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## Extreme Asceticism, Medicine and Pure Land Faith in the Life of Shuichi Munō (1683-1719)



Munō's (1683-1719) biography is contrary to some of our standard views of Jōdo-shū practice. He embodies unshakeable faith, but this leads him to undertake some of the most severe ascetic practices found in monks of any school; these include auto-castration and austerities that lead to an early death. Munō records how he increases the numbers of recitation of the *nenbutsu* to almost unbelievable numbers, ignoring his physical needs in the process as he longs for death and subsequent birth in the Pure Land. His sincerity made him effective at spreading Pure Land practice among the impoverished and ill, including lepers. He participated in nursing the ill, sometimes prescribing the use of *nenbutsu* as a cure and at other times telling people that they should prepare for death. His detailed records of these people give us an unusually vivid picture of the people who received his ministrations; these included lepers, the blind, the deaf and those bothered by bad dreams. Munō also kept records of his own dreams. Finally, Munō compiled a list of guidelines for those who were inspired by him, telling them how they should behave and practice. His followers carefully recorded the details of his death in a manner found in many Pure Land texts.



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I first became interested in Shuichi Munō 守一無能 (1683-1719) while doing research on Ryōō Dōkaku 了翁道覺 (1630-1707), an Ōbaku 黄檗 monk who founded Japan's first public library.<sup>1</sup> Ryōō engaged in ascetic practices for most of his life, prostrating himself numerous times until his knees were bloody, burning the same finger several times, and reducing the amount of food he ate even late in life. One of the most dramatic episodes in Ryōō's life occurred when he castrated

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1. See Groner (2007 and 2009).

himself as part of his efforts to master his sexual desires. As I sought to understand this extreme act, I looked for other examples of auto-castration. One of the very few I found was Munō. As I investigated Munō's career, I became interested in the physical manner in which he characterized his life and practice, constantly observing his health and the toll that asceticism took on it. Much of Buddhism focuses on using meditation to alter one's mind, but the efficacy of practices that focus on the mind are difficult to observe in an objective manner. The situation is perhaps more difficult when the object is to have a moment of complete faith, entrusting oneself to the Buddha and hoping for post-mortem salvation. As a result, Pure Land advocates sometimes looked for physical evidence for birth in the Pure Land: seeing purple clouds, hearing music overhead, or observing the manner of death. These are repeatedly mentioned in the popular genre, Biographies of Those Reborn (in the Pure Land) (*Ōjō-den* 往生傳). These were compiled in Japan over a period of almost one-thousand years, beginning with the *Nihon ōjō gokuraku-ki* 日本往生極樂記, compiled in 984 up to the *Sennen ōjō-den* 專念往生傳, compiled in 1863; their popularity waned after the Kamakura period, but then revived during the Tokugawa period.

Munō turns his gaze upon himself and closely observes how his physical existence reflects his practice. In addition, he teaches his followers that they can observe the results of practice in their own efforts to deal with illness. The fascination with the physical is not unusual in Buddhism. For examples, note such issues as the manner in which breathing changes during meditation, the debates over whether an enlightened male practitioner might experience desires that are not consciously under his control such as nocturnal emissions, or the emphasis on discovering relics after an advanced practitioner dies. Some early Mahāyāna practitioners engaged in austerities. (Nattier 2003) Munō's affiliation with the Japanese Pure Land School (*Jōdo-shū* 淨土宗) seems odd in this regard because *Jōdo-shū* often focuses on the importance of faith and receiving Amitābha's help more than on an individual's overcoming the physical body's suffering through intense practice. Thus, Munō's life is so focused on the physical and asceticism that it seems unusual in Japanese Pure Land Buddhist history. One of the early sources of practice used in China that would eventually contribute to Pure Land was the intense meditation retreat mentioned in the *Pratyutpanna-sūtra* (T no. 418), which was later adapted by the Tiantai master Zhiyi 智顛 as the ninety-day constantly-walking *samādhi*. This involved visualizations of the Buddha; however the degree of physical pain and suffering that Munō underwent when he engaged in prolonged recitations was never stressed by Zhiyi. Munō never practiced the 90-day retreat, but the emphasis on maintaining a concentrated mind clearly influenced him, as did the emphasis on visualization. Munō never mentions a realization of emptiness,

the goal of the 90-day retreat. Instead, the Pure Land is seen as a paradisiacal place for birth, an emphasis not found in the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi sūtra* or Zhiyi's constantly-walking *samādhi*.

In the following pages, I describe Munō's biography and practices, focusing on three areas: his asceticism, proselytizing and the use of the *nenbutsu* in curing illness, and the circumstances of his death. Both Munō and his biographer constantly stressed his fascination with how his intense austerities were physically affecting him.

Munō was part of a world-renouncing (*shasei* 捨世) movement among Jōdo-shū monks that began in the warring states period and extended through the Tokugawa period, with the earliest figure being Shōnen 称念 (1513-1554).<sup>2</sup> Many of these looked up to Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212) as a model, emphasizing the ideal of a man who had withdrawn from the Tendai establishment on Mount Hiei and retreated to Kurodani 黒谷, a deep valley on Mount Hiei 比叡 that was separate from the Tendai 天台 power center at Enryakuji 延暦寺, located on a different area of Mount Hiei. Often these world-renouncing Pure Land monks were reacting against an "establishment" form of Buddhism that seemed to emphasize advancement in the world and the acquisition of wealth over spirituality.<sup>3</sup> Some of them focused on Hōnen as a monk who still meditated and observed the precepts even as he preached a faith-based practice that did not require his followers to either observe the precepts or meditate. In doing so, these ascetic practitioners may have been attempting to obtain one of the highest forms (*jōbon* 上品) of birth in the Pure Land, a categorization based on the *Contemplation sūtra* (*Kanmuryōju-kyō* 觀無量壽經).<sup>4</sup> In addition, many of these monks had no fixed home and traveled from site to site, a practice found in Munō and his associates. Much of their activity was centered in the Kantō region. (Hasegawa 1980: 38-43) Although Munō clearly came from this tradition, his activities centered on the Tōhoku region, particularly on temples associated with Nagoe 名越 tradition of Jōdo-shū, which was active in Tōhoku. (Satō 1995: 62-63) Munō was particularly noted for his ascetic tendencies and proselytization among those people at the bottom of society; his efforts far exceeded most of the other members of Pure Land proselytizers in intensity.

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2. For a short discussion of these monks, see Satō Takanori (1995: 60-61).
  3. Munō makes a distinction between worldly and world-renouncing monks in the *Munō oshō gyōgō-ki* 無能和尚行業記 (Record of the practices of the priest Munō, hereafter cited as *Record*). (JZ 18: 154b-156a)
  4. Although her interpretation is controversial, Fusae C. Kanda (2004) has argued for the importance of the nine types of birth in interpreting Hōnen's observance of the precepts and meditation.

Munō's biography is found in the *Record* by Hōjū 寶洲<sup>5</sup> (d. 1738) and the *Zoku Nihon kōsō-den* 續日本高僧傳 (Continuation of biographies of Japanese eminent monks). (DNBZ 64: 80c-81a) A set of letters and excerpts from Munō's dharma-talks has recently been published by Hasegawa Masatoshi 長谷川匡俊, the scholar who has conducted the most thorough research on Munō. (Hasegawa 2003: 206-223) Although issues of authenticity have not all been resolved, these sources generally agree in their emphasis on Munō's asceticism and proselytizing. In addition, I have utilized sections of a compilation of reports of practice and its healing effects by Munō's disciples and Munō himself, entitled *Kindai Ōshū nenbutsu genki* 近代奥州念仏験記 (A record of recent proofs of the nenbutsu in Tōhoku); although this has not yet published in its entirety, it has been extensively quoted in Hasegawa Masatoshi's studies of Munō. The accounts were collected from people affected by Munō and totaled well over 1200. These short accounts are remarkable in their detail, including the names, places of residence, ages, afflictions, prescribed numbers of *nenbutsu*, notes on how they were performed, and testimonies about the efficacy of the practices. The similarity to accounts by patients and doctors is clear. Munō actively collected these testimonials; they were eventually published by Gizan. (Hasegawa 2003: 16-18) One fascicle of these records, the *Kanke dōjō kitoku-shū* 勧化道場奇特集 (Record of miracles at the place of proselytization and practice), compiled by Munō's disciple Funō 不能, has been published by Hasegawa (2003: 18-20, 224-238). In addition, Engu 厭求<sup>6</sup> collected documents that were not included in the *Record* in the *Munō oshō gyōgō yūiji* 無能和尚行業遺事 (Bequeathed record concerning Munō's activities).<sup>7</sup> The people referred to above as "disciples" were actually called "those who aspired to the way" (*dōshin-ja* 道心者); Munō took no disciples in the sense that he served as preceptor at their ordinations. However, their devotion to him and their adoption of his practices make the term "disciple" appropriate.

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5. Hōju was a scholar-monk who assiduously observed the precepts and spread Pure Land teachings. He was the author of a number of works on these topics. (Kaneko 1975: 194-196)
  6. Engu (n.d.) is also known as Gon'yo 嚴譽 and should be distinguished from the Pure Land Saint (*shōnin* 上人) Engu, also known as Kōyo 廣譽 (1634-1715). For a brief description of Gon'yo, see Hasegawa (2003: 147-148).
  7. This text was composed in 1740, twenty-one years after Munō's death, and published seventeen years after the death of Munō's disciple Funō in 1778. It is found in the Shiryō hensanjo at Tokyo University as BA4246484X. I was able to obtain a copy with the help of Kikuchi Hiroki 菊池大樹, associate professor at the Shiryō hensanjo, but the document was written in a cursive style that made it difficult to read. My use of it has depended on selections commented on by Hasegawa.

### Early Life and Austerities

Munō was from the Yabuki 矢吹 family from Ishikawa County in Ōshū (modern Fukushima prefecture). He is described as having a compassionate and respectful nature. Because his father had too many sons, he offered to have Munō adopted into the Ōki 大木 family, but Munō objected because he had wanted to become a monk from an early age. Munō paid obeisance to images of the Buddha and read scriptures. At the age of seventeen, he became a novice under Ryōkaku 良覚 of Daian-ji 大安寺<sup>8</sup> in the city of Koori 桑折, Date 伊達 county (Fukushima prefecture). After his initiation, Munō began reading Pure Land texts and for the next few years studied these texts assiduously; he engaged in formal debates (*rongi* 論義) and discussions with other monks. When he was eighteen, he showed the first signs of his predilection for austerities, sequestering himself at the Mañjuśrī Hall at Kameoka 亀岡 to request the deity's help in obtaining the wisdom to see things as they really are (*nyojitsu-chi* 如実智) and perfecting the two types of benefit (*niri* 二利, for oneself and for others). He went to a number of temples; particularly noteworthy was his visit to San'en-zan 三縁山 (Zōjō-ji 増上寺), the site of the Tokugawa family temple in Tokyo and an important Jōdo-shū temple and seminary (*danrin* 檀林) during the Tokugawa period. When he was nineteen, he went to Narita-san 成田山 to see the Fudō Myōō 不動明王, where he fasted for seven days. He was told by Shingon practitioners there that he must practice single-mindedly and be pure and celibate if he wished to attain the inexplicable meditations, realms, powers and eloquence. The attitudes expressed by the Shingon monks at Narita-san came to characterize his later practice of austerities more than the dictates of the Jōdo-shū, but the content of his teachings to the masses was clearly Jōdo-shū.

In 1705, at age twenty-three, he was ordained by Ryōtsū 良通 of Senshō-ji 専称寺 in the Nagoe 名越 lineage of the Jōdo-shū from whom he received lineages for both the precepts and doctrine.<sup>9</sup> During the subsequent years, he would narrow his practices: first to practices that only were directed to birth in the Pure Land. He used divination at the Saijō sanbō-ji 最上三寶寺 in Dewa to determine his practices by preparing several options, usually a combination of recitations of Pure Land scriptures and praises combined with the recitation of the nenbutsu. However, one of the options was the recitation of the *nenbutsu* 60,000 times each day; this was

8. Daian-ji, located in Koori 桑折 in Fukushima prefecture, was founded between 1492 and 1500 by Ryōsan Ryakugan 良珊歴巖. Because it was located in the bakufu's agricultural lands, it was the site of a number of the graves of the rural intendants (*daikan* 代官) who administered the lands. It would have been a prominent local temple at the time Munō went there, but burned in 1768.

9. *Zoku Nihon kōsō-den* (DNBZ 64: 80c-81a).

the option upon which he kept drawing. He immediately abandoned the “auxiliary practices” (*jōgō* 助業, namely: chanting scripture, worshipping, praising, and making offerings) of the Pure Land tradition.<sup>10</sup>

The Nagoe lineage was one of the six lineages that began under the third patriarch of the Jōdo School, Ryōchū 良忠 (1199-1287). It was founded by Ryōchū’s disciple Sonkan 尊観 (1239-1316), who emphasized the teaching that a single recitation of the *nenbutsu* could insure salvation (*ichinen gōjō* 一念業成). How and whether this doctrinal position related to Munō’s asceticism is not clear. A debate between the Nagoe lineage and the Shirahata 白幡 lineage over who was the true successor to Ryōchū began late in Ryōchū’s life. The Nagoe lineage was energized by the debate and came to dominate the Tōhoku region’s Pure Land temples during the fifteenth century. Senshō-ji was the headquarters (*sō-honzan* 総本山) of the Nagoe lineage. This temple burned down in 1668, but was rebuilt beginning in 1671.<sup>11</sup> Thus at the time Munō went there it would have been recently restored.

In 1704, he went before the Buddha at Senshō-ji and vowed to end his sexual desires and to recite the *nenbutsu* 10,000 times a day. In the eighth month, he again fasted for seven days while he recited the *nenbutsu* both day and night. In 1708, he vowed that he would constantly sit and not lie down and increased the recitations to 30,000 times each day. In 1709, he withdrew from the world to live alone in a rough straw hut in Kawamata 川俣 (Fukushima prefecture), began reciting the *nenbutsu* 60,000 times each day and did not take off his robes day or night except to bathe or go to the toilet, and never put down his rosary except when eating or going to the toilet; when he wrote down the *nenbutsu* or those rare times when he consulted a text, he still held the rosary in one hand. He did not remove his footwear except when necessary.<sup>12</sup> Because his teacher had stressed how people were drawn by the world, Munō made light of his physical needs and desires so that he could focus completely on the *nenbutsu*. Whenever Munō rested, he would sit by the western window and gaze into the distance. He reflected on whether the three states of mind (*sanjin* 三心) required for birth in the Pure Land were complete: 1) a sincere mind, (2) a deep mind (i.e. deep faith), and (3) a mind that directs all merits to one’s own birth in the Pure Land.

In 1711, beginning with the fifteenth day of the tenth month, he was able to recite the *nenbutsu* 100,000 times each day for a week. By 1713, his practice averaged 60,000 recitations each day with each of the six characters in the *nenbutsu* clearly

10. *Record* (JZ 18: 116b-117a).

11. For a useful summary of the Nagoe lineage’s history and doctrinal stance, see Tamayama Jōgen (1975: 708-730). The move of the lineage from northern Kantō to Tōhoku is described in Ōhashi Shunnō (1978: 155-158). A detailed history of Senshō-ji is found in Satō (1995).

12. JZ 18:117b; reading 鞋 as 鞋.



pronounced without omissions or slurring. The difficulty of this practice can be appreciated when the number of seconds in a day is calculated: 86,400. Thus Munō had to be focused if he were to repeat the *nenbutsu* clearly at a rapid rate. He slept only a little during the fourth watch (1-3 a.m.), and lived on rice gruel and tea. When he shaved his head or washed, he would continue to count recitations of the *nenbutsu* on his fingers because he could not hold the rosary at such times. He never spoke of worldly issues or dealt with trivial worldly affairs.

In addition, he wore paper robes (*kamiko* 紙衣). These were often made from the remnants of flax glued together with *konnyaku* paste, soaked in persimmon juice to preserve them and then softened by kneading. Often they were produced in the Tōhoku region and were favored by Risshū monks and others. The thickness of the paper helped ward off cold. Although paper robes were emblematic of poverty at first, eventually they became a luxury good because they could not be washed and would have to be thrown out when they became dirty. (Shimonaka 1993 Vol. 2: 382a-b) However, the *Record* records a dream in which a monk appeared and told Munō that the fragility of paper robes was like that of the body and would help him practice assiduously. (JZ 18: 159a) Munō's biography includes a list of ten virtues that wearing such robes entailed: 1) they are easy to obtain and do not cause trouble; 2) one need not fear that they will be stolen; 3) they do not give rise to fame or riches; 4) they guard one from the cold and block the wind; 5) one need not go to the trouble of washing them; 6) they are not infested with lice; 7) they do not lead to clinging; 8) they naturally lend themselves to a quiet daily life; 9) others do not envy them; 10) they encourage practice.<sup>13</sup>

As Munō's practice advanced, he was able to recite the *nenbutsu* from 84,000-100,000 times each day. According to the Continuation of the Biographies of Japanese Eminent Monks, he recited the *nenbutsu* innumerable times during his life.<sup>14</sup>

#### Auto-Castration

One of the most dramatic episodes in Munō's life was his self-castration. He had long been bothered by his inability to suppress his sexual desires. His decision to castrate himself is described in the *Record*:

13. *Zoku Nihon kōsō-den* (DNBZ 64: 80c); *Munō oshō gyōgō-ki* (JZ 18: 159).

14. The text gives the number of 106,930,000, reflecting the records that practitioners kept of recitations. The value of the number *oku* 億 varies (Nakamura 2001: 160b), but a note in the text specifies that in this case, *oku* is 10,000 multiplied by 10,000. (DNBZ 64: 81a)

When the teacher was thirty-one years old, on the seventeenth day of the fourth month of 1713, when he was living at Baishō-ji 梅松寺 in Kojima in Date-gun, he took the razor for shaving hair and cut off his genitals (*inkon* 姪根). There was no surgeon in Date, but within five days, it had been treated, and within thirty days, the wound had mostly healed. When someone asked our teacher about his intention when he castrated himself, he replied, “During the Tang dynasty, there was a monk at Qinglong-si 青龍寺 named Shi Guangyi 釋光儀, who cut off his genitals to avoid violating the dharma and causing himself obstacles and difficulties.<sup>15</sup> He was able to carry out his intentions and benefit greatly. This is recorded in the biographies of monks. When I saw this, I regarded it favorably and thought that the wise and fools of the past and present have often made mistakes as they trod the dangerous paths of human desires. Moreover, they received criticism as they proselytized.

So, for the sake of my own practice and for proselytizing, I thought for years of castrating myself to strengthen my practice as a monk, but I was afraid I would be thought of as a defective human being (*baijin* 廢人) and that this would interfere with my practice. As a result, I put off making my decision. I then read the work of Myōe 明恵 of Togano 桐尾, who disregarded his own life and body for the Buddha-dharma and so cut off his right ear. When I saw this in his biography, my mind was decisive and firm so that I carried out my intention. Afterwards there was no illness or suffering.<sup>16</sup>

Munō’s biographer comments that anyone contemplating such an act should consult the various sources that prohibit self-castration, including Yijing’s travel diary,<sup>17</sup> the *Sūtra of forty-two sections*,<sup>18</sup> and the *Faju piyu-jing* 法句譬喻經.<sup>19</sup> The biographer then concludes that if a person’s intention is to advance in his practice, castration would be permissible, but that if it were done only to control sexual desire, it was

15. *Ming gaoseng-zhuan* (T 50: 873a-c); Faure (1998: 35).

16. JZ 18: 118-19. The incident is briefly mentioned in the biography in the *Zoku Nihon kōsō-den* as “he cut off his own penis (*shōshi* 生支) and the wound quickly healed.” (DNBZ 64: 80c)

17. In a short comment following his criticism of monastic suicides, Yijing criticizes those who castrate themselves, saying that such a practice appears nowhere in vinaya texts. (T 54: 231b; Miyabayashi and Katō 2004: 400)

18. The Buddha tells a monk who is about to castrate himself, “The Buddha said to him, you want to cut off your male organ. It would be better to cut off your false-thinking mind. Your mind is like a supervisor: if the supervisor stops, the people working under him will also stop.” (T 17: 723b; transl. by Hsuan Hua, accessed from <http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Buddhism/BTTStexts/S42--Contents.htm>)

19. In the *Faju piyu-jing*, a monk is about to use an axe to cut off his genitals because he cannot control his desires when the Buddha stops him, saying that he is ignorant and does not understand the essentials of the way. If he wishes to seek the path, he must first cut off ignorance and then control the mind. The mind is the origin of good and evil. (T 4: 577b)



not. Although this interpretation is not found in the Buddhist sources mentioned by Munō's biographer, it suggests a way to validate Munō's actions. (JZ 18: 119) By that time, Munō's practice also involved a vow never to lie down.

That same year, Munō began to reflect on whether he should adhere to the precepts as he recited the *nenbutsu* or whether he should just be an "ordinary monk" (*bonsō* 凡僧) and recite the *nenbutsu*. A monk appeared in a dream and urged him not to abandon his aspiration, but later he came to feel that perhaps rigid adherence to the precepts might interfere with single-minded devotion to Amida's vow. Such devotion would naturally take care of any evil tendencies. As a result, later that year Munō composed seventy-two vows. Rather than taking the form of precepts, which might involve a focus on administration and punishment, the vows focus on single-minded devotion to *nenbutsu* practice. Many of them were drawn from earlier *nenbutsu* practitioners. An extensive selection of them is translated below with numbering by the author.<sup>20</sup>

1. Reflect on our indebtedness to the *nenbutsu*, but do not be boastful about the primordial vows.
2. Be compassionate and do not neglect teaching and proselytizing.
3. Make your aspiration to attain the path strong and do not be irresponsible about practice.
4. Do not neglect your practice just because you are not ill.
5. Do not let go of the rosary unless you have to carry out your work (*samu* 作務).
6. Be completely dedicated to the *nenbutsu* and do not be drawn away by other activities.
7. Dedicate your merits to the Pure Land; do not seek other rewards.
8. Whether you are walking, standing, sitting or lying down, do not turn your back to the west.
9. When spitting or going to the toilet, do not face west.
10. When facing an image of the Buddha, do not neglect propriety.
11. Do not disrespect the various sacred teachings.
12. Other than bathing or using the toilet, do not take off your robes.
13. Do not stop chanting the Buddha's [name] except when sleeping or eating.
14. Strive to spread the Dharma and do not indulge in the various forms of entertainment.
15. Abide in a mind that treats all equally and do not argue about who is closer and more removed.

20. This list is based on Hasegawa (2003: 27-28) who has excerpted the rules that he considered to be central to Munō's practice. A fuller list that includes the rules following this note is found in JZ 18: 161b-163b.

16. Be considerate of others and do not seek your own pleasure.
17. If one sees an unwholesome action, do not disparage the person who performed it.
18. Abide in a compassionate mind and do not hate evil people (*akunin* 悪人).
19. Discern the Buddha-nature within others and do not make light of those of low birth.
20. Be satisfied with a little and do not covet riches.
21. Be wary of donations from lay believers (*shinze* 信施); do not become infatuated with beautiful things.
22. Be content with being poor and of low status; do not desire high office or riches.
23. Cut off any thought of fame or profit; do not be flattered by common opinions.
24. Be humble and do not desire respect.
25. Be frugal and do not seek offerings.
26. Be sincerely appreciative and not jealous of the accomplishments of others.
27. Desire one's own practice and do not belittle that of others.
28. Always seek quietude and do not desire to mix with others.
29. Even though one is correct, do not engage in arguments.
30. Do not insist you are right and others are wrong.
31. When one sees one's fellow practitioners do wrong, do not neglect [your obligation to] to teach and remonstrate with them.
32. Although someone may have an obligation to you, do not think of the rewards [for yourself].
33. Receive the favors of others, but never forget your obligations.
34. Do not come in contact with sensuous pleasures; think of them as if they were poisonous snakes.
35. Do not crave gold or jewels; think of them as sweet poisons.
36. Entrust yourself to whatever comes and do not grieve over worldly events.
37. Think of the [world as a] burning house and do not be attached to the six sense objects.
38. Protect the Buddha-dharma and do not begrudge one's life.
39. Think of death and think of the Buddha throughout one's life.

Besides these, several other vows, not included in Hasegawa's list deserve mention.

1. Always encourage sentient beings to think about the three types of actions [physical, verbal and mental]; whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, they should focus on Amida.
2. At all times, remember hell and set forth the dominant intention to be born [in the Pure Land].

3. Vow not to create karma that would result in birth in the three unfortunate realms [hell, hungry ghosts, animals]; the pleasures of existence in the realms of gods or humans should enter one's mind.
4. When facing Buddhist images, do not violate the propriety used in the [other non-Pure Land] teachings.
5. When one sees someone do something that is not good, do not give up on that person.
6. When one hears someone saying something that is not true, do not tell others.
7. Do not discuss the strong and weak points of being monastic or lay.
8. Do not show off one's merits.
9. Maintain a compassionate attitude; do not hate bad friends.
10. Always chant the Buddha's name and do not speak about pointless issues.  
(JZ 18: 161b-63b)

The rules focus on creating a single-minded devotion to *nenbutsu* practice, with the practitioner's mental attitude stressed more than verbal or physical actions. The rules also indicate that one should strive to be a virtuous person in accord with the Dharma and should strive to create a good, just society. Note that no provision for punishments is specified if any of these were violated. The threat of losing salvation if one were to lose one's concentrated mind sufficed as motivation.

### *Proselytizing and Medicine*

As part of his practice in the Tōhoku area, Munō stressed the physical benefits that could be gained from the practice of the *nenbutsu*. Although the ultimate goal of *nenbutsu* practice remained birth in the Pure Land, the detail in which he recorded the physical benefits of practice indicates that for many people, the cure of physical ailments was probably equally, if not more important than post-mortem salvation.

Proselytization took place on both a personal basis in which Munō visited individuals and in small groups of people to whom Munō spoke; an example is found below in which Munō spontaneously visited a small group of lepers. At other times, he was invited to give sermons and is said to have spoken to as many as 15,000 people. Even allowing for the possibility of exaggeration, these were clearly large crowds. The topic of these sermons is often not stated, but was probably the Pure Land scriptures. In one case, Munō lectured on Hōnen's *Senchaku-shū* 選択集,<sup>21</sup> a text that was favored by monks of the Nagoe lineage. A number of people at the meetings came forward to receive a daily assignment (*nikka* 日課) of a specific number of recitations of the *nenbutsu*. Munō assiduously advised them about the

21. A number of passages from the *Kindai Ōshū nenbutsu genki* describing these meetings are quoted in Chimoto Hideji (1999: 179-180).

proper recitation of the Buddha's name, how to hold the rosary, and other issues of deportment. When their practice did not bring about the desired result, he might advise them about pronunciation, holding the rosary, correcting their posture or increasing the number of daily repetitions. At times, the practice of the nenbutsu was accompanied by refraining from eating meat or drinking alcohol.

Near the end of Munō's life, the Jōdo-shū scholar-monk Gizan 義山 (1648-1717) decided to ask some of those who had agreed to recite the *nenbutsu* daily for personal accounts. These included their vows to recite, either written down by the person him or herself or by someone else, as well as accounts of the benefits of their practice; other passages were based on testimony from Munō. Altogether 1260 accounts were collected in twenty-three volumes.<sup>22</sup> Of these, 166 were included in the three-fascicle *Kindai Ōshū nenbutsu genki*.

A consideration of what terms such as "illness" and "cure" might have entailed for Munō helps set the background for his activities. Several months before his death at age 36, Munō was taken to a hot spring in Shinobu 信夫 county (modern Fukushima-city). The water was praised for its health-giving effects, which were said to be particularly effective for Munō's health problems. Munō, however, was not interested in the curative properties of the spring, arguing that his health problems were terminal, that a release from the suffering of the round of birth and death to the Pure Land of bliss had long been his goal. Although he was grateful that people came to call on him, concern for his health and efforts to prolong his life threatened to lure him away from his long cherished goal of birth in the Pure Land. (JZ 18: 151a-52a) Such accounts call the definition of illness into question. For Munō clinging to the evanescent pleasures of this life was illness because it obscured a higher goal. Although for most people, curing a physical or psychological illness was the goal, this was not always the case. In one episode, a practitioner conversant with medicine concludes of a patient, "This illness cannot be cured in this life ... You can only pray for the next life." After the patient received a set number of recitations from Munō, Munō appeared in the patient's dream and said, "You have thought (*nen* 念) of me for a number of years, you will be reborn in the eastern land of the Medicine Buddha."<sup>23</sup> The passage is important because it demonstrates that for some of his followers, birth in a Buddha-land was the cure. The inclusion of birth in a land other than Amida's western paradise demonstrates an openness to other deities, bodhisattvas and Buddhas. In fact, several Buddhist figures such as Jizō are mentioned in Munō's biography. Finally, the mention of Munō's appearance in his follower's dream in the same manner that Amida and others appeared in Munō's

22. JZ 18:127b-28a; Chimoto (1999: 178).

23. *Kindai Ōshū nenbutsu genki*, quoted in Chimoto (1999: 181).

own dreams indicates the stature that Munō had attained for his followers. Many of the accounts in the *Kanke dōjō kitoku-shū*, compiled by Munō's disciple Funō, describe visions of Munō or of Amida or Kannon emanating from Munō's body.

At the same time, Munō realized that most people would not share his views. How could he preach that this life was not to be valued to someone who had spent his life clinging to family, wealth, and other goods? Such a direct approach would only lead the listener to become angry and filled with hate. Instead, those who would preach or attend the dying must listen to a person's concerns and try to respond to them. (JZ 18: 149b-150b) Munō's preaching to people about the cure of illnesses must be seen in this light.

Four varieties of ailments are major themes in the records of Munō's proselytizing: blindness, bad dreams, deafness, and leprosy.<sup>24</sup> In addition, a few entries concern female problems of excessive bleeding and difficult births; in the cases of difficult births, the mother, but not the child sometimes survived, indicating that this was not simply a record of miracles, but reflected the difficult medical realities that people faced. These cases are recorded in the *Kindai Ōshū nenbutsu genki*. This text is different from the genre *Ōjō-den* (Biographies of those born in the Pure Land) because the this-worldly benefits of the *nenbutsu* are stressed rather than the spiritual benefits of post-mortem salvation. People with leprosy or difficulties seeing and hearing were considered to be suffering from karmic recompense. (Groemer 2001: 350) The recitation of the *nenbutsu* had long been considered as an antidote to health problems because it produced large amounts of merit; the popularity of Munō's treatments is not surprising. Accounts of the restoration of sight or hearing are difficult to interpret, but one of the issues that has not been adequately investigated concerns how blindness and deafness are defined. At what point does poor eyesight become blindness or bad hearing become deafness? For the partially blind person, could the way in which he or she was treated by family and friends be important? Could a better diet, particularly with certain vitamins be a factor?<sup>25</sup> In several of the stories about blindness, refraining from drinking alcohol

24 Hasegawa (2003: 96); see pp. 97-99 for a chart listing the ages, genders, illnesses, practices and outcomes of the cases in the *Kindai Ōshū nenbutsu genki*.

25 A discussion of the degrees of blindness is difficult to find, but the records of Catholic missionaries include mentions of partially blind people serving in capacities that were reserved for the "blind." See Ruiz-de-Medina (2003: 113). The history of blindness in Japan has not been studied well. Eye diseases are mentioned in the *Yamai soshi* 疾病創始 (Origins of disease) written in the eleventh century. A number of traditions of treating eye diseases developed in Japan, but their methods were kept secret. The earliest textbook on eye diseases is probably the *Ganmoku meikan* 眼目名鑑 (A guide to the eyes) in five fascicles, published in 1689. The length of the text indicates a prior history of treatment of blindness, probably through Chinese medicine. (Nakajima 1986: 139-141)

is mentioned. Could alcohol poisoning account for a change in seeing? In the case of deafness, then could care of the ears (perhaps removing wax so as to improve hearing the *nenbutsu* as part of the preparation for practice) or focusing on hearing the *nenbutsu* more than on hearing ordinary conversations be a factor? While Munō traveled, he established huts or hermitages called Sokuni-an 塞耳菴, literally huts for stopping up the ears. The name of these huts referred to a sage who had refused to discuss worldly affairs, reciting the *nenbutsu* as though his ears were stopped up.<sup>26</sup> Not enough information is found in the short accounts of the benefits of reciting the *nenbutsu* to definitely resolve these issues, but they should be considered.

In the case of blindness, the description of the ailment and its cure are closely related to practice of the *nenbutsu*. The following passage, typical of many of the accounts, is a record by the reporter, whose remarks are in parentheses (added by the author) that includes first-person passages of the patient.

(So-and-so's eyes began hurting the eighth month of last year and he went blind.) 'Although various treatments were tried, they had no effect. It was difficult to behave in accord with my family's needs. On the seventeenth day of that month, three friends urged me to go to Shōmyō-ji 称名寺, where I listened to a sermon. I received the practice of reciting the *nenbutsu* 200 times each day. I carefully chanted the *nenbutsu*, and during the night of the nineteenth of that month, I dreamt that I suddenly opened my eyes and went to Sekinami 関波 Village. I felt extremely grateful to the *nenbutsu*. When I did open my extremely damaged eyes again, I found that I could move freely. The colors of things were clear, just as they had been before [I went blind]. I am extremely thankful and increase my recitations to one-thousand each day.' (Later this person stopped drinking alcohol and recited the *nenbutsu* 15,000 times each day. But later at the urging of a bad person, he broke his vow to refrain from drinking alcohol and killing; in addition, he stopped believing in the *nenbutsu*. By the seventh month, he was again blind).<sup>27</sup>

The sudden onset of the blindness and the sudden cure and their association with alcohol may be important in evaluating these claims.

The appearance of dreams in the Record is treated very seriously. A section on "stimulus and response" (*kannō* 感応) in the Record begins with a description of dreams, dividing them into two types: false (*mōmu* 妄夢) and true dreams (*shinmu* 真夢). The Record claims that according to medical manuals, false dreams were caused by various imbalances in the body's *qi* (*ki* 氣); twelve types of oversupply (*jūni-sei* 十二盛) and fifteen types of deficiency (*jūgo fusoku* 十五不足) are mentioned. These two terms appear in Chapter 43 of the *Yellow Thearch's Inner Classic, Basic Questions* (*Huang Di nei jing su wen* 黄帝内经素问). If the *qi* were balanced, one would have a deep dreamless sleep. However, dreams also provided a way for

26. JZ 18: 123; Hasegawa (2003: 30).

27. Cited in Hasegawa (2003: 100).



deities to communicate with people; they are frequently treated this way by Munō. Discussing the issue of dreams in terms of medicine, an approach that differs from the manner in which they are usually thought of today, reminds us that definitions of medicine differ according to period and culture. Even if bad dreams were a medical problem, Munō claimed that proper recitation of the *nenbutsu* could cure bad dreams because they were seen as both a medical and a spiritual problem. In contrast to false dreams, true dreams were spiritual revelations; the author of the *Record* then listed numerous dreams from both Buddhist and heterodox sources, such as the Buddha's mother's dream about her pregnancy and Confucius' dream of the Duke of Zhou. How could so many examples not indicate the truth of dreams? Some Buddhists had argued that such auspicious dreams would only occur to those who had upheld the precepts or who had accumulated good merit; they certainly would not occur to someone who merely chanted the *nenbutsu*. But Munō argued that the power of the *nenbutsu* was such that it could save even the most evil person with ten repetitions; surely the *nenbutsu* could account for auspicious dreams. (JZ 18: 144b)

Munō was fascinated by dreams. They are mentioned repeatedly in the records of those upon whom he conferred the *nenbutsu*. He also kept a record of his own dreams. (JZ 18: 159b-161b) Almost all of these consisted of a Buddhist deity or monk appearing and speaking to him. He carefully noted the images' sizes. The cast of characters included such figures as Jizō 地藏, who is identified with Amida in one case in which Munō is instructed to tell one of his followers to chant Jizō's name. Because both Jizō and Amida are closely connected with death and post-mortem salvation, the identification is reasonable. In others, esoteric figures appear, such as Kurikara Fudō 俱利伽羅不動, the personification of Acala's sword, and Karuraen Fudō 迦樓羅焰, Acala who is like the Garuda that symbolizes the flames. (JZ 18: 160b) Round circles of light or halos (*enkō* 円光) and moon disks (*gachirin* 月輪) also appear; perhaps these figures reflect the influence of his early stay at Narita-san, a site popular with pilgrims asking for Fudō's protection during the Tokugawa period.<sup>28</sup> Fudō had been associated with birth in the Pure Land since the ninth century, frequently with birth in Maitreya's heaven, but also was invoked in connection with Amida. (Mack 2006: 297–317) Images of Hōnen also appear in Munō's dreams. At times the deities chide Munō, such as a figure of Hachiman 八幡 who appeared in 1716 and accused him of being beset by sexual desires throughout his past lifetimes. (JZ 18: 161b)

The following examples are typical of Munō's treatment of bad dreams.

Narrated by Shigeshirō 重四郎 of Sōma Nakamura Okobito-machi 相馬中村御小人町 [in modern Fukushima prefecture]. From three years ago I suffered from headaches; moreover, every night I had bad dreams. My hands and feet were numb

28. For a study that focuses on Fudō at Narita-san, see Bond (2009).

and I could not move them. This was quite frightening and my situation was quite grave. On the twentieth day of the fifth month, I agreed to perform three-hundred recitations. When I performed these, from that night my illness quickly vanished. Because of this, I increased the number of recitations. (Hasegawa 2003: 102)

Related by the mother of Taiyūemon 太右衛門 of a hut in Sōma Nakamura: I am sixty-nine years old. For many years I have been troubled every night by a dream in which I am eaten by a horse. My suffering is difficult to describe. However, I received a daily commitment of reciting the *nenbutsu* from our honored teacher. From the night I practiced this, the dreams stopped. I am extremely thankful and have increased my recitations to 16,000 each day. I have also received a hanging scroll with the recitation on it. (Hasegawa 2003: 102)

My wife has suffered terribly from bleeding these past seven years. From long ago she has been deaf. On the twenty-seventh day of this past month, we agreed to recite the *nenbutsu* two-hundred times each day. The following day we increased this by one-hundred recitations. On the night of the twenty-ninth day of that month, Amida and Jizō appeared in our dreams. By the Buddha's command we heard the sound of the *Jizō sūtra* being read in our dreams and awoke. From that time her illness was healed; and her ears were able to hear. We feel thankful for the daily benefits (of this practice). First day of the third intercalary month, 1716. Kichi 吉, grandson of the Tamuras 田村 of Kinbara 金原. (Hasegawa 2003: 102)

Leprosy was thought to be the physical manifestation of moral depravity and bad karma. At the same time, it could be transmitted to others, leading to the sequestering of those afflicted in separate communities. The curing of leprosy is found in the activities of other Buddhist monks, most notably Eison's 叡尊 (1201-1290) activities on behalf of "untouchables" (*hinin* 非人), many of whom had skin diseases other than leprosy.<sup>29</sup> Eison's adherence to the precepts was believed to have protected him and his followers from leprosy; a similar belief probably influenced Munō. The scope of those said to have leprosy was much broader than the modern definition of leprosy as Hansen's disease.<sup>30</sup> Hygiene and care provided by monks might have helped cure some of these diseases. In the following case, the mention of quitting alcohol and perhaps greater self-confidence arising from his practice may have played a role.

29. For a good overview of the background of East Asian religion and leprosy, see Leung (2009: 66-83). For leprosy and Buddhism during the Tokugawa period, see Williams (2005: 108-110, 188-89).

30. S.v. "rai 癩" in Kokushi dai-jiten henshū iinkai (1993 Vol. 14: 480a); Goble (2011: 67-88).

I began suffering from leprosy from the tenth month two years ago; my form was ugly and despicable. Although I tried various cures, they had no effect and my condition daily became graver. The hair on my head and my eyebrows fell out. I had difficulty interacting with people; even my wife and children did not know what to do with me. On the seventh day of the eleventh month of last year, when the teacher was proselytizing at Daian-ji in Koori, I secretly went to see him. I agreed to perform one-hundred nenbutsu and then performed them. On the evening of the sixth day of the first month of this year, I dreamt that our teacher appeared and said, “This [way of practice] is useless in treating the disease. If you perform [the *nenbutsu*] daily with complete sincerity, the disease will be completely cured.” Then I awoke from the dream. I then performed the practice single-mindedly and the next evening our teacher again appeared in a dream and said, “The way in which you practice is not good; you should perform the practice while sitting facing the Buddha. If you practice in accord with the teaching, then a figure generated by your meditation will come.” Then I awoke from the dream feeling thankful. Subsequently, I recited more than ten-thousand times every day while facing the Buddha. Within one or two months, my illnesses were cured. The hair on my head and eyebrows grew back as before. I quit alcohol and meat-eating and increased my practice to twenty-thousand times. The end. On the tenth day of the seventh month of this year, when I performed the *nenbutsu* at our family’s Buddhist shrine (*ji-butsudō* 持仏堂), light appeared from the hanging scroll with the Buddha’s name (*go-myōgō* 御名号) that our son Yoshi no jō 善之丞 had received and a golden Buddha about nine inches tall appeared and stood. Father and son both worshipped it. Minami Handa village, Yoshishirō.<sup>31</sup>

In a passage in the *Record*, Munō was preaching at the Kannon-ji 観音寺 in Date. Afterwards he saw a dilapidated shack in the mountains and wondered who lived there. When he was told that lepers lived there, he said that they were afflicted with karma and suffering from the past and that if they were not taught about Buddhism, then their suffering would continue in future births. He entered the shacks and found the people surprisingly open to his teaching. He saw people missing limbs and fingers that could not hold a rosary or count. He asked those who could hold the rosary or count to sit next to them and help. The author of the *Record* compares this to the efforts of Eison’s disciple Ninshō 忍性 (1217-1303) to feed those with leprosy. (JZ 18: 123b-124b)

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31. Included in Hasegawa (2003: 103-104).

### Munō's Death

In the spring of 1718, Munō began to feel ill and decided to stop travelling and reside in a meditation hut in Kita Handa. He realized that he would not live much longer. By the fall, the illness had worsened. On the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, about a week before he would die, he assembled his followers and spoke about procedures after he died. He also wrote down his final instructions (*ikun* 遺訓) to govern those lay believers and monks who were in attendance. (Hasegawa 2003: 218-19) He announced that his impending death was unavoidable (*hisshi* 必死) and that he would soon enter a place prepared for his death. Those without any business should not approach his sick bed. Only one or two people should attend him and they should constantly recite the *nenbutsu*. He had been accustomed to reciting the *nenbutsu* 100,000 times each day; but now that he was ill, the number was not so important. Instead, the practice needed to be continuous so that he would not backslide in his practice. The recitations should be matched to his breathing.

Munō also explained the rationale for his earlier vow never to lie down, explaining that he would now abandon it. Earlier he had focused on the numbers of recitations and had feared that if he lay down, he would give in to fatigue and sleepiness. In addition, a prone position was not suitable for counting with the rosary. Now that he had to deal with physical fatigue, the crucial issue was to keep reciting the *nenbutsu*. Those who attend him should encourage him by softly reciting and using the hand-bell (*inkin* 引磬). His lips were to be moistened with purified water from consecrated earth (*kaji dosha no jōsui* 加持土砂の浄水).

After he stopped breathing, the recitations were to continue accompanied by small cymbals (*shōko* 鈺鼓) until all body heat had left the corpse. Then his body could be washed and buried in a plot chosen by divination. A pine tree was to be planted over the grave; the grave should not be imposing. The funeral should be conducted by those who were close to him with the recitation of the *nenbutsu* and transfer of merits. Any memorial service should be done privately at one's residence and should not be anything lasting several days.

On the twenty-seventh, Ryōkaku 良覚, who had been the previous abbot of Daian-ji and had been Munō's teacher, Ryōin 良隱, and the current abbot of the temple Ryōshō 良声 came to pay a visit and ask how he was. Munō answered that this was their final farewell in this life, but they would meet again in the Western (Pure) Land, where they would share the lotus platform (*kedai* 華台). Ryōshō remarked that Munō had always been firm in his devotion to practice over many years; he would no doubt attain one of the top ranks (*jōbon* 上品) of birth in the Pure Land. Several years earlier, Munō had written to Zennyū 善入 (1668-1735) in 1713 about his vow to recite the *nenbutsu* 100,000 times each day, saying that he had been able to recite as many as 110,000 and that he had been encouraged by others

to strive for the highest degree of birth. In the letter, he noted his dislike of the world and his unwillingness to wait for birth in the Pure Land to come when he was older.<sup>32</sup> These statements reveal that such extreme acts as self-castration were part of Munō's efforts to maintain the concentration that would lead to highest birth.

Munō answered Ryōshō that "I have unusual karma that has enabled me to convert several ten-thousands of people. Now I will creep back to the Pure Land. The primordial vow that led me to appear in the world was nothing other than this."<sup>33</sup>

On the twenty-eighth, he prepared to prognosticate whether he would die during the current year or the beginning, middle or last part of the first month of the new year. The answer came twice that he would die during the current year. He had his deathbed prepared so that he would lie with his head to the north and face the west; colored cords were connected to the Buddha's hands. However, he did not die until the second day of the first month of the new year. The author of the *Record* explained that the incorrect prognostication had simply encouraged Munō's practice and that death was near. (JZ 18: 132b) Munō's chanting was stronger than that of his attendants. Periodically he would alter the phrases he chanted to include, "For the very worst of evil people, no other way exists but chanting the name of Amida to be born in the Pure Land."<sup>34</sup> That same day in the afternoon, he called the two monks who were closest to him, Engu and Renshin 蓮心.<sup>35</sup> Munō told them that he had seen the Pure Land in a vision, indicating that his desire to be born there would be fulfilled. Moreover, every aspect of it had conformed with the descriptions found in the scriptures. No room for doubt existed. That night he had psalms on the ten types of bliss (*jūroku* 十樂) associated with the Pure Land softly recited; these included such aspects as being escorted to the Pure Land upon death and the joy when one's lotus first opened in the Pure Land. On the thirtieth day, a number of people came to see his death (birth in Pure Land).

With the new year, Munō seemed well. Several lay believers came to wish him greetings for the new year. Munō replied that he was still alive due to the Buddha's expedient means. Munō asked for a special cake, but no matter how hard his

32. Hasegawa (2003: 208, 219). For a discussion of Munō's relation with Zennyū, see Hasegawa (2003: 119-127).

33. DNBZ 64: 80c. A slightly different statement is found in JZ 18: 132a.

34. The phrase is found in several early Pure Land works by Genshin and Hōnen, including the *Ōjō yōshū* (T 84: 77a) and the *Kurodani Shōnin gotōroku* (T 83: 124b). Genshin cites the *Contemplation sūtra* as the source, but the words do not appear in it. Later commentators claim that it captured the sense of the text, but the *locus classicus* for it remains unclear. The verse had become widespread by Munō's time. (Ishida 1970: 419-420, 479-480)

35. Hasegawa (2003: 148-149). Engu and Renshin play major roles during the last period of Munō's life.

attendants tried to bring him what he asked for, they failed. Finally, they realized that he was asking for the hundred-flavor cakes from the Pure Land.<sup>36</sup> They then realized that even though he had not eaten, he had remained healthy, almost as if he had been fed from the Pure Land. A person from the mountains related the story of Yamamoto Genpachi 山本源八, who had died in the eleventh month of the previous year. Munō had encouraged him to recite the *nenbutsu* and he had done 80,000 recitations each day. The visitor related how he had seen Yamamoto and Munō eating cake together in a dream. (JZ 18: 235b)

Around four in the afternoon, Munō summoned Engu and asked him to chant the praises for Amida's welcoming the dying to the Pure Land. Munō listened with his hands in a *gasshō* and seemed particularly moved. In the early evening, he summoned Engu and Renshin and asked them to chant the praises of the ten blisses of the Pure Land. During the night, Munō held his rosary and strings attached to an image of Amida and the three Pure Land sūtras. His attendants took turns chanting the *nenbutsu* and playing the hand-bell to help him. Munō began to breathe with gasps, but still chanted the *nenbutsu*. Even when his voice could no longer be heard, his lips moved. He seemed to be happier and healthier than ever. Finally he appeared to be sleeping and his breath stopped. Within an hour the earth quaked, prompting his attendants to remember passages in the scriptures describing how the earth moved when the Buddha died and to realize that this was a sign that Munō had attained his desired birth.

When they washed his corpse, it was unusually light and supple; his face seemed beautiful, as if they were looking at the founder of their school. They left him there through the night of the third as people came to pay their respects. Finally, at noon on the fourth day, they decided to bury him in accord with his wishes. People came from all over, vying with each other to touch his coffin. Because the situation seemed dangerous, the attendants decided to quickly place the coffin in the grave, but even so, many fell into the grave. Munō's robes and rosary were torn apart by those in attendance, anxious to have some sort of physical connection to Munō. Miracles of the appearance of light and the Buddha's body were witnessed.

The events that occurred several years later are described in the *Munō wajō gyōgō yuiji*. In the summer of 1724, Munō's remains were being moved to Daian-ji, the temple where he had first been initiated. When his remains were being installed, they emitted light; several hundred relics were obtained. Engu received two of them. The relics were brought to the town of Sōma-jō 相馬城, where many people venerated them, creating karmic ties to the Pure Land. Thus Munō continued his proselytizing even after his death.

36. Mentioned in the *Wuliangshou-jing*. (T 12: 271c)



The following account appeared as an appendix to a set of hymns by Munō, the *Kanjin eika-shū* 勸心詠歌集.<sup>37</sup> Three years after his death, Tsunoda Sansaemon 角田三左衛門 of Koori decided to have an image of Munō made to express his devotion. He asked a sculptor, Shibutani Rizaemon 渋谷利左衛門 to make the image. Although the sculptor had seen Munō, he could not recall his features and kept postponing work on the image. A mysterious monk appeared. When the sculptor asked where he was from, the monk replied around here. When asked whether he was a Zen, Tendai, or Shingon monk, the monk would always answer with whatever was suggested. Finally, the sculptor's mother and wife both said that he resembled Munō and that he must be a manifestation of Munō. When other people came by the sculptor's house and saw the monk, they said the same thing. The monk then disappeared, but the sculptor was able to recall Munō's features and make the sculpture. He felt that Munō had appeared out of compassion.

Munō's fame would be enhanced when his disciple Funō 不能 (1700-1762) renamed a temple Shuichi-san Munō-ji 守一山無能寺, and dedicated it to Munō's memory and to carrying on his tradition of austerities.<sup>38</sup> Funō would only have been twenty when Munō died, but the short amount of time they spent together was crucial for Funō. His name Funō was patterned after Munō and the temple's name Munō reflected his devotion to his teacher.<sup>39</sup> The temple became the site where a number of monks carefully observed the precepts and was called a Ritsuin 律院 (vinaya hall). Such institutions were founded by Jōdo-shū monks during the eighteenth century who wished to follow Hōnen's model as a reclusive monk.<sup>40</sup> A major part of their practice was adherence to the precepts and the rejection of the *danka* system and the monastic education system fostered by the Tokugawa government.

### Conclusion

Munō's biography reminds us that the stereotypes of Japanese Buddhism that have come down to us often obscure a much more nuanced and complex narrative. In Munō's case, his extreme ascetic practices reveal a concern that an emphasis on faith in Amida alone was not enough to satisfy some practitioners. In fact, it may not have been enough for a number of Pure Land practitioners. Such figures as Genshin 源信 and Hōnen's disciple Shōkū 証空 (1177-1247) exhibited an interest

37. Hasegawa (2003: 163-165) has translated the passage into modern Japanese.

38. The temple had been founded by Ryōnen 良然 in 1596, it had originally been named Daikō-san Shōtoku-ji 大光山正徳寺.

39. Hasegawa (2003: 169-196) has compiled Funō's biographical information.

40. S.v. "ritsuin" 律院 in Jōdo-shū kaishū happyaku-nen kinen shuppan (1980 Vol. 3: 446b).

in the highest levels of rebirth that was reflected in practice and the devotional paintings they commissioned. (Kanda 2002, 200-242) The need to enter meditative concentration without any distractions led Munō to fasting, never lying down, unimaginably large numbers of recitations each day, and self-castration. The desire for assurance that the practices were successful led to a focus on the physical indications of their effects. Munō was fascinated by his own impending death and his physical state as he approached it. Earlier, Munō's interest in physical indications led him and his disciples to compile records of the curative powers of the *nenbutsu*. Finally, even after his death, Munō's physical presence was manifested by the appearance of his relics and the salvific power of them as they attracted believers.

### Abbreviations

DNBZ: *Dainihon Bukkyō Zensho*, ed. by Suzuki gakujutsu zaidan (1970-1973).

JZ: *Jōdo-shū Zensho*, ed. by Jōdo-shū kaishū happyaku-nen kinen kyōsan junbikyoku. (1971-1975).

T: *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, ed. by Takakusu and Watanabe (1924-1934).

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