, in Annen’s words, the one Buddha who is all Buddhas, who preaches continuously throughout all space and time. And, since the Dharma body is originally inherent in all phenomena, ordinary worldlings are in essence Buddhas, too; between the enlightened and the unenlightened, no ontological distinction whatever can be made. Redefinition of the

Buddha of the “Fathoming the Lifespan” chapter as an originally inherent Buddha would help give rise to medieval understandings of the *Lotus Sūtra* as a teaching of original enlightenment.

In passing, we may note an early and influential Tendai text that reflects both the esotericizing of the *Lotus* and the redefining of its Buddha. This is the esoteric scripture *Myōhō-rengē sanmai himitsu sanmaya kyō* (Sūtra of the secret *samaya* [symbols] of the samādhi of the lotus blossom of the Wonderful Dharma), or simply *Renge sanmai-kyō*. Though traditionally said to have been translated by the esoteric master Amoghavajra (Ch. Pu-k’ung, 705–774) and brought to Japan by either Kūkai or Enchin, it is almost certainly a Japanese apocryphon. Only its opening verse, known today as the *Hongaku san* ([Hymn] in praise of original enlightenment), is cited in Heian- and Kamakura-period texts and is thought to have been composed around Annen’s time, perhaps even by Annen himself.<sup>108</sup> The verse is as follows:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>kimyō hongaku shin hosshin</i>                        | I take refuge in the Dharma-body<br>[Buddha],<br>the mind of original<br>enlightenment,         |
| <i>jōjū myōhō shin rendai</i>                            | who ever resides on the lotus pedestal<br>of the mind, which is the<br>Wonderful Dharma.        |
| <i>honrai gusoku sanjin toku</i>                         | Innately adorned with the virtues<br>of the triple [Tathāgata] body,                            |
| <i>sanjū shichison jū shinjō</i>                         | The thirty-seven honored ones <sup>109</sup><br>dwell in the palace of the mind.                |
| <i>fumon jinju shozanmai</i><br><i>onri inga hōnengu</i> | The countless universal samādhis<br>are naturally inherent,<br>independent of cause and effect. |
| <i>muhen tokkai hon enman</i>                            | The boundless sea of virtues<br>is originally perfect and full                                  |
| <i>gen ga chōrai shin shobutsu</i>                       | Reverently I salute<br>the Buddhas of the mind.   |

The idea that the various samādhis or contemplations are all “naturally inherent” and “independent of cause and effect” would be further developed within medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought. The *Renge sanmai* verse is widely cited in Tendai *hongaku*-related literature, and commentaries on it were retrospectively attributed to major Tendai figures.<sup>110</sup>

### Valorizing the Phenomenal World

As discussed above, the T’ien-t’ai philosophical tradition approached the universality of truth from the standpoint of phenomena (*shih, ji*), in

that each concrete phenomenon is held to embody in itself the three-fold truth of emptiness, conventional existence, and the middle. This emphasis on the phenomenal was underscored in Saichō's appropriation of the doctrine of "suchness according with conditions" in a way that gave priority to the dynamic aspect of suchness, that is, its expression as the phenomenal world.

With the development of Taimitsu, the concrete world of visible phenomena was accorded still greater importance. This move had a major source in esoteric understandings of the sensory world. Kūkai had taught the esoteric doctrine of the six great elements—earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness—which comprise all things in the cosmos and are the body and mind of Dainichi Nyorai. To see colors, shapes, thoughts, and so forth as body of the originally inherent Buddha is to endow them with heightened sacrality; Kūkai took this one step further to argue that all phenomena were in fact the "preaching" of the Dharma body (*hosshin seppō*), by which Dainichi is revealed. Such ideas were also eventually incorporated into Taimitsu.

The valorization of the phenomenal world in Mikkyō thought was grounded in the bivalent meaning of the "three mysteries." On the one hand, the three mysteries are all forms, sounds, and thoughts, that is, the entire phenomenal world, equated with the body, speech, and mind of the cosmic Buddha Dainichi. On the other hand, the three mysteries are the concrete forms of esoteric practice by which identity with Dainichi is realized: the intricate mūdras formed with the hands and body; the vocally recited mantras and dharanis; and the mental contemplations of the holy figures represented on the mandalas. In this connection, the categories of *ri* and *ji*, in addition to their earlier meanings of "principle" and "phenomena," assumed new connotations in the realm of esoteric practice, *ri* being the timeless paradigm to be contemplated inwardly, and *ji*, its physical and temporal imitation or expression in actual practice. For example, *ri* is the mental visualization of the Buddha, while *ji* is the Buddha image standing on the altar.<sup>111</sup> Hence the Taimitsu distinction between the *Lotus*, which is "esoteric in principle" (*rimitsu*), and the *Ta-jih ching*, which, including as it does descriptions of mūdras and mantras, is "esoteric in concrete form" (*jimitsu*). Esoteric practice, with its ritual gestures, chanting of sacred formulas, and elaborate mandalas, was valorized as the secret language and gestures of the Buddha. Its strong sensory and aesthetic appeal, as well as its presumed efficacy in both soteriological and worldly matters, contributed greatly to its spread and patronage. Under its influence, one sees in the latter Heian period a general shift across Buddhist traditions away from silent, introspective contemplation toward practices having concrete form. This is evident, for example, in the way that the T'ien-t'ai contemplative methods introduced by Saichō were gradually supplemented and then surpassed in

popularity by such tangible acts as reading, reciting, and copying the *Lotus Sūtra*, and in the way that the chanting of the *nenbutsu*, the name of the Buddha Amida, emerged alongside, and eventually superseded, the silent contemplation or visualization of the Buddha.<sup>112</sup>

This emphasis, rooted in Mikkyō, on *ji* as the concrete forms of practice by which enlightenment is said to be realized experientially also enhanced the value accorded to *ji* in the broader sense as the actualities of the phenomenal world. The phenomenal world as the locus of truth was expressed in the Tendai tradition by such terms as “the real is identical with phenomena” (*sokuji nishin*) or—an expression especially popular in the medieval period—the “constant abiding of the worldly truth” (*zokutai jōjū*).<sup>113</sup> These doctrines were explicitly associated with the origin teaching (*honmon*), or latter fourteen chapters of the *Lotus Sūtra*,<sup>114</sup> and were often supported with a passage from the sūtra that reads: “The dharmas dwell in a Dharma-position, / and the worldly aspect constantly abides” (*ze hō jū hōi / seken sō jōjū*).<sup>115</sup> Along with the verse from the *Renge sanmai-kyō*, this is one of the textual passages most frequently quoted in medieval Tendai *hongaku* literature.

A particular example of the valorizing of the phenomenal world that occurred in early and medieval Japanese Tendai thought may be found in doctrinal discussion of the realization of Buddhahood by grasses and trees (*sōmoku jōbutsu*).<sup>116</sup> This doctrine had its origins in the attempts of Chinese Buddhist exegetes to extend the potential for Buddhahood universally. Tao-sheng (d. 434), disciple of the great translator Kumārajīva, argued that Buddha-nature is inherent even in the *icchantika*, people of incorrigible disbelief who lack the aspiration for enlightenment; Chitsang (549–623) of the San-lun school argued that insentient beings have the Buddha nature as well.<sup>117</sup> However, the Chinese thinker most closely connected with the idea that insentient beings have the Buddha nature is Chan-jan, whose discussion of this doctrine in his *Chin-kang pei* has been noted above. Chan-jan also develops the idea in his commentary on Chih-i’s *Mo-ho chih-kuan*, in discussing the passage, “Of every form and fragrance, there is none that is not the Middle Way.”<sup>118</sup> However, even among those Chinese Buddhists who upheld the possibility of the realization of Buddhahood by insentient beings, this was thought to depend on the realization of Buddhahood by sentient beings: because self and the outer world are nondual, when the practitioner manifests Buddhahood, so will that person’s environment.

In Japan, the problem of the Buddhahood of insentient beings—refocused as the Buddhahood of grasses and trees—garnered greater interest and moved in a different direction. Kūkai saw plants and trees as participating ontologically in the five great elements that compose the Dharma body and that “therefore, without change in their essence, they may without objection be referred to as ‘Buddha.’”<sup>119</sup> On the Tendai side,

beginning with Saichō, the discussion evolved in more complex fashion. Saichō had been pressed to address the issue in his debates with Hossō scholars. His opponents demanded: If, as Saichō maintained, universal suchness has the nature of awakening and knowing, was he then claiming that even insentient beings such as grasses and trees should be able, of themselves, to realize Buddhahood?<sup>120</sup> From Saichō's time on, Tendai scholars would argue the position that grasses and trees can indeed, of themselves, arouse the aspiration for enlightenment (*bodhicitta*, *bodai-shin*), cultivate practice, and achieve enlightenment. Annen in particular devoted great attention to this issue.<sup>121</sup> The doctrine of the Buddhahood of grasses and trees would eventually spread beyond monastic circles and influence first medieval poetry and later the Nō drama.<sup>122</sup>

Ideas about the enlightenment of plants are taken up in the later, medieval Tendai original enlightenment discourse, and it is there that one first finds concrete explanation of what exactly the enlightenment of plants might mean. In response to the question of how plants arouse the *bodhicitta*, cultivate practice, and realize enlightenment, one text responds: "Grasses and trees already have the four aspects of emergence, abiding, change, and extinction. These are [respectively] the awakening of aspiration, the cultivation of practice, the [realization of] enlightened wisdom (*bodai*), and the nirvāṇa of grasses and trees. How could they not belong to the category of sentient beings?"<sup>123</sup>

Here the doctrine of the Buddhahood of trees and grasses has been assimilated to *hongaku* discourse, in which, to the enlightened eye, the moment-to-moment arising and perishing of the phenomenal world is none other than the true aspect of original enlightenment.

In contrast to Chinese discussions of the Buddha nature of insentient beings, which aimed at asserting the universality of the Buddha nature, Japanese debates focused primarily on "grasses and trees." This focus, it has been suggested, may have reflected ancient, pre-Buddhist Japanese experience of the numinous presence of the deities or *kami* in nature and was reinforced in early medieval times by an increasing valorization of the natural world as a place of reclusion and enhanced soteriological meaning, in contrast to the turmoil and political scheming that marked the imperial capital of Heian-kyō in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>124</sup> This suggestion may have some validity, especially in later appropriations of the *sōmoku jōbutsu* discourse outside the realm of monastic scholarship. However, it should be borne in mind that notions of the "Buddhahood of grasses and trees" originated not as responses to "nature," but in doctrinal debate over the implications of claims for universal Buddhahood, and developed as a specific example of a larger tendency, emerging within Taimitsu and esoteric Buddhist thought more generally, to see the ordinary phenomena of the world as the locus of ultimate truth.

As discussed earlier, both Chinese T’ien-t’ai and Hua-yen intellectual traditions saw concrete particulars (*shih*) and universal principle (*li*) as nondual, though they approached this nonduality from different standpoints. By asserting this nonduality, they were able to “reclaim” the phenomenal world, not as a realm of suffering to be escaped, but as the locus of Buddhist practice and realization. Nonetheless, in the polarity of *li* and *shih*, concrete phenomena were still acknowledged as insubstantial, fleeting, and in that sense inferior or subordinate to “mind” or “true aspect.” With the development of Japanese Mikkyō, however, this polarity began to shift, with increasing emphasis being placed upon the realm of the sensory and the phenomenal. In the Tendai tradition, this shift in emphasis would culminate in the medieval discourse of original enlightenment.<sup>125</sup>

#### “Shortening the Path”

A fourth critical development in early Tendai thought was a progressive reduction, in doctrinal interpretation, of the length of time and level of achievement deemed necessary to realize enlightenment. Paul Groner has aptly termed this move “shortening the path” in an article of the same name. Discussion of this issue focused on the concept of “realizing Buddhahood with this very body” (*sokushin jōbutsu*). This concept had been introduced to Japan by both Kūkai and Saichō and contrasted sharply with the views of the Nara schools, which emphasized gradualist models of the Buddhist path.

It is extremely difficult to determine which of the two men, Saichō or Kūkai, first advocated the concept.<sup>126</sup> However, their sources clearly differed. Kūkai based himself on the *P’u-t’i-hsin lun* (Treatise on the aspiration for enlightenment), an apocryphal treatise attributed to Nāgārjuna, which contains the term.<sup>127</sup> Kūkai’s own treatise on the subject, *Sokushin jōbutsu gi* (The meaning of realizing Buddhahood with this very body), argues the direct realization of Buddhahood on the basis of the universality of the six great elements that compose the body and mind of both Dainichi and the practitioner; in the performance of the three mysteries, the identity of the body, speech, and mind of the esoteric adept with those of Dainichi Nyorai is realized.<sup>128</sup> Saichō, however, drew on the episode in the *Lotus Sūtra* of the eight-year-old Nāga princess, who in the space of a moment changes into a male, completes the eight phases of a Buddha’s life, and manifests perfect enlightenment.<sup>129</sup> In his writings, the realization of Buddhahood with this very body is linked not to esoteric practices, but to the power of the *Lotus Sūtra*. The Nāga girl, Saichō points out, had a threefold hindrance: she was born into the animal realm as a *nāga* (a serpent or dragon), clearly the result of unfavorable karma; she was female and of poor faculties; and she was young and there-

fore had not been able to devote many years to religious practice. Nevertheless, through the wondrous power of the *Lotus*, she was able to attain Buddhahood.<sup>130</sup>

We have already seen that Saichō saw the *Lotus Sūtra* as the “direct path” or “great direct path,” over and against the Hossō view of enlightenment as requiring three incalculable aeons to achieve. He was not optimistic about most people actually realizing Buddhahood with this very body, a possibility he saw as open only to those who had reached the stage of partial realization, the fifth of the six stages of identity, which corresponds to the first abode or *bhūmi* in the fifty-seven stages of bodhisattva practice of the perfect teaching.<sup>131</sup> The fifth stage of identity and the first abode both denote the point of transition from the level of an ordinary worldling (*prthag-jana*, *bonbu*) bound by defilements to that of the sage (*ārya-sattva*, *shō*), who has eliminated all defilements except ignorance (*mumyō-waku*) and begun to experience true insight. Where the birth and death of the ordinary worldling is determined by karma (*bundan shōji*), that of the sage is chosen in accordance with his aspiration for enlightenment and intent to benefit others (*hennyaku shōji*). “Realizing Buddhahood with this very body” for Saichō thus referred to the partial enlightenment of those who had already made the transition from ordinary worldling to sage. However, he also maintained that, even in the case of deluded worldlings, through the power of the *Lotus Sūtra* the process of enlightenment could be vastly accelerated, being fulfilled in the next lifetime or at latest the lifetime after that. This concern, even on a theoretical level, with the possibility of Buddhahood for ordinary worldlings would eventually emerge as a major characteristic of Japanese Buddhism as a whole.<sup>132</sup>

After Saichō’s death, his followers enthusiastically discussed and elaborated the concept of realizing Buddhahood with this very body. Among the issues of debate was whether *sokushin jōbutsu* should be understood as full or partial realization; whether it referred to enlightenment in this lifetime or in a subsequent lifetime; whether or not it was accompanied by a Buddha’s distinguishing physical marks; whether or not stages of the path might be skipped by advanced practitioners; whether emphasis should be placed on eradicating defilements or on manifesting innate Buddha nature; and what sort of practices would actually enable the realization of Buddhahood in this body.<sup>133</sup> While opinions varied, a general tendency emerged to define *sokushin jōbutsu* as occurring in this single lifetime (*issō jōbutsu*) and as accessible at increasingly lower stages of the path. Thus it came to be understood as a possibility for ordinary worldlings as well as sages. Especially from the time of Annen, Tendai discussions of *sokushin jōbutsu*, though still grounded textually in the *Lotus Sūtra*’s story of the Nāga girl, came increasingly to be associated with esoteric practices.

This stress on the possibility of realizing Buddhahood with this very body greatly influenced the development of medieval Tendai thought. In *hongaku* discourse, all beings are considered to be enlightened from the outset; what counts, then, is the moment when, whether hearing this doctrine from a teacher or reading it in texts, one realizes (or takes faith in) one’s originally enlightened nature. Thus medieval Tendai texts would speak of “realizing Buddhahood in a single moment” (*ichinen jōbutsu*).

Of the four characteristics of early Tendai thought outlined above, the esotericizing of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the identification of its Buddha with the Dharma body of Dainichi are specifically characteristic of Taijitsu, though they also illustrate the incorporation of esoteric elements that occurred more broadly in all “exoteric” schools. The other two characteristics—emphasis on phenomenal world as the locus of truth and the possibility of realizing enlightenment quickly—transcended Tendai doctrine and emerged as prominent themes in Japanese Buddhism more generally. Also broadly influential was the culture of secret transmission that surrounded Tendai esoteric practice, of which more will be said in chapter 3. Esoteric teachings and ritual, being esoteric, were not published universally but were passed on secretly from master to disciple. In the medieval period, this mode of transmitting knowledge would become normative not only for religion but in the arts, crafts, and other branches of knowledge as well.

### **Tendai Pure Land Thought**

One more element should be mentioned that helped lay the ground for the emergence of medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought. This was the Pure Land Buddhism, focused on the Buddha Amida (Skt. Amitābha), that developed within the Tendai tradition.<sup>134</sup> Pure Land practices had existed in Japan in some form almost from the time of Buddhism’s introduction. Within the Tendai school, Saichō himself may be said to have introduced such practices in the context of the “four kinds of samādhi,” the meditation system established by Chih-i.<sup>135</sup> Of these four kinds of meditation, the “constantly walking samādhi” is performed while circumambulating an image of Amida Buddha. It entails visualization of Amida’s thirty-two major and eighty minor excellent marks and leads to insight into the nonduality of the visualized Buddha and the visualizing subject. Later, Saichō’s disciple Ennin introduced to Japan the *nenbutsu* practice of Mt. Wu-t’ai, which involved group recitation of the *A-mi-t’o ching* (*Amida-kyō*, Sūtra of Amitābha) for a fixed number of days and was practiced while contemplating Amida Buddha. This was called the “uninterrupted nenbutsu” (*fudan nenbutsu*) and was instituted on Mt. Hiei as a form of the constantly walking samādhi.<sup>136</sup> Tendai Pure Land thought was greatly stimulated by the famous treatise of Genshin (942–1017), *Ōjō yōshū* (Essentials of birth in the Pure Land), which empha-

sized aspiring to birth in Amida's Pure Land after death by relying on contemplative *nenbutsu* practice or, for those less capable, the repeated recitation of Amida's name.<sup>137</sup> Tendai Pure Land thought was further influenced by popular practices that employed the chanted *nenbutsu* as an offering for the salvation of the dead and the pacification of vengeful ghosts.<sup>138</sup> Also associated with Tendai were a number of famous itinerant *nenbutsu hijiri* or holy men such as Kōya (or Kūya, 903–972) and Ryōnin (1072–1132), who traveled widely in Japan and spread the chanted *nenbutsu* among the populace.

Medieval Pure Land thought, especially that of Hōnen (1133–1212) and Shinran (1173–1262), has often been seen as a response to the Final Dharma age (*mappō*), thought to have begun in 1052 and to mark the beginning of the third and last stage in a three-stage process of Buddhism's decline.<sup>139</sup> It is often associated with belief in human limitations, in the depravity of the times, in salvation after death, and in the need to rely on the power of the Buddha. It would seem, at first glance, to be the very opposite of *hongaku* doctrine. However, as seen in the "constantly walking samādhi," there had also existed within Tendai Buddhism almost from the outset another, older strand of Pure Land thought emphasizing the nonduality of Amida and the practitioner, which would later be assimilated to and developed within Mikkyō thought. Original enlightenment discourse drew on this tradition and was also influenced by later popular Pure Land concerns about the salvation of ordinary worldlings. Several important *hongaku* texts are cast in an Amidist mode. These texts interpret the present world as the Pure Land, and Amida as the Buddha originally inherent in all phenomena, for example, by equating the three characters of the name *A-mi-da* with the three truths of emptiness, conventional existence, and the middle.<sup>140</sup> They may in fact represent some of the earliest Tendai *hongaku* literature.

### **The Emergence of Medieval Tendai Original Enlightenment Thought**

A distinct tradition within Japanese Tendai that centered on the idea of original enlightenment emerged in the latter Heian period. Although heavily influenced by earlier Mikkyō developments, notions of original enlightenment were developed under the rubric of Tendai/*Lotus* studies and were presented as the *Lotus Sūtra*'s ultimate intent. This tradition evolved its own rituals and doctrines and produced its own texts. Since it forms the chief subject of this study, it will not be discussed in detail in this introductory genealogy. However, three of its salient characteristics should be noted here at the outset.

First, original enlightenment thought is distinctive of that period in Tendai history known as "medieval Tendai" (*chūko Tendai*). What con-

stitutes Japan’s “medieval period” (*chūsei*) has been the subject of some controversy, and definitions have varied among disciplines.<sup>141</sup> At one time said to have begun with the establishment of the Kamakura *bakufu* or samurai government in 1185, the “medieval period” has now been pushed back by some historians to the eleventh or even tenth century in connection with the breakdown of the Ritsuryō system of imperial control of public lands and the beginnings of the private estates (*shōen*) system. “Medieval Tendai,” while intimately related to changes in the larger society, has its own parameters. The term was first proposed by Shimaji Daitō, who argued the need for periodicization in the study of Japanese Tendai intellectual history. *Chūko* or “medieval” in his view represented the period from Saichō up until the adoption during the mid-Edo period of the Sung T’ien-t’ai thought of Ssu-ming Chih-li and was characterized by the fusion of esoteric and exoteric Buddhism, emphasis on the origin teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and the doctrine of original enlightenment.<sup>142</sup> The category was further refined by Shimaji’s student and scholar of Tendai Buddhism, Hazama Jikō (1895–1946), who defined “medieval Tendai” as extending roughly from the period of Insei or rule by retired emperors (1086–1185) up until about the Genroku through Kyōhō eras (1688–1735) of the Edo period, a usage that has now become widely accepted.<sup>143</sup> In Hazama’s view, three characteristics distinguished Tendai thought during this period: the development of “original enlightenment thought” (*hongaku shisō*); a particular interpretive style based on personal insight rather than fidelity to texts (*kanjin-shugi*); and an emphasis on the authority of oral transmissions (*kuden*).<sup>144</sup> Hazama further divided this *hongaku*-dominated “medieval Tendai” into three stages: (1) The period of emergence and establishment, extending from the mid-Insei through the late Kamakura period. During this stage, oral transmissions of the teachings of medieval Tendai thinkers began to be written down and collected. Two main lineages, the Eshin and the Danna, appeared and divided into several subbranches. Within these lineages, specific doctrines were formulated and systematized, and distinctive transmission rituals took shape. (2) The period of development and decline. In this period, lasting from roughly the Nanbokuchō (1336–1392) through the Muromachi (1333–1568) period, doctrines underwent further elaboration, extensive collections of, and commentaries on, oral transmission literature were produced, and rituals of transmission became increasingly formalized. Medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought developed in conjunction with distinctive practices of Mt. Hiei, including the cult of Sannō Shintō, the *kaihōgyō* walking meditation, and mountain asceticism. According to Hazama, in this period, especially in the later Muromachi, abuses were becoming evident, including increasingly arbitrary interpretations, the forging and selling of transmissions, and the general ossification of formal aspects of the tradition. (3) The period of

transmission and maintenance, lasting from the early to the mid-Edo period. During this time, despite occasional new developments, emphasis was on maintaining the tradition. In the Genroku (1685–1703) and Kyōhō (1716–35) periods, the priest Myōryū (1637–1690) and his disciple Reikū (1652–1739), leader of a faction on Mt. Hiei called the Anraku school, advocated the *Ssu-fen lü* precepts in addition to the bodhisattva precepts and championed the Sung T'ien-t'ai doctrine of Chih-li as a new orthodoxy superseding that of the medieval *kuden*.<sup>145</sup> These events marked a shift away from the characteristically medieval modes of Tendai thought and practice and ushered in the “modern period” of Japanese Tendai history.

A second point to be noted is that the literature of this *hongaku*-based medieval Tendai tradition, especially in its earlier stages, is largely a literature of apocryphal texts. Specific teachings of this tradition were at first passed down from master to disciple in the form of oral transmissions (*kuden*), perhaps beginning around the middle of the eleventh century. (The chronology given here was proposed by Tamura Yoshirō and will be discussed below.<sup>146</sup>) Eventually *kuden* were written down in a few sentences on single sheets of paper, called *kirikami* (or *kirigami*), which the master would then give to his disciple. *Kirikami* were inscribed on a single sheet and wrapped in a separate piece of paper, on which would be written an outer title (*gedai*), or the original sheet would simply be folded and the outer title inscribed on the outside. In some *kirikami* collections, such as the *Sanjū shika no kotogaki* (Notes on thirty-four articles), the outer titles of some of the original *kirikami* are preserved. Beginning probably around the mid-twelfth century, numbers of *kirikami* were collected together to form larger texts, assigned a collective title, and attributed retrospectively to a great Tendai master of the past, such as Saichō, Ennin, or Genshin. Some compilations made during the mid-to late-Kamakura period were similarly attributed to later Tendai figures, such as Chūjin (1065–1138), the forty-sixth *zasu* or chief abbot of Mt. Hiei, or his disciple Kōkaku. Once set down in writing, they of course became textual records, rather than oral transmissions, but they continued to be called *kuden*, probably in testament to the authority surrounding one-to-one master-disciple transmission. Works dealing with original enlightenment thought other than *kuden* collections were also produced; these include a number of essays interpreting Pure Land thought from an original enlightenment perspective, several of which were retrospectively attributed to Genshin, the great Tendai Pure Land figure of the mid-Heian period. By the mid-Kamakura period, systematizations of doctrine were beginning to take shape. These are the so-called *kuden hōmon*, or orally transmitted doctrines. Best known among these are the comparative classification of the “fourfold rise and fall” (*shijū kōhai*) and the system of the “threefold seven great matters” (*sanjū*

*shichika no daiji*), both of which developed within the Eshin school.<sup>147</sup> In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—that is, from the end of the Kamakura through the Nanbokuchō and Muromachi periods—a variety of extensive commentaries informed by *hongaku* ideas was produced on classical T’ien-t’ai works, on the *Lotus Sūtra*, and on earlier *kuden hōmon*. Some of these later works were signed by their actual authors or compilers, though works whose attribution appears dubious still continued to appear.<sup>148</sup> Thus for medieval Tendai Buddhism, apocryphal texts were the norm rather than the exception, a fact that has had significant consequences for the study of this literature.

Third, it must be mentioned that, in medieval Tendai thought, the category “*hongaku*” assumes a distinctive meaning different from its usage in earlier contexts. First to note this was Shimaji Daitō, who distinguished between “original enlightenment” as used in medieval Tendai texts and in the *Awakening of Faith*.<sup>149</sup> In the *Awakening of Faith*, he pointed out, “original enlightenment” refers to the one mind considered from the perspective of conventional consciousness, or the “mind as arising and perishing,” and not from the absolute perspective of the mind as suchness. “Original enlightenment” is paired with “nonenlightenment” as one of two inseparable aspects of the *ālaya-vijñāna* or store consciousness, in which innate purity and delusion are conjoined; moreover, “original enlightenment” must be realized through the knowledge cultivated by practice in the process called “acquired enlightenment.” Thus in the *Awakening of Faith*, “original enlightenment” remains merely the potential for enlightenment in deluded beings. In the medieval Tendai *kuden* literature, however, Shimaji found that *hongaku* is equated with suchness itself and assigned an absolute meaning; it is no longer merely an abstract principle but the actual, true aspect of all things (*ji jissō*)—a development he attributed, via Kūkai’s appropriations, to the *Shih Mo-ho-yen lun*. He also noted that the terms “original enlightenment” and “acquired enlightenment” had been assimilated in medieval Tendai to the project of doctrinal classification: “original enlightenment” was defined as the profound insight of the origin teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and “acquired enlightenment,” as representing an inferior level of teaching.

Shimaji’s observations were further elaborated by Tamura Yoshirō, who saw a clear line dividing medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought and its antecedents both on the continent and in Japanese Tendai up through Annen.<sup>150</sup> In his view, medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought represented the thorough conflation of two streams of thought: the notion of mind or suchness as an absolute principle (*ri*) that had developed within Hua-yen Buddhism, and the emphasis on the world of concrete phenomena (*ji*) found in T’ien-t’ai and associated since Chan-jan’s time with the origin teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the Bud-

dha's revelation of his original enlightenment in the remote past. First, said Tamura, the idea of original enlightenment was identified as an absolute principle (*ri*); then the monism of this absolute principle was applied directly to concrete actualities (*ji*), so that the arising and perishing of phenomena, just as they are, were valorized absolutely as the expressions of original enlightenment. Tamura found this "absolute monism" or "absolute affirmation" of the phenomenal world to be exemplified by passages such as this one, from the *kuden* collection *Sanjū shika no kotogaki*:

The revelation of [the Buddha's original enlightenment as] principle (*ri kenpon*) means that hell dwellers are [none other than] hell dwellers, hungry ghosts are none other than hungry ghosts, and so on, on up to Buddhas and bodhisattvas being [none other than] Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Because the ten realms [of living beings] from the outset constantly abide, the ten realms, without transformation, represent the original essence (*hontai*).<sup>151</sup>

Hell dwellers, hungry ghosts, and other deluded beings do not change and become Buddhas; all beings just as they are manifest the true aspect, which is original enlightenment. This entails the "absolute affirmation of reality" and the "affirmation of the deluded ordinary worldling" that Tamura sees as central to original enlightenment thought.

Whether or not it is accurate to characterize original enlightenment as a doctrine of "absolute affirmation" will be among the questions raised by this study. Here we may simply note that the shift in the meaning of "original enlightenment" found in medieval Tendai thought may also be described from a different perspective. Once the Buddha nature has been defined as innate in all beings, the question arises as to whether awakening depends on removing the attachments and false views that obstruct one from discerning the Buddha nature, or on a direct realization of the Buddha nature, as whose consequence the mental defilements will naturally be dispelled or transformed. The *Awakening of Faith* clearly takes the former position, as, to a lesser extent, does early Tendai thought. By the medieval period of Tendai history, however, largely under Mikkyō influence, emphasis had shifted heavily in the other direction. All one must do is discern, or even simply have faith in, original enlightenment; then the defilements and hindrances appear in their true light as its nondual manifestations.

While the perspective of original enlightenment dominated the medieval Tendai tradition, it was not universally accepted. An important critic was Hōchi-bō Shōshin (fl. 12th cent.), a scrupulous exegete who was the author of voluminous commentaries on the major works of Chih-i.<sup>152</sup> Shōshin framed his criticism in response to "many among those who study *shingon*," hinting at the esoteric roots of Tendai original en-

lightenment thought. Original enlightenment, he said, was to be understood in terms of the *Awakening of Faith*, as a potential within deluded worldlings to be realized by the practice of acquired enlightenment. In particular, Shōshin criticized the claim that the ordinary worldling is “originally the Buddha of self-awakening” (*honrai jikaku-butsu*), a position he denounced as a denial of the causality of practice and attainment and “the same as heterodox teachings” (*gedō-setsu*). Shōshin also opposed definitions of Śākyamuni of the “Fathoming the Lifespan” chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* as an originally inherent Buddha, which, he said, clearly went against the sūtra’s statement that Śākyamuni had practiced the bodhisattva way and attained Buddhahood in the remote past. Shōshin’s criticisms form an important external reference point for gauging how far original enlightenment thought had developed by the late Heian period. For convenience’ sake, this book will use the term “medieval Tendai thought” to refer to the tradition’s *hongaku*-dominated mainstream, but with the understanding that not all medieval Tendai thinkers accepted contemporary notions of original enlightenment.

### Original Enlightenment Thought and Broader Intellectual Currents

Thus far, this genealogy has traced in vertical, diachronic fashion the origins and development of ideas important to the emergence of medieval Tendai original thought. Here, it is appropriate to note some of its horizontal branches, that is, the synchronous influence of *hongaku* thought on the broader intellectual life of medieval Japan. This discourse did not remain confined to Buddhist scholastic circles but was quickly assimilated to other vocabularies and found other modes of expression. It can be found, for example, in didactic tales and poetry of the medieval period. *Shasekishū* (Sand and pebbles), a collection of *setsuwa* (tales) by Mujū Ichien (a.k.a. Dōgyō, 1226–1312), relates the following:

The *Shou-leng-yen ching* tells the story of Yajñadattā, who looked in a mirror one morning and could not see her face because of the way she was holding the mirror. Believing that her head had been taken by a demon, she ran about distractedly until someone showed her how to hold the mirror correctly. Then she thought that her head had been restored. Both her wretchedness and her delight were without foundation. The unenlightened man is like one who looks for his lost head. The mind of original enlightenment (*hongaku*) is not lost; the loss comes only from thinking that this is so. Thinking that we have discovered and attained something for the first time is what we feel when we experience enlightenment for the first time (*shikaku*). But how can

we attain it for the very first time [when it has been there since the beginning]?<sup>153</sup>

Ideas of original enlightenment are also found occasionally in verse, such as these poems of Shōtetsu (1381–1459), where the Sinitic Buddhist terms *hongaku* and *honbutsu* are transformed into their Japanese equivalents, *moto no satori* and *moto no hotoke*:

*Hotoke to mo  
nori to mo shiranu  
hito ni koso  
moto no satori wa  
fukaku miekere*

He who knows nothing  
of “Buddha” or “Dharma”—  
he is the one in whom  
original enlightenment  
appears profoundly.

*Yama mo mina  
moto no hotoke no  
sugata ni te  
taezu minori o  
toku arashi kana*<sup>154</sup>

Mountains and tiny river shells  
are all the forms  
of the original Buddha,  
and the storm ceaselessly  
preaches the Dharma.

A detailed discussion of the impact of original enlightenment thought on the broader intellectual culture of medieval Japan would exceed the scope of this study. Here it will suffice to touch briefly on two important areas of influence: Shintō theory and poetics.

### Hongaku Thought and Shintō Theory

In the late Kamakura and Muromachi periods, a body of literature began to take shape detailing various secret transmissions and theories concerning the nature of *kami* or local deities. The threat of Mongol attack in the late thirteenth century may well have stimulated a heightened interest in the *kami* as sources of numinous power to be invoked for nation protection, and who—after typhoons thwarted two invasion attempts in 1274 and 1281—were seen as having indeed repelled Japan’s enemies. This new literature was chiefly a development within Buddhism. Buddhist monks were among the few educated people who could both travel widely and communicate with people of different social classes. Thus they helped initiate the practice of making pilgrimages to major shrines such as Ise and Kumano, played a key role in the dissemination of stories about the miraculous powers of the *gongen* or local manifestations of the deities, and did much to popularize the worship of shrines beyond those of the family or village.<sup>155</sup> They were also the major producers of the new transmission literature concerning the shrines and their deities. Its two main streams are those of Sannō Shintō, which concerns the *kami* of the Hie shrine complex worshipped on Mt. Hiei, and Ryōbu Shintō, which originated within the Shingon school as an attempt

to assert the identity of the inner and outer shrines of Ise with the Diamond- and Matrix-Realm mandalas. Similar literature was also compiled within the families of hereditary shrine priests, though their ideas too were strongly influenced by Buddhism.<sup>156</sup> Central to these Shintō theories and transmissions is the doctrine of original enlightenment.<sup>157</sup> While this remains a vast and largely unexplored area within the field of medieval Japanese religion, a few examples can be given here.

First, notions of original enlightenment were invoked in attempts to establish the preeminence of the Ise shrine. For example, a Ryōbu Shintō transmission text retrospectively attributed to Kūkai outlines three categories of *kami*. The first category is the *kami* of original enlightenment (*hongaku*). This refers to the deity of the great shrine of Ise, the “constantly abiding and unchanging subtle essence of the principle or nature that is originally pure.” Second are the *kami* of nonenlightenment (*fukaku*), ignorant, boisterous, and deluded demons who “never emerge from the four evil [realms]” and “lose their minds on hearing the pure voice of the Buddhas’ [preaching].” Third are the *kami* of acquired enlightenment (*shikaku*), the deities of the various other shrines, who, after undergoing transmigration, by means of the Buddhist teachings “awake from the sleep of ignorance and return to the principle of original enlightenment.”<sup>158</sup> The categories of original enlightenment, non-enlightenment, and acquired enlightenment of course come from the *Awakening of Faith*. This threefold categorization of *kami* (*sanjin-setsu*) appears in other transmission texts of the late Kamakura period and influenced the development of Ise Shintō doctrine.<sup>159</sup>

Second, original enlightenment thought influenced a shift in how the unity of *kami* and Buddhas was understood. During the Nara and Heian periods, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, who transcend time and space, had increasingly come to be identified with specific local deities and thus grounded, as it were, in the temporal and geographical realities of Japan. The logic of these identifications was eventually expressed in terms of *honji-suijaku*, language borrowed from T’ien-t’ai/Tendai *Lotus Sūtra* exegesis. The Buddha of the latter fourteen chapters of the sūtra, or “origin teaching” (*honmon*), who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago, is the Buddha in his original ground (*honji*), while the Buddha of the first fourteen chapters, or “trace teaching” (*shakumon*), is the “manifest trace” (*suijaku*) who appeared in this world as the historical Buddha. Chih-i had likened the relation of the two to that of the moon in the sky and its reflection on a pond.<sup>160</sup> When this relation was applied to that of Buddhas and *kami*, it became possible to conceive of the deities, not merely as protectors of Buddhism or as suffering beings in need of Buddhist salvation, but as local manifestations of the transcendent Buddhas and bodhisattvas, compassionately projected as a “skillful means” to lead the people of Japan to enlightenment. Correspondences between

specific Buddhas or bodhisattvas and *kami* were elaborated on geographic, political, and economic grounds, as well as those of linguistic association.<sup>161</sup>

In the polarity of *honji-suijaku* thought, Buddhas and bodhisattvas are clearly valorized over *kami*. The transcendent Buddhas are regarded as the origin, and the local *kami* as their manifested traces (*buppon shinjaku*). With the emergence of theories and transmissions about the *kami* in the late Kamakura period, however, the polarity of this relationship began to shift in favor of the *kami* who compassionately “dim their light and mingle with the dust of the world” (*wakō dōjin*). Interpretations of the identity of Buddhas and *kami* paralleled those of the nonduality of abstract principle (*ri*) and concrete phenomena (*ji*) in medieval Tendai thought; as concrete phenomena came to be stressed over their invisible ground, so did *kami* over Buddhas. Eventually, in the Muromachi period, there emerged what modern scholars have called “reverse” or *han honji-suijaku* theory. Here the original relationship is inverted: the local *kami* are seen as the original ground, and the transcendent Buddhas, as their manifestations (*shinpon busshaku*). The role of *hongaku* thought in arguing this reversal is well expressed in the following passage from Sonshun (1451–1514):

Buddhas achieve the way by acquired enlightenment; thus they are regarded as traces (*suijaku*). *Kami* convert and teach by virtue of original enlightenment; thus they are called “original ground” (*honji*). . . . *Kami* have worldly forms, and Buddhas, the forms of renunciates (*shukke*). “Renunciation” means that one corrects one’s worldly form; it takes the shape of a shaven head and [black]-dyed robes, of discarding evil and upholding good. This is the practice of acquired enlightenment. But the lay state (*zaike*) entails behavior stemming from the virtue of one’s innate nature and demonstrates the practice of one’s present status being precisely the [stage of] wondrous enlightenment (*tōtai soku myōkaku*). . . . Tenshō Daijin [Amaterasu Ōmikami] is the honest and upright, originally inherent deity; therefore [this *kami*] rejects the twisted mind of acquired enlightenment and takes the straight way of original enlightenment as fundamental.<sup>162</sup>

It should be noted that Sonshun was a Tendai monk, and that this passage occurs in a commentary on the *Lotus Sūtra*, a Buddhist text. Reverse *honji-suijaku* thought did not originate in an independent Shintō world defining itself over and against Buddhism, though such claims have long been made. It emerged within the Buddhist realm, as Shimaji Daitō asserted nearly a century ago.<sup>163</sup> It also occurs in the school of Yuiitsu Shintō established by Yoshida Kanetomo (1435–1511) of the sacerdotal lineage of the Yoshida Shrine; however, Yuiitsu Shintō theories were also clearly shaped by medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought.<sup>164</sup>

Third, one finds myths and legends of the *kami* reinterpreted in light of *hongaku* doctrine. For example, the Tendai monk Ryōhen wrote in 1424: “All sentient beings are also known as the eight million *kami*. Opening one’s mouth [to assert] that the momentary deluded thoughts of all living beings are unmoving original enlightenment is what is meant by the opening of the rock cave.”<sup>165</sup> In the myths related in the eighth-century imperially commissioned chronicles *Kojiki* (Record of ancient matters) and *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan), when the Sun Goddess hid herself in the rock cave, all was in darkness. The opening of the rock cave, which restored light to the world, is here likened to the revelation of original enlightenment.

### Hongaku Thought and Medieval Poetics

The doctrine of original enlightenment not only appeared as a theme in individual poems, as noted above, but also informed medieval poetic theory.<sup>166</sup> Some monastics regarded the composing of poetry, or “floating phrases and fictive utterances” (*kyōgen kigo*), as an obstacle to Buddhist practice. Devotion to poetry inevitably involved one in “sins of the mouth”—false or exaggerated expressions—and in the realm of the senses, as well as in such worldly pursuits as poetry competitions. It also consumed time that could perhaps be more profitably spent in contemplative practices.<sup>167</sup> Original enlightenment thought and its attendant valorization of concrete phenomena provided one rationale by which some poets were able to reclaim the composition of verse, not only as an activity valid for Buddhists, but as a form of Buddhist practice in its own right.

A suggestive work in this regard is the *Korai fūtei shō* (Poetic styles past and present, 1197) by the poet Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114–1204). Shunzei is credited with having introduced into Japanese verse the elusive aesthetic quality of *yūgen*, connoting mystery and depth. The relevant section of his treatise begins by likening the composition of poetry to “calming and contemplation” (*shikan*) as set forth in Chih-i’s *Mo-ho chih-kuan* (Great calming and contemplation). Chih-i’s work begins with a recitation of the Dharma lineage transmitted from Śākyamuni Buddha down to the present; in like manner, Shunzei declares, the Japanese *uta* or verse has been handed down since antiquity:

[Some might say] that the one [i.e., the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*] addresses the profound truth transmitted by writings on the Dharma and by the [Buddha’s own] golden mouth, while the other [that is, the tradition of poetry] resembles the game of “floating phrases and fictive utterances.” But it is here that the deep meaning of things becomes apparent, for poetry as a connection (*en*) can bring one even to the Buddha Way. Hence the teaching that “the worldly passions are precisely

enlightenment” (*bonnō soku bodai*). Thus the *Lotus Sūtra* states, “If he [the practitioner of the sūtra] preaches secular classics, pronouncements on the governance of the world, occupations that sustain life and things of that sort, he shall in every case accord with the True Dharma.”<sup>168</sup> And the *Contemplation of Samantabhadra* says, “What is sin? And what is good fortune? The mind itself being empty, sins and fortune are without substance.”<sup>169</sup> For these reasons, I can now definitively state that the profound way of poetry resembles the three truths of emptiness, conventional existence, and the middle.<sup>170</sup>

The connection between Shunzei’s poetics of *yūgen* and T’ien-t’ai/Tendai concepts of nonduality has long been noted. The threefold truth, as mentioned above, denies both the real existence of phenomena and one-sided attachment to emptiness, affirming all things as simultaneously empty of substance but also existing provisionally as elements of conventional reality. Scholars have noted a number of structural similarities between this concept and Shunzei’s verse, which are also reflected in the work of other medieval poets. One such similarity is a collapse of the distinction between observer and observed to reveal the “mind” in which both subject and object are encompassed. Konishi Jin’ichi has pointed to this development in Shunzei as representing a new direction in medieval poetry.<sup>171</sup> William LaFleur has additionally noted a denial of hierarchy between signifier and signified, or between poetic imagery and what it alludes to, that characterizes medieval poetry in the *yūgen* mode. Such verse, like the threefold truth itself, “aims at a kind of ontological egalitarianism” in which “the abstract is no more and no less real than the concrete” and “surfaces are never merely superficial.”<sup>172</sup> A symbol, while being a symbol, simultaneously embodies the reality it represents. To apply LaFleur’s mode of analysis to a single poem, one might consider this verse by the Tendai prelate Jien (1155–1225) on the brevity of summer nights:

*Musubu te ni*  
*kage midare yuku*  
*yama no i no*  
*akademo tsuki no*  
*katabuki ni keru*<sup>173</sup>

In my cupped hands,  
the moon’s reflections scatters  
in this mountain well:  
While I am still unsatisfied,  
the moon sinks from view.

To anyone familiar with T’ien-t’ai/Tendai doctrine, the poem immediately suggests the analogy of the moon and its reflection that Chih-i employed in his exegesis of the *Lotus Sūtra* to explain the relation between the original Buddha and his historical manifestation in this world. However, one point of that analogy is that historical manifestation and origin are neither separate nor hierarchical. A similar “nondual” structure informs the poem; thus it does not merely allude to the analogy of

the unity of origin and manifestation as expressed in Chih-i’s commentary but is also about the moon on a summer night and its reflection in a mountain well. In a manner similar to the trajectory of the threefold contemplation, which proceeds from conventional existence to emptiness and then reverses, returning to conventional existence, so the poem points to the classic allusion beyond itself only to turn and redirect the attention back to its immediate imagery. This rejection of hierarchy between image and the truth to which it alludes mirrors, as LaFleur has noted, the Tendai idea that “phenomena are none other than the true aspect” (*genshō soku jissō*).<sup>174</sup> This verse of Jien’s also illustrates the denial of observer/observed duality noted by Konishi. As the reflected moon breaks apart in the poet’s hands, the “real” moon vanishes from sight, simultaneously cutting off perceiver and perceived, object and reflection.

Yet another, deeper structural similarity is to be found between medieval Tendai thought and medieval poetics. This is the claim that poetry, even art itself, is not a second-level representation of a higher, “religious” truth but, when approached with the proper attitude, is equivalent to Buddhist practice and is the expression of enlightenment. Shunzei’s suggestion that “the profound way of poetry” resembles the threefold truth soon found expression in the phrase “the way of poetry is itself the Buddha Way” (*kadō soku butsudō*). In other words, the same sort of nondual relationship thought to obtain between *ji* and *ri*, or between *kami* and Buddhas, was applied to the relationship of artistic expression and Buddhist truth.<sup>175</sup>

Shunzei’s reference to the threefold truth has usually been interpreted in terms of the methods of contemplation set forth in Chih-i’s *Mo-ho chih-kuan*. However, by Shunzei’s time, “calming and contemplation” and the “threefold truth” had emerged as central themes in the medieval Tendai *kuden* literature, where they were often interpreted from a *hongaku* perspective, not as actual forms of contemplative discipline, but as innate from the outset: for the person who has realized original enlightenment, all ordinary activities are “calming and contemplation.” It seems possible, even likely, that Shunzei understood the contemplation of poetry in this sense.

The influence on poetics of Tendai thought generally and original enlightenment thought in particular is also evident in the writings of other leading medieval poets concerning their art. Jien asserted that the principle of the nonduality of ultimate and worldly truths was expressed in the composition of *uta*.<sup>176</sup> Jakuzen (fl. 12<sup>th</sup> cent.) wrote, “Of every form and fragrance, there is none that is not the Middle Way.’ [To compose poetry on] on green leaves or scarlet blossoms is an instance of this principle.”<sup>177</sup> *Nomori no kagami*, a thirteenth-century treatise on poetics, suggests that sincerity of expression in composing verse is equivalent to the threefold truth of emptiness, conventional existence, and the mid-

dle, and to the heart of esoteric Buddhist practice. “To endow with mind that which is without mind, to give voice to things that cannot speak, is the realization of Buddhahood in this very body by both sentient and insentient beings.” Composing a thirty-one-syllable *waka* is equivalent to reciting an esoteric mantra.<sup>178</sup> A somewhat later poet, Shūgi (1421-1502), wrote in his treatise on linked verse (*renga*):

As for the way of poetry, by simply fixing compassion in one’s mind and contemplating the principle of birth and death, even when watching the scattering blossoms and falling leaves, the demons in one’s mind will be calmed and will return to the principle of suchness which is original enlightenment. Because “in every case there will be no contradiction to the true aspect,” whatever the path to which he is devoted, one should not deviate from this mind.<sup>179</sup>

The relationship between original enlightenment thought and the broader cultural milieu has yet to be fully explored. However, even a brief examination brings to light striking similarities between the collapsing of the distinction between ultimate reality and concrete phenomena seen in medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought; the identification of Buddhas with *kami*; and the equation of the Buddha Way with poetry. All three discourses participate in a shared “nondual” matrix in which immediate particulars are valorized as instantiating the whole of enlightened reality. This way of thinking appears to have characterized much of medieval intellectual activity.

### **Problems in the Study of Tendai Hongaku Thought**

Thus far, the term Tendai “original enlightenment thought” has been used as though it were unproblematic, but what it represents is far more complex and less unified than this single rubric would suggest. At this point, it will be well to give some idea of the sources involved in the study of this subject and the problems they present, as well as the difficulties entailed by the use of “original enlightenment thought” as a scholarly category. An awareness of such problems is essential, because they affect how the subject of “original enlightenment thought” has been constructed in modern scholarship.

#### **Problems with the Texts**

Medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought is developed primarily in a diverse body of texts known as orally transmitted doctrines (*kuden hōmon*). Some of these texts deal explicitly with the concept of original enlightenment, while in others this idea is present only as a tacit premise informing a discussion of other subjects, such as the Sannō cult, the chanting of hymns (*shōmyō*), precept initiation, or topics of doctrinal debate. There

are also works dealing with original enlightenment notions that do not take the form of oral transmissions. Much of the *hongaku*-related Pure Land material attributed to Genshin falls into this category.

Modern academic study of the Tendai *kuden hōmon* began around the same time that the topic of “original enlightenment thought” began to draw scholarly attention.<sup>180</sup> Scholarly research thus far, however, has illuminated merely the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Oral transmission texts account for an estimated 20 percent of the Tendai sect’s Eizan Library holdings, and this is only one of several archives in Japan housing such documents.<sup>181</sup> Only a small percentage of these texts has been made available in printed editions.<sup>182</sup> The sole annotated volume of such literature, *Tendai hongaku ron* (Tendai original enlightenment discourse), was published in 1973; it has since come to be regarded in the nature of a canon and has done much to stimulate interest in original enlightenment thought.<sup>183</sup> However, it contains only seven complete texts and two substantial portions of larger texts—a fraction of the extant *hongaku*-related literature. It is well to bear in mind that our understanding of “original enlightenment thought,” and of medieval Tendai more broadly, is still based on a limited sampling of data. As more manuscripts are edited and published, a more detailed picture should emerge.

Another, formidable difficulty with the Tendai oral transmission literature concerns the dating and attribution of individual texts. As outlined above, *kuden* were first relayed orally from master to disciple, then written down as *kirikami*, and finally assembled into collections that were retrospectively attributed to Saichō, Enchin, Kōkaku, or other prominent Tendai figures. During this period of compilation, oral transmission and the production of new *kirikami* were still continuing, and these transmissions would in turn be incorporated into compiled texts. Thus not all *kirikami* included in a particular collection necessarily date from the same period.<sup>184</sup> Later works systematizing and commenting on *hongaku*-related doctrines sometimes carry reliable attribution; these begin to appear from around the fourteenth century. Before that, however, lie two hundred years or more of texts whose exact chronology and authorship, in most cases, are simply not known. Internal clues will occasionally establish an upper or lower limit for the date of a text’s compilation or the sequence of two or more texts. In a few cases there are external references. For example, in his commentary on Chih-i’s *Fa-hua wen-chü* (Words and phrases of the *Lotus Sūtra*), written between 1165 and 1207, Hōchi-bō Shōshin questions the authenticity of a collection of *kuden* attributed to Ennin called *Juketsu entaragishū tōketsu*,<sup>185</sup> thus some version of the *Entaragishū* must have been written before that time. For the most part, however, dating is a matter of elaborate guesswork as to the sequence of texts based on what appear to be earlier or later stages in the development of the doctrines and arguments they contain. Connections

among texts are often so complex that tentatively dating one can affect the placement of several others.

Drawing upon the work of earlier scholars and on his own comparison of texts, the late Tamura Yoshirō (1921–1989) established a tentative chronology of some of the major texts considered representative of medieval Japanese original enlightenment thought, dividing the production of this literature into six fifty-year periods from 1100 to 1400.<sup>186</sup> Tamura notes that his dating is tentative and his list of texts far from exhaustive. His dating of certain individual writings has been debated. Nonetheless, his represents the most detailed chronology to date and is heuristically useful as a framework for discussing the development of Tendai *hongaku* thought. It has been cited so widely that it is worth examining some of the evidence on which it is based and the major uncertainties involved.

Dating of some texts from Tamura's fifth and sixth periods—from 1300 to 1400—can be established with relative certainty, as by this late stage, some works were signed by their actual compilers. Fixing the upper limits of the tradition is much more difficult. Tamura's choice of "1100" as a starting point for the process of textual compilation derives from his analysis of the *kuden* collection *Honri taikōshū* (Collection in outline of the original principle). As a collection of *kirikami* transmissions said to have been received by Saichō in China, it clearly belongs to the medieval Tendai *kuden* tradition. However, because it does not yet exhibit the characteristic vocabulary of *hongaku* thought, it is obviously a very early example of the genre. Tamura finds great similarity between the *Taikōshū* and the ideas of Annen, who died in the late ninth century. However, the *Taikōshū* says that it represents "the doctrinal interpretations of Eshin's followers," a reference to Eshin Sōzu or Genshin, who died in 1017. Considering that it must then have been compiled by Genshin's followers after his death, Tamura places the *Taikōshū* "around 1100" and begins his dating of the *kuden* literature from that point.<sup>187</sup>

If the compiling of oral transmissions and *kirikami* into larger texts began "around 1100," then when did Tendai oral transmission itself begin? Perhaps, Tamura suggests, from about the mid-eleventh century, that is, from the time of the Tendai monk Kōkei or Kōgyō (977–1049) and his disciple Shōhan (996–1077). Kōkei, known as a systematizer of Taimitsu ritual, is said to have transmitted his teachings on esoteric rites verbally to his disciples. This convention of oral transmission may then have been applied to Tendai doctrinal interpretations as well. Shōhan, under the name of his lodging temple, the Renjitsu-bō, is mentioned frequently in medieval Tendai *kuden* texts as the source of various oral transmissions.<sup>188</sup>

Central to Tamura's scheme is his proposed dating of the *kuden* collection *Sanjū shika no kotogaki* (Notes on thirty-four articles), attributed to Kōkaku (fl. 1150). Tamura considered the *Kotogaki* to be a watershed

work. In his view, all the essentials of *hongaku* thought are fully present in this work: later texts may be seen as developing not new ideas, but systematizations and commentaries on doctrinal positions already present in the *Kotogaki*. In this text, says Tamura, the monism of *hongaku* as principle (*ri*) is applied directly to the world of changing phenomena (*ji*), which are then absolutized as the expressions of original enlightenment. However, he notes, this absolutizing of concrete phenomena is not among those aspects of *hongaku* doctrine criticized by Shōshin in his commentary on Chih-i’s *Hsüan-i*, completed in 1207. Thus, Tamura concludes, this idea had probably not emerged by Shōshin’s time. He accordingly dates the *Kotogaki* between 1200 and 1250, probably closer to 1250.<sup>189</sup>

However, Tamura’s dating of the *Kotogaki* is by no means universally accepted, and other scholars push it back to the late Heian period.<sup>190</sup> At stake is the issue of when Tendai *hongaku* thought reached its full point of development. Over and against earlier scholars such as Hazama Jikō, who had placed this flourishing in the late Heian or early Kamakura period, Tamura, by his relatively late dating of the *Kotogaki* and other significant texts, pushed it forward to the mid-Kamakura period.<sup>191</sup> This in turn may hold implications for the relationship of original enlightenment thought to that of the new Kamakura-period Buddhist movements, whose founders—apart from Nichiren and Ippen (if one includes him)—were active well before 1250.

Most disagreements with Tamura’s proposed chronological sequence have taken the form of disputes over the dating of individual texts.<sup>192</sup> One scholar, however—Hanano Michiaki—has challenged the entire scheme. Hanano, like Hazama before him, sees *hongaku* thought as coming into flower during the late Heian or Insei period. Hanano has developed his own six-stage chronology in the compilation of medieval Tendai texts. It is similar to Tamura’s except that the dates of a number of significant works are pushed back between fifty and a hundred years.<sup>193</sup> One of the more intriguing aspects of Hanano’s argument concerns the body of Amidist *hongaku* literature, which is chiefly attributed to Genshin.<sup>194</sup> Pointing out that this literature differs stylistically from the Tendai *kuden hōmon* and does not take the form of collected oral transmissions, Hanano maintains that it should be regarded as forming an independent and earlier lineage of Tendai *hongaku* literature, dating from very shortly after Genshin’s time. This possibility is supported by the datings tentatively proposed by other scholars of specific texts in the Tendai *hongaku*–Pure Land genre, though again, there is little firm agreement.<sup>195</sup>

Further study and comparison of texts, it is hoped, may shed some additional light on the chronology of stages in the development of *hongaku* thought and the compilation of related literature. At present, how-

ever, it is virtually impossible to say with exactitude who compiled a particular text or when. As a result of such uncertainties, the Tendai *hongaku*-related literature in its formative stages comes to us in a state of dislocation, removed from its original contexts. Problems of dating and attribution compound the difficulty of knowing why particular texts were written or under what circumstances, who read them, what their ritual or institutional contexts may have been, or what part they may have played in the careers of those who transmitted them. These are limitations that must be borne in mind in thinking about notions of original enlightenment.

### Problems with the Category

The *kuden hōmon* literature and other medieval Tendai texts often use the term “original enlightenment” and, occasionally, “original enlightenment teaching” (*hongakumon*) or “original enlightenment doctrine” (*hongaku hōmon*). “Original enlightenment *thought*,” however, is a modern category, first popularized by Shimaji Daitō’s studies. Introducing an expression that would be echoed by decades of later scholarship, Shimaji characterized original enlightenment thought as “absolute affirmation” of the phenomenal world. Tamura Yoshirō, as already noted, saw this “absolute affirmation” as a thorough-going monism in which the realm of principle (*ri*) and the realm of phenomena (*ji*) were utterly conflated. He also expanded upon this characterization in an attempt to define “original enlightenment thought” more precisely. It consists, says Tamura, in two philosophical moves.<sup>196</sup> First, the Mahāyāna idea of nonduality is pushed to its ultimate conclusion. All existents, being empty of independent self-nature, are seen as interpenetrating and mutually identified. This move negates any ontological difference whatsoever between the ordinary person and the Buddha, the mundane world and the pure land, self and other, and so on. All conventional distinctions of the phenomenal world are thus collapsed in a breakthrough into an undifferentiated, nondual realm. Second, based on this insight into absolute nonduality, one “returns,” as it were, to the phenomenal world, affirming its relative distinctions, just as they are, as expressions of ultimate nondual reality or original enlightenment. In other words, one negates two levels of distinctions to reveal two levels of nonduality: (1) the distinctions among phenomena (e.g., between body and mind, or between self and objective world) are negated to reveal their absolute nonduality; and (2) the distinction between this absolute nondual realm and the empirical world of differentiated phenomena (e.g., body/mind, subject/object, birth/death) is also negated, revealing the nonduality of phenomena and the ultimate truth. Thus far, this might seem indistinguishable from earlier Mahāyāna formulations of nonduality, especially the T’ien-t’ai threefold truth. The difference for Tamura lies in

the extent to which the second move is carried in medieval Tendai thought. The “return” to the phenomenal world affirms as the expressions of original enlightenment not only the “existential” aspects of that world, such as “birth” and “death,” or “self” and “other,” but also its delusive aspects, such as ignorance and the mental defilements. Thus the deluded ordinary worldling *qua* ordinary worldling and the Buddha *qua* Buddha are both affirmed as manifestations of nondual original enlightenment. In fact, as Tamura points out, it is the ordinary worldling living in the actual world who is identified as the “true Buddha,” while the transcendent Buddha of the sūtras is reduced to the status of a provisional Buddha. This affirmation of ordinary worldlings, in Tamura’s view, establishes all activities of daily life as the Buddha’s conduct and in effect denies the need for any specific religious practice. He concludes that, while the first of these two philosophical moves is “grounded in traditional Buddhist thought,” the second, in affirming deluded worldlings, “oversteps the boundary of Buddhist thinking patterns and is due more to the influence of Japanese thinking patterns.”<sup>197</sup> This definition has come to enjoy considerable currency. For example, it appears under the entry “*hongaku shisō*” in the recently published Iwanami Buddhist dictionary, reputed to be the most outstanding Buddhist dictionary in Japan directed toward the nonspecialist.<sup>198</sup>

Tamura’s definition is helpful in illuminating common conceptual structures underlying a mass of diverse materials. Nonetheless, certain reservations are in order and will be discussed in the course of this study. Here, it is appropriate to note the problems entailed in the attempt to establish a singular or unified definition of “original enlightenment thought.”

First is the danger of excessive reification. The term “original enlightenment thought,” especially when supported by a very systematized definition such as Tamura’s, may tend to suggest a greater degree of unity in the source materials than they actually possess.<sup>199</sup> For example, the above-mentioned Iwanami *Tendai hongaku ron* contains nine texts that all participate, as the title indicates, in something called “Tendai original enlightenment discourse.” Close examination, however, reveals important differences in approach. Among the selections, the *Tendai Hokkeshū gozu hōmon yōsan* (Essentials of the Oxhead doctrine of the Tendai-Lotus school) and the *Sanju shika no kotogaki* are clearly collections of oral transmissions or *kirikami*. However, the *Shinnyo kan* (The contemplation of suchness) takes an essay form, rather than that of a *kuden* collection. It is also written in the mixed Japanese style (*kana majiri bun*), rather than the literary Chinese employed in most medieval Tendai doctrinal writings, and it may have been written for an educated lay reader. Among those selections that are classifiable as *kuden hōmon*, the *Shuzenji-ketsu* (Decisions of Hsiu-ch’an-ssu) contains instructions for

a range of meditative practices, while the *Kankō ruijū* (Digest of the Light of Han) appears to be closely related to the Tendai tradition of doctrinal examination and debate.<sup>200</sup> The *Honri taikōshū*, *Shuzenji-ketsu*, *Kankō ruijū*, and others focus on interpretation of traditional Tendai/Lotus doctrine, while the *Shinnyo kan* incorporates Pure Land elements. Such diversity increases when a wider range of texts is considered. The use of the single rubric “original enlightenment thought” can easily obscure the plurality of approaches, genres, and subject matter of the writings informed by a *hongaku* perspective.<sup>201</sup>

A second problem lies in the notion of “original enlightenment thought,” which gives the impression of a primarily or even purely philosophical enterprise, independent of practice, ritual, or institution. Until quite recently, the discipline of Buddhist studies in both Japan and the West tended to stress doctrine to the exclusion of other concerns. In the case of medieval Tendai, this tendency has been exacerbated by the scarcity of information surrounding the production of texts, which makes their ideas particularly difficult to contextualize. There may also be historical reasons why *hongaku* thought has so often been presented in a chiefly philosophical light. Shimaji, who characterized it as the “climax” of Buddhist philosophy in Japan, saw it as the perfect counter to a criticism, evidently current in his day, that “Japan has religion but no philosophy.”<sup>202</sup> The category of “*hongaku* thought” thus easily becomes a double abstraction: due to problems of dating and attribution, many of the relevant texts have in effect been abstracted from their original contexts; then, the idea of a unified “original enlightenment thought” is abstracted from the texts.

“*Hongaku* thought” is best understood not as a monolithic philosophy, but as a multivalent discourse, albeit one that included among its many forms some highly developed doctrinal formulations. It was, moreover, a discourse embodied in specific practices, lineages, and concerns about authority and legitimacy. “Original enlightenment thought” is a convenient designation for the great range of concepts, perspectives, arguments, and doctrinal formulations informed by ideas of original enlightenment, but it was by no means either unified or an exclusively philosophical enterprise. The term will be used in this study based on this understanding.

### Is Original Enlightenment Thought “Japanese”?

Tamura Yoshirō, as seen above, maintained that the affirmation of deluded worldlings as equal to the Buddha “oversteps the boundary of Buddhist thinking patterns and is due more to the influence of Japanese thinking patterns.” This affirmation, he suggests, is rooted in “the Japanese ability to accommodate themselves to nature,” a characteristic that, when applied to the actual world, “becomes one of accommodation to the actual world, and even an affirmation of the actual

world.”<sup>203</sup> Nor is Tamura the only scholar to make such assertions.<sup>204</sup> Others, while not claiming that *hongaku* thought departs from Buddhism, still see it as representative of a quintessential Japanese spirit.<sup>205</sup> Of all attempts to shed light on the discourse of original enlightenment, those linking it to a reified Japanese mentality are probably the least useful, and it is appropriate to note here some of the difficulties that such efforts present.

First is the problem of cultural essentialism. To inflate to the status of “Japanese thinking patterns” the ideas of certain influential producers of discourse is to run the risk of obscuring less powerful, and thus less vocal, social groups who may not have shared those ideas. In discussing medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought, we are talking primarily about the ideas of a privileged group within medieval society: almost exclusively male, predominantly clerical, and in many cases of noble birth. Not all involved were aristocrats, to be sure, but they were nonetheless well educated and in that sense represented a cultural elite. How far other medieval Japanese may have shared in their views is a question very difficult to answer.

Philosophically speaking, doctrinal positions affirming the phenomenal world as the locus of truth did indeed come to predominate in Japanese religious thought. However, this should not blind us to significant exceptions, nor to the very common disjunctures between doctrinal argument and “on-the-ground” religious activity. Medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought coexisted, especially in the late Heian period, with the radically different discourse of “shunning this defiled world and aspiring to the Pure Land” (*enri edo gongu jōdo*), celebrated in the collections of “tales of those who achieved birth in the Pure Land” (*ōjōden*). It also flourished in a society where reclusion was a respected course of action. Nor was this coexistence always a simple divide between those holding immanentist views and an opposing camp seeking salvation beyond this world. The same individual might hold one view or the other according to context, for example, by displaying increasing concern with birth in Amida’s Western Pure Land as he or she approached death.

Lastly one must ask: Is *hongaku* thought of the sort found in medieval Tendai something unique to Japan? May there not have been parallel developments in other countries? While such comparative issues go beyond the scope of this study, it may be noted in passing that some very similar ideas can be found in the work of some Chinese Buddhist thinkers. Tsung-mi, for example, in his criticism of the Hung-chou lineage of Ch’an originating with Ma-tsu Tao-i (709–788), represented its position as follows:

The arising of mental activity, the movement of thought, snapping the fingers, or moving the eyes, all actions and activities are the function-

ing of the entire essence of the Buddha nature. Since there is no other kind of functioning, greed, anger, and folly, the performance of good and bad actions and the experiencing of their pleasurable and painful consequences are all, in their entirety, Buddha nature.<sup>206</sup>

This statement closely resembles a number of passages in medieval Tendai texts. Tendai *hongaku* thought, as Tamura himself has amply demonstrated, emerged out of a long tradition of interpretation of the Mahāyāna teaching of nonduality; one does not need to invoke “Japanese thought patterns” to account for it. Nonetheless, like any Buddhist tradition, medieval Tendai was grounded in the specifics of a particular culture and a particular historical moment, apart from which it cannot be fully understood. Tendai *hongaku* thought is indeed “Japanese,” not in embodying some putatively timeless and essentialized Japanese mentality, but in terms of the medieval Japanese historical, social, and institutional context in which it developed. Locating original enlightenment thought within that context is a major aim of this study.