

**The Life of Shinran Shonin: The  
Journey to Self Acceptance**

**Alfred Bloom**

*Revised Edition*

**Institute of Buddhist Studies  
Monograph Series  
Number One**



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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that we are able to initiate this new series of monographs with the opportunity to reprint Alfred Bloom's biographical study of Shinran Shonin. Originally published in the highly respected journal *Nvmen* in 1968, this study is the counterpart to his well-known *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace*. The author has taken advantage of this opportunity to make some minor corrections and changes to the original text, for which effort we wish to express our thanks.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks for the support of the Morizo and Emi Fujimoto Publication Trust Fund which made it possible for us to bring forth this work.

## THE IBS MONOGRAPH SERIES

The intent of the monograph series is to publish scholarly studies of greater than essay length which focus on a single topic in the areas of Jōdo Shinshū and Pure Land Buddhism, as well as other areas of Buddhism more generally.

Richard K. Payne  
Series Editor



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# THE LIFE OF SHINRAN SHONIN: THE JOURNEY TO SELF ACCEPTANCE

Alfred Bloom

## INTRODUCTION

Shinran's life has great historical interest because it was the chrysalis within which a new and distinctive form of Buddhist piety and thought developed. His religious experience gave him a penetrating insight into the defiled nature of human existence which became the foundation for his understanding that salvation is through faith alone. Just as this perception is historically significant, the life out of which it arose also gains in historical significance. The course of his life has a direct relation to the thought which he formulated for it is quite unlikely that, had he not been separated from his master Hōnen, or chosen to live a life among the peasants of the eastern provinces, would he have contributed to the development of Pure Land tradition in such a creative manner as his thought reveals.

As is natural in the case of influential personalities, stories grew up which have the purpose to stress his greatness in overt ways. In the case of religious teachers

it is not uncommon to illustrate points of doctrine in events of the teacher's life. Thus numerous tendentious tales may appear.

The life of Shinran is not exceptional in this regard. Hence it is a primary aim of this study to sift the materials relating to his biography in order to provide a reasonable account of the course of his career. It is not the intention of this work to criticize scholars of Japanese religions for accepting, even though tentatively, stories given in the tradition about great leaders, since in many cases direct knowledge of the Japanese language and the availability of critical studies has been lacking. It is hoped that this study can fill some lacunae in a critical inquiry into the life and thought of Shinran.

In addition to sifting the various stories concerning Shinran in the tradition, our inquiry will also be concerned with presenting information on certain significant problems of Shinran's life which have attracted the attention of recent Japanese scholars. Among these are the marriage of Shinran and Eshin-ni and his family; the nature of religious heresies in Kanto and the tragic separation of father and son, and the social composition of Shinran's disciples.

The information which we glean from the various traditions and historical sources reveals four basic periods in Shinran's life. The first period concerns his entrance into the monastic life and his stay on Mount Hiei. It was during this time that his spiritual conflict, uncertainty and dissatisfaction arose. The second period centers about his conversion to Hōnen's teaching. This was the time of discovery. The third begins with his exile in Echigo and includes the later period of preaching in the Kanto region. Here his insights into the meaning of Pure Land doctrine deepened, and new and original concepts were forged. The fourth period covers the time after he retired to Kyoto to devote himself to writing and interpreting the faith for his disciples. This last period may be called the time of definition and clarification.

## THE PERIOD OF RELIGIOUS DISSATISFACTION, 1181-1201

Shinran is believed to have been born in 1173 as the son of Arinori and related to the Fujiwara clan through the Hino family, according to tradition.<sup>1</sup> While his mother's name and clan connections are completely unknown, tradition claims she was Kikko, the daughter of Minamoto Yoshichika.<sup>2</sup> It appears that he was the eldest of four or five brothers whose names appear in the *Sompibummyaku* genealogy.<sup>3</sup> According to certain traditions, he was raised by his uncles Noritsuna and Munenari,<sup>4</sup> because he lost his parents as a young child. However, the lack of detailed and reliable information concerning his family relationships prevents us from giving a more connected account of his earliest life.

While it is impossible to assess the genealogies afforded us by tradition, and while it may have been the intention of the biographers to furnish Shinran with an aristocratic background in order to commend him to the nobility, the character of his personality revealed in his writings and the intellectual nature of his teaching, as well as the events surrounding his exile, indicate that he was not strictly peasant or warrior in origin.

The motivation and occasion for Shinran's entrance into the monastic life of Mount Hiei are also obscure, though various suggestions appear in traditional sources. According to the tradition of the *Denne*, he was destined to obtain a position in the court following the footsteps of his father.<sup>5</sup> However, he turned his back on such prospects because he had a desire to prosper the Buddhist teaching and to work for the salvation of all beings. At the age of nine, he is said to have requested his uncle Noritsuna to accompany him to the monastery. In a later work, the *Saishukyōju-e-ji*, the motivation is attributed to his deep sense of the transiency of life after the loss of his parents.<sup>6</sup> There also exists a tradition in which Shinran's mother requested on her death bed that he become a monk.<sup>7</sup>

Although it is impossible to determine precisely the motivations behind his retirement to the monastery from the traditions, there is information which may provide a clue. As we have already pointed out, Shinran may have been the eldest of four or five brothers. Two of these brothers are clearly known to history. They were also monks. Further, Shinran's father apparently had become a monk and is referred to in the Honganji genealogy as Mimurodo Daishin Nyūdō.<sup>8</sup> Against the theory of Arinori's early death there is the reference by Zonkaku to a sutra dedicated to Arinori by Shinran and his brother Ken'u on the occasion of a memorial service after Arinori's death.<sup>9</sup> In the light of these facts scholars have generally rejected the traditional accounts and sought for other possible motivations whereby a father and at least three of his sons retired to the religious life. Some point to a great family problem,<sup>10</sup> while others look to the background of turmoil and upheaval at the end of the Heian for the reason. Examples of other mass retirements have been mustered to indicate that it was a common custom for the nobility to take up religious life in order to stabilize their political or economic existence.<sup>11</sup> However, none of these illustrations, though suggestive, are sufficient to determine the precise reasons in the case of Shinran and his father and brothers.<sup>12</sup>

Whatever may have been the cause behind his retirement, there is no doubt about Shinran's presence of Mount Hiei and his involvement in the religious discipline of that institution. The traditional accounts, however, provide us with little reliable material on the basis of which to give an objective view of the character of his study there and the sources of his spiritual dissatisfaction. The course of his stay there, according to traditional narratives, is designed to glorify his achievements and wisdom, and thus provide a dramatic background of the radical turn which his life took when he renounced Mount Hiei to become a disciple of Hōnen.

The *Denne* relates that in 1182 Noritsuna took Shinran to Shōrenin which was then headed by the famous priest Jichin (Jien). Shinran was accepted into the Tendai order and was given the name Hannen-Shōnagon-no-Kimi.<sup>13</sup> The various references in tradition to this period of twenty years in which Shinran studied Buddhism on Mount Hiei are primarily concerned with his religious experience. They emphasize his great knowledge and understanding of doctrine in order to make it clear that he had thoroughly weighed Tendai thought and practice and found that salvation could not be achieved through it. Generally his experience is telescoped into a few descriptive, formal statements, though the *Shōtōden*, coming from the Tokugawa period, gives a more detailed and chronological account of his activities there.

According to the tradition, Shinran studied at Yogawa Ryōgon on Mount Hiei which signified that he stood in the line of the Pure Land tradition that had evolved through Genshin, Ryōnin and Hōnen.<sup>14</sup> Matsuno Junko particularly stresses the influence of Genshin's thought on Shinran, and implies this influence comes from the period of his stay on Mount Hiei.<sup>15</sup> Tradition also asserts that he had attained a complete understanding of Tendai philosophy.<sup>16</sup> His understanding included the exoteric and esoteric teachings of Buddhism and especially the Tendai principle that the "three truths are one truth,"<sup>17</sup> as well as Shingon mysticism.<sup>18</sup> As the result of meeting various great teachers, learning many doctrines, and practicing many forms of meditation, Shinran is said to have equaled Hōnen in his understanding of Buddhism.<sup>19</sup>

In evaluating such traditions we must remember that their purpose was to exalt the founder by praising his wisdom and spiritual insight. The only basis in fact which gives any support to these traditions is the fact that he was scholarly and his writings reveal a considerable knowledge of Buddhist works and an

understanding of basic Buddhist doctrine. Many of his writings are anthological in which he gathered texts to support his views. How much of this material he acquired on Mount Hiei, we cannot say. This period, together with his residence in Yoshimizu with Hōnen, could have provided him with ample opportunity to gather and read many texts which he could not have done later in the provinces.

According to the *Shōtōden*, Shinran's achievements on Mount Hiei go beyond purely scholastic attainments. It claims that he so impressed Jichin that at the age of twenty five he was appointed the Abbot of Shōkōin.<sup>20</sup> As Jichin's assistant, he gave lectures and conducted services, and is even reputed to have constructed a library for the Buddhist canon at the West Pagoda.

Despite the wealth of legends and stories concerning his abilities, the period of Shinran's residence on Mount Hiei is hidden in obscurity except for one ray of light which illumines the darkness. In a letter to her daughter Kakushin-ni, Shinran's wife, Eshin-ni, relates that he was a *dōsō* on Mount Hiei.<sup>21</sup>

The *dōsō* were priests of fairly low status in the organization of Mount Hiei and probably served either in the Jōgyōzammaidō or the Hokkedō.<sup>22</sup> Though they have been confused with the *doshu*, another type of servant priest, it now appears that they were especially concerned with the ceremonies of the Continuous Nembutsu (*fudannembutsu*) performed in the Jōgyōzammaidō. As such they were particularly important because of their intimate connection to the development of Pure Land doctrine and practice. Ryōnin, the founder of the Yūzunenbutsu teaching in 1103, is an outstanding example of *dōsō*.<sup>23</sup>

The knowledge that Shinran was a *dōsō* and intimately involved in Pure Land thought already during his stay on Mount Hiei provides a context for understanding the religious anxiety and dissatisfaction which

he experienced. As a *dōsō*, he was exposed to Pure Land concepts concerning the evil character of the age and human existence. He was probably confronted frequently with the transiency of life, because the Continuous Nembutsu services were sponsored by individuals mainly to acquire merit which could be transferred to a relative to insure his good destiny.<sup>24</sup> In this way Pure Land teachings penetrated Shinran's mind and contributed to the deepening of his religious sensitivity.

We have no specific evidence, however, for the source of Shinran's anxiety and dissatisfaction. The *Denne* briefly suggests that he had a desire to retire, that is, to take up the practice of nembutsu, at the age of twenty nine.<sup>25</sup> No reasons are given for this, but the *Shōtōden* gives a detailed account of his success at court and his rejection of fame.<sup>26</sup> The *Tantokumon* relates that he was troubled by his passions and was hindered by them in the practice of meditation.<sup>27</sup>

All the traditions agree that Shinran become deeply troubled because he was not able to obtain an assurance of his salvation. No matter what discipline he attempted, he was obstructed by his passions. There is some historical basis for this fact. In one of Eshin-ni's letters she tells of his concern for his destiny as the reason for his spiritual quest.<sup>28</sup> Shinran himself had declared on one occasion that "as I am a person for whom any discipline is difficult to attain, hell will certainly be my destination."<sup>29</sup> Thus while it is impossible to determine precise causes for his profound sense of defilement, there can be no doubt that he experienced a deep sense of spiritual failure, frustration, or inadequacy which awakened him to the futility and vanity of Buddhist practices traditionally believed to enable an individual to gain Buddhahood.

Shinran may also have been influenced by the decadent and corrupt conditions which he could have observed on Mount Hiei. The violent activities of the rowdy monks frequently disturbed the peace and quiet of

Kyoto, and the continuing strife between the students (*gakushō*) and the priests (*dōshū*) was not conducive to a contemplative atmosphere. The Buddhist Order had become a refuge where monks could compete for fame and power. Thus Shinran, in the same manner as Hōnen, Dōgen, and Nichiren, became perturbed and uncertain about the way of salvation.

Whatever the psychological or social reasons may be which lay behind Shinran's religious development, it is possible that he was simply an individual who was constitutionally unsuited for the rigorous practices of meditation of the Tendai system. After years of serious study and sincere attempts to achieve some degree of spiritual insight, he experienced frustration and inner conflict. There are evidences that his rejection of Mount Hiei was grounded in a deep sense of defilement which must have developed through the years of his training. The very nature of his thought indicates that it was an attempt to face up positively to his corrupt nature. He came to view the existence of passion in men as a sign of Amida's mercy and the earnest that salvation was assured. The development is only intelligible on the background of the disillusionment suffered on Mount Hiei.

As Shinran became more aware of his own personal evil and the decadent character of his age, he became more and more anxious about his own destiny. Tradition records that he visited the various shrines on Mount Hiei in an effort to discover a solution to his inner conflict. Unsuccessful in his quest, he went to Kyoto to the Rokkakudō and began a vigil. All texts agree that he secluded himself there and that it was a most significant experience. They disagree on the chronological relation of that event and his conversion to Hōnen's teaching.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, our most certain source for determining the importance of the event is the brief statement of Eshin-ni that he left Mount Hiei and went to the Rokkakudō where he secluded himself for one hundred

days. On the ninety fifth day, he received a vision which included a message relating to Shōtoku Taishi. The following morning he set out for Hōnen's hermitage and listened to his teaching faithfully. He was so attracted by this doctrine that he ignored all criticism and said that he would accept doom, since he was already doomed.<sup>31</sup>

### THE PERIOD OF DISCOVERY, 1201-1207

From the Rokkakudō, as we have noted, Shinran attended Hōnen's hermitage in Yoshimizu. The new phase which was opening in his life was to be the most decisive and perhaps critical in his whole religious development. It was his meeting with Hōnen that marked Shinran's rejection of the elaborate disciplinary and philosophic approaches to Buddhist enlightenment taught on Mount Hiei. It symbolized the rejection of the decadent, aristocratic, confusing religion of the age and his identification with the virile, vital and popular teaching of Hōnen which brought clarity to religious thought and faith through the stress on the singlehearted recitation of the name of Amida Buddha. The occasion had such great meaning for Shinran that he long remembered it. In the epilogue of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* he remarked on his experience:

But I, Gutoku Shinran, in the year 1201, abandoned the difficult practices and took refuge in the Original Vow.<sup>32</sup>

The brief phrase with which Shinran describes this momentous decision is pregnant with the spirit of reform within Buddhism for which this period is famed, and it shows that he shared the same general outlook as the other reformers of his time.

That Shinran turned to Hōnen's teaching on this occasion is also worthy of note. Hōnen, more than any other Buddhist thinker to this point, had brought to the

fore the problem of the self and its degenerate nature. Through Hōnen's teaching individuals burdened with guilt and sin could devote themselves to the simple recitation of Amida Buddha's name in the faith that they would gain birth in the Pure Land despite their spiritual incapacity. It is recorded that he attracted to himself samurai, robbers, prostitutes, fishermen, and the like. He enabled these people, excluded from deliverance by traditional concepts, to aspire for the fruits of Buddhahood though bound as they were to their passion-ridden existence. It was undoubtedly this new emphasis on Amida Buddha's compassion which attracted Shinran and led ultimately to his accepting the teaching.

In Yoshimizu it is clear that Shinran comprehended the meaning of Pure Land teaching for the common mortal bound by ignorance and passion. He had come to this understanding through the kindly instruction of Hōnen, and through his life he steadfastly maintained that he was but his earnest disciple. He believed firmly that if Hōnen's teaching were not true then there was no possibility of salvation.

For me, Shinran, there is nothing else to do other than to believe, as I have received the words of the good man (Hōnen) (when he said) "You can be saved by Amida doing only the nembutsu." I do not know at all whether the nembutsu may be truly the seed by which we are born into the Pure Land, or is the karmic act by which we can fall into hell.

Even though I should fall into hell because I was deceived by Hōnen and practiced the nembutsu, I would not repent at all. But, I probably would have regrets that I was deceived if, indeed, I were one who could become a Buddha by being diligent in the (practice of the) discipline, (for the sake of) myself and others, and yet descended into hell through saying the

nembutsu. However, since I am one who cannot attain to any discipline, hell is probably to be my determined dwelling place in any case.<sup>33</sup>

After Shinran's discovery of the meaning of Pure Land teaching and his attainment of an assurance of salvation even as a sinful person, he devoted himself to the close study of Hōnen's thought. In 1943 texts of the *Kammuryōjukyō* and the *Amidakyō*, to which Shinran had added notes as he read, were discovered in the Nishi Honganji storehouse. The study of these texts and the works quoted by him indicate that they were probably made while he resided in Yoshimizu.<sup>34</sup>

Shinran's study and growth in the understanding of the Pure Land teaching in the few short years he lived in Yoshimizu were rewarded by Hōnen's granting him permission to copy the *Senjakushū* and allowing him to draw his portrait. For Shinran, these gifts marked the high point of his spiritual experience and testified to his close relation with his teacher. In glowing terms he related these incidents and what they meant to him many years afterward:

In 1205, by his kindness, I copied the *Senjakushū*. On the fourteenth day of the seventh month in that same year, Hōnen wrote with his own pen title *Senjakuhongannembutsushū* together with the phrase "Namu Amida Butsu (is) the act for Rebirth; the Nembutsu is the foundation," and (my name) "monk Shakkū." On the same day, I was given permission to draw a portrait of Genkū (Hōnen). On the twenty ninth day of the seventh month, he wrote a title on the picture and with his own brush he penned (the phrase) "If I become Buddha, and all beings who call my name even down to ten voicings are not born (in the Pure Land), may I not obtain true enlightenment. Now he has become Buddha, and we know that his profound Vow was not false. Beings who

pronounce and think on his name shall certainly attain birth (in the Pure Land).” Further according to a dream, he changed the characters of my name Shakkū and wrote that name with his own brush. At this time our teacher, the Shōnin, was seventy three years old.

The *Senjakuhongannembutsushū* was compiled through the instruction of the Regent in retirement (Tsukinowa-dono Kanezane whose religious name was Enshō). Contained within it are the essentials of Shinshū and the inner principles of the nembutsu. Whoever reads it will find it easy to understand. It has rare, most excellent and beautiful passages. It is unsurpassed among treasured texts. Years pass; days pass, and those who receive his teachings go into the millions. Whether one was intimate or distant, those permitted to see or copy this book were very few. But I have already copied the work and drawn his portrait. This is the effect of the right act of the sole practice of nembutsu. It is a sign that (my) birth is assured. Suppressing my tears of joy and sorrow, I recall the events of that time.

Oh, how happy I am. My mind is established in the Buddha Land of the profound Vow. My thought is set afloat on the sea of the inconceivable doctrine. I have experienced the Tathāgata’s compassion (Amida Buddha’s) deeply, and I sincerely cherish the kindness of my teacher.<sup>35</sup>

Shinran’s testimony to his close relationship to Hōnen became the basis for the growth of a variety of legends in the Shinshū tradition which attempt to amplify this relationship. On the one hand, there are legends which attempt to portray him as the correct exponent of Hōnen’s faith in contrast to erring disciples. Here distinctive tenets developed by Shinran later are represented as the views of Hōnen himself. The polemical background of the

tales is obvious. On the other hand, there is the legend concerning Shinran's marriage to Tamahi at the suggestion of Hōnen. This legend clearly aims at justifying the institution of marriage for Shinshū clergymen following Shinran's example.

The legends concerning Shinran's faithfulness to Hōnen's teaching while he resided in Yoshimizu are interesting because they reflect the growing gulf at a later time between Pure Land schools and the Shinshū group founded by Shinran. The differences center on the nature of faith and the character of Hōnen's doctrines.

In this vein Kakunyo, author of the *Denne* (I, 6) related that many people were attracted to Hōnen's Pure Land teaching, but very few earnestly followed his doctrine. When Shinran became aware of this situation, he came to the teacher and proposed a test. Hōnen agreed. Shinran divided the disciples into two groups by asking them whether they believed that faith or practice was the foundation of salvation. As a result, three hundred persons revealed their misunderstanding, because they sought salvation in practices. However, Seikaku, Hōrembō, Shinran and the lay disciple, Hōriki, placed themselves on the side of faith. The climax of the incident came when Hōnen took the side of faith and confirmed Shinran's view.<sup>36</sup>

In two other incidents Hōnen is shown confirming Shinran's point of view. One occasion arose when Shinran claimed his faith was identical with Hōnen's. Hōnen agreed to this assertion of the novel view (actually developed by Shinran) that faith was in actuality a gift of Amida Buddha to good and evil mortals alike.<sup>37</sup> In another instance, Hōnen agreed with Shinran against other Pure Land disciples that devotees gain the status of rebirth into the Pure Land in the present life and need not wait to the end of life for assurance of salvation.<sup>38</sup> This doctrine was actually taught by Shinran and is one of his creative contributions to Pure Land thought.

One of the most important legends concerning Shinran's activities in Yoshimizu is the account of his marriage to Tamahi, the daughter of the Regent Fujiwara Kanezane. The first appearance of the story is in the *Shōtōden*. According to this text, after Shinran had become a disciple of Hōnen, he received a vision in the Rokkakudō (as we have discussed above). In this vision the Bodhisattva Kannon appeared to him in the form of a monk wearing a white kesa and seated on a white lotus. Addressing him by the name Zenshin, the Bodhisattva Kannon made a pledge:

Even though you violate a woman because of past  
karma  
I will take the form of a beautiful woman and be  
violated  
During your life you will be able to adorn (the doctrine),  
When you die, I will guide you to the Pure Land.<sup>39</sup>

After the message had been given, Bodhisattva Kannon declared: "This is my vow." Shinran was then urged to declare what he had learned in the vision to all beings.

The narrative continues by recounting that in the tenth month, the fifteenth day, in 1201, Regent Kanezane came to Yoshimizu. After the evening sermon, he questioned Hōnen:

Among your many disciples, Kanezane is a layman. Is there a difference between the nembutsu of sages and our nembutsu?

Hōnen replied:

It is clear that the Original Vow is for all beings good or evil and common mortals will attain birth.

Kanezane then requested that Hōnen have one of his monks take a wife and this would become a model for the birth of laymen into the Pure Land. Hōnen complied and chose Shinran for this marriage. When Shinran hesitated, Hōnen recalled to him the vision he had had in the Rokkakudō in which the Bodhisattva vowed to be his wife. Shinran, unable to refuse the master's request, returned home with Kanezane and married his seventh daughter Tamahi who was just eighteen years old at the time.<sup>40</sup>

Although the story derives from a late tradition, it gained very wide currency and generally appears in almost all accounts of the life of Shinran in modern works. Marriage of the clergy became a distinctive feature of the Shinshū community. It was of course not the first time that clergy were known to be married, but it was the first time that a theoretical basis for the marriage of priests was formulated. According to Shinshū belief, the attainment of salvation does not require the abandonment of the secular life, but is to be achieved within the framework of common mortal existence.<sup>41</sup> That Shinran married is no historical problem since we possess the letters of Eshin-ni, but it is a question whether he really married during the residence in Yoshimizu.

We must point out here that although no reputable scholar presently accepts the account of Shinran's marriage given in the *Shōtōden* and outlined above, Shinran's marriage during this period is still an open question. A suggestion that he may have married here is found in the appearance in certain letters of two mysterious individuals named Imagozen-no-haha and Sokushōbō.<sup>42</sup> While there is no information by which to identify these people precisely, Shinran's letters imply that they have a close relation to him on the basis of which he appealed for aid on their behalf from the Kanto disciples. Because of the close relation reflected in the letters, scholars have theorized that Imagozen-no-haha

may have been his wife whom he had to abandon in Kyoto when he was sent into exile. On his return later in life he found her and her son there in destitution. Being poor himself, Shinran asked his disciples for help. However, this theory has not been accepted because of the obscurity of the individuals involved.<sup>43</sup>

The most important evidence against Shinran's marriage in Yoshimizu is the fact that in 1204, he signed the seven point pledge drawn up by Hōnen in which he promised that his disciples would observe monastic discipline. Point four of the series of pledges declares:

You must not, in the name of the *Nembutsu* which you say requires no precepts, encourage people to indulge in meat eating, wine drinking, or impure sexual intercourse. Never say of people who strictly practice the religious discipline proscribed by their sect, that they belong to the so-called "miscellaneous practice people," nor that those who trust in the Buddha's Original Vow need never be afraid of sin.<sup>44</sup>

Hōnen further reinforced the pledge by a personal letter which he sent to Abbot Shinshō of Mount Hiei:

If anyone disseminates distorted views and empty lies, he deserves to be severely punished, in accordance with the strictest judgment, and I hope and trust that such will be so dealt with.<sup>45</sup>

In face of the mounting criticism and pressures which Hōnen was receiving from Mount Hiei and Nara, it is unlikely that he would have tolerated, much less permitted, Shinran to marry in Yoshimizu. That Shinran himself signed the pledge makes it rather unlikely that he was married at this time.<sup>46</sup>

Shinran's fellowship and study under Hōnen came to an abrupt end in 1207 when Hōnen and his leading disciples were sentenced to exile and two others were

beheaded. As early as 1204 there were signs of opposition when the monks of Mount Hiei complained to Hōnen about the irreligious behavior of his disciples.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the monks also appear to have petitioned the court to abolish Hōnen's community because his disciples were extremely irreverent towards the gods of the nation.<sup>48</sup> Hōnen attempted to appease the authorities on Mount Hiei by drawing up the seven point pledge which he had all his disciples sign.

Attention has been called to the fact that the discipline of Hōnen's followers was really an internal matter for the Tendai order, since Hōnen was supposed to be living according to Tendai regulations. It was quite natural that the abbot of Mount Hiei would be concerned lest the order be brought into disrepute. However, Hōnen's doctrine transcended the limited sphere of Tendai discipline. In his writings, Hōnen had placed the schools of Nara and Mount Hiei into the category of the Holy Path. He directed his criticism to all schools.<sup>49</sup> Consequently he faced not only opposition from the Tendai order, but in 1205, the priests of Kōfukuji in Nara petitioned the court to punish Hōnen's evil followers. They charged Hōnen with nine specific errors such as the establishment of a new school of Buddhism without government permission, the drawing of a new mandala in which the evil man is shown receiving the light of Amida Buddha, making light of Śākyamuni Buddha, rejecting virtue, rebelling against the gods, obscuring the truth about the Pure Land, giving a wrong interpretation to the Pure Land teaching and confusing the nation.<sup>50</sup>

Little appears to have been done to meet the demands of these petitions, because Hōnen had strong supporters in the court such as Regent Kanazane who had even written to the monks of Mount Hiei in defense of Hōnen.<sup>51</sup> The opposition was crystallized when two indiscreet monks, Anraku and Jūren, converted two court ladies without the permission of the retired Emperor Go-Toba.

When the retired Emperor returned from his pilgrimage to Kumano shrine, he was told of the incident in a way which led to the suspicion of immoral relations between the monks and the women. In 1207 the two monks were beheaded and Hōnen and his followers were defrocked, reduced to laymen and then banished to distant provinces.<sup>52</sup> Hōnen was given the secular name Fujii Motohiko, and Shinran received the name Fujii Yoshinobu. Hōnen was sent to Tosa on Shikoku, and Shinran to Kokubu in Echigo to the north. The justice of the persecution can be questioned, and it is severely condemned in the traditional accounts of the Pure Land school.<sup>53</sup> In the epilogue of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran relates the incident and expresses his own critical attitude.<sup>54</sup>

In the short period between 1201 and 1207 Shinran had found spiritual release and faith in the Pure Land doctrine. He progressed rapidly as a disciple of Hōnen to whom he attributed the blessings of assurance and peace. Recognized by Hōnen as a close disciple, Shinran was permitted to make a copy of the *Senjakushū* and to draw a portrait of the teacher. Ever after, those privileges were regarded by him as a sign of his deliverance, and they inspired him to continual praise of Hōnen. However, the frail human bond was broken, and when Shinran departed for the north, he could not know that he would never see the master again; that whatever questions arose in his mind he would have to find solutions on his own. The experience with Hōnen had shown Shinran the direction to go, the exile and the new life would mature and deepen the insights he had received.

THE PERIOD OF DEEPENING INSIGHT AND EVANGELISM:  
THE SOJOURN IN ECHIGO, 1207-1212,  
AND IN HITACHI IN KANTŌ, 1212-1235 (?)

*The Significance of the Echigo Exile for Shinran: The Exile and Shinran's Spiritual Development.* The causes of the break up of the Yoshimizu community lay in the enmity and anxiety of the established religious orders who feared the loss of their power through the growth of the Pure Land teaching.<sup>55</sup> However, the ultimate result of their endeavor to suppress his doctrine and its leaders, was its greater popularity. When Hōnen and his disciples were banished to various parts of the country, they had great opportunity to continue to spread the teaching in areas hitherto neglected by the dominant schools. Frequent attempts were made to restrain the movement, but they failed. Hōnen had declared it was impossible to stop it,<sup>56</sup> and in the *Denne*, Shinran is portrayed as accepting the exile as a fortunate event:

If the great teacher Hōnen Shonin were not sent into exile, I, too, would probably not have gone into exile. If I did not go into exile, how would the beings in the remote places be saved? This was by the grace of our sainted teacher. In other words he was a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Seishi and Shotoku Taishi was the embodiment of the Bodhisattva Kannon...<sup>57</sup>

The period of exile was particularly important for Shinran, not only for the possibilities that appeared to spread the Pure Land doctrine, but it was in this time that the insights which he had gained in association with Hōnen were given the opportunity to develop freely. We know little of his actual life during this time, but it was here that the interpretation of Pure Land doctrine which

has given Shinran his lasting religious significance began to mature as he faced the problems of establishing a new life in the northern area of Japan.

In order to assess the importance of the Echigo sojourn for the development of Shinran's thought, we must recall that during the Yoshimizu period, he had gained a firm assurance of his deliverance which overrode his awareness of a sinful, passionate nature. Once attaining release from his spiritual anxiety, he devoted himself to Hōnen's teaching and became thoroughly indoctrinated and conversant with it. However, a historical problem arises when we study Shinran's teaching itself. There we find a distinct difference from Hōnen on very important points of doctrine. Shinran made a thorough reinterpretation of the traditional Pure Land doctrine, and his thought diverged sufficiently for him to be excluded from later accounts of the Yoshimizu community in the traditional Pure Land School.

When we come to consider the reasons for the radical transformation of Pure Land doctrine which we can observe in Shinran's thought, the Echigo sojourn, despite its obscurity, appears as the key to the problem. Shinran's own personality and his experience during this time of exile became the basis for the new formulations which he made.

The chief contribution of the period of exile to Shinran's spiritual development was the fact that it brought him face to face with the hard realities of the life of the common people which he had not known when he lived apart as a monk pursuing the path of Buddhist studies. In this new situation he had the opportunity to observe the life of the people at close hand. In fact, he shared that existence and took a wife as well as abandoned monastic disciplines. His experience was perhaps even more radical than that of an ordinary peasant because of the painful transition which he must have undergone

when he was abruptly thrust out of the pleasant confines of the capital and found himself surrounded by the rigorous life of the villager. He said of himself: "I am neither priest nor layman."<sup>58</sup> This phrase sums up his basic problem. He had to merge his religious life with his new secular existence. He had lost his priestly privileges in the eyes of the state, but he could not entirely cast aside his religious training and interests because he was now merely a layman. Just as he was a priest without privilege, he was a layman without experience.

Inferring from the nature of his doctrine, the fact of his marriage, and what we can surmise of this new life which he was forced to lead, we can conjecture that through his experience in lay life, Shinran came to realize that the common people could also attain Buddhist ideals in their ordinary life. He was led through his difficulties and hardships to look deeply into the nature of human existence, and he became acutely aware of the strength and indispensability of the passions and instincts in the struggle for existence. He saw that people were inextricably bound by their passions, which were necessary to maintain life. Thus, Shinran could not think with the traditional monastic schools that the life of passion was merely to be cast aside in futile attempts to purify the self. For him the Buddhist analysis of the human situation ceased to be a mere poetic or theoretical scheme to justify the monkish practices and privileges. He viewed the human predicament with existential clarity as he lived it himself, and as it was also illumined by his deepened understanding of the compassion of Amida Buddha which he had learned in Yoshimizu. Shinran rejected completely the duality of religious and lay life. He took the principle "Samsara is Nirvana" as something to be applied concretely to the common life. Existentially and philosophically Shinran united the secular and religious life.

*Shinran's Marriage and Family.* Apart from the actual formulation of Shinran's thought, his marriage in Echigo provides us with a suggestion of the probable direction of his thought as we have interpreted it above. His marriage and the problems of raising a family furnished Shinran with a stimulus for his understanding of the human condition. Thus we must give some consideration to the information we have concerning his marriage.

There have been a variety of theories concerning the time and number of wives Shinran may have had. However, the only one that is clearly known is Eshin-ni, whom he may have married soon after his arrival in Echigo and his initial experience with the new life there.<sup>59</sup> He undoubtedly soon learned that the requirements for earning a living in that environment required a wife as a helpmate and companion. This companionship he found in Eshin-ni.

Little is known of Eshin-ni herself except that she came from Echigo and may have been related to a family of some status in the community.<sup>60</sup> Various bits of information have been garnered by scholars in order to determine her education and wealth. Among these, fragments of sutras which she copied and letters to her daughter Kakushin-ni reflect some degree of education. It is possible that she also had some wealth because she appears to have possessed some servants, made plans for a gravestone, and was concerned for her grandchildren's education. According to the *Hino-ichiryū-keizu*, she was related to Miyoshi Tamenori. Umehara observes that this family had considerable influence in both Echigo and Kanto. The relation may have affected Shinran's decision to go to Kanto. In the *Gyokuyō* of Regent Kanazane reference is made to a Miyoshi Tamenori whom some scholars believe was Eshin-ni's father.<sup>61</sup>

While there is evidence that Eshin-ni was related to a family of some influence, there are also indications which can be interpreted to show that she may have only been a servant. She referred to herself as “Chikuzen,” a type of familiar name which she may have received when she was employed. It has also been pointed out that she was twenty-six when Shinran went to Echigo and her marriage was fairly late for a girl of aristocratic connections. In her later years she moved from place to place in Echigo and the inferior character of her main place of residence called Tobita-no-maki also casts doubt on her relation to a wealthy family. Her robust handwriting, indicating a strong body, and her familiarity with servants appear to point to a bond of relation with them. Thus some scholars conclude that she may have been a servant of the Miyoshi family, but this is not necessarily to be construed that she herself was from a low class. Servants were frequently related to the class they served.<sup>62</sup>

It appears reasonable to suppose that Eshin-ni lived in close relation to a family of status and in some way shared the benefits of that status, though her own is open to question. Whether the relation was based on kinship or service is not clear. Nevertheless, she appears in Shinran’s life as a woman of considerable ability and character.

Concerning Shinran’s family, the *Honganji-keizu* genealogy lists seven children under his name.<sup>63</sup> Of these seven, the first, Han-i, is reputedly a son born between Shinran and Tamahi, the daughter of Regent Kanazane. However, since this marriage is generally regarded as legendary, the birth of this son is also discounted. It has been suggested by some that Han-i be replaced by Sokushōbo as the eldest son, because he appears to have a close, but obscure, relation with Shinran.<sup>64</sup> Leaving aside Han-i and Sokushōbō, the *Kudenshō* notes that

Eshin-ni was the mother of six children.<sup>65</sup> Of these six, three were girls, Kakushin-ni, Oguronyobō and Takanozen-ni, and three were boys, Zenran (Jishin), Masukata (Yūbō), and Shinrembō. All are known to history except Takanozen-ni who is rejected by some scholars.<sup>66</sup> Eshin-ni's letters are all addressed to Kakushin-ni who was her youngest daughter. Kakushin-ni was Shinran's devoted nurse and attendant in his last days. Oguronyobō apparently died young and the care of her children fell to Eshin-ni.<sup>67</sup> Masukata, also called Yūbō, is referred to in connection with the dreadful famines which made life difficult for Eshin-ni's family in Echigo.<sup>68</sup> He went later to Kyoto, in place of his mother, to be with Shinran in his last moments.<sup>69</sup> Shinrembō appears in Eshin-ni's account of Shinran's travels to Kanto which took place when Shinrembō was four years old.<sup>70</sup> On another occasion Eshin-ni wrote that Shinrembō became a heretic when he sponsored a service of Continuous Nembutsu for his father.<sup>71</sup> Zenran only appears in Shinran's letters when he became the center of a controversy among the Kanto disciples.<sup>72</sup>

From these indications we can see that Shinran had a full family life and responsibility which undoubtedly contributed to his own religious development.

*Shinran's Evangelistic Activity in Kanto: The Departure from Echigo and Emigration to Kanto.* Apart from our knowledge of Shinran's marriage and his family which he acquired in Echigo, and our inferences regarding his spiritual development, we have no knowledge of his secular or religious activities there. Though he remained convinced of the truth of Pure Land doctrine, he does not appear to have engaged in any direct evangelistic activity. Only one disciple, Kakuzen, is recorded from this region.<sup>73</sup> Shinran lived a quiet and thoughtful life preparing himself for his future task.

In 1211, at the end of five years, Hōnen was pardoned. In the next year, after he returned to Kyoto and took up

residence in the western foothills of Higashiyama, he died.<sup>74</sup> The *Denne* states that Shinran, also pardoned, remained in Echigo in order to preach.<sup>75</sup> However, the *Shōtōden* relates that he desired to return to Kyoto. After some delay and the death of Hōnen, Shinran reached Kyoto and mourned at the teacher's tomb. The journey also included a trip to Ise.<sup>76</sup> Scholars, however, are inclined to discount the story of the *Shōtōden*, because knowledge of Shinran's activities and family condition would seem to rule out such a journey.

Shinran delayed his departure from Echigo about two years. It is probable that his family situation prevented him from leaving as soon as he was pardoned. The *Denne's* suggestion that he also stayed in order to preach is not warranted by the number of disciples from that region. Rather we may imagine that he had become immersed in lay life as a family man and supporter of his wife and children. Shinrembō was born in the third month of 1211, and with the possibility of three children under the age of five, the difficulties of a change of residence were great. The problem of transporting a whole family would certainly have hindered him from making a move to Kyoto and then to Kanto. Instead, he had to choose his place of residence carefully and make proper preparations for the journey. Such a task may easily have required two extra years after the end of the exile. In the year 1213 Shinran with his family departed for the Kanto region.<sup>77</sup>

*Shinran's Evangelistic Motivation.* Although Shinran avoided direct propagation of his Pure Land faith for political or economic reasons in Echigo, it is quite clear from his activity on the way to Kanto that he had not at all forgotten his initial religious impulse, and his desire to help all beings gain enlightenment. Rather, the experience of lay life intensified his desire to declare the faith to those persons ignored by the traditional schools.

There are a variety of possible political, social and religious reasons which may have dictated his choice of Kanto as the area of his endeavor rather than returning to Kyoto which he knew so well. From the political standpoint, the Pure Land teaching was still prohibited in the capital. Shunjo, Hōnen's biographer, notes that edicts restricting the doctrine were issued at various times from 1213 to 1239. The attitude of the priests of Mount Hiei was so adamant that in 1227 they attempted to destroy Hōnen's tomb and seize his body.<sup>78</sup> The conditions in the capital naturally prevented the free spread of the faith. Of all Hōnen's disciples, only Shōku of the Seizan school returned to teach there.<sup>79</sup> Shinran may also have been encouraged to go to the Kanto region by groups of farmers who may have emigrated from Echigo in search of better agricultural conditions.<sup>80</sup> It has also been pointed out that he would need an economic basis for his family when he went to a new area. Hitachi in Kanto appears to fulfill this requirement and it is coincidental that Miyoshi Tamenori is said to have been a landowner not only in Echigo but also in Hitachi.<sup>81</sup>

Perhaps the most important consideration in Shinran's decision was the religious. During the Echigo exile he had lived close to the common people. He nurtured a desire to share his faith with them. Unable to return to Kyoto and unwilling to compromise his convictions, he turned his eyes to the newly developing region. The *Denne* ascribes a strong evangelistic impulse to his decision and interprets the vision which Shinran received in Rokkakudō in relation to this mission. In the course of the vision he saw the great masses of people in eastern Japan to whom he must declare the message that would assure them salvation.<sup>82</sup> The *Tantokumon* interprets the term Gutoku which was adopted by Shinran as part of his name in relation to this mission. The term signified the mode of humble living of the peasants which, according to Shinran, was the true mode of Buddhist wisdom in the

degenerate Last Age (*mappo*). Thus he desired to live on the same level as the peasants who worked in the fields.<sup>83</sup>

In the light of his inner transformation which wiped out all priestly and monkish ways which he had known for over twenty years, Shinran was probably attracted to the Kanto region as the most fertile field for the proclamation of his new religious standpoint. It is thus possible to regard his decision as based on an evangelistic purpose rooted deep in humanitarian regard for the spiritual condition of the multitudes of people destitute of education and understanding. Some evidences of this concern may be seen in the postscript of his *Yuishinshōmon'i*. This passage parallels the concern for the common man revealed in the *Jōei Formulary*. The Formulary states:

...we have written the Formulary in such a way that even the most illiterate fellows can understand its meaning. The old laws are like complicated Chinese characters, the new laws like the simple syllabary (*kana*).<sup>84</sup>

In similar vein Shinran wrote:

Because the peasants (country folk) do not know the meaning of (*kanji*) characters and their pitiable ignorance is boundless, I have often written the same thing over and over so they may understand easily. Those who are intelligent may think it is ridiculous, and they may scoff. However, I have written with the single purpose (to permit) the dull person to understand easily. I do not take notice of the criticisms of those people in general (who have knowledge).<sup>85</sup>

Shinran's desire to bring salvation to the multitude in the eastern regions is revealed in an illuminating experience that transpired as he traveled from Echigo to Kanto in 1213.<sup>86</sup> At that time, he made a vow to benefit

beings through the recitation of the thousand parts of the Pure Land sutras. However, after beginning to fulfill the pledge, he reconsidered it and came to the conclusion that the true way to requite the compassion of Amida Buddha was to cause others to believe what he believed himself. In other words, he felt a strong urge to witness to his faith directly to the people in order to have them share in the joy and peace that he knew himself. In addition, the recitation of the sutras was a practice which was believed to assist in the cultivation of faith in the Pure Land School. Such a practice implied that reliance on the name of Amida Buddha alone was not entirely sufficient for salvation.

The incident reveals two points concerning Shinran's spiritual development at the end of the Echigo period. In the first place we observe the appearance of his strong evangelistic impulse which reflects the intensity of his own faith. Secondly we notice that he rejected all subsidiary practices, once and for all, and relied only on the way of recitation of Amida Buddha's name. In this rejection the central theme of Shinran's view of faith begins to appear. Nevertheless, his thought was still in a state of evolution, but it is clear that he was coming to some far reaching conclusions about Pure Land doctrine.<sup>87</sup>

*Shinran's Disciples.* When Shinran arrived in Kanto, he made his center at Inada in Kasama.<sup>88</sup> During his residence there, he appears to have made journeys into neighboring areas at Hitachi, Shimoso, Shimozuke and Musashi. He attracted a body of followers from the upper and lower classes, and from clerical and lay groups. There are many legends of temples he is reputed to have established.<sup>8</sup> Even some opposition is indicated in the legend of the conversion of the monk Myohōbō who was a yamabushi, a type of monk engaged in severe ascetic practices such as sleeping in fields, prostrating on mountains in order to gain merit and spiritual insight.<sup>90</sup> This mode of religious devotion represents the utmost in

self power practice, but according to the legend, Shinran was successful in converting him.<sup>91</sup>

Disregarding the legends which emphasize Shinran's success, we can be certain that he did create a considerable following. There are various lists of disciples such as the *Shinran-monryo-kōmei-chō*,<sup>92</sup> and the *Nijuyonhai-chō*, as well as a list of fifty one persons given in the *Shōtōden*,<sup>93</sup> and the mention of various people in his letters. According to the *Shinran-monryo-kōmei-chō*, forty-eight disciples are given with their locations. A summary indicates that twenty lived in Hitachi, five in Shimoso, six in Shimozuke, one in Musashi, six in Iwashiro, one in Rikuchu, and one in Echigo. Added to the Kanto disciples, eight are listed from Kyoto. When repetitions are deleted, the *Nijuyonhai-chō* yields six names. The letters of Shinran present twenty more disciples. Thus a total of seventy-four disciples are clearly known in the tradition. Five of these became heretics reducing the total to sixty-nine true disciples. Three were women and sixty-six were men. The distribution of the disciples shows that his work centered about the area of Hitachi. Further the number of followers includes probably only the leading ones, and like Chū Tarō of Ōbu who was a leader of some ninety people, they represent a far greater base among the people.<sup>94</sup>

More important than the number of disciples that Shinran gained during his residence in Kanto is the character and general social class of those people. From what we have already seen of his views and attitudes we know that he intended to identify himself closely with the multitudes of ordinary people in the eastern provinces. He was also critical of contemporary Buddhism and implicitly of the society that supported it. Because of his intention, his critical attitude and the general nature of his teaching, it has been thought that he was a religious spokesman for the lower classes as opposed to the upper, propertied class. Consequently, Shinran's doctrine and activity have been closely scrutinized for indications of

the particular segment of Kanto society to which he appealed. It is to be noted also that modern issues pervade the discussion. Modern Japanese scholars are attempting to assess Shinran's religion in its social dimension, and therefore to determine the significance of that doctrine for present day problems in Japan. With this extra-historical interest, it is to be expected that the theories of scholars may be influenced by their judgment on contemporary issues. It will be helpful here if we take into account some of the leading theories. Such scholars as Hattori Shiso, Ienaga Saburo, Kasahara Kazuo and Akamatsu Toshihide are important writers on this problem. They are particularly concerned to discover the social class of the disciples and to define Shinran's concept of nationalism. We shall attempt to determine the social character of the few fellowships, and in a later section we shall take up the question of Shinran's nationalism.

The discussion of the social status of Shinran's followers has been enlivened by Hattori Shiso's views which are dictated by Marxist considerations and the assumption of a class struggle. He asserts that the chief support for Shinran came from the "new farmers" who had emigrated from Echigo to Kanto.<sup>95</sup> These farmers were distinguished from the original farmers in the land, and they suffered from heavy exactions and demands of the land-owners. Hattori sees behind Shinran's teaching the basic division of society into rulers and ruled. For him, Shinran's attitudes and teachings were all conditioned by the fact that "Shinran was earnestly with the farmers."<sup>96</sup>

According to Hattori, the social conditions of Japan in that time were parallel with those in Europe when Luther appeared. Japan had its own Rome, pope and clergy. The nobles, and heads of clans and manors, exploited the farmers at every turn.<sup>97</sup> However, Shinran rejected this basic social organization and its political theory. Hattori states:

Shinran's doctrine did not stress at all "Submission" to absolute mundane authority. He made the concept of human sin and evil the basis of his view just as Luther did. It was Kakunyo and Rennyō who intruded the concept that "Imperial Law is the foundation" into the doctrine of the founder (Shinran). It is not in Shinran's doctrine. On the contrary "The Imperial Law is the foundation" is a watchword of the old orders of Hieizan and Nara. By it the mundane basis of the temple-manorial system was maintained. Shinran rejected both temples and temple possessions.<sup>98</sup>

These views have aroused stimulating studies and views into the nature of society and Shinran's community. In consequence of these investigations, other scholars have sought to show that Shinran's teaching could appeal to other segments of Kanto society besides the poor, ignorant farmers. An interesting example of the new approach to this problem is Ienaga Saburo who agrees with Hattori on many points.<sup>99</sup> Ienaga raises the question whether Shinran's religious content can be defined as Hattori does simply by determining its social basis. For Ienaga, the attraction of Shinran lay in his individuality. He maintains it is not sufficient to view Shinran in terms of the social conditions alone. This is useful for historical study, but it cannot exhaust the significance of his teaching.

In line with this thought Ienaga attempts to show that Shinran was in touch with people of various classes when he lived in Kanto. While the farmers may have been the most numerous, he feels it is an error to maintain that Shinran always judged things from the side of the farmer against the lords of the land. To generalize on a specific situation is an error. He calls attention to the fact that the appearance of such men as Shimushi Nyūdō Dono and Shōnenbō in Shinran's letters indicates that he also had

relation to the class of warriors. He claims that there were some men of considerable means and wealth in the fellowship.

Questioning Hattori's theory that Shinran represented the farmers alone, Ienaga begins with an analysis of the concept of the evil man and his salvation formulated by Shinran. He assays by this study to discover which class might have had this consciousness of evil, and would be attracted to him. Rather than the farmers, Ienaga suggests the warriors:

The reason is that since the connection of the self awareness of the evil man and faith in rebirth grew within a process of development in the religious existence of the warrior (*bushi*) class, we may expect that even Shinran's theory that "the evil man is the true cause (or object of salvation)" was not unrelated also to that stream of thought.<sup>100</sup>

It is his contention that the warrior life assisted the formation of the theory of the primacy of the evil man in Shinran's thought, but he does not intend to infer that the theory was aimed chiefly at that class. The existence of such a class and the struggles that embroiled the age were the foundation for the appearance of the thought.<sup>101</sup>

In a manner similar to Ienaga, Kasahara Kazuo sees elements of truth in Hattori's views. He agrees that the farmers were in opposition to the lords of the land,<sup>102</sup> and also contends that it would have been impossible for the rulers to accept Shinran's teaching since that doctrine with its emphasis on Lay Buddhism (*zaike bukkyō*) and centered in a place of practice (*dōjō*) was a unifying factor among the farmers. The egalitarian tendency and the implicit denial of the traditional gods of the land appeared as a threat to the position of the rulers. He adds that if men of status had been attracted in any large numbers, persecution would have been impossible. Rather than

the “new farmers” proposed by Hattori, Kasahara suggests that the basic foundation of Shinran’s fellowship were the resident farmers, along with their servants, who had little hope of bettering their circumstances in that society.<sup>103</sup>

In contrast to these views which seek the basic component of Shinran’s religious community in one element of society, Akamatsu Toshihide suggests that Shinran’s fellowship embraced diverse elements. He agrees that the sense of sin might be stronger among warriors, fishermen, and hunters than among farmers, but he would not exclude the farmers. In addition, he points out that the community probably included persons of the merchant class. This conclusion is based on the fact that several of Shinran’s disciples had means to travel to Kyoto. He thinks that the *dōmin*, who were once thought to refer to the permanent, residential farmers, may also have included merchants.<sup>104</sup>

Akamatsu’s investigation of the social status of particular members of Shinran’s fellowship shows that farmers, retainers, warriors, servants, and merchants participated. He notes that those individuals who were able to read and understand Shinran’s writings, and hold positions of leadership must have been persons of higher than ordinary status.<sup>105</sup>

As these theories indicate, Shinran’s teaching had aspects which attracted men of various classes. The teaching itself does not manifest the national, social foundations that inspired it. Through the diversity of scholarly opinion we are able to observe the implicit universalism of his thought. It also reveals that social definition does not assure the complete understanding of a system of thought.

While it is not possible to ascertain that Shinran was allied with one class against another, and while his doctrine transcends class distinctions, this does not mean

that it cannot be made to serve the interests of some class<sup>106</sup> or that it is without social implications.

From the study of the various theories concerning the social foundation of Shinran's community of faith, and the general nature of his teaching, we may conclude that his followers in large part were probably from the lower classes. Japanese society was governed by a strong class consciousness and a clear distinction between the ruler and the ruled. In such circumstances, it is highly unlikely that Shinran's principle of equality before the Vow of Amida Buddha would be supported by the upper classes when it was translated into social reality. Egalitarian movements frequently receive support from the lower classes, though the spokesmen of the movement are often men of high ideals from the upper classes. The simplicity of worship, ecclesiastical organization in the earliest Shinshū community implies a lower class following since the economic problems of elaborate ritual and clergy are absent. Shinran never established a temple, and the original place of worship appears to have been a modified home.<sup>107</sup>

In conclusion we can state that Shinran's teaching does not evidence particular class consciousness, but his teaching of the universal compassion of Amida Buddha and the requirement of faith alone naturally attracted followers from the lower classes who had nothing to offer except their devotion. It was his earnest desire to bring spiritual help to the multitudes of his time. Though he was not politically or socially inspired, his deep identification with the peasants and ordinary citizens conditioned the formulation of his doctrine.

*The Kyōgyōshinshō Compilation.* During Shinran's period of residence in Kanto he compiled the *Kyōgyōshinshō* which is a monumental anthology of passages drawn from sutras, treatises, and commentaries to illuminate the basic teachings of Pure Land thought.<sup>108</sup> Probably since the day of his conversion to Hōnen's

teaching and throughout his activity as a teacher, he had been stimulated to clarify his faith to himself and to organize it. The notes mentioned earlier which he made to the sutras indicate his scholarly nature.<sup>109</sup>

There are many theories about the time and place of compilation, but it is safe to say that it was the result of a long process. No specific date can be attached to it, since Shinran himself did not date it as he had done his other writings. However, scholars have generally agreed that the date 1224, which appears in the last volume in relation to the calculation of the onset of the period of the Last Age in the decline of the Dharma, must have an intimate relation to the production of the work itself. According to a tradition given in the *Shōtōden*, this time is considered the time when Shinran set down the whole work.<sup>110</sup> While the scholars see the importance in the date, they have different views on what was written at that time.

Many motives have been ascribed to Shinran which led him to writing the book. It is not certain, as some scholars hold, that he intended to criticize heretics among Hōnen's followers,<sup>111</sup> or that he aimed to pronounce judgment on the legalistic Buddhism which constantly obstructed the Pure Land teaching.<sup>112</sup> Nor is it certain that Shinran intended the work purely for his own benefit in which he overcame anxieties about the truth of his teaching by gathering passages from various texts which he could use to support his ideas. All of these suggestions have some insight and can find some justification in the work itself. However, they do not appear to be the dominant motives which led to its formation. There are several indications that the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was Shinran's attempt to give adequate expression to the Pure Land teaching which he had received from Hōnen and which had brought peace and joy to his own life. Testimony to this intention can be found in all sections of the work. The term *Kyōgyōshinshō*

is a shortened title, and one given to the work by later writers. The name given by Shinran was *Kenjōdo-shinjitsu-kyōgyōshō-monrui*, that is, an anthology expounding the true teaching, practice, and attainment of the Pure Land (school). Attention is drawn to the term *ken*, in Japanese, *arawasu*. It means to reveal, express, exhibit, or prove.

In the preface to the work Shinran exclaimed:

O, how happy I, Gutoku Shinran, now am. The sacred books of India and the commentaries of the teachers of China and Japan are hard to meet, but I have now been able to meet them. I reverently believe in the teaching, practice and attainment of the true teaching, and I have particularly known the deep things of the Tathagata's virtue and grace. Thus, I rejoice at what I have heard and praise what I have received.<sup>113</sup>

This passage makes clear Shinran's sense of obligation to Amida Buddha and the teaching of the former sages of the Pure Land tradition. In order to praise the compassion of the Buddha, he brought together the teachings of the masters and through them organized his own teaching. He constantly declared that his work was simply an expression of his gratitude.<sup>114</sup>

It is clear that Shinran's main intention for compiling the work was to express and organize Pure Land teaching in line with his evangelistic purpose. While he was aware of opposition to Pure Land teaching, his concern was not merely one of refutation.

As a literary document, we have pointed out that the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is an anthology of passages from various sources. He may have chosen this method of giving an exposition of Pure Land thought rather than making a commentary on Hōnen's *Senjakushū*, because he felt a need for a fuller exposition of that teaching than Hōnen's work provided.<sup>115</sup> Undoubtedly, he must have been aware

of the contradictory elements in traditional Pure Land thought.

Though Shinran employed an abundance of quotations to which he added his few comments, it is evident that he desired to present a unified theory of Pure Land teaching. The quotations he used were those that had attracted him in his wide reading. Once inserted within his system they became his own words and ideas. In many cases he was able to make the passages conform to his reading because of the flexibility of Chinese grammar and the Japanese method of reading Chinese texts. Such changes are referred by scholars to his individual creative insight through which he was enabled to make significant alterations in a text in accordance with his subjective awareness of faith.

Shinran's special contributions to the organization of Pure Land doctrine in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was his expansion of the traditional system of Teaching, Practice, and Attainment to four principles with the interposition of Faith between Practice and Attainment.<sup>116</sup> Through this change in organization, Shinran sought to make clear the importance and indispensability of faith in the realization of birth in the Pure Land. It was the exaltation of faith which became the basis for the epochal developments which Shinran brought to Pure Land thought.

As many scholars have pointed out, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was essentially an unfinished work. Shinran continued to add new texts, make alterations and revisions in order to give stronger support to his teaching. It became the source book which was the basis for his other writings. Though different in form, the other writings were all dependent on this work. The text of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was initially written in kambun, the Chinese style. However, in order to make its teaching accessible to those with little education, Shinran also copied it in nobegaki form. His wasan, hymns, popularized

its themes so that they could be sung and become a part of the consciousness of the lowliest individual.

We may conclude this section on Shinran's work in Kanto by pointing out the great achievements he made. He left behind him an enduring body of disciples devoted to him and his teaching. While he made no impression on the larger stream of history that surrounded him, the seeds that he had sown were destined to bear fruit in a later age when the ecclesiastical organization was established. His teaching had spoken to the lives of these disciples, because he had lived with them and his doctrine filled a spiritual need. As we have seen from our discussion of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran also gave an initial formulation to his teaching. It seems clear that he arrived at the basic outline of his doctrine and had become aware of the meaning and role of faith long before he returned to Kyoto where he gave himself to defining and explaining his teaching. The themes that he developed in his correspondence with the new disciples and the heresies which he condemned were not entirely new to him in Kyoto. He had taught these ideas and he had encountered heresy even while in Kanto. Thus the Kanto period was a very productive and fruitful time for him. His ministry of some twenty years came to an end, however, when he decided to return to Kyoto to spend the last years of his life.

#### SHINRAN RETURNS TO KYOTO: THE PERIOD OF DEFINITION OF DOCTRINE, 1235(?)–1262

*Shinran's Return to Kyoto.* Shinran's later years in Kyoto are a significant and integral part of his total career. Though it is often termed a retirement, it does not mean a period of complete inactivity. The literary evidences indicate that he changed his mode of teaching, not that he stopped teaching. In terms of the future, it

might be said that these were the determinative years, because he placed in writing, and hence in permanent form, those teachings which are distinctive of Shinshū. The comparative leisure and ease that he enjoyed permitted him to engage in this work. The various historical and religious questions which arise during this period form the background and context for the literary activity.

Shinran returned to Kyoto in, or around, the year 1235 when he was sixty-two or sixty-three years old.<sup>117</sup> The precise reasons for his return were probably various and now obscure. We may suppose that somehow he yearned for the life of the capital from which he had been separated for so many years. The literary output of these years suggests that he envisioned such activity in contrast to the direct teaching which had absorbed his time in Kanto. It has also been suggested that perhaps he wished to avoid becoming the center of a large organization as its leader, or that he may have felt that the time was ripe to leave the community of believers under the guidance of the close disciples. This would give him the opportunity to develop his own spiritual life. Somewhere within him a change of heart is seen which caused him to turn his back on the thriving fellowship. Nowhere does he explain his reasons, and scholars have speculated on every possibility such as a family rupture,<sup>118</sup> the need of a daughter for assistance,<sup>119</sup> persecutions in the east,<sup>120</sup> or to avoid some internal conflict in his own group.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the most plausible focuses attention on his literary efforts.<sup>122</sup>

Whatever the motive may have been, and none of the above theories has universal acceptance, it must have fallen into the category of Shinran's mode of life or religious situation. From the matrix of conditions involved in his work, we may conclude that he saw some of the benefit for himself and for his followers if he returned to Kyoto. The availability of source materials for study, the

escape from direct persecution, the desire to avoid fame and authority, as well as to deepen his own spirit, may all be possible reasons for his return.

Shinran's family probably accompanied him on his long road to Kyoto. While there is no mention specifically of their going there and later they were all living scattered, there is reason to believe that they all made the journey. Eshin-ni's reference to Ue-no-kindachi,<sup>123</sup> that is Kakue, Kakushin-ni's eldest son, and later inquiries about people near to Kakushin-ni such as Saisho-dono, Wakasa-dono, Kako-no-mae, and Jorenbō<sup>124</sup> have been interpreted to mean Eshin-ni knew them well because she was at sometime in Kyoto. Reference was also made by Eshin-ni to a picture of Shinran which she had apparently seen before and desired.<sup>125</sup> Kakushin-ni married Hino Hirotsuna, and when he died, she spent her time caring for her aged father in Kyoto. Zenran was also there, and his son Nyoshin played on his grandfather's lap.<sup>126</sup> Zenran was sent as Shinran's emissary to the Kanto disciples.<sup>127</sup> At some time Kenchi of Takada had witnessed a discussion between Zenran and Shinran in Kyoto.<sup>128</sup>

Since Eshin-ni, Kakushin-ni, and Zenran appear to have lived in Kyoto with Shinran, it is reasonable to suppose that the other children such as Masukata who came to visit Shinran on his death bed, Shinrembō, and Oguronyobō had also lived there. It has been suggested that economic reasons caused the children to disperse to Echigo. Shinran may not have been able to provide for them all in Kyoto. If they were dependent at all upon the disciples for aid, it is more logical that they went to Echigo from Kyoto and from Kanto where there were more disciples.<sup>129</sup>

Shinran's living conditions were not ostentatious or extremely affluent, but it is probable that he had sufficient means to meet his needs. The evidence is ambiguous so that theories of both poverty and wealth have arisen.

The basis of the theory of poverty has been found in the letters which relate to the occasional gifts from the Kanto disciples. Further, the earlier identification of Iyaonna with Kakushin-ni gave rise to the theory that Shinran had to sell his daughter into servitude.<sup>130</sup> Another evidence was sought in the request of Shinran on behalf of Imagozen-no-haha and Sokushōbō. It appears in that instance that he was not able to do anything for them himself.<sup>131</sup> Finally, he had to rely on the kindness of his brother and was without fixed residence. This poverty is laid in part to the loss of property and wealth of the Hino family in the Shokyū disturbance (1219-1221).<sup>132</sup>

On the other hand, there are indications that Shinran may have been fairly well off. The opinion of almost all scholars at present rejects the identification of Iyaonna with Kakushin-ni. This removes the theory that he sold his daughter into servitude. Rather, Iyaonna is a servant girl, and thus an evidence of economic sufficiency.<sup>133</sup>

The request of aid for Imagozen-no-haha has also been challenged. She has been identified with Kakushin-ni by some scholars, and the letter seeking aid as a last request by Shinran to his disciples just before he died.<sup>134</sup> Thus the request for aid is not considered from the standpoint of poverty, but from the fatherly concern of Shinran for his daughter who will be left behind.

Some indications of more affluent circumstances may also be seen in the portraits which were made of Shinran when he was alive. The most famous are the *Anjo-goe* and *Kagami-goe*. They depict him in his everyday attire. The clothing and the setting do not indicate poverty.

Another evidence is found in the fact that the paper which Shinran used to write to the disciples was of good quality and written only on one side. In that time the use of both sides was common and economical because paper was expensive.<sup>135</sup>

The gifts given by followers were substantial, since there were probably wealthy merchants and people of other classes who could give considerable amounts. The frequency of gifts, however, cannot be determined, but it may be assumed that there were more than those which are recorded. Since they were voluntary, the amount would not be stabilized, but it is fair to assume in the light of Japanese respect for the obligation that the teacher-pupil relationship would involve also some concern and provision for the aged master. The voluntary aspect is reflected in Shinran's deep gratitude for their kindness.

After all the evidences have been mustered, there is no clear evidence that Shinran himself was very wealthy, but it is certain that he had sufficient resources to maintain himself and to carry on his study and writing. He was not poor, but not ostentatiously rich. He lived dependent on disciples, and whatever independent income he may have had cannot be determined.

Something of a religious and moral aspect enters into the discussion also. Those who wish to emphasize the simplicity and austerity of his life are likely to stress his poverty. Those who object to the idea that he would sell his daughter into servitude in order to exist seek for evidence of wealth.

*Literary Activity in Kyōto.* After Shinran became settled in the capital, he took up his pen to give lasting form to his thoughts.<sup>136</sup> Just when we should consider the beginning of his literary production is not entirely clear. He made copies of important Pure Land texts, the *Yuishinshō* of Seikaku in 1235, 1241, and 1246, and the *Jiriki-tariki-no-koto* of Ryūkan also in 1246. His own first datable literary creations were a series of poems, the *Jōdo-wasan*, extolling the Pure Land, and the *Kōsō-wasan*, praising the patriarchs of the Pure Land tradition. These were produced around 1248. It can be seen from the chronology that there was a period of some ten years in which no text appeared. It has been suggested that this

was the time that he devoted his attention to the completion of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.

From the beginning of the appearance of these texts Shinran carried on a continuous activity of writing from his seventy-sixth year, 1248, to his eighty-eighth year, 1260. Besides texts of his own composition and copies, he also carried on correspondence with his Kanto disciples.

Throughout his teaching career Shinran endeavored to relate himself to the traditional Pure Land teaching. In the course of his dealings with the disciples he had occasion to refer to several works and to make copies of them for their use. We have already mentioned the *Yuishinshō*, first copied in 1235, and then later in 1241, 1246 and 1254. Together with this he composed a type of commentary on the text called the *Yuishinshō-mon'i* which appeared in 1251 and copied again in 1256 and 1257. Ryūkan's *Jiriki-tariki-no-koto* was copied first in 1246 and was followed by the *Gose-monogatari*, usually attributed to Ryūkan in 1254 and the *Ichinen-tannen-fumbetsu-no-koto* by Ryūkan in 1255. Commentary to this later text, called either *Ichinen-tannen-mon'i* or *Ichinen-shōmon*, was composed in 1257. Other works which he copied ranged from a *nobegaki* copy of Shantao's parable on the two rivers in 1254 and several pieces of Hōnen's writings such as the *Saihō-shinan-shō*, 1257, *Sambukyō-daii*, 1258, and the first volume of the *Senjukushū* in *nobegaki*, 1259. He also made a copy of Shōtoku Taishi's biography in 1257, entitled *Jōgutaishigoki*.

Shinran's own writings are the *Kyōgyōshinshō* whose earliest copy was made by Sonren in 1247. The *Jōdo-monrui-shishu-shō* appeared in 1252. In his eighty-third year, 1255, he produced the *Gutokushō*, *Jōdo-sangyō-ōjō-monrui*, *Songō-shinzō-meimon* and the *Kōtai-shi-shōtoku-hōsan*. In 1256 he wrote the *Nyūshutsu-nimon-ge*, and in 1257 he penned the *Shōzōmatsu-wasan* as the result of a

dream. In the eighty-sixth year the famous *Jinenhōni-shō* appeared and in the eighty-eighth year the *Midanyorai-myōgo-toku* was written. Many of these works were copied and given to various disciples in the Kanto area for the purpose of teaching and to prevent heresy.

Parallel with this literary activity, Shinran carried on a considerable correspondence with his disciples. Through his letters he was able to answer specific questions or to deal with problems that arose occasionally in the various fellowships. The letters afford us some insight into the activities of his latter years, but more than that, they reveal more clearly the mind and personality of Shinran himself. A leading scholar of Shinran studies has given an apt summary of the true significance of these letters:

The later thirty-seven letters were given to all the disciples. The leaders of the “place of practice (*dōjō*)” who stood between Shinran and the disciples inquired of him about unclear points of doctrine or reported the tense social relations. Shinran responded to their requests for instruction and taught them gently. These letters relate, clearly and concretely, the fundamental thought of Shinran’s religion. Through them the nature of faith was clarified for the leaders and disciples as they desired. It is well to study the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in order to know Shinran’s religion as a doctrine or as a system and tradition. To get it in just a word, we can repeatedly read the *Tannishō*. However, in order to know what kind of counter influences the gospel of absolute Other Power (*tarikī*) brought about in those who accepted it, and how that influenced Shinran’s action and thought, in other words, when we try to make clear the constitution of Shinran’s religion historically and socially, we must, above all, study his letters.<sup>137</sup>

As this scholar indicates, there is a difference between the general writings of Shinran and his letters. The writings lack the controversial and tendentious character which appears in the letters, though there were elements of heresy and contention in the background. The writings aim merely to set forth the doctrine itself for the purpose of edification, instruction, and exposition. As many are simply anthological in character, they are designed to provide the bases and supports for his essential insights. They do not reveal as clearly the personality of Shinran himself. However, the letters are directed to specific persons and problems, and there we meet the individual Shinran attempting to guide, warn, or encourage his followers.

The extant letters which Shinran wrote and are now collected into various groupings indicate that he carried on a fairly active correspondence concerning doctrinal problems, and also some personal matters. Though the epilogue of the *Ketchi-myaku-monshū* records that there were ninety letters,<sup>138</sup> there now remain only forty-three of which eleven are original copies and the rest are copies made by other individuals.

The forty-three letters which are generally recognized as belonging to Shinran are gathered into five collections. The two major assemblies are the *Mattōshō* which has twenty-one entries and the *Shinran-shōnin-goshōsoku-shū* which has ten entries. Other collections are the *Zenshōbō-goshōsoku-shū* with seven letters, the *Ketchi-myaku-monshū* with five letters, and the *Ishū-shinseki-goshōsoku-shū* with six letters. Since the same letter may appear in more than one collection, we get a total of forty-three discounting duplicates.<sup>139</sup> Apart from these letters, Washiyama calls attention to the letter of disowning written to Zenran and later copied by Kenchi, a patriarch of the Takada school, and two letters addressed to one Shinjōbō which belonged to the Senjuji of the Takada school.<sup>140</sup> Shinran's earliest correspondence is

placed by scholars in 1243 with a letter to Ōgozen concerning Iyaonna, his servant girl. Since this letter has no date appended to it, such a date can only be conjectured.<sup>141</sup> A letter referring to one Shōamidabutsu and one to Kakushin-ni appearing in other collections are placed in 1243 and 1250 respectively. These letters also have no date indicated. The major period for Shinran's letters, if we exclude the conjectured dates given here, extends from 1251 to about 1262 when he died.<sup>142</sup>

From 1251 to 1254 or 1255, Shinran's disciples were troubled by a heresy designated as "Mindfulness versus Mindlessness." Both of these extremes were regarded as erroneous by Shinran. Other errors that appeared were antinomianism and the problem of the single recitation of Amida Buddha's name versus the multiple recitation of the name. Nine letters were devoted to these doctrinal problems.

The letters from the period 1255 to 1256 relate chiefly to the Zenran incident in which Shinran finally had to disown his eldest son because he had disrupted the fellowship. In this connection we also gain insight into the persecution of Pure Land teaching by the Kamakura Shōgunate, and Shinran's general attitude to persecution. The complex problem of Zenran's activity and the persecution become clearer when the chronological order of the letters is determined. Deducing from the contents, the order has been worked out by scholars with some little variation.<sup>143</sup> Hattori's analysis of the thirteen letters provides us with a general outline and background of the problem.

A third group of letters coming after 1255 includes thirteen letters which deal mainly with doctrinal problems. The questions raised by the disciples center on some relatively new doctrines which Shinran had begun to teach. One of these concerned the fact that salvation is assured in the present life because it is entirely dependent on the work of Amida Buddha. It appears in these later

years that Shinran must have given considerable reflection to the meaning of the life of faith and the destiny of believers. He applied the full implications of his understanding of faith to all areas of the believer's experience.

When the letters of Shinran have been surveyed and organized they yield a fairly comprehensive view of the activities of his later years in Kyōto. We shall direct our attention to Shinran's relation to his disciples, to the various problems and questions they addressed to him, and to the situation resulting in the tragic rejection of Zenran. In connection with this last problem we shall be able to observe Shinran's view concerning religious persecution.

*Shinran's Relation to His Disciples.* One of the outstanding indications of the high regard in which Shinran's disciples held him is the fact that they sent him gifts of money from time to time in order to give him material support. His letters indicate that he received at one time three hundred *mon*,<sup>144</sup> at another twenty *kan-mon*,<sup>145</sup> two hundred *mon* from Kyōnimbō,<sup>146</sup> five *kan-mon* from Zenran,<sup>147</sup> and another unspecified amount.<sup>148</sup> Their willingness to help and respond to Shinran's requests can be implied when he did not hesitate to request some assistance for Imagozen-no-haha.<sup>149</sup>

While the sharing of material possessions is a good sign of the bond of fellowship which existed between the disciples and Shinran, the disciples also expressed their sentiments in letters. One such personal expression was written by the disciple Kyōshin:

Indeed, although I was in the capital (Kyoto) for some time, I was always in a rush. I deplore the fact that I could not spend time quietly. How I desire that I might purposely come to Kyoto and spend at least five days with you (Shinran). It is because of the (Buddha's) grace that I say this.<sup>150</sup>

Most of all, the determination of Kakushimbo to reach Kyoto shows the deep affection which the disciples had for Shinran. Kakushimbo left Kanto for Kyoto with some other disciples. On the way, Kakushimbō fell ill. Even though his life might have been spared had he remained where he was or returned home, his only thought was to die by the side of the master if he must die. Shinran was greatly affected by this display of devotion. Renni wrote:

I asked him (Shinran) if there was (anything) wrong in this letter. When he read it through he said, "There is nothing in error, it is fine." He wept especially (when he read the part) concerning Kakushimbō. (It seemed) to me that he felt very sad.<sup>151</sup>

Shinran also received visits from a Gento Shiro,<sup>152</sup> Myōkyōbō,<sup>153</sup> Shōshimbō,<sup>154</sup> Shimbutsu, Kenchi, and Senshimbō.<sup>155</sup> There were numerous other unidentified visitors such as those who reported to Shinran of the misunderstanding of his teaching about equality with Maitreya.<sup>156</sup> On another occasion some disciples had made a long trip to inquire about Shinran's view of the Pure Land teaching. This may have been in connection with Zenran's claim to have special teaching from his father.<sup>157</sup> These few references give us indication of considerable coming and going, and desire for fellowship and instruction by Shinran's disciples.

On Shinran's side, we can observe great warmth and affection toward the disciples. He expresses sympathy with the problem of a disciple and offers kind counsel.<sup>158</sup> In his instruction there is humility and tact.<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless in important matters there is firmness.<sup>160</sup>

The personal element in the relation with disciples spans the great distance of separation. There are greetings to the Lady Nun of Totomi,<sup>161</sup> and Kuge.<sup>162</sup> He welcomes Senshimbō's residence nearer Kyoto.<sup>163</sup> He gives a direct answer to a personal question of a disciple.<sup>164</sup> To

Yūamidabutsu he expresses his desire to meet him in the Pure Land if he cannot meet here.<sup>165</sup> He is happy when Shōshin has completed his case successfully in Kamakura, but is concerned with Nyūshin's long stay there.<sup>166</sup>

*Shinran's Response to Disciples' Questions.* The major portion of Shinran's letters is devoted to the answers which he composed to deal with the varied inquiries concerning the fine points of doctrine which the individual disciple had no authority to define himself. These questions were prompted either by difficulties in completely comprehending particular doctrines of Shinran or by confusions arising when Shinran's thought was interpreted in terms of doctrines of other sects such as Shingon, Zen, or other Pure Land schools. There were also specific heresies arising within Shinran's order which he was called on to judge.

*Clarification of Doctrinal Issues.* The definition of doctrine is the main theme of several of Shinran's letters. When confusions had given rise to disputes, the disciples sent to Shinran in order to obtain a judgment.

It appears that there was some confusion among the disciples as to the precise meaning of Shinran's teaching that the believer in this life is equal to the Tathāgata (that is one who is already enlightened, a Buddha) or to the Bodhisattva Maitreya who is destined to be the Buddha of the next era. The problem arose from the similarity of this idea to the concept of *sokushinjōbutsu* which means that one can become a Buddha in this life through the various disciplines of meditation and purification. For Shinran, the difference between the two doctrines lay in the fact that what he taught was based on the work of Amida Buddha and did not require an individual to undergo the rigorous disciplines, but only to rely on faith.<sup>167</sup>

In another exchange with the disciple Jōshin, Shinran sympathizes with his doubts on religious questions. Apparently Jōshin likes things in ordered conception,

but Shinran feels this may end in some presumption on his part. The faith is inconceivable; it stands beyond attempts to enclose it in the framework of human distinctions and logic. The attempt to rationalize brings doubt and confusion as when people try to distinguish the concept “the desire to flee this world” from the concept “the cause to be born in the Pure Land” both of which are essentially one thing.<sup>168</sup> A similar situation arises in Kyōmyōbō’s inquiry about the relation of the Vow and the name. Here Shinran contends that faith is not the product of reasoning, and when the believer once has faith one should not become entangled in endless discussions and debates.<sup>169</sup>

In an exchange with Kakushimbō, Shinran explained the relation of practice and faith, stressing their inseparability,<sup>170</sup> while on yet another occasion, he rejected the extreme of single recitation versus multiple recitation of the name of Amida Buddha, maintaining that deliverance takes place with one thought or recitation, but it is not limited to that alone. Whatever practices a person undertakes, they all are to represent one’s gratitude to Amida Buddha for his salvation.<sup>171</sup>

A general letter to clarify the position of Shinran’s thought was directed to the followers in Kasama.<sup>172</sup> In this letter he defined such basic doctrines as the meaning of self power and Other Power, the principle of “assertion as non-assertion,” the salvation of the evil man, the scope of the Vow, and the principle of equality with the Tathāgata. He also urged his followers not to speak ill of other teachings, but to be sympathetic with those who do not believe. They were to be aware of the great obligation which they owed Amida Buddha themselves.

A study of the background of the Kanto region would reveal various religious trends. Shinran’s disciples often ran into opposition with other groups and sometimes converts from other sects would bring with them the viewpoints of their previous connection which caused

misunderstanding among Shinran's followers. The leading disciples would report these ideas to the master, for though they had the ability to think for themselves and understood the doctrine, they had no authority to give final judgment on any question. Hence they submitted all questions to Shinran.

The problem of the "importation" of alien influences into Shinshū doctrine can be observed in the questions about equality with the Tathāgata which could be interpreted along Shingon lines, and the issue of "Mindfulness versus Mindlessness" which reflected Zen influence. The problem of the single and multiple recitation has a background of conflict among other Pure Land schools.<sup>173</sup>

Signs of opposition can be seen in the letter of Yūamidabutsu concerning the allegation that devotees are only born in the border land of the Pure Land rather than attaining the highest goal.<sup>174</sup> Shinran maintained that believers attain the highest bliss. In another exchange he denied that believers had to wait for the last moment before death for assurance of their future attainment of birth in their present life, and this is what it means to be equal to the Tathāgata.<sup>175</sup>

*Specific Heresies Arising in Shinran's Fellowship.* The letters of Shinran indicate that the persecution which his fellowship experienced hinged on two charges. Antinomianism and defamation of the gods furnished the excuse for the officials to restrain this teaching. He appears to have encountered these errors even while he lived in Kanto, but they may have become more widespread after his departure. In no uncertain terms he dissociated himself from these aberrations. At one point he disclaimed any relation to the ringleader of such activity, Zenshōbō of Kita-no-Kori.<sup>176</sup>

The antinomian heresy was based on the teaching that the wicked person may be saved despite his/her evil nature, and it opened the door to loose ethical action.<sup>177</sup>

Shinran had taught that the central concern of Amida Buddha's compassion was the defiled person, but he denied that he was the source of this erroneous interpretation.<sup>178</sup> He maintained that it was foolish merely to take a poison because there was an antidote.<sup>179</sup>

In the face of this heresy, Shinran urged his disciples to keep evil persons at a distance<sup>180</sup> and to be careful not to give the teaching to persons not versed in the scriptures or the mind of Amida Buddha. Caution must be observed in teaching unprepared minds.<sup>181</sup> The attitude of a true believer is just the opposite of the careless, evil way:

It will be a sign that one truly despises the world when the individual, who believes both in the vow and lives to say the nembutsu, desires together with that not indeed to do evil (deeds) as his mind desires.<sup>182</sup>

Whether or not Shinran was really the source of misunderstanding of the concept of the deliverance of the evil common mortals, it is clear that he taught ideas which came perilously close, for he had taught that Amida Buddha's compassion accepted a person despite the evil which one performs in order to allay the fear and guilt to those who may have thought they were beyond the possibility of any deliverance. However, he never intended this consoling teaching to be taken as an ethical directive to permit a person to pursue a self indulgent existence.

Against the tendency of the believers to despise their enemies<sup>183</sup> and to defame the gods and other teachings,<sup>184</sup> Shinran repeatedly reminded them of their obligation of gratitude to Amida Buddha and to the other Buddhas through whom their salvation had become possible.<sup>185</sup> Gratitude in Shinran's thought is the foundation of the ethical life.

Together with having the proper attitudes and behavior, Shinran repeatedly encouraged his disciples to read recommended texts in order to clarify and to avoid

pointless debates and arguments.<sup>186</sup> Among these recommended texts were the *Yuishinshō*, the *Jiriki-tariki-no-koto*, the *Gose-monogatari* and the parable of the Two Rivers. Other authoritative works were T'an-luan's commentary on the *Jōdoron*, Shan-tao's *Hanju-zammai-gyōdō-ōjō-san*, (also called the *Hanju-san*), *Midakyō-gishū Kangyōshō-Sanzengi*, the chapter on the Sincere Mind, the *Hōjisan*, and Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū* as well as such works as the *Muryōjukyō*, *Muryōjukyōnyoraie* and the *Mokuren-shomongyō*.<sup>187</sup>

The authority of Hōnen as the basis of his teaching is frequently invoked by Shinran, though it is noticeable that he does not specifically recommend any text of Hōnen's.<sup>188</sup> The recommendation of the *Yuishinshō* and the *Jiriki-tariki* which were written by disciples of Hōnen is due to the fact that Shinran believed they reflected Hōnen's thought.<sup>189</sup> He stressed that those who understood Hōnen's thought best were all in basic agreement, while those who disagreed had all advanced their own individual views.<sup>190</sup>

By such means and counsels Shinran attempted to indicate the clear line of teaching. However, despite his reference to other teachers and literature, and appeals to Hōnen's authority, the nature of his letters shows that it was his own influence and leadership which held the key to the solution of these problems.

*The Zenran Affair.* The disowning of Zenran, his oldest son, was the last major event which occurred in Shinran's lengthy life. It was also the most tragic and disheartening experience that he must have faced in all his years. The tragedy was, of course, that his oldest son appeared to have conspired against the authority of his father in an attempt to assume control of the religious fellowship. The discouraging thing for Shinran was that he finally had to resort to the extreme measure of disowning Zenran when he came to understand the situation fully.

We can begin our inquiry into the event by first arranging the relevant letters in proper order and tracing the series of events. We can thus reconstruct the situation and determine more precisely Zenran's character and the doctrine he is alleged to have taught.

The first letter which relates to this problem comes from 1255, the ninth month, the second day, and is addressed to all the followers. The background of the letter is the continuing persecution of the teaching by the government. Shinran expresses his belief that the charges that the believers defame the gods and live in loose ways are only excuses to restrain the movement. In light of these charges, Pure Land devotees must be especially careful not to be irreligious or to speak ill of any person. He urges his followers not to believe that it is permissible to commit sins just because they are born evil. Finally, he exhorts them to pray for their enemies.<sup>191</sup>

Shinran wrote this general letter for all followers of Zenran. It was a response to a letter from his son concerning the mistaken views of one Shingambō. He expresses in the reply his disappointment at Shingambō and simply states that it just doesn't sound like him. In a postscript Shinran asks Zenran to let Shōshin and the others read the text. He is disturbed because Shōshin, and possibly Shingambō, had met with him in Kyoto to discuss this problem, but it persisted. Now Shingambō, a leading disciple, is deeply involved. It is significant that Shinran accepted Zenran's report as truthful though he found it hard to believe.<sup>192</sup>

The letter to the Kasama brethren of the tenth month, the third day, has a background of persecution on the basis of which Shinran set forth basic themes of his teaching. Again he stressed that there was no reason on the part of the believers to defame the gods, slander other sects or the enemies of Pure Land faith.<sup>193</sup>

In a letter whose date is uncertain, Shinran expressed his consternation at a report from Zenran accusing

Shimbutsu, Shōshin, and Nyūshin of heresy. These had all been intimate followers of Shinran, and he simply confessed his disappointment and sorrow at the suggestion.

He realized, however, that it is not possible to make people all think the same way. Since there appeared to be no agreement, there was nothing to discuss. One trace of suspicion can be found when Shinran cautioned about criticizing other people. The reports were so hard to believe that he had to reflect also upon the source of the charges.<sup>194</sup>

Sometime between the ninth month, second day and the eleventh month, ninth day, Shinran received a report from another source beside Zenran. This news concerned the activity of Zenran, and it related that he had told the people of Kanto that their previous mode of Pure Land devotion was useless. According to the report, Zenran claimed to have received a special teaching from Shinran when he had come down from Kyoto.<sup>195</sup> With this claim to a special doctrine he had caused ninety people to leave the congregation of Chū Tarō of Obu and follow him.

In his letter to Zenran dated eleventh month, ninth day, Shinran asks him how he could have taught such things. In answer to the charge that he, Shinran, had been partial, he declares that he had copied and sent the *Yuishinshō*, the *Gose-monogatari*, the *Jiriki-tariki* and the parable of the Two Rivers (*Nigebyakudō*) by Shan-tao to the disciples. The disappointment is deep.<sup>196</sup> Nevertheless it is significant that Shinran does not sever his relation with Zenran at this time. He is well aware, however, that Zenran has somehow brought strife into the fellowship. From this point he is not so trustful of Zenran.

The withdrawing of faith in Zenran is clearly revealed in Shinran's letter to Shinjōbō, dated the first month, the ninth day.<sup>197</sup> In it he sympathizes with Shinjōbō on account of the difficulties he has met in teaching the Pure

Land doctrine. However, he warns him against seeking the help of people to prosper the faith of the ground that all true believers should entrust everything to the Buddha. The source of the idea that they should seek the aid of human forces to spread the doctrine appears to have been Zenran, and this suggests that he may have formed some political alliance in the community in order to strengthen the doctrine and to restrain anti-social elements in the fellowship. Shinran relates his surprise that Shinjōbo had believed the claims of Zenran concerning the special doctrine. He clearly criticizes and dissociates himself from the teaching given by Zenran.

The culmination of the relationship between Shinran and Zenran appears in the letter dated the fifth month, twenty ninth day of 1256. Previous to this time, Shinran had received several reports about Zenran and what he had been teaching. At this time also Shōshin had been called before the authorities in Kamakura to state the position of Shinran's followers. The singling out of Shōshin marked him as a very high ranking member of Shinran's fellowship in the Kanto region. This status made the tragedy more poignant when it is recalled that Zenran had placed doubts in Shinran's mind concerning Shōshin. On top of this, Zenran had also accused his mother of some injustice and had insulted her in a letter to a certain lady of Mibu. The extremity of the situation made Shinran feel that there was only one solution. He must disown and completely break off from Zenran. It was not only a way of punishing Zenran and protecting the fellowship, but, more seriously, it was an attempt by Shinran to witness to all the brethren that he was sincere in not giving special teaching to one that he did not give to all, and that there is only one teaching which he gave. It is a measure of self-defense and an apology for the misunderstanding and misuse of his authority.

On the same day as he resorted to the letter of disowning, Shinran also sent a similar letter to Shōshin.

He requested that this letter be sent to all the followers so they might know clearly where he stood in the matter. He called the gods to witness his avowal that there was no secret teaching given Zenran. Further he praised the *Shinshū-monshō* written by Shōshin, possibly in relation to his defense at Kamakura. He ended the letter by completely denying any connection or knowledge of a certain Aimimbō who had also been using Shinran's name as his authority.<sup>198</sup>

Sometime previous to the fifth month, twenty-ninth day, Shōshin had probably been summoned to give an account of Shinshū teaching at Kamakura. At the conclusion of a successful defense, he was permitted to return home, whereupon he penned a letter to Shinran. This letter is dated the sixth month, the first day and it arrived in Kyoto on the seventh month, ninth day. Shinran replied immediately expressing his gladness for the safe return. He assured Shōshin that the case was not his alone, but that he represented all the Pure Land believers. He maintained that it was a great error for them to ridicule Shōshin or blame him for their troubles. Shinran praised the way he had stated his case and agreed fully that Pure Land devotees may recite the name of Amida Buddha for the sake of their country to show their gratitude to the Buddha and their desire for peace in the world and the spread of Buddhist teaching.<sup>199</sup>

When Zenran had been excommunicated, Shōshin and the other disciples were restored to their former trust, and the persecution began to subside,<sup>200</sup> Shinran was once again approached on doctrinal problems such as equality to the Tathagata and the principle of the "assertion as non-assertion." The letter of Shōshin of the ninth month, seventh day (of 1256) ended with a statement that he heard reports about conditions among the followers, and he was at ease. He rejoiced at the reports which Shimushi no Nyūdō-dono Shōnenbō had brought him.<sup>201</sup>

Later in the tenth month, tenth day of 1257, Shinran sent a letter to Shōshin discussing in detail the terms “Company of the Truly Assured,” the “State of True Enlightenment,” and “Equality with Maitreya” which refer to the condition of “Being Accepted and Not Rejected” by Amida Buddha in this life. A similar letter was sent at the same time to Shimbutsu.<sup>202</sup> In these letters Shinran is expressing his deep confidence in the disciples by conveying to them his deepest spiritual insights.

From the enumeration of the aforementioned events described in these letters, we can reconstruct in some measure the circumstances of Zenran’s heterodoxy and thus perhaps come to understand his character and Shinran’s position in the affair.

As we know from the earlier letters of Shinran, in 1252 there were people such as Zenshōbō and Shinkembō who were centers of disturbance in the fellowship. While we do not know the specific content of their doctrines, there may have been anti-social elements which caused individuals to reject the traditional gods and Buddhas that stood as supports for the social life of ancient Japan. Such teachings would very likely arouse opposition and persecution. He knew of such people, and when persecution came, he recognized that such disorderly persons should be restrained.

Shinran also realized that these heretics could bring the whole movement into disrepute. Over and over in his letters he cautioned his followers not to defame the gods and Buddhas or speak ill of any opposition. They must not give the least excuse to the authorities to restrain the Pure Land teaching.

In order to help them in this matter, Shinran dispatched his eldest son Zenran to the Kanto area. Apparently Zenran was given some authority to try to bring the disturbing, heretical faction into line. This instruction was perhaps reflected in the report of Zenran

that later reached Kamakura to the effect that Shinran told him “to attack”<sup>203</sup> the Hitachi Pure Land followers.

When Zenran reached Kanto, he began to send Shinran reports about the various disciples. In the course of the correspondence he accused the leading disciples to Shinran. Shinran was in great consternation because he had trust in Zenran, and he was far removed from Kanto. Possibly due to Zenran’s attempt to restrain the anti-social aspects of Shinran’s teaching, some connection may have been made with local leaders who were interested in Pure Land teaching, but who wished to see it purged of its radical elements. These local leaders, maybe at Zenran’s suggestion, sent a report to Kamakura relating the conditions in the area. As a result, Shōshin and Nyūshin were summoned to Kamakura to defend their teaching. Shōshin made a good defense, but for some reason Nyūshin was detained longer. When he returned home, he wrote to Shinran about what he had said in reference to the Pure Land followers and their attitude to the state.

While Shōshin was in Kamakura and the situation was seemingly becoming critical, Shinran received some disturbing reports about Zenran. He had been using the authority of Shinran to break up congregations, by claiming a special teaching which only he, Zenran, had received from his father. He may have considered strengthening the fellowship by bringing it into line with the popular demands of the time. When Shinran became aware of this activity of Zenran, he immediately severed relations with him. When he realized his misjudgment of Shōshin, and the slander of Eshinni, he had only one course to take. As a consequence he sent letters to both Zenran and Shōshin disclaiming Zenran.

After the excommunication of Zenran and the successful defense by Shōshin, the fellowship could once again continue to develop and prosper under the capable leadership of Shōshin, Shimbutsu, and others. The later

letters of Shinran reflect the change in the situation from a hectic, divisive period of turmoil to a tranquil period of growth. The doctrines of this later period show development of interest in the status of the believer in this life after being assured of rebirth by attaining faith. Shinran's own thought contemplating these questions reached new heights.

Zenran's character and the nature of his teaching in this affair have been largely based on conjecture in past inquiries into the subject. He has been rather maligned by traditional Shinshū scholars who maintain that it was his ambition to take over the community as a second Shinran.<sup>204</sup> They claim he was filled with nothing but seething ambition. In consequence of his pride, they relate, he resorted to falsehood by declaring that he had a special teaching from his father. The way in which he is said to have insulted his mother has also been adduced as evidence of his low moral character.

There are, however, things to be said on Zenran's behalf. It does appear that he had been sent to Kanto by Shinran with some special instructions to deal with the chaotic conditions in the fellowship. In some ways Zenran's use of this authority came into question either through his own zealousness or through misrepresentation. He was faced with the problem of restraining anti-social elements which threatened the existence of the community. It is quite possible that he followed his father's instructions with undue severity, and sought to sanction this activity by appeal to Shinran's authority and particularly by the appeal that he had special instructions given to him alone. It was on the basis of this claim that he had been able to divide Chū Tarō's congregation and to accuse leading disciples of heresy.<sup>205</sup>

Recent studies of Zenran's activities by Shinshū scholars have drawn a different picture of him in contrast with the traditional view given above. According to Miyaji Kakue, Zenran was a man whose personality was

somewhat legalistic, and he favored practices of purification. Against the Pure Land devotees whose doctrines encouraged antinomianism, Zenran asserted that the virtue of faith should be accompanied by adherence to the Buddhist precepts. It was apparently his view that the belief in Amida Buddha's compassion which saves evil beings is not meant to deny the need for cultivation of virtue. It is thought that the precepts he encouraged were the practices of the Shingon school current among the masses of people in the region.<sup>206</sup>

To reinforce Miyaji's interpretation of Zenran's character we may call attention to the study by Matsuno. He has pointed out the existence of a tendency among Shinran's disciples to relate the subsidiary practice of good deeds to Shinran's doctrine. This development is traced in Shōshin and later, Kenchi. Also Shimbutsu's *Kyōshakumon-bunsho* illustrates the tendency to emphasize that "faith is the mother of all virtues." In this view nirvana was to be attained through an undoubting mind of faith and the cultivation of the three treasures, together with the practice of good deeds.<sup>207</sup> This trend among Shinran's disciples is said to have its roots in his doctrine itself, and was particularly stimulated by his copying the *Saihōshinanshō* of Hōnen.<sup>208</sup> The possibility of uniting faith and good deeds became the foundation for the popularization of Shinran's teaching, and it has its background in the influence of Zenran.

There appears to have been two aspects to Zenran's teaching itself. On the one hand, he strove for the stabilization of the fellowship, and on the other hand, he seems to have attempted a popularization of Shinran's teaching. Traditionally, Zenran has been pictured as trying to make an accommodation with popular tendencies of the day. In the *Boki-e-ji* he is presented as a leader of a group of fortune tellers or sorcerers. He had somehow combined his Pure Land teaching with these popular superstitions. Inferring from this possibly legendary

account, scholars suggest that in this activity he desired to broaden the base of the doctrine. In this way he may have hoped to stabilize the fellowship and to bring it in line with contemporary sentiments and standards of religion.

In our estimation of these theories we can point out that they go far to redeem the character of Zenran's religious activity. However, the fact remains that whatever high purpose he had, it still became necessary for Shinran to disown him, and thus consign him to oblivion. There seems to have been considerable misunderstanding throughout the whole affair in which all those involved were placed in the unfortunate position requiring decisive and painful action. It may also be pointed out that the allegation that Zenran may have conspired to take over leadership of the community does not seem plausible since he probably would have been elevated shortly anyway after the passing of Shinran. We may thus conclude on this subject that Zenran was acting in accord with his understanding of the needs of the community, but that he may have been too severe and domineering.

In the case of Zenran's insult to his mother which Shinran referred to in connection with his rejection, we have little ground to form a precise judgment. Zenran has charged that he had been cheated by his "stepmother." Shinran countered that this was false. Some scholars have asserted that since Eshin-ni was Zenran's real mother, the insult extended to the term "stepmother" and the charge that he was cheated. Others have maintained that she was his stepmother in fact and that the charge of falsity related to the alleged cheating. It is here a problem of the grammar and natural sense of the letter.<sup>209</sup> However, we have no details of Zenran's charge, nor do we know Eshin-ni's side of the argument. Matsuno believes that the whole incident was rooted in economic difficulties which eventually caused Shinran's family to disperse.<sup>210</sup>

Since Shinran did not have property, this would not have been a good basis for argument. The question remains open, since all we know is that Zenran was deeply offended, and Shinran denied the charge.

*The Persecution of the Pure Land Faith and Shinran's Attitude Toward the State.* In the background of the Zenran affair there appears the effort of the government in Kamakura to restrain Pure Land teaching and its anti-social implications. There is the suggestion that in some way Zenran had contributed to this persecution by appealing to the authorities in Kamakura against those he thought were perverting the true teaching. Hence Shōshin, as we have already seen, was summoned to Kamakura to present a defense of his teaching. Consequently, in the course of the affair Shinran found it necessary to consider the justice of the charges against the teaching and to advise his disciples on the attitude they should take in the face of opposition.

The attitude which we discover in Shinran's letters concerning persecution and the state has become a topic for serious discussion among Japanese scholars. The discussion has arisen because Hattori Shiso argued that Shinran had no nationalistic tendencies in his thought. While Japanese scholars might concur with Hattori in his basic thesis, they have taken exception to his connection of Shinran's attitude with the class struggle which he asserted was shaping the age.

The starting point of Hattori's discussion comes from the fact that Shinran's criticism of the state which appears in the *Denne*<sup>211</sup> and the epilogue of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*<sup>212</sup> was deleted from the traditional *Hōonkō* services when the *Denne* was read during the war because it contained anti-nationalistic elements. He also points out that in contrast to this, the letter to Shōshin dated seventh month, ninth day of 1256 reveals that Shinran agreed with him that the Pure Land devotee could recite Amida

Buddha's name for the sake of his country. This passage could be interpreted nationalistically.

Hattori, however, rejected the nationalistic interpretation of this letter and other related passages. He challenged all traditional views with his own.

In view of the problem proposed by Hattori, and in the light of recent studies of Shinran's nationalism growing out of the Zenran affair, we shall attempt to survey his thought in relation to the specific event which we can glean from his letters.

Shinran was very cautious when he wrote in his letters about the persecutions that his followers suffered. He avoided the strong language of criticism which can be found in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* against the legalistic Buddhism of his day. Rather he counseled caution and care on all sides, because he was well aware of the factions and erroneous views held by some of his followers. He strongly advised them to avoid defaming the gods and Buddhas and thus deprive the authorities of any excuse to restrain the teaching.

In the first letter which introduced the problem of persecution (ninth month, second day, 1255) Shinran tried to show that those who were aware of the grace of the Buddha should not criticize the popular religion. The reason is that the salvation of Pure Land devotees came to them through the activities and efforts of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In accordance with traditional Japanese thought, he affirmed that the gods of Japan are the protectors of the Buddhists, and they are not lightly to be rejected. Thus, there could be no reason for antisocial behavior.<sup>213</sup>

Further, Shinran not only urged respect for the gods and Buddhas, but he maintained that the devotee should not criticize the authorities on account of the persecutions. Rather, they were to have sympathy for them and recite the Buddha's name as a means to save the persecutors.<sup>214</sup>

The reason that Shinran advised caution on the part of his followers, and the positive attitude of sympathy and pity, was that the persecution was a natural consequence of the fact that they were living in the degenerate age. During this period when the Buddhist doctrine was eventually to disappear, there were many evils running rampant in the world. He called attention to Śākyamuni Buddha's description of the people of this age as "eyeless" and "earless." They cannot understand the truth. He quoted a passage from Shan-tao which also described the state of the age:

When the five defilements flourish,  
There is much doubt and slander.

The clergy and lay dispute each other,  
And do not heed.

When they see those practicing (the discipline)  
The poison of anger arises.

With means and destruction vying,  
They give birth to hatred.<sup>215</sup>

With these prophecies in mind, and his own experience of persecution vivid in his memory, Shinran did not regard the recurrent persecutions with any surprise.

However, Shinran was also well aware that there were among his followers individuals with radical ideas who could bring about action by the authorities to restrain the teaching. Thus he wrote that it was shameful that there were reports which revealed the misdeeds of Pure Land devotees. They should have been more mindful of the Buddha's grace and the debt they owed for their salvation. But he held that only the individuals in error should be held responsible and not the entire group.<sup>216</sup>

Despite his warnings against evil-doers and wrong views, Shinran fully realized that those who desired to hinder the spread of Pure Land faith will take advantage of any charge, true or false. Consequently, he, on occasion, voiced doubts concerning the charges made by the authorities.<sup>217</sup> In view of this situation it was necessary for the devotees to refrain from any appearance of evil.

The attacks on the Pure Land teaching came not only from the civil authorities, but as in earlier times, they were probably stirred up by religious competition. The Buddhists of the established schools may also have had a hand in keeping the government alerted to the social menace of this teaching. In the face of opposition, Shinran maintained that no one could injure the Buddhist doctrine. When the Buddhists attempt to do it, they are like worms that live in the lion and destroy the animal from within. He saw that the Buddhists of his day were perhaps the greatest enemies of Buddhism. Of course, he meant by opposing the Pure Land teaching they were in effect opposing the true Buddhism for that age. He believed that while no one could injure Buddha's teaching, Buddhists, themselves, being eyeless and earless, could virtually destroy it by placing obstacles in the path of Pure Land faith.<sup>218</sup> This comment on his view of contemporary Buddhism was also echoed in the *Shōzōmatsu-wasan*:

In the age of the five defilements  
Clergy and lay together struggle.  
Seeing one with faith in the nembutsu  
Doubts, and slander and destructions flourish.

All who do not attain *bodhi*  
Do injury to the sole practice of the nembutsu.  
As a sign of their destruction of the sudden doctrine  
Endless will be the great sea of births and deaths.<sup>219</sup>

From these passages in Shinran's letters and verses, we may observe that he believed that persecution was appropriate to the evil age and it was to be accepted as inevitable. However, he also recognized that the charges made by the civil and religious opponents were generally without basis and false. Still he knew enough of his own followers to realize that misunderstandings and rumors could arise because of careless disciples. He did not think that the errors required or justified the restraining of the entire fellowship. Nevertheless, when persecution appeared, he urged his followers to avoid retaliation and simply to pray for the salvation of the persecutors.

It can readily be seen from the considerations above that Shinran's view of the state was governed completely by religious considerations. He was not interested in politics in and for itself, but only in the advancement of Pure Land faith in order to bring salvation to all beings.

In order to accomplish the goal of declaring the way of deliverance to beings it was necessary that conditions of peace and tranquillity prevail. Consequently, Shinran agreed with Shōshin that Pure Land devotees could pray for the sake of the nation to promote harmony which would enable Buddhism to flourish. He was not interested in the conditions of society, but in the conditions which would contribute to the growth of Buddhism. He urged that his followers keep mindful of the Buddha's grace and desire to help others as the basis for producing harmony. It appears that on the twenty-fifth of each month a service was held in honor of Hōnen's death during which Amida Buddha's name was recited specifically for the purpose of saving sinners and the opponents of the teaching.<sup>220</sup>

While Shinran did not have a strong social awareness on the basis of which he strove to reform society, he was aware that there were great evils in the society of his day which he set forth in various places in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, the *Gutoku-hitan-jukkai-wasan*, and the *Shōzōmatsu-wasan*. However, he did not reject the state and its

structure. We have previously noted also in connection with the discussion of his disciples that his teaching was notably free of class dissension, and that his disciples represented various classes. It would appear from this study that those who have tried to read nationalism into his thought, or out of it, have been more influenced by the later usages of the texts than what the texts themselves say. Shinran did not indicate in any manner the belief that Buddhism was chiefly designed for the protection and prosperity of the state. His basic position has been described well by Mitsuyuki Ishida:

All Pure Realm schools arose from the masses. They have always demanded freedom of worship, and the government which assures it they consider to be a correct government. Accordingly, it is felt that religion should not be used by the government for its own ends, nor should religion subvert the state. Shin has insisted upon this freedom of worship through all its history, but has not recklessly opposed the state—indeed it has at times been too cooperative. At all times it has sought to preserve the unique characteristics of the Shin position.<sup>221</sup>

*The Last Years.* The final years after the suit against the Pure land teaching had subsided and the fellowship attained tranquillity, Shinran spent his last years in relative peace in Kyoto. He carried on his usual activities of writing letters to disciples, copying works which he considered important, and penning some of his own. He received visits from his followers as before. He must have become conscious of his age as he indicates in a letter to Jōshimbō his awareness that death could come at any moment, and he grieves over the deaths of those he had known in the past years.<sup>222</sup>

According to the *Denne*, in his last days Shinran stayed with his brother, Jin'u, who was a Tendai priest. This residence was the Zenbo-in in the area of Oshi-koji

and Made-no-koji, according to the *Denne*, while the *Shōmyōden* and *Shōtōden* give it as Sanjo-Tomi-no-koji.<sup>223</sup> There he was attended by Kakushin-ni, his daughter. In the very last days Masukata, another son, came, as well as Kenchi and Senshin, disciples from Kanto. The *Denne* narrates briefly the last days of Shinran:

Towards the latter part of mid-winter in the second year Kocho (1262) the Shonin showed the symptoms of a slight indisposition, and after that his talk never referred to earthly things, dwelling only on how deeply grateful he was to the Buddha; he uttered nothing but the name of Amida, which he constantly repeated. On the twenty-eighth of the same month, at noon, he laid himself on his right side with his head toward the north and his face towards the west; and when at his last recitation of the name of Amida was heard no more, he expired. He was just then completing his ninetieth year.<sup>224</sup>

It is not the province of this study to inquire into the development of the fellowship after the death of Shinran, except to say that soon after his passing his ashes were placed in a tomb in the Otani area in the Higashiyama section which belonged to Kakushin-ni. In time this tomb became the center of devotion and remembrance of Shinran, and those who administered it and the memorial services there became the center of the Honganji sect which united the major body of his followers. The mode of leadership was hereditary which became a distinctive mark of this school. We cannot mention here the problems the succession occasioned, nor the problems arising from those who did not favor this method and formed the Takada school. They derived their teaching through Shimbutsu and Shōshin who represented a spiritual lineage. In addition, there were many problems relating to the connections of the Shinshū community to the

orthodox Pure Land schools in the Middle Ages in Japan. It was not until the time of Rennyō, the eighth patriarch (1415-1499) that the Honganji sect emerged as a fully independent group. It continued to develop to the present day when it claims to have some 21,024 temples and 9,046,357 believers comprising the two major branches. It is to be noted that there are ten schools tracing their lineage to Shinran.

Finally, though Shinran is a man of yesterday, his thought and faith are of today. In consequence of his spiritual impulse the great complex of Shinshū doctrine and schools have emerged. In the post-war period, Shinshū studies have resumed with greater vigor in an attempt to release the spirit of Shinran into Japanese society in the hope that his idealism and faith will invigorate and contribute to the reconstruction of Japan.<sup>225</sup>

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NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Honganji Shōnin Shinran Denne* (hereafter given as *Denne*), *Shinshū Shōgyō Zenshō* (hereafter given as *SSZ.*), III, 639. Commentary in Kasuka Murin, *Shin-ran Denne*, 262-3. For historical discussions see Umehara Ryusho, *Shinranden no Shōmondai*, 15-34. Nakazawa Kemmyo, *Shinshū Genryū-Shiron*, 174-7.
- <sup>2</sup> No mention is made of Shinran's mother in the *Denne*, but in the *Shōtōden* of the Takada school of Shinshū, she is said to be of Minamoto origin. See *Shinran Zenshū*, V, 172. Yamada Bunsho, *Shinran to Sono Kyōdan*, 36-39. Hirose Nanyu ("Shinran Shōnin no Shusse," 195) points out that there are great chronological difficulties if Kikko is accepted as Shinran's mother. She must have been born before 1110 when Yoshichika was put to death. Therefore she would have been at the improbable age of sixty when he was born.
- <sup>3</sup> Yamada, op. cit., 36-7.
- <sup>4</sup> *SSZ.*, III, 639, 661. Yamada. op. cit., 37. Kemmyo Nakazawa, "Shinran no Tanjō to Kekei." *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 63-4.
- <sup>5</sup> Kasuka, op. cit., 263-4.
- <sup>6</sup> *SSZ.*, III, 821.
- <sup>7</sup> Yamada, op. cit., 40. Yamabe Shugaku, *Waga Shinran*, 80-1.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-9. Umehara, op. cit., 35-42.
- <sup>10</sup> Nakazawa Kemmyo, *Shinshū Genryūshiron*, 176-7. According to the *Sompibumyaku* Arinori had four sons of whom Shinran was the eldest. They are Jin'u, Ken'u, and Yu-i. There are theories concerning a fifth son, Gyōken, who appears in the *Honganjitsūki* as the fourth in order. His existence is disputed. However, they were all clergy. See *Shinshū Daijiten*, I, 30; 319.
- <sup>11</sup> Yamada, op. cit., 38.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.
- <sup>13</sup> *SSZ.*, III, 639. On the chronological problem of Shinran's relation to Jichin see Nakazawa Kemmyo, *Shijō no Shinran*, 54. Fujiwara Yusetu, *Shinshūshi Kenkyū*, 76. Umehara, op. cit., 51-2.
- <sup>14</sup> Matsuno Junkō, "Shinran o meguru Shomondai," Kasahara Kazuo (ed.), *Shinshū Kyōdan no Tenkai*, 321.
- <sup>15</sup> Matsuno Junkō, *Shinran*, 5-16.
- <sup>16</sup> Takakusu Junjiro, *Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, 133-4, for aspects of Tendai teaching.
- <sup>17</sup> William Edward Soothill, Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 76-7. The three are void, provisional and middle; their unity is the fundamental standpoint of Tendai doctrine.

- <sup>18</sup> The term *yugayugi* refers to Shingon teaching. *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 134, note 16.
- <sup>19</sup> *SSZ*, III, 780.
- <sup>20</sup> *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 181.
- <sup>21</sup> *SSZ*, V, 106.
- <sup>22</sup> Yamada, op. cit., 52. Sato Tetsuei, “Eizan ni okeru Shinran ni tsuite,” *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 73.
- <sup>23</sup> Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon Jōdokyō Seiritsushi no Kenkyū*, 205. On the Continuous Nembutsu, *ibid.*, 85-8.
- <sup>24</sup> Yamada, op. cit., 45-6.
- <sup>25</sup> *SSZ*, III, 639. *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 151, note 8.
- <sup>26</sup> *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 184.
- <sup>27</sup> *SSZ*, III, 661.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 104.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 774.
- <sup>30</sup> Compare accounts in *SSZ*, III, 661, 821-2 and in *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 187-9, 193, 195.
- <sup>31</sup> *SSZ*, V, 104-5.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 774.
- <sup>34</sup> For discussion of these texts see Kasuka, op. cit., 147-50, Tsuji Zennosuke, *Nihon Bukkyōshi, Chūseihen*, 402-3, and Karasawa, Tomitaro *Bukkyō Kyōiku Shisō no Kenkyū*, 165-6.
- <sup>35</sup> *SSZ*, II, 202-3.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 643-5.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 690-793, for another version of the same incident.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 22-23.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 640-641. Same vision related in *Shōtōden, Shinran Zenshū*, 193. The *Denne* version makes no mention of marriage as does *Shōtōden*.
- <sup>40</sup> *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 198-199. Kanezane’s daughter is mentioned in Jitsugo’s *Ōtaniichiryukeizu* as the mother of Han’i. This genealogy dates from 1541, 279 years later and is not regarded as reliable. Matsuno Junko. *Shinran*, 168.
- <sup>41</sup> Anesaki Masaharu, *History of Japanese Religion*, 182.
- <sup>42</sup> *SSZ*, II, 725-726. Also Ogushi Tsuko, *Shinran Zenshū*, II 259-260.
- <sup>43</sup> Miyazaki Enjun, *Shinran to Sono Montei*, 20-22. Kurata Hyakuzō, *Hōnen to Shinran no Shinkō*, 97-99. Ienaga Saburo, *Shinran Shōnin no Gyōjitsu*, 10.
- <sup>44</sup> Harper Havelock Coates and Ryugaku Ishizuka, *Honen, The Buddhist Saint*, IV, 551.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.
- <sup>46</sup> This pledge does not mean that no disciple of Hōnen had married. In fact Seikaku and Ryūkan, two leading followers, were married. See Tsuji, *Nihon Bukkyōshi, Chūseihen, op. cit.*, 392-395. Matsuno,

*Shinshū Kyōdan no Tenkai*, 315-6.

- <sup>47</sup> Coates and Ishizuka, op. cit., IV, 550-2.  
<sup>48</sup> Tsuji, *Nihon Bukkyōshi, Chūseihen*, II, 318-9.  
<sup>49</sup> Tamura Encho, *Hōnen*, 157.  
<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-67. See also Coates and Ishizuka, op. cit., IV, 557-8, 562, note 15, and Yamada, op. cit., 99-103.  
<sup>51</sup> Coates and Ishizuka, op. cit., IV, 554-7.  
<sup>52</sup> *SSZ.*, II, 794-795. Also Coates and Ishizuka, op. cit., IV, 599-600.  
<sup>53</sup> Coates and Ishizuka, op. cit., 598-599. See also *SSZ.*, II, 701, 532-41, verses 59-75, 517-8, verse 13, 14.  
<sup>54</sup> *SSZ.*, II, 201-2.  
<sup>55</sup> Yamada, op. cit., 95.  
<sup>56</sup> Coates and Ishizuka, op. cit., IV, 601.  
<sup>57</sup> *SSZ.*, III, 641.  
<sup>58</sup> Miyazaki Enjun, “Shinran no Tachiba to Kyōgyōshinshō no Senjutsu,” in *Kyōgyōshinshō Senjutsu no Kenkyū*, Sato Tetsuei, ed., 14. According to Miyazaki, Shinran, being neither priest nor layman, was in a position to free Buddhism from its social bondage and permit it to be shared by all the people.  
<sup>59</sup> Ienaga, *Shinran Shōnin Gyōjitsu*, 13. Matsuno Junko, *Shinran*, op. cit., 162-78. He takes up in detail Shinran’s marriage, identification of Eshin-ni, her social status and ownership of servants. For a concise summary of the problems surrounding Shinran’s marriage see Matsuno Junko, *Shinran: Sono Kōdō to Shisō*, 137-9.  
<sup>60</sup> Umehara Ryusho, op. cit., 216-9. Hattori Shisō, *Shinran Nōto*, 21, denies Eshin-ni was descended from a family of status.  
<sup>61</sup> We must call attention here to the fact that the name Tamenori in the genealogy referred to is written [為教] and in the *Gyokuyō* it appears as [為則].  
<sup>62</sup> Miyazaki, op. cit., 36-40.  
<sup>63</sup> Umehara Ryusho, op. cit., 212.  
<sup>64</sup> Miyazaki, 40.  
<sup>65</sup> *SSZ.*, III, 19.  
<sup>66</sup> Umehara Ryusho, op. cit., 213-5.  
<sup>67</sup> *SSZ.*, V, 104.  
<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-4, 109.  
<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-6.  
<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-2.  
<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.  
<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 727-9.  
<sup>73</sup> Ienaga, *Chūsei Bukkyō Shisōshi Kenkyū*, 190. Ienaga, *Shinran Shōnin Gyōjitsu*, 118. Umehara Ryūshō, “Echigo Hairyū Jidai no Shinran,” *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 82-4.  
<sup>74</sup> *SSZ.*, II, 202.  
<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 648.

- <sup>76</sup> *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 212-5.
- <sup>77</sup> This date is based on calculations made from information in Eshinni's letter, *SSZ*, V, 101.
- <sup>78</sup> Coates and Ishizuka, op. cit., IV, 684-8.
- <sup>79</sup> Umehara Ryusho, op. cit., 230.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 231-236. Miyazaki, op. cit., 41-3.
- <sup>81</sup> Kasahara Kazuo, "Tōgoku ni okeru Shinran," *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 86.
- <sup>82</sup> *SSZ*, III, 640-1.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 662.
- <sup>84</sup> George B. Sansom, *A History of Japan to 1334*, 397.
- <sup>85</sup> *SSZ*, II, 683, 619-20.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 101-2.
- <sup>87</sup> Kasawara Kazuo ("Kyōgyōshinshō no Seiritsu," *Shinshū Kyōdan no Tenkai*, 20-4) stresses the role of Shinran's anxiety in relation to his faith to the development of his thought. The incident related by Eshin-ni is seen in the light of this continuing anxiety, and he infers that Shinran arrived at his view of faith early.
- <sup>88</sup> *SSZ*, III, 648.
- <sup>89</sup> Yamada, op. cit., 119-23.
- <sup>90</sup> Hakuju Ui, *Bukkyō Jiten*, 1068.
- <sup>91</sup> *SSZ*, III, 649.
- <sup>92</sup> Yusetu Fujiwara, "Shinran Shōnin Montei no Chiriteki Bumpu," *Shinran Zenshū*, II, 134. Ienaga, *Shinran Shōnin Gyōjitsu*, 116-30.
- <sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 219-0.
- <sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 135-9.
- <sup>95</sup> Hattori, op. cit., 126.
- <sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.
- <sup>99</sup> Ienaga Saburo (*Chūsei Bukkyō Shisōshi Kenkyū*, 201-9) notes that Hattori has presented a clear explanation of the social background of Shinran, and he further agrees in distinguishing the thought of Shinran and the later views and actions of the Honganji organization. He credits Hattori with the epochal theory that Shinran rejected completely the idea that religion exists merely for the sake of the protection and prosperity of the state (*Gokoku Shiso*).
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 204, 206.
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.
- <sup>102</sup> Kasahara Kazuo, *Shinran to Tōgoku Nōmin*, 282.
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 286-97.
- <sup>104</sup> Akamatsu Toshihide, *Kamakura Bukkyō no Kenkyū*, 71.
- <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-71. Also, Akamatsu Toshihide, "Shinran no Shokan ni tsuite," *Shinran Zenshū*, op. cit., II, 3. In the same volume in the

essay “Shinran to Deshitachi,” 125-33, Akamatsu gives details on the lives of the disciples.

- <sup>106</sup> See *Living Buddhism in Japan*. Bulletin of the International Institute of the Study of Religions, Vol. 6-2 (May 1959), 19-20. An incident is related in which the president of a silk thread company made the women say the Nembutsu in gratitude for various gifts from the employer, rather than being concerned over low wages.
- <sup>107</sup> Miyazaki, op. cit., 154-5. Yamada, op. cit., 118-25.
- <sup>108</sup> Yuki Reimon, “Ken-jōdo-shinjitsu-kyōgyōshō-monrui ni tsuite,” *Shinran Zenshū*, VI, 4. *Shinshu Yōgi*, II, 90.
- <sup>109</sup> See above p. 11.
- <sup>110</sup> *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 223.
- <sup>111</sup> Nakazawa, *Shinshū Genryūshiron*, 245.
- <sup>112</sup> Kasahara, *Shinran to Tōgoku Nōmin*, 204-15. For discussion of various aspects of possible motivation see Shugaku Yamabe and Chizen Akanuma, *Kyōgyōshinshō Kōgi*, I, 19-24.
- <sup>113</sup> SSZ., II, 1.
- <sup>114</sup> Ibid., 43, 203.
- <sup>115</sup> Yuki Reimon, *Shinran Zenshū*, VI, 19-23.
- <sup>116</sup> Yuki Reimon, “Kyōgyōshinshō Shinkan Bessenron no Yōshi,” Sato Tetsuei, *Kyōgyōshinshō no Senjutsu no Kenkyū*, 80-2, argues from the title of the work *Ken-jōdo-shinjitsu-kyōgyōshō-monrui* that Shinran originally projected a work following the traditional scheme of three principles, but later in Kyōto put it together with the volume on Faith which had been produced separately at a different time.
- <sup>117</sup> The time of return has not been precisely recorded. See Ienaga, *Shinran Shōnin Gyōjitsu*, 28. Umehara Ryusho, op. cit., 274-80. Miyazaki, op. cit., 53-4.
- <sup>118</sup> Miyazaki, op. cit., 54-5.
- <sup>119</sup> Yamada, op. cit., 146.
- <sup>120</sup> Matsuno, *Shinshū Kyōdan no Tenkai*, 339.
- <sup>121</sup> Fujiwara, *Shinshūshi Kenkyū*, 146-50.
- <sup>122</sup> Miyazaki, op. cit., 73, 75-6. Yamada, op. cit., 147-8.
- <sup>123</sup> SSZ., V, 113.
- <sup>124</sup> Ibid., 114-5, also 110-1. See Matsuno, *Shinran*, 407-8.
- <sup>125</sup> SSZ., V, 103.
- <sup>126</sup> Ibid., III, 825. Matsuno, *Shinran*, 408.
- <sup>127</sup> Ibid., II, 705.
- <sup>128</sup> Ibid., III, 782, 842.
- <sup>129</sup> Matsuno, *Shinran*, 407-10. Also Matsuno, “Kirakugo no Shinran Ikka,” *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 106-7.
- <sup>130</sup> Nakazawa Kemmyo, *Shijō no Shinran*, 163. Hattori, op. cit., 98-9. Miyazaki, op. cit., 111-2.
- <sup>131</sup> SSZ., II, 725-7. Miyazaki, op. cit., 85-103.

- <sup>132</sup> Yamada, op. cit., 151.
- <sup>133</sup> Miyazaki, op. cit., 113.
- <sup>134</sup> Akamatsu, op. cit., 3-28.
- <sup>135</sup> Miyazaki, op. cit., 114-6.
- <sup>136</sup> Ienaga, *Shinran Shōnin Gyōjitsu*, 32-95, gives detailed chronology of these texts.
- <sup>137</sup> Akamatsu Toshihide, "Shinran no Shokan ni tsuite," *Shinran Zenshū*, 7-8.
- <sup>138</sup> Washiyama Jushin, "Goshosoku ni shinobu Bannen no Shinran Shōnin (1)," 55.
- <sup>139</sup> The numbering here follows that of the *SSZ*, II.
- <sup>140</sup> Washiyama, op. cit., 56.
- <sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 57. The authenticity of these letters is also uncertain.
- <sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-62. Washiyama presents a detailed chart which gives the pertinent chronological data and relates the letters to other writings of Shinran. Other attempts to determine the chronology may be found in Gyoshin Hosokawa, "A Study of the Epistles of Shinran," II-2: 645-7, III-1: 203-5, III-2: 579-81. Hattori, op. cit., 110-4. Yamada, op. cit., 159-60. Akamatsu, op. cit., 29-59.
- <sup>143</sup> Hosokawa Gyoshin, "A Study of the Epistles of Shinran," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū*, III-1, 203, offers eight letters. Hattori, op. cit., 110-4 offers thirteen and Yamada, op. cit., 160 gives seven.
- <sup>144</sup> *SSZ*, II, 671-2. A *mon* is an ancient coinage said to be one thousandth of a *kan* which is equivalent to ten *sen*. It is also given as a farthing.
- <sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 683.
- <sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 698-700.
- <sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 705-6.
- <sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 689-93.
- <sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 725-6.
- <sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 676.
- <sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 680.
- <sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 710-1.
- <sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 689.
- <sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 705.
- <sup>155</sup> *Mikawa-nembutsu-sosho-nikki*, *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 253.
- <sup>156</sup> *SSZ*, II, 678.
- <sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 773-5.
- <sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 670-1.
- <sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 668-9, 685-9.
- <sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 685-9.
- <sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 793-4.
- <sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 705.
- <sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 671.

- <sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 666-8.  
<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 672-3.  
<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 710 and 708 respectively.  
<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 666-8, 680-1.  
<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 670-1.  
<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 670.  
<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 671-2.  
<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 698-700.  
<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 658-61.  
<sup>173</sup> Hosokawa, "A Study of the Epistles of Shinran," II-2, 646-7.  
<sup>174</sup> *SSZ.*, II, 672-3.  
<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 685.  
<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 682.  
<sup>177</sup> The Apostle Paul had a similar difficulty with the radical implications of his teaching. He wrote in Romans 6:1, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?..."  
<sup>178</sup> *SSZ.*, II, 682.  
<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 690-1.  
<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 692.  
<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 683.  
<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 691.  
<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 681-3, 685-9, 689-93, 703-5; also 696-7, 700-3, 710-1.  
<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 658-61, 700-3.  
<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 660, 696-7, 698-700, 700-3, 710-1.  
<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 685-9, 695-6, 698-700, 705-7, 707-9.  
<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 658-61, 661-2, 666-7, 673-4, 674, 674-80, 681-3, 684-5, 689-93, 693-4, 700-3, 703-5, 711-3.  
<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 658-61, 666-7, 711-3; also 665.  
<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 686.  
<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 687.  
<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 700-2.  
<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 703-5.  
<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 658-61.  
<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 706-7.  
<sup>195</sup> It is uncertain just when Shinran sent Zenran to Kanto as his emissary to help restrain the spread of heresy. He was there probably before the letter dated ninth month, second day of 1256. Before he went he may have received special instructions for dealing with errant disciples. It is his use of his authority and his relation to Shinran that became the source of trouble.  
<sup>196</sup> *SSZ.*, II, 705-6.  
<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 707-9.  
<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 727-9 (letter of Disowning); 717-9 (letter to Shōshin).  
<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 696-7.

- <sup>200</sup> Ibid., 710-1.
- <sup>201</sup> Ibid., 720-1.
- <sup>202</sup> Ibid., 661-2; 662-3.
- <sup>203</sup> Ibid., 729. The term *sonjiru* (Colloq.) has the sense “damage, hurt, injure, impair” (*Kenkyusha’s New Japanese English Dictionary*). The word is quite strong and may reflect only Shinran’s sentiment of chagrin at the action of Zenran, rather than a direct report of Zenran’s words.
- <sup>204</sup> Yamada, *op. cit.*, p. 162.
- <sup>205</sup> Fujishima Tatsuryo, “Sono Go no Kantō Kyōdan to Zenran no Igi,” *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 115-6. For a detailed analysis of the competition among the leading disciples in relation to the Zenran affair see Kazuo Kasahara, *Shinran to Tōgoku Nōmin*, 331-7, 347-51. Yamada, *op. cit.*, 162-4.
- <sup>206</sup> Miyaji Kakue, “On Zenran’s Heterodoxy,” 232-5. Yamada, *op. cit.*, 167-71. Matsuno Junko, “One Doctrinal System of Shinran’s Followers,” 206-9. Matsuno, *Shinshū Kyōdan no Tenkai*, 342.
- <sup>207</sup> Matsuno, *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū*, III-1, 207.
- <sup>208</sup> Ibid., 206.
- <sup>209</sup> Umehara Ryusho, *op. cit.*, 193-4, sets forth the theory that Zenran was the real son of Eshinni. The term stepmother is the insult. Seikichi Kawakami (*Gutokufū*, 189-92) accepts that theory that Shinran had three wives, and feels that it is farfetched to claim the term “stepmother” as an insult. See also Yamada, *op. cit.*, 161-2.
- <sup>210</sup> Matsuno, *Shinran Zenshū*, I, 107-9.
- <sup>211</sup> *SSZ.*, III, 647-8.
- <sup>212</sup> Ibid., II, 201.
- <sup>213</sup> Ibid., 698-700.
- <sup>214</sup> Ibid., 703-5, 696-8, 658-61.
- <sup>215</sup> Ibid., 701.
- <sup>216</sup> Ibid., 700-1.
- <sup>217</sup> Ibid., 701.
- <sup>218</sup> Ibid., 705.
- <sup>219</sup> Ibid., 517-8.
- <sup>220</sup> Ibid., 710.
- <sup>221</sup> Mitsuyuki Ishida, in *Path of the Buddha*, 339.
- <sup>222</sup> *SSZ.*, II, 664-5.
- <sup>223</sup> *Shinshu Daijiten*, II, 819-20.
- <sup>224</sup> Ibid., II, 653. Tr. from *Buddhism and Jodo Shinshu*, 177-8.
- <sup>225</sup> For a study of Shinran’s doctrine see author’s *Shinran’s Gospel of Pure Grace* (Tucson: Arizona University Press, 1965). 97 pp.

