Some Doctrinal Peculiarities and the Answerer’s Profile Seen in the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron, The Treaties on Seeing One’s Nature and Attaining Buddhahood: Kenshō jōbutsu-ron in the Kanazawa Bunko Collection

FURUSE Tamami

1. Introduction

The Kenshō jōbutsu-ron 見性成佛論 has been assumed to be a text belonging to the Daruma school. But until very recently no detailed studies supporting the ascription has been published. In a previous paper, I argue that there are strong reasons to believe that the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron is closely related to Dainichibō Nōnin himself. This actually pinpoints the attribution with more accuracy than simply stating that the text belongs to the Daruma school.

2. The fundamental philosophy from citation

The philosophy advocated in the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron seems to have been strongly influenced by the Southern Chan tradition of the Tang dynasty, particularly by Mazu’s 马祖 school. In the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron, the answerer (答者) quotes 42 old and wise sentences or paragraphs from the Chan yulu 禪語錄, possibly from the Jingde chuandeng lu 景德傳燈錄, the Zongjing lu 宗鏡錄 and some other sutras or commentaries. He also cites 5 times from Dazhu Huihai 大珠慧海 (dates unknown) who was one of Mazu Daoyi’s 马祖道一 (709-788) disciples and also cites other masters of the Southern Chan branch. In the Japanese monastic communities, the Zongjing lu was a popular text since the Heian period.

It is well-known that the Daruma school regarded the Zongjing lu as an important text of their sect. According to ISHII, the doctrines of the Zongjing lu are clearly reflected in the Jōtō shōkaku-ron 成等正覚論 of the Kanazawa Bunko Collection. I shall mention here only a few of the differences seen between the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron and the Jōtō shōkaku-ron. The latter mostly consists of quotations from the Zongjing lu while the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron cites quite a few from the Chanyu lu sources. The Jōtō shōkaku-ron is more like a Buddhist ceremonial script while the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron is redacted in the
form of a catechism in which Buddhist teachings are taught by an questioner（問者）to an answerer（答者）. Therefore, the style and wording of the Jōtō shōkaku-ron are more formal and stylized than those in the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron. On the other hand, in the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron, the whole text, except for the preface（序）, is written in a colloquial style.

3. Focusing on the 4th dialogue: Zen and Teachings

There are 44 Question and Answers in the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron. One of the most important parts is the 4th dialogue（179a15-184b6）3) in which the answerer（possibly Nōnin himself）reveals his Zen 禪 philosophy contrasting it to the ‘teachings’ 教, a term construed as referring to mere theoretical, scholastic views.

The answerer firstly explains the teachings and practices characteristics of what he takes as being the scholastic approach, particularly of the Tendai school. He quotes Baozhi’s 寶誌 (418-514) strong criticism of Vinaya masters 律師. The answerer argues that enormous time is needed if people follow doctrines different from Zen. Then he explains Zen or the School of the Buddha’s Mind:

Next, the School of the Buddha’s Mind makes clear that one realizes the essence of mind immediately, and consequently his or her senses and perceptions work directly.
（次に佛心宗はただちに心性をさとり，知覚をあらはずす（を）訳とす．）4)

He also cites from Dazhu Huihai 大珠慧海.

Therefore, learning and achieving are the teaching for deluded persons, whereas understanding no characteristics of mind is the principle for illumined persons.
（そへに修因得果は迷人の教えなり，了心無相は覚者の宗ならばなり）5)

Then, after citing Mazu’s 馬祖 words as recorded in the Zongjing lu 宗鏡録, he continues by pointing out that concentrating on one’s mind and understanding the essence of mind are crucially important, Resorting to words is unnecessary. Then he cites again from Dazhu Huihai and Baozhi.6)

In the 4th dialogue, the answerer clearly expounds his philosophy along lines similar to the Southern Chan tradition of the Tang dynasty. And no doubt, Dazhu Huihai in particular appears to have exerted a strong influence upon him. My own citation of the words attributed to Dazhu Huihai comes from the Jingde Chuandeng lu, but we do not know for sure which Chanyu lu text（s）the answerer actually consulted.

— 1289 —
4. Refusal to Answer

Not only do we lack strong evidence supporting the fact that the *Kenshō jōbutsu-ron* was a text of the Daruma school, but we also have no exact knowledge as to what the philosophy of the Daruma school was. However, some rough ideas about this school can be gained from the collected materials written about it by various scholar-monks. (Takahashi collected 33 materials which refer to ‘Daruma school’ or ‘Dainichibō Nōnin’.) In some of these materials there are a few interesting fragments which have common elements with the *Kenshō jōbutsu-ron*.

One of the materials is the *Shōkō Shōnin-den* 聖光上人傳. Shōkō was the founder of the Sanjō 三条 school of the Chinzei 鎮西 sub-sect belonging to the Pure Land 淨土宗 tradition. Nōnin (or Dainichi Zenshi 大日禪師) is described vividly in this book. (Shōkō and Nōnin were contemporary, and it is highly probable that the two men met in person.) The last part of his description of Nōnin goes like this:

The Zen master [Nōnin], his mouth shut and tongue tied, did not reply. He only praised [Saint Shōkō], ‘You are [like] Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. You have appeared in order to teach me!’, and so on.  

(禪師閉口結舌。不答而讚曰。汝是文殊師利菩薩。為訓我而來歟云々。)

The *Shōkō Shōnin-den* is quite ironical about Nōnin’s attitude towards answering questions. Shōkō may have actually felt that Nōnin was not intelligent enough to establish and propagate a Buddhist school.

A similar attitude is, however, hinted at in the *Kenshō jōbutsu-ron*. Towards the end of the catechism, the questioner asks foolish questions, and the answerer merely repeats the questions without giving a clear reply. He only says, “the child of the Fire God searches fire.” (丙丁童子来求火) Moreover, in the *Kenshō jōbutsu-ron*, the answerer refers a few times to the harmfulness of theoretical knowledge and intellectual studies.

Consequently, it is very likely that the answerer in the *Kenshō jōbutsu-ron* is Dainichibō Nōnin himself and the text of the *Kenshō jōbutsu-ron* was redacted as the record of the catechism of Nōnin later after he died.

5. Final remarks

My examination of the *Kenshō jōbutsu-ron* has revealed the following new facts.
1) The answerer thinks that the Zen approach is totally different from the traditional teachings expounded in scriptures or scholastic treatises.

2) The fundamental philosophy of the answerer is based on the Southern Chan tradition of the Tang dynasty, in particular on Mazu’s school. One of the main themes repeated by the answerer is “Don’t search [enlightenment] outside of your mind.”

3) His refusal to answer is very similar to the description of Dainichi Zenji in the Shōkō Shōnin-den. It is very likely that the answerer in the Kenshō jōbutsu-ron is Dainichibō Nōnin himself.

Notes
1) FURUSE (2008)
2) ISHII (1991)
3) KBSZB, pp.179a15-184b6.
4) KBSZB, p.183a17.
5) KBSZB, p.183b3-4.
6) Master Huihai says, “Mind is the Buddha and it is needless to use this Buddha to seek the Buddha. Mind is the Dharma and it is needless to use this Dharma to seek the Dharma,” Baozhi says, “People and Buddha are not different. The great wisdom and foolishness are not different. Why do you need to seek treasures outside [your mind]? You have your own bright beads in your body.” And again says, “Since Buddha and people are in a same kind, people are Buddha. Common people occur rationality with no reasons, persist in vacancy, and run around with waver.”

7) TAKAHASHI (1977)
8) Translation by DELEANU, Florin: “THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JAPANESE DARUMA SECT 逹磨宗” written by ISHII Shūdō, unpublished. (ISHII Shūdō (2002): Nihon Daruma-shū no seikaku (日本達磨宗の性格), in Zaidan hōjin Matugaoka bunko kenkyū nenpō (財団法人松ヶ岡文庫研究年報), 16, pp.123-151) I would like to show my deep appreciation to Dr. Ishii and Dr. Deleanu who kindly give me permission to use their translation.
9) Zoku gunsho ruijū (続群書類従), Tokyo: Heibon-sha, 9a, p.32a-b.
10) KBSZB, p.198a5.
11) The colophon is dated the year of Einin (永仁五年) (1298), which would be about 100 years
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after Nōnin’s death.

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(Key words) the Kenshō jöbutsu-ron (見性成佛論), Dainichibō Nōnin (大日房能忍), the Daruma school (達磨宗)

(Graduate Student, The International College for advanced Buddhist Studies)