

PACIFIC WORLD

Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies

Third Series Number 1
Fall 1999

**SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF
RENNYO SHŌNIN'S DEATH**



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EDITORIAL NOTE

It seems that every institution goes through periods of expansion and contraction. Over the last four years, the Institute of Buddhist Studies has turned its attention inward, and engaged in an extensive re-evaluation of its entire program, including its publications. The *Pacific World* has long been a key element in the Institute's publications, giving the Institute a means of expressing its identity. As we have re-evaluated our identity over the last four years, it has become clear that Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies is the focus of energies that the Institute needs to pursue. The idea of Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies is an attempt to create a concept that is simultaneously inclusive and focused.

It is inclusive, first, because Shin Buddhism does not exist in isolation from any other form of Buddhism or any other religious tradition. Second, the exploration of the many ways in which Shin Buddhism is related to the religious, philosophic and social concerns of the contemporary world necessarily means continual re-exploration of Shin and Buddhist history. At the same time the concept of Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies focuses our efforts, giving a point of reference from which to develop both an editorial and an institutional identity.

After a two-year hiatus, we are now ready to initiate the third series of the *Pacific World*. The editorial committee wishes to thank the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai for its understanding and continuing support of the Institute, the Institute's own Board of Trustees for their guidance over the past four years, and the membership of the Buddhist Churches of America, without whose support the Institute would not exist.

Richard K. Payne

Institute of Buddhist Studies, Dean
and Pacific World Editorial Committee, Chair

Rennyō: His Historical Significance and Contemporary Relevance

Alfred Bloom

Professor Emeritus
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THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF Rennyō's death has opened a new page in the history of Shin Buddhism. Through modern studies, Shin's potential to provide meaning for people in all areas of life, and increased expectations among the members for positive direction in our confusing and challenging contemporary world, have focussed attention on Rennyō (1415–1499), who also confronted a turbulent and chaotic world. The renewal of interest in Rennyō has centered on his personality and leadership qualities, which enabled him to establish the languishing Hongwanji as the foremost Buddhist sect of his age. The great transformation in the fortunes of the Hongwanji that he brought about gave rise to such titles as Restorer, Renovator, Innovator, and Second Founder. But more than creating a socially, politically and religiously powerful institution, Rennyō laid the basis for a personal spirituality which has sustained the movement into modern times when in the competition of faiths, it has declined seriously. What is needed is a revival of the determination, commitment, and creative spirit of Rennyō, which can revitalize the movement and offer a needed vigorous spiritual challenge to modern people universally.

It is the purpose of this essay to suggest in a summary fashion aspects of his life and work which highlight Rennyō's contemporary significance and overcome the historical gap of five hundred years between him and ourselves. It is hoped that this study will inspire people in their search for hope and faith in our turbulent world as he did in his.

I. THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RENNYO

When Rennyō appeared on the stage of history in the fifteenth century, the small, struggling Shin Buddhist Hongwanji branch was in deep trouble. Yet, by the beginning of the twentieth century it could boast a membership that was almost one-third the population of Japan.¹

This astonishing success story is due to the energy and dedication of Hongwanji's eighth Abbot, Rennyō Shōnin. Though overshadowed since the Meiji period (1868–1912) by the figure of Shinran, Shin Buddhism's founder, Rennyō was a complex, multidimensional individual. He was at one and the same time a religious leader, a builder of temples, an organizer, a politician, and a writer of poignant letters. He stood at the apex of the Hongwanji hierarchy. Yet, he remained a plainspoken man of the people. He was a missionary, a pastor, a friend, as well as a spiritual teacher. He was also an earthy man, outliving four of his five wives and fathering twenty-seven children. In each of his roles, Rennyō was above all a humane person, never losing his human touch. Though not a scholar like Shinran, he conveyed the spirit and essence of Shin Buddhism through the simplicity of his teaching, capturing the hearts of hosts of people during his lifetime, and giving them a sense of the value of their own lives.

Rennyō claimed to be no more than a transmitter of the truth that Shinran had uncovered. Acquainted with grief, humbled by his background, he was affectionately called Rennyō-san by ordinary people and, unlike Shinran, soon became the subject of popular anecdotes. As restorer of Shin Buddhism, he was like a fresh spring wind bringing an awareness of new growth. He was above all the right man at the right time in the history of Hongwanji, giving the tradition a focus and energy that made it the leading sect in Japanese Buddhism.

The 500th anniversary of Rennyō's life has provided the occasion for a rethinking and re-evaluation of his life and teachings by all Hongwanji temples and members around the world, in Japan, North and South America, and Europe. His life is being celebrated and studied by some as a source and inspiration for the revitalization of Shin Buddhism in a stressful time, not entirely dissimilar from his own.

Despite the importance of Rennyō traditionally within the Hongwanji, according to inquiries made by Itsuki Hiroyuki, a noted author, Rennyō is generally not as well known as are the great monks Saichō (767–822) of Tendai, Kūkai (774–835) of Shingon in the Heian period (794–1185), Hōnen (1133–1212), Shinran (1173–1262), Ippen (1239–1289), Dōgen (1200–1253), Eisai (1141–1215), and Nichiren (1222–1282) in the Kamakura period (1185–1333), or the later Ikkyū (1394–1481) in the Muromachi period (1338–1573) and Enkū (1632–1695) in the Tokugawa period (1603–1867). Most have heard Rennyō's name, but know nothing of his life and activities.

Itsuki points out that intellectuals generally disfavor Rennyō, because he appears to be a professional priest, while Shinran declared that he was neither a priest nor a layperson. Rennyō appeals more to business people, politicians and those who work among the masses, as well as

ordinary people who are still much influenced by Rennyo's pastoral letters (*Gobunshō*, or *Ofumi*).²

Itsuki notes that since the death of Rennyo five hundred years ago there are even today many who feel intimate or familiar with "Rennyo-san" while in contrast they revere and respect Shinran Shōnin.³ He writes that when people hear the name Shinran, they may straighten their collar or alter their posture, naturally assuming an attitude of devotion. However, when they hear Rennyo, their faces relax, and they have a peaceful expression as though they are blown on by a spring wind.⁴

Rennyo, as the Eighth Abbot descended from Shinran, has long been known as the Restorer or Second Founder of Shin Buddhism. Today he is being called an Innovator. These titles are more than metaphors. They have real, historical substance, indicating the contributions Rennyo made to rescue Hongwanji from its long plunge into poverty and isolation. The title Second Founder acknowledges Rennyo's reinterpretation of Shinran's teaching. In dedicating himself consciously to the renewal of Hongwanji, he laid the foundation for the future religious and social unfolding of Shin Buddhism. Although five hundred years have passed since his leadership, his influence extends to the present day, raising a real question whether Shin Buddhism is more reflective of Rennyo than Shinran. Rennyo himself believed that he was returning to Shinran as the spiritual source for Shin Buddhism, while correcting misunderstandings of the teaching that occurred in what he called the "middle period" between Shinran and himself.

Although admired as an innovator by many today, Rennyo is controversial for having set the pattern for teaching and organization that has been severely criticized in modern times as authoritarian and feudalistic. These reproaches largely resulted from the momentous events surrounding Japan's defeat in World War II.

In the contemporary re-evaluation of Rennyo, many now see him as a thinker who grasped the popular mind and brought hope to the ordinary person. In the recent past, he has been viewed as merely an organizer, cleverly employing his many children to construct an ecclesiastical institution. However, he is now recognized as struggling to control a burgeoning movement whose followers sometimes used the teaching to justify their anti-social attitudes and actions, such as refusing to pay taxes or ridiculing other religions.

Thus, there are among modern scholars a variety of views about Rennyo. What is most productive now is to gain insights and learn from his experience in order to assist the renewal of Shin Buddhism in the twenty-first century. As a person of the fifteenth century, we must view Rennyo in that context, recognizing the differences between his era's challenges, the problems he confronted in his effort to revive the ailing

Shin sect, and those of today. At his birth, conditions were abysmal in Hongwanji, and from his early youth, Rennyo resolved to restore the teaching. His aim and dedication was to proclaim Shinran's vision of Amida's boundless, unconditional compassion for all people. Our focus today must take into account that with all this, Rennyo remains a man of the fifteenth century.

From our viewpoint five hundred years after his remarkable achievements, we see the choices that Rennyo made may have had undesirable implications for the future. How could he have known that? What mattered then—and still matters—is that he adapted the teaching to meet the needs of the people he led and nurtured. Of course, he differs in points of emphasis from Shinran who lived in the thirteenth century. These must be recognized. Rennyo had no intention to distort the teaching. Rather, in his mind he faithfully followed Shinran, as Shinran believed he followed Hōnen and transmitted the teaching in a manner that would be most effective in enabling ordinary people to understand and take it into their lives.

The tremendous growth of Shin Buddhism during his lifetime must be credited to his insight that whatever the merits of the previous Abbots, just copying texts or making official tours did not reach the people effectively. Those Rennyo met were naturally and sincerely convinced of his spiritual authenticity, and that his character manifested his convictions. By this means, he attracted a great following, all of whom were devoted to him.

Rennyo's popularity in Japan is such that one legend about him has been made into a *kyōgen* drama which illustrates, perhaps, something of Rennyo's popularity, spiritual influence, and attraction for women. At the same time, it reveals the conflict of the old religion and the new religion. The story is called *yome odoshi no men* which means roughly "bride-scaring mask." Tourists also call it *nikuzuki no men* or "mask with flesh attached."

The legend relates that a mother-in-law became very jealous of the devotion her son and daughter-in-law had toward Rennyo. Every night after work they would both go to Yoshizaki. In an age when the women would have been left at home to do chores and the men went out, the story suggests something about Rennyo, when the husband and wife both go to Yoshizaki. The mother-in-law resented being left behind. One night when they went to Yoshizaki, she put on a demon mask and hid behind a tree on the path. The wife was walking out in front, when the mother jumped out, shouting she was a messenger of the deity of Hakusan.

The "spirit" criticized the couple for always visiting Rennyo, neglecting their work and the mother-in-law. The frightened woman fled home.

The husband's turn was next and while the mother waited for him, she thought to take off the mask, but could not get it off. It ate into her face. She cried out and when the son came, he asked why the mask covered the mother's face. She told him everything, and he took his mother to Yoshizaki where Rennyō was residing. When she heard his teaching, she was grateful and began to recite nembutsu. Suddenly, the mask mysteriously fell off, but some of her flesh, which had been torn when she earlier tried to force the mask off, stuck to it, giving rise to the name "the mask with flesh attached."⁵

In Japan, the popular familiarity with Rennyō comes also from such stories told about Rennyō and his contemporary Ikkyū, the famous eccentric Zen monk-poet, and himself the subject of popular legend. One of these stories relates that on one occasion, when Rennyō was building the Yamashina Hongwanji Temple in Kyoto, Ikkyū came and seated himself over some trees that were going to be used in the construction, putting some grass over his head. Some people working in the construction became nervous since Ikkyū refused to move from his place. They went to Rennyō to complain about it. After explaining the situation, Rennyō told them to just give some tea to Ikkyū and he would leave. They gave him tea whereupon he immediately left the site. Everybody was wondering what happened, when Rennyō explained: "The *kanji* for tea is made from three parts: grass on top, a person in the middle and tree on the bottom. This was just the way that Ikkyū asked for tea."

On another occasion, in Kyoto there was a very famous pine tree called Very Tortuous Pine (*nanamagari no matsu*). Ikkyū put up a sign in front of the pine tree which announced: "I am going to give one *kan* (8.33 pounds) of gold to the person who can see this pine tree in a straight way." Everybody tried to see how such a twisted tree could be seen straight. Some people thought that maybe from some angle the tree could be seen as straight. After some time, someone told Rennyō about the sign. Without seeing the tree, he said that he knew the answer and asked for the one *kan* of gold. Ikkyū cautioned that on the reverse side of the board there was a warning: "This is not valid for Rennyō." Some people asked Rennyō the answer and he replied: "The answer is very simple. The way to see this tree straight is to recognize that it is twisted."

Again, Ikkyū created the following *kōan* (Zen riddle-like question) for Rennyō: "Amida has no mercy since Amida only saves those who say His Name." (In Japanese: *Amida ni wa makoto no jihi wa nakarikeri, tanomu shujō nomi tasukeru*). Rennyō answered the *kōan* with a poem: "There is no heart far from Amida, but a bowl of water covered cannot reflect the moon" (*Amida ni wa hedatsuru kokoro wa nakededomo futa aru mizu ni tsuki wa yadoraji*).

One may imagine this exchange arising in friendly banter between two friends. Yet, it captures two approaches to Pure Land teaching as it

evolved from Hōnen and his emphasis on the sole practice of nembutsu. Ikkyū sees the exclusivistic, discriminating feature of the practice, confronting the world. Rennyō, however, points to the universal, inclusive character of Amida Buddha that underlies the practice. The one views nembutsu from the outside, while the other experiences it from the inside. According to Rennyō, Amida, like the moon, always shines everywhere equally, but one's mind and heart may be closed. They both highlight the paradoxical nature of the teaching, which is particular and universal.

Stories concerning Shinran such as we find in the *Godenshō* are more serious and express points of doctrine. Here Rennyō is shown in a more light-hearted way to be on good terms with a monk of another sect, but also spiritually keen in responding easily to the questions put to him by the monk. These stories show that Rennyō was the equal of Zen monks who were prominent in religion and arts.

The ethnologist Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), who diligently viewed the life of the Japanese with great insight, digging deeply into the Japanese mind, was not particularly friendly to Shin Buddhism. However, he indicated that the influence of Rennyō continues to live on in remembrances, customs, and practices that have become flesh and blood, and have been handed down unconsciously.⁶ Rennyō established the style of worship in Shin Buddhism, such as the recitation of the *Shōshinge* (*Hymn of True Faith* written by Shinran in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*), *Amidakyō* and Shinran's *Wasan* or hymns. He emphasized the observance of *hōonkō*, the grateful commemoration of Shinran's death, which was first initiated by Kakunyo (1270–1351), the third abbot. His "Letter on White Ashes" (*Hakkotsu no Gobunshō*) became widely used in funerals.

In modern literature, we can observe the influence of Rennyō in the novel *Black Rain* (*Kuroi ame*) by Ibuse Masuji (1898–1993). The story concerns the devastation of Hiroshima and an occasion where no priest was available to perform services. A layperson is left with the obligation to perform a service for a dead fellow worker. He receives from a priest several texts to use in the service, including Rennyō's "White Ashes." The sutra and other scriptures were difficult to understand, but Rennyō's letter was "in gentler, homelier Japanese, in a beautiful language that struck home to the heart." After the service, others wanted to copy the letter. The response of the people was to Rennyō's letter, which caught the spirit of their tragedy and was easily understood.⁷ In spite of the many questions that have been raised among scholars about his leadership and his teaching among scholars, Rennyō's widespread popular influence is enduring.

Particularly in the postwar period, there has been a rediscovery of Rennyō by scholars, which has been noted by Mori Ryūkichi, himself a

scholar of Shin history. He indicates that until a direct path to the study of Shinran had been opened in the beginning of this century, Shin Buddhists could only view Shinran through the filter of Rennyo. This has given rise to the question whether it is Shinran's sangha or Rennyo's, because the influence of Rennyo has been so great. In the pre-modern period, Rennyo was the symbol for the Shinshū kingdom and a feudal religious Order of which he was the leader. Because of such absolute authority, modern people, such as intellectuals, outside of Shin Buddhism withdrew and kept their distance from Rennyo.

In the postwar period a new historical scholarship, represented by a famous Buddhist scholar, Hattori Shisō, threw new light on Rennyo and gave fresh impetus to the study of medieval Buddhism. He employed little known textual records of a subsidiary medieval temple (*Honpukuji kyūki*) to set out the life of Rennyo, rather than just relying on his letters, despite their great value religiously and historically. Other important scholars were Kasahara Kazuo and Inoue Toshio, whose fundamental studies clarified Rennyo's historical character and released him from being merely a symbol for the sect. They restored his position as a historical person, overcoming his long held bad reputation. He even appeared in textbooks and historical novels.⁸ Most recently, Rennyo has become the subject of the popular author Itsuki Hiroyuki, whom we mentioned previously. Through his novel, play, and various essays, Rennyo has gained new attractiveness, because he is portrayed as living resolutely and boldly in an age of turmoil.

In my own scholarly experience, I have encountered the low evaluation of Rennyo, because some of his policies contributed to the formation of the hereditary, ecclesiastical hierarchy in the Hongwanji centered on his family, which is unknown in the history of Buddhism. In addition, the collusion of Hongwanji and the state (*ōbō-buppō*) in promoting the nationalism that contributed to the onset of the recent war has focussed attention on Rennyo's statements concerning the relation of Buddhism and society which were used to justify such collaboration.

While Rennyo has been discounted as a scholar, his efforts in copying texts as an assistant of his father exposed him to the writings of Shinran in an intimate way. He absorbed the fundamental principles of Shinran, which he concentrated in his letters. He also closely studied Kakunyo, the third Abbot, and Zonkaku (1290–1373), Kakunyo's son, as well as the *Anjinketsujōshō*, a Pure Land text of the Seizan school of the Jōdoshū whose author is not certain, yet a favorite of Rennyo and influential in his thought.⁹

Rennyo's major writings were his letters, which total over two hundred. Later eighty of those letters were selected as a special collection by Enryo (1491–1521), his grandson. These letters have now

become virtually scripture for Shin followers, while certain ones are read on special occasions. The most famous is "White Ashes" (*Hakkotsu no Gobunshō*), which as mentioned above is frequently used at Shin funerals.¹⁰

In recent religious studies, the recognition of letters, as personal communications, has grown with the observations that many great teachers have used letters to relate to their followers and share their teaching. Most notable are Hōnen, Shinran, Nichiren and outside of Buddhism, Paul in the Christian tradition. Rennyo's letters have come to be viewed as an important religious resource, because they contain insights and information, which reveal him to be a thoughtful and knowledgeable person. Though he had deeply studied Shinran's teaching, he was neither scholastic nor pedantic.

Inspired by the 500th year commemoration of his death, scholars have continued the effort to look more closely at Rennyo himself in his own historical context, rather than projecting on him the results of later developments in Hongwanji and Buddhism generally. That is, Buddhism in Japan, as a whole, was greatly influenced by the rise of feudalism and eventually imperial absolutism in Japanese history. While it has been easy to attribute these later developments as they are manifested in Hongwanji to Rennyo, more considered and critical study focuses on Rennyo's response to the problems of his own time in order to construct a more accurate image of the person.

Comparisons are frequently made between Shinran and Rennyo highlighting their differing religious and social perspectives, as well as personalities. Shinran unintentionally created a movement and was more individually oriented. His teaching reflects his inward, introspective and subjective, as well as more scholarly or philosophical character. He speaks pointedly of his religious experience and his personal weaknesses or limitations and clearly rejected the idea that he was a teacher or had disciples.

Rennyo, however, inherited a movement that had already become institutionalized. While speaking very little about his own spiritual experience, he consciously accepted the role of teacher or leader of an emerging movement and had to deal with the problems of religious power and authority that accompanied his status. He was concerned with the fortunes of the Shin community. He was more outgoing in his human relations. Further, his position as a teacher must be considered in the light of his enormous influence, for which there is little comparison among other medieval teachers.

Despite differences in personality and religious experience, Shinran's and Rennyo's approaches to faith are similar in being subjective or personal and requiring a definite turn of the mind in trust in Amida's Vows. It is expressed in the grateful recitation of the nembutsu. There

is a common emphasis in both teachers on the absolute Other-Power foundation of deliverance. They understand that Amida is a power within the heart and mind of the person, bringing about a spiritual transformation, as well as being enshrined as the essence of the nembutsu itself.

Rennyo's lowly origins as the son of a concubine and his experience of poverty gave him great sympathy with the ordinary person and made him easy to relate to. In the *Rennyo Shōnin goichidaiki kikigaki*, there is the notation:

(Rennyo) said: "Leaving aside social position and sitting together with everyone alike is like Shinran who said: 'All people within the four seas who have faith [shinjin] are brothers [and sisters].' I only ask that when we sit together that you raise your questions and acquire faith [shin]." ¹¹

It is said that rather than speaking from a platform or raised seat, Rennyo met people knee to knee and drank tea with them. In another instance, Rennyo halted the Tendai practice used in Shin temples of throwing thirty centimeter sticks at people in the audience from the speaker's elevated position when listeners were nodding off.¹² He did not put on airs and disliked a show of piety:

Rennyo Shōnin disliked wearing clothes without designs or patterns. He said that it made someone seem superior (or more religious). He also disdained wearing charcoal black robes. When someone came to him (dressed in this way) he exclaimed: "Here is a properly dressed, superior priest." Therefore, he said: "No, I am not superior; only Amida's Vow is superior."¹³

Briefly, Rennyo's personal style appears more open and democratic. The first letter in the authorized collection emphasizes the camaraderie of Shin Buddhism, noting Shinran's declaration that he did not have even one disciple. Rennyo wore plain gray robes and removed the preaching platform. He sat on the same level with his followers. He admonished his associates not to keep followers waiting and to serve them food and sake. When he visited followers who had little to offer him, he warmly ate the millet gruel that they ate and spent the night discussing religion with them.¹⁴ He advocated that Noh plays be performed to put people at ease and to teach the buddhadharma anew when they have lost interest.¹⁵

Though Rennyo could be solicitous for the welfare of his followers, he was also critical. He castigated the behavior of the priests who sought greater spiritual and financial power over the members. He also censured the members for lacking proper religious motivation for their

participation and for the lack of discussion and understanding of the doctrine.

Rennyō is viewed as a teacher who gave consolation and hope to followers in tough times, not entirely unlike our own time. His historical background is the descent into war and chaos in what is known as the Warring States period of Japanese history. With the gradual collapse of the Ashikaga Shogunate, warlords vied for personal power and struggled to gain control over the country. Rennyō and the Hongwanji were caught in the midst of these struggles. In this context, Rennyō emphasized the otherworldly aspect of Pure Land thought and challenged people to take seriously their future destinies. In his time, the prospect of the Pure Land was a compassionate alternative to the sufferings and uncertainties of life in this world. Hence, he emphasized the “one great issue of the afterlife (*goshō no ichidaiji*).” In Rennyō’s time, the yearning for afterlife was a response to the terrors of life in an unpredictable world, whereas in our time of affluence, the issue is the meaning of existence. Today some who view this life as meaningless have gone so far as to take their own lives, believing they will find meaning in other spheres when they are free from their bodies and the material world.

Recent assessments of Rennyō by Western scholars, most notably Minor Lee Rogers, James C. Dobbins, and Michael Solomon¹⁶ call attention to Rennyō’s central importance in the formation of Shin Buddhism into a major religious force in Japan. Rogers notes the ambiguous and controversial relation of Rennyō as a revered leader of the Shin sect and the problems of religious power that accompanied his historical role.¹⁷ He is multifaceted, being “a Buddhist priest, charismatic religious leader, shrewd political strategist, igniter of literary imagination, friend for turbulent times, representative figure for Japanese spirituality.”¹⁸ Dobbins views Rennyō as a rare individual who had a vision and seized the moment, addressing the needs of ordinary people and giving the clearest exposition of the teaching. He combined religious exhortation and social expediency.¹⁹

The complexity of Rennyō originates from his having to deal with the radical nature of Shin Buddhism in its relations with other traditions and the general society. In addition, popular rebellions called *ikkō ikki*, involved Hongwanji members, merchants, and peasants. These incidents had their roots in the liberating implications of Hōnen’s Pure Land doctrine, which permitted people to accept death positively, while devaluing political and traditional religious institutions that controlled the means of salvation.²⁰ During this time, Hongwanji itself became a power, while at the same time it was opposed by the established Buddhist orders such as Tendai. Rennyō himself only narrowly escaped death because of persecution. Under his leadership, Hongwanji became completely independent of the Tendai order.

In studying Rennyo, we have to distinguish the view within the Hongwanji, which exalts him as the faithful transmitter of Shinran's teaching, and the more critically oriented historical and social studies, which try to assess his role and position in the history of Japan, religiously and socially. In order to develop a proper understanding of Rennyo, it is necessary to provide a context in Japanese history and the history of Shin Buddhism prior to Rennyo in order to make clear the decisive role he played.

We must also look closely at his life and his family. He is remarkable because of the difficulties of his childhood, the problem of his becoming abbot and his family life, which involved five wives in succession and the birth of twenty-seven children, consisting of thirteen sons and fourteen daughters. There were the problems of persecution, and there was the work of propagation and instruction to which he devoted himself. His letters, as the primary resource, highlight his effort to revitalize the Shin movement, by giving correct teaching, while also creatively interpreting its meaning for the people of his time. The letters reflect internal problems of the Shin community, spiritually and socially. The role of the Hongwanji and Rennyo in the *ikkō ikki*, or peasant uprisings is an important area of concern for modern scholars.

We have only hinted at important facets of Rennyo's life and work in order to stimulate a deeper appreciation and realistic assessment of his achievements in Shin history. In this way we can also receive inspiration to develop the teaching in our own age, both maintaining its proper understanding, while also adapting it to the needs of our contemporary society. We shall now turn to what we may learn from Rennyo's endeavors for our own day.

II. THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF RENNYO

In our previous section, we summarized aspects of Rennyo's life that were the basis for his success in revitalizing the Hongwanji and creating a major, powerful religious movement in medieval Japan. Sifting through the evidence of his thought and activities, we can discover clues for the renaissance of contemporary Shin Buddhism, emphasizing his progressive character. Above all, it is important that the spirit of Rennyo be the guiding force of the Shin sangha.

A. Rennyo's Perspective on Faith and Religious Experience

As we have earlier pointed out, both Shinran and Rennyo each responded to issues of their own time and circumstance. There is a basic unity in their thought, despite differences in their personalities and

historical situation. While sharing Shinran's personal vision of Amida's all-encompassing compassion and wisdom, Rennyo adjusted Shinran's fundamental insights to make them more accessible and understandable to the ordinary person of his day. He simplified the more complex teaching of Shinran, holding to the principle of emphasizing only the most essential principles. Further, being born within an already existing institutional system, Rennyo believed that the teachings were made manifest in the world by means of the Hongwanji tradition.²¹

Rennyo's experiences of the deaths of his wives and several children, as well as the violence of the age, made him keenly aware of the impermanence, unpredictability, and violence in life.²² In view of the brevity of life and depth of our evil²³, the afterlife is of the greatest importance (*goshō no ichidaiji*), in contrast to Shinran's stress on the reception of faith and assurance of rebirth in this life.²⁴ Rennyo draws a clear distinction between this world and the next, and it is the next that should be the object of our aspiration and the decisive settling of mind.

While Rennyo upholds strongly the principle of karma as the basis for encountering the teaching, religious experience is a total process for him. This process is outlined in five conditions, which must be present in order for a person to attain truly settled faith. First, there is the unfolding of good karma from the past. Second, there is the meeting with a good teacher.²⁵ Third is receiving Amida's light; fourth is attaining faith, and fifth, saying the name of the Buddha.²⁶ However, these five elements comprise a simultaneous moment in which we have the good fortune to encounter a teacher who clarifies the truth concerning our spiritual condition and awakens confidence in the truth of the teaching. It is the one moment of entrusting and attaining of truly settled faith.

According to Rennyo, faith is fundamental²⁷ and is the source of nembutsu.²⁸ Faith "is granted by Amida Tathāgata . . . this is not faith generated by the practitioner, . . . it is Amida Tathāgata's Other-Power faith."²⁹ The term *shinjin* is taken by Rennyo to be Amida's Other-Power true mind which displaces the believer's mind of self-striving.³⁰ An alternative term for faith is *anjin* or *yasuki kokoro*, which has essentially the same meaning as *shinjin*, but with emphasis on the aspect of the peace, or tranquillity that attends reception of faith.³¹

Through the reception of *shinjin/anjin* the believer is embraced within the Buddha mind in a spiritual union, confirmed by faith and expressed in the teaching of the unity of the being and the Buddha (*kīhō ittai*), derived from the *Anjinketsujōshō*. Rennyo interprets the terms *namu* and *amida butsu* in the nembutsu to emphasize the oneness of the mind of the person of settled faith and the Buddha. It is the action of the Tathāgata that creates the oneness of the Buddha mind and ordinary mind, guaranteeing the ultimate enlightenment of the person of faith.³² The name *namu-amida-butsu* is the verbal, symbolic expression of the

reality of that oneness when it is recited in trust and gratitude.³³ The recitation of the name is only for gratitude, arising spontaneously from the settled mind of faith.³⁴

It is important to note that external appearances, or the varying outward conditions, status or roles of people in life, have no relevance in attaining trust. Further, on attaining the settled mind, one carries on a normal life, whether it is as a hunter, fisherman, or tradesman.³⁵ Settled faith means also to honor the laws of the state and fulfill public obligations.³⁶ The relation of Buddhism and the state or society is an important issue in Rennyō's thought, but it must be viewed in the light of his historical situation. Essentially he promoted the idea we have in the New Testament of "rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God [Buddha] what is God's [Buddha's]." (Matt. 15:15-22.)

In order to encourage his followers to be respectful of other religions, Rennyō exalts Amida Buddha as the Original Teacher and Original Buddha of all buddhas and gods.³⁷ That is, he is the superior³⁸ and supreme expression of buddhahood which includes all other gods and buddhas within himself. They appear as *upāya* or compassionate means to lead people to the buddhadharma.

Both Shinran and Rennyō had to confront the problem of discipline among the members. Shinran, living in Kyoto and at a great distance from his followers in Eastern Japan, exhorted proper behavior on their part without developing specific rules. Rennyō, however, in an institutional context attempted to exert more control over the Shin community. In his view the term *anjin* or settled mind carried with it the responsibility to follow the obligatory observances, which he set down as a means of avoiding conflicts and obstacles to the teaching in the general community.

From this brief survey, we can see that Rennyō, like Shinran, was concerned for the personal character of faith and its expression in a deep conviction of Amida's compassion. However, Rennyō consolidated the growing Shin community by establishing principles that are more specific for daily living and human relations.

B. Rennyō's Mission of Propagation and Education

What ultimately gives Rennyō's life significance is his work of propagation and education, which enabled Hongwanji to become the principal leader of Shin Buddhism. Without his consistent efforts to make the teaching more comprehensible to the ordinary person, it is clear that Shinran's highly personal and subtle teaching would have remained obscure and veiled in history.

The Abbots before Rennyō engaged in propagation activities, yet Hongwanji remained a small segment of the larger Shin movement.

Traditionally there were ten branches of which the Hongwanji was but one. It opposed the flourishing Bukkōji and Takada branches, which employed popular practices, viewed by Hongwanji leaders as inconsistent with Shinran's teaching. Lacking in popular appeal, the Hongwanji became impoverished and isolated.

The controversy centering on Rennyo's acceptance as Abbot revolved about the ability of the contenders to revive the fortunes of the Hongwanji. Rennyo's uncle, Nyōjō (1412–1460), convinced family members that Rennyo, rather than Ōgen (1433–1503), son of the legitimate wife of Zonnyo (1396–1457), was more eminently qualified because of his intimate relation to his father and closer relations to the followers.³⁹ When Rennyo finally became Abbot, it was clearly the combination of Rennyo's personality, his abilities and activities, the times and the character of his teaching that brought about the momentous change in the fortunes of the Hongwanji. He was the right man in the right place at the right time.

Rennyo's activities continued his father's efforts, which included copying texts, writing objects of worship in the form of name-scrolls, granting Dharma-names, undertaking teaching tours, establishing temples, and writing letters, as well as frequent interviews and meetings with individual disciples. These endeavors all aimed to secure the relationship of Rennyo and the Hongwanji with the followers on a deeply personal level. He was also perceptive in seeing how social dynamics worked in Japanese society when he developed the system of *kō*, or small, voluntary associations for religious nurture, and described how propagation should proceed. We might say that Rennyo's propagation and education depended on personal relations, communication-publication through copying texts or writing letters, etc., and social insight.

We may not all share Rennyo's combination of personal traits that contributed greatly to his enormous influence. Nevertheless, we can benefit from the specific strategies he employed in his work of propagation and education which are the basis of his historical and religious importance.

Though Shinran had established the precedent of writing letters to respond to doctrinal questions from disciples, Rennyo's letters were central to his project as a vital means for presenting the essentials of Shin Buddhism in clear and concise language. In comparison to Shinran's scholarly texts such as the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, they could be heard by all followers and were easily copied. Rennyo's letters number over two hundred. However, eighty were selected by Ennyo (1491-1521), Rennyo's grandson, directed by his father, Jitsunyo (1458–1525) the ninth Abbot. These have become virtually sacred text for Shin Buddhists. Most famous among all of them is the "Letter on White Ashes," discussed above.⁴⁰ This letter contributed to Rennyo's popularity, it touched the

hearts of people with the reality of impermanence, and the importance of faith and gratitude in spiritual life.

Rennyo made gratitude a central feature of Shin Buddhism. A general accounting of his letters indicates that in the collection of eighty letters forty-nine close with specific exhortations to gratitude, while in others it is implied. Through his insistence, the expression of gratitude became the distinctive approach of Shin Buddhism to practice and religious reflection.

With his father, he made many hand-written copies of Shinran's text for various disciples. This was an extremely laborious method. However, both Rennyo and his father promoted block printing and dissemination of Shinran's *Shōshinge* and *Sanjō-wasan* (three collections of hymns) which were more understandable for those who read or sang them. Here he used, as it were, the latest technology to make materials widely available to the members. Encouraging the use of these texts in personal devotion at home, Rennyo contributed to the deepening of the personal commitment of members to the teaching, as well as the development of literacy among the people.

Rennyo laid the basis for a strong, stable ecclesiastical system by the appointment of his sons to strategic temples and the marriage of his daughters to important clergy. The formation of an inner circle of sons to consult and carry on the teaching made for a broad base of leadership and contributed to the doctrinal integrity of the movement. It is remarkable that after his passing, the unity of the family was maintained.

While establishing the foundation for future Shinshū organization, Rennyo also encouraged grass roots association and activity of a more personal and democratic nature. As the social-religious foundation of Shin Buddhism, the *kō*, (local, voluntary cells in the villages) provided an intimate context to nurture the inward reality of faith. Through the development of the *kō*, groups of disciples met on a monthly basis to discuss the faith (*yoriai dangō*). Here a lively sense of community and commitment were nourished.

Since the *kō* might coincide with the village, in time religious and political aspects overlapped as is evident in the peasant *ikkō ikki* uprisings. One important characteristic, however, is that the *kō* could transcend its simply local character through its connection with the broad movement of Shin Buddhism. This was the basis for the enormous power that Shin Buddhism came to hold in medieval society. This power led to its struggle with Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), and eventual division under the Tokugawa.

We can see that the meetings of the *kō* or temples provided opportunity for members to interact and discuss their faith in a more personal way. The dissemination of the *Shōshinge* and *Wasan* suggests that part of the meeting involved the devotional chanting of these texts, while

members and clergy then discussed the teaching. Rennyo also wrote numerous letters marking the anniversary of Shinran's death in which he commented on the meaning of the teaching. The letters were to be read at the services.⁴¹ The meetings were clearly also a social occasion, though Rennyo desired that the religious purpose be constantly maintained.⁴² For him the spirituality of the movement was uppermost. In his overall perspective he recognized that the prosperity of the movement does not lie in the prestige of great numbers, but whether people have faith, and the flourishing of the right sole practice comes about through the will of the disciples who follow.⁴³

In the educational process, Rennyo was also very perceptive. He understood the essential role of the teacher, though not in an authoritarian fashion like the other competing Shin Buddhist movements of his time. He realized that faith does not arise in a vacuum, but there must be a teacher who interacts with the seeker to evoke faith and give it stability (*Gobunshō*, II-11). The teacher is to deal with questions and doubts about the teaching and never to suppress the disciple's inquiry.

Shin Buddhism is more than simple faith in a practice that promises some future benefit, such as the self-power *nembutsu*, which conduces to an externality of religion or a quantitative calculation of benefits. Shin Buddhism is a religion of personal experience, becoming aware of Amida's unconditional compassion at work in our lives. Through discussion and interaction with the teacher, a clarity and confidence is reached such that one is assured of rebirth in the Pure Land (*shōjōju*) and lives by that assurance. It is to attain the confirmation and conviction of one's faith indicated in the terms: *shinjin ichinen* (*shinjin* of one thought-moment), *ichinen hokki heizei gōjō* (the karmic cause of birth is fulfilled in ordinary life), or *anjin ketsujō* (attainment of the settled mind). It is not a practice to do, but a faith to live by. D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966) translated the term *gyō* (normally translated as “practice”) in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* as “living” which approaches the holistic perspective of the Shin understanding of faith.

As a strategy for propagation, Rennyo spoke the language of the people. This is demonstrated by his adoption of the term *tanomu*, which was widely used by other Jōdo schools. Rennyo gave it the Shinshū meaning of relying or trusting in the Vow of Amida Buddha, rather than pleading for salvation as in the term *tasuke tamae to tanomu*. He often employed the term *anjin* in place of *shinjin* because it was also widely used in Pure Land circles. However, he gave clear Shinshū meaning to these terms.

Rennyo made many tours of the countryside to spread the teaching. This gave him wide exposure to the living conditions of the people. He also suggested that to propagate Shin Buddhism effectively one must approach the three most important people in a village, the priest, the

elder, and the headman. Apart from the hierarchical character of this social order, what is important here is Rennyō's sensitivity to the changing nature of the society in which he lived and his shrewdness in recognizing its usefulness. Though in our more individualistic age, this strategy would have little effect, the principle underlying his recommendation is that we must understand the society we are living in and be able to address important segments of society in a way that will attract their interest and support.

Rennyō is notable in his time for his sensitivity to the spiritual welfare of women, inspired perhaps by his concern for his wives and numerous daughters, as well as the women who participated in his movement. He refers to the spiritual status of women in fifty-eight of the two hundred twelve letters that are considered authentic. Contrasting Shin Buddhism with other Buddhist traditions, Rennyō stressed that the salvation of women was a primary concern for Amida Buddha. This is significant because the religious status of women in traditional Buddhism was lower than the status of men.⁴⁴ Though Rennyō declares the spiritual equality of women, he does not make clear their social equality. This remains a task for our contemporary sangha.

CONCLUSION

Like Rennyō, we must be able to adapt the teaching to meet the needs of ordinary people, as well as to make clear its challenge for people in all walks of life and segments of society. The pressing issues of contemporary society cannot be ignored by religious faith. The life and teachings of Rennyō, forged in a turbulent age, offer insight and guidance for searching people today and inspire hope for life now, as well as hereafter. We have observed many aspects of Rennyō's activities and style that brought Shin Buddhism to its highest level in the medieval period.

It is important to note here, in distinction to other Buddhist traditions which place a high emphasis on practice, that the nembutsu taught in Shin Buddhism is "neither a practice nor a good deed," aiming at attaining enlightenment or some type of benefit. Life and living in its totality is "practice" and not merely those activities regarded as "religious." The principles of the unity of beings and dharma (*kihō ittai*) and the interrelation of the spiritual truth and secular truth (*shinzoku nitai*) imply that our lives are to manifest the highest truth; that we live with self reflection, seeing ourselves in the mirror of the Dharma. The characteristics of such a life, then as now, are comradeship, communication, critique, commitment or deep religious motivation and understanding. These are the keys to the future for Shin Buddhism.

NOTES

1. See Galen Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida: History and Orientalism in the Study of Pure Land Buddhism* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 141, note 2: “If Honganji had about 10 million members in 1875, it included about 30 percent of the Japanese population (1875 national figure: 34,338,000).”
2. Itsuki Hiroyuki, *Rennyō: Sei zoku guyū no ningenzō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1994), pp. 2–5.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–8, 15.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 137–140
6. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
7. Minor Lee Rogers and Ann T. Rogers, *Rennyō: The Second Founder of Shin Buddhism* (Berkeley, Calif.: Asian Humanities Press, 1991), pp. 342–343.
8. Mori Ryūichi, *Rennyō* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1969), pp. 3–4.
9. James C. Dobbins, *Jōdo Shinshū: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan*, (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 106–107.
10. This eloquent letter, according to scholars, borrowed images and phrases from other texts such as the *Mujōkōshiki* by the Retired Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239) when he was exiled to Oki after the Jōkyū rebellion in 1222. This text was quoted by Zonkaku in his *Zonkaku hōgo*. See Sugi Shirō, *Gobunshō kōwa* (1933; reprint, Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdo, 1993), pp. 386–388; Inagi Sen’ei, *Gobunshō-gaiyō* (1983; reprint, Kyoto: Hyakkaen, 1995), pp. 502–513.
11. *Rennyō shōnin goichidaiki kikigaki*, no. 40, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 3 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941), p. 543. Author’s translation. For alternative translation, see Kosho Yamamoto, *The Words of St. Rennyō* (Yamaguchi, Japan: The Karin Bunko, 1968), p. 21.
12. Jōdo Shinshū Kyōgaku Kenkyūsho, ed., *Rennyō Shōnin: Sono oshie to shōgai ni manabu* (Kyoto: Honganji Shuppansha, 1995), p. 79.
13. *Rennyō shōnin goichidaiki kikigaki*, no. 167, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 3, pp. 571–572. Author’s translation. For alternative translation, see Yamamoto, *Words of St. Rennyō*, p. 61.
14. Ira Michael Solomon, “Rennyō and the Rise of Honganji in Muromachi Japan,” (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1972), pp. 187–188. Revised edition published as Michael Solomon, *Rennyō and the Rise of Honganji: Shin Buddhism and Society in Medieval Japan* (Los Angeles: Pure Land Publications, 1997).

15. *Jitsugo kyūki*, no. 51, in Inaba Masamaru, *Rennyo shōnin gyōjitsu* (1928; reprint, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1990), no. 214, p. 83.

16. In addition to the other works by these authors cited elsewhere in this article, the reader may also be referred to Minor L. Rogers, “Rennyo’s *Ofumi* and the Shinshū in Pure Land Tradition” in James Foard, Michael Solomon and Richard K. Payne, eds., *The Pure Land Tradition: History and Development* (Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, no. 3. Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1996), pp. 429–461; Michael Solomon, “Honganji under Rennyo: The Development of Shinshū in Medieval Japan,” in Foard, Solomon and Payne, eds., *The Pure Land Tradition*, pp. 399–428; and James C. Dobbins, “The World-View of Rennyo and His Religion: A Study of ‘Sayings From the Life of Master Rennyo’ (*Rennyo Shōnin goichidai kikigaki*)” in *The Rennyo Shonin Reader* (Kyoto: Institute of Jodo Shinshu Studies, 1998), pp. 113–131.

17. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, pp. 79–84.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

19. Dobbins, *Jōdo Shinshū*, p. 132.

20. Soho Machida, *Renegade Monk: Hōnen and Japanese Pure Land Buddhism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 7–9.

21. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, III-9.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77, note 19.

23. The ten transgressions are (1) destroying life, (2) stealing, (3) committing adultery, (4) lying, (5) uttering words that cause enmity, (6) uttering harsh words, (7) engaging in idle talk, (8) greed, (9) anger, (10) wrong views. The five grave offenses are (1) killing one’s mother, (2) killing one’s father, (3) killing an arhat, (4) causing blood to flow from the body of a Buddha, and (5) disrupting the harmony of the assembly of monks, causing schism or dissolution. (Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 147, n. 18, 19.) The five obstacles are that women cannot become deities like Brahma, Indra, Mara-kings, *cakravartin* or Buddha. The three submissions are submission to father, husband and eldest son.

24. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, I-10; V-2. Rennyo does not neglect the principle of entry into the company of the truly assured (*shōjōju*) taught by Shinran or the attainment of confirmed faith in this life (*anjin/shinjin ketsujō*). It is that his eye is more on the goal of that experience than we see in Shinran.

25. The role of the teacher is fundamental in light of the emphasis on hearing the name in the fulfillment text of the 18th Vow. Hearing requires that there be a teacher (Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, I-15; III-6). An aspect of the process of hearing and settling faith is that it is promoted through discussion and the clarification of doubts. Rennyo states: “Even if you feel that you understand the significance of the Buddha-dharma—having listened through sliding doors or over a hedge—faith will be decisively settled [only] by your

repeatedly and carefully asking others about its meaning You should ask others, time after time, about what you have understood of faith, until Other-Power faith (*anjin*) is decisively settled. If you listen but once, there will surely be mistakes” (Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, IV-7, 8, 12).

26. *Ibid.*, II-11.

27. *Ibid.*, V-10.

28. *Ibid.*, V-22.

29. *Ibid.*, V-12.

30. *Ibid.*, I-15; IV-6.

31. *Ibid.*, II-15.

32. *Ibid.*, II-10.

33. *Ibid.*, III-7.

34. *Ibid.*, I-1,2,5.

35. *Ibid.*, I-3; IV-1.

36. *Ibid.*, II-6; IV-1.

37. *Ibid.*, II-8.

38. *Ibid.*, V-5.

39. Rennyō’s birth mother had been a concubine to his father and the family required Zonnyō to take a legal wife when he succeeded to the abbacy. The stepmother treated Rennyō harshly and was determined that her son would become Abbot. At first she succeeded, but Nyojō persuaded the family to accept Rennyō on his merits.

40. English translations appear in the Buddhist Churches of America, *Shinshū Seiten: Jōdo Shin Buddhist Teaching* (San Francisco: Buddhist Churches of America, 1978), no. 78, p. 377; and in a recent translation by Rogers and Rogers in *Rennyō*, V-16.

41. Some anniversary letters are given in the collection of 85. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, III-9, III-11, V-11.

42. The *hōonkō* service was held on the twenty-eighth day of the eleventh month since the time of Kakunyo, the third Abbot, and for which he composed the *Hōonkō shiki* (*The Rite for the Meeting of Thanksgiving*) in 1294. The character for *kō* is the same for the type of meeting discussed here.

43. *Jitsugo kyūki*, no. 56 and 57, in Inaba Masamaru, *Rennyō Shōnin gyojitsu*, no. 221 and 222, p. 85.

44. See my essay “Rennyō’s View of the Salvation of Women: Overcoming the Five Obstacles and Three Subordinations,” in *The Rennyō Shōnin Reader* (Kyoto: Institute of Jōdo Shinshū Studies, 1998), pp. 5–33.

Rennyō's Letter on Kengyoku-ni

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THE *LETTERS OF RENNYO* (*Gobunshō*, or *Ofumi*) formed the centerpiece of his propagational efforts throughout his life. Although the total number of letters that he wrote during his career is unknown, as many as two hundred fifty-two letters have been identified as those penned by Rennyō. Two hundred eleven letters were compiled by Ennyō (1491–1521) during the tenure of Jitsunyo, the ninth Head Priest of Hongwanji. Ennyō selected eighty letters from among them and compiled them as the *Letters in the Five Fascicle Collection* (*Gojō no Gobunshō*). In addition, four letters written by Rennyō during the last summer of his life have been collected as the *Letters of Summers* (*Ge no Gobunshō*). The final letter that has been included with those above is the *Gozokushō*, which is Rennyō's short biographical sketch of Shinran. A translation of these eighty-five letters can be found in *Shinshū Seiten* compiled by Tri-State Buddhist Temples.¹ A recent translation of the *Letters in the Five Fascicle Collection* has been presented with a detailed exposition of Rennyō's life and thought in *Rennyō: The Second Founder of Shin Buddhism* by Minor L. and Ann T. Rogers.²

The remainder constitute the letters outside of the *Five Fascicle Collection*, called *Jōgai no Gobunshō*. Thus far very few of them have been translated into English. Rennyō's letter "On Kengyoku-ni" is included with this group of letters and it now appears in English for the first time. Many of Rennyō's letters are doctrinal tracts, often presenting detailed expositions of the essence of Shin doctrine. Others contain his admonitions to his followers to refrain from improper behavior. In that respect, "On Kengyoku-ni" is somewhat different from his other letters, for in it Rennyō writes movingly of the life and death of his second daughter, Kengyoku (1448–1472). The letter is also unusual in the fact that it represents a rare instance in which Rennyō talks at length about a member of his family. However, what this letter holds in common with most of Rennyō's letters is his fervent urging to his followers that they entrust themselves completely to the salvific reality of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow.

In the letter, Rennyo describes the hardships that Kengyoku had to endure throughout her young life. Sent off as a child to be a servant in a Zen temple, she later became a nun of the Jōkein lineage of the Jōdo school. Later she returned to Hongwanji to care for her step-mother, who had taken ill. Despite her best efforts, however, her mother, and two sisters died within a short time. Shortly thereafter, Kengyoku was summoned to join Rennyo at Yoshizaki in the northern regions. There, Rennyo relates, she realized *shinjin*, the heart and mind of complete reliance on Amida's Vow, which brought about the settlement of her birth. Soon thereafter, she passed away at the young age of twenty-five.

The letter then goes on to describe the contents of a dream that took place after her funeral. The dreamer (probably Rennyo) watches as a golden buddha appears out of the ashes of Kengyoku's cremated remains. The buddha suddenly changes into a butterfly and flies away into the western sky. According to the letter, this vision is evidence of her attainment of birth in Amida's Pure Land. The letter then concludes with Rennyo's heart-felt admission that Kengyoku is a good teacher who could guide him and all persons to realize *shinjin* and say the *nembutsu* in gratitude.

Interestingly, three essays in this journal make reference to this letter. Tomoyasu Hayashi states that Rennyo's experience of loss had a great impact on his views on impermanence.³ Particularly, the deaths of his second wife and four daughters in a short period of time deepened his concern about and understanding of the transiency of life. Akira Ōmine focuses on Rennyo's use of the word *tamashii* or, spirit.⁴ He concludes that Rennyo did not equate that notion with the concept of a substantial soul. Instead, in the letter the word indicates Rennyo's grief over the loss of his daughter and a reaffirmation of the primacy of *shinjin*. Finally, Jitsuen Kakehashi takes the relationship between Rennyo and Kengyoku as the focal point of his lecture.⁵ He offers insight into the events of her life and the meaning that her death held for Rennyo. Kakehashi concludes with the observation that the bond between Rennyo and Kengyoku represented the ideal relationship for followers of the Shin Buddhist path, as they taught and guided each other to the settlement of their birth.

NOTES

1. Tri-State Buddhist Temples, comp., *Shinshū Seiten: Jōdo Shin Buddhist Teaching* (San Francisco: Buddhist Churches of America, 1978), pp. 269–390. See also Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, comp., *The Shinshu Seiten: The Holy Scripture of Shinshu* (1955: repr. Honolulu: Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, 1961), pp. 287–298.
2. Minor L. and Ann T. Rogers, *Rennyō: The Second Founder of Shin Buddhism* (Berkeley, Calif.: Asian Humanities Press, 1991), pp. 137–259.
3. Tomoyasu Hayashi, “The Ideal of Impermanence in Rennyō’s Letters,” *The Pacific World*, Third Series 1 (1999): pp. 31–46.
4. Akira Ōmine, “The Idea of *Tamashii* in Buddhism: Who is the ‘Self’?,” *The Pacific World*, Third Series 1 (1999): pp. 47–60.
5. Jitsuen Kakehashi, “Rennyō and His Daughter, Kengyoku,” *The Pacific World*, Third Series 1 (1999): pp. 61–75.

On Kengyoku-ni¹

As I quietly consider this matter, I think that it must be true when we say that the basis of a person's character can be found in one's name. Thus, Kengyoku was the name of a person who has just passed away and realized birth. Her name means "to see a gem." What kind of gem? The name Kengyoku means to behold the wondrous truth of suchness and dharma-nature—the "wish-fulfilling gem" (*nyoi hōju*).²

Kengyoku-ni was a nun, who served originally as a servant (*katsujiki*)³ at a Zen temple, but before long she became a follower of the Jōkein lineage.⁴ Yet, drawn by inconceivable conditions from the past, she came to realize, in recent days, the *shinjin* of our tradition. Here is the reason why. On the fifth day of the twelfth month of the second year of Bunmei (1470) the woman who had been her aunt⁵ passed away. Then, even as she was deeply mourning that loss, her older sister's life⁶ came to an end on the sixth day of the second month of the third year of Bunmei (1471). Her grief was boundless, and, as a result, she herself became incurably ill. Perhaps, in the end, we must say that her illness arose out of her grief and she was never able to recover. On the tenth day of the fifth month of this year (1472) she was confined to her sick bed, and after ninety-four days she passed away.⁷

Throughout her illness she would speak of the unlimited joy she felt over having been able to abandon the "peace of mind" taught in the Jōkein lineage, which she had held until then, and become established in the "settled mind" of our tradition.⁸ On the day before her life came to an end, particularly, she spoke over and over again of the establishment of her settled mind and of her deep appreciation for the efforts of those who had nursed her for so many days. Besides that, she reflected on all of the things that she had come to know during her life. Finally, toward the end of the hour of the dragon (9 A.M.), in the morning of the fourteenth day of the eighth month, lying with her head to the north and facing the west, she attained birth.

Her outward appearance and complexion had led those who cared for her to think, as would anyone, that somehow she would become well again if they would do all that they possibly could for her. But, human life is limited, and so it was unavoidable that she would be summoned by the winds of impermanence and pass away as she did. There was no one who could reflect again upon her life and not be moved to heart-felt tears.

Truly, it can also be said that the deceased was a person in whom the karma of past good deeds (*shukuzen*)⁹ had emerged. The reason for this

must be that she had been able to encounter the inconceivable power of Amida Tathagata's Vow, which is a powerful condition for the attainment of her birth. Indeed, it is also not insignificant that tens of thousands of people attended her funeral service for the very reason that she had travelled to this place in the northern provinces¹⁰ and here attained birth.

Toward the dawn of the night of her cremation on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a certain person¹¹ here experienced a wondrous vision about her in a dream. In his dream he could see the funeral grounds where her body had vanished in the smoke of cremation, and there, arising out of the white ashes and bones that remained, he could observe three blue lotus blossoms. Within the blossoms he could see a golden Buddha, only one-inch tall, which sent forth rays of light. As he watched, it instantly turned into a butterfly and disappeared from sight. He thereupon awoke from his dream.

This vision was a manifestation of the gem of suchness and dharmature found in her name, Kengyoku. She became a butterfly and disappeared from sight. This indicates without question that her spirit has been transformed into a butterfly,¹² which has gone into the sky of dharma-nature, to the world of ultimate bliss—the city of nirvana.

Also, the fact that a funeral could even have taken place at this temple was because the deceased had realized birth. In particular, there had been a downpour of rain just prior to the cremation. Yet, at the time of the cremation, the sky had cleared, and the moon was pure and bright. Purple clouds stretched across the sky and were reflected in five colors upon the full moon. Everyone could observe this. I truly feel that this must have been an auspicious sign, which allowed us to know that the deceased had assuredly attained birth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Thus it is that everyone should reflect on this nun, Kengyoku, and on her birth. We should understand that she is truly our good teacher (*zenjishiki*).¹³ If people—all men and women—should, as a result, become settled in *shinjin* in the one-thought moment of taking refuge and say the *nembutsu* to respond in gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence, then surely her life will have become a condition for our going to be born in the Pure Land of that one Buddha.

Respectfully.

NOTES

1. This translation is based on the tenth letter located among the *Jōgai no Gobunshō* in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 5 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kobundō, 1983), pp. 306–308.
2. A precious gem that was said to fulfill all of one's wishes. Known as *cintāmani* in Sanskrit, it was said to provide one with jewels, garments, or food, according to one's desires. Also, it was said to be able to ward off disaster, chase away evil and purify unclean water. In a more general sense, the mani gem was a symbol representing the Dharma or virtues of the Buddha.
3. This word refers to a young person who serves food to the priests of the temple. When she was just a child, Kengyoku had been placed in the care of a Zen temple by Rennyo. Kengyoku was born in 1448, prior to Rennyo's succession to the position of Head Priest of Hongwanji. During this period Hongwanji as a whole and Rennyo in particular faced severe financial hardships. As a result, Rennyo placed many of his children in the care of other temples.
4. Jōkein lineage was one of the most important branches of the Jōdo school that had been established by Hōnen. The Jōkein lineage was begun by Rai'a Nenkū (d. 1297), a disciple of Hōnen. It derives its name from the Shōjōkein temple in Kyōto. Shōjuan was a temple for nuns of the Jōkein order. It was at this temple that Kengyoku became a nun of the Jōdo school and studied its teachings.
5. This refers to Renyū, who was the younger sister of Nyoryō (d. 1455), Rennyo's first wife. After Nyoryō's death, Renyū became his second wife. Kengyoku's birth mother was Nyoryō. Thus, Renyū, the woman who had been Kengyoku's aunt became her step-mother. Rennyo asked Kengyoku to leave Shōjuan and return to Hongwanji in order to care for Renyū when she became ill.
6. This refers to Nyokei (b. 1446), Rennyo's eldest who died in the second month of 1471 at the age of twenty-seven. In actuality, another sister, Myōi (b. 1461) also died during the same month at the age of twelve.
7. Kengyoku died at Yoshizaki at the age of twenty-five in the eighth month of 1472. Just prior to her death, a third sister, Ryōnin, also passed away in the eighth month of 1472.
8. Although Rennyo uses the same word *anjin* in this letter, it has been translated in two ways, "peace of mind" and "settled mind," in this passage in order to reflect the differing interpretations of the word by the Jōkein lineage of the Jōdo school and by the Jōdo Shinshū. In the case of the Jōkein lineage, *anjin* represents the calmness of mind that one needs to have at the moment of death in order to gain the assurance of birth. In Shin Buddhism, *anjin* is the mind of complete trust in Amida Buddha, which brings about the

complete settlement of one's birth, even in the midst of daily life.

9. Good acts performed in and stored from the past. In Shin Buddhism the roots of good that have been stored from the past emerge (*kaihotsu*) in a way that allows a person to realize *shinjin*.

10. This refers to Yoshizaki, which was situated on the border between Echizen and Kaga provinces. In this rustic place Rennyō established a new base of operations for the Hongwanji's propagational activities throughout the northern regions. Kengyoku was summoned by Rennyō to join him at Yoshizaki. At that time Kengyoku was staying at Miidera in Ōmi province with Rennyō's children. Prior to that she had been a nun in Kyoto.

11. It is believed that this refers to Rennyō himself.

12. The word Rennyō uses is *tamashii*, which means spirit. This does not indicate a permanent, substantial soul. See Ōmine's discussion of this topic in this journal. Kakehashi's article in this journal suggests that the butterfly is a universal symbol of death. He also states that, for Rennyō, it represented Kengyoku's birth in Pure Land and attainment of enlightenment.

13. A good friend and teacher who teaches and guides beings to follow the Path of the Buddha. *Kalyāna-mitra* in Sanskrit. In *Letters II-2*, Rennyō states that meeting a good teacher is one of the five conditions that are necessary to attain birth.

The Idea of Impermanence in Rennyō's *Letters*¹

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THE 500TH YEAR MEMORIAL Service for Rennyō Shōnin (1415–1499), the Eighth Head Priest of the Hongwanji, was observed over a ten-part, one hundred day period from March through October of 1998. This commemoration took place on a scale considerably larger than the two previous memorials for Rennyō, each of which was held over periods of eight days. The 400th Year Memorial Service took place from April 7 through 14, 1894, while the 450th Year Memorial Service was held from April 10 through 17, 1948.

Indeed, the flurry of recent activities concerning Rennyō has been very gratifying. Research projects, public lectures and symposia on Rennyō, as well as groups studying his writings—his *Letters* (*Gobunshō*, or *Ofumi*) and his memoirs, known as *Rennyō shōnin goichidaiki kikigaki* (*The Recorded Sayings of the Master Rennyō*)—are still taking place in many locales. Moreover, publications related to Rennyō are now being produced in greater numbers than before.

The popular writer, Itsuki Hiroyuki, has authored two books on Rennyō. The first is entitled *Rennyō: Seizoku guyū no ningenzō* (*Rennyō: A Human Being of the Sacred and Secular Worlds*).² The second book is a drama script entitled *Rennyō: Ware fukaki fuchi yori* (*Rennyō: From the Depths of My Abyss*).³ It is said that Itsuki was writing this drama at the time when the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake of January 7, 1995, occurred and that the impact that the earthquake had upon him is strongly reflected in the work. In a booklet distributed at a performance of the drama,⁴ Itsuki states the following,

Hōnen, Shinran, Rennyō. Each of these three religious individuals was uniquely different from the others in nuance and shading. This is the way that I would describe them:

First, Hōnen was a person who taught us about easily practicing a matter of utmost importance. Next, Shinran, who was Hōnen's disciple, was a person who sought to examine this easy matter truly and deeply. In contrast, Rennyō, who relied upon Hōnen and Shinran, was a person who, throughout his life, sought with all of

his might to transmit this profound matter as widely as he could.

To practice the important matter easily;
 To examine the easy matter deeply;
 To transmit the deep matter widely.

These three aims represent the intentions which I also first had when I set out as a writer; they remain my secret aspirations that I cherish even today. Now as we dramatize Rennyo's life, I believe that it is necessary for us to meditate anew on these three aspirations.

With these words, Itsuki presents his own view of the historical development of the *nembutsu*, which flowed through Hōnen (1133–1212), Shinran (1173–1262) and Rennyo. They also reveal the view of humanity of an author who has presented one literary work after another to the world.

* * *

On August 30, 1996, a second year student in my class at the university died in a traffic accident. Both the young man and his father, who had been at his side guiding him, died. This young man, who had received his driver's license five days earlier, was practicing his driving on the road when he crossed over the center line while attempting to pass a vehicle in front of him. Colliding head-on with a truck that had been approaching from the opposite direction, the vehicle in which he was riding was crushed beneath the truck. Both the young student and his father died instantly.

I went with the chief of my section at the university to take part in the funeral service at the family temple in Hyōgo Prefecture. Standing before the two caskets for the family photograph the young student's mother fought back her tears as she simply repeated the *nembutsu*. According to the young man's mother, he had just decided that he wanted to succeed his father as priest of the temple and so had received his priestly ordination in March of that year. His father had just retired from his teaching post, at which he had worked for many years. He was also just at the point of regaining his health, having overcome an illness that had lasted for over one year. The young man was twenty years old; his father was sixty-two.

My relationship with this young student was very brief. He had attended twelve sessions of my class during the spring term from April 11 through July 4. Yet he was an excellent and serious student, having submitted all of his class reports and never once having been absent from

class. It was truly regrettable that his young life ended much too soon, with his goals only partially realized.

Namoamidabutsu.

* * *

RENNYO'S VIEW OF IMPERMANENCE

The centerpiece of Rennyo's propagational activities and teaching can be found in his Letters (*Gobunshō*, or *Ofumi*). It is said that over two hundred fifty letters exist today and in many of them Rennyo expounds his view of the impermanence of life. Among the eighty letters included in the *Letters in the Five Fascicle Collection* (*Gojō Gobunshō*), there are thirteen which make reference to this subject,⁵ and we can find another twelve in *Jōgai no Gobunshō*, which collected those letters not included in the five fascicle collection,⁶ for a total of twenty-five letters which make mention of impermanence.⁷ The sixteenth letter in the Fifth Fascicle is the famous letter "On White Ashes" (*Hakkotsu no Gobunshō*).

As we quietly consider the transient nature of human life, we realize that what is truly fleeting is our own life which is like an illusion throughout its beginning, middle and end. Thus, we have never heard of anyone living forever. Our lifetime passes so quickly. Could anyone now live for one hundred years? Will I die first, or will it be another? Will it be today or tomorrow? We do not know. It is said⁸ that those who are left behind and those who go before are more numerous than the drops of dew that fall upon the roots of the trees and linger on the tips of their leaves.

Thus, in the morning we may have a radiant face, but in the evening come to be white ashes. When the winds of impermanence blow through, both eyes suddenly close and when our final breath is stilled forever, our radiant face turns lifeless and its beauty is altogether lost. Our family and relatives may gather and lament, but all is to no avail. Since this cannot go on for long, our body is then taken to a field and, when it has vanished as smoke in the night, all that is left is white ashes. Words cannot describe such sadness.

The transience of human life is not limited to the old or the young and so all people should immediately take to heart the most important matter of birth in the life to come, and, deeply entrusting in Amida Buddha, say the *nembutsu*.

Respectfully.⁹

This letter "On White Ashes" brings us into a head-on confrontation with the impermanence of human life. It counsels us to look immediately

at the nature of this transient world and take up the “most important matter of birth in the life to come” (*goshō no ichidaiji*), or, that is, the issue of eternal life. It guides us, in the midst of this impermanent world of delusion, to aspire for the eternal realm of enlightenment. For that reason it urges us to entrust in Amida Buddha’s Primal Vow and say the *nembutsu*.

The background of Rennyo’s view of impermanence can be found in an historical period which spanned three major conflicts: (1) the *Jōkyū* Disturbance of 1221, a conflict in the imperial court between the Retired Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239) and the Regent Hōjō Yoshitoki (1163–1224); (2) the War between the Southern and Northern Dynasties, a conflict between Ashikaga Takauji (1305–1358) supporting the Northern Dynasty and the Emperor Godaigo (1288–1339) of the Southern Dynasty in 1336; and (3) the *Ōnin* War, a war between the Eastern Army of Hosokawa Katsumoto (1430–1473) and the Western Army of Yamana Sōzen (1404–1473) beginning in 1467. This era of ongoing conflict culminated during the Muromachi Period (1338–1573), which was about to give way to the Period of Civil War that engulfed all of Japan.

Still, the background of Rennyo’s thought is not only limited to these historical events. It was also greatly impacted by Rennyo’s own life in which he experienced the repeated separation by death from important relatives and members of his family. Rennyo had five wives, but his first four wives passed away almost one after the other. His first wife, Nyoryō, died when he was forty-one years old. His second wife, Renyū, died when Rennyo was fifty-six years. His third wife, Nyoshō, died when he was sixty-four. His fourth wife, Shūnyo, died when he was seventy-one years of age. Finally, Rennyo was cared for by his fifth wife, Rennō, and himself passed away at the age of eighty-five years.

With his five wives, Rennyo had a total of twenty-seven children, thirteen sons and fourteen daughters, and a number of them also died at young ages. In particular, during a brief period of one year and nine months, from the twelfth month of 1471 through the eighth month of 1472, he lost five members of his family to death.

5th day of the 12th month of 1470: second wife, Renyū

1st day of the 2nd month of 1471: fifth daughter, Myōi (12 years old)

6th day of the 2nd month of 1471: eldest daughter, Nyokei (27 years)

1st day of the 8th month of 1472: eighth daughter, Ryōnin (6 years)

14th day of the 8th month of 1472: second daughter, Kengyoku (24 years)

The death of his second daughter, Kengyoku (1448–1472), is set forth in detail in the tenth letter of *Jōgai no Gobunshō*.

Kengyoku-ni was a nun, who served originally as a servant at a Zen temple, but before long she became a follower of the Jōkein lineage. Yet, drawn by inconceivable conditions from the past, she came to realize, in recent days, the *shinjin* of our tradition. Here is the reason why. On the 5th day of the 12th month of the 2nd year of *Bunmei* (1470) the woman who had been her aunt passed away. Then, even as she was deeply mourning that loss, her older sister's life came to an end on the 6th day of the 2nd month of the 3rd year of *Bunmei* (1471). Her grief was boundless, and, as a result, she herself became incurably ill. Perhaps, in the end, we must say that her illness arose out of her grief and she was never able to recover. On the 10th day of the 5th month of this year (1472) she was confined to her sick bed, and after ninety-four days she passed away.¹⁰

When she was a child, Kengyoku was placed in the care of a Zen temple where she served as a *katsujiki* or child-servant. Later, she became a follower of the Jōkein temple. She worked very hard and finally, Rennyo says, she took up residence with Rennyo in Yoshizaki and realized *shinjin* in accord with the Jōdo Shinshū tradition. In setting out her experiencing of the deaths of her step-mother and sisters one after another, as well as her own illness and death, Rennyo gives expression to his own grief. And yet on the other hand, he also affirms his belief that, since Kengyoku was established in her settled mind (*anjin*), she realized birth in the Pure Land.¹¹

Finally, at the end of this Letter, Rennyo refers to Kengyoku as a good teacher of the Way (*zenjishiki*), and states that, for all men and women who are settled in *shinjin* of the one-thought moment of entrusting and who recite the *nembutsu* as a response in gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence, she will be a condition for their certain birth in the Pure Land.¹² I believe that Rennyo's view of impermanence was deepened all the more through the deaths of these members of his family.

Rennyo's *Letters* contain many words and expressions that refer to impermanence. Here are some examples: "the winds of impermanence" (*mujō no kaze*), "dream-like illusion" (*yume maboroshi*), "the ephemeral human world" (*adanaru ningenkai*), "not determined by age or youth" (*rōshō fujō*), "vainly spend one's life; vainly pass one's days" (*itazura ni akashi, itazura ni kurasu*), "those who are vigorous and lively will certainly wither away; those we meet will certainly depart" (*jōsha hissui esha jōri*), "that those who are left behind and those who go before" (*okure sakidatsu*), "transient nature of life" (*fushō*), "fleeting world" (*ukiyo*), "fleeting, like a flash of lightning or the morning dew" (*denkō chōro*), "we depart alone" (*dokko*), "a light flickering in the wind"

(*fūzen no tomoshibi*), “bubbles floating on water” (*suijō no awa*), “leaf of a banana plant” (*bashō*), and “white ashes” (*hakkotsu*). What we must keep in mind here is that all of these phrases are simply references to impermanence; they do not represent some world-weary or misanthropic view on Rennyo’s part.

OTHER VIEWS OF IMPERMANENCE

*The current of the flowing river flows endlessly,
and yet the water is not the same.
Foam floating in the eddies now disappears, now forms,
but it never lasts for a long time.
Human beings and their dwellings in the world are just like
this.*

This is the opening passage of *Hōjōki* (A Record of My Ten-Foot Square Hut) written by Kamo no Chōmei (1153–1216).¹³ As we look at Kamo no Chōmei’s view of impermanence, we see that he combines a stark look at the impermanent state of the world during his time with an attitude that allows for an objective consideration of actual conditions. At the same time, his is the posture of a solitary recluse who lived in quiet retreat in the mountains of Hino. Although he devoted himself to the Buddhadharmā, he did not become a true seeker of the Path. In addition, even while he regarded as repugnant the state of the actual world, he did not absolutely negate it.

Rennyo’s view of impermanence differs from that of Kamo no Chōmei. For Rennyo, impermanence was a truth or principle that affirmatively takes on the reality of suffering. This we can surmise from various passages from his *Letters*:

However, life in the human realm is but a brief, transient moment of life (*ittan no fushō*). The life to come contains the blissful fruition of eternal life (*yōshō no rakka*).¹⁴ (*Letters* II-7)

Human beings dwell in a realm of uncertainty (*fujō no sakai*). The Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss is the eternal, unchanging world (*jōjū no kuni*). Therefore, we must aspire not to remain in the uncertain human realm, but rather for birth in the eternal world of Ultimate Bliss.¹⁵ (*Letters* V-11)

In that regard, human beings dwell in a realm of uncertainty, not determined by old age or youth (*rōsho fujō*). Life in this world is but a brief, transient moment of life (*ittan no fushō*). Since the life to come contains the blissful fruition of eternal life (*yōshō no rakka*),

we should not desire to remain forever in this life. In the life to come we will never fall into the realms of hell for eternity, and so by all means we must quickly understand the most important matter of the life to come (*goshō no ichidaiji*) and, entrusting in Amida's Primal Vow, become settled in *shinjin* of Other Power.¹⁶ (*Jōgai no Gobunshō*116)

The phrases “transiency of life” (*pushō*) or “the realm of uncertainty” (*fujiō no sakai*) refer to the world of delusion in which we attribute life with a substantialized nature and are uncertain as to our true place of refuge. In contrast, “eternal life” (*yōshō*) and “eternal, unchanging world” (*jōjū*) refer to the “birth of non-birth” (*mushō no shō*), or that is, the eternal, universal world of enlightenment and immeasurable life. The life to come should not be understood to be simply a substantialized world that exists after death. Rather, it is the realm of awakening to an eternal, universal reality, which pervades the three worlds of the past, present and future. This is the sense behind the expression “the most important matter of the life to come” (*goshō no ichidaiji*).

SOURCES OF THE LETTER “ON WHITE ASHES”¹⁷

Evident within the letter “On White Ashes” are passages from the works upon which it is based. They include excerpts from *Zonkaku hōgo*¹⁸ (Dharma Words of Zonkaku) by Zonkaku (1290–1373) and a passage from *Mujōkōshiki*¹⁹ (A Discourse on Impermanence) of the Retired Emperor Gotoba, which is quoted in *Zonkaku hōgo*. Rennyō composed his letter “On White Ashes” by quoting first from Gotoba's *Mujōkōshiki*, from various portions of the *Zonkaku hōgo*, and also from various literary works such as the *Wakan rōeishū* (A Collection of Japanese and Chinese Poetic Recitations).²⁰

1. The passage, “As we quietly consider the transient nature of human life,” in the letter is a quotation from the *Zonkaku hōgo*.²¹
2. The passages, “. . . we realize that what is truly fleeting is our own life which is like an illusion throughout its beginning, middle and end. Thus, we have never heard of anyone living forever. Our lifetime passes so quickly. Could anyone now live for a hundred years? Will I die first, or will it be another? Will it be today or tomorrow? We do not know. Those who are left behind and those who go before are more numerous than the drops of dew that fall upon the roots of the trees and linger on the tips of their leaves,” is composed based on the passages in *Mujōkōshiki*.²²

3. The passages, “Thus, in the morning we may have a radiant face, but in the evening come to be white ashes . . . ,” and “. . . and, all that is left is white ashes,” are composed based on a passage in *Wakan rōeishū* and a passage in a Noh play, *Kasasotoba*.²³
4. The passage, “. . . both eyes suddenly close and when our final breath is stilled forever, our radiant face turns lifeless and its beauty is altogether lost”; “our body is then taken to a field and, when it has vanished as smoke in the night”; and “not limited to the old or the young and so” are composed based on the passages in *Zonkaku hōgo*.²⁴

In the first year of Jōgen (1207) the Retired Emperor Gotoba brought about the suppression of Hōnen’s movement of the exclusive practice of the *nembutsu*. Gotoba is said to have made the imperial journey to Kumano some twenty-nine times, delighting in reciting *waka* poetry on the road back to the court. This has a close connection with the compilation of poetry, *Shin kokin wakashū* (New Collection of Japanese Poems of Ancient and Modern Times).²⁵ The priests of the Tōdaiji and Kōfukuji in Nara, and Enryakuji of Mt. Hiei, had pressed Gotoba to suppress the *nembutsu* order and prohibit the practice of the *nembutsu*.

As it happens, during one journey to Kumano, two court ladies whom Gotoba held in great favor, Matsumushi and Suzumushi, came to hear the teaching of the *nembutsu* and became Buddhist nuns. As a result, the pretext for suppression of the *nembutsu* movement was established. The Master Hōnen was ordered to exile to Tosa province (modern Kōchi prefecture) in Shikoku (actually Sanuki province, modern Kagawa prefecture) and his disciple Shinran was exiled to Echigo province (modern Niigata prefecture). The records of this exile refer to this as the Jōgen Suppression (*Jōgen no hōnan*). It is set forth at the end of the “Chapter of the Transformed Buddha and Land” in Shinran’s *Kyōgyōshinshō*²⁶ (A Collection of Passages Revealing the True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way) and in the appended note in Renno’s copy of the *Tannishō*²⁷ (A Record in Lament of Divergences).

However, it is said that history has a way of repeating itself. Later, after having been defeated by the Hōjō Regents in the *Jōkyū* Conflict (*Jōkyū no ran*, 1221), the Retired Emperor Gotoba, who had suppressed the *nembutsu* movement and sent both Hōnen and Shinran into exile, was himself exiled to Okinoshima (a remote island in Japan Sea, belongs to modern Shimane prefecture). In addition, his children, Retired Emperors themselves, were also sent off into exile: his eldest son, Tsuchimikado (1195–1231) to Tosa and his third son, Juntoku (1197–1242) to Sado. This remarkable incident of three Retired Emperors being

made to experience exile was an occurrence unprecedented in history.

Gotoba, the eighty-second Emperor, possessed the name, Takahira. He was the fourth son of the Emperor Takakura (1161–1181). Tsuchimikado, who was the eighty-third Emperor, was called Tamehito. Finally, Juntoku, the eighty-fourth Emperor, had the name Morinari. The poems of Gotoba and Juntoku appear as the ninety-ninth and hundredth verses in the *Hyakunin isshu* (Collection of Single Poems by a Hundred Poets).²⁸

The poem of the Retired Emperor Gotoba

There are those who are beloved;
 There are those who are despised.
 Thus thinking about this meaningless world
 I am lost in thought. (99)

hito mo oshi
hito mo urameshi
ajikinaku
yo wo omou yue ni
mono omou mi wa

The poem of the Retired Emperor Juntoku

It was an ancient time
 (So long ago) that it is beyond the length
 Of the tangled creeping vines
 On the decaying eaves
 Of the ancient palace. (100)

momoshiki ya
furuki nokiba no
shinobu ni mo
nao amari aru
mukashi narikeri

Gotoba was never, until his death, able to escape from Okinoshima. However, in his final years, the Retired Emperor who had suppressed the *nembutsu* movement himself came to take refuge in the exclusive practice of the *nembutsu* and wrote the *Mujōkōshiki*. The whereabouts of the original manuscript of the *Mujōkōshiki* are today unknown. In 1918, a copy of the text, written in the original classical Chinese characters, was discovered in a repository at the Ninnaji temple in eastern Kyoto. It is now considered to be a National Treasure.²⁹

At the outset of the *Mujōkōshiki*, there are two lines of verse. It then proceeds in three sections, first, middle and last. Written at the end of

each section is the Name, *Namoamidabutsu*. The passages quoted within *Zonkaku hōgo* are from the middle section. In the first and last sections, the following passages are set forth respectively.

First Section:

Rejecting the suffering of the five paths and six paths of *samsaric* existence,³⁰ what we must aspire for is the pure realm of peaceful sustenance. Born between Buddhas of the past and future,³¹ we must entrust to the compassionate Vow of Amida.

Simply recite the Name of Amida, and wish to be born in a lotus blossom.

Thus, not rising with the smoke of the verdant mountains in the east, though we hasten, we should hasten to receive the virtues of the *nembutsu*; not wiping away the dew of the mountains to the north,³² though we endeavor, we should endeavor to perform the practice leading to birth.

Last Section:

Though we vow, we should vow to be companions in the assembly of *bodhisattvas* and sages; though we entrust, we should entrust in the salvation brought about by the Primal Vow of Amida.

Perfecting our contemplation of the twelve-fold chain of causation,³³ we lament the impermanence of *samsaric* existence and, wishing to be guided to birth for the nine grades of beings,³⁴ we recite the Name of Amida.

It is my wish that, when my life comes to an end, I may behold the Buddha of Immeasurable Life and the body of unlimited virtues. I wish that, after we have seen that Buddha, I and other believers will realize the eye of wisdom that eliminates defilement and be born in the Land of Peace and Bliss.

During his exile, the Retired Emperor Gotoba experienced with his own body the teaching that “all things are impermanent” (*shogyō mujō*) and “all things flourishing with life will certainly wither away” (*eiko seisui*). He then came to take refuge in Amida Buddha and recited the *nembutsu*, wishing to be born in the Pure Land. All beings, friend and foe alike, can be born in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss together, in exactly the same way, through the *nembutsu*.

Gotoba, however, could go no further than desire for a birth appropriate for the nine grades of beings or desire to be guided to birth at the

moment of death. This is referred to as birth through various practices set forth in the Nineteenth Vow. Rennyo Shōnin, on the other hand, speaks of birth through *nembutsu* of Other Power as provided by the Eighteenth Vow.

In the first letter of *Mattōshō*, a collection of Shinran's letters, he states,

The idea of Amida's coming at the moment of death is for those who seek to gain birth in the Buddha Land by doing religious practices,³⁵ for they are practitioners of self-power. The moment of death is of central concern for such people, for they have not yet attained true *shinjin*

The practitioner of true *shinjin*, however, abides in the stage of the truly settled,³⁶ for he has already been grasped, never to be abandoned. There is no need to wait in anticipation for the moment of death, no need to rely on Amida's coming. At the time *shinjin* becomes settled, birth too becomes settled; there is no need for the deathbed rites that prepare one for Amida's coming.³⁷

Shinran explains that abiding in the "stage of the truly settled" (*shōjōju*) is a benefit bestowed now, in this life, in the one-thought moment of *shinjin*. Kakunyo (1270–1351) and Rennyo referred to this benefit with the phrase, "the karmic cause of birth is perfected in ordinary life" (*heizei gōjō*), since the karmic cause of birth in the Pure Land and the realization of enlightenment is perfectly established during ordinary, everyday life and not at the moment of death.

Rennyo explains this in his letter "On Leaving One's Home in the Aspiration for Enlightenment" (*Shukke hosshin no shō*, *Letters I-2*)

In our tradition, the fundamental teaching of the Master Shinran is not that one must leave one's home in the aspiration for enlightenment; nor does it declare that one must renounce one's family and discard all worldly desires. It is simply that, when *shinjin* of Other Power is settled in the one-thought moment of taking refuge, there are no distinctions as to whether one is male or female, old or young. The *Larger Sutra* describes this as "they immediately attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression." It states in [T'an-Luan's] *Commentary*³⁸ that, "In the one-thought moment of *shinjin*, one enters the stage of the truly settled." This, then, is the teaching that one need not depend upon Amida Buddha's coming to welcome one at the moment of death" and the meaning of "the karmic cause of birth is perfected in ordinary life."³⁹

Here Rennyo reveals that the various notions which give explanation to the realization of *shinjin*, such as "they immediately attain birth

and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression,” “the stage of the truly settled”, “not depending on Amida Buddha’s coming to welcome one at the moment of death” and “the karmic cause of birth is perfected in ordinary life,” all have the same meaning. The notion that “the karmic cause of birth is perfected in ordinary life” (*heizei gōjō*) is not taken from the standpoint that something takes place after death. Rather, it means that, in this life, one transcends death and is established in the stage of the truly settled in which birth in the Pure Land is assured. Thus, Rennyo states, one is able affirmatively to accept—and transcend—death.

MEANINGS OF ANAKASHIKO (RESPECTFULLY) IN RENNYO’S *LETTERS*

Finally, Rennyo’s Letters invariably end with the word *anakashiko* written two times. What is the meaning of this phrase? An examination of *anakashiko* reveals that it possesses three possible meanings.⁴⁰

1. An expression of deep respect and awe, such as “Respectfully yours” or “Sincerely yours.”
2. A concluding phrase: a word or expression which appears at the end of a letter.
3. A declarative adverb: a word which is followed by a proscriptive or imperative phrase, such as “by no means” (*kesshite*), “not at all” (*yume yume*) or “by all means” (*kanarazu*).

The following sentences are examples from classical Japanese literature where *anakashiko* is used in the third sense, as a declarative adverb.⁴¹

You must never behave foolishly.
anakashiko orokani subekarazu
(*Konjaku monogatari* 20-36)

By no means should you reveal this to anyone else.
kono koto anakashiko hito ni hirō suna
(*Heike monogatari* 5, *Kanyōgū*)

By all means, keep this a secret; by all means keep this a secret.
anakashiko anakashiko hisu beshi hisu beshi
(*Otogizōshi*)

I believe that the word *anakashiko* in Rennyo’s *Letters* functions as something more than just a simple, pro forma concluding expression. It

also functions, more importantly, as a declarative adverb. For example, compare the following:

By all means, one must never disparage them.

*aikamaete henshū wo nasu koto yume yume nakare, anakashiko
anakashiko*

(*Letters IV-4*)⁴²

By no means should you speak of this to anyone. By no means should you speak of this to anyone.

*aikamaete aikamaete tare nimo tare mimo katari tamaunayo,
anakashiko*

(*Otogizōshi*)

The two sentence patterns above are quite similar. In Rennyo's Letters, when *anakashiko* appears at the conclusion of the letter and immediately follows an imperative clause in the body of the letter, it takes on the added function of a declarative adverb. That is to say, it is used to emphasize and underscore the content of the letter. It follows then, that in the letter "On White Ashes" the phrase *anakashiko anakashiko* emphasizes and calls our attention once again to the words that immediately precede it, which are,

The transience of human life is not limited to the old or the young and so all people should immediately take to heart the most important matter of birth in the life to come, and, deeply entrusting in Amida Buddha, say the *nembutsu*. (*Letters V-16*)

As we humbly read this letter anew, we should accept it as the testament of Rennyo's aspiration to transmit this deep matter widely to all beings. It is Rennyo himself saying to us, "This is my wish, so, by all means, please do so! Please do so!"

Translated by David Matsumoto

NOTES

1. This article was originally published in Japanese as *Rennyō shōnin ni manabu* (Kyoto: Hyakkaen, 1996). An edition of English translation by David Matsumoto was published under the title, “Learning from Rennyō Shōnin,” in Hayashi Tomoyasu, *Rennyō kyōgaku no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 1998), pp. 1–18. This revised translation was prepared by David Matsumoto, with editorial assistance of Eisho Nasu and Lisa Grumbach. Unless otherwise noted, all of the quoted passages have translated into English by David Matsumoto.
2. Itsuki Hiroyuki, *Rennyō: Shinzoku guyū no ningenzō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1994). This book is published based on the textbook written for a twelve broadcasts of “NHK Ningen Daigaku: Denshō ni ikiru Rennyō” at NHK educational television from April through June, 1993.
3. Itsuki Hiroyuki, *Rennyō: Ware fukaki fuchi yori* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1995). The scripts was originally published in *Chūō kōron* serially from January through April, 1995.
4. The author attended an impressive four-hour long performance of this drama produced by Zenshinza at Gion kaburenjō in Kyoto performed July 14–30, 1995. The drama was also performed at various theaters in Japan including Nagoya (December, 1995), Osaka (February, 1996), and Tokyo (November–December, 1996).
5. *Gobunshō*, I-6, 10, 11; II-1, 5, 7; III-4; IV-2, 3, 4, 13; V-11, 16, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 3 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941).
6. *Jōgai no Gobunshō*, 10, 24, 27, 38, 42, 44, 50, 51, 54, 68, 116, 117, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 5 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941).
7. For more detailed discussion of this issue, see Hayashi Tomoyasu, “Rennyō Shōnin to *Gobunshō*,” in *Rennyō kyōgaku no kenkyū*, pp. 45–57.
8. Rennyō begins the passage with the words, “It is said that . . .,” because this passage is an excerpt from the *Mujōkōshiki* (Discourse on Impermanence) by the Retired Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239) quoted in *Zonkaku hōgo* (Dharma Words of Zonkaku). For more detailed discussion of this issue, see pages 37–42 of this article.
9. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 3, pp 513–514.
10. *Jōgai no Gobunshō*, pp. 306–307. For a complete English translation of this letter, see David Matsumoto, “Rennyō’s Letter on Kengyoku-ni,” in *Pacific World*, Third Series (1999): pp. 23–29.
11. *Jōgai no Gobunshō*, p. 307.
12. *Jōgai no Gobunshō*, p. 308.

13. *Hōjoki* in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 30 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1957), p. 23.
14. *Gobunshō*, II-7, *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 3, pp. 434–436.
15. *Gobunshō*, V-11, *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 3, pp. 507–508.
16. The letter 116 of the *Jōgai no Gobunshō*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 5, pp. 306–8.
17. For more detail analysis of the sources of this letter, see Hayashi Tomoyasu, “Rennyō Shōnin to *Gobunshō*,” pp. 50–56, and Ishida Mizumaro, *Nihon koten bungaku to Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shoten, 1988), pp. 63–69.
18. *Zonkaku hōgo*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 3 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941), pp. 353–374.
19. For the text of *Mujōkōshiki*, see Hosokawa Gyōshin, “*Hakkotsu no ofumi sōgen kō*,” in Hiramatsu Reizō sensei koki kinenkai, ed., *Nihon no shūkyō to bunka: Hiramatsu Reizō sensei koki kinen ronshū* (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1989), pp. 409–423.
20. *Wakan rōeishu* in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 73 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968).
21. *Zonkaku hōgo*, p. 360.
22. Hayashi Tomoyasu, “Rennyō Shōnin to *Gobunshō*,” pp. 51–52.
23. Compare with “though in the morning we may have a radiant face and boast of worldly paths, in the evening we become white ashes and decay in a barren field” from the *Wakan Rōeishu* (p. 255) and also with the Noh Chant of *Kasa Sotoba* “though in the morning we may have a radiant face and enjoy the worldly paths, in the evening we result in becoming white ashes, decaying in a barren field.” (*Kasasotoba*, in *Yōkyōkushū*, vol. 2, in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 41 [Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1963], p. 261.)
24. *Zonkaku hōgo*, p. 359, and 363.
25. *Shin kokin wakashū*, in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 28 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958).
26. *The Collected Works of Shinran*, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), pp. 289–290.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 681.
28. Munemasa Iso’o, ed., *Ogura hyakunin isshu* (Kyoto: Chūō Tosho, 1975): pp. 99–100.
29. See Hayashi Tomoyasu, “Rennyō Shōnin to *Gobunshō*,” note. 50, p. 66.
30. Five paths (*godō*) and six paths (*rokudō*) of *samsaric* existence refer to the realm of delusion; Samsara. The six paths refer to the realms of hell, hungry ghosts, animals, fighting spirits, humans and heaven. In the five paths, the realm of fighting spirits is omitted.
31. Buddhas of the past and future (*zen-butsu go-butsu*) refers to Śākyamuni

Buddha, the Buddha of the past, and Maitreya Bodhisattva, the Buddha of the future.

32. Mountains to the north (*hoku bō*) refers to mountains to the north of Loyang in China. This range was famous for its many grave sites of nobles and warriors.

33. The twelve-fold chain of causation (*jūnien*), or twelve-linked chain of dependent origination. It consists of ignorance, actions, consciousness, mental functions and matter, six sense organs, contact, perception, desire, attachment, existence, birth, and old age and death. Śākyamuni Buddha taught that, through contemplating this twelve-fold chain of causation, one comes to know that the cause of suffering is ignorance, and that by eliminating ignorance one will eliminate suffering.

34. Guided to birth for the nine grades of beings refers to the notion that Amida Buddha will come to welcome and guide the person who is to be born in his Land to a lotus pedestal set out for the each of the nine grades of beings. In the *Contemplation Sutra* it is taught that, depending of the merits accumulated during one's lifetime, an ordinary being will realize one of nine grades of birth. Each of three levels of beings (upper, middle and lower) is capable of three kinds of birth (upper, middle and lower), thus, nine grades of birth. Depending on the grade of birth, the lotus pedestal to which one is guided is also said to differ.

35. Those who seek to gain birth in the Buddha Land by doing religious practices refers to those who strive to attain birth by performing various religious practices, accumulating the good roots of virtue thereby and relying on those merits as the cause of birth.

36. The stage of the truly settled (*shōjōju*) refers to the group of those who, in the moment when they have realized *shinjin*, are assured of gaining birth in the Pure Land and attaining enlightenment.

37. *Lamp for the Latter Ages*, in *The Collected Works of Shinran*, vol. 1, p. 523.

38. This is a reference to T'an-Luan's *Commentary on the Treatise on the Pure Land*.

39. *Gobunshō*, I-2, p. 404.

40. See *Kadokawa kōgojiten* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1974), p. 46, and Hayashi Tomoyasu, "Rennyō Shōnin to *Gobunshō*," p. 61.

41. Satake Akihiro, "Ofumi-sama," in *Bungaku* 41, no. 4 (1973): p. 87, and "Anakashiko," in *Bungaku* 41, no. 5 (1973): p. 101. See also Hayashi Tomoyasu, "Rennyō Shōnin to *Gobunshō*," p. 61.

42. *Gobunshō*, IV-4, pp. 479-481.

The Idea of *Tamashii* in Buddhism: Who is the “Self”?¹

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WHAT IS BORN IN the Pure Land? Where does the self come from and where does it go? Who is this self? In seeking to answer these fundamental questions, we will engage in a discussion of ideas beginning with Plato up through modern and contemporary Western philosophy. Our inquiry will also look into ideas developed in Mahayana and Pure Land Buddhism, with emphasis on the thoughts of Dōgen (1200–1253) and Shinran (1173–1262).

LOCATING THE PROBLEM

Where do we go when our human existence comes to an end? Is it that nothing exists after death and that death simply returns this self to nothingness? Or is it that some other world exists after death and that we will go to live there in some form? These questions are as ancient as the history of the human race. Yet, though we are living today in a modern technological age, these are questions that are not far removed from us at all.

It is likely that primitive people had already faced these questions, albeit in a nebulous way. However, they were probably first posed self-consciously in around the fifth Century B.C.E., a time that Karl Jaspers referred to as the “axial age” (*Achsenzeit*). It could be said that Western metaphysics, which began with Plato, as well as world religions such as Buddhism and Christianity, were set in motion by questions such as these.

These questions perplexed philosophers in modern Europe as well. The fundamental problem addressed in Descartes’ *Meditations on First Philosophy* concerned proofs for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. The critical philosophy of Kant later denounced as dogmatic the proofs set forth by those metaphysicians, but it did not consider the questions themselves to be meaningless. The existence of God and the immortality of the soul (*Seele*) could not be proven through theoretical reason. However, it was possible to inquire into them as the

objects of faith within the scope of practical reason. What this means is that the inquiry of practical reason is a matter of great significance as it relates to the depths of human existence itself. Metaphysical studies of subjectivity in German idealism after Kant, including Fichte and Hegel, further sought to resolve the same problems in the new direction that had been established by Kant. In place of the traditional schools of metaphysics, which from the time of the Greeks had considered such things as “god” or “mind” from the standpoint of their substance (*Substanz*), there arose a new perspective that viewed them as subject (*Subjekt*), or as “spirit.” Yet despite this shift, the problems themselves continued to exist. The thinking of Kierkegaard, who opposed Hegel’s metaphysical speculation, and that of the existentialists associated with Kierkegaard focused on these problems as well. Their thinking dealt exclusively with the problem of transcendence in human existence.

In Mahayana Buddhist thought, this problem corresponds more than anything else to the issue of birth in the Pure Land as set forth in the Pure Land teachings. “Birth in the Pure Land,” it could be said, actually constitutes a Buddhist symbol for transcendence. However, in Pure Land thought and faith, the words “Pure Land” and “birth” are losing the potent sense of reality and the power to arouse that they had previously possessed. This phenomenon parallels one found in Western philosophical and Christian thought, in which views pointing to the transcendent are on the verge of vanishing.

Such is the state of the contemporary age. For this reason, in order for the idea of birth in the Pure Land to be restored to its place of importance within the life experiences of people in the contemporary age, it will definitely be necessary to approach the problem with the proper attitude. That is to say, we must break through the outer shell of those concepts and enter into their interior, and there seek to comprehend the concepts once again, from a point of life that exists prior to concepts. I am referring here to the hermeneutical situation that Heidegger and others set forth for the interpretive study of classic texts.

In an early essay entitled, “Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle,”² Heidegger discussed the significance of the hermeneutical method. When we who live in the present seek to understand ideas from the past, he stated, we must also comprehend them experientially. The extent to which we can grasp ideas from the past will be dependent upon the extent to which, and whether, we who are presently engaged in interpretation can keep alive our own questions. Nowhere does there exist a transparent text that will always be clearly evident to all people. Our questions are established vertically, up from the ground of the present reality of the hermeneutical situation. That source of our questions is also the fundamental situation that allows the past to talk about the past itself.

Questions like “What is birth?” or “What is born?” can be rephrased as “Where have I come from and where will I go?” or “Who is this self?” I do not know whether or not these questions were asked in the traditional studies of Shin Buddhism. However, these questions cannot possibly be answered simply by combining or enlarging upon the existing doctrinal knowledge or through analysis of such concepts as birth or Pure Land. Of course, any interpretation is apt to cast excessive light, in the direction of its point of view or tenor of observation, upon any object that we ourselves consider to be the main subject. Hence, the light that we cast upon it must be dimmed whenever appropriate. However, by passing through the excessive illumination of the hermeneutical condition an object that has always been viewed only under a dim light can, for the first time, be comprehended just as it appears within that dimness. One such object that we must consider in this manner today is the problem of “birth in the Pure Land.”

T'AN-LUAN'S “BIRTH OF NON-BIRTH”

T'an-luan (476–542) was a major figure in the development of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist thought. In his major work, *Ching-t'u-wang-sheng-lun-chu* (*A Commentary on the Treatise of the Pure Land*; Jpn. *Ōjōronchū*), there appears a famous passage presented in a question and answer form.³ The question begins by stating that all of the texts of Mahayana Buddhism, such as the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* or the commentaries on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sutra*, teach that the fundamental nature of the existence of sentient beings is that of “non-birth” (Jpn. *mushō*), in which they neither are born nor die. It is like empty space, which is not possessed of self-nature (*svabhāva*) or substantial nature. In other words, the fundamental realization of Mahayana Buddhism is that all things are “empty” (*śūnyatā*). If that is so, then what does it mean when Bodhisattva Vasubandhu (ca.4–5 C.E.) states that he “aspires to be born” in the Pure Land?

T'an-luan goes on to answer this question in the following way,

Answer: There are two meanings to the explanation that the nature of sentient beings' existence is that of non-birth, just like empty space. The first is that “real” sentient beings, as conceived by ordinary beings, and “real” birth-and-death, as viewed by ordinary beings, are ultimately non-existent, just like hair on the shell of a tortoise. They are just like empty space. The second is that all things are born of causes and conditions; hence, they are “not-born.” They are non-existent, just like empty space. The birth to which Bodhisattva Vasubandhu aspires signifies birth that is the arising

of causes and conditions. Since birth means the arising of causes and conditions, it is provisionally called “birth.” It is not used in the way that ordinary beings refer to the “real” sentient beings or “real” birth-and-deaths.⁴

The birth to which Vasubandhu refers when he says, “I aspire to be born” is not birth that is conceived as “real” by ordinary beings. Ordinary beings view birth (or, life) as something “substantial,” or that is, something having real substance. For example, a human possesses something with “real” substance called a body, which performs many actions. In addition, one possesses something with “real” substance called a mind, which thinks of various things. Thus, birth (or, life) is used to refer to the activity of an existing thing that is endowed with a “substantial” mind and body. Death means that all such activity ceases to exist. This is the way in which ordinary beings view birth as “real.”

In actuality, however, this way of viewing birth implies a certain self-centeredness. Self-centeredness is an attitude whereby one seeks to discover the basic substance present in all things. By grasping that substance, it is believed, one will realize peace of mind. In fact, however, one’s grasping onto basic substance means, on the contrary, that one’s own self actually becomes seized and made captive by that basic substance. Birth that is viewed by ordinary beings who are being held captive in this way cannot be called the true form of birth.

In contrast, the birth of Vasubandhu’s aspiration to be born is birth as seen from the standpoint of the arising of causes and conditions. The phrase “causes and conditions” refers to the mutual interdependence of all existences (*pratitya-samutpāda*). It is an alternative name for emptiness. All things exist in a manner that is neither self-centered nor substantialized. T’an-luan says that such birth is not “real” birth, but is “provisionally called ‘birth’” (*kemyō no shō*). This does not mean that birth is like a fantasy or illusion. Rather, it means that ordinary beings refer to the birth that they are seeing as “real.” Thus, the true way of viewing birth is to refer to it as what is “provisionally called birth.” This is the manner in which T’an-luan answers the question in his text.

However, that alone is not reason enough to explain why Vasubandhu says that he “aspires for birth.” Birth is originally non-birth and, if that is the actual state or truth of birth, then shouldn’t Vasubandhu have stated that he aspired for non-birth instead? That is the reason why there arises a second question, “Question: In what sense does he speak of ‘birth’?” Again, the issue raised here is why birth is desired instead of non-birth.

This becomes an inquiry into the relationship between birth in this defiled realm (*sahā* world), which is what ordinary beings see, and birth in the Pure Land. Why is the same term used to refer to birth in the

defiled realm and birth in the Pure Land? T'an-luan answers that,

That which is provisionally called a person in the defiled realm and that which is provisionally called a person in the Pure Land are neither definitely the same nor different.⁵

In other words, it cannot be said that birth in the *sahā* world and birth in the Pure Land are identical; nor can it be said that they differ. Both views—that they are identical or different—come about when one understands the two forms of birth substantially. But that is not the case. They are “neither the same nor different.” This might also be referred to as the “continuity of dis-continuity.” Yet, this explanation alone is still somehow insufficient, for it does not penetrate thoroughly into the source or fundamental essence of birth itself.

Here, we must go another step deeper with our inquiry into the fundamental essence of birth. Bodhisattva Vasubandhu states that,

I take refuge in the Tathāgata of Unhindered Light and aspire to be born in the realm of peace and bliss.⁶

Yet, birth is the origin of our self-centered existence; it is the source from which the multitude of samsaric sufferings arises. Hence, although we might turn away from birth or life in the *sahā* world and aspire for birth in the Pure Land, wherever we go we would just end up being born once again. Would this not mean then that we could not become free from transmigrating in samsaric existence no matter where we might go?

T'an-luan answered this question in the following way,

(Birth in) that Pure Land is the birth of non-birth (*mushō no shō*) that is brought about by the pure, Primal Vow of Amida Tathāgata. It is revealed not to be like birth within falsity and emptiness in any of the three existences. This can be said because Dharma-nature is pure; ultimately, it is non-birth. We speak of “birth” only when we refer to the feelings of the person who seeks to attain birth (in the Pure Land). Since birth is actually non-birth, how could birth be exhausted?⁷

The manner in which this answer is presented is quite different from those of the preceding questions-and-answers. What we see here is a fundamental inversion of the standpoint from which birth is viewed. Up until this point, birth had been viewed from the human standpoint of the person who wishes to be born. That is, the previous explanations had made distinctions between “real” birth and birth that is “provisionally called birth.” They had also stated that “provisionally-named persons of the defiled realm” and “provisionally-named persons of the Pure Land”

were neither the same nor different. In other words, their point of view was from the side of “real” birth.

In contrast, T’an-luan is now trying to view birth from the source of birth itself. This is revealed where he states that,

(Birth in) that Pure Land is the birth of non-birth that is brought about by the pure, Primal Vow of Amida Tathāgata.⁸

This means, in other words, that birth in the Pure Land does not result from our aspiration for birth. Rather, it originates in the Primal Vow of Amida Tathāgata.

That is the reason why birth in the Pure Land, or, the birth of non-birth is not the same as birth “that is provisionally called birth.” Rather, we must call it true birth, or, fundamental birth, which is based in the Primal Vow of the Tathāgata. Passing through its own self-negation as non-birth, birth casts off its self-centeredness and comes to be revealed as birth that wells up from the fundamental activity of existence—Amida Tathāgata’s Primal Vow. Birth of non-birth refers to the non-birth from which birth arises, and at the same time, to the birth that arises from non-birth. The phrase, “since birth is actually non-birth, how could birth be exhausted?” expresses the fundamental affirmation of birth that has passed through negation. Birth into the Pure Land does not simply refer to birth in a separate world of tranquility where samsaric existence has been transcended. It signifies an unlimited, active dynamism that turns and goes back into the very midst of the ocean of samsaric existence, thereby seeking to work exhaustively to the ends of that ocean of birth-and-death.

We ordinary beings cannot grasp the birth of non-birth through our own self-power. The Pure Land is not a place in which we can be born simply by wishing to be born there. Rather, we must abandon our self-powered calculation, with which we try to grasp birth, and entrust ourselves to the Tathāgata’s Primal Vow, which originally aspires on our behalf, saying that it cannot help but cause us to be born. When we do, we will discover ourselves, already in the midst of that life. What is born? It is this self that entrusts in and relies on the Primal Vow of the Tathāgata.

THE IDEA OF TRANSCENDENCE IN THE WEST

Let us now take a look at a number of ideas regarding transcendence of the present life as expressed in the sphere of Western culture. Plato’s philosophy of the Idea was the origin of traditional metaphysics that viewed the non-extinction and eternal life of the soul as lying at the base

of the workings of human culture and life, which includes death. According to Plato, nothing that we can observe in the realm of the senses actually or truly exists. Rather, all things exist temporarily. Things are nothing more than shadows of transcendent ideas. Still, he considered the realm of ideas that transcends the senses not simply to lie at the base of human culture. It is also the religious principle that enables human beings to live in transcendence of death. Humans who understand eternal ideas are eternal and inextinguishable, just like ideas. The core of Platonic philosophy lies in his teaching as to the path of the human soul, which ascends to the world of ideas in the heavens.

Among his Dialogues, *Phaedo* is a work that has provided encouragement to the hearts and minds of countless people. In it, Plato has Socrates say the following,

When death draws near to human beings, those among people who are bound to die will die. As for those who will not die, their death is postponed at that time and thus, completely whole, they get up and leave without incurring ruin.⁹

If we treat the soul as if it were immortal, what concerns me about that is not just this brief period of time that we call human life. Rather, it must be the entire period of its immortality. Further, the dangers that we incur are great, but right now they appear before our own eyes. It is the danger that we will incur if we treat the soul without respect.¹⁰

According to Plato, death is the occurrence in which the human soul becomes separated from the physical body. However, there are cases when this separation is carried out purely and cases when it is not. In order for the soul to take on a pure form and separate cleanly from the physical body it is necessary to practice the separation constantly while one is still alive. One trains in focusing on the soul itself in order to avoid having the soul become mixed with the physical body. The content of this practice is philosophical speculation, or, the path of the “soul as the power of speculation that preserves self-identity.” This is the reason why philosophical speculation is none other than the training in preparation for death. For Plato philosophy was not simply for the satisfaction for intellectual curiosity or for the performing of polemic techniques. It was the way to transcend death and reach the dimension of the immortality of the soul.

One point is noteworthy in Plato’s notion of transcendence. It lies in his thinking in regard to the original power of the human soul, or that is, the power of self-identifying reason. This is the idea of substance, an idea that was followed even in seventeenth century Europe. It was

reflected in the thought of Descartes, who understood the fundamental essence of the human soul to be a “thinking substance” (*res cogitans*). This metaphysics of substance included the thought of Aristotle, flowed through medieval Christian theology, and was inherited by modern philosophers like Descartes, Spinoza and Leibnitz. Such metaphysics finds, in the fundamental essence of our soul or mind, a self-identifying thing that exists in transcendence of temporality and creation. This it calls “substance.” With Kant’s criticism of substantiality (*Substanzialität*), for the first time the principle of the subject (*Subjekt*) or spirit (*Geist*) took its place. Hegel’s well-known thesis was that “substance is subject.” However, as we will see below, the clearest exemplar of a criticism of the Platonian or Cartesian notion of the immortality of the soul can be seen in the thought of Fichte.

For instance, in his work, *Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre 1804)*, Fichte states the following.

The science of knowledge cannot recognize the immortality of the soul. The reason is that according to the science of knowledge the soul does not exist. Death and potential do not exist as well. There is only life (*Leben*). Life exists eternally within life itself; that which now exists within life is, like life, eternal. For that reason, the science of knowledge sustains life and, just like Jesus, it states the following, “One who believes in me will not perish. You will come to possess life within yourself.”¹¹

In place of a god that is substance, like that of Spinoza, Fichte considered the principle of philosophy to be the self as activity, which is totally free. This subjective self is not a substance that thinks, but is the self-awareness that precedes substance. The self-awareness of knowing oneself constitutes the true self as subject. Viewed from this standpoint of self-awareness, when we substantialize and become attached to an immortal soul that is separate from the body we are mistakenly taking that which is not the self to be the self. Fichte said that the soul that we consider to be substantial is nothing more than our own spirit. Fichte’s view of religion was that our true self is the self that abandons the individual self and lives within God, who is great, expansive life. Fichte echoed the words of Jesus in the *Gospel According to St. John* when he said that the true God is neither personalized character nor substance; He is this life that we are now living.

THE IDEA OF TAMASHII IN DŌGEN AND SHINRAN

In Buddhism it has often been thought that what corresponds to the soul or reason (*nous*) of Western metaphysics is consciousness (*vijñāna*),

in particular, the storehouse consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*) as set forth in the commentaries of the Yogācāra school. It is well known that, in response to the question of whether the soul does or does not exist after death, Śākyamuni remained silent. This signified his denial of the existence of a substantial soul of the kind that we have been examining. It did not mean that he was advocating a simple materialistic position. If human beings simply consisted of physical bodies, not only Buddhism, but also religion itself would be ineffective. Therefore, from ancient times the problem has been found in the question of what we think of the thing that we have come to call the “soul” (*tamashii*) or the “mind” (*kokoro*).

The words of Dōgen that appear in the “Bendōwa” (On the Endeavour of the Way) Chapter of his work, *Shōbōgenzō* (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye),¹² represent some of the sharpest criticism of the generally-held concepts of the substantial soul or the conscious self, including those of Platonism. In this chapter, a certain person asks a question regarding the meaning of realization in the teachings of the Buddha. Is it to know that the body constantly changes through deaths and births, but that “mind-nature” or, soul, transcends birth-and-death and is thus indestructible in its permanent self-identity?¹³ In response, Dōgen answers that any teaching that “mind-nature” is permanent is similar to the heretical views of Senika, who was a religious thinker prior to Śākyamuni.¹⁴ It does not accord with the Buddha-dharma at all. This kind of thinking — that the body may perish, but the mind does not cease to exist — is actually the fundamental cause of samsaric delusion. It is the height of foolishness to have these thoughts, which are the cause of samsaric existence, and then seek to gain emancipation from samsara through them. That is a pitiable, false view.

In contrast, the standpoint of Dōgen’s teaching was that no division can be made between the body and mind, or that is, between that which undergoes temporal change and that which is eternal. Dōgen’s expressions for this included phrases such as “oneness of body and mind” (*shinjin ichinyo*), “non-duality of nature and form” (*shōsō funi*), and “samsara is identical with nirvana” (*shōji soku nehan*).¹⁵ Needless to say, the standpoint of attachment to an impermanent physical body is not present in the Buddhist teachings. At the same time, however, any thinking that the mind transcends the body and is thus imperishable also operates from a standpoint that substantializes the mind and forms attachments to it. Both the substantializing of the body and the substantializing of the mind arise from our egoistic attachment and false views as to the self. They equally serve to destroy the Buddha-dharma.

From the standpoint of “the oneness of body and mind,” it is not just the body that perishes; the mind also perishes. Yet, it can also be said neither the mind nor the body perishes. This is because, even while

perishing and not perishing stand in opposition to each other, they are also identical. That is to say, true emancipation from samsara arises, not where one exists separately from samsara, but only where one becomes completely identical with samsara itself. “Samsaric birth-and-death is the Life of the Buddha.” Dōgen also referred to the world of the Buddha-dharma, which is established outside of the confines of the self, as the realm of the mind—the “one mind.” The ideas of “the oneness of body and mind” and “samsara is identical with nirvana” are based on the standpoint that views the mind in this sense.

This does not differ at all from the Pure Land Buddhist teaching that *shinjin* of Other Power signifies this vast world of the mind. This “mind” however, is not one that can be produced by ordinary beings’ own powers. Rather, it is given to ordinary beings from the side of the Tathāgata. Shinran explained this through the idea of “directing of virtue by Other Power” (*tariki ekō*). For that reason, although *shinjin* refers to “mind”, it is not a thing that we call “mind”; that is to say, it is not a substantialized mind. That kind of self-centered substance is the mind that is eradicated by the Buddha’s mind. That is, the framework of self-consciousness in which the self knows the self is the mind that is overturned by the Buddha’s mind. It could be said that *shinjin* is the event in which one discovers one’s true self within the vast, boundless and open space of the Buddha’s mind.

When one realizes true and real *shinjin*, one is immediately grasped and held within the heart of the Buddha of unhindered light, never to be abandoned. “To grasp” (*sesshu*) means to take in (*setsu*) and to receive and hold (*shu*). When we are grasped by Amida, immediately—without a moment or a day elapsing—we ascend to and become established in the stage of the truly settled; this is the meaning of *attain birth*.¹⁶

(Shinran, *Notes on Once-Calling and Many-Callings*)

Since those who have realized *shinjin* necessarily abide in the stage of the truly settled, they are in the stage equal to the perfect enlightenment. . . . Since those counted among the truly settled are of the same stage as Maitreya, they are also said to be equal to the Tathagatas. Know that persons of true *shinjin* can be called the equal of Tathagatas because, even though they themselves are always impure and creating karmic evil, their hearts and minds are already equal to Tathagatas. . . . In the *Hymns (on the Samadhi) of All Buddhas’ Presence* Shan-tao, the Master of Kuang-ming temple, explains that the heart of the person of *shinjin* already and always resides in the Pure Land. “Resides” means that the heart of the person of *shinjin* constantly dwells there. This is to say that such a

person is the same as Maitreya. Since being of the stage equal to enlightenment is being the same as Maitreya, the person of *shinjin* is equal to the Tathagatas.¹⁷

(Shinran, *Lamp for the Latter Ages*)

In these passages Shinran explains that *shinjin* constitutes a transcendent event, which he describes through such phrases as “attainment of birth” or “settlement of birth.” This manner of human existence transcends time, even as it dwells in the midst of time. The one thought-moment of *shinjin* (*shin no ichinen*) can be expressed metaphorically, not as Kierkegaard’s “atom of temporality,” but as that instant that is an “atom of eternity.” What Shinran’s teaching of the true essence of the Pure Land way (*jōdo shinshū*) emphasized above all is the utmost and irreplaceable importance of the one thought-moment of *shinjin*, which is the first glint of eternity. The instant in which *shinjin* becomes settled represents one’s point of departure to the Pure Land. Shinran stated that persons of *shinjin* have already realized the settlement of birth, or that is, they have attained birth, even while they are still possessed of their physical bodies. In addition, Shinran expresses their arrival in the Pure Land with these words, “they transcend and realize great, complete nirvana on the eve of the moment of death.”¹⁸ This means that the mind of *shinjin*, which accompanies the physical body in the present life, becomes buddha, or that is, completely becomes mind itself. In the traditional studies of Shin Buddhism, this is referred to with the phrase, “birth is identical with the attainment of enlightenment” (*ōjō soku jōbutsu*).

In one of his letters Rennyō (1415–1499) writes about the same idea that Shinran had sought to explicate through his use of the word “mind” (*kokoro*). Rennyō, however, called it “spirit” or *tamashii*. The letter was written at the time of the death of Rennyō’s second daughter, Kengyoku-ni (1448–1472), who died at the age of twenty-five on the fourteenth day of the eighth month in the fourth year of Bunmei (1472).¹⁹

Rennyō records that Kengyoku-ni had rejoiced over realizing *shinjin* of Other Power, in accordance with the Jōdo Shinshū teachings. He states that, after warmly thanking the nurses who had cared for her, she quietly passed away. Following that, he describes a wondrous dream that was seen by a certain person at the dawn of the fifteenth day of the month, the night of her cremation.

According to the dream, the white ashes and bones of the cremated body of Kengyoku-ni lay in the garden where the funeral had taken place. As the person looked, three blue lotus flowers arose from the ashes. Between the flowers there appeared to be a gold-colored buddha, only one-inch tall, emitting rays of light. Suddenly, the buddha seemed to turn into a butterfly and vanish from sight. Thereupon, the person

awoke from the dream. Rennyo follows this description with the following words,

This vision was a manifestation of the gem of suchness and dharma-nature found in her name, *Kengyoku*. She became a butterfly, which then disappeared from sight. This indicates without question that her spirit (*tamashii*) was transformed into a butterfly, which went into the sky of dharma-nature, to the world of ultimate bliss—the city of nirvana.²⁰

What Rennyo here refers to as spirit, or *tamashii*, is not like a soul based on some primitive form of religious animism. It does not correspond to a substantial, metaphysical soul that can be differentiated from the physical body. Nor does it point to a kind of being from the spiritual world of the after-life of the type that is often brought up in stories of near-death experiences. Rather, it refers to something other than all of those substantialized realms of existence. The word signifies the existential reality of the young woman, *Kengyoku*. She must have known full well that all of those realms simply represent the fleeting and illusory thoughts of ordinary beings. Hence, she entrusted her entire self, without the slightest doubt, to the Tathagata's Vow, which was so worthy of her trust. We can see that, for Rennyo, the word *tamashii* was vividly imbued with the lucid colors of his sadness and joy. This was the sense in which he used it. Rennyo would be indeed troubled if we were to persist in our mistaken opinion that, in order to propagate to the masses, he simply compromised his beliefs to fit the secular sentiments that were prevalent in Japan at that time.

Translated by David Matsumoto

NOTES

1. Originally published in Japanese as “Bukkyō no tamashiiron”, in *Bukkyō*, no. 4, *Tamashii no mikata* (Views on Tamashii) (Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 1998), pp. 12–22. The text of this article and, unless otherwise noted, all of the quoted passages have translated into English by David Matsumoto.
2. *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles: Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* (Written 1921–22). For further reference and English translation, see “Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermetical Situation,” translated by M. Baur, *Man and World* 25 (1992): pp. 355–393.
3. T’an-luan, *Ōjōronchū*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941), pp. 283–284. For further reference and English translation, see also, *T’an-luan’s Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Discourse on the Pure Land, A Study and Translation*, Hisao Inagaki, trans. (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 1998), pp. 132–133.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. T’an-luan, *Ōjōronchū*, p. 327; Inagaki, p. 239. See also Vasubandhu, *Jōdoron*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 1, p. 269.
7. T’an-luan, *Ōjōronchū*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 1, p. 327; Inagaki, pp. 239–240.
8. Ibid.
9. Plato, *Phaedo*. For further reference and English translation, see also Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 88.
10. Plato, *Phaedo*; see also *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, p. 89.
11. Fichte, J.G., *Science of Knowledge*. This is a translation of the Japanese version of the passage that is included in “Bukkyō no tamashiiron,” pp. 18–19.
12. Dōgen, “Bendōwa,” in *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 1, Mizuno Yaoko, ed. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990), pp. 10–49. For further reference and English translation, see also Kazuaki Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), pp. 143–160.
13. Dōgen, “Bendōwa,” p. 31–32; Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 153.
14. Dōgen, “Bendōwa,” p. 32–34; Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 153.
15. Dōgen, “Bendōwa,” p. 34; Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 154.
16. Shinran, *Notes on Once-Calling and Many-Callings*, (A translation of

Ichinen Tanen Mon'i), Shin Buddhism Translation Series, *The Collected Works of Shinran*, Vol. 1 (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), p. 475.

17. Shinran, *Lamp for the Latter Ages*, (A translation of *Mattōshō*), *The Collected Works of Shinran*, Vol. 1, p. 528.

18. Shinran, *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way*, (A translation of *Ken Jōdo Shinjitsu Kyōgyōshō Monrui*), *The Collected Works of Shinran*, Vol. 1, p. 123.

19. Rennyō, *Jōgai no Gobunshō*, no. 10, *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 5 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kobundō, 1941), pp. 306-308.

20. *Ibid.*, 308.

Rennyō and His Daughter, Kengyoku

A Lecture by
Jitsuen Kakehashi

Kangaku
Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha

Professor Jitsuen Kakehashi visited to the Institute of Buddhist Studies to present the 1997 Numata Lectures on the topic of “Rennyō: His Life and Thought.” He also presented this lecture to the public on September 28, 1997 at the Gardena Buddhist Temple. The 1997 Numata Lectures were sponsored by the Institute of Buddhist Studies, the BCA Centennial Lecture Series, and the Yehan Numata Endowment Foundation.

Professor Kakehashi possesses the title of Kangaku, which represents the highest academic rank within Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha. He recently retired as the Director of the Research Department of Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, and he is the former Dean and President of Gyōshinkyōkō, Osaka. He is the author of numerous books, including works on Hōnen, the Tannishō, myōkōnin and most recently Rennyō.

THE LECTURE

As I quietly consider this matter, I think that it must be true when we say that the basis of a person’s character can be found in one’s name. Thus, Kengyoku was the name of a person who has just passed away and realized birth. Her name means, “to see a gem” What kind of gem? The name Kengyoku means to behold the wondrous truth of suchness and dharmā-nature—the wish-fulfilling gem. (Rennyō’s Letter On Kengyoku-ni)

GOOD AFTERNOON. TODAY, I would like to speak to you about a person by the name of Kengyoku-ni (1448–1472), who was the second daughter of Rennyō Shōnin (1415–1499). Kengyoku died at the very young age of twenty-five years, on the fourteenth day of the eighth month in the year 1472. At the time, Rennyō was fifty-eight years old. Shortly after Kengyoku’s death, Rennyō wrote a letter in which he remembers his daughter and relates to his followers the events of her life—a life that had enabled him to realize true joy in the Dharma. Today, I would like to base my talk to you on this letter.

After beginning his letter with the words above, Rennyo then continues with this passage,

Kengyoku-ni was a nun, who served originally as a servant at a Zen temple, but before long she became a follower of the Jōkein lineage. Yet, drawn by inconceivable conditions from the past, she came to realize, in recent days, the *shinjin* of our tradition.

Here Rennyo relates how his daughter Kengyoku was placed in the care of a Zen temple at a very early age. There she was raised as a servant to the priests. Later she was taken in by a temple of the Jōkein lineage of the Jōdo school, where she grew to adulthood. Through innumerable causes and conditions, however, she was able to return to Hongwanji and then realize *shinjin* as set forth in the Jōdo Shinshū. In this brief passage, Rennyo reveals his feelings about this daughter, with whom he had had very little connection and who had had to endure considerable hardships during her youth.

At the time when Rennyo was born Hongwanji was known as Ōtani Hongwanji. Located near what is now the Chionin temple in Kyōto, it was unimaginably small when we compare it to the Nishi or Higashi Hongwanji temples of today. Moreover, it was not an independent temple of the Jōdo Shinshū. In fact, Hongwanji was a minor temple affiliated with the Tendai school of Buddhism. It was very meager in resources and beset with troubles. That was the state of Hongwanji at the time. Yet, through Rennyo's efforts during his eighty-five years of life, this poor, miniscule Hongwanji would go from almost nothing to become the most prominent religious institution in all of Japan. Rennyo would develop this sangha on the foundation of the teachings of Shinran (1173–1262) so that it could propagate those teachings throughout the land. But, the road leading to that end was filled with troubles and turmoil.

Rennyo became the Head Priest of Hongwanji when his father Zonnyo (1396–1457) passed away. Rennyo was forty-three years old at the time. We can see that he had to wait many years before he became the Head Priest. As its leader, how would he set out to guide Hongwanji? What kind of Hongwanji should he try to build? Throughout his long years of waiting these were the kinds of questions that he must have constantly pondered.

Certainly, during the time of both Hōnen (1133–1212) and Shinran, Hongwanji could not possibly have even existed as a temple, let alone as one called "Hongwanji." Their teaching was too different from the traditional ways of thinking in Buddhism. That is why the *nembutsu* movement of Hōnen and Shinran was the target of continuous suppression by the authorities. Essentially, Jōdo Shinshū and its teachings had

no rights under the law. If its teachings were to spread, therefore, its existence and its headquarters would somehow have to receive official recognition from the authorities. This occurred just one hundred years before Rennyō, at the time of Kakunyo (1270–1351).

Kakunyo, the great-grandson of Shinran, affixed the name “Hongwanji” to this small temple and arranged for it to become affiliated with the Tendai school. The Hongwanji temple was located within the grounds of a temple called Ōtanidera. That temple was under the control of another temple called Myōkōin, which in turn was affiliated with the temple Shōrenin, which was one of the *monzeki* temples in the Tendai school. A *monzeki* was a very special temple at which only persons of the highest social classes—emperors, aristocrats, or others in the ruling classes—would be able to enter the priesthood. The next rank of temples directly under the Shōrenin *monzeki* temple were referred to as *inge* temples. Hongwanji was affiliated with the *inge* temple Myōkōin and, through it, with the Tendai school as a whole. In this way, Hongwanji came to be officially recognized as a temple by the authorities.

However, it could not just be a Tendai temple in name only; it also had to act like one. As a Tendai temple, its continued existence would be permitted only if it engaged in various Tendai rituals. For that reason, Hongwanji housed many objects of worship and scriptures from the Tendai school. Certainly, Hongwanji was actually a Jōdo Shinshū temple. In a Jōdo Shinshū temple the image of Amida Buddha ought to be enshrined as the central object of reverence. It should also focus on Shinran Shōnin and his teaching of Amida’s salvation. This teaching should be clearly reflected in the temple adornments. Yet, in Hongwanji this was not the case. Instead, Hongwanji contained various objects and scriptures used in the many Tendai rituals.

When Rennyō became the Head Priest, he declared that these Tendai objects and scriptures were not in accord with Shinran’s teaching, which urged us to abandon self-powered practices and simply entrust in the Buddha’s Primal Vow. Therefore, Rennyō burned the objects of worship and scriptures used in Tendai rituals. He used them as kindling and as firewood to heat his bath. Now, that was a pretty harsh thing to do. Perhaps he might have thought about burning them without telling people what he was doing. But he just couldn’t do that. Burning these objects was his way of expressing his resolution, “We will not go back! No matter what may happen, we won’t go back!” In order to declare this resolution, Rennyō burned the objects and scriptures that did not accord with the Shinshū teachings. This is the kind of person that he was.

On this point, there is a very interesting story regarding a portrait containing the images of Zennyō (1333–1389), the Fourth Head Priest

of Hongwanji and Shakunyo (1350–1393), the Fifth Head Priest. The custom in Hongwanji was to hang up the portrait on the days commemorating the anniversary of their deaths. On one such day, Rennyō took out the portrait in order to hang it up. However, upon viewing it, he decided to burn the portrait instead. Now, this was a portrait of his ancestors, his predecessors as Head Priest. Yet, they were portrayed as wearing the robes of Tendai priests. The portrait portrayed them in a form that did not comport with Shinran's teaching and, for that reason, Rennyō decided to burn them up. But, after stopping to think about it for a while, Rennyō eventually changed his mind. Instead of burning the portrait, he rolled it back up and on the top of the scroll he wrote the words, "Good and Bad." Then, he placed the portrait back into storage.

What this seems to indicate is that Rennyō must have realized that Hongwanji had been able to survive by disguising itself as a Tendai temple. His predecessors had lived during the "winter" of the Hongwanji history, when that was the only way to ensure that the Shinshū teachings would be able to continue. His ancestors had struggled to spread the teachings even as they disguised themselves as Tendai priests. As he reflected upon the difficulties that his ancestors had to endure in the most difficult of times, he realized that he could not just burn up their portraits as something "bad." To do so would not honor their memory. Yet, at the same time, he couldn't let others imitate their style of attire. So, he wrote "Good and Bad" on the portraits and then put them away. This episode has been passed on to us.

Until then Hongwanji had not been a temple that had sought to explain the teachings to common people. Rather, it was centered on priests who were more interested in carrying out scriptural transmission than in explaining the Dharma to the masses. For Rennyō, however, the essence of Shinran's teaching of Jōdo Shinshū was that he lived together with all common people. By putting on aristocratic airs, placing oneself apart on some highborn level and behaving like a member of the nobility, one would be completely unable to spread the teaching of Shinran. Rennyō therefore resolved to build a Hongwanji in which he would be able to realize a profound sense of the teachings of Jōdo Shinshū together with the common people, with all people together.

Following his succession at the age of forty-three years, Rennyō left things the way they were for a short time. However, he soon began to engage in a full-scale reformation of Hongwanji. For him, moreover, this also involved a thoroughgoing self-reformation. I believe that he probably began to undertake a full-scale reformation of his own thinking and even his physical constitution in 1461, when he was forty-seven years old. That year, during which Hongwanji would observe the 200th year memorial service for Shinran Shōnin, would mark the beginning of Rennyō's definitive reformation of Hongwanji as well. He resolved that,

with the observance of Shinran's 200th year memorial, he would make Hongwanji into the temple of Shinran Shōnin, where members would gather to hear the teachings of Shinran. If this were not to happen, he believed, then there would be no reason for Hongwanji to exist. This is why he began the reformation.

It was also in 1461 that Rennyō would write the first of his *Letters*. Briefly written with language that was easy to understand, the *Letters* were produced so that anybody would be able to understand Shinran's teaching, or the salvific heart of Amida Buddha. Moreover, most of the people whom he encountered during this time were unable to read. Thus, he intended his *Letters* not so much to be read, but to be heard. In this way, anyone would be able to learn of Amida Buddha's salvation and Shinran's teaching simply by listening to passages that were easy to understand. This is why Rennyō's first letter was written in 1461, to mark the 200th year memorial service for Shinran.

In this way Rennyō intended to make Hongwanji into a temple that would accord with Shinran's teaching. Furthermore, he wanted Hongwanji to be a temple where people could go to worship and see the Jōdo Shinshū teachings with their own eyes. He sought to create a Hongwanji in which they could see the image of Amida Buddha enshrined in the very center of the temple and observe the content of Shinran's faith. When people would go to worship in the main hall of the temple, he wanted them to be able to see the teaching transmitted to them by the Founding Master Shinran and the seven Pure Land Masters: that we are saved by this Buddha, Amida, who liberates all beings, protecting and guiding all of us throughout life.

In this way, he gradually went about reforming Hongwanji. He brought it down from its lofty position and made it into a Hongwanji in which everyone could join their hands together and hear the Dharma. As a result, people quickly began to gather in greater and greater numbers at Hongwanji. In addition, this was just before the beginning of the Ōnin War (1467–1477). People were already without any spiritual foundation in this time of terrible conflict and tragedy. As I mentioned earlier, there was a widespread famine in 1462. In the city of Kyōto alone the bodies of some 82,000 persons who had starved to death were thrown into the Kamo River where they dammed up the waters of the river. That is how terrible the famine was at that time.

In the midst of all of this, Rennyō delivered his teaching and encouragement to all of those people who had lost their personal support and their spiritual foundation. He taught the people that, even though they might have been abandoned by all around them, Amida Buddha would never abandon them. That Buddha was here with them now. Even though they might have been abandoned by the government, the authorities and everyone else, Amida would never abandon them. So he

encouraged them to entrust themselves to Amida Buddha and live in the way made possible by the Buddha's Vow. As a result, Rennyo's teachings spread throughout the land. However, the priests of the Tendai school were greatly angered by all of this.

Rennyo's efforts were attracting growing numbers of people to Hongwanji. In addition, he committed the radical act of burning and destroying the Tendai objects and scriptures that were located in Hongwanji. When all of this came to attention of the priests of the Tendai school, they decided to get rid of Hongwanji. The year was 1465, when Rennyo was fifty-one years old. The Tendai school issued a resolution that Hongwanji would no longer be recognized as a Tendai temple. As a result, they decided to destroy it. The forces from Mt. Hiei attacked it twice, once in the first month and again in the third month of that year. They completely destroyed it until nothing remained. Prohibited from returning to Kyoto, Rennyo had to flee for safety. But, even as he did, he began to brace himself to face the situation. Certainly, if he were not ready to do so, then no true reformation would come about and his would not become a religion that could be shared with the common people.

Present day Shiga prefecture was known long ago as Gōshū or Ōmi province. The people in that area around Lake Biwa were devoted to Rennyo and so they offered him protection. He took refuge in a small practice-hall led by a person by the name of Dōsai (1399–1488). This was in a place located on the eastern shore of Lake Biwa called Kanegamori, which is the present day city of Moriyama. Soon after, Rennyo's presence was discovered by Mt. Hiei, which then sent three hundred fifty soldiers there to kill him. Rennyo got word of their plans ahead of time, however, and so again he was able to escape. Hiding the wooden image of Shinran beneath his robes, he enlisted the aid of some able members and escaped to Akanoi. Although his life was saved at that time, later the community at Akanoi was destroyed.

For the next one to two years, Rennyo found protection with followers of Hongwanji in a place called Katada. But unfortunately, Mt. Hiei and its allies in Sakamoto soon found that that Rennyo was living there and so they sent armed soldiers down to attack him. During the assault the entire city of Katada was burned to the ground. Rennyo was able to escape by ship across Lake Biwa and found refuge in the Miidera temple in Ōtsu. Again his life was saved, but because he was constantly being hounded and forced to run, he could find no sanctuary.

The Miidera temple was also of the same Tendai school as Mt. Hiei. However, Miidera had for years been a foe of Mt. Hiei, as well as its equal in terms of power and influence. In any event, it gave protection to Rennyo. However, he did not remain there for long. Leaving his wife and children at the temple for safekeeping, he continued to travel around the

area teaching Shinran's message to people who were seeking the Dharma. He continued to plant the seed of Amida Buddha's compassion within the heart of each person whom he met. However, the Ōmi province never did offer him a place of sanctuary.

Eventually, therefore, in 1471, when he was fifty-seven years old, Rennyo left his home and traveled to a place called Yoshizaki in northern provinces. Yoshizaki was in Echizen province, which is the present day Fukui prefecture. There, his career of dynamic propagational began. It lasted only a very brief period of time, some four years and five months from 1471 until he departed from Yoshizaki on the twenty-first day of the eighth month of 1475. But during that short period Rennyo spread the Jōdo Shinshū teachings throughout a vast region, stretching throughout what is now Fukui, Ishikawa, Toyama, Niigata, and Nagano prefectures, then up on to the Tōhoku area. In a short span of four and one-half years, Rennyo was able to spread the teachings throughout the entire circle of the northern provinces of Japan. We can sense the power and intensity of Rennyo's propagational efforts from this.

At the time when Rennyo advanced up into the northern provinces, Hongwanji had already been obliterated. Further, although he had escaped to Ōmi province, it could provide no sanctuary for him. Hence, there was nowhere for him to return to. His retreat had been cut off and his back was against a wall. But, that was not the reason why he went to Yoshizaki.

The actual situation was that in the final month of the previous year (1470), Rennyo's second wife had passed away. Shortly thereafter, on the first day of the second month of 1471, his fifth daughter died at the age of twelve. Then, on the sixth day of that same month, a scant five days later, his eldest daughter died at the age of twenty-eight. In the space of three months he lost his wife and two daughters. All this when there was no place for him in the world. It was in the midst of this condition that Rennyo decided to make his advance into the northern provinces. He was just like a wild boar, a wounded wild boar. Thus, as Rennyo went off to the northern regions, he was prepared to die. Not knowing whether he would live or die, he departed for the northern provinces with utmost determination. This is the reason why he would be able to transmit the teachings with such power and intensity.

The number of people who would come to receive Rennyo's teaching and be inspired by his faith grew like a ball of fire, thus spreading the teachings like wildfire. Most of the people who accepted Rennyo's teaching were lay believers. Many of those would then become priests and come to lead small practice-halls. The number of people like this grew like wildfire, as they spread the Jōdo Shinshū teaching throughout the northern provinces.

Yet, even in the midst of this, Rennyo's personal tragedies did not end. In 1472, he lost two more daughters to death. First, a daughter who was six years old died on the sixth day of the eighth month and then on the fourteenth day of that same month his second daughter, who was twenty-five years old, also passed away. And so, within a very short, two year span of time, he lost one wife and four daughters to death. An ordinary person wouldn't be able to remain standing after such tragedy. Perhaps most of us would just give up in defeat. But, faced with this hopeless situation, Rennyo did not succumb to those tragedies. Instead he had the power to overcome his grief and go out to teach others the way to live. He was able to overcome the tragedies in his life and turn them into the motivation for his tremendous propagational efforts. What carried him forward, I believe, was the spirit of self-reformation and reformation of the sangha, which he had developed early on. With it he was able to focus all of his energies on building a new Hongwanji centered on the temple in Yoshizaki.

Yoshizaki was on the border between Echizen and Kaga provinces, present-day Ishikawa and Fukui prefectures. It was located on a peninsula within a small lake that was very near the Japan Sea. On the peninsula was Mt. Yoshizaki, which was actually a small hill about thirty meters high. Although not high, this hill formed steep, impassable cliffs on three sides of the peninsula, which were surrounded by water. Yoshizaki lay at a strategic point along water and land routes of commerce and transport. One could cross the waterway and continue travelling on to the Japan Sea. Near the base of the peninsula stretched a public highway leading to the northern regions. The peak of the mountain was flattened and on the top of it Rennyo built a small temple with a long main hall. At that spot, it was like being inside a stronghold. Yoshizaki in fact came to take on the appearance of a castle or a small fortress. In this way, during a time of military and political conflict Rennyo was able to establish a stronghold for his Hongwanji followers where they could come to hear the Dharma with peace of mind and without any need to fear being robbed or attacked.

A letter written by Rennyo describes the circumstances surrounding his journey to Yoshizaki. According to that letter, without knowing why, he suddenly left his lodgings in the southern quarter of Miidera in Ōtsu and traveled around through various parts of Echizen and Kaga. However, since the site at Yoshizaki seemed so engaging he decided to build a temple on that spot. Since then two or three years had passed. Just by reading these words, one might think that Rennyo had gone to Yoshizaki in a rather carefree or even care-less manner. In actuality, however, he was not careless about it at all. Instead, he worked out his plans meticulously and he arrived at Yoshizaki only after he had a careful grasp of all of the facts about it.

Four years before Rennyō went to Yoshizaki a conflict known as the Ōnin War had erupted. The war began as a struggle for power between two camps, those of the eastern army and the western army. Through its course it came to engulf all of Japan. The war went on for ten years in Kyōto, eventually leaving the city as burned out ruins. The conflict gradually spread further into the many provinces as well. In the province of Echizen, where Yoshizaki was located, there was an on-going seven-year battle between the forces of Asakura and the Kai forces. This culminated with the overthrow of the provincial military governor. In the neighboring Kaga province a power struggle between two brothers, Togashi Masachika (d. 1488) and Togashi Kōchiyo widened into a battle over the entire province. It was precisely into the middle of all of this that Rennyō went to Yoshizaki. He plunged into the fray just like a soldier of war and so, he entered the area only after he had first laid the groundwork with the provincial authorities, gathered all of the information that he could and made preparations accordingly.

Rennyō resolved to go to the northern provinces even at the risk of his own life in order to propagate the teaching of Shinran to all of the people there. However, as I mentioned before, he was without a wife at that time. Thus, after he built the temple at Yoshizaki, he had his second daughter Kengyoku come to join him there to serve Hongwanji in place of his wife. But soon after her arrival she became ill. These are the circumstances that Rennyō relates in his letter about her.

According to his letter, almost immediately after she was born, Kengyoku was placed in the custody of a Zen temple. Shortly thereafter she was placed in the care of a temple in the Jōkein lineage of the Jōdo school, and she later became a nun in that tradition. However, through innumerable causes and conditions she was able to return to Hongwanji, where she was able to receive *shinjin* in accordance with Jōdo Shinshū. As I mentioned earlier Kengyoku apparently did not have a close relationship with her father, Rennyō. The letter describes how the child must have endured a great deal of hardship as she was shuffled from temple to temple during her early years.

The temple of the Jōkein lineage that the letter makes reference to was actually the Shōjuan temple in Yoshida. Rennyō's aunt lived at this temple as a nun of that lineage and it was this temple to which Kengyoku was entrusted. The Jōkein lineage was the most important stream within the Jōdo school. One of Hōnen's disciples was a person by the name of Shōkō-bō Ben'a (Benchō, 1162–1236), who was a contemporary of Shinran. Shōkō-bō Ben'a had a disciple by the name of Ryōchū (1199–1287), who in turn had a disciple named Rai'a Nenkū (d. 1297). Rai'a established a branch within the Jōdo school in Kyōto that was called the Ichijō-ryū. He had disciple by the name of Kō'a Shōken (1265–1345), who was a great scholar and who is said to have built a temple called

Shōjōkein. A great many people from the aristocratic and samurai classes gathered to worship at Shōjōkein, which was the central temple in the Jōdo school at that time. That temple was also referred to as Jōkein.

Jōkein was the largest and the most powerful temple in the Jōdo school of the time. Within that lineage there also existed a temple for nuns that was called Shōjuan in Yoshida. The head of that temple was Rennyō's aunt, a nun by the name of Kenshū-ni. One of her disciples was a nun by the name of Kenzui-ni, who was in fact Rennyō's younger sister. It was into their care that his daughter Kengyoku was entrusted. Thus, for Kengyoku, this was not such a lonely assignment, for although she was in the custody of Jōkein, she was really under the care of her great-aunt and aunt. Particularly, her great-aunt Kenshū-ni lovingly raised Kengyoku as if she were her own child. This was where she grew to maturity. This was also where she became a nun of the Jōdo school, receiving the name Kengyoku. There she learned the teachings and was said to have realized the faith of the Jōdo school. Eventually, however, we are told that she returned to Hongwanji and realized *shinjin* in accord with the teachings of Jōdo Shinshū. That is, it can be said that Kengyoku underwent a conversion from the *shinjin* of the Jōdo school to that of Jōdo Shinshū.

Why did this conversion take place within Kengyoku-ni? Rennyō writes about in this way in his letter.

Here is the reason why. On the fifth day of the twelfth month of the second year of Bunmei (1470) the woman who had been her aunt passed away. Then, even as she was deeply mourning that loss, her older sister's life came to an end on the sixth day of the second month of the third year of Bunmei (1471). Her grief was boundless, and, as a result, she herself became incurably ill.

Kengyoku was residing at Shōjuan in Yoshida when her stepmother, Renyū, became ill. Renyū was Rennyō's second wife. She was also the younger sister of his first wife, Nyoryō (d. 1455). Kengyoku was born to Nyoryō and so Rennyō's second wife was also Kengyoku's aunt. That is why Rennyō uses the phrase, "the woman who had been her aunt." Kengyoku's aunt, Renyū, thus became her stepmother. Anyway, Renyū became ill, leaving a number of small children who were in need of care. Kengyoku returned from Jōkein to Hongwanji in order to nurse her ill stepmother and take care of the children.

However, as you will recall, shortly before that Hongwanji had been destroyed by Mt. Hiei's assault. There had been nowhere to settle down in Ōmi province until, finally, Miidera offered to give protection to Rennyō and his family. There Rennyō was able to construct a place

where the wooden image of Shinran Shōnin could be enshrined. On the grounds of the temple he also built a very small residence for his wife and children. That was the place to which Kengyoku returned in order to look after the children and attend to their mother.

All Buddhist monks and nuns during that time were trained in the medical arts. Without exception they had great knowledge of medical treatment and medications. Kengyoku must have been skilled in the medical arts and so she was called to nurse her very ill stepmother. But, unfortunately, on the fifth day of the twelfth month of that year (1470) Renyū passed away. She had been very fond of Kengyoku and had thought of her like one of her own children. Kengyoku cared deeply about her stepmother as well and so, when Renyū died, Kengyoku suffered in anguish.

And there was no end to her anguish. On the first day of the second month of the following year (1471), Kengyoku's six year old sister died. Then, five days later on the 6th day of that month, her twenty-eight year old older sister also passed away. She had also been nursing this sister during the time that she had been attending to her stepmother. Having lost her mother and two sisters in a very short time, Kengyoku fell into the depths of sorrow. Yet this terrible anguish also became the condition that allowed her to be able to hear her father Rennyō's teaching and to become a person settled in *shinjin*.

As the letter states, "her grief was boundless." The sadness that she felt as members of her family passed away, one after another must have been overwhelming. At the same time, all of the time and all of the effort she spent in caring for her stepmother and sisters must have left her exhausted. As a result, Kengyoku herself became ill. But, she was not able to rest and care for herself. Rennyō was going to make his advance up to Yoshizaki and she as well had to go there to help her father. The reason was that Hongwanji had to respond to both men and women. In particular, many women would go to worship at Hongwanji. Traditionally, the job of the wife of the Head Priest was to present the teachings in a manner appropriate for women and to entertain visitors. At the time, however, Rennyō was without a wife and so Kengyoku went to join him in Yoshizaki in place of her mother, or that is, to serve in place of Rennyō's wife. She went to Yoshizaki to talk with the many people who would go there to worship.

As a result, Kengyoku's illness continued to worsen. Perhaps it was due to the accumulation of her grief. In any event, instead of getting better, her illness progressed. She made it through the winter and then the spring. When summer arrived in the fifth month of that year, she became bedridden and was confined to her sickbed for some ninety-four days. Finally, on the fourteenth day of the eighth month of that year she passed away. Kengyoku was twenty-five years old.

However, the letter goes on to state,

Throughout her illness she would speak of the unlimited joy she felt over having been able to abandon the “peace of mind” taught in the Jōkein lineage, which she had held until then, and become established in the “settled mind” of our tradition.

Until she returned to Hongwanji she had only received the Jōkein lineage’s teaching in regard to *shinjin*. According to that teaching, we must continue to say the *nembutsu* until we die. We say the *nembutsu* while petitioning to the Buddha, “Amida! Please save me!” If at the moment of death our mind is calm and our life ends while we are saying the *nembutsu*, then Buddha will come to welcome us and will escort us to the Pure Land. If at the last instant of death, our minds are not at peace, or we forget to recite the *nembutsu*, or we become so ill that we cannot say the *nembutsu*, then we will not attain birth, even though we may have recited the *nembutsu* continuously before then. Therefore, we will not realize birth—we will not be saved—unless we continuously engage in the strict practice of saying the *nembutsu* until the very last instant of life. We must practice and maintain a calmness of mind in anticipation of the moment of death when the Buddha will come to welcome us into the Pure Land.

Kengyoku had heard nothing but this teaching of the Jōdo school until she heard her father speak of the Jōdo Shinshū teaching. She heard Rennyo teach his followers that we realize salvation in the instant that we entrust in the Buddha. When we entrust ourselves to Amida Buddha we follow the instructions of the Buddha who says to us, “Entrust in me just as you are, no matter how deep your karmic sins may be and even though your deluded passions may rage furiously. I will save you without fail!” In the instant that we entrust ourselves to Amida with the thought, “If that is how it is to be, then save me,” we realize the Buddha’s salvation. From then on, we will be protected by the Buddha for as long as we may live. When the time comes for us to die, the manner in which we die is of no concern. During her final days, Kengyoku spoke over and over again of this. When the time would come for her to die, she would be able to die. She was able to live and die with a peaceful mind for she had been able to hear of Amida Buddha who would bring about her birth in the Pure Land.

As human beings, our lives are burdened with deep karmic sins. Throughout our many experiences we commit a variety of sins. How we live in this world cannot be described simply or clearly. When something happens, its occurrence is often nothing other than a mystery. Thus, to live means that we must carry around an assortment of questions. We must carry dark shadows about on our backs. That is the nature of

human life. However, even though we carry the shadows about on our backs, by facing the light, the shadows may remain on our backs but they will no longer hinder us from truly living. If, on the contrary, we turn our backs on the light and face our own shadows, we will quickly become terrified of the darkness. As long as we are intimidated by the shadows of our own hearts, then we will never be able to shine brightly within the light.

But when we put the shadows to our backs and face the light—when we direct ourselves to the words of the Buddha who says, “Entrust in me. I will save you without fail!”—in that instant we are enveloped by the Buddha just as we are, still possessed of shadows. When we truly understand this realm, we will turn our backs on the shadows and face the light. This is the kind of human life that we will be able to live. This is human life that is enveloped by the Buddha. We live while calling out in gratitude to the Buddha, “Amida, thank you for saving me!” This is what Rennyō taught. The *nembutsu* is not a request to the Buddha to “Please save me.” Rather, it is our expression of gratitude, “Thank you for saving me, Amida!” With it develops a mind of endless gratitude.

Rennyō relates that in the midst of her illness Kengyoku constantly spoke of her life in this way. She did not know how or when she would die because of her illness. But she no longer had to worry about what might happen to her, for she was alive—enveloped in the light with the Buddha and protected by the Buddha. I believe that, for Rennyō, the joy that his daughter realized was perhaps his greatest salvation. It was the salvation of his own human heart. Kengyoku had encountered much hardship throughout her young life. She was then separated one after another from all of the people to whom she was close. Finally, she met with death at the young age of twenty-five. If she had asked of Rennyō, “Why do I have to die so young?” his grief would probably have been unspeakable. However, what she said to him in essence was, “Thanks to you, father, I have been able to live a life that is truly significant and profound. Now I will leave before you and go the world of the Buddha.” Perhaps hearing these as her final words, I believe that Rennyō would have realized profound joy—profound joy in the midst of sorrow.

Many things occur in our human lives. But, whatever difficulties or sadness that we may have experienced, if we can look upon our lives as being rare and wondrous events, then we truly will have lived. If we are able to realize this realm of gratitude, in which we are able to live—and die—in *gasshō*, then what else could we need? Why were we born into this world? What will become of us after we die? These are things that we will never understand. How foolish it would be for us to live our lives burdened by such thoughts, for they are vain and fruitless, the stuff of our ignorant minds.

What a source of anxiety it would be if we had to wait until the moment of death to know whether or not the Buddha would really come

to welcome us to the Pure Land. The life of *nembutsu* is one in which we live our lives together with the Buddha, so that we are constantly protected by the Buddha. No matter what troubles might occur and no matter what incidents might arise, we are protected by the Tathāgata and are given the wisdom and power to overcome all of them. This is the world that Kengyoku teaches us about.

The letter then goes on to say,

On the day before her life came to an end, particularly, she spoke over and over again of the establishment of her settled mind and of her deep appreciation for the efforts of those who had nursed her for so many days. Besides that, she reflected on all of the things that she had come to know during her life. Finally, toward the end of the hour of the dragon, in the morning of the fourteenth day of the eighth month, lying with her head to the north and facing the west, she attained birth.

Even on the day before her death Kengyoku wanted more than anything else to hear the Dharma. She expressed her joy over being enveloped within the light of Amida Buddha and her gratitude for being able to return to the Pure Land. She expressed her appreciation to all those who had been caring for her and spoke of many other things. Then, at around nine o'clock in the morning of the fourteenth day of the eighth month, she quietly drew her last breath, and returned to the Pure Land.

The funeral for Kengyoku took place on the fifteenth day of the month. Even in that very remote countryside, tens of thousands of people gathered during her funeral. They probably knew Kengyoku and had gotten an unforgettable impression when they had met her. Most likely she was a very beautiful person. Moreover, she was also a person who had undergone a religious conversion. Thus, it must have been clear that she had realized *shinjin*. Having met her even once, she must have left an unforgettable impression on them and so tens of thousands of people gathered at Yoshizaki when they heard of her death. It is doubtful that so many people would have come out to attend the funeral of a Shogun. Yet, the letter states that they came out to bid farewell to Kengyoku. For Rennyō, this was a wondrous event. As he states,

Indeed, it is also not insignificant that tens of thousands of people attended her funeral service for the very reason that she had come out to this place in the northern provinces and here attained birth.

The letter then relates an interesting event. In the evening after the funeral on the fifteenth, a pyre had been lit for the cremation of Kengyoku's remains. What is presented in the letter next is a dream, which begins while the cremation is at its height and the bones are still

upright. In the dream, three blue lotus blossoms arise from out of the white bones and ashes that are lying on the cremation pyre. From between the lotus blossoms a shining gold buddha about three centimeters in height then fully appears. In an instant, the Buddha changes into a golden butterfly, which then flies up into the western sky and disappears. This is the dream that “a certain person” was said to have had. This “certain person,” I believe, refers to the author himself. This must have been Rennyō’s dream.

The butterfly as an image of death has been present in human history from ancient times up to the present. This is a very mystifying phenomenon. It was seen in Greek civilization. It also appeared the writings of Chinese masters from well over 2,000 years ago. In recent times Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, a well-known author in the area of terminal care and near-death experiences, has written that children who have had near-death experiences often report having had a dream in which they became a butterfly. There are apparently many cases like this. Amazingly, the children report that they were calmed by the image, which allowed them to accept their own death.

Perhaps this image of death as a butterfly is something that lies deeply within the human consciousness and at the foundation of humanity itself. In any event, for Rennyō the image of the shining, golden butterfly flying off into the western sky must have symbolized both the pain of losing his daughter Kengyoku to death and the thought of her attainment of birth in the Pure Land.

Finally, Rennyō concludes his letter by stating that those who knew Kengyoku should think of her as their good teacher. He urged them to realize the same *shinjin* that she had herself realized so that they too would become assured of their births in the Pure Land. Rennyō considered his own daughter to be his good teacher of the Dharma, or *zenjishiki*. Kengyoku, it is said, also thought of him as her good teacher. Here we can see a father and a daughter, even though they are separated by death, actually walking together on the same path to the Pure Land. Those who are born before should lead those come after them, while those who are born later should follow those who have gone on before. On this path they are guiding each other: each is the other’s teacher; each is the student of the other. This sense of being “fellow good teachers” on the path to the Pure Land is the true meaning of the phrase “fellow-practicers” (*dōgyō*). It is also the true meaning of parent and child, for in its most fundamental sense that relationship is not just of this world. Rennyō and his daughter, Kengyoku teach us that the *nembutsu* is the true expression of the eternal bond between parent and child.

Shan-tao's *Exposition of the Method of Contemplation on Amida Buddha*, Part 1

Translated by
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THIS IS A REVISED translation of Part 1 of Shan-tao's *Kuan-nien o-mi-t'o fo hsiang-hai san-mei kung-te fa-men* (Jpn. *Kannen Amidabutsu sōkaizanmai kudoku bōmon*), commonly known as the *Kuan-nien fa-men* (The Method of Contemplation on Amida Buddha, Jpn. *Kannenbōmon*). The original English version was published in *Shinshūgaku* 33 and 34 (1966) and reprinted with a Japanese transcription of the original text in the Ryukoku Translation Pamphlet Series 2 (Kyoto: Ryukoku Translator Center, 1966).

Parts 2 and 3 were published in *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū* 425 (1984): pp. 20–41, and 431 (1988): pp. 20–33. Revised translations of Parts 2 and 3 will appear in forthcoming issues of this journal.

EXPOSITION OF THE MERIT OF THE SAMĀDHI¹ OF CONTEMPLATION ON THE OCEAN-LIKE FIGURE² OF AMIDA BUDDHA³

Compiled by
Bhikṣu Shan-tao⁴

PART ONE: METHOD OF PRACTICING THE SAMĀDHI

1. Presentation of the method of practicing the Buddha contemplation *samādhi* of meditation on the Buddha based on the *Contemplation Sūtra*⁵
2. Presentation of the method of practicing the Buddha recollection *samādhi*⁶ based on the *Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra*⁷

3. Presentation of the method of practicing the Buddha recollection *samādhi* in the meditation hall based on the *sūtras*
4. Presentation of the method of repenting and making vows in the meditation hall based on the *sūtras*

2 Presentation of the method of practicing the Buddha contemplation *samādhi* based on the *Contemplation Sūtra*: this method is clarified in the *Contemplation Sūtra* and the *Sūtra on the Ocean-like Samādhi of Contemplation of the Buddha*.⁸

Contemplate Amida Buddha whose body is the color of pure gold, with a halo emitting light pervasively and with unparalleled dignity. Aspirants, keep this image, day and night, wherever you are. Keep this image while walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. Always direct your thought to the west and imagine that even the host of sages and all the adornments made of various treasures are manifest before your eyes. This you should remember.

3 Further, aspirants, when you sit in meditation, you should first sit in the full cross-legged posture. Place your left leg on the right thigh, with the sole in harmony with the contours of the body; then, place your right leg on the left thigh, with the sole in harmony with the contours of the body. Rest your right hand on the palm of the left hand, and touch the soft tip of one thumb with that of the other. Next, keep your body upright and close your mouth. Close your eyes in a manner in which they appear open but not exactly open, appear closed but not exactly closed.

First, contemplate with your mind's eye the matted hair on the Buddha's head. The skin is golden color, and the hair is dark blue. Each hair curls on the head. The skull is snow white and transparent. The brain is the color of crystal. Next, contemplate the brain having fourteen veins, each emitting fourteen rays through the hair-follicles, and contemplate these rays going round the curling hair seven times and returning through the hair-follicles. Next, contemplate the same rays shining forth through the follicles of the eyebrows. Next, contemplate the broad and even forehead. Next, contemplate the high and long eyebrows which look like a new moon. Next, contemplate the white curls of hair between the eyebrows,⁹ white and void in the interior though appearing to be substantial, and emitting golden light from the tip, which comes right toward you to illuminate you. It is stated in the *Sūtra on the Ocean-like Samādhi of Contemplation of the Buddha*,

If practitioners contemplate the mark of the white curls of hair even for a moment, they will, whether able to see it or not, be rid of the grave karmic evils which would cause them to transmigrate for ninety-six

*koṭis*¹⁰ of *nayutas*¹¹ of *kalpas*¹² multiplied by the number of the sands of the River Ganges.¹³

If you always practice this meditation, you will be rid of a great amount of hindrances and karmic evils. Besides, you will acquire immeasurable merits and so all the Buddhas will be pleased and rejoice.

Next, contemplate the two eyes, broad and long; their black irises and whites are distinct and illuminating light pervades. Next, contemplate the straight, high nose which looks like a molten gold bar. Next, contemplate the smooth, well-framed face without any trace of scowl. Next, contemplate the ears whose lobes hang low; in the cavity there are seven hairs, each emitting light which illuminates the Buddha's entire body. Next, contemplate the lips, red and resplendent. Next, contemplate the teeth, closely joined to each other and white and lucid as a new moon. Next, contemplate the tongue, thin, broad and long; at the root of the tongue there are two glands which send the saliva through the throat directly to the heart. The Buddha's heart is like a red lotus, open but not altogether open, closed but not altogether closed; it has eighty-four thousand petals, lying one upon another, and each petal has eighty-four thousand veins, each vein emitting eighty-four thousand rays; each ray produces a hundred-jeweled lotus; on each lotus sits a bodhisattva of the tenth *bhūmi*,¹⁴ whose body is of golden color, and each, holding incense and flowers in his hands, worships the Buddha's heart and praises it in chorus. Aspirants, if you practice this meditation, you will be rid of the hindrance and karmic evils and acquire immeasurable merits, so that Buddhas and bodhisattvas will rejoice and heavenly deities and demi-gods, too, will rejoice.

Now, from the heart upward, contemplate the well-framed throat and two shoulders. Next, contemplate the well-framed elbows. Next, contemplate the even, well-framed palms which bear the marks of the thousand-spoked wheel,¹⁵ on the ten slim and long fingers, with webs in between, and on the nails of the color of red copper. Again, from the heart upward, contemplate the Buddha's breast, even and well-framed, which bears the clear mark of ten thousand virtues.¹⁶ Next, contemplate the abdomen, unfurrowed and not swollen. Next, contemplate the round and deep cavity of the navel, where light always shines inside and out. Next, contemplate the hidden organ, perfect like a full moon and plain and without protuberance like the abdomen and back. The Buddha said,

If a man or a woman with too much lascivious desire thinks of the Tathāgata's hidden organ, his desire will be quenched, his hindrance and karmic evils removed, and immeasurable virtue attained. Buddhas, then, will rejoice and heavenly deities and demi-gods, too, will rejoicingly follow and protect him. He will, thereby,

enjoy a long, peaceful life without the pains of sickness.¹⁷

Next, contemplate the well-framed two thighs, knees, and kneepans. Next, contemplate the two shins which are like the shanks of the deer king. Next, contemplate the two heels which are like the trunk of the elephant king. Next, contemplate the raised insteps which are like the shell of the tortoise king. Next, contemplate the ten long toes with webs in between and the nails of the color of red copper. Next, contemplate the Buddha sitting in the full cross-legged posture; he keeps his left leg on the right thigh, with the sole in harmony with the contours of the body, and his right leg on the left thigh, with the sole in harmony with the contours of the body. Next, contemplate the flat soles bearing the marks of the thousand-spoked wheel; the spokes and rim possess light which universally illuminates the lands of the ten quarters.

The contemplation of the Buddha from the top of the head down to the marks of the thousand-spoked wheel on the soles is called the complete contemplation of the glorious merit of the Buddha's body. This is called the contemplation in the proper order.

4 Next, contemplate the lotus-seat. Next, contemplate the lotus-base. Next, contemplate the petals, lying one upon another to make eighty-four thousand deep. Visualize each petal adorned with a hundred *koṭis* of king-jewels, each jewel possessing eighty-four thousand rays of light which illuminate the Buddha's body above. Next, contemplate the stalk of the jeweled flower with eight sides, each adorned with a hundred thousand jewels which emit great light illuminating all above and below. Next, contemplate the stalk resting on the jeweled ground and the various jewels above the ground which emit eighty-four thousand rays of light, each illuminating the Buddha's body and the six realms¹⁸ in the ten quarters.¹⁹ Also, imagine that all these rays of light shine upon you. When you practice this meditation, you will be rid of the hindrance and karmic evils and acquire immeasurable merit; therefore, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas will rejoice and heavenly deities and demi-gods, too, will rejoice. Day and night, they will follow and protect you. You will, thereby, attain peace and security while walking, standing, sitting or lying down. Then you will enjoy longevity in peace and opulence without ever suffering the pains of sickness.

If you follow the Buddha's teaching, you will be able to visualize various things in the Pure Land. If you have perceived them, keep them to yourself and do not talk to others about them. For talking about them is a grave offense that will invite the retribution of a bad illness and shortening of life. If you follow the teaching, you will upon death attain the birth of the highest grade²⁰ in the land of Amida Buddha.

After you have performed this contemplation from the top to the

bottom of the Buddha's body sixteen times, fix your thought on the white curls of hair on the brow. Control your mind well, and do not allow it to be distracted. If it is distracted, you will lose the meditative mind and hardly accomplish the *samādhi*. This you should remember.

This is the method of practicing the Buddha contemplation *samādhi*. If you direct your thought (toward the Buddha) at all times, you will attain birth in the Pure Land. Follow exclusively the Thirteen Contemplations²¹ of the *Contemplation Sūtra* without apprehension and never entertain doubt.

5 Further I say to the aspirants; if you desire to be born in the Pure Land, you should intently observe the precepts, recite the Name, and chant the *Amida Sūtra*.²² Chant the *sūtra* fifteen times a day, and you will arrive at ten thousand in two years. Chant it thirty times a day, and you will arrive at ten thousand in a year. Recite the Name ten thousand times a day, and at the proper time (i.e., six times a day) worship and praise the glorious manifestations of the Pure Land with great effort. Those who (daily) make thirty thousand, sixty thousand, or a hundred thousand utterances are all aspirants of the highest birth of the highest grade. In addition, turn all the other merits toward birth. This you should remember.

I have shown above the method of practicing the *samādhi* of contemplating the Buddha.

6 *The Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra*, chapter on the Questions, clarifies the method of practicing the Buddha recollection *samādhi* in the meditation hall for seven days and seven nights.

The Buddha said to Bhadrāpāla.²³ “There is a *samādhi* called ‘contemplating all Buddhas of the ten quarters appearing before one’s eye.’ If you practice this *samādhi*, you will have answers to all your questions.”

Bhadrāpāla said to the Buddha, “Please explain it to me. Your exposition will serve a great deal to lead people to enlightenment and bring peace to beings of the ten quarters. Please manifest a great illumination for the sake of sentient beings.”

The Buddha said to Bhadrāpāla, “There is a *samādhi* called ‘concentration of thought.’ The student should constantly practice it, and never engage in other methods of practice. This is the foremost of all meritorious practices.”²⁴

7 Next, the *sūtra* states in the chapter on Practice:²⁵

The Buddha said to Bhadrāpāla, “If you wish to attain this *samādhi* quickly, you should always have great resolution. Those who prac-

tice it as prescribed can attain it. Do not allow the slightest doubt, even as small as a hair, to creep in. This method of concentration of thought is called 'bodhisattva practice surpassing all practices'."

Raise the singleness of mind and believe in this teaching.
 According to the teaching you have received, think of the
 (western quarter).
 Be mindful and sever all other thoughts.
 Make firm resolution and have no doubt.
 Be diligent in practice, and be not indolent.
 Raise not a thought of being nor a thought of non-being.
 Think not of advancing; think not of regressing.
 Think not of things before you; think not of things behind you.
 Think not of things to your left; think not of things to your right.
 Think not of non-being; think not of being.
 Think not of things remote; think not of things nearby.
 Think not of painfulness; think not of itchiness.
 Think not of hunger; think not of thirst.
 Think not of cold; think not of heat.
 Think not of suffering; think not of pleasure.
 Think not of birth; think not of becoming old.
 Think not of sickness; think not of dying.
 Think not of living; think not of the span of life.
 Think not of poverty; think not of wealth.
 Think not of nobleness; think not of baseness.
 Think not of lust; think not of greed.
 Think not of things small; think not of things large.
 Think not of things long; think not of things short.
 Think not of beauty; think not of ugliness.
 Think not of evil; think not of good.
 Think not of anger; think not of joy.
 Think not of sitting; think not of rising.
 Think not of walking; think not of standing.
 Think not of *sūtras*; think not of teachings.
 Think not of justice; think not of injustice.
 Think not of abandoning; think not of taking.

Think not of ideas; think not of consciousness.
Think not of detachment; think not of attachment.
Think not of voidness; think not of entity.
Think not of lightness; think not of heaviness.
Think not of difficulty; think not of ease.
Think not of deepness; think not of shallowness.
Think not of broadness; think not of narrowness.
Think not of your father; think not of your mother.
Think not of your wife; think not of your child.
Think not of relatedness; think not of estrangement.
Think not of hatefulness; think not of fondness.
Think not of gaining; think not of losing.
Think not of success; think not of defeat.
Think not of purity; think not of turbidity.
Sever all thoughts and be mindful for a fixed period.
Let not your mind be disturbed; be ever diligent.
And count not the years; be not indolent each coming day.
Raise a determined mind; be not lazy mid-way.
Except when asleep, be zealous in your will.
Always live alone and avoid gatherings.
Eschew evil persons, and approach virtuous friends.
Associate with a good teacher and revere him as a Buddha.
Hold fast to your will and ever be supple-minded.
Meditate on equality in everything.
Stay away from your home town and your relatives.
Abandon love and lust and perform pure practices.
Take the way to the Unconditioned and sever all desires.
When learning literary wisdom, be sure it complies with
dhyāna.²⁶
Get rid of the three defilements.²⁷
Abandon carnal passions and leave all attachments.
Seek not with a greedy mind to accumulate much wealth.
Learn contentment in eating and be not greedy for tasty food.
Restrain yourself and take not a life for food.
Dress yourself as prescribed and decorate not your body.

Ridicule not others; be not proud and haughty.
 Be not arrogant; hold not yourself aloof.
 When expounding a *sūtra*, be in accord with the Dharma.
 Know that your body is from the beginning like an illusion.
 Cling not to the aggregates;²⁸ stand aloof from the *dhātus*.²⁹
 The (five) aggregates are bandits; the four (elements)³⁰ are snakes.
 All are ephemeral, and all momentary.
 There is no eternal self; the enlightened know it to be void in itself.
 As causes and conditions meet and part, things come into existence and dissolve.
 Having realized this well, you will know that all are void from the beginning.
 Having pity and mercy for all the sentient beings,
 Give free gifts to the poor and benefit the needy.
 This is the intense concentration; of all bodhisattva practices,
 This is the way to the ultimate wisdom, the practice surpassing all.

- 8** The Buddha said to Bhadrāpāla, “If you maintain this method of practice, you will attain the *samādhi* in which all the present Buddhas appear before you. If a *bhikṣu*, *bhikṣuṇī*, *upāsaka* or *upāsikā* wants to practice according to the prescribed method, he or she should strictly observe the precepts, dwell alone in a place, and contemplate Amida Buddha of the western quarter where he lives now. According to the teaching received, you should remember: a hundred thousand *koṭis* of Buddha-lands away from here, there is a land called Sukhāvātī.³¹ Contemplate this Land with singleness of mind, for a day and night up to seven days and nights. The seventh day having passed, you will see it. It is as though you see things in a dream without discerning day and night or inside and out; you see them even though they are in the dark and there are many obstacles in between. O Bhadrāpāla, when the four kinds of Buddhists always do this contemplation, the high mountains, Sumeru mountains,³² or whatever dark places there are in the Buddha-lands (between here and Sukhāvātī), will all give way and not cause any hindrance. It is not that these four kinds of Buddhists see with a divine eye, hear with a divine ear or reach the Buddha-land with divine feet. It is not that they die here and are born there (in order to see the Land). But they see all this while sitting here.”

The Buddha continued, “The four kinds of Buddhists in this land can see it by single-mindedly contemplating Amida Buddha. Now, let it be

asked what method of practice they should perform in order to be born in the land. Amida Buddha replies, "Those who desire to be born should call my Name unceasingly. Then you will attain birth."

The Buddha said, "By means of concentrated mindfulness one attains birth. Always contemplate the Buddha's body which possesses the thirty-two characteristics and eighty minor physical marks and emits billions of rays of light shining everywhere. His majestic countenance is incomparable. He expounds the Dharma in the assembly of bodhisattvas. You must not discard the forms (of the Buddha's body). Why? The reason is that because you do not discard forms, you can contemplate the Buddha's body, and, thereby, attain this *samādhi*."

I have clarified above the method of the Buddha recollection *samādhi*.

9 When you enter the meditation hall, you should exclusively follow the Buddhist method. First, prepare a hall, place a sacred statue in it, and cleanse it with perfumed hot water. If you have no family Buddha room, any clean room will do. Sweep and wash it clean as prescribed, and place a Buddha's image on the western wall. Aspirants, it would be better if you divide a month into four periods, that is, from the first to the eighth, from the eighth to the fifteenth, from the fifteenth to the twenty-third, and from the twenty-third to the thirtieth. Aspirants, weighing the burden of your occupation, enter the path of the pure act³³ at a (convenient) period. From the first to the seventh day, wear only clean clothes and new sandals. During the seven days eat only one meal a day. Let your soft rice cake, plain rice and seasonal pickled vegetable be simple and temperate in quantity.

In the hall, restrain yourself, day and night, and focus your thought on Amida Buddha with uninterrupted, exclusive mind. Let your thought remain in accordance with your voice. You are only allowed to sit or stand; do not sleep during the seven days. Also, do not worship the Buddha or recite the *sūtra*. Do not use a rosary, either. Only let the consciousness of your recollection of the Buddha with the joined hands be present, and with every thought, think of seeing the Buddha. The Buddha stated,

Imagine that Amida Buddha's golden body, resplendent with light and incomparably august, resides before your eye.

When you properly contemplate the Buddha while standing, remain standing and call his Name from ten thousand to twenty thousand times. When you properly contemplate the Buddha while sitting, remain seated and call his Name from ten thousand to twenty thousand times. In the hall, do not join heads and talk with each other.

10 Three or six times each day and night, confess and repent various evils committed through bodily, oral and mental actions in your life to all the Buddhas, all sages, heavenly gods, earth gods, and to all the wardens of the paths of karma.³⁴ Having repented honestly, return to the practice of contemplating the Buddha according to the prescribed method. You should not readily talk about the realm you have seen. If the realm is propitious, keep it to yourself. If it is adverse, repent. Vow that you will not take with the hand or eat with the mouth any wine, meat, or the five kinds of acrid food.³⁵ Vow that if you go against the vow, you will have vicious scabs on your body and mouth. Or make a vow that you will chant the *Amida Sūtra* a hundred thousand times. Repeat the Buddha's Name ten thousand times a day, and chant the *sūtra* fifteen times a day, or twenty or thirty times, according to your capability. By so doing, desire to be born in the Pure Land and ask for the Buddha's embrace.

11 Again, aspirants, when you are about to die with sickness or otherwise, follow, mind and body, the above-stated method of the Buddha recollection *samādhi*. Turn your face to the west, and, with concentration of mind, focus your thought on Amida Buddha. Making your mental act agreeable with the oral one, recite (the Name) uninterruptedly, and resolutely think of attaining birth in the Pure Land and of the sages' coming to receive you. If the sick person sees a realm, let him tell the nursing man about it. When he has told it, record his story. If the sick person cannot talk, let the nursing man ask him various questions, saying, "What realm did you see?" If he tells of the visions of his karmic evils, let the man on the bed-side recite the Name and himself repent in order to help the sick man repent; thereby, you can definitely purge him of the karmic evils. If, the karmic evils having been extinguished, he sees the sages on the lotus-base appear before him in response to his recitation of the Name, record it in writing as I have prescribed above. When the aspirant's relatives and kinsmen come to nurse him, let not those who have drunk wine or eaten meat or any of the five kinds of acrid food enter (the room). If there is such a man, never allow him to go to the sick man's bedside. For the sick man may lose his right recollection, be confounded by the spirits, and, after having died in a state of madness, fall into the three evil realms. May the aspirants restrain themselves, uphold the Buddha's teachings, and perform the causal practice for seeing the Buddha. The above are the rules for practicing in the hall and for nursing a sick man.

NOTES

1. *Samādhi* (*san-mei*) means concentration of thoughts, intense contemplation of a particular object, or deep absorption in which the contemplator perceives the extrasensory objects meditated upon.

2. "Ocean-like figure" (*hsiang-hai*) means boundless or unlimited physical characteristics. Thirty-two major physical marks and eighty minor characteristics are attributed to a Buddha. For the "thirty-two major physical marks" and "eighty minor characteristics," see Hisao Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras: A Study and Translation* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1962), pp. 397–398, and 418. See also, *The Tannishō: Notes Lamenting Differences*, Ryukoku Translation Series II (Kyoto: Ryukoku Translation Center, 1962), pp. 97-101.

3. *Kuan-nien o-mi-t'ō fo hsiang-hai san-mei kung-te fa-men* (Jpn. *Kannen Amidabutsu sōkaizanmai kudoku bōmon*), in *Taishō*, vol. 47, no. 1959.

4. Shan-*tao* (Jpn. *Zendō*, 613-681) is the fifth of the Seven Patriarchs of Shin Buddhism. For his life and doctrine, see Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras*, pp. 106-114. See also *Shoshinge: The Gāthā of True Faith in the Nembutsu*, Ryukoku Translation Series I (Kyoto: Ryukoku Translation Center, 1961), pp. 10-11. For a full discussion of Shan-*tao*'s Pure Land thought and an analysis of the *Kuan-nien-fa-men*, see Ryosetsu Fujiwara, *The Way to Nirvana* (Tokyo: Kyōiku Shinchōsha, 1974).

5. *Kuan wu-liang-shou ching* (The Sūtra on the Contemplation of Amitāyus, Jpn. *Kanmuryōju-kyō*), 1 fascicle, translated into Chinese by Kālayaśas of the Liu-Sung Dynasty (*Taishō*, vol. 12, no. 365). For an English translation, see Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras*, pp. 315-350; for a bibliography of other translations, see *ibid.*, pp. 388–389.

6. *Nien-fo san-mei* (Buddha recollection *samādhi*, Jpn. *nembutsu zanmai*). *Nien-fo* literally means "thinking of a Buddha," "recollection of a Buddha" (Skt. *buddhānusr̥ti*). This term was originally used in Pure Land Buddhism either with the sense of contemplating Amida Buddha or calling his Name, and later exclusively used in the latter sense. Shan-*tao* used the term *nien-fo san-mei* to mean visualization of Amida and the Pure Land as the result of continuous contemplation of Amida and uninterrupted practice of calling his Name.

7. *Pan-chou-san-mei-ching* (*Sūtra of Pratyutpanna Samādhi*, Jpn. *Hanjuzammai-kyō*), 1 fascicle and 3 fascicles (*Taishō*, vol. 13, no. 417 and 418, respectively), translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema of the Later Han Dynasty. *Pratyutpanna samādhi* is the meditation in which an aspirant after seven to ninety days' practice sees Buddhas, particularly, Amida Buddha. For an English translation, see Hisao Inagaki, "Pan-chou-san-mei-ching: Translation with notes," in Fujita Kōtatsu Hakushi Kanreki Kinen

Ronshū Kankōkai, ed., *Fujita Kōtatsu Hakushi kanreki kinen ronshū: Indo tetsugaku to Bukkyō* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1989), pp. 49–88.

8. *Kuan-fo san-mei hai ching* (Jpn. *Kanbutsuzammaikai-kyō*), 10 fascicles, translated into Chinese by Buddhahadra of the Eastern Tsin Dynasty (*Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643).

9. White curls of hair between the eyebrows (Skt. *ūrṇā-keśa*) is one of the thirty-two major physical marks of a Buddha.

10. *Koṭi* is a Sanskrit word indicating a large number, commonly said to be 100 million.

11. *Nayuta* is a Sanskrit word indicating a large number, commonly said to be 100 billion.

12. *Kalpa* is a Sanskrit word indicating eons of time.

13. A modified quotation from the *Kuan-fo san-mei hai ching* in *Taishō*, vol. 15, 655b.

14. *Bhūmi*, literally “ground” or “soil,” is the name of one of the bodhisattva’s stages. The tenth *bhūmi* refers to the fiftieth stage of the fifty-one stages of bodhisattvahood leading to Buddhahood.

15. The mark of the thousand-spoked wheel (Jpn. *sempukurinsō*) is one of the thirty-two major physical marks of a Buddha; a mark of a wheel on the soles.

16. One of the eighty minor characteristics of a Buddha. In Chinese, *mantzu* (Jpn. *man-ji*), literally means the character of ten thousand virtues. A translation of a Sanskrit word *svastika* which literally means an “auspicious sign.” For further reference, see “eighty secondary marks,” in Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras*, pp. 397–398; and “*śrīvasta-svastika-nandyāvartavardhamāna-saṁsthāna-keśa*,” in *The Tannisho*, Ryukoku Translation Series II, p. 101.

17. A modified quotation from the *Kuan-fo san-mei hai ching*, *Taishō*, vol. 15, 687a.

18. The six realms are the six lower realms or states of existence. They are: hell, realms of hungry spirits, animals, fighting spirits, humans, and heavenly beings.

19. The ten quarters are the four cardinal points, four intermediate quarters, zenith and nadir.

20. The *Contemplation Sūtra* distinguishes the aspirants of the Pure Land into three major grades, namely, highest, middle and lowest, and further divides each grade into three levels of birth, namely, highest, middle and lowest. See Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras*, pp. 339-348.

21. The *Contemplation Sūtra* sets forth the method of attaining the *samādhi* of contemplation of Amida Buddha and his Land as follows: (1) contemplate the setting sun, (2) water, (3) the ground of the Pure Land, (4) the jeweled trees, (5) the jeweled ponds, (6) the jeweled pavilions, (7) the lotus-throne,

(8) the images of Amida Buddha and his two attendants, (9) Amida's physical glory and light, (10) Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva (Chn. Kuan-yin, Jpn. Kannon), (11) Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva (Chn. Ta-shih-chih, Jpn. Daiseishi), (12) visualize oneself being born in the Pure Land, and (13) visualize the images of Amida and the two bodhisattvas.

22. *Amida Sūtra* refers to *O-mi-t'o ching* (*Sūtra on Amida Buddha*, Jpn. *Amida-kyō*), 1 fascicle, translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva in 402. See Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras*, pp. 351-360.

23. In Mahāyāna sūtras, Bhadrāpāla is referred to as the head of lay bodhisattvas.

24. "Chapter on the Questions" of the *Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra*, in *Taishō*, vol. 13, 898b.

25. "Chapter on the Practice" of the *Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra*, in *Taishō*, vol. 13, 898b-899b.

26. *Dhyāna* means concentration of thoughts.

27. The three defilements are greed, anger, and stupidity.

28. Aggregates refer to the five skandhas, or five cumulations, i.e., the five components of a sentient being. They are form, perception, conception, volition and consciousness.

29. *Dhātus* refers to the eighteen *dhātus*, or the eighteen groupings constituting one's body and one's objective world. They are the six sense-bases, six sense-objects, and six consciousnesses put together. The six sense-objects are the six objective fields of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought. The six consciousnesses are the six sensations or perceptions corresponding to the six sense-bases.

30. The four basic elements constituting the material world, namely, earth, water, fire, and wind. They represent solidity, liquidity, heat and motion, respectively.

31. *Sukhāvati*, literally "possessed of pleasure or happiness," is the Sanskrit name of Amida's Pure Land.

32. In Buddhist mythology, Sumeru is the mountain at the center of the world-system. The four continents, or islands, in the ocean surrounding the mountain are inhabited by human beings, and heavenly beings dwell near, on, or above the mountain. For further details, see Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras*, pp. 384-6.

33. The Buddhist Way for enlightenment.

34. Wardens or lords of the various realms, particularly those of the Five Lower Realms, namely, hell, realms of hungry spirits, animals, humans and heavenly beings. In this division the realm of asuras, or fighting spirits, is included in hell.

35. The five pungent roots forbidden for monks to eat. They are garlic, leeks, and three kinds of onions.

**Pure Land Buddhism in China:
A Doctrinal History
Author's Preface and Chapter One: A General Survey**

Shinkō Mochizuki

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE FOLLOWING IS THE first two sections of one of the most famous sources for the study of Pure Land Buddhist thought: *Pure Land Buddhism in China: A Doctrinal History* (*Chūgoku Jōdo kyōrishi*), by Shinkō Mochizuki (1896–1948). This work was originally published in 1942, and was translated by the late Leo M. Pruden in 1982. We wish to thank his estate for permission to publish this important work. Although the original is now quite dated, it remains a useful resource, for although many specialized studies have been made since that time, no similar, comprehensive work exists. We also want to thank Professors Masatoshi Nagatomi and Stanley Weinstein for their consultation and encouragement to pursue making this work publicly available. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the assistance of the late Rev. Philip K. Eidman in contacting the Pruden estate and gaining permission for this publication.

The typescript of Pruden's translation came to light in late 1994, when I was looking through a storeroom in the Institute's building in Berkeley. There on a back shelf, I found six boxes of papers, containing two copies of the translation. Once I realized the importance of this work, I felt impelled to try to see it published—not only for the sake of the work's inherent interest, but also in recognition of the many years that Pruden had been an active supporter of the Institute.

Our plan is to publish the entirety of the translation sequentially in the *Pacific World*. When this is finished, we plan to publish the work as

a whole, together with a select bibliography that will assist the reader in locating more recent publications. Editing of the typescript has been limited to attempting to improve the readability of the translation, and updating some of the terminology to accord with more contemporary use.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This present book systemizes the notes of lectures that I gave on numerous occasions at Taishō University. As these notes are now being printed in book form, this book will be entitled *Pure Land Buddhism in China: A Doctrinal History*, which points to the major concern of this work: the development and changes that Pure Land doctrines have undergone in China.

However, religious doctrines are accompanied by faith, and this in turn carries within itself an impetus to dissemination and expansion. Therefore, while we are relating the changes and developments that Pure Land doctrines have undergone, we are at the same time narrating the historical facts of the faith's growth and expansion.

Buddhism in China has almost two thousand years of history behind it; moreover, China is vast in geographic extent, and the religious phenomena that have arisen within it from the time of its origins to the present day are innumerable. It would be almost impossible to study these phenomena one by one, and I believe that it would not be an easy task to bring together the data involved in such a history, regardless of the criteria adopted. In the present work, I have attempted, to the best of my abilities, to bring together as much relevant historical data as possible, and to delineate the antecedents and later ramifications of any given doctrinal theory in my exposition of that theory. However, when the final editing of this work was finished, I discovered several places where further revision was called for, and I am filled with remorse that in this respect the work remains incomplete. I sincerely look to corrections and the emendations which later generations of scholars will provide.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank Shōkō Kanayama, Sojun Moroto, Jōkō Katsuki, Shūkō Tanaka, Denjō Ishida, Shōdō Takarada, and Kyōshun Tōdō, for the assistance these young scholars have rendered to me in the compilation and writing of this book.

Shinkō Mochizuki
March 1942

CHAPTER I: A GENERAL SURVEY

The Pure Land teachings (*ching-t'u chiao*) form a separate tradition within Mahāyāna Buddhism. In these teachings, the devotee believes in the existence of a large number of various buddhas, and in their heavens, or pure lands; through this faith the devotee obtains, in this life, the protection of these buddhas and desires to be born into one of these pure lands after death. All of the various Mahāyāna scriptures and commentaries speak of buddhas "in all of the ten directions, as numberless as the grains of sand in the Ganges River." Each one of these buddhas lives in his own individual pure land, and here he continues to preach and to teach to a multitude of the faithful who have obtained birth in this land. Despite these repeated references, very few scriptures speak of any of these buddhas or their pure lands in detail. It is only the Buddhas Amitābha (O-mi-t'o Fo), Akṣobhya (O-shu Fo), and Bhaiṣajyaguru (Yao-shih Fo) who have separate, independent scriptures devoted to describing them and their pure lands.

However, an extremely large number of scriptures are devoted exclusively to Amitābha. These either describe his making of vows and his cultivation of religious practices while he was yet a bodhisattva, or they describe the adornments and the physical features of his pure land, the Western Land of Sukhāvati (*chi-lo*, "possessing extreme happiness"). The large number of scriptural texts devoted to Amitābha and Sukhāvati attest to the fact that, from the very earliest period, the pure land of the Buddha Amitābha was regarded as the best of all the pure lands of the buddhas. Consequently, the belief in Amitābha's Pure Land grew in India. In such works as Nāgārjuna's *Daśabhūmivibhāṣa* (*Shih-chu pi-p'o-she*), Sthiramati's *Ratnagotra vibhāga* (*Chiu-ching i-ch'eng Pao-hsing lun*), and Vasubandhu's *Commentary on the Amitāyus Sūtra* (*Amitāyus Sūtra Upadeśa*, *Wu-liang-shou ching Yü-p'o-t'i-she*) we find the authors vowing to be born into Sukhāvati. Similarly, such scriptural texts as the second volume of the *Ta-p'ei-ching*, the first volume of the *Ta-fa k'u ching*, the *Wen-chu shih-li fa-yuan ching*, and the sixth volume of the *Ta fang-teng Wu-hsiang ching* record that a variety of people vowed to be born in Amitābha's Pure Land. These include such figures as the bhikṣu Jivaka (Chi-p'o-chia), the young man Leṣya (Li-ch'e) "whom all the world delights in seeing," the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, and "Queen Increase" (Ts'eng-ch'ang Nü-wang). When the Pure Land faith spread to China, it attracted many tens of millions of devotees, both clerics and laity, and the faith eventually spread to all the countries of the Far East, where it became the major faith of a vast majority of the populations of these lands. For this reason, although when we speak of

the Pure Land teachings, this term may be used to refer to the teaching that every buddha has a pure land, in light of the above, we shall employ this phrase in the sense of belief in the Buddha Amitābha. The rest of this work will concern itself with narrating the history of the dissemination of belief in Amitābha.

There are a variety of theories concerning the first introduction of the *buddhadharma* into China. The *Preface to the Sūtra of Forty-two Sections* (*Ssu-shih-erh chang ching*), Mou-tzu's *Li-huo lun*, volume two of the *Ch'u-san-tsang chi-chi*, and volume one of the *Liang Kao-seng ch'uan* all place the first introduction of Buddhism during the reign of the Emperor Ming (reigned A.D. 57–75) of the Later Han Dynasty. According to this account, the Emperor Ming dreamt of a golden-colored man, and when he awoke, he dispatched Ts'ai Yin to the countries of Central Asia to search out the teaching of this golden-colored man. Ts'ai Yin returned to Loyang with the monk Kāśyapa-mātaṅga and here in Loyang, Kāśyapa-mātaṅga translated the *Sūtra in Forty-two Sections*, sometime during the Yung-ping period (A.D. 58–76). Based on this account, volume two of the *Li-tai San-pao chi* places the first introduction of Buddhism into China in the tenth year of Yung-ping (A.D. 67), during the reign of the Emperor Ming. However, it is well known that the *Sūtra of Forty-two Sections* was composed in China at a much later date. Further, since there is no basis to believe that Kāśyapa-mātaṅga ever actually came to China, this account, with all of its details, must have been fabricated by a later hand.

Another account is given in the first volume of the *Li-tai San-pao-chi*, and in the last volume of Fa-lin's *P'o-hsieh lun* (composed in the T'ang Dynasty). According to this account, some eighteen worthies arrived in China, headed by "the foreign śramaṇa Shih Li-fang," sometime during the reign of Ch'in Shih-huang-ti (ruled 246 to 210 B.C.). Shih Li-fang brought Buddhist scriptures with him, and preached the teaching to the Emperor. Ch'in Shih-huang-ti did not believe in these teachings, and he imprisoned Li-fang and the rest of the group. However, that very night, a Vajrayākṣa in the form of a man appeared, broke open the prison, and released the monks. Seeing this, the Emperor became terrified and prostrated himself to the monks, begging their forgiveness. The account ends with the statement that this incident is found recorded "in the *Scriptural Catalogue* of Shih Tao-an and Chu Shih-heng." We do not know if Tao-an's catalogue actually carried this account, since this catalogue has not been preserved for us. In a Japanese work, the *Tōzai kōshōshi no kenkyū* by Toyohachi Fujita, the author points out a statement in volume six of the *Shih-chi*, in an entry dated "the thirty-third year of the reign of Ch'in Shih-huang-ti" (214 B.C.), that "the temples of *pu-te* were prohibited" (*chin pu-te ssu*). The word *pu-te*

is a transliteration of the word "buddha," and this entry would mean that Buddhist ceremonies and Buddhist institutions were banned as early as the Ch'in Dynasty. The Emperor Ch'in Shih-huang-ti believed in the spirits (*shen-hsien*), and he was involved in the search for an elixir of immortality. Perhaps he disliked the Buddhist teaching of impermanence, and so banned the religion. The word "buddha" was early transliterated into Chinese by a variety of characters, *fo-t'u* (浮屠, 浮圖), or *fu-to* 復豆 so that the characters *pu-te* 不得 would thus appear to be the oldest transliteration of this word. However, if the religion of the Buddha was banned as early as the reign of the Emperor Ch'in Shih-huang-ti, then this fact would surely have been recorded in Tao-an's catalogue.

The thirty-third year of the reign of Ch'in Shih-huang-ti (214 B.C.) corresponds to the eighteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Aśoka, who in his turn had dispatched Buddhist missionaries to the lands of Gandhara and Bactria. Therefore, we cannot say that by this time one such mission could not have arrived on Chinese soil. In any case, the Buddhist scriptures did not survive from this supposed first missionary attempt, and in fact, the teachings were almost immediately proscribed, so in one sense this mission cannot be regarded as the origin of the *buddhadharma* in China.

The first account of the *buddhadharma* in China must then be placed during the reign of the Emperor Ai (reigned 7 to 1 B.C.). The thirtieth volume of the *Wei-chih* contains a "Monograph on the Eastern Barbarians," the Wu-wan and the Hsiang-pi. Commenting on this work, the *Wei-chih* quotes a text called the *Wei-lueh* by Yu K'un. This in turn states that in the year 2 B.C. (during the reign of the Emperor Ai, a scholar (*po shih*) named Ching Lu, heard about a Buddhist scripture (*fo-t'u ching*) from Yin Tsun, an ambassador from the Yueh-chih kingdom in western Central Asia. We do not know what type of Buddhist scripture this was. However, the account continues with a description of the birth of Siddhārtha, the details of his parentage, who his mother and father were, what kingdom he was born in, etc., so the text in question was perhaps a *nidāna*, or an account of the early life of the Buddha.

This oral account of the life of the Buddha, told by a Central Asian ambassador to a Chinese scholar in the year 2 B.C., can be safely held to be the first undisputed appearance of the teachings of the Buddha on Chinese soil. Very soon, however, under the rule of Wang Mang, relations were severed with the Central Asian kingdoms in the year A.D. 9, only to be reestablished with the rise of the Later Han Dynasty (from A.D. 26 onward). From this time onward, we can see more clearly the introduction of various aspects of the *buddhadharma* into China.

In volume eighty-eight of the *Hou Han-shu*, in the "Monograph on Central Asia" (*Hsi-yu ch'uan*), it is recorded that "for the first time King

Ying of Ch'u believed in this teaching (i.e., Buddhism) and, because of this, the *dharma* spread rapidly thereafter." In volume forty-two of this same work, in the "Biography of the Ten Kuang-wu Kings," we are told that King Ying was very fond of the various wanderers who traveled around the country at this time. It says that he would greet them, entertain them in his palace, and listen to their teachings. We are told that in his old age he came to believe in the doctrine of Huang-Lao (the Yellow Emperor and Lao-tzu), that he followed the doctrines of the Buddha, and that he performed ceremonies replete with vegetarian feasts.

In the year A.D. 65, the Emperor Ming ordered a general amnesty throughout the Empire for all those under sentence of death, and at this time the Emperor received presents from those to whom he had granted amnesty. King Ying sent a messenger with thirty rolls of silk cloth as a present to the Emperor, begging an amnesty for himself. The Emperor is recorded to have stated that King Ying recited the words of Huang-Lao, that he worshiped at the temple of the Buddha, and that he kept a vegetarian fast for three months as a vow to the spirits (*shen*). We are told that the Emperor said, "We find nothing odious, nor doubtful, in this." The Emperor returned the rolls of silk and ordered that these be used in feeding *upāsakas* and *śramaṇas*.

We know from this account, then, that by the year A.D. 65 King Ying had converted to Buddhism and was widely known as an *upāsaka*, as well as being noted for his vegetarian feasts. If this account is factual, then we can safely say that Buddhism had spread widely throughout China even before the Yung-ping period, and that the tale of the Emperor Ming dreaming of a golden-colored man, and receiving the *dharma* from the West, is merely a reflection of this historical fact.

* * *

The first appearance of what was to develop into Pure Land teachings was the translation in A.D. 179, during the reign of the Later Han Dynasty Emperor Ling, of the *Pratyupanna-samādhi Sūtra* (*P'an-shou san-mei ching*) by Lokakṣema. This translation was soon followed by the work of Wu Chih-ch'ien and the Western Chin Dynasty monk Chu Fahuo, who translated the *Ta O-mi-t'o ching*. Also the *Ping-teng-ch'üeh ching* was translated by Kumārajīva (of the Yao-Ch'in Dynasty). In addition Pao-yun and Kālayāśas, both of the Liu-Sung Dynasty, translated the *O-mi-t'o ching*, the *Shih-chu pi-p'o-she lun*, the *Wu-liang shou ching*, and the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching*. In this way, different texts appeared one after the other, and found greater numbers of devotees within the ranks of both the clergy and the laity.

The first person recorded to be seeking rebirth in the Western Pure Land was Ts'e, Duke of Ch'ueh (Ch'ueh Kung-ts'e, a person of the Western Chin Dynasty), and from this time onward larger and larger numbers of persons are described as longing for rebirth. The most renowned of such persons was the Eastern Chin Dynasty scholar-monk, Hui-yuan. With Hui-yuan, the Pure Land doctrines found their first eminent master, and the later Pure Land lineages in China regarded him as their first patriarchal master. It is with him that the Pure Land movement begins to be a significant religious movement.

Hui-yuan founded the White Lotus Society (*Pai-lien she*) on the southern Chinese mountain, Mt. Lu (Lu-shan). This society was a meditation group whose members would meditate on the form of the Buddha Amitābha in an attempt to realize *nien-fo san-mei* (*buddha-anusmṛti-samādhi*), a *samādhi* based primarily on the above-mentioned *P'an-shou san-mei ching*. If a devotee was able to see the form of the Buddha, this was a guarantee that he would eventually be reborn in the Pure Land. It is this emphasis on meditation that came to be normative in Chinese Buddhism, and is the form of Pure Land teachings stressed in Japanese Tendai until the Kamakura period.

From the period of the Liu-Sung Dynasty onward, the Pure Land faith spread widely throughout China: lectures on the *Wu-liang-shou ching* came to be frequently offered, and many images of the Buddha Amitābha were constructed. Bodhiruci translated Vasubandhu's *Amitāyus Sūtra Upadeśa* in the reign of the Emperor Hsuan-wu of the Northern Wei Dynasty. Soon thereafter, T'an-luan composed a commentary on it, and in this commentary adopted the theory of the division of the *buddhadharma* into an easy path and a difficult path (first taught in the *Daśabhūmi-vibhāṣa*). T'an-luan also stressed the power of Amitābha's fundamental or original vows (known as "other-power"), a teaching which came to be stressed by subsequent writers in the "exclusivist" tradition of Pure Land thought. In northern China, in the area of Ping-chou, many followers of the Pure Land doctrines are likewise recorded.

Serious textual studies of the various Pure Land scriptures began in the Chou and Sui Dynasties. This period also saw the composition of many commentaries on both the *Wu-liang-shou ching* and the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* by such famous monks of other Buddhist traditions as Ching-ying Hui-yuan, Ling-yu, Chi-tsang, and Fa-ch'ang. Other masters composed works or essays on various problems of Pure Land teachings, masters such as Chih-i (the founder of the T'ien-t'ai tradition), Tai-chi, Chih-yen (of the Hua-yen tradition), and Chia-ts'ai. These works discussed the precise nature of the buddha's body (*kāya*) and the nature of his pure land. At this time, too, the *Ti-lun* (*Daśabhūmi-*

vyākhyā) was a popular object of study, and many scholar-monks whose primary orientation was this text appear to have been deeply interested in Pure Land doctrines, and to have counted themselves as Pure Land followers.

There also developed an early Yogācāra tradition centered on the study of the *She-lun* (Asaṅga's *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*). A number of masters from this tradition came to hold the view that the Pure Land teaching of the *Kuan Wu-liang shou ching* that ordinary persons (*pṛthagjana*) could attain rebirth was a teaching "whose purport lay in a specific period of time" (*pieh-shih-i*). That is, the basic teachings of the Pure Land scriptures were an expedient teaching, designed to lead the simple to faith in the Buddha and further developing their religious consciousness. This would lead them to Yogācāra philosophy or, in any case, out of purely Pure Land teachings. Because of the sophistication of this Yogācāra teaching, and because this school of thought placed the Pure Land teachings in a subservient, but still meaningful, relationship to the rest of Buddhism, the Pure Land movement underwent an intellectual decline for a number of decades.

In the T'ang Dynasty the Pure Land movement saw the appearance of the monks Tao-ch'ō and Shan-tao. Both of these men became the inheritors of the tradition of T'an-luan, and in their writings stressed the power of the fundamental vows of Amitābha. These men were also the first to introduce the concept of *mo-fa* (*J. mappō*) into Chinese Pure Land thought. The theory of *mo-fa* divides Buddhist religious history into two, or three, periods: the first period is that of the True Dharma, the second period is that of the Counterfeit Dharma, and these two are then followed by the period that sees the total Extinction (*mo*) of the Dharma (*fa*). In their writings, they taught that the Pure Land teachings were the teachings specifically designed by the Buddha to fit these historical conditions. Shan-tao most especially spelled out the Pure Land doctrines in the mold originally set by T'an-luan and Tao-ch'ō. Presented in his *Commentary on the Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* (the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching Shu*), his exegesis set a standard that was widely read and followed by many subsequent generations of Chinese Pure Land thinkers.

In this work, Shan-tao refuted the theories of a number of other masters, and laid a firm foundation for subsequent Pure Land thought. In Japan, Shan-tao and his *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching Shu* became very popular due to the emphasis placed on them by Hōnen and by Hōnen's disciples. To the Japanese, Shan-tao came to be by far the single most important Chinese Pure Land writer.

Contemporary with Shan-tao were such masters as Chih-shou, Ching-mai, Hui-ching, Yuan-ts'e, Tao-hui, Tao-yin, and Huai-kan, all of whom were active in the capital city of Ch'ang-an. Each of these masters

wrote commentaries on the *O-mi-t'o ching* and the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching*. Also quite important were the Korean scholar-monks of Silla, the masters Chajang, Wŏnhyŏ, Ŭisang, Bŏpwi, Hyŏn'il, Kyŏnghŭng, Ŭijŏk, Taehyŏn, and Dunryun. Each of these masters wrote commentaries, or carried out studies in the various Pure Land scriptures. It was clearly at this period—the early years of the T'ang Dynasty—that Pure Land studies reached a high watermark in the Far East, due in large measure to the influence of the flourishing state of Buddhist studies in general.

The monk Hui-jih returned to China from his sojourn in India during the K'ai-yuan period (A.D. 713–741) of the T'ang Dynasty. At roughly this same time the emerging Ch'an school began an attack on the Pure Land teachings. They taught that the Pure Land teachings were fit only for the ignorant, for they were an *upāya*, or expedient teaching, designed to lead ignorant persons to something higher, and were ultimately “a lie and a delusion.” This attack generated a furious counterattack from the ranks of the Pure Land followers, which led to the gradual formation of a separate sect of Pure Land teachings within China. Pure Land scholars became self-conscious of their tradition in the ensuing debate with the Ch'an school. The Pure Land polemic was continued by such monks as Ch'eng-yuan, Fa-chao, and Fei-hsi, who held theories which appeared to reconcile Ch'an with Pure Land thought. These masters held that the *nien-fo san-meī* constituted an unsurpassed, most profound and marvelous meditation teaching (*ch'an-men*). However, in their writings, Pure Land masters heaped much abuse upon the heads of the followers of the Ch'an tradition. Despite this, there were in the Ch'an ranks monks who appear to have reconciled these two traditions.

The monk Hsüan-shih, a disciple of the Fifth Patriarch of the Ch'an tradition, proclaimed the existence of a new tradition, the Nan-shan Nien-fo-men Ch'an-tsung, “the South Mountain Meditation Tradition of the Nien-fo Teachings.” Nan-yang Hui-chung, one of the disciples of the Sixth Ch'an Patriarch, Hui-neng, taught the simultaneous cultivation of “practice and understanding.” In this case, “practice” refers to *nien-fo* recitation, and “understanding” to the insight gained through Ch'an.

Yung-ming Yen-shou, a second-generation disciple of the Ch'an master Fa-yen, taught the principle of the mutual perfection of the truth of emptiness (in Ch'an), and of existence (in the Pure Land teaching). He taught that only an understanding of these two could bring about awakening. These masters, coming largely out of Ch'an ranks but also having their counterparts within the ranks of Pure Land masters, were instrumental in teaching widely the necessity of the dual cultivation of both meditation (Ch'an) and the recitation of the Name of Amitābha (Pure Land practice). Eventually, this tradition of joint cultivation came to assume the proportions of a separate sectarian trend within Far Eastern Mahāyāna.

The Sung Dynasty saw the appearance of a number of monks who were known for their cultivation of the Pure Land teachings, such monks as T'ien-i I-huai, Hui-lin Tsung-pen, Ku-su Shou-na, Ch'ang-lu Tsung-i, Huang-lang Ssu-hsin, and Chen-ko Ch'ing-liao. This period also saw, for the first time, the appearance of laymen who became renowned for their joint cultivation of Pure Land and Ch'an practices, laymen such as Yang Chieh, Wang Ku, Chiang-kung Wang, Wang Chen, and Wang Jih-hsiu. The fame of these laymen strengthened this tendency towards joint Ch'an-Pure Land cultivation.

The T'ien-t'ai tradition also produced a number of believers in Pure Land teachings, as well as a number of scholarly monks who worked in exegesis, among whom were the Sung Dynasty monks Hsing-ching, Ch'eng-yu, I-t'ung, Yuan-ch'ing, Wen-pi, Tsun-shih, Chih-li, Chih-yuan, Jen-yüeh, Ts'ung-i, Ts'e-ying, and Tsung-hsiao. All of these masters either composed commentaries on the *Kuan Wu-liang shou ching* or the *O-mi-t'o ching*, or wrote works explaining various aspects of the Pure Land teachings. Chih-li's *Kuan-ching Shu Miao-tsung ch'ao* is the most famous of these works. Its salient doctrinal feature was the teaching of visualizing the Buddha Amitābha with respect to one's own mind. This teaching came to be emphasized within T'ien-t'ai circles, contributing much to the development of a doctrinal basis for the joint cultivation of Ch'an and Pure Land practices, and to the fusion of Ch'an and Pure Land theories within Chinese Buddhism as a whole.

Later, during the Sung, the monk Yuan-chao of Yu-k'ang, noted for his studies and writings on the Vinaya tradition (*Lü-tsung*), devoted the latter years of his life to propagating the Pure Land teachings. He composed a commentary on the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching*, and in his own way set up a variant lineage and school within the broader Pure Land tradition. His disciples, Yung-ch'in and Chieh-tu, also wrote commentaries, and contributed to popularizing the philosophical views of their master. During the Southern Sung Dynasty, the Japanese monk Shunjō introduced the writings of Yuan-chao to Japan where, however, their circulation was initially limited. Thus it was that Pure Land thought developed during the Sung Dynasty.

At this same time, Chinese Buddhism also saw the rise of Pure Land lay societies (*chieh-she*), or lay organizations established to promote Pure Land belief and practice among their members. Such groups became especially strong in South China, and we know the names of the major leaders of such groups. Indeed, a large number of the most renowned scholar-monks of their day organized such groups, masters such as Hsing-ch'ang, Tsun-shih, Chih-li, Pen-ju, Ling-chao, Tsung-i, and Tao-shen. All of these masters organized laymen and clerics into societies for the purpose of cultivating *nien-fo* practices. In almost all of

these cases, the organizers considered themselves to be reviving the tradition of Hui-yuan's White Lotus Society on Mt. Lu, while also looking to the lives of Shan-tao and Fa-chao, themselves reputed to have formed such organizations, as precedents.

At the beginning of the Southern Sung Dynasty, the master Tz'u-chao Tzu-yuan founded an organization now actually termed the White Lotus Tradition (*Pai-lien tsung*). In its teachings and organization, the traditions to which this group hearkened back were written down by the monk P'u-tu of the same Mt. Lu in a major compendium of this sect's teachings, the *Lien-tsung pao-chien*. In this work, we find a large amount of popular superstition and degenerate customs mixed with Buddhist doctrines. The work was banned on several occasions but, after each banning, the resentment of the masses became enflamed, leading to popular rebellions and local uprisings. The sect was often termed the *Pai-lien chiao-fei*, the White Lotus Teaching Rebels, in official documents.

With the founding of the Yuan Dynasty, the tendency toward the joint cultivation of Ch'an and Pure Land became even more pronounced. Several renowned Ch'an masters became noted for their devotion to the Pure Land faith: such masters as Chung-feng Ming-pen, T'ien-ju Weitse, Ch'u-shih Fan-ch'i, and Tuan-yün Chih-ch'e. Within the T'ien-t'ai tradition, a number of well-known monks wrote works in praise of the Pure Land teachings, such as Chan-t'ang Hsing-ch'eng, Yü-k'ang Meng-jun, Yin-chiang Miao-hsieh, and Yün-wo Shan-chu.

The Ming Dynasty (1368–1627) was a period characterized by large numbers of monks who taught the practice of the joint cultivation of Ch'an and the Pure Land teachings. Among such masters were Ch'u-shan Shao-ch'i, K'ung-ku Ching-lung, Ku-yin Ching-chin, I-yuan Tsung-pen, Yün-chi Chu-hung, Tz'u-po Chen-k'o, Han-shan Teh-ch'ing, Po-shan Yuan-lai, Chan-jan Yuan-ch'eng, Ku-shan Yuan-hsien, and Wei-hsiang Tao-p'ei. The most eminent of these was the master Chu-hung. During the Lung-ch'ing period (1567–1572), he went into retreat at an auspicious site in the Yun-chi Mountains in the area of Hang-chou, and there he cultivated the *nien-fo san-meï* (S.: *buddhānusmṛtisamādhi*). He composed a commentary on the *O-mi-t'o ching*, and several works extolling the joint cultivation of Ch'an and Pure Land teachings. His influence spread widely and gradually influenced all of Chinese Buddhism.

At this time, the T'ien-t'ai tradition also produced some eminent scholar-monks who wrote books elucidating Pure Land teachings from the standpoint of T'ien-t'ai thought. Among such masters were Wu-ai P'u-chih, Yen-ching Tao-yen, Chü-an Ta-yu, Yuan-hsi Ch'uan-teng, Ling-yueh Chih-hsü, and Ku-hsi Ch'eng-shih. The most eminent of these was the master Chih-hsü, who advocated the theory that "the

Three Learnings have One [Common] Origin.” Chih-hsü also stressed the necessity of upholding all three traditions—Ch’an, Pure Land, and Vinaya—as an exclusive reliance on any one of them would lead to the decay of Buddhism as a whole. Nevertheless, Chih-hsü believed that the most essential of these Three Learnings was the Pure Land tradition. Contemporary with these masters were the laymen Yuan Hung-tao and Chuang Kuang-huan, who also composed works extolling the Pure Land teachings.

During the Ch’ing Dynasty (1616–1911), the Pure Land teachings came to be advocated by an ever larger number of laymen. Active during the K’ang-hsi period were the laymen Chou K’o-fu, Yü Hsing-min, and Chou Meng-yen, who all wrote works encouraging the practice of Pure Land devotions. During the Ch’ien-lung period (1736–1795), the laymen P’eng Chao-sheng and P’eng Hsi-su compiled biographies of persons who had attained rebirth in Sukhāvātī. P’eng Chao-sheng composed an especially large number of works praising Pure Land teachings, and worked for the wider dissemination of these doctrines.

Toward the end of the K’ang-hsi period (1662–1722), the monk Shih-hsien Ssu-ch’i, emulating the work of Chu-hung, organized a Pure Land society (*lien-she*) in Hang-chou. The influence of this society spread widely, and Ssu-ch’i came to be called “Yen-shou come again” (*Yung-ming tsai-lai*), and became the object of much popular affection and veneration. This period also saw the activities of the monks Hsing-ts’e, Hsü-fa, Ming-heng, Ming-teh, Ch’i-neng, Fo-an, Shih-ch’eng, and Chi-hsing. These monks were active in the K’ang-hsi and Ch’ien-lung periods in their cultivation of the Pure Land teachings. At a slightly later period the monks Shui-chang and Hu-t’ing continued to compile biographies of persons who had attained rebirth in the Pure Land. Slightly later, the monks Ta-mo and Wu-k’ai, and the laymen Chang Shih-ch’eng and Chen I-Yuan, wrote works extolling Pure Land practices.

From the time of the Sung Dynasty onward, Pure Land teachings especially flourished in southern China. However, with the founding of the Ch’ing Dynasty, the capital of China was moved to the north to the city of Yen-ching (re-named Pei-ching, meaning “the northern capital,” i.e., present-day Peking). At this court, the Tantric Buddhism of Tibet and Mongolia was especially honored, and so it happened that during this dynasty Pure Land doctrines and practices were largely limited to southern China. From the Ming Dynasty onward, Chinese Buddhism appears to have lost some of its vitality and much of its originality and creative genius, and this was evident too in the case of Pure Land literature. Much of the published Pure Land literature consisted of nothing more than excerpts from the writings and thoughts of the great masters of the past.

With the establishment of the Republic, Chinese Buddhism underwent a slight revival. However, with the advent of the Second World War and the subsequent socialist revolution on the Chinese mainland, much Buddhist work came to a halt. This work has been only slightly revived in the last two decades on the island of Taiwan, in Hong Kong, and in certain Southeast Asian centers.

BOOK REVIEWS

Sexuality and Paradox: A Panel Review of Bernard Faure's *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998. 338 pages. Hardcover: \$59.50; paperback: \$18.95.

For the Buddhism Section of the American Academy of Religions, Western Region's 1999 annual conference at the University of San Francisco, a book review panel entitled "Sexuality and Paradox: Buddhist Norms and Practices" was conducted. The discussion was of Bernard Faure's *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality* (Princeton University Press, 1998). The panel participants included Jennifer Dumpert, Bruce Williams, Greg Petropoulos, John Thompson, and Joseph Thometz. Bernard Faure, the author, responded to the discussion. The panel was organized and moderated by Richard K. Payne. The following are written versions of the discussants' comments.

Richard K. Payne
Institute of Buddhist Studies

The Absence of Models for Female Buddhists

Jennifer Dumpert
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The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality contains an enormous amount of information. It approaches its topic in a style reminiscent of Wendy Doniger's *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*. To navigate texts such as these, one needs a strategy or a particular subject for which one is searching. Reading a text as replete with stories, facts, dates, and ideas as this book without some idea of what one is reading for could lead the reader to feel afloat in a sea of information. My own work focuses on women in modern American Buddhism, and therefore I read the book with that subject in mind. My hope was to gather useful, straightforward information. This was frustrated, however, by Faure's postmodern tendency to not draw clear

conclusions and to perpetually pull the rug out from under the implications of his own evidence. Two postmodern concepts best describe what characterizes my frustration in my particular search: deferral and absence.

Deferral is rooted in the attempt to demonstrate that language is inadequate for truly stating what one means. Thus, some postmodern writers will stop short of clear and concrete conclusions. Instead, evidence that may point to a conclusion will be given, and the reader is left to surmise what it is that the evidence points to.

The concept of absence refers to the importance of what is left unsaid. Amongst others, Foucault, whose work Faure depends on in *The Red Thread*, suggests that absence implies as much as presence. There is a relation between what is concealed and what is made evident, and attention to that relation reveals much about both. For example, the absence of women from history does not merely fail to address women in history, it also implies that women's modes of being in history are of so little importance that they can be passed over in silence.

Faure points out from the outset of the book that woman will be "conspicuously absent" from this text, appearing "inasmuch as she is an element of the Buddhist discourse on sexuality" (p. 14). Instead, Faure promises that gender issues will be the focus of a second volume, to be entitled *Purity and Gender*.

Another issue highlighted by my particular reading of the book involves the nature of desire. I infer from the text that desire in Buddhist history is, as in western history, characterized as male. Numerous instances are given of male desire: Faure points out that "male love" is love of men for men, while "female love" is love of men for women (pp. 233–234). He offers a quotation which clearly states that women are not be allowed into temples because "they arouse deep passion in men's hearts" (p. 170). He tells the story of Eshun (the sister, we are told, of the Zen priest Emyo: defined in terms of men even in the way she is identified) who was considered too attractive to be allowed to enter the Buddhist order and who therefore disfigured herself (p. 20). He clearly states that "the woman—nun or laywoman—remains an object of desire for the monk" (p. 88).

Faure says that women are seen as "Possessed by an inclination to lust that is difficult to control" which makes them "even more dangerous" (p. 88). Further, he lists numerous rules pertaining to the conduct of nuns in relation with other nuns that are clearly meant to discourage sex among women (p. 82). Despite this, he fails to consider female desire in depth. While there are brief references to lesbian sex (women as that which inspires desire, even among other women), Faure points out that this was "at best perceived as a poor imitation of heterosexual relations."

Further, “Sexual relations between women are [considered] . . . insignificant and can be formulated only through male language” (pp. 81–82). Though his evidence produces implications about desire as male and about the double standard applied to gender in the realm of sexuality, I find myself wishing that Faure commented more on female desire, if only to concretely point out some of the implications of its absence from Buddhist literature.

Value judgments about male desire versus female desire can also be implied from the text. There are numerous examples of “the motif of the female bodhisattva who . . . use sexuality to convert men” (p. 130).

Similarly, we are told how the Buddha convinces his half-brother Nanda to stay in the Buddhist order. First, the Buddha shows him that his beautiful bride-to-be, for whom Nanda was pining, was closer in appearance to the ugliest of beings (a dead and disfigured she-monkey) than to a celestial nymph. Second, he promises Nanda one of the nymphs if he remains in the order. Nanda, who stays, finally realizes “the vanity of all desires and the emptiness of beauty” (p. 16). Leaving aside any judgments about the shallowness of a character whose basis for marriage seems to rest solely in the appearance of the bride, these instances clearly demonstrate that men can achieve realization via their desire for women. Furthermore, in the motif of the bodhisattva who converts men via sex or promises of sex (Guanyin, p. 118; Kokuzo, p. 120), and such figures as the “peerless courtesan” Vasumitra “who frees men by fulfilling their carnal desire” (p. 121), we see female characters helping male characters achieve realization by fulfilling male desire.

In contrast, we are given the story of the courtesan Mātāṅga, whose attempt to seduce Ānanda is foiled when Ānanda declares “If you want to become my wife, become a nun” (p. 19). Cited as a “moral victory” (p. 19) for Ānanda, this story demonstrates that men help women along the path by foiling their desires. Although rarely mentioned, women’s desire—unlike men’s—clearly constitutes an obstacle that does nobody any good. Yet, while he does make this conclusion via the evidence he offers, Faure fails to resolve the issue with clear commentary. Instead, a reader with my topic in mind is left with a large array of facts and stories that make unpleasant implications but which do not necessarily offer anything new or useful. We are all aware of these kinds of inequities in the realm of sexuality. Rather than having them pointed out, I want to know more about what their existence means.

Addressing desire from the male standpoint is familiar enough. Yet, Faure’s frequent comments on the “shameful inequity” (p. 83) between genders demonstrate that he is clearly aware of the fact that addressing things from women’s perspective would tell a different story. He says, for example, “one could assume that a greater emphasis on women’s viewpoint would bring about some significant change regarding the

classical schema of opposition or reversal between prohibition and transgression . . .” (p. 282). He also is clearly cognizant that this book has looked at sexuality in the traditional way, i.e., from men’s viewpoint. “We can suspect that this schema—reproduced in the present book—is one of the effects of the masculine ideology which has until now predominated in Buddhism” (p. 282). Regardless of his obvious and seemingly feminist-friendly opinions about the way women are viewed in Buddhist history, he has allowed women to remain largely absent in this work, deferring the topic to a future book. Admitting that he has reproduced the norm when examining sexuality is not enough to make that reproduction acceptable. Rather, his awareness of this itself calls for more explicit critical commentary on the sexual norms of the Buddhist tradition throughout the book.

I was frustrated by the absence of women, and by Faure’s frequent unwillingness to draw conclusions from his wealth of evidence. However, I did find some very useful material for women practicing Buddhism in the West. My own work focuses on the effort by American women (and men) to envision, or to revision, a Buddhist history which is “usable for women” (an effort demonstrated, for example, by the recent profusion of books on the topic of women and Buddhism). I have, for example, criticized the tendency to focus on women who gain historical prominence by achieving in male roles. Revising Buddhist history by focusing on women who defeated men in dharma battle, or who managed to become great teachers, simply reproduces current values. A history that implies that women who count were, and therefore are, those who bested men in men’s terms is at best a compensatory history. Despite giving women a place in history and providing feminine role models, such compensation cannot fully succeed. However many women can be discovered who could do what a man did as well as a man, there will always be an overwhelming majority of men in those roles, which will therefore continue to be seen as male roles. Instead, I suggest redefining historical values, focusing on and valorizing the roles women did play. Many modern authors of books about women and Buddhism fail to offer pragmatically useful examples of how this historical revaluation might be constructed. Faure, however, does consider the figure of the courtesan, not just from a male standpoint as in the “role of the evil temptress” (p. 131), i.e., desirable yet repugnant, but also from a standpoint potentially inhabitable by women:

The courtesan is also a woman who, in a sense, has “left the world” and can see through its vanity. She has awakened to the (conventional) truth, because she can see behind appearances, through the veil of illusion. She is no longer bound by ordinary social ties and conventional norms, because she can see through men’s games. She

is not impressed by their social distinctions—priests, commoners, or nobility, all are the same to her—and she can, like a true teacher, manipulate them through their own “skillful means” (p. 131).

Faure soon shifts back into the male viewpoint, however, combining this observation with the motif of the bodhisattvas who help men attain realization by appearing to them as courtesans who seduce men, or at least promise to. He suggests that “such motifs could be read as a legitimization of female transgression . . . and be used by women to justify their own freedom.” Nonetheless, he goes on to state that “the courtesan is, to some extent, recognized as a potential bodhisattva” (p. 136), putting the observation again in terms of the salvation of men. Thus, not only is female desire obscured, but female models are defined in terms of the salvation of men.

Context and Perspective

Bruce C. Williams

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This is an important book by an influential scholar of Buddhist Studies. It will be widely read and should be widely read. This will be due not only to the timeliness and interest of the book’s subject matter, but also because the book is quite well written. It is, in fact, a remarkably good read. This may embarrass some scholars who feel that important works of scholarship should not be so much fun to read; it may also embarrass others who might wish they could write as well as Prof. Faure. That the book is well written may also be one of its pitfalls: the reader may often read quickly over passages that deserve more careful attention.

Let me begin my marginal comments with a brief quotation from the “Introduction”:

This work is primarily a study in collective representations, focusing on their inherent dynamics and their social inscription. In order to reveal enduring common (sometimes even cross-cultural) structures, I have wandered freely across geographical borders and historical periods—much to the dismay of some of my historian friends (p. 11).

I am neither a historian nor am I dismayed. Yet as one who has spent much of his time dealing with the negotiated (and often highly local)

nature of the acculturation of Buddhism across cultural/linguistic boundaries (especially with regard to China) and of the development of various forms of Buddhist discourse and practice, I am cautious.

First, let me state how I view the perspective of the book. To me the title should be understood to read *The Red Thread: A Synoptic Introduction to Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality as Seen from a Largely (Franco-) Japanese Perspective*. Much of the discussion is framed in terms of the (often modern?) Japanese perspectives on the issues discussed. Even the Chinese material used occasionally seems to be framed in ways that are more appropriate to Japan than to China. I do not know if this was by design or not, but I see perhaps a couple of factors that contribute to this impression. First, the absence of historical framework for much of the Indian and Chinese material, coupled with the large amount of space devoted to Japan, “urges” the reader (or at least this reader) to contextualize the Indian and Chinese material in terms of the Japanese (the last half of the book is almost entirely devoted to Japan, and the first half makes liberal use of Japanese materials). At the very least the reader is given a sense that the stories and themes from the Japanese material draw out the relevant implications of the Indian and Chinese examples. They seem to function, as it were, as “capping phrases” to the non-Japanese material. Second, because the Indian, Chinese, and Japanese sources deployed are rarely situated in time (and frequently not in the bibliography), and since the Indian and Chinese material is often followed by a story, or stories, from the Japanese Buddhist traditions, this reader was often left with the impression that the author wanted me, the reader, to view the Indian and Chinese materials as part of a “progression” to the Japanese version of the issue under discussion (e.g., “Ascetic Lust,” pp. 29–31). This is particularly ironic in view of Prof. Faure’s previous publications in which he has frequently broken away from Japano-centric views of Buddhist history, doctrine, and praxis.

Before I move on to a few comments on context, let me raise the issue of who the intended audience for this book is. The author states in the “Introduction” (p. 12) that “this work is meant to be a heuristic device to attract specialist [*sic*] from other areas to Asian materials that may seem at first glance irrelevant.” I suspect strongly, however, that the audience for this book will be much broader. Despite the author’s attempts to inform the reader, especially in the “Introduction”, what he will and will not be doing in the book, and despite his attempts to warn the reader of the complexities of the Buddhist tradition(s), some readers may be tempted to read the book as “Buddhism says . . .,” or “Indian/Chinese/Tibetan/Japanese Buddhism says . . .” Given the sociology of graduate education in this country, this group may include a significant number of graduate students and scholars. (Note: Given the broad

audience that this book will probably reach, Chinese characters for names, places, terms and book titles should have been inserted discretely into the book, perhaps in a list toward the end. In a number of places relevant English translations should also be noted, e.g., Anthony Y's *Journey to the West* [p. 27], and one of the several translations of Keizan's *Denkōroku* [p. 59]).

Context may be of many types. Let me restrict myself to some brief comments on geographical, temporal, and historical contexts as they relate to the varieties of the Buddhist traditions.

Buddhism began in early India among groups of ascetics engaged in meditative practice and the pursuit of liberation. Without going into the issues of what constituted early Buddhism, the Buddhist traditions evolved to include not only ascetic individuals and communities, but also monastic institutions for monks and nuns and complex relationships among monks, nuns, lay Buddhists and the societies at large. The issue of desire, and more specifically sexuality, was played out somewhat differently in each of these areas. Among those engaged in the practice of the Buddhists path(s) to liberation desire was itself part of a triadic cycle of the three passions (or three poisons), desire, aversion, and ignorance, each feeding the other, but ultimately driven by ignorance. The problem of desire, not just sexuality, but desire for sense gratification (food, clothes, comfortable surroundings, etc.), was not necessarily, or even most importantly, a problem of purity, but of attachment and entanglements. Sex not only increased desire and created impediments to effective meditation, it also operated to reinsert monks/nuns into the very family and social networks they had sought to cut off by becoming monks/nuns (as noted in a number of places, e.g., pp. 33, 65). That liberation was seen by some as complete detachment from all entanglements, a state of no-views with its correlative "paradox of desire", may date from very early in the Buddhist tradition. The contrast between no-view as the result of seeing reality as it is and right views, no matter how exalted, as obstructions is a favorite theme of the Mahayana wisdom literature (*prajñāpāramitā*), including the *Dazhidulun*. This, it seems to me, is the issue in the story from the *Dazhidulun* about the two monks Prasannendriya and Agramati (pp. 4, 44, 98–99; cf. the parallels with the Chinese Chan monk Linji, pp. 46–47), not the "superiority of transgression" or liberation through transmuting the passions (*kṛeṣā*).

Although what I have said in the previous paragraph may be standard fare for some, I would like to emphasize that what may be at stake here is the clash of different paradigms of practice and interpretation, a clash that plays itself out through the corridors of Buddhist practice and history (note Faure's caveat, p. 63, last paragraph). Which paradigms clash, however, and how they play out historically depend also on regional and cultural factors. In India, China, and Japan there

may have been (and may continue to be) very different contexts, motivations, etc. behind apparently similar stories (including stories, e.g., from India, retold in China and Japan, and at different times). In China it took centuries to reconcile the differences among the various versions of the *vinaya*, or monastic code, and to implement it monastically. But today it still provides the framework for clerical practice, both collectively and individually. In Japan, beginning in the 9th century, a version of the Bodhisattva vows was substituted for the traditional *vinaya* in the Tendai tradition. Since Tendai monks were extremely influential in later developments in Japanese Buddhism, this “new code” has been extremely influential in molding Japanese institutions and forms of Japanese religiosity. Many traditional strictures no longer applied; monks (and nuns?) from very early times could, and did, marry.

In our discussions of approaches to Buddhist sexuality we need also to distinguish carefully what is properly Buddhist from what is Indian, Chinese, Tibetan, Korean, or Japanese. This is an aspect of the book that made me particularly cautious. It may often be difficult, even impossible, in some cases to distinguish which contribution is properly Buddhist and which part is from the local culture. This comment is not meant to raise the specter of a “normative Buddhism”, but to urge researchers to investigate what Buddhism was contextually, in each place and in each time, through a careful comparison of the issues raised in the relevant sources. It is in this area that I see the author’s use of the Japanese perspective operating, not just in those sections that deal directly with Japan, but as a way of interpreting the Indian and Chinese material. For example,

In Japan, certain self-mummified saints were worshiped in order to enhance fertility. In one particular case, the object of devotion was the dried genitals of the saint. This unexpected return of vitality is inscribed in the inner dynamics of Buddhism, in particular in the ritual renunciation (p. 29).

Although I know of no Indian Buddhist examples, mummified saints are known in China from perhaps as early as the seventh century. Cults to certain mummies may date from the eighth century. Devotion to the genitals, however, appears to be a Japanese contribution to this type of cult (compare this with the case of Guangyi, p. 35). What then is the sense of the last sentence of this quotation? How much of this example are we to read back into the whole Buddhist tradition?

This is a rich and provocative book. My brief comments can not even begin to do justice to the vision it embodies. While I do not always agree with what Prof. Faure says in his many books and articles, I always find him and his work thought provoking and honest. The highest compli-

ment I can give to Prof. Faure, as to any scholar, is that I read his work and take it seriously. I urge you to do the same.

The Red Thread: Conceptualizing Buddhist Sexuality Across Time and Place

Greg Petropoulos

Graduate Theological Union

Bernard Faure stakes out a vast territory in an attempt to uncover “a Buddhist discourse on sex,” taking the reader on a journey that is limited neither by time or place. Faure surveys myths, stories, doctrines and monastic codes throughout the long history of Buddhism, ranging from Śākyamuni to contemporary America, in an attempt to present a coherent map of Buddhist sexual ideals and practices. Drawing upon the works of Michel Foucault and Georges Bataille, Faure manages to discern some key features in the complex landscape of Buddhist sexuality, leading the reader to a better appreciation of both the continuities and paradoxes presented by Buddhist teachings on sexuality.

Faure invites both the scholar and the practitioner to glean insights from his work. Indeed, it would seem from the introduction that Faure has developed his ideas with an eye toward the relatively young Buddhist communities in the United States which are still seeking a definitive vision of proper Buddhist sexual behavior. That the short history of Buddhism in America is fraught with sexual scandal suggests a deep-seated problem that transcends fallen teachers in the West, and reaches back to the very beginning, and continues throughout the development of the various schools of Buddhism.

But Faure does not neglect the scholar, and in fact, this work is an excellent corrective to the all too often simplistic views of Buddhist sexuality. At a time when discussions of Buddhist sexual practices focus on Tantrism and “crazy wisdom,” with the occasional reference to monastic homosexuality, Faure takes up the challenge to elucidate a more basic, yet more complex, landscape. And while Tantrism and “crazy wisdom” are not neglected, and monastic homosexuality takes up a full third of the book, Faure recognizes that a true discourse on Buddhist sexuality must go beyond these limiting categories and include cultural and political forces impacting both lay and monastic adherents.

A constant theme throughout *The Red Thread* is the dialectic between taboo and transgression. Faure devotes a full chapter to “The Ideology of Transgression,” in which he offers numerous examples of sexual transgressions. At times the reader can feel overwhelmed by the

seemingly endless parade of sinners Faure produces in support of his thesis. In fact, it soon becomes obvious that Faure himself is overwhelmed by the diversity and range of the data he is working with.

Herein lies the difficulty in this work. In attempting to define a Buddhist discourse on sexuality, one is confronted by Buddhisms. Yet it would seem that Faure proceeded with the hope that his method would hold, and a locus for dialogue would emerge. Unfortunately, the scope of this project is too great, and Faure is forced to admit as much in his Afterthoughts:

My initial intention was to describe a complex and heterogeneous cultural phenomenon, the emergence of a Buddhist discourse on sexuality (and gender). Despite the fragmentary and multiple nature of this approach, or because of it, a sometimes uniform and simplistic scenario has tended to impose itself, which fails to do justice to the intricacy of the doctrines and of their sociohistorical contexts. (p. 280)

Yet it would seem that the opposite has occurred. Rather than a “uniform and simplistic scenario” emerging, one is left with contradictions and paradoxes as Buddhism addresses the issue of sexuality in changing cultural milieus. Faure has demonstrated that often social and political factors play a greater role in determining behavior than does religious doctrine. What is missing, however, is a discussion on the permutations doctrines undergo in order to adapt to new conditions. One wonders, for example, how the concept of karmic retribution has been reinterpreted and utilized given the direct connection sexuality has with rebirth.

It is difficult to fault Faure’s efforts since his work provides a wealth of information in a succinct and manageable form. Yet it is clear that a great deal of work remains to be done (Faure promises a second volume, *Purity and Gender*). A good place to begin would seem to be the monastic nature of Buddhism. Faure focuses his attention on the homosexual expressions that arise within Buddhist monasticism. But it seems that the scope of this question must be broadened to include other monastic religions. Inclusion of different monastic traditions may illuminate more basic questions regarding personal, societal, and institutional pressures on sexual behavior.

The Red Thread stands as a pioneering work that, while sometimes becoming lost in the details, provides a useful map of the key landmarks in the discussion of Buddhist sexuality. The overview provided here by Faure is more than adequate to enable both scholar and practitioner to locate specific issues within a broader context, and, with extensive bibliographic resources, aid in further exploration.

Buddhist Sexualities: Discipline and Transgression

John M. Thompson

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It is a rare treat to find a scholarly work that is both insightful and fun to read. Such is the case with Bernard Faure's most recent work *The Red Thread*. *The Red Thread* is an engaging, albeit twisted tale of the strange, often contradictory attitudes towards sex and desire within Buddhism. While not without its problems, *The Red Thread*, like sex itself, will entangle many readers.

As with Faure's previous works (*The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, and *The Will to Orthodoxy*), so also in *The Red Thread* Faure takes a distinctly iconoclastic approach to Buddhist history. The irony of this should not be lost since Chan/Zen, usually considered the most iconoclastic Buddhist tradition, is the focus of much of Faure's scholarship. Of all Faure's works, *The Red Thread* perhaps shares the most with *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* in that both books rely heavily on French postmodern thinkers, notably Michel Foucault and George Bataille. *The Red Thread* also shows the influence of Derrida, having liberal sprinklings of puns and *bon mots*.

The Red Thread raises the question of whether or not there is a uniquely Buddhist rhetoric of sexuality, surveying Buddhist history from its beginning in India through medieval China ending in Japan in the early modern period. Faure begins in chapter one with an overview of desire itself in Buddhism, going on to discuss the Vinaya (chapter two), and the notion of transgression (chapter three). With chapter four, "Clerical Vices and Vicissitudes," the book makes a noticeable shift from a more general theoretical tone to a discussion of actual (and alleged) historical cases. Finally, chapters five and six together deal with homosexuality in Buddhism, especially the practices of "male love" (J. *nanshoku*) and its accompanying cult of the novice (J. *chigo*) in monastic circles in Japan. Faure rounds out the book with a short section of "afterthoughts" which contains some interesting and amusing musings on his part.

The Red Thread, like Faure's previous works, is filled with insights, some troubling but all interesting. One of Faure's basic points is that Buddhism is, in fact, a multivocal tradition—a collection of "buddhisms" really. This point is well taken. His discussion of the Vinaya and of Japanese sexual discourse amply illustrates the fact that Buddhism has been exceedingly androcentric in orientation, and unfortunately continues to be so. In light of this fact Faure's promise of another work specifically dealing with gender issues is most tantalizing. This will form

a companion to *The Red Thread*, and is to be entitled *Purity and Gender*. Faure also does a good job in depicting Buddhist tradition, particularly Mahāyāna, as being caught in an uneasy tension between the opposing ideals of transgression and rigor. Perhaps *The Red Thread's* greatest strength, though, is that after reading it, one can never look at Buddhism in quite the same way. For instance, the profile of the Vinaya that emerges in the second chapter does incline one to agree with Faure's assessment of it as "displaying an unhealthy fascination for the trivial and defiling aspects of human existence" (pp. 66–67). Moreover, Faure discusses the dynamics involved in the large-scale idealization and sexual exploitation of the *chigo* throughout Japanese monastic communities in detail. He does not shy away from calling this "massive child abuse" (p. 278)—despite the possibility that some of the priests involved may have sincerely believed in the religious efficacy of such practices. Such a typification cannot but encourage a critical view of certain religious institutions, whatever their cultural context, despite Faure's stated intentions to do otherwise.

Faure tends to move rather easily across historical, cultural, and lineage boundaries in his discussion. For example, chapter one moves from early Buddhism to tantra to China to Zen. Those who have already read *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* will find certain sections repetitious, the result of *The Red Thread* having originally been written for a French audience, and therefore used materials from *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* with which that audience would have not been familiar. In addition, *The Red Thread* focuses overwhelmingly on medieval and early modern Japan, and this inevitably presents an unbalanced (though not necessarily false) picture. Most of my criticisms, however, concern Faure's discussion of transgression (mainly chapter three, though it is a recurrent motif throughout the book). Transgression has become something of a stock theme in postmodern academic circles (witness the "valorization" of De Sade and Celine in the past decade among literary theorists) and I am unsure that Faure's discussion in the context of Buddhism furthers our understanding. Indeed, it strikes me as rather "faddish." More to the point, in dwelling on the constant movement towards transgression within Mahāyāna Faure conveniently glosses over the fact that it is enlightenment after all which allows Buddhas and bodhisattvas to transgress. They are no longer attached, hence they generate no new karma. In turn, they use their freedom in the service of helping other sentient beings. This amounts to a very different kind of transgression from basic moral laxity or ego-centric misbehavior, though I readily admit it may be hard for us unenlightened folk to tell the difference.

Methodological Reflections on Bernard Faure's *The Red Thread*

Joseph Michael Thometz

Graduate Theological Union

Conscripting Foucault and Bataille into the service of Buddhist studies, Bernard Faure's *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality* offers a well-written collection of tales, mostly of Japanese origin. These tales illustrate his effort to uncover, reconstruct, or imagine what a Buddhist discourse on sexuality might be like, with a more plausible picture of an as-yet-to-be-understood typology of polymorphous discourses subsumed under the aegis of Buddhism.

I must state at the outset that I am neither an expert on medieval Japanese Buddhisms, nor do I locate myself within the community of scholars who interpret history through the lens of Foucault's thought. Rather, I approach Professor Faure's work with a background in Modern Western epistemology, Greek and Christian apophatic thought, and Indian Mahāyāna philosophy, especially the epistemological views of the Indian Mādhyamika schools. In short, epistemology, the critique of language and its capacity to express religious (understood functionally as liberative) truth assumes the centerpiece of my comparative studies. With this philosophical background I broach the subject of interpretive method in Faure's book. I believe that method necessarily colors content, and therefore questions pertaining to method should be granted almost equal weight as that accorded to content itself.

My few comments will center on potential contradictions in praxis, specifically, the methodological dilemma of simultaneously calling for abandoning the image of an atemporal and unlocalized Buddhism, while advancing claims that presuppose and, moreover, require some norms and atemporal laws upon which arguments can be made, and through which norms and laws may be set up for later commentary or dismissal. Clearly, Bernard Faure seems to recognize this potential contradiction in praxis. A caveat in his introduction speaks to this: "for heuristic and didactic purposes, I have assumed here the existence of a generic Buddhism, a singular norm But this norm will, of course, turn out to be irreducibly plural, multivocal, to the point that we may have to speak of Buddhisms in the plural, or rather, of Buddhist norms and sexualities, of Buddhist approaches to sexuality" (p. 11).

In adopting norms for heuristic purposes one might be led to ask about the status accorded to the interpretations and theories generated. What guides and allows one to discriminate between more or less

plausible interpretations? In his Afterthoughts, Faure suggests, "Once we reject the notion of a pure, atemporal, and changeless doctrine, we are able to appreciate as a positive characteristic of Buddhism its flexibility, its singular capacity to adapt to the multiplicity of times and cultures" (p. 279). But what is signified by this which is singular in its capacity? If doctrine is, in fact, exclusively determined by culture and history, how can one even identify a referent for this singular capacity? What allows for recognition of temporally discrete teachings to qualify as Buddhist? Could not one suggest that this capacity to admit change has a certain atemporal compulsion, epistemologically speaking? Is this not one of the three marks of existence, *anitya*, impermanence?

Moreover, by employing insights gleaned from Foucault's theories—for instance, from Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis—in reading medieval Japanese Buddhism (through the lens of these insights), some atemporal status, if not accorded to reason itself, is surely accorded to the heuristic value of Foucault's theoretical framework. The method itself appears to enjoy some atemporal status, *even* as a heuristic device. In the act of applying it back over the centuries, and across linguistic and cultural divides, the temporal/atemporal dichotomy becomes blurred. One is left to wonder how, having abandoned the idea of a changeless doctrine, one might come to discriminate between changing Buddhist doctrines and doctrines of non-Buddhist expression.

As Faure states in his Afterthoughts, "Foucault rejects the notion of the Law, but the Law is ideologically the source, the starting point, of Buddhist thought. There is no way around it, but this necessary stage is what allows us to question its primacy and relevance later on" (p. 286). But in calling for abandoning an atemporal status to doctrine and law, how does one proceed in making intelligible that which was local and temporal 2500 years ago? Again, if one proceeds heuristically, what is the value of insights and theories generated? For it would appear that in this sense of a starting point, early Buddhist doctrine or law assumes the role of a straw man—a *sannyasin* eagerly in search of a world to reject.

The temporal dilemma appears only a few pages later from the call to abandon the notion of an atemporal, unlocalized Buddhist doctrine. Faure raises a point that he intends to develop further in his *Purity and Gender*, a companion volume to *The Red Thread*. His claim is that a consistent feminist critique could well shatter Buddhism in its foundations. He adds, "It is indeed clear that not only the basic dogmas of Buddhism but the symbolic economy in which they are inscribed as well derive from masculine ideology" (p. 281). No doubt, patriarchal powers have historically mediated the presentation of, and spin put upon. . . put upon what? Is not something first furnished, albeit in a manner perhaps disclosed in relation to power? In this respect, I'm curious to understand

how the three marks of existence: *duḥkha*, *anitya*, and *anātman* might be reducible to masculine ideologies, strictly speaking; and moreover, how might this claim be advanced without according some atemporal status to a masculine ideology that reaches back to the foundations of Buddhism? Why claim that a consistent feminist critique could well shatter Buddhism in its foundations unless such a questionable foundation could doctrinally be accessed for criticism? Access seems to presuppose some atemporal value judgment, either assigned to rationality or to the feminist critique. This situation, I believe, again points to a recurring question about the status accorded to theories generated from a rejection of any atemporal notion of doctrine.

It appears that this methodological issue was acknowledged by Foucault. In his *History of Sexuality* he admits,

... in an obstinately confused way, I sometimes spoke, as though I were dealing with equivalent notions, of representation, and sometimes of law, of prohibition or censorship. Through stubbornness or neglect, I failed to consider everything that can distinguish their theoretical implications. And I grant that one might justifiably say to me: By constantly referring to positive technologies of power, you are playing a double game where you hope to win on all counts; you confuse your adversaries by appearing to take the weaker position, and, discussing repression alone, you would have us believe, wrongly, that you have rid yourself of the problem of law; and yet you keep the essential practical consequence of the principle of power-as-law, namely the fact that there is no escaping from power, that it is always-already present, constituting that very thing which one attempts to count it with. (Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1 [New York: Vintage Books, 1978], p. 82.)

The contradiction in praxis, the tension between temporality and atemporal notions, is perhaps resolved as a false or fantastic dichotomy that cannot be maintained in practice. To borrow Heidegger's insight, are we "always already" engaged in a manner that undercuts both temporal and atemporal notions in methodology? If so, the methodological question about the contradiction in praxis resolves itself as nonsensical.

The story of Prasannendriya and Agramati, which Faure raises in his introduction, is illustrative of perhaps a more Buddhist solution: the theory of Two Truths (*satyadvaya*), ultimate and conventional. Faure reminds us, "Ultimate truth is the truth that transcends all limited viewpoints, sublating conventional truth, that is the truth perceived from a limited, all-too-human perspective" (p. 5). These two truths circumscribe the parameters of meaningful speech as applied to the religious truth of the Buddhist Middle Path. The second truth of

emptiness (*śūnyatā*) eludes the reaches of the first truth of conventional existence (*saṃvṛtisatya*); nevertheless, the first truth must be employed in conveying the higher truth (*paramārthasatya*) of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Nāgārjuna writes,

Without a foundation in the conventional truth,
The significance of the ultimate cannot be taught.
Without understanding the significance of the ultimate,
Liberation is not achieved.

(*MMK* 24:10, Jay L. Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995]).

Is not the postulation of *paramārthasatya* as the more accurate rendering of *saṃvṛtisatya*, itself, an atemporal doctrine, epistemologically speaking?

One ends where one begins. I return to the question of the straw man and the value assigned to theories generated out of a heuristic adoption of norms and laws. A kind of procreative intellectual security is afforded theories predicated upon some atemporal notion of doctrine and law; regardless of the particular cultural or socio-economic epoch into which the scholar is born, she is then permitted to boldly go where no scholar has circumscribed before. But without resolving the methodological dilemma of temporal distance, and if the dichotomy is not resolved as a matter of Heidegger's always-already, or if solace is not found in the Two Truths (*satyadvaya*), then one must ask again whether Buddhism is not reduced to a straw man who, albeit fertile and tumescent for heuristic purposes, waits with baited breath in the clinic for word that he is no longer fertile with *bījas* (seminal or karmic seeds). In other words, how does one discriminate between viable and weak interpretative progeny? On what grounds is a theoretical triage to be performed? Still, with probable assurance most would confess, in spite of these methodological concerns, this procreative undertaking is both creative and stimulating.

Bernard Faure's *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality*, with its seductive prose and provocative perspectives, reads so well that I had to force myself to slow down and dwell in the text. Throughout Faure's presentation, I continued to ask what are the interpretive presuppositions brought to bear on the discussion. In particular I think students of Buddhism would benefit from asking the same, especially with respect to Faure's discussion of the ideology of transgression. What is the Buddhist meaning of transgression outside of its putatively atemporal liberative end, i.e. correcting perception and seeing reality (*tattva*) as it truly is (*pratityasamutpāda*)? But setting such substantive questions aside, I would encourage scholars of Buddhism to read *The Red Thread* as a novel application of method in Buddhism.

***Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sutra.* By Donald S. Lopez, Jr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. xii., 264 pp. Hardcover: \$39.50; paperback: \$15.95.**

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“Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me.” As everyone knows, this old childhood rhyme is far from the truth. Anyone who has carried a compliment or rebuke days or even weeks beyond when it was given knows only too well the power words have, both to heal and to hurt. This point is beautifully illustrated by the story Donald Lopez recalls in the introduction to his book, *Elaborations on Emptiness*. He tells the Japanese story, “Miminashi Hōichi,” the story of a blind boy who is threatened by a family of ghosts. He is protected by the monks of the local monastery, who inscribe the words of the *Heart Sūtra* all over his body, which renders him invisible. They forget his ears, however, and though he lives, his ears are torn off by the ghosts. This visceral, somatic example begins Lopez’s latest book on the *Heart Sūtra*, and while the other uses of words and language are not as graphically concrete, they all deal with the same basic questions: how does language function, and how is it efficacious in ritual performance? In short, how is language *used*? While Lopez uses one of the most popular Buddhist *sūtras* to illustrate his arguments, the questions he raises are of concern not only to Buddhist scholars, but those in many other areas of study as well, such as comparative philosophy, linguistics, and ritual performance. This fact makes this book valuable not only for the experts, but also for those with more general interests in language and religion.

Elaborations on Emptiness, a sequel of sorts to his earlier book, *The Heart Sūtra Explained*, offers full translations of eight different Indian and Tibetan commentaries of the *Heart Sūtra*, organized thematically and paired with detailed, insightful essays by Lopez. The commentaries include those of Vimalamitra, Atīśa, Kamalaśīla, Śrisimha, Jñānamitra, Praśāstrasena, Mahājāna, and Vajrapāni. In his introduction, Lopez states his intention to balance the commentaries with essays of his own, in order to provide an introduction into some of the larger questions that are then explored in detail in the specific commentaries themselves.

After an excellent introduction which is not to be skipped, Lopez begins his work with the essay “Who Heard the Heart *Sūtra*?” In this essay, Lopez examines the debate surrounding the question of the identity of the hearer of the *sūtra*, the “I” in the “Thus have I heard.” This issue is important, in that it goes directly to heart (so to speak) of

the credibility of the *sūtra* as a whole. If the *Heart Sūtra* is to be attributed to the Buddha, then it is of the utmost importance that the one reciting the *sūtra* have the necessary credentials. Also of concern here is the question of the implied audience of the *sūtra*—who is qualified to hear it, which in turn raises the issue of orality. What is the relationship between sound and meaning in the *Heart Sūtra*, and what are the changes that occur when something that is to be heard can now be seen and read? Lopez engages all these issues in a lucid, intriguing presentation. This essay is followed by the commentaries of Vimalamitra and Atīśa, both of which deal with the *samgītikartr* question in the most detail.

The second essay is titled “The *Heart Sūtra* as Tantra,” and here Lopez discusses the debate surrounding the categorization of the *Heart Sūtra* as *sūtra* or *tantra*. He notes that it has been classed in various canons under both headings. By necessity, this raises the vexing question of how to define *tantra*, and Lopez’s discussion in this section, which begins with quotes by Levi-Strauss and Wittgenstein, is quite interesting. He observes how the definitions of *sūtra* and *tantra* have actually played off one another, and that it is the context in which a text functions that plays the critical role in assigning the words a definition. In other words, to use Wittgensteinian language, a definition of *tantra* cannot be found apart from the language game in which it functions. The two commentaries that follow this chapter, those of Kamalaśīla and Vairocana, reflect this *sūtra-tantra* debate.

The next essay, “The *Heart Sūtra* as Sādhana,” continues this conversation, with a twist. Lopez argues that the question of whether the *Heart Sūtra* is to be categorized as a *sūtra* or *tantra* is complicated by the fact that there are two *sādhanas* (“means of achievement”) in the Tibetan canon which are based on the *Heart Sūtra*. This is significant, for, as Lopez writes, “the *Heart Sūtra* may be the only *sūtra* (if it be a *sūtra*) to have a *sādhana* associated with it.” (p. 14). After a brief discussion of the function of mandalas and visualization, he details at length the visualization sequence in Dārikapa’s *sādhana*, and uses a heavy dose of Freudian psychoanalysis to interpret it. In this chapter he also introduces the issue of *mantra*, which is the subject of the next essay. The two commentaries that follow this chapter are those of Jñānamitra and Praśātrasena.

The next essay deals perhaps most directly with the issues of language potency and use raised at the beginning of this review. Lopez opens this essay, “The *Heart Sūtra*’s Mantra,” with a question: “How are we to understand ritual speech?” (p. 165), and uses the popular *mantra* that ends the *Heart Sūtra*—[om] *gate gate pāragate pārasamgate bodhi svāhā*—as his example. In this chapter, he takes up the question of how

a *mantra* functions, and suggests that several aspects of this *mantra* in the *Heart Sūtra* violate some of the key characteristics a *mantra* supposedly typifies. For example, the *Heart Sūtra's* *mantra* contains no instruction as to how it is to be used, no deity who is to be propitiated, no specific end at which it is aimed. (pp. 166-167). Furthermore, there is the complication that, although the *mantra* was written down, contrary to traditional Indian practice, it was not translated but transliterated, in order to “duplicate and preserve” (p. 172) the original sound of the speaker’s voice. Again, then, we are back to the question of understanding/meaning versus use/function. Lopez’s use of Austin’s analysis in *How to Do Things with Words* is helpful here. The commentaries that follow this chapter are the final two, those of Mahājana and Vajrapāni.

The last category in which Lopez treats the *Heart Sūtra* is that of exorcism (“The *Heart Sūtra* as Exorcism”). He begins with a personal experience of his own unwitting participation in an exorcism rite, which is the most common use to which the *Heart Sūtra* is put in Tibet. From this personal account, he goes on to give a detailed explanation of one such ritual. After the ritual has been described, Lopez raises some important issues latent in the performance of the ritual, including the questions of sacrifice, mimesis, and sorcery. He ends the chapter with a treatment of “Lamaism” in relationship to Buddhism.

The last chapter is a gem. It wraps up the whole preceding dialogue by introducing the larger question of what the commentators were trying to accomplish, and what methods they employed, specifically their use of folk etymology. This leads him to a discussion of comparative philosophy, and the way in which Asian texts have often been treated by Western scholars. His whole discussion here is extremely insightful, and I want to quote just one passage from the chapter. In his treatment of comparative philosophy he notes the pitfall that often occurs by interpreters who try to lift out a “crude ideology” from complex texts. He writes, “Even the most abstract systems (with which Buddhism is replete) cannot be regarded merely as bodies of propositions. They must also be treated as located utterances, the rhetorical purposes of which one must seek to determine if they are to be understood.” (p. 254). He then lays out three requirements that must be fulfilled for genuine understanding to take place, and ends the book with a hopeful theory about the function of commentaries, and the way in which they contribute to and create new meaning.

This book is worth reading on a number of levels. Those who are serious scholars of Buddhist texts will appreciate the thoughtful, well-noted translations Lopez has made of the various commentaries. Those who are lovers of the *Heart Sūtra* will appreciate all the nuances of the text Lopez elucidates, and the different functions it has in various

traditions. Finally, anyone who has an interest in the function of language, the different methodologies guiding textual commentary, or the possibilities of cross-cultural interpretation will enjoy the conversation Lopez begins, and most likely carry his ideas long after the book itself has been put down.

NOTES AND NEWS

IBS PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES 1998-1999

1998 NUMATA LECTURER: Professor Akira Ōmine

Professor Akira Ōmine, a leading Japanese scholar in the field of religious philosophy, presented a series of seminars and lectures for the Institute of Buddhist Studies and Buddhist Churches of America in August 1998.



Currently a professor at Ryūkoku University, Professor Ōmine is also emeritus professor of Ōsaka University. He is also on the faculty of the Doctrinal Research Center of the Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha.

A well-known haiku poet, he is the author of many texts, including *Fichte kenkyū* (A Study of Fichte), *Kagetsu no shisō* (Thoughts of Flower and Moon), *Konnichi no shūkyō no kanōsei* (The Possibilities for Religion Today), *Shinran no kosumoroji* (Shinran's Cosmology), *Shinran no dainamisumu* (The Dynamism of Shinran), and *Shūkyō to shi no gensen* (The Source for Religion and Poetry).

On August 11, 1998, Professor Ōmine conducted the 1998 Numata seminar on the topic of "Religion and Language: The Soteriological Significance of Religious Language" in Berkeley. Students and faculty of the IBS and Graduate Theological Union, as well as other interested persons participated in the seminar. Professor Ōmine then presented two lectures on the topic, "Jodo Shinshu in the 21st Century: A Return to the Starting Point of Religion." The lectures took place on August 14th at the Mountain View Buddhist Temple and August 16th at the Los Angeles Honpa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. Both lectures were sponsored by the Yehan Numata Foundation, BCA Centennial Lecture Series, BCA Ministers Association, and IBS Center for Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies.

English translations of both of Professor Ōmine's presentations are available on the IBS web-site at: <http://www.shin-IBS.edu>.

**1999 RYŪKOKU LECTURER:
Professor Gyōyū Yamada**

Professor Gyōyū Yamada of Ryūkoku University visited IBS in March to present a series of lectures for an IBS Spring semester class that focused on topics in Shin Buddhist thought.



Professor Yamada is professor emeritus at the Gifu College of Education. Currently, he is a professor of Shin Buddhist Studies at Ryūkoku University and has attained the academic ranking of Kangaku within the Hongwanji. Prof. Yamada is the author of numerous texts including, *Nyūshutsu nimongeju no kenkyū* (A Study of Shinran's Hymn of Two Gateways of Entrance and Emergence), *Shinshū shinjin no kisoteki kenkyū* (A Basic Study of Shinjin in Shin Buddhism), and *Yasashi Shinshū shinjin no Q & A* (Simple Questions and Answers about Shinjin in Shin Buddhism).

His lectures at IBS, which were on the topic of "Shinran's Vision of the Primal Vow: Jōdo Shinshū's Approach to Pure Land Faith," took place on from March 9 to March 16, 1999. In addition, Prof. Yamada presented a lecture on "The Primal Vow and Pure Land Faith" on March 12, 1999 at the Buddhist Church of Oakland.

**1999 NUMATA LECTURER:
Professor Takamaro Shigaraki**

Professor Takamaro Shigaraki will visit IBS as the 1999 Numata Lecturer in September 1999.

Professor Shigaraki has been at the forefront of the study and development of Shin Buddhist thought during the past four decades. He was as a professor of Shin Buddhist Studies in the Faculty of Letters at Ryūkoku University prior to serving as president of the university for two terms. He later became the head of the Kanseikyoku (department of ecclesiastical adjudication) within Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha. He is currently serving as chairman of the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai. Professor Shigaraki is the author of a great many texts, including *Shinran ni okeru shin no kenkyū* (A Study of Shinjin in Shinran's Thought), *Jōdokyō ni okeru shin no kenkyū* (A Study of Shinjin in Pure Land Buddhism), *Gendai shinshū kyōgaku* (Contemporary Shin Buddhist

Doctrinal Studies), *Bukkyō no seimeikan* (The Buddhist View of Life), and *Shinran shisō o ikiru* (Living through Shinran's Thoughts).

The IBS Numata Lectures by Professor Shigaraki will take place from September 7 to 14 at the Graduate Theological Union. The topic of his lectures and the IBS course that will follow them will be "Shinjin in Shinran's Thought." In addition, he will deliver lectures on September 10 at the Mountain View Buddhist Temple and on September 16 at the Orange County Buddhist Temple. His lectures will be sponsored by the Yehan Numata Foundation, BCA Centennial Lecture Series, BCA Ministers Association, and IBS Center for Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies.

BDK ENGLISH TRIPITAKA: A Progress Report

This article updates the comprehensive report on the BDK Tripitaka Translation Project given in the Notes and News section of *The Pacific World*, New Series, Numbers 11 (1995) and 12 (1996). As noted in that article, 139 texts selected from the Taisho Daizokyo (Taisho Tripitaka) by the BDK English Tripitaka Translation Committee are being translated into English by internationally recognized scholars around the world. The translations are being published in 108 or so volumes by the Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research in Berkeley, California, and will comprise the First Series of the BDK English Tripitaka.

The texts of the First Series set forth, essentially, the scriptural and philosophical bases for the main Mahayana Buddhist schools of China, Korea and Japan. The books published as of the Spring of 1999 (with brief descriptions of the texts published since 1996) are:

1992. *THE SUMMARY OF THE GREAT VEHICLE* (Taisho 1593), translated by John P. Keenan (USA). ISBN 0-9625618-6-X.

1993. *THE BIOGRAPHICAL SCRIPTURE OF KING ASOKA* (Taisho 2043), translated by Li Rongxi (China). ISBN 0-9625618-4-3.

1994. *THE LOTUS SUTRA* (Taisho 262), translated by Kubo Tsugunari and Yuyama Akira (Japan). ISBN 0-9625618-0-0.

1994. *THE SUTRA ON UPASAKA PRECEPTS* (Taisho 1488), translated by Shih Heng-ching (Taiwan). ISBN 0-9625618-5-1.

1994. *THE ESSENTIALS OF THE EIGHT TRADITIONS* (Extra-canonical), translated by Leo M. Pruden (USA), and *THE CANDLE OF THE LATTER DHARMA* (Extra-canonical), translated by Robert Rhodes (USA). ISBN 0-9625618-7-8.

1994. *THE STOREHOUSE OF SUNDRY VALUABLES* (Taisho 203), translated by Charles Willemen (Belgium). ISBN 0-9625618-3-5.

1995. *A BIOGRAPHY OF THE TRIPITAKA MASTER OF THE GREAT CI'EN MONASTERY OF THE GREAT TANG DYNASTY* (Taisho 2053), translated by Li Rongxi (China). ISBN 1-886439-00-1.

1995. *THE THREE PURE LAND SUTRAS* (The Larger Sutra on Amitayus, The Sutra on Contemplation of Amitayus, and The Smaller Sutra on

Amitayus) (Taisho 360, 365 and 366), translated by Inagaki Hisao (Japan). ISBN 1-886439-01-X.

1995. *THE ESSENTIALS OF THE VINAYA TRADITION* (Taisho 2348), translated by Leo Pruden (USA), and *THE COLLECTED TEACHINGS OF THE TENDAI LOTUS SCHOOL* (Taisho 2366), translated by Paul L. Swanson (USA). ISBN 0-9625618-9-4.

1996. *TANNISHO: PASSAGES DEPLORING DEVIATIONS OF FAITH* (Taisho 2661), translated by Bando Shojun (Japan), and *RENNYO SHONIN OFUMI: THE LETTERS OF RENNYO* (Taisho 2668), translated by Ann T. Rogers and Minor L. Rogers (USA). ISBN 1-886439-03-6.

1996. *THE GREAT TANG DYNASTY RECORD OF THE WESTERN REGIONS* (Taisho 2087), translated by Li Rongxi (China). ISBN 1-886439-02-8.

1997. *SENCHAKU HONGAN NEMBUTSU SHU (A Collection of Passages on the Nembutsu Chosen in the Original Vow)* (Taisho 2608), translated by Morris J. Augustine (USA) and Kondo Tessho (Japan). ISBN 1-886439-05-2.

This work, known generally by its abbreviated title of “Senchakushu,” is the principal work of Genku, the founder of the Pure Land School in Japan. It is therefore regarded as the basic text of this school. Because it contains criticism of the traditional Buddhist schools founded during the Nara and Heian Periods and presents a systematic outline of the standpoint of Pure Land Buddhism, this work met with strong criticism from the traditional Buddhist schools, and many works refuting the author’s views appeared even during his lifetime. But it has proved to be the most important single literary work in the establishment of the Pure Land School as an independent school of Buddhism in Japan.

1998. *THE PRATYUTPANNA SAMADHI SUTRA* (Taisho 418), translated by Paul Harrison (New Zealand), and *THE SURANGAMA SAMADHI SUTRA* (Taisho 642), translated by John McRae (USA). ISBN 1-886439-06-0.

THE PRATYUTPANNA SAMADHI SUTRA (Hanjuzanmaikyo) is one of the oldest Mahayana sutras, and the earliest sutra to contain a reference to Amitayus. It can thus be regarded as a forerunner of the Pure Land Sutras. The samadhi described in this sutra refers to the spiritual state wherein one is able to see by mental concentration buddhas appearing before one’s very eyes, and this sutra describes the techniques involved in this meditation, giving Amitayus who

resides in the western paradise of Sukhavati as an example of a buddha who might appear in such manner. In Japan the meditation described in this sutra has become the basis of an ambulatory meditation practice called “jogyo-zanmai.”

THE SURANGAMA SAMADHI SUTRA expounds the essentials of meditative practice. In this sutra, the Buddha replies to a query that the “surangama samadhi” is the foremost among all methods of spiritual training, embracing within it all other methods of practice, and then goes on to describe it in detail. Viewed historically, the thought presented in this sutra anticipates such works as the Avatamsaka-sutra, Vimilakirtinirdesa-sutra and Saddharmapundarika-sutra.

1999. THE BLUE CLIFF RECORD (Taisho 2003), translated by J. C. Cleary (USA). ISBN 0-9625618-8-6.

“The Blue Cliff Record” consists of 100 kung-an (koan) selected by Ch’ung-hsien from the 1700 kung-an of the Ch’uan-teng-lu (“Transmission of the Lamp”). Ch’ung-hsien has added explanatory verses to each of the kung-an, and later the comments of K’o-ch’in were appended. In the Ling-chi (Jpn.: Rinzai) School this work is held in extremely high regard, and is looked upon as a model text for instruction in the practice of Ch’an (Zen).

1999. THREE CHAN CLASSICS [The Recorded Sayings of Linji (Taisho 1985) and Women’s Gate (Taisho 2005), translated by Thomas Cleary (USA); and The Faith-Mind Maxim (Taisho 2010), translated by Yoshida Osamu (Japan)]. ISBN 1-886439-07-9.

“The Recorded Sayings of Linji” is a record of the teachings of Lin-chi I-hsuan (Rinzai Gigen), the founder of the Lin-chi (Rinzai) branch of Ch’an (Zen), and was compiled by one his disciples, Hui-jan. In the Lin-chi (Rinzai) School it is regarded as the most important collection of the recorded sayings of a Ch’an master.

“Women’s Gate” consists of 48 kung-an selected by Wu-men Hui-kai (Jpn.: Mumon Ekai), a Ch’an monk of the Sung Dynasty. It has traditionally been the most highly prized work in the Ch’an School. This work contains relatively few kung-an in comparison to other collections and is an introductory work and is thus in frequent use.

In the “The Faith-Mind Maxim,” Seng-ts’an, the Third Patriarch of the Ch’an School in China, gives expression to the highest state of Ch’an. The original is a short work consisting of 146 lines and only

584 characters, and states that the ultimate truth of Ch'an corresponds to a state of equality and absolute freedom, free of all differentiation and conflicts, right and wrong, loss and gain.

TEXTS TO BE PUBLISHED IN 1999-2000

THREE TEXTS ON CONSCIOUSNESS ONLY [The Demonstration of Consciousness Only (Taisho 1585); The Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only (Taisho 1586); and The Treatise in Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only (Taisho 1590), all translated by Francis Cook (USA). ISBN 1-886439-04-4.

“The Demonstration of Consciousness Only” is a commentary by Dharmapala et al on Vasubandhu’s “Trimsika” translated by Hsuan-tsang. It presents an exposition of the Yogacara or Mind-Only school of thought (Vijnanavada), according to which there is a fundamental consciousness called “alaya-vijnana” (‘store-consciousness’) at the basis of the human personality in which all past actions are said to be stored. These latter are said to appear in present and future actions, and so all phenomena are regarded as manifestations of the mind. This work has served as the basic text of the Fa-hsian (Jpn.: Hosso) School in China and Japan.

“The Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only,” composed by Vasubandhu and translated by Hsuan-tsang, gets its name from the fact that it consists of thirty verses and is considered a basic text of the Fa-hsiang (Jpn.:Hosso) School in China and Japan. It is also the fundamental treatise of the Mind-Only doctrine (Vijnanavada), which asserts that all phenomena are manifestations of the mind.

“The Treatise in Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only,” composed by Vasubandhu and translated by Hsuan-tsang, consists of twenty verses to which is appended a commentary. It is not only devoted to an exposition of the Mind-Only doctrine (Vijnanavada), but also presents a critique of non-Buddhist philosophies and Hinayana doctrine from the viewpoint of the Mind-Only doctrine, asserting that all phenomena are manifestations of man’s fundamental consciousness.

THE SCRIPTURAL TEXT: VERSES OF THE DOCTRINE, WITH PARABLES (Taisho 211), translated by Charles Willemen (Belgium). ISBN 886439-08-7.

“The Scriptural Text: Verses of the Doctrine, With Parables” is based upon the Chinese translation of the “Dhammapada,” of which

approximately two thirds of the verses have been selected for commentary. The Pali version of the “Dhammapada” contains 423 verses and a number of commentaries recording the tales and fables surrounding each verse. In the Chinese version, 250 verses have been added to the original 500 verses, two thirds of which are dealt with in this work.

KAIMOKUSHO OR LIBERATION FROM BLINDNESS (Taisho 2689), translated by Murano Senchu (Japan). ISBN 1-886439-12-5.

The “Kaimokusho” was written by Nichiren as a result of the ordeals he experienced during his exiles to Izu and Sado, and it represents a reappraisal of the “Lotus Sutra.” “Kaimoku” means literally ‘to open the eyes,’ the implication being that the aim of this work is to lead people still at an inferior stage of spiritual development to the essence of the supreme “Lotus Sutra.” Since it is written in Japanese, it is considered to have been composed by Nichiren for his lay followers.

BUDDHIST MONASTIC TRADITIONS OF SOUTH ASIA (Taisho 2125), translated by Li Rongxi (China). ISBN 1-886439-09-5.

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THE SCRIPTURE ON THE EXPLICATION OF THE UNDERLYING MEANING (Taisho 676), translated by John Keenan (USA). ISBN 886439-10-9.

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This issue of *Pacific World:*
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is dedicated to the memory of

Rev. Philip Karl Eidmann

January 3, 1924 to May 12, 1997

and

Rev. Russell Hamada

November 5, 1951 to April 18, 1998

Both made major contributions
to the development of the Institute,
as teachers, as advisors and as friends.
They are both missed here in this saha
world, though we know they now dwell
in Amida's infinite compassion and
wisdom. May our future efforts be
guided by their memory.

