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ISHIKAWA, Atsuko. A Reconsideration of the Subject Matter and Production Context of the *Hell and Pure Land Screens Owned by the Konkaikōmyōji Temple*

The *Hell and Pure Land Screens* painted in the latter half of the Kamakura period are a set of Buddhist paintings that have been transmitted in the Pure Land temple Konkaikōmyōji, in the city of Kyoto. This pair of screens shows one composition, in which the Pure Land is depicted in the upper register, the present world is rendered on the right side, and the hell is on the left. Figures in Japanese and Chinese-style clothing are illustrated in both, the present world and the hell scenes. The sea separates the Pure Land from the present world as well as from hell, thereby contrasting the different spheres of existence.

In this paper, I investigate the pictorial content of the screens. First, I compare the screens to similar paintings produced around the same time, and second, I discuss the narrative stories that are represented by the figures, which populate the screens. By doing so, I offer an explanation of the screens' meaning, and hypothesize, who the patrons might have been. Finally, I consider the screens' probable usage as well as the theory that these screens were produced as a set along with the *Amida Descending Over the Mountains Screens*, which has also been transmitted in the Konkaikōmyōji Temple.

The *Hell and Pure Land Screens* are characterized by their brilliant, rich colors and dark, thin lines. These characteristics can also be found in other thirteenth-century paintings, such as the *Eight Episodes of the Buddha's Life*, owned by the MOA Museum. On the other hand, a second painting with the same subject, *Eight Episodes of the Buddha's Life*, kept in a Japanese private collection and dated to the fourteenth century, displays the same characteristics as in the *Hell and Pure Land Screens*. By contextualizing the *Hell and Pure Land Screens* screens with these other works, I propose that the screens were made sometime between the late thirteenth to the early fourteenth centuries.

Upon tracing the Japanese- and Chinese-style figures in the screens to the narrative tales and Buddhist treatises from which they derive, I found that these scenes largely represent tales that emphasize the main character's attainment of rebirth (*ōjō*) through recitation of Amida Buddha's name or other meritorious deeds. The Jōdo sect emphasized the rebirth of ordinary people. Given that the main characters in these stories are people who are ignorant or unenlightened, and that three golden lotus flowers which symbolize the attainment of the lowest level of rebirth are represented, I believe that these screens exemplify paintings belonging to the Jōdo school. The crux of the screen's message—the recitation of Amida's name and other meritorious deeds—further suggests that the screens were produced within a Jōdo Buddhist context.

The meritorious deeds represented in the screens correspond to the teachings of the Chinzei branch of the Jōdo School. The Chinzei monks Ryōchū (1199–1287) and his disciple Dōkō (1243–1330), studied the Jōdo teachings along with those of Genshin and Yōkan. In their writings, they refer to some of the narratives depicted in the screens. Hōnen also refers to some of these narratives in his sermons. Dōkō compiled these sermons in a document entitled the *Kurotani Shōnin gotōroku*. I suggest that the stories of people attaining rebirth depicted in the screens were also found in the compilations of Hōnen's and other Jōdo teachings collated within the Chinzei branch.

I believe that the screens were used as a tool to teach a dying person how to attain rebirth. If we turn to Ryōchū's *Jōdo taiishō* (1250), we learn that he delineated instructions for “good friends” (*zenchishiki*) to aid the sick person on his deathbed by telling him stories of others who have achieved rebirth. I argue that these screens were used also for this purpose.

Like these screens, the thirteenth-century Daigoji Enma Hall and the Shitenōji Painting Hall also contained numerous vignettes from narrative tales depicted on the walls. These screens were thus not simply Jōdo paintings, but also part of a larger practice in the medieval period of depicting Buddhist narrative tales.

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