

## ***Honen's Waka Verse***

– W.S. Yokoyama and Yukie Dan, Trans.

### ***1 spring***

*saerarenu hikari mo aru wo woshinahete  
hetate kaho naru asakasumi kana*

Just as I was talking about the unhindered Light,  
In rolled the morning fog which,  
to my utter surprise,  
blocked out everything in sight!

### ***2 summer***

*ware ha tata hotoke ni itsuka afuhi kusa  
kokoro no tsuma ni kakenu hi so naki*

We are like the hollyhock that will one day  
gaze upon the face of the Buddha,  
[And so] never let a day go by without strumming  
[the strings] of the heart  
[to the tune of Namu amida butsu].

### ***3 autumn***

*amita butsu ni somuru kokoro no iro ni te ha  
aki no kosuye no takuhi nara mashi*

As to the color of the heart steeped in  
[Namu] amida butsu,  
Let it aspire to autumn ablaze  
on the fringes of the trees.

### ***4 winter***

*yuki no uchi ni butsu no mina wo tonafure ha  
tsumoreru tsumi so yagate kienuru*

As we trudge through the falling snow,  
chant the Name of [Amida] Buddha,  
For the drifts of sin that pile up [on our shoulders]  
shall in short order surely disappear.

### ***5 on giving one's life for the buddha dharma***

*karisome no iro no yukari no koi nita ni  
afu ni ha mi wo mo oshimi ya ha suru*

It is like the urgent desire one feels when swept up  
in a passionate relationship  
in this world of swiftly changing colors:

So too would one [passionately] give anything,  
even one's life,  
when one encounters [the Buddhist teaching].

### **6 at kachio ji temple**

*shiha no to ni akekure kakaru shirakumo wo  
itsu murasaki no iro ni minasan*

Those white clouds that perch upon  
my thatched gate morning and night---  
When will I see them change into the purple clouds  
[of the Pure Land]?

### **7 the nembutsu of the original vow as the activity resulting in birth in gokuraku, the land of bliss, is far superior to all other practices**

*amita butsu toiu yori hoka ha tsu no kuni no  
naniha no koto mo ashikarinu heshi*

Practices other than [Namu] amida butsu  
may have currency in the land of Tsu,  
Where, in Naniwa, everything one does amounts to  
harvesting the reeds of evil.

### **8 untitled**

*gokuraku he tsutomete hayaku ite tata ha  
mi no ohari ni ha mairi tsuki nan*

It stands to reason to turn your attention to  
the Land of Bliss early on,  
So that at life's end, you would be assured of  
making the round there.

### **9 untitled [in nembutsu samadhi]**

*amita butsu to kokoro ha nishi ni utsusemi no  
monuke hate taru koye so susushiki*

With [Namu] amida butsu this heart of mine  
[has been ushered] to the West[ern land],  
At last free of this shell,  
how coolly the voicing [of Namu amida butsu]  
fills the void!

### **10 the light reaching everywhere in this world is the heart of nembutsu gathering living beings, bar none**

*tsuki kake no itaranu sato ha nakere tomo  
nakamuru hito no kokoro ni so sumu*

There is no land where the moonlight does not reach,  
Finding a place in the hearts of those  
who would abide in its light.

**11 to have the sincere understanding of the triple mind**

*ojo ha yo ni yasukere to miru hito no  
makoto no kokoro nakute koso senu*

That people see the [assurance of] Birth [in the Pure Land]  
as a way to live carefree in this world  
Reveals their lack of a true understanding [of these matters].

**12 on saying the ten thoughts before retiring at night**

*amita butsu to ju koye wo tonahete ma toro mamu  
nakaki nemuri ni narimo koso sure*

It's always best to say ten voicings of  
[Namu] amida butsu before dropping off at night,  
For who knows: this just might be the night  
that one falls into that long sleep.

**13 these waka were written by honen in his own hand.**

*chitose furu komatsu no moto wo sumikani te  
muryoju butsu no mukae wo somatsu*

Sitting at leisure at the foot of Komatsu pine  
[whose boughs] have weighed a thousand years,  
I wait in anticipation of the time I will be welcomed  
[to the Pure Land] by the Buddha of Infinite Life.

**14 untitled**

*ohotsu kana tareka ihiken komatsu to ha  
kumo wo sasafuru takamatsu no eda*

Once a small and insignificant Komatsu pine  
that people would pass by without comment,  
Now a tall Takamatsu pine whose branches  
would seem to support the very clouds.

**15 untitled**

*ike no mitsu hito no kokoro ni nitari keru  
nikori sumu koto satame nakere ha*

The human heart is like the waters of a pond:  
It has to be settled for it to be clear.

### **16 untitled**

*mumare te ha matsu omoiden furusato ni  
chikiri-shi to mono fukaki makoto wo*

Being born [in the Pure Land] means,  
first, recalling it as [your] homeland.  
[To do so] let your thoughts dwell deeply  
on the truth of the Vow.

### **17 untitled**

*amida butsu to mosu hakari wo tsutome ni te  
jodo no sogon miru so ureshiki*

What inspires me to say [Namu] amida butsu  
all the time  
Is the thought I may one day see the wonders  
of the Pure Land [with my own eyes] !

### **18 [in response to kanejitsu's waka as honen departs in exile to sanuki, third month, sixth day, ken'ei 2 {1207}]**

*kanejitsu's waka  
furusutete yuku ha wakare no hashi nare to  
fumi watasu heki koto woshi-so omou*

When the time comes for me to be left behind  
at that bridge of parting,  
It will rend my heart to see you step cross,  
though cross you must.

### **honen's waka**

*ro no mi ha koko kashiko ni te kienu tomo  
kokoro ha onashi hana noute na so*

With bodies as enduring as mist,  
vanish we must when our own time comes;  
Yet with hearts as close [as yours to mine],  
surely we'll be together again  
when we attain Birth on the flowers  
[of the Pure Land].

### **19 untitled**

*kore wo mimu oriori koto ni omohi tete  
namu amida butsu to tsune ni tonahe yo*

Failing to see this,  
[you are at the mercy of your delusions as]  
all kinds of thoughts come to mind  
one after another.

[What you need to do is to]  
constantly give voice to Namu amida butsu.

**20 as I am now**

*ikera ha nembutsu no ku tsumori  
shina ha jodo he mairi nan  
totemo kakutemo kono mi ha,  
omohi watsurafu koto-so naki*

All I've sought to achieve in life was  
the work of nembutsu,  
That in death I would make the round  
to the Pure Land.  
Whatever fate befell me personally,  
come what may,  
Never once did I lose my concentration  
[or put my goal in jeopardy].

**NOTE:**

*Based on the text supplied in the entry on waka in Jodoshu jiten III. 512-13. For a previous English translation, see "Honen the Buddhist Saint: His Life and Teaching," trans. H. H. Coates and R. Ishizuka (Kyoto: Chion'in, 1925), pp. 542-45, where rhymes are made of seventeen of the waka.*