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## To Our Readers

As I assume the role of editor, it is my hope that this expanded issue of the *Pacific World* will attract the interest of a broad spectrum of students of Buddhism, lay, clerical and scholars. While it is difficult to meet the needs of each type of reader, it is our view that scholarship should be accessible to lay people and that the study of Buddhism can be both informative and inspirational. In this way Buddhism can grow in Western society with the progress of understanding among scholars and non-scholars alike.

We cannot say we have achieved our goal in this issue. Only our readers can judge by the help they receive from the journal for their intellectual and spiritual growth. We would appreciate hearing from you.

As editor, this is my first experience on such an ambitious scale. Whatever the limitations of our publication, I assume full responsibility.

First, I wish to express our deep appreciation for the continuing support of the Numata Foundation which is dedicated to the advancement of Buddhist knowledge and insight. Also, many people have worked very hard to prepare the essays for publication. Thanks are due especially to Rev. Rebecca MacDonald for her editorial skills, Mrs. Rika Wagner for her typing of manuscripts for the printer, and Dr. Ken Tanaka for his advice, counsel and administrative assistance during the process. Of course, we must acknowledge our contributors, without whom, there could be no journal. We are hopeful that many others will share their thoughts and studies with us in the future.

The range of our articles covers historical, philosophical, religious and social issues. Buddhism has implications for the whole scope of human existence. It is important that its relevance becomes clear. It is not simply an exotic, foreign religion in the contemporary scene. It is an ancient tradition with a wealth of experience to contribute for grappling with contemporary issues. We think this selection of essays vividly demonstrates that fact.

Alfred Bloom, Editor-in-Chief

## On the Emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism

by Yoshifumi Ueda, translated by Dennis Hirota

Research on the early development of Mahāyāna Buddhism has advanced rapidly in recent years, and many hitherto obscure facets of it have been brought to light. But there appears to be, among Buddhist scholars, a single, common understanding concerning the origins of Mahāyāna about which I have basic doubts. Although there are variations in expression among individual scholars, we find a general consensus that Mahāyāna Buddhism was a movement that arose among *lay* Buddhists. Professor Ryūjō Yamada, for example, writes:

A movement to return to the fundamental teaching arose among the *laity* as distinct from the community of elders. This movement labeled the sectarian Buddhism, which had fallen into a kind of conceptual play through emphasis on debate and disputation, with the name “small vehicle” (Hīnayāna), and its own outlook was that of lay believers who were absorbed in reverence for the founder (Śākyamuni). This was a matter of returning to the realization of the law of interdependence. The term “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*) came to represent the fundamental concept of the new movement. Most scholars have taken this perspective concerning the origin of Mahāyāna Buddhism. (emphasis added; *Daijō bukkyō seiritsuron josetsu*)

As Yamada states here, most scholars, with minor variations, have accepted this understanding of the origins of Mahāyāna.

The emphasis on laity is, in one sense, understandable. The distinguishing characteristic of

Mahāyāna, “the great vehicle,” is that it leads all beings to true and real enlightenment—not only certain people, but any person whatsoever; moreover, it does this unfailingly. When Mahāyāna Buddhism first arose, it labeled all the preceding Buddhism the “small vehicle,” implying that such Buddhism was inferior because it lacked this capacity. The person who walks the path of Mahāyāna is called “*bodhisattva*” (being of enlightenment). The spirit of the *bodhisattva* is expressed as “benefiting others,” by which one brings all other beings across to the other shore, the world of nirvāṇa, before crossing over oneself.

It is said that in the Hīnayāna path, one strives to escape from this shore of *samsāra* and attain the other shore, and there is no vision of the people remaining on this shore as oneself. The *bodhisattva*, however, possesses precisely this vision; hence, he cannot cross first to the shore of nirvāṇa, and yet neither is his “benefiting others” a form of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Mahāyāna transcends the dualism in which self and other are separate. It delves to the root-reality in which both self-benefit (attaining nirvāṇa) and benefiting others (bringing all sentient beings to nirvāṇa) are established together as one and identical. The *bodhisattva* does not, like those of the Hīnayāna path, discard this shore and pass on to the other; rather, he brings all people of this shore to the other. According to the religious philosopher Keiji Nishitani:

[The *bodhisattva*] stands in the position of a ferryman who passes back and forth between this shore and the other. This is a stance founded on going and returning between shores. Such a stance is, among

the world religions, a highly unique one found only in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The attitude of the *bodhisattva* is expressed in the phrase, "*Samṣāra* is itself *nirvāṇa*." That is, the mundane world is itself the realm of perfect wisdom.

The essential spirit of Mahāyāna is manifested in concern for a Buddhist path for the laity; hence the prevalence of the supposition that it originated among the laity itself. The fundamental position of Mahāyāna, however, should not be understood as one of lay religion. It does not stand on a dualistic opposition of monk and lay and establish itself on one side; rather, it transcends such dualism and attaches no significance to the distinction of monk and lay. This position arises naturally from the fundamental Mahāyāna stance expressed "*Samṣāra* is itself *nirvāṇa*." This nondifferentiation of lay and monk in Mahāyāna thought is seen in such Indian Mahāyāna scriptures as the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*, and its most thoroughgoing expression is found in the Buddhism of Hōnen and Shinran.

To return to the problem of the origin of Mahāyāna, the view that it lies among the laity raises several fundamental questions that touch on the very nature of Mahāyāna. Is it, for example, actually possible for "believers" or "laity" to have created a new form of Buddhism? Even if we accept that Mahāyāna could not have arisen from the monks, there is still some question whether we should therefore seek its origins among lay believers. Below, I will treat two basic problems: the nature of the authors of the Mahāyāna sūtras, and the nature of the awareness of one's form of Buddhism as Mahāyāna.

#### WHO WROTE THE MAHĀYĀNA SŪTRAS?

Firm evidence for the establishment of Mahāyāna Buddhism is found in the appearance of Mahāyāna sūtras; outside of such writings, we have no direct information concerning the origins (of Mahāyāna). It is generally accepted that the earliest such sūtras are the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*.

At present the origins of Mahāyāna Buddhism are thought to extend back to the first century B.C. The Mahāyāna sūtras profess to be the teachings of the Buddha, but they appear in large numbers one after another over a lengthy period extending to the seventh century A.D. Until long after Śākyamuni's death, then, it was possible for sūtras to appear as the Buddha's teaching. Moreover, not only the body of Mahāyāna sūtras as a whole, but even individual sūtras often appear to have been formed by gradual accretion and expansion. Such a process in the formation of a sacred canon is surely unique in the history of religions. It is as though the Bible or the Qur'an were to appear in numerous different versions in quick succession.

The Hīnayāna canon represents the teaching of Śākyamuni Buddha as formulated from memory after his death by his disciples; it has, as the Buddha's teaching, been handed down to the present, and there is nothing in it that stems from a later date. The Mahāyāna scriptures, however, did not appear until hundreds of years after Śākyamuni's demise, and even from the perspective of content, they differ completely from the Hīnayāna scriptures. Since the Mahāyāna sūtras cannot be considered the direct words of Śākyamuni, we must assume that people other than Śākyamuni composed them, and that the authors of the early forms of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras* were the earliest Mahāyāna Buddhists.

Who, then, wrote the Mahāyāna sūtras? I will not consider here what specific group those authors belonged to or their relations to groups that existed during Śākyamuni's lifetime. These are possibly important problems, but my basic concern here is more generally whether the authors of the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras (the early versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Lotus*, *Garland*, and other sūtras) were people who could be described as "believers" or "laity," or whether they were another kind of people. This is because the issue I wish to pursue lies less in the historical background of Mahāyāna than in its fundamental nature. I raise the question of the nature of the authors as a means of approaching the larger question of how we are to understand the basic



nature of Mahāyāna.

Most scholarly works dealing with the problem of the formation of Mahāyāna state that the early Mahāyāna sūtras were either written or gathered and shaped by lay believers (some scholars also include progressive monks). In other words, in contemporary scholarship, the thought of early Mahāyāna is understood as something that people described as believers or laity were capable of formulating. Professor T. Kimura, for example, writes:

They (the instigators of the Mahāyāna movement) formulated and collected, in the name of Buddha, the thought which they themselves believed to be the Buddha's true intent, and further, they asserted that it was those writings, rather than the scriptures treasured up to then (the Hīnayāna sūtras, precepts, and treatises), that better expressed the Buddha's true intent.

It is assumed here not only that lay followers were capable of composing the sūtras, but further that the sūtras could be written by people who were aware that they themselves had not attained Buddhahood. Needless to say, believers and lay followers—those who take refuge in Buddha and who accept the Buddha's teaching—are not enlightened ones (Buddhas). It is certainly questionable whether such people could take works they themselves had written as the Buddha's teaching. Further, these people, even if they should be *bodhisattvas* who seek the way while maintaining home life, are seekers of enlightenment, not enlightened ones who have attained the goal. It is difficult to accept that the Mahāyāna sūtras, which are written from the perspective of the enlightened one (Buddha), should have been composed by "lay believers" who lacked an awareness of themselves as enlightened.

For "believers" or "laity" to be perfectly convinced that certain concepts represent "the true meaning of the Buddha," it is necessary for concepts that can be understood and accepted as the Buddha's meaning to exist beforehand. Since

those concepts and ideas are Mahāyāna concepts differing from those of Hīnayāna, it is impossible that they be the products of Hīnayāna followers. Neither can they be the products of believers who stand in the position of accepting the Buddha's teaching as truth. It is precisely because the Buddha's teaching includes truths so profound that they cannot be fully grasped or understood that they can only be accepted and believed. Since the Buddha's teaching comprises concepts and ideas born from the experience called perfect enlightenment, believers who have not yet experienced perfect enlightenment have no choice but to accept. Here, "progressive monks" or "lay *bodhisattvas*" may be substituted for the term "believers"; in not yet having become enlightened ones, there is no essential difference. Regardless of whether they have abandoned home life or not, believers, monks or *bodhisattvas* have the awareness that they are not Buddhas, and people with such an awareness would surely find it unthinkable to place themselves in the position of Buddha, whom they revere, and compose sūtras in his name.

Even without stating as bluntly as Kimura that "they formulated and collected, in the name of the Buddha, thoughts which they themselves believed to be the Buddha's true intent," if one asserts that the Mahāyāna movement was instigated by lay believers or by lay or monk *bodhisattvas* who had not yet attained enlightenment, one's fundamental position does not differ significantly from Kimura's. In this case, Mahāyāna Buddhism as the Buddha's teaching is not an historical fact but no more than the conjecture of the believing minds of ordinary human beings.

The Mahāyāna sūtras do not represent the direct teaching of Śākyamuni; nevertheless, they were not composed from the perspective of belief in Buddha, but can only be seen as written from the perspective of having become Buddha. Who then wrote the sūtras? It is not that people who had not yet attained Buddhahood expressed what they believed to be the Buddha's true meaning as the Buddha's own words. Rather, enlightened people—people who possessed the realization of

already having attained Buddhahood themselves—expressed their own realization, their own experience, in the form of the sūtras. We find evidence for precisely such awareness in the *Mahāyāna-sūtralaṃkāra* by Maitreya and Vasubandhu's commentary on it:

[In the Treatise,] "because it is established" (*siddha*) means that if a person other [than Śākyamuni] realizes perfect enlightenment (*abhisambuddhaya*) and teaches it, and that [teaching] is established to be the Buddha's teaching (*buddha-vacanatva*), the person who has attained perfect enlightenment and teaches in accord with [his enlightenment] is none other than Buddha. (Chapter 1, verse 4; Ui Hakuju, *Daijō shōgonkyōron kenkyū*, p. 46).

From these words we know that in the time of Maitreya and Vasubandhu, even a person other than Śākyamuni was considered to be a Buddha if he actually realized and taught perfect enlightenment. In the statement, "Because it is established," Maitreya offers a basis for asserting that Mahāyāna Buddhism is the Buddha's teaching; it is clear, therefore, that Mahāyāna Buddhists of the day possessed this kind of self-realization, and that based on this way of thinking, works composed by people other than Śākyamuni were written in the form of the Buddha's teaching. For Hīnayāna Buddhists, a sūtra is the Buddha's teaching because it was preached by the Buddha (Śākyamuni), but for Mahāyāna Buddhists, the reverse holds: a teacher is called Buddha because the content of what is taught is established to be the Buddha's teaching. We see, then, that the Mahāyāna sūtras were written by people who possessed an awareness of having attained perfect enlightenment—of being Buddhas—and that because of this their works took the form of the teaching of the Buddha. If the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras were composed about the beginning of the Christian era, there is a space of at least several hundred years between them and *Mahāyāna-sūtralaṃkāra*, but the thinking concerning what makes the Mahāyāna sūtras the teaching of the Buddha seen in these words of Maitreya and Vasubandhu may

be understood to reflect the traditional thinking among Indian Mahāyāna Buddhists.

## SELF-AWARENESS AS THE GREAT VEHICLE

Another basic problem concerning the origins of Mahāyāna is why the concept of the "great vehicle," which had not appeared among Buddhists before, suddenly arose. At some point in history, some Buddhists labeled all the preceding Buddhism "the small vehicle" and distinguished their own Buddhism as the "great vehicle." Why? What was the basis upon which the self-awareness of Mahāyāna Buddhists arose? As we have seen, most scholars stated that the origins of Mahāyāna are to be found in the activity of lay followers and progressive *bhikkus* who were dissatisfied with the traditional order, which centered on monks and nuns. They sought to give rise to a more positive Buddhism in which lay people as well as monks could find salvation—a Buddhism that reflected the original spirit of Śākyamuni. Since they themselves also held the possibility of attaining Buddhahood, they believed that they should be called "*bodhisattvas*"—enlightenment-beings. Moreover, they committed to writing, in the Buddha's name, the thought and concepts which they strongly believed to express the true intent of the Buddha, and these writings became the Mahāyāna sūtras.

If such an account is true, then "great vehicle" signifies the vehicle by which all people are saved, lay as well as monks and nuns; "great" essentially means "broad" or "all-embracing." Such is not the explanation given in the Mahāyāna treatises and commentaries, however. For example, it is stated, "Foolish beings are attached to *saṃsāra*; the two vehicles (*śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*; those of the Hīnayāna path) are attached to *nirvāṇa*. The *bodhisattva* sees no distinction between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*." Here, the *nirvāṇa* of Hīnayāna and that of Mahāyāna are distinguished. Moreover:

In the emancipation of the two vehicles (Hīnayāna), there are no three bodies; in the emancipation of the *bodhisattva*, there

are three bodies. Those of the two vehicles are incapable of eliminating obstructions of wisdom (blind passions affecting intellect); hence, they have no great compassion and do not practice benefiting others. Therefore they have no accommodated body or transformed body. (Asaṅga 310-390, in *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*).

Here, it is taught that the emancipation or enlightenment of Hīnayāna and that of Mahāyāna differ. While the *bodhisattva* realizes the no-self or nonsubstantial nature of both persons and things, practitioners of Hīnayāna cannot eliminate obstructions of wisdom because they know only the no-self nature of persons. Hence, in their emancipation, they cannot rid themselves completely of blind passions or attachments, and so do not attain true enlightenment or dharma-body. They do not practice benefiting others because of stubborn attachments that prevent them from truly becoming one with others. It is not, as many modern scholars would have it, that Hīnayāna does not emphasize salvation of others because it focuses on monks and nuns who have renounced home life and looks down upon those remaining in secular life. Because Hīnayāna practitioners have not rid themselves completely of egocentricity, they distinguish between themselves and others—whether monk or lay; hence, they cannot genuinely benefit others. We see, then, that Hīnayāna is considered inferior not because it takes the perspective of monks and discriminates against the laity, but because practitioners of this way do not attain true nirvāṇa (eradication of blind passions) or true enlightenment.

Thus, at some point in history, among some Buddhists, there arose the self-awareness that their Buddhism was the great vehicle. This came about because they had sought enlightenment and performed practices according to the Buddhist tradition up to that time, but however much they strove, they could not reach ultimate enlightenment. So they abandoned the tradition and, seeking a new path, at length discovered one by which they could attain ultimate enlightenment. Thus they transcended the traditional Buddhism.

They called the new path that had made their attainment possible “the great vehicle.” The concept that symbolizes the earliest Mahāyāna Buddhism is *prajñāpāramitā* (ultimate wisdom or enlightenment), of which Nāgārjuna (c. 150-250) states:

It is called *pāramitā* (having reached the other shore— because one reaches the other shore of the great ocean of wisdom and goes to its ultimate limit.

The *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* states, “Mahāyāna signifies turning the wheel of *Dharma* (teaching the *Dharma*), having attained all-knowing wisdom; it lies beyond the capacities of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*.” Nothing other than *prajñāpāramitā* could attain the ultimate depths of wisdom. Thus, the origins of Mahāyāna lie not in a movement among lay believers, but with people who had attained such full and complete enlightenment (eradication of attachments) that they could criticize as immature and unfulfilled even the enlightenment of the venerated elders of the tradition. These enlightened ones expressed their own awakening in the Mahāyāna sūtras, and the content of their teachings was established to be the Buddha’s teaching. It is not that believers or monks and *bodhisattvas* lacking awakening wrote what they conceived to be the Buddha’s intent in the Buddha’s name.

In the history of Indian Buddhism, the evolution from the preceding Buddhism to Mahāyāna was not a successive and linear development, but a leap of radical change. This does not necessarily reflect, as is often asserted, a shift in the sociological background of Mahāyāna from the order of Hīnayāna monks and its community of supporters to a social group centering on lay believers. Once the new Buddhism had been established, it is a matter of course that the social groups that supported it should differ from those that supported the traditional community, for the founders of the new Buddhism had taken their leave of the old order. The non-successional shift from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna arose not because of differences in the social background of supporting

groups; rather, it arose because, in the depths of enlightenment, the Hīnayāna had been transcended. This can be grasped if we consider Hōnen, Shinran, Dōgen and others who broke with the Buddhism of Mount Hiei and founded new Buddhist paths. The new Buddhism—the newly opened enlightenment—naturally received the support of different segments of society. Even if efforts were made deliberately to create a new teaching to save segments of society that were not included in the traditional Buddhism, they would be bound to fail. For to truly save others, one must exercise great compassion, and such activity requires above all emancipation from egocentricity. This is possible only as the new realization of enlightenment.

### BECOMING BUDDHA VERSUS BELIEVING IN BUDDHA

As we have seen, the stance of the authors of the Mahāyāna sūtras reflects not faith, but rather of the experience of perfect enlightenment; this attitude pervades the origins of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the history of its development. Herein lies one of the differences of Buddhism from such religions of faith as Christianity and Islam. It is undeniable that many have lived with faith in Mahāyāna. What is important, however, is that Mahāyāna has flowed from the experience and thought and acts of persons who attained Buddhahood, and with only those who assumed the attitude of faith, the history of Mahāyāna Buddhism could not have been established. In contemporary Japan, people who have attained Buddhahood are extremely rare, and even those who seriously embrace a determination to attain enlightenment seem not to be numerous. The great majority take the stance of faith or belief, and perhaps for this reason it appears that the Buddhist community is composed only of those who have faith in the Buddha. The perspective of having become Buddha has lost its actuality. Although the original goal of Buddhism is to attain Buddhahood—and this is especially emphasized in the Mahāyāna tradition—the modern academic approach has been to abandon the perspective of attaining enlightenment and to perceive Mahāyāna

from the perspective of faith in Buddha. This approach can only lead to distortion and misconception when treating the history of Buddhism, but it is reflected in the dominant understanding of the origin and growth of Mahāyāna. The matter of attainment is even more important for those who strive not merely to understand Buddhism, but to make it their own. There can be no grasp of Buddhism if one seeks it apart from the perspective of attaining Buddhahood.

As we have seen, a large number of Mahāyāna sūtras appeared in India over a period of hundreds of years. It must be said, then, that there were a large number of Buddhas. The Mahāyāna concept of many Buddhas has its origins here. In the view of most scholars, the Mahāyāna tradition idealized the Buddha (Sākyamuni) and transformed him by imparting superhuman powers to him. Further, out of this inclination to take Buddha as an object of worship, numerous Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* were conceived; thus, the Mahāyāna conception of many Buddhas is considered the product of longing and devotion on the part of followers. Or, it is said that the concept arose out of the consideration that if a large number of people aspire for Buddhahood, there is a *possibility* of many attaining it, and in addition, there is the possibility of the people who have already attained Buddhahood existing. I think, however, that the Mahāyāna conception of many Buddhas did not arise from the perspective of faith in Buddha, nor from a concept of the possibility of the attainment of Buddhahood by numbers of people, but rather from the historical reality of people other than Sākyamuni actually having been able to attain Buddhahood. It became possible to assert with certainty that “even people other than Sākyamuni are able to become Buddha through this method (i.e., practicing *prajñāpāramitā*)” on the basis of experience, and this formed the foundation for the conception of many Buddhas. If people who have realized enlightenment appear, having attained Buddhahood through methods that lead to Buddhahood for anyone who practices them, then it is possible for people everywhere to attain Buddhahood; hence, it is said that there are Buddhas throughout the three times and ten



directions. For the Mahāyāna Buddhist, Buddhas are not objects of faith, they are himself—the true subject, not the absolute object. Only the person who has not awakened to this views them objectively. In the Buddhism of Shinran also, the fundamental nature of Amida Buddha is not that of an object of worship, but rather the true subjectivity functioning as self-knowledge.

Further, it is said that people “who acted with the conviction that all people could attain Buddhahood” gave rise to Mahāyāna Buddhism, but merely asserting on the basis of Śākyamuni’s thought the conviction that all people can attain Buddhahood is certainly inadequate. Mahāyāna Buddhism was first formed when the possibility of all people attaining Buddhahood ceased to be merely a concept or idea and came to possess actuality. There had to be more than mere activity based on the conviction that all people can attain Buddhahood; there must have been people other than Śākyamuni who were actually able to attain it. What is important here is that there is not simply “conviction in the possibility of attaining Buddhahood,” but the “actuality of having attained Buddhahood.” In the Mahāyāna sūtras, people who had realized perfect enlightenment, based on their own experience, explained such matters as the content of perfect enlightenment, what one should do to attain it, and how an enlightened person thinks and acts. Hence, the sūtras must be understood as composed from the perspective of Buddhahood, not as born from faith or idealization. In other words, they should be seen not from the perspective of holding faith in Buddha, but from that of attaining Buddhahood. If one takes this perspective, problems that have been treated lightly or overlooked from the attitude of faith surface as serious questions. Problems that, for the mere believer, are ignored or insufficiently understood come to be seen as taught in the Mahāyāna sūtras. How we deal with such problems is an important question.

A word must be said concerning the Buddhism of Hōnen and Shinran, who are said to teach the stance of faith in Buddha. We must bear in mind that in their Buddhism, to entrust oneself to

Amida Buddha holds the significance of attaining Buddhahood, and though they speak of being saved by the Buddha’s Primal Vow or of being born in the Pure Land, the content in both cases is becoming Buddha. Shinran’s *shinjin* is not faith as commonly conceived, but the awakened mind that signifies attainment of the stage of non-retrogression. In general Mahāyāna thought, the *bodhisattva* attains the stage of nonretrogression—meaning that he will never fall back in his advance to Buddhahood—when he has realized suchness or true reality; for the *bodhisattva*, this is the first stage of the Path of Insight, and is the basic turning point in his progress. Upon realization of *shinjin*, a person reaches the stage of nonretrogression, and his attainment of enlightenment becomes certain. Shinran himself states that the person of true and real *shinjin* is the same as Maitreya, the *bodhisattva* in the upper level of the tenth and final stage of advance to perfect Buddhahood. The entire history of Mahāyāna, then, is a tradition not of people believing in Buddha, but of people becoming Buddha. It is no different in Hōnen and Shinran.

The foundation of Mahāyāna Buddhism—enlightenment—is divided into two aspects, great wisdom and great compassion. In actual attainment, these two are one and undivided, but from the perspective of human beings, in whom the intellectual and the emotional are distinct, enlightenment has two sides. Because of this, the path from unenlightenment to enlightenment is taught to have both sides of wisdom and compassion. “To see things as they actually are” or “to know one’s mind” express the path of wisdom, “to be grasped by the great compassion of Amida” is the path of compassion. Even though wisdom and compassion are divided, originally they are one; hence, the path of wisdom also includes the aspect of compassion, and the path of compassion also possesses the aspect of wisdom. Whichever path one advances upon, through awakening to one’s true self one becomes a true and genuine human person, and at the same time, one realizes and manifests the mind in which oneself and all things of the universe are one both intellectually and emotionally. That is, one becomes Buddha.

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**TRANSLATOR'S NOTE:**

This translation has not benefited from a review by Professor Ueda; hopefully it will be published again in the future with corrections and revisions.

# Notes on the Americanization of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism: Urgency, Adaptation, and Existential Relevance in America, 1986 and Beyond

by Tetsuo Unno

## PREFACE

Poets are the divine messengers of the inward soul. Therefore, theirs are the words I borrow here to invoke the American soul: its spirit, its darkened terrain, its unconsciousness.

"Midway in our life's journey, / I went astray / from the straight road and woke to find myself / alone in a dark wood" (Dante). "Dark, dark my light, and darker my desire" (Roethke). "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, / The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned; / . . . / Surely some revelation is at hand" (Yeats), "Oh, Mary, / Gentle Mother / open the door and let me in. / . . . / I have been born many times, a false Messiah, / but let me be born again / into something true" (Sexton). "Lord, I am not worthy / Lord, I am not worthy / but speak the word only." (T.S. Eliot).<sup>1</sup>

Jōdo Shinshū responds, in the words of Shinran Shōnin, "(The Power of Amida's Vow) is a Light that illuminates the long night of ignorance / Do not grieve over the blindness of one's eye of wisdom / For the Vow is a vessel that floats us on the great ocean of birth and death / Do not despair over the gravity of one's evil."<sup>2</sup> Although still only dimly perceived in America, the "Something true" and the "Word" prayed for by the poets quoted above is the Name, *Namu Amida Butsu*, which vows the salvation of the unsavable.

## BUDDHISM IS A RELIGION OF SALVATION

The renowned scholar of the *prajñāpāramitā* tradition, Edward Conze, writes, in its core,

"*Buddhism is a doctrine of salvation*" (italics are Conze's).<sup>3</sup> And Professor Frederick Streng affirms that "Nāgārjuna's articulation (of the Mādhyamika philosophy) is more than a set of propositions; it is the articulation of a vision which seeks to release human beings from suffering; i.e., *to save them*" (italics are mine).<sup>4</sup> Even the Zen Master Dōgen expounds, "Forgetting body and mind, by placing them together in Buddha's hands and letting him lead you on, you will without design or effort gain freedom, attain Buddhahood."<sup>5</sup>

Jōdo Shinshū's efforts to adapt itself to its American setting must be viewed in this light. That is, its spread, or increase in followers, is secondary. The ultimate reason Jōdo Shinshū must make itself accessible to America is that Jōdo Shinshū possesses infinite potential towards the salvation of America—from a collective condition of crisis and *duḥkha*.

## THE AMERICAN CONDITION TO WHICH JŌDO SHINSHŪ MUST ADDRESS ITSELF

Books on America, written during the past five years are overwhelmingly dark.<sup>6</sup> This is not a reflection of Cassandra-like alarmism or pessimism, but rather of realism. For aside from the nuclear sword that hangs over us all, America is faced with a number of crises: urban violence, a devastating national debt, an epidemic of drugs, a breakdown of basic social institutions such as the family, a loss of stature among nations, a loss of a sense of community (Americans sue each other with greater frequency than any other people), a breakdown in ethical values (e.g., widespread cheating among students) and the dehumanizing



effects of modern technology, for example. Moreover, pollutants poison our land, water, plants, animals, and ourselves; the disposal of one trillion pounds of non-nuclear but hazardous waste material and one hundred million pounds of nuclear waste material, produced each year, lack sufficient control.

America's karmic past continues to rebound. American Indians remember the decimation of their people and culture and speak out with increasing rage. Blacks act out from their collective unconscious, filled with the memories of more than 240 years of slavery. America's policy of national egotism, manifest toward Mexico and the Central and South American nations' destiny is now bearing fruit. The tragedy of Viet-Nam continues to haunt. Even heretofore quiet Japanese-Americans are now protesting their forced removal to relocation/concentration camps (1942-1945).

Beyond this, the world's population increases by eighty million each year and, albeit indirectly, America is beginning to feel its effects. The shift from an industrial to a technological state is resulting in the phasing out of the middle class and the bifurcation of American society into the very rich and the very poor, with its resultant sense of dislocation. Increasing mobility undermines social cohesion; the writer Vance Packard notes that America is becoming a nation of strangers. The relatively poor quality of education has produced a nation in which one-third of its people are functionally illiterate. Seven hours of T.V. watching every day has blurred the distinction between image and reality. Finally, as the sociologist Robert Bellah notes, in American society "the economy is geared to deliberately stimulate insatiable human desire."<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps sensing America's weakened condition, other industrial nations are overtaking America. Briefly stated, while they export, we import; they emphasize responsibility, we harangue each other about our "rights"; they invest in their future, we mortgage ours; they save, enriching their national wealth, we compulsively spend and deplete our national wealth.

Even the quintessentially American trait of individualism, that affirmation of the dignity and even the sacredness of the individual, it appears, as noted first by the French writer and political scientist Tocqueville, has a dark side. That is, individualism is prone to develop into a sense of isolation and fragmentation.<sup>8</sup> These, then, are some of the crises that define the American condition, 1986.

#### THE TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF ANSWERS AND RESOLUTIONS: PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY, RELIGION AND THE ARTS

Allied against the critical conditions outlined above are the traditional sources of wisdom: Philosophy, Psychology, Religion and the Arts. An examination of these, however, finds them, in the main, powerless. For example, with regard to philosophy, it can be said that aside perhaps from a crude form of pragmatism ("if it works, it's right and true"), America has no philosophy in the way *Bushidō* or Code of the Warrior pervaded Japanese life for hundreds of years. There are, of course, thousands of scholars who teach philosophy as a technical subject at colleges. Among them, however, are few who live and die their philosophy as did Socrates, Kierkegaard, or more recently, Sartre.

The vast majority of Americans live, for the most part, unconsciously, by pseudo philosophies which, for want of a better term, may be described as "sensualism" ("if it feels good, do it"); or "narcissism" (Me, Me, Me); or "anarchism" ("I'll do it if I feel like it; it's a free country"); or "quantity-ism" ("the bigger the better; the more the merrier"); or "self-gratificationism" ("I want more and I want it now"); or "vigilantism" ("I'll take care of him personally, with *this*"); or "consumerism" ("I just have to have that"); or "success-ism" ("I don't care how I do it, I'm going to make it"); or "commercialism" ("O.K. now, let's figure out a way to make this profitable"); or "hype-ism" ("exaggerate a little; what's important is to get it out there; to publicize, to promote"); or "entertainment-ism" ("The most important thing? To have Fun!!!"). These, of course, are

not solutions. They are the problem.

Psychology, for the most part, is also powerless to do anything toward resolving the American crisis. Although there are over two hundred forms of popular psychologies, they are, in essence, useless, mainly because their basic presupposition is that our conscious mind can significantly influence our unconscious. Depth psychology or psychoanalysis is, of course, more powerful and more effective, but to be effective, according to Freud, one must attend a one-hour session with an analyst, five days per week, for five years. Very few can afford that kind of time or money.

The deepest source of resolution for human suffering is religion. Of the status of religion in America, 1986, several things can be said: First, there is a resurgence of interest in religion. However, a large part of it is on the lower levels, with its emphasis on quasi-magical practices, healing, this-worldly benefits and political power. Second, the religious message of Christianity has been inter-mixed with popular psychology, diluting the purity of its teaching. Christian thinkers such as Tillich have made profound interpretations of Christianity, but these have not filtered down to the masses. And third, the message of such theologians as Altizer that "God is dead" may reflect, partially at least, the spiritual condition in America. God, of course, is Absolute and cannot die. However, the traditional ways of explaining/understanding/experiencing God may have died in America. That is, they no longer elicit any deep spiritual response; they have no real meaning for Americans. This absence of God is reflected in a darkening America.

And what of the arts? It can be said that no one describes the human condition with greater sensitivity, depth, and accuracy than writers. However, despite their sometime incandescent genius for conveying their perception and experience of the American condition, they, for the most part, have no answers. No resolution. They report, but they do not prescribe. This is true for poets (Eliot, Sexton, *et al.*), for playwrights (O'Neill, Miller, *et al.*), and for novelists (Bellow,

Mailer, *et al.*). Because of the failure of these traditional sources of wisdom, many Americans, especially the young, are, according to Harvey Cox, "Turning East"<sup>9</sup> for spiritual sustenance and resolution. Toward Zen, Nichiren and Tibetan Buddhism, but ultimately to the Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism of Shinran.

### THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE AMERICAN SHADOW

Despite the dark and foreboding account above, America possesses certain basic strengths which make it an especially fertile ground for the spread of Jōdo Shinshū. We must begin with the two pillars that serve as the foundation of America: The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. The former proclaims the equality of all persons and their being endowed with certain Unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. The latter guarantees the freedom of worship and the prohibition of a government-established religion (First Amendment). It provides equal protection under the law (Fourteenth Amendment). And it guarantees the rights of citizen against U.S. or state infringement based on race, color, or previous servitude (Fifteenth Amendment). Contrast this with the religious situation in the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, or Iran, and the importance of these two documents becomes self-evident. Objectively, America is blessed, as we all know, with tremendous natural resources: land, space, minerals, soil, water, etc. Its technology leads the world; its material affluence is unmatched.

Psychologically, Americans still retain their pioneering spirit and they continue to seek new challenges and religions. Philosophically, they are pragmatic and willing to test and use anything that works, whether it be a new gadget, psychotherapy, or religion. Its comparative lack of tradition enables it to move smoothly into new territories.

From the very beginning (the Puritan separatists, the Plymouth Colony, the Constitution, etc.), religion has always played an integral part

in American life. This trait continues, symbolically, in the use of the phrase, "In God We Trust" on U.S. currency, in the saying of invocations at state and national assemblies, in its habit of self-reflection and even self-reproach, and in its quickness to help the sick, hungry and poor. No other country, for example, has ever matched America's compassion towards those seeking refuge from persecution and suffering.

These are some of the reasons that America possesses the potentiality to serve as the next religious matrix for a new growth of Jōdo Shinshū. Should this transpire, the implications are infinite because America is both the future of, and a model to, the world. The effects may rebound to the country of its origin, Japan.

#### CHANGE AND ADAPTATION AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism's essence is Compassion and Wisdom, and both are manifested as, and through, *upāya*. "*Upāya*" means effective methods, tools, or techniques used to convey Buddhism. Buddhism flourished outside of India, in distant lands such as China, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Indonesia and Japan because of the skillful application and exercise of *upāya*.

The "Biographies of Eminent Monks"<sup>10</sup> records numerous examples of Indian and Central Asian monks employing a variety of techniques to convey Buddhism to the native Chinese. Donran, whom Shinran Shōnin revered, used Taoist examples to explain Pure Land concepts.<sup>11</sup> (References to Taoist concepts were widespread during the early years of Buddhism in China). The North Indian Bodhiruci, Donran's teacher, used a feat of magic to convince the Chinese of Buddhism's power.<sup>12</sup> The Central Asian monk, Fo-t'u-ch'êng impressed the Chinese with his ability to cure illness.<sup>13</sup> Shinran radically altered the reading of scriptural passages and shaped Pure Land doctrine for the sake of the people of the Kamakura Period. In like manner, a diversity of *upāya* must be employed in the struggle to adapt Jōdo Shinshū to its American context.

This need, I believe, is self-evident.

#### ADAPTATION AS ESSENTIALLY A DIALECTICAL PROCESS

By "dialectical," I simply mean "the interplay of opposites" in which apparently opposing truths mutually influence and enhance each other, much as two pieces of glowing charcoal face each other. With reference to Jōdo Shinshū in America, the "opposites" that present themselves are as follows:

Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism in America must retain its traditional doctrines. At the same time, it must be modified, adapted, and made to conform to its American setting. While grounding Jōdo Shinshū in its objective doctrine, subjective religious experience must be clarified and emphasized. While the preservation of the purity of Jōdo Shinshū doctrine must be of primary concern, there should be no hesitation in making use of insights from other traditions; e.g., philosophy, psychology, literature, modern physics, Zen/Tibetan/Yogācāra/Mādhyamika Buddhism.

While holding Faith to be of the essence (the vertical dimension), a more detailed attention must be paid to the problem of how to ethically manifest that Faith in society (the horizontal dimension). While affirming the suddenness of the one moment of awakening to Faith, stress must be placed equally on the importance of Faith as a gradual process; that is, the nurturing of the awakening to Faith throughout one's life. The moment of Faith must also be viewed as occurring in linear time, as well as continuously taking place in the Absolute Now. Faith must be experienced as both the absolute negation of the self and the absolute affirmation of the self. While emphasizing the importance of a Spiritual Guide (Zenchishiki/Kalyāṇamitra), the need to let go one's attachment to the teacher must be stressed.

The quintessence of Jōdo Shinshū is absolutely paradoxical (for example: "the meaning of no-meaning") but this must be made comprehensible. In the Chapter on Faith in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, the Ocean of Great Faith is seen as negating

all opposites (sudden/gradual; thought/absence thought; meditation/good works, etc.).<sup>14</sup> However, this negation must be experienced as transcending both negation and affirmation.

The American institution of Jōdo Shinshū (BCA) must ground itself in the Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan, and at the same time work to establish a separate identity here in America. We must exert ourselves toward the spread of Jōdo Shinshū to others, but at the same time know that the ultimate source of that exertion lies in *Tariki* or the "Power of the Absolute Other" and not in *jiriki*, the power of the limited, egotistic self. With regard to salvation, we must be fully aware that there is absolutely nothing for one to do; one is neither capable of, nor required to contribute to, one's salvation. And yet one must exert ourselves to understand and fully comprehend or experience this point.

Jōdo Shinshū must be seen as dealing with one's personal, psychological and social problems, but at the same time it must be known that its ultimate concern is with those problems that have no solution: death, absolute evil, irreversible karmic bondage, etc. The Jōdo Shinshū follower must decry the depth of his or her evil and unconditionally affirm that evil is the seminal source of salvation. In the act of Faith, one must see that one dies utterly (*Zen nen myōjū*) and simultaneously is born anew (*Gonen sokushō*).

In Faith, one must see that one's evil is absolutely fixed, unredeemable, and beyond salvaging and that this evil undergoes ultimate transformation to become its opposite. We must revere the symbols of Jōdo Shinshū, and at the same time transcend the symbols and see the Reality to which they point. Ultimate effort must be expended to go to the Pure Land to be born a Buddha (*ōjō*), knowing that the final goal is returning to this defiled, floating world of suffering to work for the deliverance of all sentient beings (*gensō*).

Finally, and in a slightly different vein, birth into the Pure Land is, in truth, no longer to be

born (*mushō no shō*). Meaning is the negation of meaning (*mugi no gi*). Non-practice is practice (*fugyō no gyō*). "To think that one has attained Faith is to not attain; to know that one has not attained is to attain."<sup>15</sup> "That which is shallow (in matters of Faith) is deep."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the adaptational process is involved and complex. For it to evolve correctly, three major components must be present: 1) clear and objective knowledge of the doctrine of Jōdo Shinshū (that is, its basic texts), 2) subjective or spiritual depth, and 3) time itself.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

It must be emphasized that in the attempt to adapt and to become existentially relevant, the crucial thing is not numbers, money, knowledge, administration, or secular notoriety. Such have their place. However, what is of ultimate importance is spiritual depth; depth that is based on *Tariki*, the Other-Power and not *jiriki*, one's own power, of which the essence is delusion, defilement and powerlessness.

Moreover, such spiritual depth must be manifested in the person of one, single individual; concretely and historically. The worth of a true Buddhist is affirmed by two men of different traditions and times. Zen Master Watanabe Genshu (1869-1963) said, "Even one or two who are True Monks will do. Should they appear today in our country, Japanese Buddhism will be saved by that fact alone."<sup>17</sup> Approximately five hundred years before, Rennyo Shōnin taught that "The flourishing of a religion has nothing to do with the large numbers of people who gather or with the greatness of its secular power. The flourishing of a religion is dependent on even one person attaining Faith."<sup>18</sup>

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#### FOOTNOTES:

1. Dante, *The Inferno*. John Ciardi (Tr.), *The Inferno* (N.Y.: The New American Lib., 1954), p. 28.

Roethke, "In a Dark Time." Yeats, "The Second Coming." Sexton, "Jesus, the Actor, Plays the Holy Ghost." T.S. Eliot, "Ash Wednesday."

2. Shinran Shōnin, *Shōzōmatsu Wasan*, Verse 35.
3. Edward Conze, *A Short History of Buddhism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980), p. 21.
4. Frederick J. Streng, *Emptiness—A Study in Religious Meaning* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 171.
5. Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō* Chapter V, "Life and Death." Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto (Ed. and Tr.), *Zen: Poems, Prayers, Sermons, Anecdotes, Interviews* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965), p. 41.
6. A sampling of material published between 1980-86 (with the exception of the work by Packard). For reasons of space, bibliographic information has been kept to a minimum.

Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism—American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*.

Joseph Granville, *The Warning—The Coming Great Crash in the Stock Market. Why It Is Inevitable. What You Can Do to Avoid It*.

Vance Packard, *A Nation of Strangers*.

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David and Holly Franke, *Safe Places for the 80s—Over 100 Suburbs, Towns, and Villages Where You and Your Family Can Live, Work and Go to School, Safe from Crime*.

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Surviving a Nuclear War. (Other similar titles: *Nuclear War Survival Skills; Assured Survival—Putting the Star Wars Defense in Perspective; The Cold and the Dark—The World After Nuclear War*, etc.)

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Jonathan Kwitney, *Endless Enemies—The Making of an Unfriendly World*.

Norman Corwin, *Trivializing America—The Triumph of Mediocrity*.

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Sanford J. Ungar (Ed.), *Estrangement—America and the World*.

Charles Murray, *Losing Ground—American Social Policy 1950-1980*.

Jonathan Kozol, *Illiterate America*.

Montagu and Matson, *The Dehumanization of Man*.

7. Robert N. Bellah, "The Contemporary Meaning of Kamakura Buddhism." A lecture delivered at a Symposium on Kamakura Buddhism. Univ. of Hawaii, 22 January 1973, p. 22 of an unpublished manuscript.
8. Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart—Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 37. Perhaps the best socio-

logical study of the American character since Tocqueville's seminal socio-political classic, "La Democratie en Amerique" (2 vols., 1835, 1840), and the later, "The Organization Man" and "The Lonely Crowd."

9. Harvey Cox, *Turning East—The Promise and Peril of the New Orientalism* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1977).
10. *Kao-sêng chuan*, by the monk Hui-chao (A.D. 497-554). Comprised of 257 major and 243 ancillary biographies. *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (hereafter abbreviated as "T"), Vol. 50, pp. 322-424.
11. *Wang-shêng-lun chu*, T-40-835/c.
12. T-50-428/c.
13. Arthur Frederick Wright, "Fo-t'u-teng," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*; Vol. 11, 1984, p. 325.
14. *Kyōgyōshinshō; Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho*, Vol. II, p. 68/line 10.
15. *Goichidaikikigaki*, No. 214 (Rennyō).
16. Attributed to Hōnen Shōnin, in a letter to Renshōbō of Kumadani. Refer to *Bukkyō Daiji-i*, Vol. I, p. 660.
17. *Daihōrin*; June, Vol. 46; No. 6, p. 152.
18. *Goichidaikikigaki*, No. 121.



## The Sacrifice of Baby Fae, Another Look: A Buddhist Sketch to Decision Making

by Ronald Y. Nakasone

In a stinging commentary, "The Sacrifice of Baby Fae,"<sup>1</sup> Ellen Goodman, a columnist for the *Boston Globe* questions the motives "for tinkering with newborns and baboons." She states that "experimenting on terminally ill human beings has not always been handled honestly." Dr. Christian Barnard, who performed the first heart transplant, writes in his memoirs that he was not completely honest with Louis Washkansky, his patient. Mr. Washkansky was told that his odds for survival were strong; he was not told by Dr. Barnard that these were the odds of surviving merely the operation. Louis Washkansky, and more recently Dr. Barry Clarke, recipient of the first artificial heart, were fully aware of the risks of experimental medical procedures. Both were willing to take a chance for life and to make a contribution to medicine. The question for Ms. Goodman is whether a parent has a right to subject a child to such experimental medical procedures. She writes:

All medical evidence of this case . . . suggests that this infant had no chance to survive into toddlerhood, let alone adulthood. Given that, we have to conclude that Baby Fae's body was donated, alive, to science. The rationale that she was "going to die anyway," implies that it is open season on dying, that we can try even the most outlandish experiment on these human beings . . . Those who cannot give consent should be the last not the first people we use for experiments.

To be sure, this medical event has stirred the entire gamut of moral, ethical, religious and medical responses. The techniques Dr. Bailey and

his team at Loma Linda Hospital were trying to develop may some day prove applicable in adults with heart disease. Some concur this cross-species organ transplant was a "tremendous victory," and Dr. Leonard Bailey "has opened new vistas for all."<sup>2</sup> Some physicians, of course, suspect that the motivation for the procedure was more experimental than therapeutic. Dr. John S. Najarian, the University of Minnesota transplant expert, matter-of-factly said when Baby Fae died that it was "unfortunately not a surprise," but "reasonably close to what could be expected."<sup>3</sup> Whatever opinion each of us have or may have had concerning this medical event, our emotions, I believe, fluctuated with Baby Fae's 21-day fight for life.

The Buddhist community, together with the rest of the world, deeply mourned the passing of such a young life. Although it is no fault of Buddhist teachings not to offer a clear-cut response to the propriety of cross-species transplant, these ancient teachings articulate the cultivation of four social virtues or *Brahmavihāras* which, I believe, Buddhists can use to respond to questions of medical experimentation and ethics. They are: 1) *maitrī* (*mettā* in Pali) or friendliness; 2) *karuṇā* or compassion; 3) *mudita* or sympathetic joy; and 4) *upekṣā* or equanimity.<sup>4</sup> Although each of these emotions emerge from differing levels of insight, we do not abandon one when we realize a more profound virtue. Each is to be practiced with the other three in mind. As we proceed with our discussion, note that concern for the self becomes less pronounced when we move from friendliness to equanimity.

First, *maitrī*, or friendliness, is characterized by the desire to do good to others and to provide



them with what is useful; it quiets ill-will and malice. Once these negative qualities are stilled, we are able to quicken tender thoughts towards others. But there is a darker side when we cultivate friendliness towards others; our actions are almost always to our own advantage.

It is certainly more pleasant to be on good terms with your neighbors or those with whom you work. A friendly atmosphere makes the neighborhood more congenial and the work place more pleasant. There are no suspicions or finger-pointing. Friendliness is enlightened self-interest: you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. Was Dr. Bailey's desire to place a baboon heart in Baby Fae in accord with genuine concern, or was an obscure physician at Loma Linda University Hospital, according to a recent article, trying to be more highly visible which would make it easier for him and the hospital to attract grant money? What was the real benefit of Dr. Bailey's treatment of Baby Fae? Were a few more days of life filled with hope and despair, pain and suffering, worth any new advance in understanding the underdeveloped immune system in a newborn? It is difficult to know what or who benefited the most. Choices based on friendliness are still rooted in self-interest; they must be transcended by compassion.

*Karuṇā*, or compassion, is a great virtue for Mahāyāna Buddhists. It is due to his great compassion that the *bodhisattva* renounces nirvāṇa and remains in the world to help others; but it is through his concern for others that the *Bodhisattva* identifies with the sufferings of others. The 48 vows of the *Bodhisattva Dharmākara* crystallize this concern. Śāntideva (seventh century A.D.), a Mādhyamika thinker, goes so far as to maintain that *bodhisattvas* need only to learn compassion; this in turn leads to the acquisition of all the attributes of Buddhahood.<sup>5</sup>

Compassion is a virtue which extinguishes our desire to harm others, thereby extending to others whatever aid we can offer. Reports of needy and unhappy children have always met with unbounded generosity from the American public.

Compassion makes us so sensitive to the misfortune of others that we make them our own. Yet despite the nobility of compassion, to contemplate on too much suffering and affliction is apt to depress us. Strangely enough, though, there is a certain pleasure which accompanies the contemplation of the suffering of others. The Reagan administration denied reports that it had refused to aid the starving millions because Ethiopia is a Marxist regime. They felt the decision to create collective farms decreased in part the food production in Ethiopia; the Ethiopians brought on this calamity themselves. We often gloat over the misfortunes of others. One may be sensitive to the suffering of others but avidly watches it.<sup>6</sup> We were, to be sure, drawn by compassion to the plight of Baby Fae and her parents. Were we also drawn to their suffering?

In order to overcome the negative aspects of compassion, we must practice sympathetic joy (*mudita*). This virtue is characterized by joy, faith, and freedom from craving, jealousy, insincerity, and hostility. With sympathetic joy, we identify with the joy and success of others. Sympathetic joy is placed above compassion because it is much more difficult to share in the happiness and success of others. Rarely, if ever, are we happy with the achievement of a co-worker who is promoted ahead of us, or a colleague who is more successful. Rather, we are filled with jealousy and envy. To rejoice with the achievement and successes of others requires a rare spiritual perfection.<sup>7</sup> With sympathetic joy, one rejoices in, and identifies with, the great achievements of our spiritual heroes. To identify with the great spiritual achievements is to approach the community of saints.

The perfection of sympathetic joy leads to *upekṣā*, or equanimity, the last and most profound of the social virtues. Equanimity is characterized by even-mindedness and a purity of mind which is not affected by the actions and conditions of others. Only the mind of equanimity can respond with equal concern for the sufferings, petty or profound, of beings. This characteristic of equanimity is crystallized in the concern of the Amida

Buddha whose Great Compassion embraces all persons—good and evil. The Great Compassion is especially generous to those who are most in need of help. Shinran Shōnin recognized this characteristic of equanimity when he wrote: "Even a good person is born in the Pure Land, how much more so is an evil person."<sup>8</sup>

Great Compassion is magnanimous. It mourns the death of an antelope slain by a hunter. By the same token, Great Compassion fathoms the anguish of the Masai Hunter, who kneels beside his slain prey and says, "I know all life is sacred. I profoundly regret that I must take your life. But I have children to feed. Please understand and forgive me." Compassion goes out to Baby Fae as well as to the baboon who sacrificed its heart. Equanimity assures equal concern for all living beings without attachment or hatred.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, the mind of equanimity is unaffected by the suffering and actions of other beings. This does not mean that the *bodhisattva* does not feel the pain or joy of others, but rather he does not fall into gloom when contemplating suffering. Nor is the *bodhisattva* infatuated by something or someone of whom he is especially fond. And because of this, the mind of equanimity is able to perceive and understand the reasons and causes for suffering and sorrow. Robert Aitken, a contemporary teacher and exponent of Zen, expresses this idea of the objective and yet heartfelt sadness which flows from the mind of equanimity in dealing with the decision to abort a child. He writes:

A woman is likely to feel acutely miserable after making a decision to have an abortion. This is a time for compassion for the woman, and for her to be compassionate with herself and for her unborn child. If I am consulted, and we explore the options carefully and I learn that the decision is definite, I encourage her to go through the act with the consciousness of a mother who holds her dying child in her arms, lovingly nurturing it as it passes from life. Sorrow and suffering forms the nature of *samsāra*, the

flow of life and death, and the decision to prevent birth is made on balance with other elements of suffering. Once the decision is made, there is no blame, but rather acknowledgment that sadness pervades the whole universe, and this bit of life goes with our deepest love.<sup>10</sup>

The mind of equanimity forms decisions on the "balance" of other sufferings and joy. The decision to attempt a cross-species transplant offered hope for life; not to operate meant certain death. The decision to place a baboon heart in Baby Fae meant the destruction of another sentient being, unforeseen problems, and untold anguish. Yet this decision also quickened hope and incalculable joy, however short-lived. Whenever any decision, proper or improper, is made, we must understand that it carries with it its own set of inexorable consequences. A decision which touches many must take into account all the elements of suffering and joy; and such a choice must not emerge from self-interest, pity or false optimism.

The four social virtues of friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity discussed above are guidelines for directing our spiritual energies when interacting with others. These virtues are grounded on the capacity to identify with the needs of others. In the final analysis, the practice of these virtues are meant to nurture and uplift ourselves and those with whom we come into contact. When we practice these virtues, we exercise the Buddha-nature inherent in us.

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#### FOOTNOTES:

1. "The Sacrifice of Baby Fae," *San Jose Mercury News*, Nov. 23, 1984, p. 3B.
2. "Legacy of Baby Fae," *New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1984, p. 2E.
3. "Baby Fae's Heart Gives Out," *Newsweek*, Nov. 26, 1984, p. 94.

4. The idea of *brahma-vihāra* is also found in non-Buddhist documents. It is not an original Buddhist contribution to Indian religious thought, but the Mahāyānist appreciated these social virtues and adopted them into their practice. The translations of the "four social virtues" and the commentary on these expressions are taken from Edward Conze's *Buddhist Thought in India* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1962), pp. 80-91. Conze has another discussion in "Love, Compassion and Sympathetic Joy," in *Further Buddhist Studies* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer Ltd., 1975), pp. 33-55.
5. Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1932 and 1978), p. 179.
6. Edward Conze, "Love, Compassion, and Sympathetic Joy," in *Further Buddhist Studies* (Oxford: Cassirer, Ltd., 1975), pp. 52-3.
7. Edward Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1962), pp. 88-89.
8. *Tannishō*, Ryūkoku Translation Series (Kyoto: Ryūkoku University, 1962), p. 22.
9. D.T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1907 and 1962), p. 417.
10. Robert Aitken, *The Mind of Clover, Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), pp. 21-22.

# Nembutsu and Commitment in American Life Today

by Minor L. Rogers

## I. ENCOUNTERING THE *NEMBUTSU*

Encountering the *nembutsu* has changed the course of my life. Let me explain, as this story begins twenty years ago in southern Kyūshū. In 1963, as a Christian missionary from the United States, I was invited by the Japanese bishop of the diocese of Kyūshū—part of the worldwide Anglican communion known in Japan as the Nihon Sei Kō Kai and in the United States as the Episcopal Church—to be Priest-in-Charge of a church in Kagoshima prefecture. In that small town, my responsibilities were to read the prayer book services, preach on Sundays, and go about my pastoral duties as best as I could, given my limited knowledge of the Japanese language. In effect, I was the *rusuban*.

Among the members of the Sei Kō Kai congregation was a man who, stricken with osteomyelitis at thirteen, had been bed-ridden for almost fifty years. This disease of the bone marrow is extremely painful; his legs and arms were covered with dozens of incisions made in an attempt to arrest its progress. I went to visit him often and, as he was bed-ridden, he was a captive audience. But somehow we were able to find ways to exchange what was in our hearts and minds. What struck me most—what really kept me returning for those visits—was his unfailing good cheer and his compassionate concern for those around him. He was active in an organization for the physically handicapped and always available to listen to and counsel his neighbors. He even helped to support himself by copying documents with a metal stylus to prepare them for duplication.

One day he spoke to me of growing up in a

pious Shin Buddhist household. During that conversation, for the first time, I heard the word “*nembutsu*”—saying the Name of Amida Buddha. My friend had lost his mother when he was seventeen and, handicapped, began to feel that he was simply a parasite dependent on others. Seeing the poverty and misery of his family, he felt he had no right to live; he even considered suicide. And some time later, largely through the influence of his physician, he became a member of the Christian church. He told me that sometimes, even though a church member, at moments of sudden pain or fright, without his thinking, the *nembutsu* would come to his lips. In a similar situation, a Christian might say, “My Lord, my Lord,” or “God help me.”

And so it was from a Japanese Christian that I first heard of the *nembutsu*, the practice of no-practice. From this friend, I also heard the name Shinran Shōnin for the first time. Later, in reflecting on these experiences, I became increasingly aware of a dilemma: clearly my friend was a Christian in the fullest sense of the word, yet at moments he said the Name of the Buddha, Amida, who out of wisdom and compassion had vowed to save all sentient beings. I have carried this paradox, or apparent paradox, in my heart and mind ever since, like a Zen *koan*. Might we put the dilemma this way: Are we to say that my friend’s humanity is grounded in Christ-like love, humility, and the spirit of service to his neighbor, and yet does not partake of Amida Buddha’s wisdom and compassion? On the other hand, is it sufficient to note that his humanity is grounded in *myōkōnin*-like absolute entrusting to Amida Buddha, apart from the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ? How is one to sort out these

facts intellectually? How is one to make sense of them morally and theologically?

I suspect it was partly in response to questions such as these working in the depths of my mind that when I returned to the United States, I took up a study of Japanese religion and culture. I learned about the Kamakura period and the lives of the great Pure Land Buddhist reformers—Hōnen and Shinran. In addition, I began to read the works of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who at that time was Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard. In particular, I was struck by his essay, "The Christian in a Religiously Plural World," in a slim volume published in 1961 in *The Faith of Other Men*.<sup>1</sup> Smith writes of the intellectual, moral, and theological challenge posed for Christians in the contemporary world by an awareness of religious pluralism, in particular the "faith" of other persons. In his *Faith and Belief*,<sup>2</sup> he argues as a historian and comparativist that "faith" is a universal human quality or potentiality, and he attempts to show that there are concepts analogous to "faith" in the major religious traditions of humankind; that is, for Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and others. In another of his essays, "Christian—Noun or Adjective," he points out that nouns divide us—it is unintelligible for a person with a traditional Western way of thinking to speak of being *a* Buddhist and *a* Christian at the same time. In the same way, such a person can not literally think of being *a* mother and *a* father simultaneously. On the other hand, in an adjectival or adverbial sense, might not one's humanity be seen as in some sense "flavored" both by Buddhist and by Christian piety? Similarly, any one of us may have both maternal and paternal qualities. In this sense, does not the piety of my friend taste both of Shin Buddhist *shinjin* and of Christian faith?

There were others who subsequently taught me about the *nembutsu*. Masatoshi Nagatomi, professor of Buddhism at Harvard, introduced me to the vast sweep of Buddhist thought in India and China underlying Japanese Shin Buddhism. He himself is a Shin Buddhist priest. Again, in Japan, Futaba Kenkō, professor emeritus

of Buddhist history at Ryūkoku University and also its former president, opened his own tradition to me, an outsider, with his critical historical and theological approach. The Reverend Kenryū Tsuji, former Bishop of Buddhist Churches of America and now resident minister at Ekōji Buddhist Temple in Virginia, has visited our university several times in the past few years to lecture. More recently, the Reverend Michio Tokunaga, in probing for the Indian Mādhyamika roots of Shinran's thought in *śūnyatā* philosophy, and in his work with Professor Taitetsu Unno, Mr. Dennis Hirota, and others in the translation project on Shinran's writings, has made it possible for the Jōdo Shinshū tradition to come alive for me as an outsider. The translators of the Shin Buddhism Translation Series (SBTS), in resisting the common practice of translating Shinran's key concept of *shinjin* as "faith," call attention to the need to understand such religious symbols in their own particular historical context if we are to go on to see *shinjin* as truly universal. Finally, I had the honor of hearing His Eminence Kōshin Ōtani, Monshu, spiritual head of the Jōdo Shin sect speak eloquently in English on Shinshū teachings at a symposium on Shin Buddhism and Christianity at Harvard Divinity School in the spring, 1984.<sup>3</sup>

In sum, as a Christian clergyman, I find no conflict between my personal "faith" as a Christian and a study of *shinjin* and this personal encounter with the *nembutsu*. Rather, the more I discover the depths of *shinjin* and the power of the *nembutsu*, the more I am able to see the richness of my own Christian heritage.

## II. INDIVIDUALISM IN AMERICAN LIFE

I would like to turn now to a major crisis confronting us today as religious persons—Buddhists and Christians alike—in contemporary American life. In order to frame this issue, I have drawn on the work of one of the leading sociologists of our times, Robert N. Bellah, Professor of Sociology and Comparative Studies, University of California, Berkeley. His writings on American society and Japanese culture go far beyond the narrow con-

finer of merely academic discussions. His most recent work is entitled *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*.<sup>4</sup> A work of collaboration with four other scholars, it received a lead review in the *New York Times Book Review* and became a best seller.

The questions Bellah raises in the preface are these: How ought we to live? How do we think about how to live? Who are we, as Americans? What is our character? In seeking answers to these questions, he and his colleagues met with several hundred people in many parts of the country. They asked about their lives and what mattered most to them. They talked about their families and their communities, their doubts and uncertainties, their hopes and fears.

The critical issue for Americans today, according to Bellah and his colleagues, concerns the kind of individualism that has come to control and characterize our society. "Individualism" is a word used mainly in two senses: first, a belief in the dignity and indeed sacredness of human beings, perhaps an "Other-Power" individualism if we translate this into Shinran's view of reality; and, second, a belief that the individual has a primary reality over and against society—in other words, social reality and social relationships are secondary and merely derived from the reality of the individual. What worries Bellah and his colleagues as they talked with their fellow Americans is the emphasis they heard being given to this second kind of individualism, what we might call a "self-power" individualism that somehow is more real than community. They see this attitude or philosophy as a cancerous growth threatening to destroy the social fabric of American life.

Such a dark analysis of our society or any society is to be taken seriously when voiced by perceptive and concerned persons such as Robert Bellah. On the other hand, this analysis may not be cause for dismay to those living out of Shinran's vision that this is the age of *mappō*, a degenerate age controlled by the illusion that we as individuals have some power to help ourselves. It is an age in which the *Dharma* can be neither taught

nor practiced in a traditional sense, and is no longer efficacious for salvation for those relying in any measure on their own efforts. It is an age in which our only recourse as foolish beings (*bonbu*) is the saving power of Amida's Primal Vow. I believe Shinran's *nembutsu* teaching provides answers; in other words, Shin Buddhism as a way of life offers a devastating critique of self-power individualism and provides vital resources for reawakening a commitment to the very best of humane values in American life.

The authors of *Habits of the Heart* are worried that middle-class Americans have largely lost the language they need to make moral sense of their private and public lives, to see their lives as a whole, and to live with integrity. In their lengthy discussions, what they heard was a preoccupation with fulfilling individual desires rather than any sense of commitment to the common good.

What they call the "utilitarian individualism" of self-practice is the calculating pursuit of material self-interest. They cite the example of a successful businessman who lives in a comfortable California suburb and works as a top level manager in a large corporation. He tells with pride the story of his rapid rise in the corporation. For fifteen years, night after night, he had worked until midnight at his office. He would then go home, go to bed, get up at six, and return to work. When asked why he worked so hard, he said quite simply: "It seemed like the thing to do at the time . . . I couldn't stand not having enough money to get by on . . . I guess self-reliance is one of the characteristics I have pretty high up in my value system."<sup>5</sup> When asked what values were most important for him in those years, he said, "Perhaps it was success. Perhaps it was the fear of failure. But I was extremely success-oriented to the point where everything would be sacrificed for the job, the career, the company."<sup>6</sup> Using Bellah's categories, the utilitarian individualist is the person controlled by self-interest, ever striving to be "number one."

According to the study, the other dominant form of self-power individualism today is marked



by a preoccupation with self-cultivation and self-expression which holds that each of us has a unique core of feeling and intuition that needs to be expressed if our individuality is to be realized. As we continue the story of the successful manager in California, we see his shift to this expressive individualism. After fifteen years of marriage and success in business, he came home one day to discover that his wife was seeking a divorce. He reported this as follows: "In fact, our house was for sale, and we had an offer on the house. My wife said, 'Before you accept an offer, you should probably know that once we sell this house, we will live in different houses!' That was my official notification that she was planning to divorce me."<sup>7</sup>

His divorce led to a re-examination of the real sources of joy and satisfaction in his life. In a second marriage, he discovered a fuller sense of what he wanted out of life: "My viewpoint of a true love, husband-and-wife type of relationship, is one that is founded on mutual respect, admiration, affection, the ability to give and receive freely."<sup>8</sup>

We may be prompted to think of this as a story of success. Here is someone who has succeeded materially and then gone on to reach out beyond material success to a fuller meaning in life through sharing with others and building a warm, nurturing family life. But is there any turning of heart and mind—any conversion—here? The authors of the study also question any fundamental change in the language the manager uses to describe what has happened. His language is consistently that of any individualism centered solely on what makes him happy. His new goal—devotion to marriage and children—seems as arbitrary and unreflective as his earlier pursuit of material wealth. Both phrases of his life focus simply on his individual preferences rather than representing a larger sense of commitment beyond mere self-interest. For such persons, the most fundamental ethical virtues are justified as a matter of personal preference; individuals should be able to pursue whatever they find rewarding as long as they do not interfere with the value systems of others.

For example, again in the manager's own words:

One of the things that makes California such a pleasant place to live, is people by and large aren't bothered by other people's value systems as long as they don't infringe upon your own. By and large, the rule of thumb out here is that if you've got the money, honey, you can do your things as long as your thing doesn't destroy someone else's property, or interrupt their sleep, or bother their privacy, then that's fine. If you want to go in your house and smoke marijuana and shoot dope and get all screwed up, that's your business, but don't bring that out on the street, don't expose my children to it, just do your thing. That works out kind of neat.<sup>9</sup>

What we have here is a classic instance of individualism based firmly on the illusion of self-power. To sum up: the argument of *Habits of the Heart* is that too many of us in America today, like the manager, are constrained by a language of self-power individualism. We are incapable of explaining the deepest commitments that truly define our lives. To that extent, the possibility of commitments beyond our own self-interest is seriously called into question.

Bellah's analysis, however, is not entirely pessimistic, for he hears in the language of our religious communities—which he calls communities of memory—resources for reworking deeper levels of commitment. In his study, he takes up primarily the resources of Biblical language of the Jewish scriptures, the Christian New Testament, and the civic republican language of our founding fathers as found in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. However, it is clear to me that comparable resources are available in the Buddhist tradition of Shinran, Rennyo, and Shinshū *myōkōnin*. We are ready now, I believe, to move to the heart of this issue.

### III. NEMBUTSU AND COMMITMENT TODAY

One may see little connection between what I



have said thus far and the Buddha-Dharma. The voice of a Shin Buddhist friend, scolding me, rings in my ears. It reminds me that the only thing we can do is to come to listen to the "teaching" again and again; the "teaching" alone is what matters. And woe to the preacher who does not present it! My friend, sometime back, also reminded me that the "teaching" has absolutely nothing to do with sociological and psychological analysis, or even with historical studies. The "teaching" is the Truth expressed in the Pure Land sūtras, in the commentaries of the Patriarchs, in the writings of Shinran Shōnin and Rennyo Shōnin, and in the lives of countless *myōkōnin*. The "teaching" is quite simple: we are to discard—to throw away—every kind of self-power endeavor and rely single-mindedly and wholeheartedly on the saving grace of Amida Buddha alone. What matters is not an individual's success. What matters is living naturally (*jinen ni*). What matters is living free of calculation and self-designing (*hakarai nashi*).

I agree with my friend's restlessness with empty abstractions. At the same time, careful analysis such as Bellah's may help us to identify the key issues more clearly. Our problem as foolish beings is to live naturally and free of calculation and design in a society that deliberately and systematically and with calculation promotes, advertises, rewards, and celebrates the distorted notions of self-power individualism we have been discussing. In short, ours is a crisis in commitment: how are we to nurture commitments to the needs of society at large?

#### IV. SHINJIN AS COMMITTED LIFE (SHINRAN)

The Shinshū tradition has the resources to address this crisis of commitment in American life in a fresh and striking way. As Shin Buddhists, you have available in your tradition, as a community of memory, a vision of Truth expressed in religious symbols capable of leading men and women—young and old, rich and poor, Easterner and Westerner—in America today to a commitment beyond material self-interest, beyond preoccupation with self-cultivation and self-

expression.

I find that vision of Truth clearly set forth in Bishop Seigen Yamaoka's discussion of the six aspects of *shinjin*.<sup>10</sup> Are not the six aspects of the one mind of *shinjin*—expanding, self-reflection, great compassion, great joy, gratitude, life of meaning and growth—a striking and profound answer to the crisis in commitment in American life today? May we not read Shinran's letters to the *nembutsu* devotees in the Kantō in 13th century Japan, especially the twentieth letter in *Mattōshō* as a homily (*monpō*) on commitment?

Shinran is addressing problems in the *nembutsu* community brought about by misunderstandings of the "teaching." Perhaps the fundamental problem was not so different from ours in American life today: an individualism based on calculating pursuit of self-interest and an indulgent preoccupation with self-expression. Might we not say that Shinran saw self-reliance on the one hand and antinomian tendencies on the other as cancerous growths threatening to destroy the life of that first Shin Buddhist community? He sharply contrasts persons of *shinjin* with those who abuse the teaching. On the one hand, of those caught up in the process of *shinjin*, a life of meaning and growth through the non-working which is the true working, he says:

There was a time for each of you when you knew nothing of Amida's Vow and did not say the Name of Amida Buddha, but now, guided by the compassionate means of Śākyamuni and Amida, you have begun to hear the Vow. Formerly you were drunk with the wine of ignorance and had a taste only for the three poisons of greed, anger, and folly, but since you have begun to hear the Buddha's Vow you have gradually awakened from the drunkenness of ignorance, gradually rejected the three poisons, and come to prefer at all times the medicine of Amida Buddha.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, of those yet asleep in the drunkenness of ignorance, addicted to the three

poisons of greed, anger, and folly, and resisting the healing power of the medicine of Amida Buddha, Shinran says:

In contrast, how lamentable that people who have not fully awakened from drunkenness are urged to more drunkenness and those still in the grips of poison encouraged to take yet more poison. It is indeed sorrowful to give way to impulses with the excuse that one is by nature possessed of blind passion—excusing acts that should not be committed, words that should not be said, and thoughts that should not be harbored—and to say that one may follow one's desires in any way whatever. It is like offering more wine before the person has become sober or urging him to take even more poison before the poison has abated. "Here's some medicine, so drink all the poison you like"—words like these should never be said.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, Shinran vividly spells out the dynamic processes of *shinjin* at work in human life:

In people who have long heard the Buddha's Name and said the *nembutsu* surely there are signs of rejecting the evil of this world and signs of their desire to cast off the evil in themselves. When people first begin to hear the Buddha's Vow, they wonder, having become thoroughly aware of the karmic evil in their hearts and minds, how they will ever attain birth as they are. To such people we teach that since we are possessed of blind passion, the Buddha receives us without judging whether our hearts are good or bad.

Moreover, since *shinjin* which aspires for attainment of birth arises through the encouragement of Śākyamuni and Amida, once the true and real mind is made to arise in us, how can we remain as we were, possessed of blind passion?<sup>13</sup>

#### V. HOW WE ARE TO ENTRUST (RENNYO)

It falls to Rennyo Shōnin, the fifteenth-century "restorer" of the Shinshū, to clarify how one is to enter into the life of *shinjin*. It is Rennyo's unique contribution to make known "in what manner we are to entrust." As one of the memoirs puts it:

As for [Shinran] Shōnin's tradition, the essential point is the one thought-moment of entrusting. For this reason, [his successors], generation after generation, taught what we call "entrusting," but we did not know precisely in what manner we were to entrust [ourselves]. That being the case, . . . [Rennyo] . . . wrote the *ofumi* during his tenure and clearly informed [us], "*Zōgyō o sutete goshō tasuke tamae to isshin ni mida o tanome* (Give up miscellaneous practices and single-mindedly entrust [yourselves] to Amida for deliverance [in the matter of] the next life)." Hence [Rennyo] is considered the revered master, the "restorer."<sup>14</sup>

Over the centuries, with greater chronological distance and perspective on his place in the tradition, Rennyo has come to be most commonly known as *chūkō shōnin*, "the revered restorer [of the tradition] in mid-course," or even "second founder." It is Rennyo Shōnin more than any other figure in Shinshū history who has enabled Shinran's teaching to be handed down over the centuries, and to be available to us today. In this sense, he is revered as restorer of the tradition; his words are the very words of Amida. Yet, Rennyo has frequently been the target of harsh criticism for his aggressive evangelist practices in building the Hongwanji into a powerful institution and into a major political force in late medieval Japan.

According to Marxist historians such as Hattori Shisō, Rennyo is to be compared with Tokugawa Ieyasu in his cunning and coarseness as a political strategist. Clearly there are two sides to Rennyo's character. He was a man of his time, Sengoku Japan, and during that period the survival and prosperity of Hongwanji demanded sharp political instincts and skill in the use of political

power. Rennyo was also a religious genius transcending his time in his absolute devotion to expanding the Hongwanji as the vehicle for preserving and spreading the Buddha-Dharma.

One of the people who has helped me most in understanding Rennyo's life and character is the contemporary novelist, Niwa Fumio, an eldest son, born into a Shin temple household. Many of his works such as *Bodaijū* (*The Buddha Tree*) treat Buddhist themes. He serialized his *Rennyo* over a ten-year period, 1971-1981, in 121 installments in the magazine *Chūō Kōron*. *Rennyo* was subsequently published as an eight-volume work.

In a postscript to the last volume, he tells of an incident involving a talk he gave on Rennyo in 1982 before a thousand people in the Cultural Center of Kanagawa on the Japan Sea.<sup>15</sup> After the lecture, he received a letter from a woman who had been in the audience. Moved by the spontaneity of her account, he substituted her letter, in full, for the postscript planned for the *Rennyo* volumes. He explains that her letter seemed to complete his ten years of labor. It was as if someone had written for him precisely what he had longed to realize himself.

The woman writes first of having read Niwa's *Shinran*. Raised in a pious Buddhist home, she had, nonetheless, begun to have doubts about her faith as she grew older. This state of mind continued into old age. But when her daughter brought her Niwa's *Shinran*, she felt, reading with tears of gratitude, that she was able to "draw correctly and clearly from the deep well of Shinran's teachings." She came to feel that Niwa was Shinran himself. She felt herself accepted, for the first time, with an unwavering certainty.

Significant in her experience was that she was the youngest in a family of six children. Her father died at fifty-two, when she was only five. During the brief years they shared together, he lavished affection on her as the youngest child, sensitive to the difficulties she would face after his death. Her experience led her to wonder in later years how Rennyo had viewed his own chil-

dren born when he was in his seventies. Although Rennyo had been badly treated by a stepmother, he had allowed his own children to be raised, one after another, by a series of stepmothers. Why had he, in his old age, chosen young partners in marriage? Having children of her own, she was dismayed and critical of Rennyo's behavior. She could not imagine acting in such a way herself. In listening to Niwa's lecture, however, she "noticed a very important thing":

It was precisely because of Rennyo's meritorious deed in bringing prosperity to Hongwanji and the Jōdo Shinshū, in an extreme state of decline, that it was possible for me to be raised within this teaching. Because of that [Rennyo's work], you [Niwa Sensei] are here and I was able to come upon your *Shinran*. When I thought of that, I came to wonder to what extent Rennyo's private life was important.<sup>16</sup>

In short, she realized that, finally, the "teaching" is of far greater importance than any individual's personality. After the close of her letter, Niwa reflects:

In the novels up to this point, concerning the three issues for which Rennyo was criticized, I presented the facts and gave the arguments opposing the misunderstandings; . . . I believe that I was able to gain full agreement [on the first two]. But in regard to the five marriages and the twenty-seven children, I was unable to add any new interpretation. It was an elderly lady who by chance came to hear my lecture, who was able, while she was listening to my talk, to lay aside her preconceptions in regard to Rennyo's personal life, completely naturally—as she said in her letter, "I noticed a very important thing." That was something of a nature that I—a novelist—could never force, even in my novels or in facing an audience.<sup>17</sup>

I believe that we have here a clue to the relationship between Shinran and Rennyo. Living

two centuries apart in very different social contexts, their lives and writings have complemented one another to insure continuity in the "teaching." As "founder" and "restorer," they provide for us today a community of memory defined in part by its past and the memory of its past. In short, that enduring community provides a context for *shinjin* as committed life today, transcending the individualism of a calculating pursuit of material self-interest and a preoccupation with self-cultivation and self-expression.

## VI. THE IDEAL LIFE AS REAL (MYŌKŌNIN)

It is especially interesting to me as a student of Rennyo's life and thought to discover that it is one of his followers who appears to head the list of *myōkōnin*. It is Dōshū of Akao who is said to have served Rennyo as his escort-guard in the Hokuriku. Dōshū's response to Rennyo's person and teaching may be taken as a mirror image of Rennyo's own piety, piety that is an ellipse with twin foci: Amida and the Hongwanji. Dōshū's life was lived in grateful response to Rennyo and Shinran as representative of the Hongwanji's guardianship of the teaching of Amida's Primal Vow. Dōshū as the model of Shinshū piety is quoted by Rennyo as follows:

As a matter of daily concern, we should never neglect the morning service at the family altar; we should make monthly visits to the nearest sub-temple to express our devotion to the founder, [Shinran] Shōnin; and each year, we should make a pilgrimage to the head temple [Hongwanji].<sup>18</sup>

Further, Dōshū considered Rennyo as the restorer of the Hongwanji to be a manifestation of Amida. He once said he would fill Lake Biwa with mud by himself if Rennyo told him to do so. Out of devotion to the Buddha-Dharma, he slept on a stack of forty-eight sticks to remind himself of Amida's forty-eight vows. Unable to sleep soundly, he constantly held in mind his gratitude for Amida's *kalpas* of *bodhisattva* practice as Dharmākara for his [Dōshū's] sake alone.

Among Dōshū's successors in modern time is, of course, Saichi, maker of *geta*, who in his unique script wrote poems on the wood chips in his workshop. It is Rennyo himself and his writings, *Gobunshō*, that decisively shape Saichi's piety.

Hey, you Saichi!  
Who'd you hear  
Namu Amida Bu[tsu] from?  
Well, I heard it  
from Master Rennyo.  
Oh, come now, Saichi—  
There's four or five hundred years  
between Master Rennyo and you.  
That's telling a lie, Saichi.  
It isn't a lie! It's  
in the *Gobunshō*. The  
*Gobunshō* are Master Rennyo.  
Well then, what sort of person  
is Master Rennyo? You,  
Saichi! Won't you  
tell me?  
Well, Namu Amida Bu[tsu]  
is Master Rennyo!  
Surely Namu Amida Bu[tsu] couldn't  
be Master Rennyo!  
Well—when Namu Amida Bu[tsu] lives and works,  
that's Master Rennyo.<sup>19</sup>

I am tempted to try to summarize my remarks into a concise conclusion. The real point, however, is that there is no conclusion to the dynamic, living tradition of Shinshū in which you are participants. It is a tradition new every morning, which each of you redefines as you go about living each day. To the extent that we are open—or are opened—to the truth of Amida's Primal Vow and the nurture of His wisdom and compassion, we transcend naturally the self-power individualism that so threatens American life today. Further, we move, or are moved, beyond a definition of success as narrow self-interest and preoccupation with self-cultivation and self-expression to compassionate concern for all sentient beings.

As a Western-educated Christian, I am not a Shin Buddhist in a formal sense. I have, however, been touched by the healing light of Amida's

wisdom and compassion as it has been at work in the Shin Buddhists whom I have known. That is, through the writings of Shinran Shōnin and Rennyo Shōnin, and in the lives of their heirs in *shinjin-myōkōnin* in Kagoshima, in Boston, in Kyoto, in Virginia, and finally here in San Jose. Praise be to Amida Buddha for providing us with such a path of compassion.

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#### FOOTNOTES:

1. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Faith of Other Men* (1962; New York and London: Harper and Row, 1972).
2. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
3. See "Symposium on Shin Buddhism and Christianity: Textual and Contextual Translation," *Bulletin: Center for the Study of World Religions* (Harvard University: Fall, 1984), pp. 2-8.
4. Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985).
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
10. Seigen H. Yamaoka, *The Six Aspects of Jōdo Shinshū* (Denver: Buddhist Churches of America, 1982), pp. 2-17.
11. Yoshifumi Ueda, ed., *Letters of Shinran, A Translation of Mattōshō* (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1978), pp. 60-61. Also, Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho Hensanjo, ed., *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, 5 vols. (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kobundō, 1967-70), 2:690; cited hereafter as SSZ.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 61; SSZ 2:690-92.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62; SSZ 2:691-92.
14. SSZ 3:577.
15. Niwa Fumio, *Rennyo*, 8 vols. (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1983) 8:317-21.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-21.
18. SSZ 3:544; English translation here based on that of Daisetz Suzuki, in *Japanese Spirituality*, tr. Norman Waddell (Tokyo: 1972), p. 169.
19. Suzuki Daisetsu, *Myōkōnin Asahara Saichi shū* (Tokyo, 1967), pp. 79-80.

# Śākyamuni Within the Jōdo Shinshū Tradition

by John Ishihara

## INTRODUCTION

This article will discuss Shinran Shōnin's view of the role of Śākyamuni in the Pure Land tradition. It will initially be descriptive in character, citing selected passages from the works of Shinran to establish his view, and this descriptive analysis will come to the conclusion that Śākyamuni is a specific actualization of the compassionate intent that is Amida Buddha. This actualization of Amida, for Shinran, centers on the fact that Śākyamuni spoke the words of the Pure Land sūtras. The importance of Śākyamuni to Shinran is that he taught us about Amida. From a historical-critical perspective, this view is untenable. This article continues by noting this modern, historical-critical conclusion, as well as the fact that for Shinran to anchor Amida in the historicity of Śākyamuni and others was important. Moreover, we discover in Shinran a sense of history, or remembering, in which the establishment of the vows by Amida and Śākyamuni's preaching of this establishment play central roles.

This article concludes by attempting to incorporate this historical sense, or remembering, of Shinran's into our views of Amida and Śākyamuni while remaining faithful at the same time to our modern, critical sense. Another possible title of this article could be, "The Historical Grounding of the Ahistorical Amida Myth," for as we more clearly define the proper way to view Śākyamuni, we will clarify the importance of anchoring the figure of Amida in history. For Shinran, the Amida story is historically true. We cannot see it in the same way, yet the sense of history and remembering is important to keep in mind; it makes historically concrete what is too often the

subjectively abstracted reality of Amida.

The context of this article is the Christian-Buddhist dialogue. It is a section of a larger work in which Amida is looked at and reworked in light of the dialogue. The present article makes no specific reference to Buddhist-Christian dialogue and can be viewed on its own apart from this context. Yet, it is the historical sense that is so very important to Christianity that has aided me to perceive a sense of history and remembering in Shinran's teaching and to develop and ground it through firmer historical-critical discussion. While inter-faith dialogue is not the only way to confront Shin Buddhism with the contemporary context, it is one of the more fruitful means of drawing Shin Buddhism out of traditional doctrine. Tradition must be honored, yet not to the extent that it inhibits Shin Buddhism from engaging in dialogue with the world around it.

Finally, a word about terminology is in order. The phrase *Dharma-for-us* will be found in the following discussion. It is, specifically, my translation of *upāya* (Jpn. *hōben*) and is used, in most cases, as short-hand for *upāya dharmakāya* (Jpn. *hōben hosshin*), that is, it is a synonym for Amida Buddha. The phrase attempts to illustrate the dynamic, saving activity of reality as it comes out of itself for our sake. It is this central insight into the character of reality that highlights Shinran's view of reality. *Dharmakāya*, reality, is the ever active, saving reality of *Dharma-for-us* in the view of Shinran.

Shinran centers his thoughts on Amida as this *Dharma-for-us*, ever concerned with the enlightenment of all existence. For Shinran, the *Dharma* is



nothing but *Dharma*-for-us. The *Dharma* negates and fulfills itself in the compassionate intent of Amida, and so, the identity with Amida is not a simple identity. In a *Yuishinshō Mon'i* passage, one sees Shinran centering on Amida (The *Dharma*-for-us) as this saving power.

This Tathāgata permeates the countless worlds; that is, it permeates the minds of the ocean of all beings. Thus, plants, trees, and lands will attain Buddhahood. Since it is the minds of all beings which rely upon the Vow of the *Dharma*-body for *Dharma*-for-us, the mind of faith is nothing but Buddha-nature. This Buddha-nature is nothing but *Dharma* itself, and this *Dharma* itself is nothing but *Dharma*-body. Therefore there are two types of *Dharma*-body in regard to the Buddha. One is the *Dharma*-body of *Dharma* itself and the other is the *Dharma*-body of *Dharma*-for-us. The *Dharma*-body of *Dharma* itself is without color and form; therefore, it is beyond conception and description.

From this thusness, form was actualized and called the *Dharma*-body of *Dharma*-for-us. Taking this form, it was called Bhikṣu Dharmākara and established the forty-eight great vows that surpass conceptuality. Among them are the Primal Vow of Immeasurable Light and the Universal Vow of Immeasurable Life. And, to the form actualizing these two vows, Bodhi-sattva Vasubandhu gave the title, "Tathāgata" has fulfilled the vows, which are the cause of his Buddhahood, and thus is called "Tathāgata of the fulfilled body." This is none other than Amida Tathāgata.

"Fulfilled" means that the cause of enlightenment has been fulfilled. From the Fulfilled Body, countless specific actualization bodies (transformed bodies) appear radiating the unimpeded light of wisdom throughout the innumerable worlds. Thus appearing in the form of light called "Tathāgata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters,"

it is without color and without form, that is, identical with the *Dharma*-body of *Dharma* itself, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and unimpeded by karmic evil. For this reason it is called "unimpeded light." Unimpeded means that it is not obstructed by the karmic evil and passion of beings. Know, therefore, that Amida Buddha is light, and that light is the form of wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

## HISTORICAL ACTUALIZATION AND AMIDA

Shinran rarely talks about the historical actualization of Amida. It is not absent, however. In the above *Yuishinshō Mon'i* passage, there is an explicit discussion of historically actualized bodies: "From this fulfilled body, countless specific actualization bodies (transformed bodies) appear radiating the unimpeded light of wisdom throughout the innumerable worlds."<sup>2</sup> In his *wasan*, Shinran identifies Śākyamuni and Hōnen, his teacher, as the actualizations of Amida.

Amida, primordially established,  
Feeling compassion for the foolish ones of  
the five defilements  
Actualized himself as Śākyamuni  
And appeared at the castle of Kapilavastu.<sup>3</sup>

The Tathāgata Amida, transformed,  
Actualized himself as master Genkū  
(Hōnen).  
Conditions expanded,  
He returns to the Pure Land.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, there is a sense of remembering in Shinran. In short, there is a sense of history in Shinran as he talks of Amida and Dharmākara in the causal state before becoming Amida. The opening lines of the *Shōshinge* are an illustration of this remembering by Shinran.<sup>5</sup> The story of Amida, and in particular the establishing of the vows, have a historicity for Shinran. It is an obvious error of contemporary interpreters of Shinran to bring their own contemporary mind-set into the interpreting process and make claims about his understanding of problems from that



viewpoint. However, it is equally erroneous to assume that a person of medieval Japan could not have thought in a sophisticated, contemporary manner. I state these two dangers in interpreting Shinran's attitude toward the Amida myth in an attempt to clarify the problems involved. Is it totally impossible that Shinran thought of the Amida myth and of Dharmākara raising the vows in the existentialist-like manner of the total collapsing of time in the now-moment of faith? I think not. There are suggestive passages in his writings that lend themselves to such an understanding.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, he talks about events as events in history which evoke a sense of remembering.

Is it not our contemporary prejudice against historical apprehension of a mythical event that prevents us from recognizing that Shinran literally believed the story and thought of the raising of the vows as somehow historical? We prefer to see him as looking at the story in this existentialist-like manner. But if he talked about the historical actualizations of Amida, and if he had this sense of remembering, this sense of history, then we cannot ignore it when considering the Amida myth.

This does not mean we must adopt the literal belief in the myth and negate recent critical research. It simply means we must acknowledge the place of history and the sense of remembering in Shinran. This remembering grounds his faith, and thus the subjective reality of faith is grounded in the objectivity of history. We cannot accept all the specific objects of remembering and history, but we can search for ones that are historically reliable from our critical, modern perspective.

The story of Amida with its mythic language of *kalpas* (eons) and *koṭis* (infinite distances) is obviously symbolic; and this, I believe, has been understood by the faithful in all ages. The mythic qualities of the Mahāyāna scriptures were accepted. This explains the lack of resistance toward the critical research that came to Asian countries at the turn of the century. This also explains why, to a large extent, the findings of

such research were really never confronted. But believers in general, and Shinran in particular, also took the story at face value and saw it as relating an event of the past, even if a premordial past. We cannot honestly share this attribution of some sort of historicity to the myth.

When the myth is viewed critically, the parallel with the life of Śākyamuni is obvious. The Amida myth can be seen as modeled after the life of Śākyamuni and amplifies themes of compassion in his life. The life of Śākyamuni is abstracted into the myth of Amida. This historical, critical interpretation is probably true. However, this is not the historicity that Shinran had in mind. But it is helpful in centering upon Śākyamuni, for this is the key to grounding the Amida myth in history.

#### ŚĀKYAMUNI IN SHIN BUDDHIST TRADITION

How is Śākyamuni understood in the Shin Buddhist tradition? Shinran sees him as the communicator of the story of Amida. Śākyamuni's prime function in the world, according to Shinran, was to talk of the vows of Amida. This is expressed in the *Shōshinge* wherein Shinran states: "The Tathāgata appeared in this world only in order to declare the reality of Amida's Primal Vow."<sup>7</sup> His position as the first teacher is evident in a famous *Tannishō* passage:

If the Vow of Amida is real, the teachings of Śākyamuni cannot be false. If the Buddha-teachings are true, the commentaries by Shan-tao cannot be false. If the commentaries of Shan-tao are true, how can the teachings of Hōnen be false? If the teachings of Hōnen are true, how can the heart of what I Shinran say be false and empty?<sup>8</sup>

The above passages explicitly center on Śākyamuni's teaching about the reality of Amida's Vow; this marks his importance to the Pure Land tradition. The earlier cited *wasans* relating Shinran's behalf that Śākyamuni and Hōnen were actualizations of Amida can be interpreted to mean that

Śākyamuni and Hōnen were relating the reality of the Vow. The actualization of Amida in history specifically focuses on the teachings of Śākyamuni and Hōnen and, by extension, the teachings of the other Pure Land masters. The fact that Hōnen talked of Amida's Vow cannot be denied. However, Śākyamuni historically said nothing of Amida, and his message states nothing explicitly of this grace-ful *Dharma-for-us*.

It is impossible to be certain as to the core of Śākyamuni's teachings, but it is clear that he did not speak of Amida and Dharmākara's raising of the vows. Identifying the actual words of Śākyamuni in the Mahāyāna sūtra is difficult, but Śākyamuni cannot be the author or teller of the Amida tale. Śākyamuni did not declare the reality of Amida's Vow. Shinran's view of Śākyamuni is based on the erroneous assumption, shared by all Buddhists of his time, that Śākyamuni was the author of all sūtras.

One cannot fault Shinran for being a person of his times, but one cannot accept this false assumption today. Thus, the position attributed to Śākyamuni in the Pure Land tradition centers on an erroneous premise. As the tradition is revised to accord with contemporary historical knowledge, it seems faithfulness to Shinran requires that we ground the reality of Amida's vows in the historicity of Śākyamuni.

### ŚĀKYAMUNI IN HISTORY

There is no question about the existence of Śākyamuni. Inscriptions commissioned by the Indian emperor Aśoka verify Śākyamuni's existence. A core of his teachings can be discerned with caution, and it includes no explicit discussion of the saving and compassionate reality of Amida. Indeed, his teachings tend to avoid any hint of the notion of grace. His death scene includes an exhortation to the disciples to secure their own salvation. There is a hint of grace or compassion in the stories of the acts of Śākyamuni; however, nothing conclusive can be said of their authentic link to him. Hence, it would be difficult to ground Amida's vow in what can be historically known

of particular sayings and deeds.

There is, nevertheless, the undeniable fact of Śākyamuni's speaking and teaching and gathering disciples. The traditional biography of Śākyamuni states that he gained enlightenment at the age of thirty-five and spent the rest of his life teaching: thus he spent thirty-five years searching for the *Dharma* and forty-five years teaching the *Dharma*. Whether this chronology is exactly accurate is unimportant. There can be little doubt that after some years of struggle, he came to see the truth and began to talk of his realization and influence people. This is an undeniable, historical fact.

Śākyamuni is said to have encountered many temptations and hindrances as he sat under the *bodhi* tree in his final attempt at fathoming the truth. This inner struggle is personified in the stories of Māra, the tempter, the trickster. The "last temptation" is that of remaining in the meditation of wisdom and fulfilling his goal of ultimate enlightenment (*parinirvāṇa*). Moreover, he is told by Māra that even if he were to teach his discovery, no one would understand. Śākyamuni denies himself the full satisfaction of ultimate enlightenment and disregards the probability of people not accepting or understanding his teachings. He gets up from the seat of enlightenment and goes forth to preach his first sermon at the Deer Park. It is in this act of going forth from the seat of enlightenment to teach that the *Dharma-for-us* is actualized in history: the Buddha Śākyamuni seated under the *bodhi* tree fully actualizes himself in the getting up from that spot of enlightenment and going forth. It is to this act that Shin Buddhism can turn to anchor the ahistorical Amida in the flow of history.

We cannot look back to Dharmākara establishing the vows nor can we look back to Śākyamuni telling the story of Amida. Neither are possible or desirable from our modern perspective. What we can look back to is the fact that Śākyamuni rejected full enlightenment for himself to tell others of this enlightenment experience and how they too could partake of it. It is in this rejection of enlightenment that, paradoxically, Śākyamuni

fulfills enlightenment and actualizes in history the compassion that is enlightenment. Amida is not actualized by the Amida myth nor by Śākyamuni getting up from meditation and going forth to teach.

The Amida myth is not the abstraction of Śākyamuni's compassionate act. As Shinran is recorded in the earlier cited *Tannishō* passage, the reality of Amida's Vow grounds the teaching of Śākyamuni. We would alter Shinran's perspective if we were to state that the reality of Amida's Vow abstracts the truth of Śākyamuni's going forth. It is important to maintain Shinran's perspective about the *Dharma-for-us* that is Amida being actualized by Śākyamuni. If this is not done, then the Amida myth merely becomes a fairy tale and not the myth that reveals a primordial reality.

The reality of Amida's Vow is actualized and made concrete by the act of Śākyamuni. Shinran viewed the reality of the *Dharma-for-us* as basic, and it is this that is actualized by Śākyamuni and Hōnen. In the case of Śākyamuni, it must be said that the actualization takes place in the act of going forth, not in his teachings. In the case of Hōnen, the actualization takes place in both the act and the content of his teaching.

### CONCLUSION

From the premise that it is important for Shinran to remember certain events to make concrete one's faith, we must look back at the tradition. We must ground the Amida myth in history, being fully aware of recent critical research. On the one hand, we will be truer to the attitude of Shinran and, on the other hand, we will make our faith more historically concrete. This does not deny the central place of the existential plumbing of the depths to realize the truth and reality of the vows of Amida. This ahistorical now-moment of faith that collapses all time into that moment, while being beyond time, must be recognized to be *in* time.

The grounding of faith in the concrete remembering of an event helps us to objectify this faith-moment and reminds us that indeed this timeless moment takes place in time. The flow of history does not merely become a passing backdrop for the timeless moment of faith. History and the events of history take on significance because the ahistorical can be anchored in the temporal.

There are two practical implications of this recognition of the actualization of Amida in history. On the level of popular worship, it is easier to talk of Amida or the *Dharma-for-us* in terms of a historical person and a historical act in that person's life. Secondly, once this is recognized, one can no longer ignore the historical/social context in which one lives. No longer can one say that the subjective faith state, or condition, is all that is important. Faith, while ever subjective, is grounded in history, and thus the flow of history in which one finds oneself cannot be ignored.

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### FOOTNOTES:

1. *Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho*, II, 630-631.
2. *Ibid.*, 631.
3. *Ibid.*, 496.
4. *Ibid.*, 514.
5. *Ibid.*, 43-46.
6. *Ibid.*, 71, "Pondering the mind of true faith, the mind of faith has one-moment. One moment expresses the moment of faith being the ultimate point of time."
7. *Ibid.*, 43-44.
8. *Ibid.*, 774-775.

# The Modern Relevance of Donran's Pure Land Buddhist Thought

by Shōji Matsumoto

Donran, the master whom Shinran revered as the crucial and most powerful link in his own *nembutsu* faith, was the major figure in medieval Pure Land Buddhism in China. The Chinese rendering of his name is T'an-luan, which has great import even today as it expresses the timeless character of his insight into the true nature of the world, and the true nature of human beings. Likewise, the meaning of his name expresses clearly the true nature of the *nembutsu* as the dynamic that continues to illuminate this world and our own lives with the boundless compassion and wisdom of Amida Buddha.

Although a brief biographical sketch cannot begin to supply contemporary men and women with answers to questions about Donran's great influence, it can help acquaint us with this remarkable Buddhist monk who was born in 476. Thus, I begin some twenty years before Donran's birth, when the Emperor Wen-ch'êng had begun a revival of Buddhism, initiating the carving of Buddhist images in the caves of Yün-kang, which were located between the capital and the large town of Yen-mên. In the 477 census there were listed over 7,000 Buddhist temples and some 77,258 Buddhist monks and nuns in the Celestial Kingdom. Such was the world into which Donran was born.

His birthplace was Yen-mên. This is near Mt. Wu-t'ai, which had been worshipped as a sacred mountain since ancient times. When the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* was translated into Chinese by Buddhahadra in 420 A.D., the spirit of this mountain had been identified as Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, the symbol of *prajñā*. From then on, Mt. Wu-t'ai was a place of Buddhist pilgrimages. The symbolic nature of this mountain, with the

sun rising from behind it, was as if *prajñā* were lighting the world, and it deeply affected Donran. At fourteen, he became a Buddhist monk.

Donran's family were peasants, and therefore no record of his family name exists. Furthermore, when an individual becomes a monk, he receives a new Buddhist name from his teacher, signifying that he has given his life to the Buddha. And, whether it is a family name or a Buddhist name, in China the name of a person is very important, for the person is thought to be what he or she is named. "T'an" is an abbreviation of "T'an-mo," which is the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit term "dharma" (teaching). "Luan" means "phoenix," the mystical bird which is the symbol of eternity. Thus, T'an-luan means "Eternal *Dharma*"—a name that carries a continuing significance for us all.

It is said that Donran eagerly devoured scripture after scripture, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, as though engraving them permanently on his mind, and devoted himself wholeheartedly to the study of the *Four Treatises* and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*. By the time he was thirty years old, he was well versed in these scriptures and commenced lecturing on them. He was so impressed by the abstruseness and profundity of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* that he decided to write a commentary on it. The more Donran became aware that he was on the right path to the stage of non-retrogression (*avinivartanīya*), the more he labored to accumulate Buddhist virtue, for he had realized that attaining the stage of non-retrogression enables one to eventually achieve Buddhahood.

Donran was half finished with his commentary on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* when he was struck by a painful respiratory illness. This illness continued for five years, making it impossible for him to write, chant sūtras, or study. The local herb doctor could not cure him, so Donran decided to go to Lo-yang, the capital, for special treatment. On the way, he stopped at the ruins of an old castle in the province of Fen-chou. As he entered through the east gate and looked up into the cloudless western sky, he had a vision that the gate of heaven had swung open and through it he could clearly and thoroughly perceive the Six Kama Heavens. With this inspiration, his respiratory illness suddenly disappeared and was cured. He is reported to have said to himself:

Man's life vanishes like the dew. There are Taoist medical books which explain minutely how to prolong life beyond the fixed limit. What I have to do now is to become one of the immortals by practicing the teaching of Taoism. After I attain the infinite life, I will be able to devote myself entirely to the cultivation of Buddhist virtue.<sup>1</sup>

With this aim, about 521 A.D., Donran arrived in the capital. There he not only read and studied Taoist classics, but also wrote several books on medicine, in which he emphasized the breathing exercises based on both the Taoist yoga practice of breath control and the Buddhist practice of counting the breaths. The aim of these practices is to prolong one's life and, if possible, to attain eternal life. As he recovered his health, Donran resolved to make a journey of over two thousand miles on foot to meet the great Taoist master T'an Hung-ching.

Donran, with some difficulty, received permission from the Emperor of that area to visit Mt. Mao where T'ao Hung-ching lived. The hermit welcomed Donran and gave him oral instruction in Taoist methods of prolonging life "as one would pour water from one jar into another."<sup>2</sup> To become immortal, Donran was taught, one must first take a special medicine called *Chin-tan*,

as well as other medical herbs. One must also keep a fast and practice various Taoist austerities. Since these practices had to be performed on a mountain, Donran decided to go back to Mt. Wu-t'ai where he hoped his practices would lead to his immortality.

Tao-hsüan gives a detailed account of Donran's dramatic encounter with Bodhiruci on his way to Mt. Wu-t'ai:

When T'an-luan heard the fame of the Indian *Tripitaka*-master Bodhiruci, he decided to travel to the capital Lo-yang to see him. When he met Bodhiruci, T'an-luan put a straightforward question to him. "Is there any Indian Buddhist scripture which is superior to this Taoist scripture, *Book of Immortals*, in the teaching of prolonging life?" Bodhiruci spit on the ground and shouted in anger. "How dare you say such a thing. The Taoist book is quite insignificant in comparison with Buddhist sūtras. Where in this country can you find the true teaching of attaining eternal life? By practicing Taoism you may prolong your life beyond the fixed limit, but like other people you must meet death sooner or later, for all men are bound by *saṃsāra* of the Triple World." Giving T'an-luan his Chinese translation of the *Sukhāvativyūha-upadēśa*, Bodhiruci continued, "If you practice the teaching stated in this book you will be able not only to undo the chain of *saṃsāra* in the six realms but also to attain Eternal Life (*Amitayus*)."<sup>3</sup> T'an-luan received the book with respect and then and there he burned the *Book of Immortals* before Bodhiruci's eyes. Under Bodhiruci, T'an-luan studied Buddhism, reading many newly translated Buddhist scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

For the next three years, Donran studied Yogācāra Buddhism under Bodhiruci and made an important discovery: He found that both Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu had devoted their lives to the attainment of birth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. Resolving to follow their exam-



ples, Donran converted to Pure Land Buddhism. In 534 A.D., at the end of the Northern Wei Dynasty and when his teacher Bodhiruci moved to Yeh, Donran traveled north to spread the teachings of Amida Buddha. Tao-hsuan's *Hsi-kao-sêng chuan* gives a vivid account of Donran's activities in spreading Pure Land Buddhism:

T'an-luan not only practiced the teachings of Amida Buddha but also preached on them to all kinds of people, monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, and even to non-Buddhists. His reputation as a Pure Land Buddhist spread far and wide. With reverent respect, the Emperor of the Tung-wei Dynasty called him "Shên-luan" (Divine Bird) and asked him to stay in the Ta-yen Temple in the province of Ping-chou. Later T'an-luan moved to the Hsüan-chung Temple in the province of Fên-chou. He frequently went out to a mound near Mt. Chieh, where he gathered his lay disciples and encouraged them to recite the Name of Amida Buddha. For this reason the mound became famous, and even today people call that mound "Luan-kung-yen" (the Mound of Master Luan).<sup>4</sup>

It was during his five years at the Ta-yen Temple that Donran wrote his great commentary on Vasubandhu's *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra-upadeśa*, a two *chuan* magnum opus entitled *Wu-liang-shou-ching yu-p'o-t'i-shēnyuan-shēng-chieh chu* in which, for the first time in the history of Buddhism, the mystery of Amida Buddha's powers were expounded. His great commentary begins with his joy in the discovery that faith in Amida Buddha alone enables one to reach the stage of non-retrogression and attain birth in the Pure Land. The work ends with his earnest exhortations to the reader to rely wholeheartedly on the power of Amida Buddha.

The emperor of the Tung-wei Dynasty, Hsiao-ching-ti, who was himself a profound Buddhist scholar, once encountered Donran and said to him, "I understand that there are innumerable Buddha lands in the ten quarters. Why do you

believe only in Amida Buddha of the western Pure Land? Is it not prejudice?"

"Yes," replied Donran. "The Buddhist scriptures state that there are countless Buddha lands and innumerable Buddhas in the ten quarters. But, to reach any one of those Buddha lands, one must have superior wisdom and compassion. I am not prejudiced, but I am a common mortal and do not have such wisdom or compassion. The reason why I believe in Amida Buddha is that Amida Buddha gives me his wisdom and compassion through his name so that I am able to attain birth in his Pure Land."

Through such statements, Donran taught the Emperor that Pure Land faith is not for intellectuals who accumulate a knowledge of Buddhism. It is for common people who know what they are in the eyes of Amida Buddha. Impressed greatly with Donran's full and factual understanding of Buddhism, the Emperor honored him with the title of "Shên-luan" and offered him the Ta-yen Temple.

After Donran moved to Hsuan-chung Temple, he composed the *Tsan A-mi-to-fo chieh* (*Gathās Praising Amida Buddha*) and the *Lüeh-lun an-lo-ching-t'u i* (*A Short Treatise on the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss*). The first, as the title indicates, is mainly concerned with praising Amida Buddha. Unlike his commentary, which presents the teaching of Pure Land Buddhism in a systematic and exhaustive manner, this book is the overflow of Donran's religious feeling. He praises Amida Buddha for his *prajñā* and *karuṇā* in the following words:

Amida Buddha's light of wisdom shines upon the darkness of the world, dissipating the darkness of our ignorance and delivering us from the endless *samsāra* of birth and death. His light of mercy reaches far and wide, carrying joy into the hearts of all and expelling the sorrows and griefs, evils and sins of all sentient beings. Amida Buddha, whose inexhaustible virtues surpass that of all other Buddhas in the ten quarters



is therefore not only praised by all the Buddhas but also respected by innumerable *bodhisattvas*. Hence, I prostrate myself and worship Amida Buddha.<sup>5</sup>

Donran also describes in this text the greatness of the *bodhisattvas* in the Pure Land and the Pure Land itself as a land where "comfort and ease prevail and the splendor of the Land is excellent and unsurpassed."<sup>6</sup> Concerning aspirants for the Pure Land, he says, "Even if the world be on fire, those who dare to pass through the flames in order to hear the sacred Name of Amida Buddha will attain birth in the Pure Land, where they will ultimately attain Buddhahood."<sup>7</sup> He ends with an exhortation that is as timeless as his Name. It speaks to us who are living during these latter years of the twentieth century as urgently as it spoke to Donran's contemporaries in medieval China, and, eight hundred years later, to Shinran in Japan: "I have praised Amida Buddha's oceanic wisdom and great compassion. May all the future generations in the ten quarters hear it and deepen their faith in Amida Buddha."<sup>8</sup>

In 195 *gathās*, Donran expressed the same feelings, the same conviction in language and imagery that appeals to the common person in every walk of life. In and out of the Hsüan-chung Temple, Donran devoted the last ten years of his life to spreading the teachings of Amida Buddha by encouraging his disciples to vow to attain birth in the Pure Land and to recite the sacred Name of Amida Buddha. His followers included laymen and laywomen as well as monks and nuns. As Shinran's teachings were to become during the Kamakura period in Japan, so too, centuries earlier, the *nembutsu* teaching, Donran saw himself as one of the common mortals who needed to be saved by the power of Amida Buddha. In the history of Chinese Buddhism, it was Donran who first made Buddhist thought accessible to all, and for this reason he won the respect of all classes of society.

Donran is recognized as the founder of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism. Even after his death at the age of eighty, his influence continued to affect

the development of Pure Land thought in China, and later in Japan. His spiritual heir, Dōshaku (Tao-ch'ō), whom Shinran also revered as one of his great teachers, became converted to Pure Land Buddhism after reading the inscription on Donran's tomb. What struck Dōshaku, and in turn Shan-tao, Hōnen, and Shinran—and what strikes us today as we move toward the twenty-first century—is that Donran felt he was living in a *Dharma*-less world.

In his writings, Donran stated repeatedly that he was living in a Buddha-less world, far removed in time and temperature from the days of Śākyamuni Buddha. Donran described his two spiritual masters, Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, as having lived in an age of quasi-dharma. Several centuries separated them from Śākyamuni, yet, to Donran, they seem to have lived in times and places where some semblance of *Dharma* teaching still could be found. He envied and admired their world, and yearned for his to be like that of Śākyamuni. But, at the same time, it was the *Dharma*-less, Buddha-less world in which he saw himself that made him aware of the reality of human nature, and of his own human condition.

In his writings, Donran cites Taoism and Confucianism as hindrances which prevented Buddhists of his time from practicing the *Dharma*. In both of these teachings the emphasis was on encouraging people to find worldly pleasures. Donran himself had been caught in the "perpetual youth" trap of Taoist magic while he suffered his long respiratory illness. But a third hindrance, and one about which Donran was quite clear and outspoken, was the doctrinal corruption within the Buddhist community itself. He could not ignore the fact that there were many Buddhist monks who yielded to the temptation to be regarded as "Master." Their attitude toward their religious practices was that they believed somehow they were doing good deeds and that those good deeds were the basis of their enlightenment. Donran also perceived that although these monks had a scholastic knowledge of the Buddhist teaching of unconditional compassion, they performed their Buddhist practices for their

own benefit rather than for the benefit of others. Donran regarded such monks as self-centered *śrāvakas*.

His poignant realization of the ugliness of the world, and the hopelessness of human beings, caused Donran to see the world and life around him in the light of the teaching of Amida Buddha. He found a practice by which all common mortals, such as himself, could attain the stage of non-retrogression. It was because his standard of comparison was the Pure Land of Amida Buddha that Donran described this world as impure, polluted by corruption, delusion and falsehood. By contrast with the Pure Land, he saw that everything in this world was illusory and transitory. He compared the world around him to a dark room or a burning house, for it was darkened by ignorance and aflame with lust, passion, desire, anger, and attachment.

"Having been ever sinking," confessed Donran, "and ever transmigrating in the Triple World of the five defilements since time immemorial, we common mortals have committed innumerable grave karmic sins—physically, verbally, and mentally. We have no chance for liberation."<sup>9</sup> He characterized the human body as a vessel of suffering, and the human mind as a container of sorrow. He was convinced that it was lack of faith in the true *Dharma* that caused people to commit sins. Blinded by ignorance and prejudice, they denied both the existence of the Buddha and the truthfulness of his teaching. Abusing the true *Dharma*, they were unable and often unwilling to awaken to faith.

But it was in this very world of defilement, and among such helpless and hopeless beings, that Donran encountered himself. The more he became aware of his own sinful and hopeless character, the more clearly and fully he realized that it was entirely impossible for him to attain the stage of non-retrogression by his own power. Through his inner experience, and his meditation upon the Buddha-Dharma, he came to the conclusion that the power of Amida Buddha alone could assure him of attaining his goal. In seeking a practice by

which he could attain access to the Buddha's power he found, from his study of Nāgārjuna's writings, that Amida Buddha had made the vows and established the Pure Land in order to attain access to the human mind—to endow such a one as Donran saw himself to be with this very power. This, Donran realized, was Amida's universal gift to all: his *ekō*.

Today, we are working at a huge task in which I see Donran's thought and insight both relevant and invaluable. This task of ours requires a new birth of courage, a new level of faith, and a new scope of vision. As we near the end of this twentieth century, a new world is coming to birth and the decisive factor will be whether we can be reborn; whether we can match the new age with the strength of a larger and deeper mind.

A new age demands new men, new women. Whenever civilization achieves new dimensions of power, or society moves into greater complexity, new kinds of persons are required. And a new world with its spacecraft, computers, and nuclear power will insist on our adjustment to new levels of human endurance.

Yet science, that popular contemporary teaching, cannot give us life's meaning. The primary mysteries of human life are not articulated or illuminated by the technological apparatus of science or industry. Birth and death, love and hate, joy and tragedy—these remain as they were in the time of Shinran. The meaning of human life is given neither by machine nor any combination of machines or refinement of machines.

Unless we can recognize the signs of Amida's Buddha power in our new world, as Donran did in his medieval China, and unless, by recognizing signs of this power, we can greet the evidence of the Vow-power's work with rejoicing, no amount of historical affirmation from the fifth century B.C. of Śākyamuni or the fifth century A.D. of Donran will suffice.

We are being tested, not to live with Śākyamuni Buddha but to live here and now in the midst of

vast revolutions in space travel, profound changes in life styles and work, loss of meaning, and anxiety and loneliness. Is our faith strong enough not merely to endure all this blindly, but creatively to see the Vow-power of Amida even now?

On the morning of August 15, 1945, the nuclear age in which we are living began. The light of the exploding atomic bomb was said to appear brighter than a thousand suns. Did its flash throw any light on the mysteries of human life? Was the flash a sign of Amida Buddha's Vow-power? Reflecting on Donran's thought, and reflecting on the effects of Donran's thoughts on Shinran's *nembutsu* teaching, it appears clearly and unmistakably to me that the answers to both of these questions are, "Yes!"

The flash was the *wisdom* that understands how confrontation with death can dissolve the pettiness, pretense, selfishness and superficiality which characterize so much of our normal unthinking years. Here and now Amida Buddha is present, though unseen. His teaching tells us of life's brevity, its insecurity, so that in the wisdom of this knowledge we may turn our hearts to him.

We need no reason, and no later day than this, to accept, as did Donran, our life eternal as Amida's *ekō*, his universal gift of wisdom and compassion, and his Pure Land, which is truth itself for each and every one of us. *Namu Amida Butsu!*

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#### FOOTNOTES:

1. *Taishō Daizōkyō*, 50, p. 470.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho*, I. 350.
6. *Ibid.*, I. 360.
7. *Ibid.*, I. 362.
8. *Ibid.*, I. 364.
9. *Taishō*, 47, p. 424.

# Spiritual Potentials for Quality Living

by Alfred Bloom

## INTRODUCTION: THE GENERAL PROBLEM

**A**ging and a Quality Life is a very modern and pressing question in a society that moves quickly from adolescence to obsolescence. It is particularly a problem for our technological, urbanized culture wherein primary values are productivity and efficiency, and wherein our competitive, aggressive and individualistic orientation to life has paradoxically reduced the value of the person. The impact of modern social developments, while not doing away with the family, has undermined its meaning and value as the context for experiencing the richness of life and receiving the needed support in meeting life's challenges.

The concern for aging and the quality of life arises, therefore, from the fragmentation and secularization of modern life. In earlier times, East and West, the elderly were resources of wisdom and repositories of the lore of the clan. They were functioning members of the household, sharing in its joys and sorrows.

We should not idealize the ancient order which was generally patriarchal, hierarchical and authoritarian. We should not even lament its passing or wish merely to return to the "good old days." But we should regret the loss of role respect and significance that now attends aging. In addition, the lengthened span of life made possible through modern medicine has intensified the loss when bodies frequently outlast mental competencies. We cannot reconstitute the past, and the present is what it is. In all probability, the logic of our modern development will increasingly threaten

the quality of life not only for the elderly, but for all segments of society.

Although our present concern is with the aging who are threatened with more immediate consequences in the decline of the quality of life, that decline is not simply restricted to the aged. If we look at our inner cities, the young and old alike suffer. The ideal of the American Dream, if it still exists, is available to fewer and fewer people.

## QUALITY LIFE AS QUALITY LIVING

Although it may appear idealistic, it is important and urgent that we find the means to counterbalance the reductionist and destructive effects of the secularization process. In so doing, we will not only be assisting the elderly, but hopefully other age groups in society. I would suggest that with quality of life there is worthwhileness and meaningfulness of life. And what is it that makes life truly human beyond the mere fact of existing? First, I would distinguish living from quality of life. *Living* suggests some intentionality, creativity, aspiration and a reaching out in relation to significant others. *Being* means simply existing here for whatever reason, merely because one has not yet died. Thus the *quality of life* may be considered in a more dynamic way as "quality living," or "truly living." It is living inspired by a hope, a goal, and makes a creative thrust in the world and toward the world. Though we live in a tragic world where life is rarely just, there is need for joy and laughter in the sense that the Irish playwright has written:

Laughter is wine for the soul—laughter, soft or loud and deep, tinged through with seri-

ousness. Comedy and tragedy step through life together, arm in arm, all along, out along, down along lea. Once we can laugh, we can live. It is the hilarious declaration made by man that life is worth living. Man is always hopeful of, always pushing toward, better things; and to bring this about, a change must be made in the actual way of life; so laughter is brought in to mock at things as they are so that they may topple down, and make room for better things to come.<sup>1</sup>

Living, in the sense that I am proposing, is an *interpersonal spiritual process, aspiring for a deeper level of meaning and satisfaction for the person*. I hesitate to say social process because it may only suggest our general set of social relations. It is important to recognize that quality living is not done in isolation. It can only occur through deep personal relations in shared experience and community.

## BUDDHISM AND QUALITY LIVING

### BUDDHIST INSTITUTIONS

My primary concern is to discuss how religious faith, particularly Buddhism, may assist people in deepening their sense of the value of the person as a necessary counterbalance to the secularizing forces that permeate our lives. I must emphasize, however, that all religious traditions create modes of community that will nurture the worthwhileness and meaningfulness of life for all age categories and social situations.

When we focus on religious traditions as a basis for developing value strategies to deal with our problems, we must understand that they have little to say directly on such issues. This is because they all arose in the pre-modern age where communal life provided a context of meaning for its members. Thus, in such times, the aged were an integral part of the family and clan.

In Buddhism, aging is seen as part of the process of suffering beginning with birth, illness, eventu-

ally reaching old age and death. It is one sign of impermanence and is associated with infirmity. There is a conversation of Rennyo Shōnin, the Eighth Patriarch of the Shin tradition of Buddhism, in which a follower remarked how miraculous it was that an aged person came at sunrise, perhaps to a service. Rennyo responded: "If one has faith, nothing can look hard to do. Clad in faith, one thinks to repay the Buddha what one owes him."<sup>2</sup>

Ancient texts generally do not raise many of the questions that modern people encounter. It is necessary to extrapolate from the spiritual principles or illustrations given in their teachings. Moreover, our considerations cannot be limited to religious institutions which seek to perpetuate that faith-tradition. All religious traditions, which have sought to maximize their social power by acquiring members and becoming large organizations, have done so at the expense of the intimate, interpersonal sharing that is necessary for quality living. Thus we must look beyond the institutions to the teachings themselves for guidance and insight.

### BUDDHISM AND FILIAL PIETY

I will now focus on the Hongwanji Buddhist tradition which originated in thirteenth century Japan. The founder is Shinran Shōnin who lived from 1173 to 1262 A.D. The teaching belongs to the Pure Land tradition which was a popularly oriented teaching to provide hope of salvation for those people unable to fulfill the original high ideals of monastic Buddhism. It can be compared with those denominations of Protestant Christianity which stress the necessity of faith for salvation. It is the faith of the majority of Japanese-Americans who consider themselves Buddhists.

Buddhism, though originally a monastic religion, has constantly admonished followers to respect and care for their parents. An elaborate system of memorials developed to keep alive the awareness of one's obligations to their ancestors and to increase the solidarity of the family. And

Buddhism was greatly influenced in its practice of filial piety through the teachings of Confucianism. Two passages may be cited from the *Classic of Filial Piety* as examples of the high ideal of Confucian morality:

The relation between father and son is rooted in nature and develops into the proper relation between prince and ministers. Parents give one life; no bond could be stronger. They watch over the child with utmost care; no love could be greater. Therefore, to love others without first loving one's parents is to act against virtue.<sup>3</sup>

Also:

In serving his parents a filial son renders utmost reverence to them: while at home he supports them with joy; he gives them tender care in sickness; he grieves at their death; he sacrifices to them with solemnity. If he has measured up to these five, then he is truly capable of serving his parents . . .<sup>4</sup>

Buddhism lends itself readily to considering problems of the aging because it has generally been a family religion as it developed in Japan. As a result of the interaction with Confucian morality in China and Japan, Buddhist beliefs and practices have strengthened the awareness of the principles of *filial piety* that have been central to Asian societies and have been effective in Asian-American communities. A recent study of the Japanese-American community by Dr. Uasumusa Kuroda of the University of Hawaii Political Science Department shows that there is a greater awareness of filial piety among the youth than in earlier times.<sup>5</sup> Observance of filial piety may not necessarily mean a deep quality living, however, if it only concerns itself mainly with the material requirements of life and not the important personal supports of usefulness and intimacy.

In the modern period, Buddhism has not adequately adjusted to changes in the nature of society which require alteration in the concepts traditionally employed to encourage such values

as filial piety. For many, filial piety still means submission to parents' demands and meets more resistance from younger generations. Consequently, for our contemporary period, the traditional modes of filial piety may not be sufficient to enable the elderly and the youth to gain meaning for their lives. Nor will it adequately inspire a deeply religious perspective on the part of those who must work in various ways in their community and temples to create a quality life for themselves or their relatives and friends.

With the development of an American Buddhism beyond the confines of the Japanese-American ethnic community, the issue of aging and the quality of life must be addressed in new and creative ways. Buddhism must show its universal relevance to society as a whole in order to maintain its inner vitality as a living faith. In order to assist in this process, I shall draw on aspects of Shin Buddhist teaching which can provide insights for quality living.

#### SHIN TEACHING AND QUALITY LIVING

*The Example of Shinran.* In view of the fact that the family is crucial in creating a context for the worthwhileness and meaning of life, I shall examine first Shinran's vision which forms the background of his marriage and subsequent missionary effort in spreading the teaching in the eastern part of Japan in the 13th century. As noted, Buddhism is essentially a monastic tradition, but in the teaching of Shinran marriage was given a spiritual meaning. Though in ancient times monks occasionally had concubines or even married, it was contradictory to monastic rules. Shinran made it a positive act in the advancement of Buddhism.

According to writings, the *Bodhisattva* of Compassion appeared to him in a dream and indicated that he would take the form of a woman whom Shinran would marry. She would be his helpmate in propagating the teaching in the frontier-like region of Japan among the peasants. The marriage was to be a means of fulfilling his mission. As a view of marriage, this dream-vision



is significant because it brings a *spiritual purpose* into marriage that contrasts with marriage as a *community affair*—an economic or social alliance of families for the benefit of the family. For Shinran, his marriage was a spiritual act and his wife was not a subordinate figure.

Each held the other in highest respect. Shinran saw his wife as the manifestation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion. In turn, Eshinni, his wife, wrote in a letter to her daughter that she had had a dream in which Shinran appeared as the embodiment of the *bodhisattva*. It is common in Buddhism to regard individuals with particular capacities as manifestations of some Buddhist divine figure, thereby heightening their spiritual significance and influence. These assertions reflect the fact that each had some element of charisma and made significant contributions so that they were seen as spiritual symbols.

In this context we also see that the family was given a spiritual meaning, not merely as a biological and social unit, but as a means by which the mission of Buddhism was to be carried out. If we extend this interpretation to our modern period, we can see in each member of the family a focus of spiritual value and meaning that contributes to the whole. We must teach that family life can be experienced as a context of meaning, calling for careful consideration of the role of parenting and relations among the members of the family.

In the fulfillment of his mission, Shinran embodied the characteristics of compassion, and he exhibited attitudes that are necessary for quality living in his dealings with his disciples. As illustration of his dealings with his disciples, I would call attention to Shinran's conversation with his disciple Yuienbō in response to Yuienbō's doubt about his ultimate salvation.<sup>6</sup> Shinran guided him to a deeper understanding of the Primal Vow which is a symbol for absolute compassion and the promise of final salvation given by Amida Buddha. This instruction in which Shinran also confessed that he had had the same doubts as Yuienbō resolved the doubts of the disciple. The passage exhibits the intimacy and

tenderness, the mutuality and respect which are the primary requirements for creating a sense of worth and caring which people seek. It is well-known that Shinran always addressed his followers with the polite, honorific terms of Japanese speech. He refused to stand above them as the teacher and even disclaimed that he had any disciples. He often said that, like them, he also was a mere foolish being who had been embraced by Amida's compassion. These are indispensable attitudes in family and personal relations generally if quality living is to be made real in our lives.

Shinran, himself, illustrates the potentiality of an aged person to continue to participate significantly in the activities and affairs of whatever group of which he is a member. Shinran, we might note, lived to the age of ninety. In his old age he formulated some of his most significant religious ideas and made important decisions. At the age of sixty or so he placed his movement in the charge of close disciples in the eastern area of Japan and returned to Kyoto. There he engaged in writing and helping his visiting disciples to understand their faith more deeply. He wrote numerous letters dealing with problems in the movement. In his eighty-sixth year he wrote a short but important text which gives the philosophical perspective of his religious faith.

Also, in his advanced years, he had to deal with a very tragic situation that resulted in his disowning his eldest son in order to demonstrate his sincerity in dealing with his disciples. He had the capacity to see the issues and to decide the proper course of action. It is clear that into his final years Shinran maintained a spiritual vitality and openness toward his followers that allowed him to gain more clarity into the nature of his faith. He demonstrated that aging, as a chronological category or physical condition, is not a basis for rejecting spiritual and intellectual growth. Thus, we should not define people merely on the basis of a presupposed age factor.

We tend in our society to define people out of significant experiences, suggesting they are too old and beyond such interests. In response, the

elderly also define themselves as unable to do something because they are already too old. Society is changing in regard to this issue. Work discrimination on the basis of age is now illegal. Yet it remains a problem of personal and mental attitudes on the part of the elderly and those who may deal with them.

In a film called *Fool's Dance*, we have a story of a home for the aged in which the staff had defined the residents as essentially senile. They had begun to act that way. Consequently, they were assigned to receive lessons in reality therapy. The hero of the story is a devout Buddhist gentleman. He resolved the question of his death for himself and emphasized that one must live to the fullest. He constantly reiterated that rather than this being the end of life, it was the first day of the rest of our lives. Reality for him was not learning to tell time as they were being taught, but to live time as one is capable. Views of reality clashed, but he liberated the residents from the imposed definitions and they responded with joy and eagerness. He awakened new life in the residents and eventually even touched the administrators.

It is true that the body ages and develops various problems, but the spirit and the mind need not age in the same way. Minds grow and mature. Confucius summarizes his process of growth from youth to old age as one of deeper wisdom and capability:

At fifteen, I set my heart upon learning. At thirty, I had planted my feet firmly on the ground. At forty, I no longer suffered from perplexities. At fifty, I knew what were the biddings of Heaven. At sixty, I heard them with a docile ear. At seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart; for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right.<sup>7</sup>

There is a Zen poem which may be interpreted to show the spiritual potentiality that goes beyond mere physical and temporal considerations:

When a man is born, he sits;  
When he is dead, he lies.  
O this ill-smelling mass of bones!  
What is it to you?  
The body comes and goes,  
The Original Nature remains the same.<sup>8</sup>

Shinran indicated that the Primal Vow does not discriminate between the young and the old. In the interdependence of all members of the family and society, we should also set aside our tendency to discriminate on the basis of age and look more at the person and his or her potentials.

### BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR QUALITY LIVING

There are numerous principles that make up the teachings of Buddhism and the tradition of Shin Buddhism. However, I will refer to two closely connected concepts which bear on our topic: the long-standing concept of *Buddha-nature* in all beings; and the *Primal Vow* as the symbolic expression of the concept of interdependence and community in Buddhism.

The principle of the *universality of Buddha-nature* in all beings was designed to indicate that all persons, whatever their actual condition in the world, have the potentiality to attain the final enlightenment or Buddhahood. It is a teaching of universal hope. This ideal became the basis of the various practices in the several denominations of Buddhism, both to motivate the endeavorer to reach for the ideal as well as indicating the possibility of attaining it.

In the case of the teaching of Shinran, this ideal takes form in the experience of faith which is the fulfillment of the ideal in the experience of the person. Shinran has written:

Buddha-nature is none other than Tathāgata. This Tathāgata pervades the countless worlds; it fills the hearts and minds of the ocean of all beings. Thus plants, trees and land all attain Buddhahood. Since it is with this heart and mind of all sentient beings that they entrust themselves to the Vow of

the *dharmakāya*-as-compassion, this *shinjin* (faith is none other than Buddha-nature).<sup>9</sup>

Through this faith, according to Shinran, peddlers, hunters and all others "who are like bits of tile and pebbles are turned into gold" (p. 41). There is not only a strong *egalitarian* aspect in Shinran's teaching which argues the value of the person, as he is, as the object of the Buddha's compassion, there is also an emphasis on *transformation*, the belief that people can change when compassionate influences work on their lives. Shinran gives an account of his own stages of transformation as he matured in the understanding of his faith. He also illustrates transformation when he describes how the ice of our ego and passions are transformed to water through the compassion of the Buddha. The image of transformation is strong in Asian thinking; seasons change, buds become flowers, children become adults. There is always some inner possibility for transformation and change. It is this possibility that we must seek in all our human relations.

All great religious traditions strive through their ideals and practices to dramatize and make real the intrinsic value of the person and the potentiality of that person to transform, grow and change. Though society must deal impersonally with an abstract sense of equality and attempt to share its resources fairly, it is extremely important, on the personal level, that those who have the responsibility to provide care bring a lively sense of reality to this essential equality and potentiality for transformation. They must communicate a sense of dignity and worth to the recipients in their care.

One hears frequently that people are treated merely as bodies by the medical profession, and cases in the social work professions. The frequent, though perhaps unintended, impersonality of professionals in carrying out their duties may leave the recipient with a sense of powerlessness and valuelessness. Dr. Hayashida emphasized that on their side, recipients must prepare themselves for such situations by nurturing in themselves their own sense of value and worth, their own sense of

self-responsibility. Religious institutions must present their teachings in ways that will meet these needs on all levels. The foundation is present in the traditions but must be made clear and given reality within the religious community itself.

The second principle is the basic Buddhist teaching of *interdependence* and *oneness*. This teaching is symbolized in Shinran's teaching of the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha. According to the myth that undergirds this doctrine, the Buddha pledged in the course of his attaining enlightenment that he would not accept enlightenment unless all other gained it with him. He, therefore, pledged himself to create the conditions by which people could gain enlightenment. An implication of these teachings is the ideal of a sangha community.

Interdependence suggests the solidarity of human destiny. We are all familiar with it in our national ideal of the indivisibility of freedom. To the extent that one person is shackled, we are all shackled. The fundamental principle of society is the interdependence of all members in creating orderly social life. Buddhism has made this a spiritually important fact. Salvation cannot be for myself alone, ignoring the plight of others. There can be no real salvation for humanity unless all people can share it. Thus we have constantly stressed in this paper that meaning, value and quality living cannot be attained in isolation. All of us must share to make it a reality. Our American individualism and the false claims to independence must be revised before we can make proper social and economic approaches to these problems.

The principle of sangha and community which are implicit in these teachings must be stressed in the religious institutions. Rather than attempting to become large social collectivities, we must form smaller units where people of all age levels and backgrounds come together to provide the necessary support for dealing with the crises of life. We frequently have a variety of organizations, but little in the way of deep community wherein our hopes, fears, anxieties, and our joys can be expressed openly. We need spiritual *communities*

of acceptance beyond those institutions and agencies provided by society to deal with problems that have already emerged. If we were to have spiritual communities that supported the worth and dignity of the person, we might even avoid problems of loneliness and inadequate care. The Taoist philosophy of China teaches that we should solve a problem while it is small. It is only with foresight and mutual caring that quality living can become a reality, not only for our elderly, but for all segments of our society.

### CONCLUSION

I have tried to suggest the basis for *quality living* which may be derived from Buddhism. I am not at all suggesting that the ideal is easy to reach merely because we may have faith in a tradition. Unfortunately, our human nature and the conditions of society that have brought us to our present point sometimes make the problems appear virtually insoluble. Nevertheless, despite the massiveness and complications of the problems, we will forfeit our humanity if we do not share the hope that we can make progress toward their resolution. Thus I am only trying to share the vision of one tradition, Buddhism, in the hope that others will explore their traditions for the values and ideals which will assist them in coping with these issues. If we become actively concerned with our religious traditions, share experience with each other, and develop our own caring communities, we shall make great headway.

I would like to comment in closing that we are talking about a philosophy of life. This philosophy cannot be made at the last minute. Everyone must start early in life to forge an understanding of life that will support them in their later years.

There are certain requirements that must be met in any philosophy: these are a sense of well being, physically and spiritually, a spirit of acceptance of self and others, and a feeling of usefulness. We must all work together to create these for ourselves and others in our various professions and life situations.

### FOOTNOTES:

1. Quoted from *Jōdo Mission of Hawaii Bulletin*, Vol. 10, No. 11 (Nov. 1985).
2. Yamamoto, Kōshō, trans., *Goichidaiki Kikigaki*. Book II, p. 62.
3. Mary Lelia Makra, trans., *The Hsiao Ching*. p. 21.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
5. Yasumasa Kuroda. Unpublished report of research made in 1983 on ethnic attitudes and values, Chapter 4, entitled "Japanese Americans, 1971-1978-1983: A Diachronical Perspective," p. 76.
6. *Tannishō* 9, a text compiled by Yuienbō from Shinran's words. Taitetsu Unno, trans., *Tannishō: A Shin Buddhist Classic*. pp. 14-15.
7. Arthur Waley. *Analects of Confucius*. II, 4, p. 88.
8. D.T. Suzuki, Sengai. p. 95.
9. Shin Buddhism Translation Series, *Notes on "Essentials of Faith Alone."* p. 42.

## Pilgrimage in Early Buddhism: Layman and Monk, and the Hindu Origin

by Hōyu Ishida

### INTRODUCTION

The name of Buddhism is given by Westerners to the vast synthesis of teachings attributed to Gautama (Pāli, Gotama), the Buddha, the Sage of the Śākya Clan, and to much that later grew out of them as they spread from India to other lands. The closest Sanskrit term for Buddhism is *Buddha-śāsana*, which means "the teachings of the Buddha." The goal of Buddhism is to become a *buddha*, an "enlightened one," by the Buddha's teachings. There are many teachings or ways to attain enlightenment. The Buddha, out of his compassion and in accord with the need and ability of his followers, offered various kinds of teachings. They were suitable to each case so as to lead people to the final goal of enlightenment. This method of extending different teachings to different followers according to their needs is called *upāya-kauśalya* ("skill in means"). Thus, "Buddha is compared to a skilled physician who adjusts his remedies conforming to the nature and intensity of the disease of the patients."<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this essay is to discuss one of the means or ways to reach the goal of a certain Buddhist path. I would like to take up here the subject of "pilgrimage" used as a method of attaining that goal and examine the meaning of Buddhist pilgrimage. I would like, however, to limit my discussion to the lay devotees of early Buddhism who were inspired to visit the four sacred places associated with the Buddha's life, and the *stūpa* where the Buddha's ashes and relics were entombed. In the first half of this essay, the four sacred places, *stūpa*-worship and the purpose of pilgrimage are discussed.

In the second half, I propose to show why the pilgrimage to those places by lay devotees was essentially important by analyzing their role in relation to that of monks or nuns who together composed the unconventional Buddhist community called the sangha. The sangha (the extraordinary norm) and the lay-oriented sangha (the ordinary norm),<sup>2</sup> both fulfilled their roles by helping each other. I will analyze the relationship between these two norms and the two Hindu norms,<sup>3</sup> since Buddhism arose out of Hindu, or Vedic, tradition. I will examine the role which pilgrimage played by observing the transition of the sangha after the death of Śākyamuni Buddha.

### (I)

In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (Pāli, *Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta*), four Buddhist sacred places associated with the Buddha's life are mentioned. The sūtra says that: "There are these four places, Ānanda, which the believing man should visit with feelings of reverence and awe."<sup>4</sup> The first is a grove of sāla trees called Lumbinī, near the capital of Śākya, Kapilavastu, where "the Tathāgata was born." The second is the bank of the river Nairāṇjanā at Buddhagayā where "the Tathāgata attained to the supreme and perfect insight." The third is the Deer Park at Ṛṣipatana near Vārāṇasī, which is "the kingdom of righteousness set on foot by the Tathāgata." The fourth is Kuśinagara, where "the Tathāgata passed finally away in that utter passing away which leaves nothing whatsoever to remain behind!"<sup>5</sup> These four spots are associated with the four main events of the Buddha's life and are to be journeyed to by his followers "with feelings of reverence and



awe." In this sūtra, the purpose of pilgrimage is thus stated:

And they, Ānanda, who shall die while they, with believing heart, are journeying on such pilgrimage, shall be reborn after death, when the body shall dissolve, in the happy realms of heaven.<sup>6</sup>

It's clear that the goal of one's pilgrimage to such places is to attain the realm of heaven (Sanskrit, *svarga*; Pāli, *sagga*), but not the realm of nirvāṇa (Pāli, *nibbāna*). We must note that the realm of heaven is not the final goal of Buddhism. Rather, it's a place where, after being reborn there, one will then be able to attain future final enlightenment. Hence, the sūtra is suggesting that the pilgrimage, especially for the sake of lay devotees, is to attain the realm of heaven since they did not renounce the world as the monks or nuns had done. (This issue will be made clear later.)

I will now turn to other important places associated with the Buddha where lay people visited primarily in order to gain merit to be reborn at least in the realm of heaven. They are the various *stūpa* where the Buddha's relics or ashes are entombed.

After the death of the Buddha, his remains were treated like those of a King of Kings. The Mallas of Kuśinagara performed the cremation ceremony as taught. They first paid "honor, reverence, respect, and homage to the remains of the Blessed One with dancing, and music, and with garlands and perfumes," made "canopies of their garments," and prepared "decoration wreaths to hang thereon."<sup>7</sup> Then, for seven days, they paid homage to the bones of the Buddha in their council hall with dancing, and they erected a solid mound or tumulus in which to place his bones and ashes at the four crossroads of the city. It was at this point that the king of Magadha, Ajātaśatru, the son of the queen of the Vaidehī clan, first heard the news of the Buddha's death at Kuśinagara. He then sent a messenger to the Mallas of Kuśinagara, saying:

The Blessed One belonged to the soldier caste, and I too am of the soldier caste. I am worthy to receive a portion of the relics of the Blessed One. Over the remains of the Blessed One will I put up a sacred cairn, and in their honor will I celebrate a feast!"<sup>8</sup>

As other kings and Brahmins heard the news of the Buddhas's death and wished to bring his remains home with them, the relics were distributed to eight kingdoms. Mounds were then made over the Buddha's remains in the kingdoms, and feasts were held. The Mauryas of Pippalivana, however, came to Kuśinagara too late, so they could only bring back the Buddha's relics, but still they made a mound and held a feast as well. Thus, *stūpa*-worship began and the Buddha's followers made pilgrimages to these *stūpa* with reverence and devotion in order to receive merit from the Enlightened One.<sup>9</sup>

## (II)

With these events in the background, I will discuss the basic relational scheme between monks and laymen in Buddhism. Further, I will interpret the meaning of pilgrimages by lay-devotees to places associated with the myth and events of the life of the Buddha in connection with a comparison of the two norms in the Hindu tradition.

In both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, the ordinary religious norm is based upon the notion of world-affirmation, while the extra-ordinary norm is based upon that of world-negation. In the ordinary norm, the aim of a religious person is to achieve his or her mundane goal, remaining in this world and participating in its activities. In the extra-ordinary norm, however, the aim is to attain release from the cycle of birth and death, called *saṃsāra*, by renouncing the world.

The Hindu notion of religious life is limited to only the three upper *varṇa*, or social classes, *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, or *vaiśya*, and excludes *śūdra*. For these so-called "twice-born" Hindus, there are four aims of life: *dharma* or duty, *artha*



or wealth, *kāma* or desire, and *mokṣa* or liberation.<sup>10</sup> *Dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* are the three main aims of the ordinary norm; and *mokṣa* is the goal of the extra-ordinary norm. Hindus pursue those aims throughout the four life stages called *āśrama*, by which their life is arranged within the social system based on *varṇa* (or caste system). Their primal importance is to fulfill their *dharma* in accordance with their *varṇa* and *āśrama*.

The first *āśrama* of Hindu religious life is *brahma-cārin*, the period of being a student of the Veda. At the start of Hindu religious life, one spends his youth before marriage in becoming a student of the Veda, under the spiritual guidance of a priest. During this period, one is initiated into traditional duties and patterns of behavior. One also learns chastity, obedience and other disciplines. According to *The Laws of Manu*, a *brāhmaṇa* should perform his initiation in the eighth year after conception, a *kṣatriya* in his eleventh year, and a *vaiśya* in his twelfth year.<sup>11</sup>

After finishing this *āśrama-gr̥hastha*, the period of being a householder, he gets married and performs the ordinary activities of life. His *dharma* at this stage is to beget children, to exercise his inherited profession, to fulfill sacramental duties to the gods and ancestors in submission to the spiritual authority of the priests, and to support those holy men by gifts, and so forth. Thus, in this last *dharma*, there is an interdependence between householder and priest; that is, between the ordinary and extra-ordinary norms. Hence, during these two *āśrama*, religious Hindus focus their life on attaining *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

After fulfilling the aims of the ordinary norms, with the coming of age of his sons, he adopts the extra-ordinary norms and enters the third *āśrama* of *vānaprastha* as a transitional period. He renounces worldly passions and family life, retires into the forest, introverts into hermit existence, purifies his soul from secular tendencies through ascetic practices, centers his mind on devotional exercises, practices yoga, and realizes the unity

of the eternal in the individual and the universe.

He then, finally, puts himself into the last *āśrama*, that of *saṃnyāsīn*. He becomes a homeless mendicant and an ascetic saint, walking along the road apparently aimlessly, yet actually on the path of liberation from the worldly bondage of rebirth. Thus, in the Hindu religious tradition, both ordinary and extra-ordinary norms are stages in the progress of one's life, which is arranged basically by *āśrama* and, strictly, within *varṇa*.

The Buddhist tradition, however, is different, although it developed from the basis of the Hindu tradition. After the attainment of his enlightenment, the Buddha established the unconventional community called the sangha. He moved to reject the traditional *varṇa* system by which many people were oppressed. Therefore, he did not employ *āśrama* in the sangha but allowed a person of any race, sex, age or caste, including *śūdra*, to join the sangha. The new member lost his former *varṇa* by taking refuge in the Three Treasures: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. This revolutionary "casteless" system was the basis of the sangha (especially the monastic sangha that will be discussed later in comparison with the lay sangha) and it distinctly differed from the orthodox Hindu tradition. As the *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* reads:

The four great rivers, Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Aciravatī, and Mahī, upon reaching the great ocean, lose their former names to be called great ocean. Just so, O Pāhārādha, the four *varṇa*, Kṣatriya, Brāhmaṇa, Vaiśya, and Śūdra, upon retiring from household life to the homeless one under the Truth (Dharma) and Discipline (Vinaya) announced by the Buddha, lose their former names (*varṇa*) to be called the world renouncers, the children of the Śākya.<sup>12</sup>

In order to propagate his teachings effectively, the Buddha, in accord with the need and convenience of his followers, then established two groups together known as the sangha: the monastic and lay communities. The former consisted

only of *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī*, monks and nuns (I will hereafter use the word *bhikṣu* to signify both *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī*), who cut off entirely their social positions and worldly desires. This is the extra-ordinary norm of the Buddhist tradition. The latter consisted of lay people called *upāsaka* or *upāsikā*, "laymen" or "laywomen" (I will hereafter use the word *upāsaka* to signify both *upāsaka* and *upāsikā*), who remained in their respective classes or states, which is the ordinary norm of the Buddhist tradition.

The ideal of the *bhikṣu* was to transcend karma by thoroughly detaching oneself from the secular world in order to attain *nirvāṇa*, the extra-ordinary goal. On the other hand, the Buddha, realizing that his teaching was too profound to be realized by *upāsaka*, who were motivated by worldly desires, applied the method of *upāya* ("skill in means"). He taught them the realm of heaven as a temporary goal to be attained by accumulating good karma or practicing the five precepts.<sup>13</sup> In both norms, however, the Buddha meant to lead *bhikṣu* and *upāsaka* to the final goal of *nirvāṇa*.

In this relationship between *bhikṣu* and *upāsaka* again we are able to see the harmonious coexistence of the ordinary and extra-ordinary norms. Both transferred merits to each other. *Bhikṣu*, since they had renounced the world, depended on *upāsaka* for food. But by their joyously and meritoriously accepting (*puṇyānumodana*) the alms given by *upāsaka*, the act or spirit of meritorious gift-giving (*puṇyakarma*) by *upāsaka* was rewarded. Thus, by the *bhikṣu*'s pure and meritorious acceptance, *upāsaka* were also able to demonstrate and accumulate good karma, which was the essential and important ethic to Buddhist lay devotees, and the Buddha was the most central figure of this relationship, as the prototype, who is unsurpassed in transferring his merit to the others.<sup>14</sup>

After the Buddha's death, however, his followers began to have different interpretations of his teachings, especially regarding *vinaya*, or "discipline." The Buddha is said to have told Ānanda that, if the sangha wished, it might revoke

the minor rules.<sup>15</sup> However, Ānanda forgot to ask which rules were minor.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the First Council<sup>17</sup> decided to retain everything in the *vinaya*<sup>18</sup> since they were afraid that the sangha (especially the monastic sangha) would be corrupted if they began to revoke rules and regulations at their convenience.

As a result, they agreed to reinforce and increase the rules of *vinaya*, and the monastic sangha began to be split into two groups that differed on points relating to discipline and the separation of monastic and lay matters.<sup>19</sup> Hence, the sangha, which emphasized *vinaya*, was becoming strongly monastic through the influence of the conservative group of monks called *Sthāvarā*, and *upāsaka* were left out of the sangha. In fact, the Buddhist Councils were held only by *bhikṣu* who composed the three branches of the Buddhist scripture called the *Tripiṭaka*: the *sūtra*, *vinaya* and *adhidharma*. Thus, the sangha became identical only with the *bhikṣu* who were isolated from *upāsaka*, and the gap between *bhikṣu* and *upāsaka* in general grew; however, another group of monks were closely associated with *upāsaka* and even developed *stūpa*-worship.<sup>20</sup>

In observing the basic interdependent relationship between *bhikṣu* and *upāsaka* of the Buddha's sangha, we have seen the *upāsaka*'s main role, which was the ethical act of making good merit, such as meritorious offering (*puṇyakarma*) to those who renounced the world. By the *bhikṣu*'s pure, joyous, and meritorious acceptance (*puṇyānumodana*), the merit was then transferred to the *upāsaka*.

After the death of the Buddha, however, as this basic scheme of the sangha became shaky because of the split described above, the *upāsaka* lost their role in the sangha. They did, however, have the five precepts which limited the extent to which they could exercise their role. Yet they continued their devotion to the Buddha, in worshipping the sacred places associated with him and his relics (for the Buddha was visibly gone).

Pilgrimages to those spots became important

especially for the *upāsaka*, while the *bhikṣu* were continuing to develop their doctrines based on *vinaya*. Just as the *upāsaka* were told to receive merit from the *bhikṣu* through giving alms to the Buddha's sangha (we can see this scheme still in the Theravādin countries), they believed that by receiving merit through the pilgrimage to those places with a believing heart, reverence and awe, as we have seen in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, they could attain their general temporary goal, the realm of heaven, even while they participated in social and secular activities. Hence, the pilgrimage to the sacred places became a major method for most lay devotees to attain the final enlightenment which would come after the attainment of the realm of heaven.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1974), p. 247.
2. I apply the method of the ordinary and extra-ordinary norms, in the second half of my paper, advocated by Franklin Edderton in *Dominant Ideas in the Formation of Indian Culture*. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 62 II 3 (September, 1942).
3. In this article, Franklin Edderton discusses only the Hindu tradition, but I use this method for the Buddhist tradition as well.
4. *The Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, in *Buddhist Suttas*, T.W. Rhys-Davids, trans., *The Sacred Books of the East*, p. 90.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
9. This reminds me of a journey by Friar Felix Fabri and his pilgrim companions to Jerusalem in his *The Book of the Wonderings of Friar Felix Fabri* (the Library of the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society). Whenever they visited the holy places of Jerusalem, associated with the myth of Jesus, they expressed their reverence and devotion to Jesus and obtained "plenary indulgences." Although there are many basic differences in purpose, etc. between the two pilgrimages, the pattern of making pilgrimage to the sacred place to experience the myth and receive merit by expressing their reverence and devotion is very similar.
10. The three upper classes were Aryans and were classified as *dvija*, "twice-born," from their initiation ("birth") into the study of the *Veda*. *Śūdra* were excluded from the Vedic study and from the use of Vedic *mantras*. See *The Hindu Religious Tradition* by Thomas J. Hopkins (Encino: Dickenson Publishing Company, Inc., 1971), p. 75.
11. See "The Laws of Manu" in *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy* by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 177.
12. *Anguttara-Nikāya*, vol. IV, p. 202.
13. The five precepts (*pañca-śīlāni*) are not to take life, not to take what is not given to one, not to commit adultery, not to tell lies and not to drink intoxicants.
14. The idea of transference of merit later becomes essentially important in the *Mahāyāna* tradition as a symbol of compassion.
15. See *The Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, p. 112. "When I am gone, Ānanda, let the order, if it should so wish, abolish all the lesser and minor precepts."
16. Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion*, 2nd ed. (Encino: Dickenson Publishing Company, Inc., 1977), p. 65.

17. The First Council took place with a great gathering of monks at the Magadhan capital of Rājagṛha soon after the Buddha's death.

18. Robinson, p. 65.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

20. These *bhikṣu* who were closely associated with the *upāsaka* later came to be central figures for the rise of the *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

## Adapting Buddhism to the West: Problems in Communication

by Arnold McKinley

Just as the Yangtze and the Ganges Rivers have flowed their separate ways on either side of the Himalayas for millenia, so did the Chinese and Indian civilizations evolve separately before the first century A.D. Supported by the fertile valleys of these two great rivers, and although the waters never mingled, the world views of these peoples eventually blended freely to produce some of the greatest religious literature of human history.

Buddhist monks originally came to China from India along trading routes through the arid Takla Markan desert of Central Asia, supporting caravans and wealthy merchants in religious and worldly ways. The first monks were "chaplains" to the traders, eating and sleeping in the quarters prepared for them. The Chinese who saw them were shocked; the monks shaved their heads, were unmarried, and carried relics of the dead—behavior contrary to the most fundamental and sacred of Chinese beliefs and ritual practices.

In 148 A.D., a Parthian monk, An Shih-kao, opened a translation bureau in Lo-yang, the capital city, with the goal of introducing Buddhist sūtras to the Chinese elite. The problems facing him were enormous. Sanskrit, the language of the sūtras, is a highly inflective language from the same family as Greek and Latin, with instrumental endings and conjugated verbs. Chinese is a compounded-character language in which any character can be a subject, object, noun, or verb, each carrying several possible meanings depending upon context and placement. And, of course, An Shih-kao had no dictionaries or word lists.

An Shih-kao spoke a form of Turkish but had some working knowledge of Sanskrit and vernac-

ular Chinese. His manuscripts were on palm leaves. One can imagine the process of translation: He would read a line of Sanskrit and in conversation with someone, describe what it meant in central Asian Turkish vernacular. That person would then tell the person next to him what it meant in everyday Chinese. This person would then communicate the meaning of the passage to an educated Chinese scholar who in turn would write down five or six characters which, he decided, conveyed the meaning adequately. The process would then be reversed until An Shih-kao heard the descriptive meaning of the Chinese characters in his native Turkish and would decide if that, indeed, was what the original Sanskrit intended to say. The process must have been tedious.

By the fourth century, Buddhists were using many Taoist words and phrases in their translations. The method was called "*kê-yi*" and was used mostly for the *prajñā* sūtras. But the confusions it introduced were great. Take for example the use of the Taoist *shou-i* (Eng: guarding the one) for the equivalent of the Sanskrit *smṛti* (Eng: mindfulness). The latter refers to a practice of keeping the consciousness in a receptive rather than responsive state. It keeps one fully in the present, without expectation, censoring skillfully the ongoing flow of thoughts so that one cannot be defiled by greed, hatred and the like. The former term refers to a meditational practice of guarding and caring for the most important god of the body who governs and controls the lesser gods of the bodily organs. One can imagine the confusion that arose in the minds of the Chinese who were attempting to understand the practice of *smṛti*.

The *kē-yi* method fell into disuse once the great translator Kumārajīva arrived in 401 A.D. to present the authoritative interpretation of Buddhist thought and to translate the Sanskrit more correctly than did An Shih-kao.<sup>1</sup> In time there emerged, for the Chinese, a clearer understanding of the fundamentals of Indian Buddhism. But the Chinese interpretations could never be entirely free of the Chinese spirit. Indeed, by 550 A.D., in the flowering of the T'ang Dynasty, the Chinese had a form of Buddhism which was radically different from its old Indian counterpart in many ways, and uniquely Chinese in character.

Such contact between radically different cultures seems to be repeating itself today. Initial contacts with the West over the silk trade routes were formed slowly during the 1400s and 1500s, but speeded up as water routes opened in the next centuries. In the 1600s, Jesuit and Franciscan monks set to translating Chinese and Japanese texts under the same sort of difficulties which had earlier faced An Shih-kao. A thorough recycling of translations continued under the efficient auspices of the British and French over the next two centuries and the Americans have joined the effort, principally in this century. Western study of Eastern culture has therefore proceeded on an even keel for over 400 years, about as long as it took the Chinese to create a base from which they could begin a thorough-going review of the Indian sūtras. Detailed studies at Western academic centers over the last 100 years have begun to clarify many of the nuances and subtleties of Buddhist thought for Western culture, an activity which begins to parallel the intense studies performed by the Hua-yen and T'ien-tai schools in sixth century China.

It might be said that the West has come to a point where its own interpretation and development of Buddhist ideas is beginning to occur. The Shinshū school of Pure Land Buddhism is ordaining American born, non-Japanese ministers. The Zen schools have established firm American and European bases. The American public is giving one of the newest schools of Buddhism, Nichiren, a Western appearance, and the Theravāda

texts which were first translated during the last two centuries. Books such as the *Tao of Physics* are appearing which seek similarities between Buddhist teachings and new scientific theories, especially theories in physics. If history is repeating itself, it will be useful to examine the problems of communication which the contact is bound to raise and to see how they once again will influence the development of new forms of Buddhism.

#### AN EXAMPLE WHICH EMBODIES THE PROBLEMS

One way of getting to know another culture is to compare and contrast some elemental teaching of two, well respected, native teachers. One expects to see some seed idea from which both began their development of a similar thought. Then a point of bifurcation, and finally some enhancements or extensions which resulted in different conclusions, can be examined. This is, of course, a simplistic way of looking at things. Nevertheless it can be effective in developing a comparison.

There exists in human culture the tendency to categorize and identify objects as if there were something naturally *essential* about them; something which distinguishes one object from another, something which gives them their character. By their language, for example, human beings grant separate rights of existence to dogs, birds, pencils and other ordinary objects. They also experience within themselves certain unique, "personal" processes which they take as belonging to themselves individually and as defining their "selfhood." One intent in the scientific observations of Western culture is to identify carefully the characteristics which distinguish a newly discovered object from others already known.

Buddhists also categorize and distinguish objects, but they make the point that these categories are completely artificial and arbitrary with no underlying *essences* implied; that is, they categorize for convenience. The Buddhist teaching is called *anātman* and, on the face of it, *anātman* seems to conflict with Western *practice*



or perception.

The root of this tendency to believe in *essences* in the West lies in Greek philosophy, particularly in Aristotle's *Physics*. Buddhist thought lies principally in the early Buddhist sūtras, composed by the Buddha and passed down orally to generations of followers. The teachings of both the Buddha and Aristotle belie them as eminently practical thinkers. Although their conclusions were ultimately different, both used thoroughly logical, experimentally based processes in their studies of reality and of the relationship between reality and the mind. Both rooted their ideas in experience, and both taught that *change* is the most fundamental property of real objects; both believed in "cause-effect" principles.

The technical term for *change*, in Buddha's teachings, is *sarva-saṃskāra anityatā* (all composed things have no permanence) and the cause-effect principle behind it is called *pratītyasamutpāda*, or dependent origination. According to the teachings, one can find nothing in reality which is not composed of parts and which is not conditioned by other things around it, either in space or in time, even though the pattern of that conditioning may not be clearly evident. The coming into existence of the various configurations of composite things occurs uninterruptedly. It is a sort of creation and destruction in which these configurations rise and pass out of existence instant by instant. That which may appear to be the same from moment to moment is really a series of many configurations, coming into existence and moving out of existence like the picture frames of a motion picture, causing each other and in turn being caused.

The sūtras indicate, too, that Buddha taught no "first cause," in the sense of an intelligence or a god who began motion long ago, or who sustains present processes of reality. Indeed, Buddha indicated that it is impossible to point out such a first cause since the cause-effect network which *pratītyasamutpāda* describes is not a sequential one. All things cause or are caused together in a complicated, gear-like meshing. Just as one gear

in such a network affects the motion of, and is affected by the motion of, other gears in a non-sequential way, so do all elements of reality affect and are affected by all others instantaneously. All gears change together through time, rather than one affecting another through a sequentially described chain of cause and effect.

In Aristotle's *Physics*, the principle of change is *Potency and Act*. An object which presently exists *potentially* existed within an antecedent object and was brought into *act* when the conditions were right for its appearance. An object cannot appear unless it existed, potentially, within an antecedent. For example, a presently existing oak tree existed potentially within an acorn. An adult existed potentially within the baby and came into active existence during growth. The antecedent must already *possess* the consequent in some way. The inner structure of the antecedent must be such as to be able to produce the consequent, otherwise the consequent cannot generally come into being. Since Aristotle's principle acts sequentially through time, one finds in his writings a "first cause" from which all change begins. This first cause moves everything else, yet is itself unmoved. Moreover, it does not exist potentially in anything else prior to itself; it is entirely *act*.

Aristotle identified two sorts of change: changes accruing to "accidental" characteristics, such as color and shape (as a white dog and a black dog differ in their accidental colors), and changes accruing to a unique characteristic *essence* of an object (as a dog and a horse differ in some essential characteristics which make the dog a dog and the horse a horse). It is as if Aristotle suggested that a list of unambiguous qualities could be drawn up which one could use to distinguish the dog from the horse, and that such could always be done if two things differ in their essentials. That list of qualities refers to an underlying, unique substratum belonging to the thing-as-it-is in itself, and called this a "substantial form."

In some of these ways, the Buddha's teachings agree. Early Buddhist sūtras say that a certain

oneness or *ekatā* about an object persists from moment to moment even though the object changes. However, this *ekatā* is not an underlying, long persisting *substratum* consisting of characteristics which can be listed. Nor is the *ekatā* of one object shared with "similar" objects to give them all some identical character. The *ekatā* is counter-balanced by *nānatā*, or the diversity in an object which appears moment to moment. Further, it is taught that conditions must be right for the emergence of an object, so that an oak tree comes only from an acorn, while a pine tree cannot.

Several arguments support Buddha's case against a substratum called *self*. As an example, suppose the person of King Menander were to be searched scrupulously to find the "personal" identity behind it. The search is not for *ekatā* but for an underlying, substratum that would never change throughout the life of Menander, and possibly continue after his life. A superficial look finds arms, legs, trunk and inner bodily organs. A second finds feelings, emotions, perceptions and the like characterizing the processes of these parts. These, and nothing more, create the "chariot" of which "King Menander" is the practical designation.

Continue the search, however. Cut off the arms and the legs. King Menander, the person, would still remain. But chop off the head and he is gone, even though all the parts exist otherwise intact. Indeed, removal of the heart alone would suffice to cause the King's demise, or removal of the lungs, or spleen, or liver. "King Menander" must possess several rather important, *functioning* organs in order for him to be designated "King Menander." Each organ in particular may be examined for the "self"; yet his supposed essence will not be found. Where is King Menander?

One may also attempt to isolate King Menander in *space*. Add organs: first the heart, then the lungs, then the skeleton, add the head, etc. Then add, layer by layer, the blood vessels, the fatty tissue, the skin. When will King Menander appear? He won't, of course, if this procedure is followed, because King Menander must *grow* into space

organismically, all organs together. Perhaps King Menander *interpenetrates* these organs. But why should the interpenetration stop with the skin layer? Is this the boundary of King Menander? Does not air go in and out? Should not the layer of air around him be considered a part of him too? And his food as well? Since both food and air transform internally into flesh, why should they not be considered part of King Menander? Buddha found boundaries and categories such as these quite arbitrary.

Again, try to isolate King Menander, *in time*. From one instant to another, something about him is always changing to some degree, perhaps a feeling or a perception, perhaps some skin tissue. Of these changing configurations of aspects, which is King Menander himself? Aristotle says that these are accidental changes and that King Menander is still quite the same King Menander from moment to moment; the substantial form is the thread which holds Menander together throughout. It is not subjected to change as Menander grows from youth to old age, his essence is the same.

But Buddha, unable to find the *Self* among an object's composite parts, or to identify the *Self* as a unity in space at the present moment, reasoned that it was impossible also to isolate the *Self anywhere in time*, past or future. In his view, King Menander would change, instant by instant as the composite parts of him changed; a new being arising moment by moment, instant by instant, like waves on a stormy sea.

Aristotle taught that such a substantial form as King Menander always requires a critical amount of matter for its existence and, indeed, the substantial form cannot be found no matter how much scrutiny such as this occurs because the "substantial form" is *immaterial*. He argued, however, that even though one cannot see it, substantial form *must* exist and he used an analogy to support its defense. The analogy goes like this: Every form which *can* be seen has a material substance which carries a form, just as a wax statue of an animal carries the likeness of an

animal on a base of wax. Aristotle called this substance "secondary matter" and the likeness "secondary form." The wax may be remolded to take on the likeness of one animal or another, but what is to be said about the wax when it is burned away and becomes smoke?

Aristotle suggested that the essential characteristics which made the wax what it was changed to the essential characteristics of smoke just as the likeness of the wax was changed from the likeness of one animal to that of another. Therefore, the analogy suggests that the essence of the wax should be called "primary" or "substantial" form and there must exist a "primary matter" which supports this form, which is itself *unchanging*, cannot be seen, and is shared by all objects. Just as the figures of animals molded into wax are diverse because each has a different "substantial form," yet each shares "primary matter" and therefore has a certain identity in common.

The crux of the bifurcation between these two philosophers seems to rest upon two issues: the decisions of whether or not to accept an *infinitely divisible* space and time, and whether or not to accept something as eternally unchanging. If one accepts, for example, that all elements of reality consist of parts such that no matter how much one wishes to subdivide an element it can still be subdivided further, and if one accepts that all moments consist of other shorter moments, then one can only end up with empty hands when one tries to grasp some fundamental constituent part of an object as its *essence*, because the subdividing can go on indefinitely. If, moreover, nothing is to be admitted as unchanging, then no one of these parts can be admitted as *essence* either. Therefore, Buddha concluded that objects of reality are without essences.

On the other hand, if one does not accept such an infinitely divisible space and time and does admit something which can never change, then *essences* can exist. As one subdivides an object, one will come either to the edges of a fundamental constituent part which cannot be further divided or one will find a part, which, even though decom-

posable, will itself not change. Either could be called its *essence*. This is, for example, the idea behind the notion of fundamental particles such as quarks in modern day physics.

In this latter case, then, categorical boundaries can be drawn around the objects of reality. This was indeed Aristotle's position on the matter. Two things, he said, are "continuous" if their extremities are the same, are "in contact" if their extremities touch, and are "in succession" if there is no thing of the same kind between them. The phrases "instants of *time*" and "points in *space*" imply infinitely divisible space and time. "Instants" and "points" are not continuous, are not in contact, and are not in succession, yet there are evident properties of objects.

Such might be a discussion between Aristotle and Buddha. In summary, they would start with *change* and end with radically different conclusions on the identity of the *Self*. Bifurcation would occur in a discussion over the nature of the divisibility of *space* and *time* and the possibility of an unchanging part.

## PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION

It is an easy task, comparatively speaking, to read a philosopher, whether in his original language or in English translation, to interpret his words linguistically and literally, and to draw conclusions as to the content of this thought. This was the approach used in developing the above example. But it is an uneven process because it takes the philosopher out of his historical context, thus failing to acknowledge the contributions of the philosophical tradition. These later interpreters spent many years attempting to understand the subtleties and nuances involved in the seed ideas.

If one wants to understand the teachings of the source philosopher, in this case Buddha or Aristotle, one must not only understand the contemporary philosophical context in which the teacher lived but the line of philosophical tradition as well. One can always find apparent gaps

and inconsistencies in the source writings because of new discoveries, or because of a new approach required by changing cultural times. The philosopher provides the child with his "shorts," so to speak, and leaves to others the "tailoring of the breeches" as Einstein had so colorfully said.

Therefore, it is to the tradition to which one turns in order to validate the argument in the example given above, to "find the thought behind the words." But here lies the first problem: Buddha was "the Buddha" and Aristotle was a learned mortal. Should one therefore be prejudiced in favor of Buddha's views? If not, does his premiere status have any bearing on the comparison at all? Could the later tradition, for example, have improved on Aristotle's work, but not on Buddha's? One must be symmetric here in answering the questions. Should a comparison of Jesus Christ's thoughts with those of some great Eastern teacher, such as Confucius, be prejudiced in favor of Jesus Christ because he is/was God? Would a comparison between the Christ's and the Buddha's views be more substantial?

The second problem is close by: Buddha himself never put pen to palm leaf; his teachings were orally transmitted and not written down until several generations after his death. But Buddhists have added texts to their canons for centuries. Which, of all these texts, should the scholar consider to be Buddha's own words? And, of all the later Theravādin and Mahāyānist interpretations, which should be considered the "proper" tradition? Theravādins, for example, consider Mahāyāna views heretical, while the Mahāyānists consider Theravādin views "elementary."

Even in the case of our example, however, a study of the tradition may be rewarding. In the Aristotelian tradition one finds compelling evidence to suggest that the Greeks found the identity principle of "primary matter," which underlies all beings, very shocking since it conflicted so unabashedly with everyday experience. The important point here is that this *identity* was not seen as something to which *diversity* (the "substantial form") is added, but that identity and

diversity are inextricably woven together; that is, *relational*. This means that neither "substantial form" nor "primary matter" exists separately. This draws Aristotle much closer to the Buddhist principles of *ekatā* and *nānatā* than the example above could ever suggest. Moreover, one discovers in the same tradition a consideration that neither identity nor diversity could have come into existence of their own accord. There must have been a more fundamental principle from which these two sprang, which was itself not only "the first cause" and immovable, as the example said, but also the principle which *chose* the differences on which the diversity was to appear. Such *choice* implies intelligence and free will.<sup>2</sup> This principle was to eventually characterize the Christian God.

If one now searches the Buddhist tradition similarly, one discovers that a single principle is used here also to characterize the fundamental nature of reality: *śūnyatā*. Although the stress is not put on *ekatā* and *nānatā* in Buddhism as strongly as it is on "primary matter" and "substantial form" in the Aristotelian tradition, they do characterize the changing nature of reality and thus are tied closely with *śūnyatā*. For Theravādins, *śūnyatā* catches the three principles of *anātman*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, and *duḥkha* (or suffering, which is the First Noble Truth), the last of which is not found in Aristotle's work. For Mahāyānists, *śūnyatā* implies additionally a strong notion of *emptiness* or *void*, an expression of the contentlessness of all changing, composed things. Thus, a major difference between Buddhism and the West appears in these two fundamental characterizations of the nature of things and, in particular, in what the differences mean in terms of religious belief in God and in mystical experiences of the void.

A third problem arises in regard to translations. The story of An Shih-kao's activities mentioned earlier captures much of the flavor of translation problems between radically different cultures. They are just as acute today for English translators from the Sanskrit and Chinese. And, to some degree, problems exist even with respect to Greek, though less so because of the centuries of

support which the Greek civilization has given Western culture.

Non-integrating cultural images form a fourth kind of problem. Take, for example, the notion of the "mind." This English term translates both the Sanskrit term "*citta*" and the Chinese character "*hsin*." In the *Madhupiṇḍika-sūtra* the Buddha says that the human person consists of five "sheaths" or *skandha*: *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saṃjñā*, *saṃskāra*, and *viññāna*. "*Rūpa*" means "form" but the English term "body" is sometimes used. The other five, together with *vitarka-vicāra*, are referred to as "*citta*" and carry a very complicated psychological theory with them. In China, prior to the appearance of Buddhism, the *hsin* was the human faculty responsible for moral approbation. It did not exhibit the detailed psychology of the Indian *citta*, yet it was used to translate *citta* in later centuries. The two formed a complex notion of mental activities.

No English word exists which captures the full meaning contained in this synthetic notion of the *citta/hsin* and this makes comparisons between Buddhism and the West on issues of the mind extremely difficult. It is technically true that "mind" refers to centers of process (and to the processes themselves) in an individual which feel, perceive, think, will and, most especially, reason. Intentions, desires, dispositions, emotions and the organized conscious and unconscious activity are included. But practically, "mind" means "thinking"; the logical process which connects ideas together. When asked where the "mind" is located, most English speakers will point to their brain. They will point to the "heart" when asked about the center of "emotions," particularly of love, and to the whole body when asked about the center of "feelings." When asked about the *hsin*, Chinese and Japanese speakers will point to the brain and to the heart, indicating that "*hsin*" means thinking, emotions and feelings.

Not only is the "net" which interrelates the internal processes of the Western "mind" described in a very different way from the *citta/hsin* net, but the contextual history of its development

was also radically different, so that to use the English words as if they captured the full meaning of the technicalities of Buddhist thought is a dubious and confusing practice. An author should provide adjacent contextual explanations of the nuances involved. For example, words such as "*smṛti*," "*an-hsin*," "*wu-hsin*" and the like, when translated as "mindfulness," "pacifying the mind," and "no-mind" respectively, contain relatively little meaning for the English speaker. Similarly, the ideas of "no-Self" for *anātman* and "emptiness" for *śūnyatā* are utterly foreign and vacuous in meaning. Ideas commensurate with the *citta/hsin* notion do not exist in Western culture, let alone in the English language. With no common, referent bases, the Westerner flails in mystery.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the context of these barriers to the communication of Buddhist teachings, Buddhism will likely find itself molded to fit Western culture in much the same way as it was molded to fit Chinese culture many centuries ago. Few Western scholars have the strong backgrounds in both Eastern and Western philosophical history necessary to effect a wholesale transfer of Buddhist knowledge. That could not be done in China and should not be expected to occur now. Nor will Westerners, being more economically and politically powerful, change their basic images to conform to imported images. Instead, Buddhist concepts will be excised from their context, translated using Western perceptions and images, and applied in a way which will accommodate and benefit Western needs. The results will evolve slowly as they did in China, and Buddhism in the West will not doubt have a form as unrecognizable in the East as Zen Buddhism is unrecognizable in India.

Yet, Buddhism will remain Buddhism. Westerners today respond to it in the same way that the Chinese of the Han Dynasty must have responded: with a certain apprehension over the strange customs and beliefs, some curiosity about the ritual practices, and, as they learn more of it, a fascination with the core teachings—a desire to



know those teachings exactly. Buddhism has been accepted wherever it has gone or has been taken. The secret of this success seems to lie in the fact that the core teachings present solutions to the timeless problems of human existence and personal growth. The outward appearances of these problems may look different across the centuries, but their inner character remains the same. Buddhism, therefore, is as alive and meaningful today as it was in the sixth century B.C. Still, every culture narcissistically considers itself somewhat superior to other cultures, as was China's attitude towards Buddhism, and that is the way the West will feel about Buddhism until it too assimilates and transforms this stranger.<sup>3</sup>

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#### FOOTNOTES:

1. Kenneth, Ch'en. *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964. pp. 43ff and 68.)
2. See an unpublished text by Fr. Kevin Wall of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology of the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, for more details on the Aristotelian tradition.
3. The author thanks the staff of the Institute of Buddhist Studies, the Venerable Madawala Seelawimala and Dr. Alfred Bloom of the same institute, and the Reverend Father Kevin Wall of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology and Director of the Center of Thomistic Studies for their support and encouragement.



# Earliest Usage of "Ta-ching" (Daikyō) and "Wang-shêng lun" (Ōjōron) by a Non-Orthodox Pure Land Buddhist: Its Implication for Chinese Pure Land Buddhism

by Kenneth Tanaka

## 1. PREFACE

The findings of this article should be of interest to anyone with even a remote understanding of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, for Ching-ying Hui-yüan (523-592 A.D.) has long been regarded as the definitive representative of the heretical interpretations of orthodox Pure Land Buddhism. It turns out, however, that he made major contributions to the doctrinal development of Pure Land Buddhism in China as well as in Korea and Japan.

This article is concerned with one such contribution by Hui-yüan, one which no previous modern writer has reported. It is in Hui-yüan's writings that we find the earliest occurrence of the abbreviated titles of two of the major Pure Land scriptures. The significance lies not only in the possible reasons for the abbreviation but also in the irony that orthodox Pure Land Buddhists have utilized, since this period in the sixth century, the same titles that a "non-orthodox" Pure Land figure had earlier adopted, if not coined. This fact reinforces my contentions that the early Chinese Pure Land movement was much broader in scope than is generally accepted, and that it cannot be accurately explained with the traditional sectarian categories which neatly demarcate the "orthodox" from the "heretical" Pure Land Buddhists.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Hui-yüan was an exegete and lecturer of great acumen and an ecclesiastic leader of distinguished prominence within the Buddhist community from the latter part of Northern Ch'i (550-577) to his death in 592 in the early years of the Sui

period (581-618). Hui-yüan's accomplishment as an exegete is remarkable in terms of the vast size and scope of his writings. No doctrinal study of this period (ca. 550-592) spanning Northern Ch'i, Northern Chou and early Sui periods in north China can be complete without a thorough study of Hui-yüan's works, of which ten have come down to us, either in part or in their entirety. In fact, there are almost as many extant works by Hui-yüan as there are by all other writers combined from this group, thereby attesting to the importance of his writings for modern research.<sup>1</sup>

Hui-yüan brought significant innovation to the development of two major doctrinal issues of the Sui-T'ang period, the *tathāgatagarbha* (Buddha-womb or nature) and *ālayavijñāna* (storehouse consciousness) theories. This fact acquires heightened interest, because according to Kamata Shigeo, Hui-yüan's views served as one of the bases for the fully-developed theories of the later Hua-yen and T'ien-t'ai traditions.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, among the works ascribed to him is the *Ta-ch'êng i-chang* (henceforth, *TCIC*), an encyclopedic work of Buddhist concepts and terms that not only served as a reference text for writers of the Sui and T'ang period but is today a valuable source for the understanding of that period's doctrinal development.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the importance and availability of Hui-yüan's writings, they have suffered surprising neglect and, thus, his doctrinal contributions have been relatively unknown. This resulted in large measure from the failure of his writings to attain canonical status in later Buddhist schools, as did the writings of the T'ien-t'ai master Chih-i. Further, the size and the broad range of sūtras and śāstras encompassed by his writings have

complicated a ready understanding of his overall thought. There is no clear, committed doctrinal position from which Hui-yüan carried out his exegesis.<sup>4</sup> Thus, our present knowledge of Hui-yüan's thought remains fragmentary. Most modern writings on Hui-yüan have focused on narrowly-defined doctrinal topics such as "Buddha-nature" and "pure land," based primarily on those chapters in the encyclopedic *TCIC* dedicated specifically to these topics.<sup>5</sup>

The modern image of Hui-yüan, in my estimation, persists as that of an academician rather than of a practitioner as in the case of Hsin-hsing (540-594) of the Three Stage school, Hui-szū (515-577) of the T'ien-t'ai and Tu-shun (558-640) of the Hua-yen traditions. According to Kamata, Hui-yüan did not actively incorporate his meditative experience into his doctrinal system but, instead, concentrated on the intellectual understanding of the scriptures.<sup>6</sup> For this reason Kamata excludes Hui-yüan from the "new Buddhism" of Sui and early T'ang mentioned earlier, and instead characterizes him as a "transitional" figure bridging the old and new Buddhism.<sup>7</sup>

While this portrayal of Hui-yüan retains some truth, it so obscures his other traits and accomplishments that we have had an incomplete picture of him as an individual. The account of Hui-yüan's gallant debate in defense of Buddhism against Emperor Wu's (Wu-ti, 543-78) persecution testifies to his fervor and commitment to Buddhism. He also effectively communicated the teaching, as evidenced by the large number of students who flocked to study with him. He was not uninterested in practice, openly lamenting that his ecclesiastic duties left him little time for pursuing meditation.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. HIS COMMENTARY ON KUAN WU-LIANG-SHOU CHING

Among his works that have survived are commentaries on the Pure Land sūtras, the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching i-shu* (henceforth, *KWCIS*) and the *Wu-liang-shou ching i-shu* (henceforth, *WLSC Commentary*). Both of these are the

earliest known Chinese commentaries on the respective sūtras, *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* (henceforth, *KWC*) and *Wu-liang-shou ching* (henceforth, *WLSC*). The *KWCIS*, in particular, became precedent and has served as model for many subsequent commentaries on the same sūtra.<sup>9</sup>

Despite this acknowledged importance of Hui-yüan's *KWCIS* in the early development of Pure Land Buddhism, the *KWCIS* has not been seriously studied on its own terms. The little discussion that exists on the *KWCIS* invariably occurs in the context of comparison with Shan-tao's *Kuan Wu-liang-shou fo shu* (henceforth, *Shan-tao Commentary*).<sup>10</sup> The *KWCIS* has not escaped playing its polemic role as a "straw man" in Japanese orthodox Pure Land scholarship (*shūgaku*). Since pre-modern times, *shūgaku* scholarship has produced massive studies extolling the virtues of Shan-tao's interpretation, while debunking the vices attributed to Hui-yüan and others.<sup>11</sup>

These debunked opponents (which include Hui-yüan) are usually referred to collectively as "shoshi" (Masters) based on *Shan-tao Commentary*,<sup>12</sup> or those of the "shōdōmon" (the Gate of the Path of the Sages). Although the other two commentaries on *KWC*, attributed to Chih-i and Chi-tsang, also disagreed with many of the views expressed in the *Shan-tao Commentary* as did the *KWCIS*, Hui-yüan, nevertheless, has continued to be the "spokesman" of the "Masters" and their "heretical" position.

The primary reason for the focused criticism of Hui-yüan by the orthodox Pure Land Buddhists can be traced in large measure to the severe criticism by *Shan-tao Commentary* leveled at a doctrinal position which resembles one found in Hui-yüan's *KWCIS*. Shan-tao's main point of contention dealt with the ranking of the nine grades of rebirth (*chü-p'in wang-shêng*) which appears in the *KWC*. In keeping with his fundamental advocacy of the Pure Land teaching's availability to the *prthagjanas* (*fan-fu*, ordinary beings), Shan-tao ranked the nine grades much lower on the Buddhist path system (*mārga*). In

contrast, Hui-yüan ranked them much higher so that even *bodhisattvas* of the *bhūmis* or the *āryajanas* (*sheng-jen*, adepts) were included among those reborn in the Pure Land.<sup>12</sup>

Shan-tao must have deemed this difference crucial for validating the uniqueness of his basic interpretation of the *KWC*, for he devotes much of the first chapter criticizing Hui-yüan's position.<sup>13</sup> Another point of contention was that, in Shan-tao's view, Hui-yüan incorrectly categorized all sixteen visualizations as "meditative good acts" (*ting-shan*). Instead he regarded only the first thirteen as "meditative good acts," and the last three as "non-meditative acts" (*san-shan*).<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. THE TITLE "TA-CHING"

Throughout the *KWCIS* Hui-yüan refers to the *WLSC* as "*Ta-ching*" (the Large Sūtra), the same title by which the later Pure Land commentators called this sūtra. The Japanese Pure Land Buddhists also used the same epithet "*Dai kyō*," as in Shinran's *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō monrui*.<sup>15</sup> In modern times, Max Muller, in translating the Sanskrit text of this sūtra, rendered its title as "*The Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha*."<sup>16</sup> Despite the widespread practice of referring to this sūtra as the "Large Sūtra," the earliest surviving reference to this sūtra as "*Large Sūtra*" ("*Ta-ching*") is in Hui-yüan's *KWCIS*.<sup>17</sup>

Texts compiled after *KWCIS* contain numerous references to this sūtra as either "*Ta-ching*" or as inclusive of the character "*Ta*" (Large) in its title. The Tao-ch'o's *An-lo chi*, Chia-ts'ai's *Ching-t'u lun* and the *Shan-tao Commentary*, for example, refer to the *WLSC* as "*Ta-ching*."<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that this work is known by other abbreviated titles, "*Ta-pên*" (the Large Text),<sup>19</sup> "*Shou-ching*" (Sūtra on [the Buddha of Immeasurable] Life)<sup>20</sup> and "*Shuang-chuan ching*" (the Two Fascicle Sūtra).<sup>21</sup>

It appears that Hui-yüan abbreviated a longer title to *Ta-ching* just as he had abbreviated the titles of other texts into two characters such as, "*Kuan-ching*" for *KWC*.<sup>22</sup> On one occasion he

refers to the sūtra as "*Wu-liang-shou ta-ching*" (183b9-10), so that *Ta-ching* could very well have been the abbreviation of this full title by which Hui-yüan knew this sūtra. If this were the full title, it would be rendered as "*The Large Sūtra on the [Buddha] of Immeasurable Life*." However, this is the only occurrence of such a title in either the *KWCIS* or in his other writings, including the *WLSC Commentary*. All the other occurrences of its full title are invariably "*Wu-liang-shou ching*" (Sūtra on the [Buddha] of Immeasurable Life) and never include the character "*Ta*." Among subsequent commentators, Tao-ch'o refers to the sūtra as "*Wu-liang-shou ta-ching*."<sup>23</sup>

Yet, these titles with the character "*Ta*" appear to have been anomalies in the overall picture. The extant catalogues compiled up to the second half of the seventh century do not refer to this sūtra with the character "*Ta*" as part of the title. For example:

- 1) In *Ch'u san-tsang chi-chi*: a) "*Hsin Wu-liang-shou ching*" and b) "*Wu-liang-shou ching*."<sup>24</sup>
- 2) In *Chung-ching mu-lu* by Fa-ching, et al.: a) "*Hsin Wu-liang-shou ching*" and b) "*Wu-liang-shou ching*."<sup>25</sup>
- 3) In *Chung-ching mu-lu* by Yen-tsung, et al.: "*Wu-liang-shou ching*."<sup>26</sup>
- 4) In *Li-tai fa-pao chi* by Fei Chang-fang: a) "*Wu-liang-shou ching*" and b) "*Hsin Wu-liang-shou ching*."<sup>27</sup>
- 5) In *Chung-shing mu-lu* by Ching-t'ai: "*Wu-liang-shou ching*."<sup>28</sup>

These catalogues indicate that the common full title by which the sūtra was known was either "*Wu-liang-shou ching*" or "*Hsin Wu-liang-shou ching*" but not "*Wu-liang-shou ta-ching*." Further, Hui-yüan himself also referred to this sūtra by its full title as "*Wu-liang-shou ching*," with the exception of that one occasion when he called it "*Wu-liang-shou ta-ching*." Of course, Hui-yüan's reference to this latter title is not the only occur-

rence among Chinese Buddhist texts that include the character "Ta" in its full title. As alluded above, Tao-ch'o also referred to the sūtra as "*Wu-liang-shou ta-ching*." The *Ching-t'u shih-i lun* (believed to have been compiled sometime between 695-774) also refers to a "*Ta Wu-liang-shou ching*."<sup>29</sup> An entry with the same title appears in Üich'ön's (1155?-1101) catalogue, the *Sinp'yon chejong kyojang ch'ongnok*.<sup>30</sup> But all of these references appear in texts that were compiled subsequent to Hui-yüan's *KWCIS*.

The above findings support arguments that the titles which include "Ta" (Large or Great)—be it *Ta-ching* or *Wu-liang-shou ta-ching*—reflect the enhanced regard which this sūtra came to acquire. For instance, those who regard the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* as a main canonical scripture symbolized their high esteem by referring to it by the more elevated "*Ta-ching*." While Hui-yüan used the title *Ta-ching* in reference to this sūtra, there is no reason to believe that he regarded the *WLSC* as the most important scripture for either exegetical or devotional purposes. As discussed earlier, no compelling evidence demonstrates that the *WLSC* played a central role in his doctrinal position or devotional commitment.

Another possibility is that "Ta" implied size and that it functioned to set it apart from a related sūtra of shorter length. Unfortunately, Hui-yüan himself nowhere refers to a title that includes the word "Hsiao" (Small). One likely candidate for this shorter sūtra could have been the "*Hsiao Wu-liang-shou ching*," translated by Guṇabhadra (377-431), which is recorded in Yen-tsung's *Chung-ching mu-lu*.<sup>31</sup> Another possibility is the *A-mi-t'o ching* (or the "*Smaller Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra*,") which became one of the major Pure Land sutras and, in Japan, one of the triple canonical sutras of the Jodo and Jodo Shinshu schools. However, Hui-yüan does not mention this sutra in either the *KWCIS* or the *WLSC Commentary*.

Tao-ch'o's *An-lo chi* is the oldest extant treatise other than Yen-tsung's catalogue to associate the character "Hsiao" with the title of *Smaller*

*Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra*. Tao-ch'o refers to this as "*Hsiao-chuan Wu-liang-shou ching*,"<sup>32</sup> and it is listed along with "*Ta-ching*" and "*Kuan-ching*" as three of the six sūtras that he recognized as advocating the abandonment of this world and the aspiration for the Pure Land.<sup>33</sup> Whether Tao-ch'o consciously juxtaposed the "*Hsiao-chuan Wu-liang-shou ching*" with the "*Ta-ching*" is unclear in his case, but his use of the word "small" in the same context as "*Ta-ching*" is significant. In some later works, the word "small" in the title of this *Smaller Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra* is contrasted instead with an early recension of the *Larger Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra* translated by Chih-ch'ien.<sup>34</sup>

The rationale remains uncertain not only for Hui-yüan's reference to this sūtra as "*Ta-ching*" but also for his inclusion of the word "Ta" in the title. However, it appears quite certain that the *KWCIS* is the earliest surviving text to refer to this sūtra by a common title which later Pure Land Buddhists in China and Japan then employed. This strongly strengthens the possibility that the practice of referring to the *WLSC* as "*Ta-ching*" emerged outside the orthodox Pure Land milieu.

##### 5. "WANG-SHENG LUN" IN THE CONTEXT OF HUI-YÜAN'S POSSIBLE REASONS FOR WRITING THE *KWCIS*

Several reasons may have motivated Hui-yüan to write his commentary on the *KWC*. On this matter Ōchō Enichi states:

Though I have yet to examine the *KWCIS* and *WLSC Commentary* thoroughly, it would be safe to assume that Hui-yüan took a deep interest in Amitābha's Pure Land because of the influence of his teacher Fa-shang's devotion to Maitreya cult.

His interest may not have been as thoroughgoing as the [teaching based on] *nien-fo* (recitation or contemplation of the Buddha) of the Other-Power [*Tariki; ta-li*], but was related to [his interest in Pure Land Buddhist concepts] such as the Buddha land espoused in the *Vimālakīrtinirdeśa*.

sūtra.

As was the case with Fa-shang, Hui-yüan's interest [in Pure Land teaching] was rooted in his disillusionment with the state of affairs brought on by the destruction of *Dharma* [*hometsu*; *fa-mieh*], but not in an introspective realization of his nature as an inferior and incapable being [*bonpu*; *fan-fu*].<sup>35</sup>

Mochizuki Shinkō similarly points out Fa-shang's Maitreya devotion as a major factor in contributing to Hui-yüan's interest in Pure Land thought.<sup>36</sup> Initially, Ōchō's and Mochizuki's suggestions seem curious, since a pure land (*ching-t'u*) such as Amitābha's Sukhāvatī and a heavenly realm (*t'ien*) such as Maitreya's Tuṣita clearly belong to different cosmological categories. The former is beyond the three realms of existence, while the latter belongs to the Kāma realm.

But this may not be as unreasonable as it appears from the traditional Buddhist standpoint. In the chapter on the pure lands in his *TCIC* Hui-yüan treats the heavenly realms and pure lands as virtually identical.<sup>37</sup> Further, Mochizuki suggests that Hui-yüan treated Maitreya's Tuṣita as one of these heavenly realms.<sup>38</sup> Such a treatment was not totally foreign to popular understanding during the Nan-pei Chao period, as syncretistic fusion of Maitreya and Amitābha and their respective lands appear in numerous epigraphic inscriptions from this period. One such inscription reads, "I request that my deceased son rid himself of this defiled [physical form], meet Maitreya and be reborn in the Western Realm [of Amitābha]."<sup>39</sup>

Despite the apparent affinity of the two traditions, it still does not adequately answer why he wrote commentaries on the sūtras pertaining to Amitābha rather than to Maitreya, as one would expect. Several sūtras on Maitreya were already translated into Chinese before Hui-yüan's time:

- 1) *Mi-lê hsia-shêng ching*. Dharmarakṣa (239-316) transl. T 453.14.

- 2) *Mi-lê hsia-shêng ch'êng-fo ching*. Kumārajīva (350-409) transl. T 454.14.

- 3) *Mi-lê ta-ch'êng-fo ching*. transl. Kumārajīva. T 456.14.

- 4) *Kuan Mi-lê p'u-sa shang-shêng tou-shuai-t'ien ching*. Ch'ü-ch'ü Ching-shêng, transl. (ca. 400). T 452.14.

But the striking absence of a single commentary by Hui-yüan on any of the Maitreya sūtras weakens all arguments which accounts for his interest in Pure Land sūtras in terms of his personal devotion to Maitreya.

Ōchō also cites the "destruction of *Dharma*" as a motivating factor. Normally expressed as the arrival of the "end of *Dharma*" (*mo-fa*), this concept has been the standard reason of orthodox scholars for the emergence of Pure Land Buddhism in sixth century China.<sup>40</sup> This suggestion assumes that the events destructive to Buddhism, such as the Northern Chou persecution, led Hui-yüan to take an interest in the *KWC*, a teaching which was appropriate for the decadent times. The mere recitation of the Name of Amitābha was sufficient for rebirth. Though he did not reject oral recitation as a legitimate cause for rebirth, Hui-yüan regarded the "*samādhi* of Buddha-visualization" as the main import of the *KWC*. His remarks to his fellow monks after his gallant defense of Buddhism in his debate with the Northern Chou negate despair over the future of the *Dharma*:

Truth must be expressed. How can I be concerned about my own life! . . . Such is the fate of the time! But even the Sage cannot banish the [*Dharma*]. The fact that we cannot presently serve the [*Dharma*] is a great regret. The *Dharma*, however, is truly indestructible. Oh Venerables, please understand this, and I ask that you not be so sad and distressed.<sup>41</sup>

Such an affirmation renders Ōchō's explanation of Hui-yüan's writing of the *KWCIS* unacceptable.



Another factor that requires mentioning concerns the apparently active presence of Amitābha devotion among Hui-yüan's predecessors and contemporaries in the so-called "Hui-kuang lineage."<sup>42</sup> The earliest known description of the lineage for the transmission of Pure Land teaching in China is Tao-ch'o's Six Worthies (*lu ta-tê*) mentioned in his *An-lo chi*. The six are: 1) Bodhiruci, 2) Dharma Master Hui-lun, 3) Dharma Master Tao-ch'ang, 4) Dharma Master T'an-luan, 5) Meditation Master Ta-hai and 6) the Ecclesiastical Head (*shang-t'ung*) of the Ch'i Dynasty.<sup>43</sup> Putting aside their alleged status as actual devotees of the Pure Land teaching or as famous names employed for authenticating Pure Land Buddhism, one cannot ignore their collective association with the "Hui-kuang" lineage.

Bodhiruci was a teacher of Hui-kuang (468-537 A.D.) and is intimately associated with Pure Land Buddhism, especially in his role of converting T'an-luan to Pure Land teaching. Reportedly he gave T'an-luan a text called the "*Kuan ching*," which has sparked controversy among modern scholars to the identity of this "*Kuan-ching*." Also, included among the numerous texts that he translated was Vasubandhu's *Wang-shêng lun*, which has perhaps been the most influential Indian *sūtra* of Pure Land Buddhism in China as well as in Japan. According to Mochizuki, the second in the lineage, Hui-lun, refers to Tao-lung. Like Hui-kuang he was a disciple of Bodhiruci and regarded as a rival to Hui-kuang as head of the Northern branch of the Ti-lun school. Next in the lineage was Tao-ch'ang, a disciple of Hui-kuang. T'an-luan, the fourth Worthy, was converted to Pure Land teaching by Bodhiruci. Lastly, the Ecclesiastical Head, none other than Fa-shang, was a disciple of Hui-kuang and Hui-yüan's direct master.<sup>44</sup>

According to *HSKC*, Hui-kuang himself also appears to have been a devotee. He constantly aspired to be reborn in a Buddha's land, and at the end of his life he specifically prayed for rebirth in the "Land of Peace and Sustenance" (*An-lo shih-chiai*). Another disciple of Hui-kuang, Tao-p'in, reportedly desired rebirth in the Western region

and had a vision of light at his deathbed. Tao-p'in's disciple, Ling-yü died facing the western direction of Sukhāvātī Pure Land and is credited with commentaries on the *KWC* and the *Wang-shêng lun*.<sup>45</sup>

The treatment of Vasubandhu's *Wang-shêng lun* (Treatise on Rebirth) is evidence of greater Amitābha Pure Land devotion among members of the "Hui-kuang" lineage than previously thought. It suggests the possibility that Amitābha devotion was far more extensive than has been previously believed. To my knowledge, the following consideration has not been addressed before; that is to say, the *KWCIS* appears to be the oldest extant text which refers to Vasubandhu's treatise by the short title, *Wang-shêng lun*, the title by which later commentators in China as well as in Japan have known this treatise. It is a strong possibility that the practice of referring to this short title began among the members of this "Hui-kuang" lineage. Their deployment of the short title serves to emphasize the devotional aspect of this treatise.

In the *Taishō* edition, the full title of the *Wang-shêng lun* is *Wu-liang-shou ching you-po-t'i-shê yüan-shêng chi* (Treatise on the Sūtra of the [Buddha] of Immeasurable Life and Verses on the Vows for Rebirth).<sup>46</sup> This treatise is also known by another title, *Ching-t'u lun* (Treatise on the Pure Land).<sup>47</sup> It is by these two shorter titles that this treatise has been commonly known, especially within Pure Land Buddhism. For example, orthodox Japanese Pure Land tradition knows this work as *Ōjō ron* (*Wang-shêng lun*) or *Jōdo ron* (*Ching-t'u lun*). In fact, today, these shorter titles are often used as if they were the original. It is not surprising, therefore, that the present examination does not uncover any previous study on the origins for referring to the treatise by these shorter titles.<sup>48</sup>

One would expect T'an-luan's commentary on the *Wang-shêng lun-chu* to be the earliest to employ the shorter titles, since it is not only the oldest extant but also the earliest known commentary on Vasubandhu's treatise. However, no reference to the shorter titles occurs either in his com-



mentary or in his other shorter works.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the *KWCIS* by Hui-yüan is the earliest surviving text to refer to this treatise by one of the two shorter titles.<sup>50</sup> In fact, *KWCIS* never refers to this treatise by its full title but only by "*Wang-shêng lun*."

Despite the scriptural status that it has enjoyed in China, and especially in Japanese Pure Land schools, no one has pointed out that the *KWCIS* by Hui-yüan is the earliest extant writing which uses the title *Wang-shêng lun*. For example, in one of the best-known studies on T'an-luan's *Wang-shêng lun-chu*, Mikogami Eryū suggests early T'ang as the first usage of the short title on the basis of Chia-ts'ai's (ca. 620-680) reference to the treatise as a "*Wang-shêng lun*."<sup>51</sup> But Mikogami fails to note that this short title had already been used in Hui-yüan's *KWCIS* more than half a century earlier.

In the earliest catalogues, none of the entries refer to either *Wang-shêng lun* or *Ching-t'u lun*; instead, they use "*Wu-liang-shou ching lun*" or "*Wu-liang-shou you-po-t'i-shê ching lun*."<sup>52</sup> Among exegetical works written after Hui-yüan, Tao-ch'o's *An-lo chi* is the oldest work to employ the short title, the "*Ching-t'u lun*." "*Wang-shêng lun*" is found, for example, in the previously-alluded *Ching-t'u lun* by Chia-ts'ai and in the *Ching-t'u shih-i lun*.<sup>53</sup>

In sum, the *KWCIS* is the oldest extant text to designate the title as "*Wang-shêng lun*." Moreover, some evidence suggests that this short title was coined by members of the "Hui-kuang" lineage. The *HKSC* credits Ling-yü, a member of the "Hui-kuang" lineage and a contemporary of Hui-yüan, with a commentary to the *Wang-shêng lun*,<sup>54</sup> unfortunately now lost. There are no other references to a text from the sixth century as "*Wang-shêng lun*."

Not unexpectedly, Ling-yü is credited with a commentary on this *śāstra*, for this *śāstra* would be held in high esteem by a member of the "Hui-kuang" lineage. The author of the *śāstra* was the eminent Vasubandhu, whose writings,

particularly the *Daśabhūmika-śāstra*, constituted the focus of study and lectures by those of this lineage. Even though the interest of this lineage focused on the "Yogācāra" doctrine, derived primarily from the latter treatise, it should not be surprising that members of this lineage, such as Ling-yü and Hui-yüan, also valued *Wang-shêng lun* as one of Vasubandhu's works.

Unlike the original full title, the title of *Wang-shêng lun* centers on the highly devotional theme of "rebirth," i.e., "Wang-shêng," in the Pure Land. This poses the question as to its name. That is, the full title could instead have been easily shortened to "*Wu-liang-shou ching lun*," as it was Fa-ching's catalogue *Chung-ching mu-lu*.<sup>55</sup> "*Wang-shêng lun*" is probably related to "*Yüan-shêng*" (Vow to be Reborn) of the full title (*Wu-liang-shou ching you-po-t'i-shê yuan-shêng chi*), since the ideas are very similar. However, the two are not exact, and the question still remains as to why "*Wang-shêng lun*," and not simply "*Yuan-shêng lun*," was selected.

Hui-yüan does not address this issue directly. But a passage in his *WLSC Commentary* might serve as a clue for its abridgement:

Question: When Vasubandhu compiled the Verses on Rebirth (*Wang-shêng chi*), he stated that women, the disabled and those of the class of the Two Vehicles are all unable to be reborn in the Pure Land.<sup>56</sup>

Of particular interest is "the Verses on Rebirth," which refers to the verse, as opposed to the commentarial prose section of this treatise. If the "Verses on Rebirth" refers only to the verse section, then perhaps the commentarial prose section came to be called the "*Treatise on Rebirth*," i.e., "*Wang-shêng lun*." This suggestion finds support in Vasubandhu, who at the end of the verse section states, "I have compiled the treatise in order to explain the verses."<sup>57</sup>

Evidence tends to identify the "Hui-kuang" lineage as the milieu in which the short title *Wang-shêng lun* was coined. This would add credence to

Mochizuki's proposal that Pure Land Buddhism was quite active among those who are traditionally not counted among orthodox Pure Land Buddhists. In short, those who belonged to a lineage which is conventionally regarded as exclusively scholastic in fact may have had an interest in the devotional dimension represented in Pure Land Buddhism. Thus, the Hui-kuang lineage's unexpectedly active interest in scriptures centering on Buddha Amitābha must be included as one of the factors motivating Hui-yuan's writing of the *KWCIS* and *WLSC Commentary*.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In Hui-yüan's *KWCIS* we see the earliest usage among extant texts of the shorter titles *Wang-shêng lun* and *Ta-ching* for Vasubandhu's treatise and the *WLSC*, respectively. Both of these titles became common for the Pure Land Buddhists in China as well as in Japan.

The above findings question the traditional practice of drawing a sharp demarcation between the orthodox and the non-orthodox Pure Land Buddhism, referred to often as the "Gate of Pure Land Path" and the "Gate of the Path of the Sages," respectively. Those characteristics previously believed to be the monopoly of orthodox Pure Land Buddhism turn out, in fact, to have not only parallels but also antecedents outside its group: the recognition of oral recitation as a legitimate causal practice, the employment of the shorter titles for two of the Pure Land scriptures, the view that the *KWC* was for the *prthagjanas* (inferior beings), etc.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, it was Hui-yüan, rather than the orthodox Pure Land proponents, who is credited with the oldest extant commentaries on the *KWC* and the *WLSC*.

## FOOTNOTES:

- 1A. I wish to express my appreciation to Professor T. Shigaraki and the Committee for the Commemoration of Professor Takamaro Shigaraki's Sixtieth Birthday for their permission to reprint this arti-

cle, which appeared in *Shinran to Jōdo-kyō*. Kyoto: Nagata bunshodō, 1986, pp. 89-109.

1. Hui-yüan's surviving works include *Ta-ch'êng i-chang* (T 1851) and nine commentaries on the following sūtras and śāstras: *Daśabhūmika-śāstra* (ZZ 1.71.2 and 3), *Ta-ch'êng ch'î-hsin lun* (T 1843), *Ti-ch'ih ching lun* (ZZ 1.61.3), *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* (T 1764.37), *Vimālakīrti-sūtra* (T 1776.38), *Śrīmāladevī-sūtra* (ZZ 1.30.4), *Wu-liang-shou ching* (T 1745.37), *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* (T 1749.37), and *Wei-shih ching* (T 1793.39). For the seven surviving works by other authors from northern dynasties of this period, see Ōchō Enichi, *Chūgoku bukkyō no kenkyū* Vol. 3 (Kyoto: Hozokan, 1979), p. 159.
2. Kamata Shigeo, *Chūgoku bukkyō shisō-shi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1968), pp. 318-326, 354.
3. T 1851.44. Yoshizu alludes to the impact that this treatise had on the writings of the later writers including Chi-tsang, Chih-i, Kue-ch'i, Chih-yen, Fa-tsang, Ch'êng-kuan. See Yoshizu Yoshihide, "Daijōgishō no seiritsu to Jōyōji Eon no shisō (1)," *Sanzō* 165 (1978): 2-3.
4. Ōchō, *Chūgoku bukkyō* Vol. 3, p. 163. He states:  

... Hui-yüan strove to maintain his objective approach and [unlike Chi-tsang] refrained from advocating in his writings the transmitted [doctrinal position] of his masters (of the "Hui-kuang lineage").
5. Kamata's article (in *Chugoku bukkyō shisō-shi*) is probably the first modern work to attempt to treat more than one doctrinal point. Yoshizu Yoshihide of Komazawa University has been the most prolific writer on Hui-yüan, whose studies have been published in numerous articles totaling over twenty and appearing mostly during the 1970s.

- Some examples of articles on specific topics based on the *Ta-ch'êng i-chang* are: Fukihara Shoshin, "Jōyōji eon no busshō-setsu," in *Hokugi bukkyō no kenkyū* ed. Ōchō Enichi (Kyoto: Heirakuji shoten, 1970): 203-260; Takahashi Koji, "Eon to zendō no busshin-ron," in *Zendō kyōgaku no kenkyū*, ed. Bukkyō daigaku zendō kyōgaku kenkyūkai (Kyoto: Toyobunka shuppan, 1980): 79-96.
6. Kamata, *Chūgoku bukkyō shisōshi*, p. 306. Kamata contrasts Hui-yüan with the likes of T'an-luan of the Pure Land tradition, Hui-wen and Hui-szū of the T'ien-t'ai tradition and Tu-shun of the Hua-yen tradition, all of whom were meditators. He suggests this difference leads to the latter group becoming founders of the new schools, while Hui-yüan never gained such status. Ōchō Enichi expresses a very similar view as he groups Hui-yüan with Chi-tsang as two individuals who were more compromising in their doctrinal assertion and less attuned to the conditions of the time, compared to Chih-i and Hsinhsing. See Ōchō Enichi, *Chūgoku bukkyō* Vol. 3, p. 146.
  7. Kamata, *Chūgoku bukkyō shisōshi*, pp. 353-354.
  8. HKSC, T 2060.50.490b5-491c15.
  9. As examples of such a view, see Etani Ryukai, "Zui-tō jidai no kangyō kenkyū shikan," *Tsukamoto Hakushi shōju kinen: Bukkyō shigaku ronshū* (Kyoto: Tsukamoto Hakushi shōju kinen kai, 1961), p. 125; Fujiwara Ryōsetsu, *Nenbutsu no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Nagata bunshodo, 1957), p. 215.
  10. T 1753.37 (*Shan-tao Commentary*). Represented modern articles include: Etani, "Zui-tō jidai no kangyō kenkyū shikan," in *Tsukamoto Hakushi shōju kinen*, pp. 125-135; Yuki Reimon, "Kangyōsho ni okeru zendō shakugi no shisōshi teki igi," *Ibid.*, pp. 907-924.
  11. See Ryōtō, *Bussetsu kanmuryōjūkyō kōki* in *Shinshū Zenshō* Vol. 5, pp. 1-298. This has served as basis for many modern discussions, such as above article by Yuki.
  12. T 1749.37.182a13-c22 (*KWCIS*); T 1749.37.247c22-249b8 (*Shan-tao Commentary*).
  13. T 1753.37.247c22-249c9.
  14. *Ibid.*, p. 247b22-c8.
  15. T 2646.83.590a14ff.
  16. E.B. Cowell, F. Max Müller and J. Takakusu trls., *Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts. Sacred Books of the East* Vol. XLIX. (1985, reprint. Delhi: Motilal Benarsidass, 1965), p. 1.
  17. T 1749.37.179a6ff.
  18. T 1959.47.6b27ff, T 1963.47.86b28 and T 1753.37.246b10ff, respectively. The term is also found in *Chi-tsang Commentary*, but this does not appear to be a reference to the *WLSC*, since the latter is referred to as "*Shuang-chuan ching*." T 1752.37.234b19ff.
  19. *Chih-i Commentary*, T 1750.37.193b11ff.
  20. Hui-kan's *Shih ching-t'u ch'ün-i ching*, T 1950.47.43c15ff.
  21. *Chi-tsang Commentary*, T 1752.37.234c5ff.
  22. Other such abbreviations include *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* as *Nieh-p'an*, Vasubandhu's commentary on the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* as *Ti-lun* and the *P'u-sa ti-ch'ih ching* (T 1581) as *Ti-ch'ih*.
  23. T 1958.47.4c15-16, 5a3.
  24. T 2145.55. a) 11c12, 12a24 and b) 13a3, 14a22.

25. T 2146.55. a) 119b24, 25, 26 and b) 117c19, 23.
26. T 2147.55.158c4.
27. T 2034.49. a) 50b7, 91b14 and b) 89c16.
28. T 2148.55.191b20.
29. T 1961.47.78c12. Modern scholarship is in general agreement that this was not of actual work by Chi-i as the text states. For a summary of the findings of Japanese scholarship on this subject, see Leo Pruden, trans., "The Ching-t'u Shih-i lun," *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. 6-1 (May, 1973): 126-129.
30. T 2184.55.1171c19.
31. T 2147.55.157a3. This entry is found next to that of Kumārajīva's translation of the same sūtra, *Wu-liang-shou fo ching*.
32. T 1958.47.19a14.
33. *Ibid.*, 19a12-19.
34. Ch'i's (632-682) *A-mi-t'o ching shu* (T 1757.37.313a17, 18) refers to it as *Hsiao A-mi-t'o*, but in contrast to *Ta A-mi-t'o ching* (T 362.12). Similar titles are found in Chia-ts'ai's *Ching-t'u lun* (T 1963.47.92c20, 94b20).
35. Ōchō, *Chūgoku bukkyō* Vol. 3 p. 159.
36. Mochizuki, *Chūgoku jōdokyōri-shi*, p. 90. There are reasons to believe that Hui-yūan did, in fact, take a personal interest in Maitreya devotion. There is also an account in the *HKSC* on the biography of Ling-kan, which relates a story of his being reborn in the Tuṣita Heaven and meeting Hui-yūan there. See T 2060.50.518b21.
37. T 1851.44.834a23-b28. Hui-yūan classifies the pure lands into three categories: 1) phenomenal pure lands, 2) form pure land and 3) true pure lands. Although the heavens are regarded somewhat inferior to Amitābha's Sukhāvātī, since the means for rebirth are "defiled pure acts" for the former as compared to "pure acts" for the latter, both are similarly included among phenomenal pure land.
38. See Mochizuki, p. 98.
39. See Mochizuki, *Chūgoku jōdokyōri-shi*, p. 135. For more examples of such inscriptions with a syncretistic outlook, see Matsumoto Bunzaburo, *Shina bukkyō ibutsu* (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1942), pp. 286-299.
40. For example, Nogami, *Chūgoku jōdokyō-shi* (Kyoto: Hozokan, 1981), pp. 69-79.
41. T 2060.50.490c26-29.
42. Mochizuki has alluded to this point, but not in any detail in connection with Hui-yūan. See Mochizuki, *Chūgoku jōdokyōri-shi*, pp. 63-69. A separate research is needed for a thorough treatment of its own to consider such topic as the role of devotion to a particular Buddha or bodhisattva among the scholar-monks.
- Despite Hui-yūan's purported association with the Ti-lun lun school in virtually all modern discussions, no evidence supports the traditional assumption that a school called "Ti-lun" existed. The appellation is of later attribution. I have, therefore, referred to Hui-yūan's predecessors and contemporaries as "Hui-kuang lineage," since textual evidence supports their associations with Hui-kuang (468-537).
43. T 1958.47.14b9-16.
44. Mochizuki, *Chūgoku jōdokyōri-shi*, p. 64.
45. T 2060.50.608a8-10 (Hui-kuang); T 2060.50.484c12-13 (Tao-p'in); T 2060.50.497b17-18 (Ling-yü). Cf. Mochizuki, pp. 67, 130.
46. T 1524.26.
47. One of the earliest surviving texts to use this short title was Tao-ch'o's *An-lo chi*,

written around the mid-seventh century.  
See T 1958.47.7c7.

48. The only discussion of this—and only an allusion at it—is found in Hirakawa Akira, “Jōdokyō no yōgo ni tsuite,” p. 6. He suggests Tao-ch’o’s *An-lo chi* as the earliest to employ *Ching-t’u* but remains silent regarding the usage of *Wang-shêng lun*.
49. His *Lueh-lun an-lo ching-t’u i* refers to *Wang-shêng lun* as *Wu-liang-shou lun*. T 1957.47.1a15. See Leo Pruden, transl., “A Short Essay on the Pure Land,” *The Eastern Buddhist* VIII no. 1, pp. 74-95.
50. T 1949.37.183a19, 184b11, 15, 22ff.
51. Mikogami Eryu, *Ōjōronchū kaisetsu*, p. 13.
52. T 2146.55.141a26, T 2153.55.407c28-29, T 2154.55.541a22, T 2157.55.941a14, T 2149.55.269b3.
53. In *An-lo chi*, T 1958.47.7c7, 25ff. In *Ching-t’u lun*, T 1963.97c12ff. In *Ching-t’u shih-i lun*, T 1961.47.78c5-6, 81a11.
54. T 2060.50.497c18. This, of course, assumes that this recorded title in the *HKSC* was the original title which Ling-yü himself used and not one subsequently ascribed to him by Tao-hsüan.
55. T 2124.50.141a26.
56. T 1745.37.107c10-11. For original passages, see T 1524.26.231a14, 232a3-4. The same passage appears once in the verse section and once in the prose section, respectively.
57. T 1524.26.231b5.
58. Hui-yüan recognizes recitation of the Buddha’s Name as one form of devotion, which in turn is one of the four causes for rebirth (T 1749.37.183b7). Further, Hui-yüan regarded *prthagjanas* as the group for whom the *KWC* was taught (173a9-10).

## ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY:

*A-mi-t’o ching* 阿彌陀經  
*An-lo chi* 安樂集  
 bonpu (bonbu) 凡夫  
 Ch’i 基  
 Chih-i 智顗  
 ching-t’u 淨土  
*Ching-t’u lun* 淨土論  
*Ching-t’u shih-i lun* 淨土十疑論  
*Ching-ying Hui-yüan* 淨影慧遠  
*Ching-t’ai* 靜泰  
 chiu-p’in wang-shêng 九品往生  
 Ch’ü-ch’ü Ching-shêng 沮渠京聲  
*Chung-ching mu-lu* 衆經目錄  
*Dai-kyō* 大經  
 Dharma Master Hui-lun 慧龍法師  
 Dharma Master Tao-ch’ang 道場法師  
 Dharma Master T’an-luan 曇鸞法師  
 Emperor Wu (Wu-ti) 武帝  
 Fa-ching 法經  
 fa-mieh 法滅  
 Fa-shang 法上  
 fan-fu 凡夫  
 Fei Chang-fang 費長房  
 hōmetsu 法滅  
*HKSC* = *Hsu Kao-sêng chuan* 統高僧伝  
 Hsin-hsing 信行  
*Hsin Wu-liang-shou ching* 新無量壽經  
*Hsiao* 小  
*Hsiao-chuan Wu-liang-shou ching* 小卷無量壽經  
*Hsiao Wu-liang-shou ching* 小無量壽經  
 Hua-yen 華嚴  
 Hui-kuang 慧光  
 Hui-szū 慧思  
 Hui-wên 慧文  
 Hui-yüan 慧遠  
*Jōdo ron* 淨土論  
*Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō mon’rui* 顯淨土真実教行証文類  
*Kuan-ching* 觀經  
*Kuan Mi-lê p’u-sa shang-shêng tou-shuai-t’ien ching* 觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經  
*Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* 觀無量壽經  
*Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching i-shu* 觀無量壽經義疏  
*Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching fo shu* 觀無量壽經仏疏  
*KWC* = *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* 觀無量壽經  
*KWCIS* = *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching i-shu* by Hui-yüan 觀無量壽經義疏

Ling-yü 靈裕  
 Li-tai fa-pao chi 歷代法宝記  
 lu ta-tê 六大德  
 Meditation Master Ta-hai 大海禪師  
 Mi-lê hsia-shêng ching 弥勒下生經  
 Mi-lê hsia-shêng ch'eng-fo ching  
     弥勒下生成仏經  
 Mi-lê ta-ch'êng-fo ching 弥勒大成仏經  
 mo-fa 末法  
 nien-fo 念佛  
 Ôjô ron 往生論  
 san-shan 散善  
 Shan-tao 善導  
 Shan-tao Commentary = Kuan Wu-liang-  
     shou fo ching  
 shang-t'ung 上統  
 shêng-jen 聖人  
 Sinp'pyon chejong kyojang ch'ongnok  
     新編諸宗教藏總錄  
 shôdomon 聖道門  
 shoshi 諸師  
 Shou-ching 壽經  
 Shuang-chuan ching 雙卷經  
 shûgaku 宗學  
 T = Taishô shinshû daizôkyô  
     大正新修大藏經  
 Ta A-mi-t'o ching 大阿彌陀經

Ta-ch'êng i-chang 大乘義章  
 Ta-ching 大經  
 ta-li 他力  
 tariki 他力  
 Ta Wu-liang-shou ching 大無量壽經  
 TCIC = Ta-ch'êng i-chang by Hui-yüan  
 Tao-p'in 道憑  
 t'ien 天  
 T'ien-t'ai 天台  
 Ti-lun 地論  
 ting-shan 定善  
 Tu-shun 杜順  
 Wang-shêng chi 往生偈  
 Wang-shêng lun 往生論  
 WLSC = Wu-liang-shou ching  
 WLSC Commentary = Wu-liang-shou ching  
     i-shu by Hui-yüan  
 Wu-liang-shou ching 無量壽經  
 Wu-liang-shou ching i-shu 無量壽義疏  
 Wu-liang-shou ta-ching 無量壽大經  
 Wu-liang-shou ching you-po-t'i-shê yüan-  
     shêng chi 無量壽經優婆塞提捨願生偈  
 Wu-liang-shou you-po-t'i-shê ching lun  
     無量壽經優婆塞提捨經論  
 Wu-ti 武帝  
 Yen-tsung 彦宗  
 ZZ = Dai nihon zokuzôkyô



## Book Reviews and Reflections

### Reflections from *HIGAN-COMPASSIONATE VOW*, by Shinobu Matsuura

*The following segment is taken from a book entitled Higan-Compassionate Vow, written by the late Mrs. Shinobu Matsuura. In this work published as a private remembrance by her family, Mrs. Matsuura, the wife of pioneer Shin Buddhist minister, the Rev. Issei Matsuura, chronicles her life story as a "bomori" (priest's wife) in serving the Buddha-Dharma in America for some 66 years.*

*Her recollections are representative of the struggles, sacrifices and determination which the early day Japanese immigrants to America had in their visions for their future generations, but even more so her memoirs record the legacy of planting the seeds of the Buddha-Dharma in the United States of America.*

*This chapter reveals Mrs. Matsuura's compassion in operating the Guadalupe Children's Home during their assignment at the Guadalupe Buddhist Church. It is a unique event in history and exemplifies the role and responsibility of the Buddhist temple within the Japanese-American community.*

### THE CHILDREN'S HOME

To regress . . . around the time I came to America in 1918, it was a period of pioneer immigration. Streams of picture brides were arriving, families were getting started and things were gradually settling down. However, there were a number of tragic dramas when, with glamorous hopes, the brides met their respective husbands. There was often disappointment and despair as they saw the course and desolate lives which were now theirs.

Meanwhile, children were born, and when they reached five or six years of age, they were to register in public schools, a difficult commute from the isolated camps.

Parents favored the traditional upbringing and camp life amongst mixed nationalities in primitive conditions made such cultural education essentially impossible. Besides, the parents were too overworked to be looking after their children properly. Most parents relied on their families in Japan to take the children. This was a difficult arrangement, for, by sea (there were no airlines then), it took a good twenty days of rough sailing to reach Japan. And it was completely devastating for some, when parents and children lived separated from one another. Changes in climate, habit and food caused illness, and even death for a number of children. Indeed, it was a critical and tragic situation.

My husband could not bear to see the families broken up. He wanted to care for the children at the temple, teach them the Japanese language while they attended public school, and he wanted to raise them in an atmosphere centered around the Buddha. On holidays, the children would return to the parents for family upbringing.

The parents were in such a dilemma that this arrangement was happily welcomed. So, in the spring of 1919, the Home was opened. We had no previous experience and felt a bit insecure, but began with the *teragoya* (temple classes in Japan) as a model.

The first to come was Mr. Umekichi Tanaka, who lost his wife in the infamous flu epidemic. He brought his two daughters, Toshiko and Akiko. Hastily, the old house was renovated, and even before completion, more children came. Within one month, we were surrounded by many children.

The morning and evening religious services, training in table manners at meals, Japanese language classes, study hours for public school . . . gradually the days molded into a comfortable routine. Mr. Tameji Eto from San Luis Obispo, who was most concerned and helpful about the Home, had already sent his daughters, Kofuji and Toshiko, to be educated in Kumamoto province in Japan. Now he sent for them and brought them to the Home. Suddenly, there were over twenty children. The older children helped selflessly in the church Sunday School and Japanese school.

Everything was going rather smoothly now, and days were filled with delightful sunshine. But suddenly one day, the state inspector came, carefully examined the building and ordered the home closed due to building code violations. What a disaster! The children were sent to nearby relatives and friends. Immediately a campaign for funds was begun. A second floor had to be built. A fire escape, a sturdy metal slide, was placed from the upstairs window. Parents and friends volunteered daily, giving their utmost support to renovate the premises.

Thus, finally, a license to operate was formally granted, giving the Guadalupe Children's Home a fresh start.

Racial prejudice was severe in those days, but everyone persevered in body and mind. When the children returned, and we were all united, it was a supreme joy and all we could do was to smile gratefully. Thirty-six children, aged six to sixteen, our family and a cook inflated into one fat family.

In the spring of 1926, Lord Sonyu Ohtani toured the temples in Hawaii and the United States. All Buddhists sincerely welcomed him with feelings akin to seeing their own parents. In the rural countryside of Guadalupe Buddhist Temple too, the entire Japanese community eagerly awaited his arrival. The children wrote welcome essays in Japanese to present to him. The Lord Ohtani was delighted. He spoke with the children and posed for photographs with them. He visited leisurely, viewing all the bedrooms, classroom and even the kitchen. And he conversed freely with the children. Later, we heard from Bishop Yemyo Imamura of Hawaii Hongwanji that the Lord had described to him, "At a countryside temple on the Southern California coast, I was moved to see many children living in the temple close to the *Dharma* and growing up in a happy family atmosphere."

When the children were healthy, life was comfortable. But frequently, when epidemics struck, we spent many sleepless nights worrying. Measles, mumps, chicken pox, whooping cough and other illnesses were common occurrences. When one became ill, we expected others to soon follow. Caring for the sleeping children, who bravely endured high fever, I realized how they must have yearned for their own

mothers, and I was deeply touched.

Once Akiko came down with scarlet fever. For one whole month, the Children's Home was quarantined. No one was allowed to leave the compound, and no visitors were permitted to enter. There was no time for tears. I had to immediately concentrate on nursing Akiko back to health with the help of her older sister, Toshiko. Her father, Mr. Tanaka, came to the front gate every day, handing fresh vegetables and other food over the fence, pleading, "Please take care of Akiko. I appreciate your care. But if she does not survive, she is in the temple and in good hands." Many parents came to the fence to hand over food and gifts.

Fortunately, after four weeks, recovery at last! The other children were given preventive shots, nutritious meals, exercise, play and study during the quarantine and were spared from catching the disease. When, after a month, the isolation was ended and quarantine lifted, the parents rushed over and a joyous reunion took place. I could only *gasshō*, for surely the *nembutsu* had sustained us.

Thus, through tears and joy, nine years sped by and the children grew up, entering high school and then college, and admirably began to fly away from the nest.

By then, Japanese schools were springing up here and there throughout California. Transportation improved and commuting to schools became easier. During these first ten years, a foundation was built upon which the children grew into adulthood.

As the children returned to their homes, I, too, became homesick for my parents. I was having physical problems. The doctor advised, "Return to see your mother and you will get well again." So our family, now six in number, left our hearts in Guadalupe and traveled to Japan. That was April of 1928.

The other day, Toshiko Tanaka, the first child at the home, called me from Fresno where she now lives. She informed me, "All the children will be holding a 50th year reunion. We want to be together again in Guadalupe for the 25th Memorial for Sensei. Kofuji, Masaji, Paul . . . all are working hard on this happy event!"

The children of fifty years ago must all be grandparents by now. Bursting in joy and anticipation, I am adding this page. *Gasshō*.

## Project to Translate Classical Chinese Tripitaka Text

In 1965, Mr. Yehan Numata, Founder of Mitsutoyo Manufacturing Company, Ltd., one of the world's leading producers of precision measuring instruments, established the Buddhist Promoting Foundation (Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai) in Tokyo, Japan. As its first major activity, the Foundation compiled a text entitled *The Teaching of Buddha* and translated it into 24 languages. These texts have been published by the Foundation and placed into hundreds of thousands of hotel rooms and classrooms world-wide.

In 1982, at the request of Mr. Numata, the Foundation initiated a monumental project to translate the entire Classical Chinese *Taishō Tripitaka* Buddhist Canon into English. Forming a scriptural base for all Buddhists, the *Tripitaka* contains the complete system of Śākyamuni Buddha's teachings and has been called a cultural legacy for all humanity.

In order to implement this new translation project, an English *Tripitaka* Editorial Committee was formed in Tokyo. Composed of leading Japanese Buddhist scholars, this committee selected 70 eminent scholar-translators from many parts of the world and made arrangements for the translation of 139 carefully selected texts, which are to be considered the "First Series."

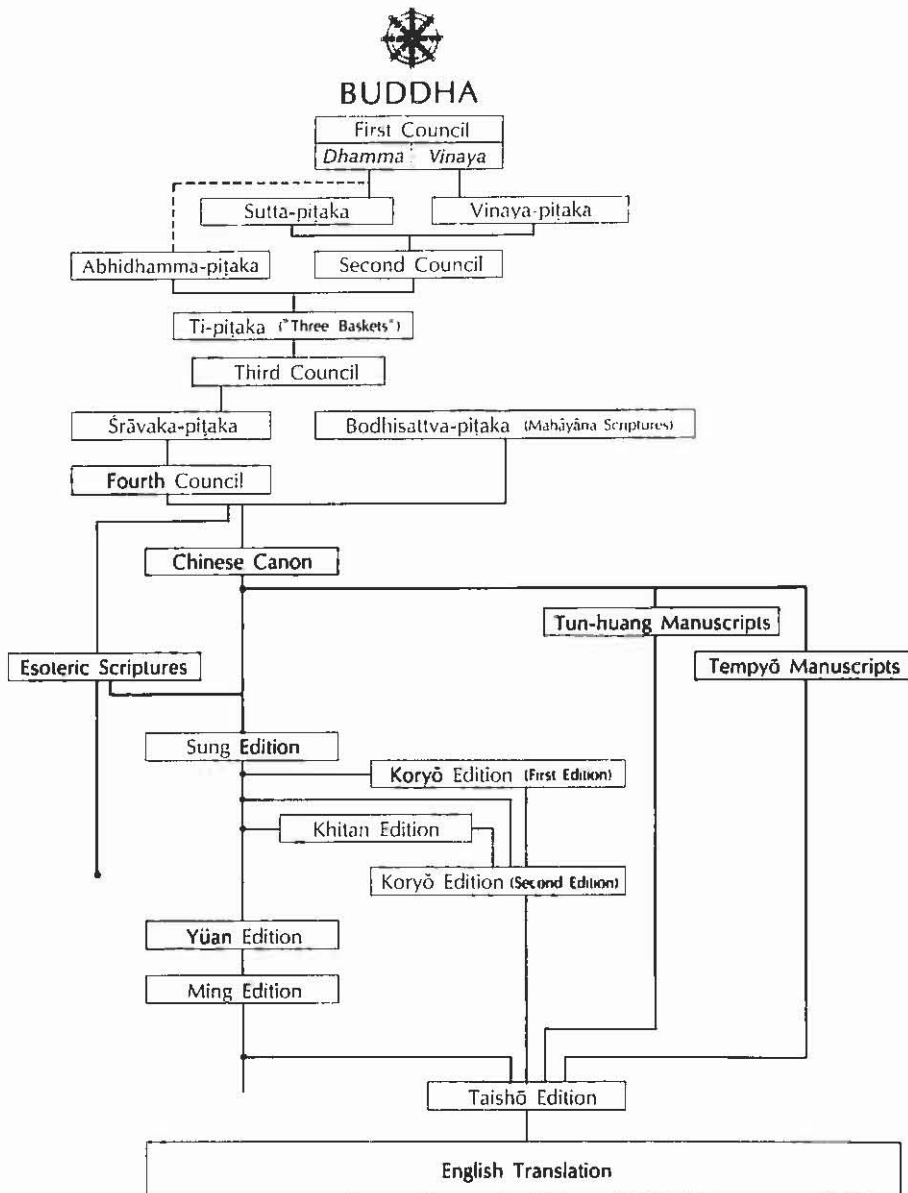
Much progress has been made. By the year 2,000 A.D., it is expected that these "First Series" texts, in 100 volumes, will be published. They represent 11 percent of the complete *Tripitaka* Canon. In order to give a clearer conception of the magnitude of this ambitious and epochal undertaking, one must be aware that it is expected to take an additional 80 years to complete this project, as it consists of thousands of works.

In 1984, to bring this project to fruition, the Numata Center for Translation and Research was established at Berkeley, California. The role of the Numata Center is to monitor the translators' work, to review and edit the translated manuscripts, to make payments to these translators, and to ready the texts for publication. It is anticipated that the initial volume of this "First Series" will be ready for distribution before 1987.

The Numata Center, through the generosity of Mr. Numata, has also established Chairs in Buddhist Studies at three major universities in America and, just recently, at the Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley. Additionally, the *Pacific World Journal* is published under the sponsorship of the Numata Center as one of the many ancillary projects of the Buddhist Promoting Foundation.

By utilizing the vehicles of the Buddhist Promoting Foundation in Japan and the Numata Center for Translation and Research in California, Mr. Yehan Numata has been able to bring into focus his singular objective to make available the message of the historical Buddha to all the world's people in the sincere hope that the teachings will lead eventually to universal harmony and World Peace.

# A Genealogical Chart of the Original Texts of the English Translation of the Buddhist Canon



(based on Dr.A.Hirakawa's "Daizōkyō no keifu")

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