

LATTER HEIAN PERIOD BUDDHISM

Heian period dates 794-1185

- new schools- Tendai, Shingon- emerging in reaction against, and eventually displacing, decadent old schools of the Nara period
- Heian Buddhism also called 'lived Buddhism' in contrast to Nara period Buddhism; through descriptions in court diaries (*nikki*, 日記) about daily religious practice of the nobility.

It consisted of: Buddhist observances, kami worship, yin-yang practices.

- in comparison with the preceding Nara Buddhism, we can observe a shift in the development of the Buddhist teachings (BUT only seen from a political perspective of emphasising this-worldly benefits; the trend was gradually moving to individual liberation and soteriological issues):
 - early Heian Buddhism- 'state Buddhism' (Tendai, Shingon)
officially sponsored and concerned chiefly with protection of the emperor and the realm.
 - middle period Heian Buddhism- 'aristocratic Buddhism'
nobility raising in power and prestige and hence patronising esoteric masters to conduct rites for their health and prosperity (this-worldly aims)
 - late Heian period Buddhism- 'popular Buddhism' (development of the Pure Land Schools)

Historically, the times are characterised by 'the prevailing disintegration and instability compared with the 'peace and tranquillity' of the earlier Heian period.' (de Barry, p. 205)

- continual feudal warfare between the warrior class raising from the provinces against the old ruling Kyóto aristocracy
- warfare between Taira and Minamoto clans- Heike monogatari- political authority of the aristocratic ruling classes threatened
- decreasing power of the courtiers- Hójóki- Zápisky z poustevny
- disunity and violent political and social change of the 10th and 11th cts.
- calamities devastating the capital- fire, earthquake, famine plus warrior ranging between themselves
- edicts issued that prohibited priests to wear secular clothes and bear arms

- grave social and political instability

- Mappó 末法

concept of the 'end of the Dharma/ end of the Law'

based upon the idea that history of Buddhism would be divided into THREE periods:

1/ times of the 'true Dharma' *shóbó* 正法

Flourishing of the Dharma, the Buddhist teaching would be transmitted with minimal distortion and practitioners are able to attain enlightenment easily

The Japanese believed that this period ended in 552

2/ the 'counterfeit Dharma' *zóbó* 像法

Age of decline of the Law, the teachings would still be preserved and practiced, enlightenment however, is no longer possible

3/ 'end of the Dharma' *mappó* 末法

Only the written teachings remain, neither practice nor attainment is possible

According to the Japanese calculations, the period began in 1052

This was, however, not a cause for despair => advocating new and creative doctrines: Pure Land and Nichiren Schools- claiming that the Buddha had foreseen and provided for the event by preparing texts and teachings suited for these times

'The sense of despair, of the inability to raise above the evils of the times, was met by a powerful movement offering salvation through faith alone, which brought the hope of new life and light to thousands of Japanese untouched by the older forms of Buddhism.' (de Barry, p. 208)

'For the aristocracy, represented the recognition of the absurdity of the values they had hitherto cherished. Ceremonies, proprieties in dress, fine calligraphy and clever poetry suddenly became hollow and meaningless.' (Matsunaga, p. 223). '*Mappó* reflected all the sufferings arising from social chaos.' (ibid.)

=> necessity for Buddhist reforms, new teachings applicable to the era, teaching that in themselves reflected the search for individual purity and self-reflection

- directed towards individuals- hence masses

GROWTH OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM

- Centered on Amida Buddha (Amitábha or Amitáyus in Sanskrit, *Amida nyorai* in Jap. 阿弥陀如来)- saviour who through his boundless merit created a Pure Land, heaven, where he offers shelter to all beings who demonstrate their faith in him, Amida
 - When still a bodhisattva, Amida made a vow ('original vow' *hongan* 本願) swearing he would save all sentient beings by delivering them into his Pure Land- *jōdo* in Jap. 浄土, or Paradise *gokuraku* 極楽, otherwise he claimed unwilling to attain budhahood if he could not accomplish this vow
 - The independent cult began to take shape in 6th ct. in China
 - Vocal recitation of Amida's name was the primary devotional act leading to rebirth in Amida's Pure Land- *nenbutsu* 念仏
 - 南無阿弥陀仏 「*Namu Amida Butsu*」
 - *nenbutsu*- has the power to extinguish evil karma
 - Amida Buddha would come accompanied by 25 bodhisattvas to the devotee and save him at the hour of death- *raigō* 来迎, descending from Pure Land on a purple cloud (Amida depicted seated or standing and coming to greet the devotee)- extraordinary efficacy of the *nenbutsu* practice at the hour of death
- Early Pure Land belief was brought to Japan by Ennin (円仁, 794-864) who came across the practice of *nenbutsu* during his stay in China
- *Jōgyō zanmai* 常行三昧, one of the four meditation techniques used by Tendai monks, lasted for 90 days in seclusion when one concentrated one's thought on Amida while invoking his name and circumambulating his image
- ⇒ the goal was to achieve rebirth in Amida's Pure Land

- ⇒ personal salvation by means of one's own endeavours came to be emphasized
 - ⇒ other-worldly aims, rejection of this 'degenerate' world
 - ⇒ shift from Tendai meditation practice or Shingon esoteric rituals towards simple faith and reliance on sources of inner strength
- Under the influence of *mappó* history came to be regarded as a process over which human beings had little or no power => salvation was understood as a total surrender in the saving grace of Amida Buddha, by chanting his name
 - Sole reliance on Buddha Amida ensured rebirth into his Pure Land
 - Pure Land thought indicated individual's own effort in religious cultivation leading toward liberation

GENSHIN 源信 942-1017

- Tendai monk, author of *Ójyóshú* 往生要集- Anthology on Rebirth in Pure Land/ Essentials on Rebirth; 985- developed out of a need for doctrinal and theoretical foundations for the wide *nenbutsu* practice
- Interpretation of Pure Land doctrine, based on the belief that the world was on the verge of entering the *mappó* age, when early meditation, adherence to precepts etc helped to attain enlightenment, these practices were exceedingly difficult
- The most appropriate teaching was therefore the belief in the saving powers of Amida
- The practice of *nenbutsu* is superior among other Tendai practices; he does not deny the efficacy of other practices, yet accentuates the sole invocation of Amida's name as the one practice- *nenbutsu* is therefore according to Genshin supreme but not sole practice

Ójyóshú

- quotes 160 different works, mostly of Chinese origins
- divides practitioners into those able to practice meditation (concentration on Amida) and the ordinary people whom he recommends to repeat the Buddha's name
- great popularity among the aristocracy (Fujiwara no Michinaga, and his son and successor Yorimichi- Byodoin)

- contains ten sections, the introductory part is full of descriptions of sufferings of deluded mortals in hells; section two concentrates on detailed depiction of ‘Pure Land with countless bodhisattvas listening to wonderful celestial music amid beautiful flowers and ponds’ (Kitagawa, p. 124)- powerful contrasting of *jódo* 浄土 (Pure Land) and *edo* 穢土 (Defiled Realm/ this world); torments of hell and glory of Paradise
- presents ‘rebirth‘ *ójó* 往生 as available to all
- offers a list of joys:
 - 1, coming to be met by Amida and his entourage at the hour of death
 - 2, promise of an open lotus for those with faith after death= offer of HOPE
 - 3, by extinguishing evil karma, the nenbutsu has thus the power to aid relationships on earth= offer of salvation

=> this-worldly promises

=> call to FAITH and PRACTICE through self-effort

 - popularisation of nenbutsu practice
 - monk Kúya 空也 903-972