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World Macrohistory and Shinran's Literacy

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> *. . . since anyone who criticizes the entire systems of others has a duty to replace them with an alternative of his own, containing principles that provide a more felicitous support for the totality of effects [to be explained], we shall extend our meditation further in order to fulfil this duty.*
> —Giambattista Vico, *La Scienza Nuova*[1]

> *. . . eccentricity, ideology, and idiosyncrasy, can yield significant "remakings" of world history. Eccentricity, namely, recognizing perspectives other than those that conventionally view the world . . . can help historians escape from ethnocentrism. . . . Ideology, more conventionally called theory, is essential if historians are to select and integrate new material. And idiosyncrasy in the interests and backgrounds of historians can often be the source of the re-vision so essential for challenging earlier historical narratives.*
> —Janet Abu-Lughod[2]

THE ORIGINAL HINT MISLAID?

The question has persisted from the beginning of European contact with Japan in the sixteenth century: What is it about Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism that has offered similarities to Western religious experience, most specifically to Protestant Christianity? The perception or intuition of these similarities has sometimes been systematic and at other times ad hoc. Allessandro Valignano, usually regarded as the most perceptive of the Catholic missionaries, reports that certain Buddhists assert that

> Even though humans commit as many sins as they wish, if only they invoke [the Buddha's] name, saying *Namu Amida but*—which is to say, *sanctissima Amida fotoque* [*hotoke*]—with faith and hope in him and the merits of his accomplishment . . . then by this they will be rendered immaculate and purged of all their sins by the virtue and merit of these *fotoques*, without any necessity to perform other penance or to

involve themselves in other works, for thereby injury would be done
to the penances and works which [the buddhas] performed for the
salvation of mankind. So much that they hold precisely the doctrine
which the devil, father of both, taught to Luther.[3]

What was the global background for this sharpness? The Jesuits were
encouraged to make an explicit analogy between religious and moral
conditions in Japan and the religious and moral conditions of sixteenth-
century Europe because pivotal struggles over the nature of society
and political authority were taking place in both parts of the world:
". . . the very same doctrine ["Lutheranism"] has been bestowed by the
devil upon the Japanese heathendom. Nothing is changed except the
name of the person in whom they believe and trust [Amida Buddha =
Protestants' God], and same effect being created among these heretics
as obtains amidst these heathen: for these as much as the others are
sunk in total carnality and obscenity, divided in divers sects, and living
therefore in great confusion of belief and in continuous wars."[4] Later
in the Meiji period the general observation of something "protestant"
about Shin was frequently renewed.[5]

From certain contemporary points of view, there might be some-
thing amusing about such conceptual biases. However, the various
sorts of Christian missionaries themselves were quite earnest when
they made such analogies or identifications. They had all come from
conflicted European or American settings in which the issues of author-
ity, both personal and institutional, coded in terms like "Protestant,"
were of the greatest significance. Would this not, at some level, seem
fundamentally suggestive? Nevertheless, five hundred years after its
first contact with the West, and despite the body of evidence for the
recurrence of this intuitive reaction to Shin Buddhism—against an
historiographical background where "protestant" developments in
European cultures (however understood) have been considered highly
significant in world history—the consistency of this "protestant" inter-
pretation has never generated an adequate comparative-evolutionary
paradigm or explanation for Shin Buddhism.[6] In consequence, in the
most broadly significant way—that is from a truly global "etic" histor-
ical-comparative standpoint—it can be asserted quite reasonably that
no sufficient understanding of what Shin Buddhism is about exists.

Of course such a provocative claim requires various qualifications.
Beginning with the Western side of the case, James Dobbins, Minor
Rogers, and a number of others have produced essential descriptive

historical sources, for the most part relying on the extensive parallel frameworks of Japanese-language scholarship. There are also interpretative works, especially regarding the West's relative neglect towards the Shin tradition. For example, Shin has attracted the attention of both Elisabetta Porcu[7] and Galen Amstutz,[8] each of whom elucidates parts of the orientalist context that encouraged that inattention. Porcu draws attention to how Zen, overshadowing Shin, has been constructed as the true representative of "Japanese culture" and has achieved symbolic hegemony. Similarly, I have myself tried to evaluate the multiple reasons for historians' and other scholars' inattention to a range of facts about Shin history. In doing so I have argued that the entire context had been sharply politicized due to a still lingering cultural stand-off between Japanese and Western sides, as well as a certain theoretical inability to process information about Shin resulting from attachments to original Indian Buddhism, to the limitations of sociological models, and so on.[9] In the field of comparative religious thought, the modern encounter of Shin with Christianity has led to a whole genre of quasi-theological comparison. That topic, however, will be bypassed here because it can be intellectually misleading, and because there is a meta-theoretical problem for European Protestantism itself (cf. *infra*).

Even the sociologist Max Weber played a significant role in this scene. Weber was not in a position to understand Buddhist doctrine or the historical context fully. Despite these limitations Weber, who established one of the major beachheads for comparative thinking in modern social theory, has been taken seriously in Japan for a long time and actually engaged Shin Buddhism briefly in his writings. This point deserves a short digression.[10] Weber fairly accurately recognized important features of Shin Buddhism from his readings of missionary reports about Japan; he knew it was nonmonastic and rather "bourgeois," and the doctrine reminded him of Lutheranism (not Calvinism).[11] In spite of the last observation, he implied that Shin might have something to do with the history of economic modernization. Later, because Japanese scholars had a continuing interest in Weber, and because Weber's famous Protestant ethic thesis was prone to be read as if universally some kind of "push" from a religious ideology was necessary to stimulate modern economic development in any country, Japanese scholars—reinforced by American scholarship—long were in pursuit of some "functional equivalent" to the Protestant ethic in Japan.[12] As early as during Weber's lifetime itself, Japanese

economists aware of the ongoing debate on the origins of capitalism in European social sciences responded to the so-called "Weber thesis" and were induced to ask the question whether there were any religious or philosophical equivalents to Protestantism in Japan. Thus, at first it had seemed that Weber's idea of a religious ethic might apply (at least potentially) to Shin Buddhism, a question taken up in a 1941 article by Japanese sociologist Naitō Kanji.[13] At the time of his writing Naitō was concerned about the idea that there was no comparability at all between Protestant ethic motivations in Europe and Japanese work behavior. Naitō suggested among other things that the way Shin gratitude was associated with diligence in work and conduct could be similar to an idea of *Beruf* or calling (vocation) in Christian Europe, and that the ethical problem of profitmaking was solved by the *jiri-rita* (profit self, profit others) formula that allowed commerce to be seen as a moral activity. However, Naitō did not describe any of the rationalizing tension famously associated with Calvinism and emphasized by Weber, and as German historian Wolfgang Schwentker footnotes, Naitō's data from sermons and house rules may also have been chronologically peculiar to late Tokugawa and even to the regional Ōmi culture.[14] Furthermore, Naitō was not concerned with any substantial doctrinal justifications in core Buddhist principles, which contrasts with the seriously deep Christian theological approach in Weber's Protestant ethic.

Further interest in exploring the analogy came largely from outside Japan, in Robert N. Bellah's study *Tokugawa Religion* (published in 1957), which picked up on the optimistic modernization theory of postwar American sociology.[15] Bellah adopted the Naitō article for his own analysis and suggested that Shin offered the best functional equivalent of Protestantism. At the same time Bellah attributed to Japanese religion *in general* a stress on diligence, frugality, and moral rectitude, qualities that were "profoundly favorable to economic rationalization."[16]

After Bellah, however, the thesis that Shin served as the functional equivalent to Protestantism as a motivator of economic development (and the whole notion of comparing Europe and Japan on that level) turned out to be inadequate even if suggestive. In part it seemed that Weber's own basis for the allusion had been weak: Weber's real knowledge of Japan had been unclear, and while Weber himself had expressed the perception that Shin was perhaps comparable to Protestantism, he only compared it to Lutheranism, and not to Calvinism—so that

properly speaking one would expect no rational this-worldly asceticism in it anyway. Eventually Japanese scholars could never conclusively confirm any idea of a meaningful Protestant ethic analogue. After the 1950s when scholars sporadically took up the question, they even disagreed if Japan actually possessed any indigenous roots of capitalist modernization; and even if Japan had possessed such indigenous roots, they were usually held to be diffuse and not traceable to any specific religious variable, and certainly not any specific form of Buddhism.[17] To the extent that the discussion was sustained, it eventually focused on a secularized or even *nihonjinron* ethnic version of the "equivalent ethic paradigm," formulated as "in what sense and to what extent did the special character or 'uniqueness' of the Japanese contribute to the successful development of industrial capitalism in Japan?"[18]

More recently, a focused review of the apparent relationship of Shin Buddhism and premodern Japanese economic life confirmed that although Shin doctrine in the narrowest sense does not have any "pro-capitalist" economic recommendations as such, Shin tradition was *de facto* closely allied with Japanese economic history, sometimes quietly paralleling overall developments and other times taking the lead. Moreover, in either mode, Shin in fact became the largest traditional religious institution in what was to emerge, after the Meiji period, as the non-European country that displayed the first truly rapid and competitive ability to adopt and adapt European-style modernization. In that light, a tentative conclusion was that as a synthetic phenomenon Shin fit nicely with the Japanese political economy up to the late nineteenth century. It was in other words institutionally isomorphic with various features of Japanese civilization including privatization, property rights, diffusion of political power, communications, transport and trade, marketization and entrepreneurship, education, social discipline, and a certain rationality.[19] In the end, however, for the purposes of the present argument, the conclusion to be drawn is still that a standard Weberian comparativist approach (focused on modernization and ideology mainly from the perspective of economics per se with a shading from the Protestant ethic thesis) does little to directly explain Shin social history and (as should be apparent) nothing to explain Shinran's original doctrine.

Moving on, but with the "protestant" interpretation of Shin kept in mind as something still requiring explanation, a few other studies have attempted other angles of attack on the analysis of Shin in a

broad historical context. One of these took a free-form stab at descriptively lining up in some "phenomenological" detail a variety of factual and structural aspects of Shin Buddhism and European Protestantism around the test category or metaphor of small-p "protestant," in order to identify some similarities and differences in the areas of doctrinal claims, politics, and social history. It seemed that in some areas (Protestantism in the United States, and the subtly suggestive Weberian question about links between religion and economics) the "protestant" analogy somehow gestured at something meaningful, and that Shin could be similarly discussed as a rather "politically" distinct form of Buddhism. At the same time, however, it was a tradition that had deep intellectual and structural differences with the ancient backgrounds of Christian institutions and with medieval Christianity as well as with the Reformation.[20]

Another, second study proposed that the understanding of Shin denominational history among both specialists and non-specialists would greatly benefit from a global social historical and comparative perspective. The example given was the stimulation provided by reading the Europeanist Peter Burke on "popular" early modern European culture from a Shin Buddhist perspective, an exercise that energizes recognition of problems of folk and elite coexistence in Shin as well as some ways in which Shin both differed from and resembled European phenomena of the "folk" as identified by Burke. As in Europe (whose reform between 1500 and 1800 Burke discusses), Shin probably also underwent a long historical evolution between ca. 1500 and 1800, during which its influence on parts of Japanese society actually became stronger and more thorough. In Japan as in Europe this evolution was strengthened by socioeconomic changes including a commercial revolution, the improvement of material living standards, growth in population, increasing standardization of some kinds of knowledge through literacy, and perhaps even gradually increasing mass political awareness. In Japan as in Europe, however, the powers of reform were limited in terms of real outcomes, and the result towards 1800 was the creation of a new kind of cultural split between the reform tradition and the resilient little (folk/popular) tradition. In its specific case, Shin had some distinctive features that bridged generic Japanese religious interests and a strict or purist version of Mahāyāna Buddhism, most notably Shin's incorporation of a form of ancestor or family religion. From a comparative standpoint, however, Shin cannot be considered

"popular" culture. Instead Shin should be considered an independent reform movement along lines recognizable in European history.[21]

The efforts described above represent primarily Western ruminations. On the Japanese side, apologists and scholars have also long had their own ways of situating the tradition, ones that revealed awareness of the "protestant" comparative issue and the problematic posed by apparent similarities with the development of modern (European) experience. Thus the Japanese have their own etic conceptions of how Shin history might be aligned in such global terms.[22] Some Japanese historians have tried to demonstrate that certain parts of Indian Buddhism (perhaps the very earliest sangha, or some communities of followers around *stūpas*) had a social, devotional, and psychological character that prefigured the character of Shin Buddhism later. According to such a model, then, Shin could be considered not a deviation from, but a restoration of earliest Buddhism.[23] Another idea was the rather literal "Protestant Reformation" analogy, which has been examined in English in connection with the work of Kuroda Toshio.[24] Additionally a related line of thought has been "the original Shinran is our contemporary" interpretation of the founder Shinran, a major twentieth-century Japanese stratagem that James Dobbins has long labeled Shin modernism.[25] Unfortunately all these notions have been shown to be empirically problematic in the forms in which they were and are typically presented.

A comprehensive survey by German Pure Land historian Christoph Kleine has examined how the protestant metaphor for Pure Land Buddhism has served—in its process of long shaping the perception of Pure Land Buddhism dialectically on both the Japanese and Western sides of the world—as probably more counterproductive than productive. The metaphor has tended to be sucked into a Christian quasi-theological discourse instead of being thought through in some broader terms independent of Christianity as such; or quasi-theological discourse has tended to reinforce a Eurocentric idea of progressive religious evolution; or the notion of Amidism as somehow "protestant" has annoyed Indologically-oriented Western Buddhist scholars; and so on.[26]

AN INADEQUATE, FRAGMENTED DEBATE
ABOUT MODERNIZATION AND BUDDHISM

In spite of these various wrong turns, dead-ends, or seeming blind alleys, it should be almost too glaring to note that actually the "protestant" question raised about Shin Buddhism is now, and always has been, an unavoidable modernization question. It is part of the huge historical and sociological debate ongoing since the nineteenth century about "what is modernity?" And indeed, in fact, in the case of Shin, the question does not really involve some quaint backwoods "faith" religion of Japanese yam farmers, but rather a messy, sophisticated, and often ill-defined stew of issues about "progress," development, institutionalization, cultural evolution, and the role of religious ideas in Japanese civilizational (and global) history altogether.

Unfortunately, however, the various spotlights, probes, feints, and deconstructions mentioned above—whether pertaining to orientalism; Christian theology; the false Reformation analogy; the non-existent functional equivalent for the Protestant ethic; or the growing body of factual, objective description itself—so far do not quite add up. They do not coalesce into a positive "logic" that would motivate historians to put Shin Buddhism where it might possibly belong, as one of the globally significant actors on the stage of the world's cultural history of modernization. As already noted, after nearly a century and a half Shin Buddhism still poses an unresolved paradigm problem for historians and comparativists—leaving a significant explanatory vacuum. The resultant effect is striking, for example, in the handling of Shin in the Tokugawa period. This was an era during which Shin was clearly one of the major growth phenomena of Japanese culture and was clearly laying groundwork for Meiji modernization, but both Japanese and non-Japanese historians (except for those more or less representing and specializing in "sect history") have almost not been able to deal with it at all.[27] Similarly absent has been any satisfactory theory of "evolutionary" relationships even with other Buddhist traditions across Asia that might fit into a larger scheme of comparative civilizations. Oddly too, rather than trying to account better for the various features that hint at that inconsistent but unmistakable "protestant" or (proto-) modern sensation experienced in the case of Shin, more attraction has typically been found in the quest to revise or debunk exaggerated apologetic claims for the modernity of Shin.[28] So, from this perspective, Shin Buddhism remains still five hundred years after

"first contact" a conceptually "stranded" religious tradition. This persistent lack of a more useful historical conceptual framework in which to situate Shin certainly must be one of the factors in the well-known blurriness or effacement of its image.

Clearly what is needed is a robust positive theory about what happened in Shin Buddhism that might tie it to a larger, possibly developmental, modernizing, comparative view of world history. Is there not something that links together facts such as Japan's progressive civilizational history, Shin's large role, and Shinran's distinctive *tariki* emphasis that distinguished it from earlier Buddhist doctrines? Can it make sense that there was really a radical disconnect between Shin Buddhism and the overall protomodern/modern character of Japanese culture that is universally accepted? Or have historians, whether Japanese or non-Japanese, simply not quite succeeded in delivering a comprehensive theory about why Shinran emerged and why his ideas were as successful in the long run in Japan as they were? To address such questions, Shinran needs to be placed in some broad picture involving both Buddhist history and (on an even larger scale) the development of *mentalités* in Asia and the world overall. In short, it needs an adequate meta-theoretical handle developed out of some wider-ranging etic perspective.

However, it is not easy to handle Shin from the standpoint of modernization theory. To begin with, modernization is inherently a vast, fluid, and politicized field of concerns, difficult even when the examination is confined to the European context (or perhaps any world context at all). Many important themes in standard modernization theory do not apply directly to historical Shin Buddhism per se, for example debates on the existence of "civil society" in China past or present, or current discourses about secularization and religious globalization. Contemporary political science or anthropological issues often do not retroject themselves to the past even if the topic is long-term world-systems. And as already suggested, "Protestant" has never really been a standard category of comparison, and even in the Christian/European setting it is often missing a common higher-level meta-theoretical interpretation. Its understanding is confined to Christian theological language, rather than seeking to evaluate what "protestant" might mean in the context of what is happening to the whole "cultural information system" in some more generalized way. Most importantly, treatment of Shin history to date lacks enough ambitious academic

precedents of the right kind. Shin simply has not been worked into large-scale historical narratives adequately, neither inside nor outside Japan. It has been so successfully kept off the historical stage by the variety of interpretations just discussed that it has been unavailable to, or almost totally ignored by, recent generalists who deal with world-systems and global comparativism. This is in rather sharp contrast with the boldness of Weber.

Against such obstacles this article will sketch an argument that two aspects of contemporary comparative theory operating in the areas of modernization and culture may enable a viable interpretation of Shin that is more fundamentally satisfactory. The first, more preparatory aspect will refer to the historiographical critiques and reorientations that have enabled the current consciousness of world-systems and multiple modernities that is widespread among social scientists. The second, more substantial aspect will refer to the historical anthropology of literacy (especially as represented by Walter Ong) that may enable the establishment of comparative perspectives on the complexity of knowledge regimes.

WORLD HISTORY HAS BEEN REORIENTED

Although in general the study of Shin Buddhism appears to remain gloriously unfazed by it, in the last forty years the world historiographical landscape has vastly changed because of major shifts of imaginative approach. These shifts operate under several different discourse rubrics: world-systems (especially for economics), multiple modernities (especially for sociologists), anti-Eurocentrism and postcolonialism (for polemicists), and horizontally integrated macrohistory (for some cultural historians). Each of these can be succinctly noted.

The world-systems approach originally investigated the sources of European economic advantage in the last few centuries—the problem that French historian Fernand Braudel famously characterized as the "Gordian knot of world history."[29] From the nineteenth century onwards, and monumentally engaged by Max Weber, there has been a vast interest in explaining why some countries compete more successfully than others. In that context a key challenge has become how to understand a long-term historical global landscape characterized by wide-ranging cross-boundary trade. The recognition that Europe has been (was?) (temporarily) superior only in recent centuries has had an extensive effect on de-centering Europe in images of world history. The

best known exponents of this movement have included historians such as Janet Abu-Lughod, Emmanuel Wallerstein, Andre Gunder Frank, Kenneth Pomerantz and others.[30] To offer a few examples, the famous series by Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century* incorporated this influence, focusing on European data but making gestures towards the non-European world as well. Braudel saw basic economic activity the world over as similar because it arises from efforts to solve similar elementary problems. Felipe Fernández-Armesto's popular *Millennium: A History of the Last Thousand Years*[31] consciously decentered Europe, presenting its period of historical advantage as temporary, possibly based on the adventitious "Atlantic centuries" when Europe (whether or not it had some preexisting cultural advantages) could exploit an unequal interaction with the Western Hemisphere. Similarly, such a rising "systems" orientation caused the prominent historian William H. McNeill to reorient some of his earlier interpretations in *The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye View of Human History*.[32]

Japan has occupied a large place in this debate. On one hand, a school of historical analysis has existed in postwar Japan that developed an independent theory of a world-system of capitalism (which actually preceded and anticipated Wallerstein et al.). This school pursued a world history of "urban everyday life" and a global "relational history."[33] On the other hand, even though the dominant world historiography was long Eurocentric, from any point of view Japan has long been recognized as having some kind of special position in the world evolution of capitalism and economic success. John Powelson, for example, summarized a view that there were certain special, and crucial, parallels between northwest Europe and Japan. According to Powelson, in each of these regions power was relatively flexibly dispersed among negotiating economic actors who could achieve a productive balance without being oppressed or controlled by a top-down sovereign power ("a free market in institutions"). The Japanese case was marked by factors such as pluralism in early agriculture, relative diffusion of early political power, acts of power leverage by peasants and merchants, a history of practices of compromise, peasant rebellions, corporate guilds, wage labor, money, banking and credit, strong technical traditions, and entrepreneurship.[34]

Along with such world-systems history there has developed the multiple modernities discourse, which occurs especially in the context of contemporary economic development theory. This accepts

some notion of global modernity at the same time that it questions the notion that any single type of modernization can be or will be the end point of transitions out of premodern social conditions. This discourse often accepts that the origins of "modernity" as a concept may indeed be European, and that formerly it was arguable that modernity was an ideology of nineteenth-century European social science. At the same time, however, modernity at present is a world-wide if highly varied sociopolitical conversation that is concerned with both unity and diversity. According to this approach, various general (but variable) patterns of "modernity" can be neutrally observed, such as religious-secular separation, legalization of society, urbanization, philosophical treatments of society, and so on.[35] Such a conception of multiple modernities has produced among other things an important contemporary discussion of what is happening to religions under the impact of globalization and how it ought to affect research on religion.[36]

The reconfigurations of the historiographical landscape associated with the above are naturally associated with a powerfully ratcheted-up critique of Eurocentrism, which is prominently represented (to take a single leading example) by the works of the historical anthropologist Jack Goody. In several books Goody takes up specific themes or cases in which Eurocentric claims about historical dominance or priority or superiority over Asia should be undermined. His examples include rationality in mental processes; bookkeeping and accounting; the success of the medieval and early colonial Indian economy; the relationship of competitiveness and family structures; or notions of individualism.[37] In *The Theft of History* Goody has extended his overview to various non-economic cultural behaviors where Eurocentrism has promoted negative biases in the empirical recognition of non-Western traditions. The distortion of empirical facts created by Eurocentrism he describes as a series of "thefts" of conceptual control or attention, imposing Eurocentric interpretive dominance. Such unduly manipulated realms of discourse include conceptions of time and space; the invention of classical Mediterranean Antiquity as the prime source of human progress; overemphasis on European feudalism as a developmental stage; the pejorative fiction of "Asian despotism"; a Eurocentric view of the world evolution of science, technology, and information systems; "civilization" as a European monopoly; historical emergence of capitalism as centering on Europe (the most important of these developmental debates for historians); universities in history; and

even values such as humanism, democracy, individualism, emotionality (including love), and progress.[38] Polemics against Eurocentrism of course have been influential for decades. When the historian Ricardo Duchesne from the pro-Eurocentrism side pushed back against Asiacentric revisionism gone to excess, he still noted that as early as the 1970s prominent historians such as McNeill were already in the process of giving up overt Eurocentric interpretation, by borrowing from anthropology and adopting interactive systems views of long term civilizational changes.[39] In schools this reorientation has gone under the rubric "World History" and at times has been part of a contest between the newer teaching of World History versus the older teaching of Western Civilization.

Anti-Eurocentrism is further linked to the broad academic discourse of postcolonialism, which is full of revisionist implications about perceptions of culture in general. To cite Arif Dirlik, a contemporary sociologist of modernization:

> The postcolonial understanding of culture is deconstructive and historicizing. Moreover, postcolonial insistence on understanding modernity in terms of relationships is an important antidote to the mutually distancing implications of [essentialist] culturalist understandings of modernity. This requires, however, that postcolonial criticism should overcome anxieties about totalities, and return analysis to the systemic understandings of difference in which postcolonial criticism has its origins. A postcolonial criticism that wallows in identity politics merely feeds into the culturalism (and political conservatism) of contemporary understandings of modernity. Reconceptualizing modernity as global modernity may help overcome some of these problems in allowing recognition of the dialectics of modernity in its globalization. Global modernity bears upon it the mark of European origins in its formulation (as must any reference to modernity). On the other hand, it is also less bound to those origins than such concepts as postmodernity or globalization.
>
> . . . the concept of "global modernity" (in the singular) [is] a way to understand the contemporary world. It suggests that the concept helps overcome the teleology implicit in a term such as globalization, while it also recognizes global difference and conflict, which are as much characteristics of the contemporary world as tendencies toward unity and homogenization. These differences, and the appearance of "alternative" or "multiple" modernities, it suggests, are expressions, and articulations, of the contradictions of modernity which are now universalized across, as well as within, societies.[40]

Such innovations and displacements encourage historians to look towards the question of "horizontally integrative macrohistory"[41] expressed in terms of cultural as well as economic development. This means that historians must pay attention to global cultural "trade systems" and flows, along with instances of parallel evolution. Representatives of such trends in cultural studies are scholars such as Goody and Victor Lieberman. The latter, taking up the standard question, "Why was Asia different? Why was Europe exceptional?" suggests that the (European) categories normally chosen for the inquiry pregovern the conclusions possible. He argues that non-Eurocentric criteria for revisionism are needed instead. In this context, he specifically does not just want to simply shift Japan from one polarized side of the inquiry to the other, i.e., merely to move Japan to the "European" side in a binary Europe vs. Asia conceptual structure.[42]

Lieberman proposes that there existed ca. 1450–1830 a broad Eurasian pattern of localized societies coalescing into larger units in various ways that were idiosyncratic but still comparable. He calls these combinings "roughly synchronized political rhythms."[43] Lieberman points out how they involve features such as territorial consolidation, administrative centralization, social regulation, and inconsistent, irregular cultural integration. The dynamics of such rhythms included economic growth, especially under conditions of fragmented power, monetization, mobility, and literacy, as well as military competition and state direction. The de facto outcome was recognizably synchronized chronologies across Eurasia, although no overarching teleology should be imputed to the patterns.[44] Similar arguments are made for example by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who wants to emphasize the interfaces among the local, regional, and super-regional dimensions of societies.[45]

Such above sorts of history, then, as well as additional discourses such as the anthropology of cultural flows, point to horizontal world-system perspectives not only for economics and technology but also for cultural information systems. They especially point to literacy and information regimes as will be noted below. As summarized by one historian, the challenge is to achieve a postcolonial world history that is non-Marxist, non-Eurocentric, and "ecumenical."[46]

THE REORIENTATION OF HISTORY INVITES
NEW APPROACHES TO JAPANESE BUDDHISM

However, does all this movement in thinking about world history really have anything to do with Shin Buddhism? Many of the discussions referenced above may seem completely tangential, for a number of reasons. First, like most other such comparative cultural revisionist studies to date, Goody's work, for example, has only a smattering of references to Japan. Second, in the course of asking why some countries are rich while others remain poor, or why our historical perception of economics may be so distorted and one-sided, contemporary postcolonial developmental/modernization theory may draw out characteristics of Japan without casting light directly on religion or Buddhism. This is the case, for example, with Powelson or Jones. In general the world-system thinking that focuses heavily on economics and anti-Eurocentrism has not so far penetrated very deeply into the details of Japanese cultural history. Third, to find the "theft of history" theme in religion one must go to the tradition of writers such as Tomoko Masuzawa, Timothy Fitzgerald, Russell McCutcheon, and perhaps before that Jonathan Z. Smith, who have pointed out the role of Christian conceptual dominance in the construction of the discipline of religious studies. These authors, however, still operate from within the framework of that dominance, and do not consider Buddhist perspectives as a serious alternative. Fourth, Japan has not been a main victim of historiographical discrimination. Eurocentrism and orientalism have only been partially applied to Japan. This is because in various economic and political dimensions Japan has not always been perceived orientalistically by Europe, but also as a serious roughly-equal coexisting power.[47] In the final analysis, then, in a manner replete with ironies, Shin Buddhism has simply resided at the margins. For the purposes of all the broad-ranging comparativists of the type cited here, Shin Buddhism has remained so obscure that it is not worked into the arguments in any form. In contrast to Goody's "theft of history," Shin history and ideas were never even stolen!

Nevertheless, these various lines of discourse—world-systems, multiple modernities, anti-Eurocentrism, postcolonialism, or horizontally integrated macrohistory—create an altered atmosphere of expectation or conjecture. This has opened the way to fresh imaginings about comparative cultural history. Global history suggests that societies (starting with economics but extending to culture) are likely

to be synchronically, "horizontally" connected over wide areas and periods. Multiple modernities encourages decentering, ambiguity, and the notion that there are many possible paths to complex development. Postcolonialism, Eurasianism, and anti-Eurocentrism warn against automatically privileging the West, while serving to reinforce one's expectations about the possible sophistication (both globally influenced, and indigenously invented) of all kinds of Japanese culture. Currently such an altered atmosphere can be seen in the work of the historians of Japan who have been most alert to the problems indicated by the call for a "horizontally integrated macrohistory" involving cultural questions. A recent example for Japan is the work of Elizabeth Berry; she does not focus on religion, but has raised intricate questions about the nature of the Tokugawa period's "information regime."[48]

In brief, then, the argument that Shin Buddhism should be more present in a broad picture of world modernization ensues from the following:

- Europe has become decentralized in perceptions of world history for a long time already; the decentralization extends to culture.
- Due to interconnections and parallelisms in development (including both trade and culture) there are good reasons to expect and look for synchronic similarities across regions.
- Japan has always been recognized as an exceptional "quasi-European" case.
- Shin was one of the major cultural phenomena of premodern Japan.

ONG'S INTERIORIZATION THESIS OF LITERACY, WITH INTEGRATED MACROHISTORY IN THE BACKGROUND

To argue this is not to say that the West's time of intellectual dominance is over, that the new century will belong to Asia and to Asian scholars who will transform the social sciences, calling attention to societies too little studied in the past. It is to say something more significant and less controversial: that the social scientific studies of the future are likely to take into greater account societies and religions, traditions and practices still too little known today, concealed from the West by many factors, not least the general unfamiliarity with the languages of the Asian world of yesterday (and today).[49]

Recent world history opens up to us the potential for a historical anthropology of Shin Buddhism that elucidates much deeper macro-historical integrative links to the evolution of global civilization than have been exploited so far. The basic perspective on this question proposed here derives from facets of the literacy thesis[50] on the complexity of information regimes. The most relevant basic set of such notions comes from literary scholar Walter Ong, especially in his classic work *Orality and Literacy*.[51] Ong had a great deal to say about the interrelation of the two modes of communication, orality and literacy. What we will concentrate on here, which is of greatest interest in the context of Shin, is the idea of a transition to an increased "interiorization" of consciousness spurred by literacy.[52]

Noting that literacy was a late phenomenon of human history that reshaped consciousness in significant ways, Ong attempts to specify how it differed from the earlier history of strictly oral communication. According to his famous thesis, writing restructures consciousness. This occurs because it invents a new world of autonomous discourse, i.e., one detached from concrete social settings of oral communication, in the process becoming "utterly invaluable and indeed essential for the realization of fuller, interior human potentials."[53] Writing starts by being regarded as an instrument of secret and magic power, but as it heightens consciousness and furthers interior transformation, it eventually abstracts and sharpens a kind of precision and analysis. Thus "writing makes possible increasingly articulate introspectivity, opening the psyche as never before not only to the external objective world quite distinct from itself but also to the interior self against whom the objective world is set." The reflectiveness of writing "encourages growth of consciousness out of the unconscious."[54] "Writing and reading . . . are solo activities. . . . They engage the psyche in strenuous, interiorized, individualized thought of a sort inaccessible to oral folk. In the private worlds they generate, the feeling for the 'round' human character is born—deeply interiorized in motivation, powered mysteriously, but consistently, from within."[55] Writing allows intertextuality.[56] As human consciousness has evolved through writing and dependency on writing it has made an "inward turn."[57] In summary, the literate mind is more analytical, innovative, objective, logical, and abstractive. In the case of Europe, all these tendencies existed before print, but print greatly accelerated them.[58]

The general thesis that literacy causes significant changes in cognition is widely accepted by scholars. For the purpose of emphasizing the specific point about a shift to psychological interiorization, Ong's articulation is the most usefully explicit. However, literacy also has been a longtime focus in the research of anthropologist Jack Goody. In Goody's analyses, writing is conducive to formalization and logic; it supports complex law and bureaucracy; it greatly affects religion by decontextualizing, universalizing, and de-ethnicizing, and it is conducive to individualism and particularism of experience. At the same time it reduces tolerance for variation (oral religion is much more flexible), so that change in written culture tends to come about by conflicted reform rather than by incremental adaptation. In Europe (where there existed a strong association between the Reformation and printing) printing had the effects of fixing texts, reinforcing authorial identity, undercutting parochialism, cultivating systematization and indexing, and encouraging science.[59]

The specialness of the case of Europe always needs to be highlighted in such discussions because there the relatively abrupt advent of printing is widely regarded as having a quick, radical effect on consciousness. In the famous evaluation by Elizabeth Eisenstein,[60] print culture had some specific cognitive qualities that altered methods of data collection, storage and retrieval of information, and communications networks. In its wake the dissemination of information was greatly accelerated, leading to an explosion in the generation and accumulation of knowledge (especially in science). Its other influences on knowledge included standardization and replicability, reorganization of information (rationalization, codifying, cataloging), improvements and corrections to editions and sources of data, enhanced preservation and fixity of information allowing for accumulative comparison and change, and amplification and reinforcement of established categories. Crucially, under the heading of movement towards modern forms of consciousness, somehow the new era of printing was associated with an enhancement of individual subjectivity, self-definition, and self-expression. All were associated with phenomena such as the production of an abundance of self-help books and practical guidebooks.[61]

In Europe, in the case of religion, printing "reset" the entire stage for the Reformation. Luther's movement (starting with the "Ninety-Five Theses") exploded because Protestant interests were able to use printing as a mass medium against the established church. Christian

dissent had existed long before but print gave it a greater and more indelible reach over a much larger area. Print had major impacts on the Roman Church too, especially in terms of standardizing and disseminating its own materials in response (sermons, hagiography, pedagogy). On all sides printing accelerated textual study of the Bible and of course dispersed the actual text of the Bible, including (especially on the Protestant side) versions in the vernacular. Protestant doctrines created a pressure for reading. Meanwhile, of course, the effect of dissemination was also splintering and differentiation.[62]

The literacy approach has been applied in detail to the evolution of Christianity in Europe. The notion of a psychological shift away from the material to the inward and spiritual is fairly common in European Christian studies along with reflections on the impact of literacy and printing. Donna Ellington[63] argues for example that both Catholic and Protestant traditions changed in the wake of the Reformation. The sermon literature on the Virgin Mary demonstrates a broad shift from emphasizing the body to emphasizing the soul, as well as from the material and concrete to the inner life of individuals. Those trends were directly connected with literacy and literate modes of thought developing in the sixteenth century. In that period occurred a transition from oral-dominated to more literacy-influenced modes of communication and consciousness (although Europe still remained a world of complex interactions between written and oral). Further directly related was a growing private sense of self (though at least in this European Christian case, this self was also a result of increased demands by church and state for conformity and codes of control). In religion preaching had an inherent communal aspect, but the written word at the same time inherently tended to individualize and privatize communications. In the case of Mary, from a starting place in the earlier bodily, concrete sacramental nature of Mary worship, there was a shift to seeing Her as one's very personal deity. In Marianism, if orality and sound were associated with physical closeness, text was associated more with sight and distance. Mary's starting roles as intercessor and mediatrix and food giver stood on the physical side, but post-Tridentine Catholicism would emphasize Mary's self-controlled, private, enclosed, contemplative, passive side. Thus when later Catholic tradition (influenced by Loyola and Jesuit teaching) defended Mary, it was a changed Mary of high self-awareness and interior piety, emphasizing the superiority of Mary's soul over her body and her spiritual

motherhood. "Catholic preachers, therefore, appropriated the same personal, inward piety that so influenced the Protestant movement. . . . Catholic religious practice and understanding underwent a transformation which had begun by the latter part of the fifteenth century and continued through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This transformation involved the cultivation of a more individualized and interiorized understanding of Christianity that ultimately left no aspect of piety untouched.[64]

Continuing with the case of Europe (where almost all the scholarly research and reflection on this problem has been concentrated), and going beyond literacy in the narrowest senses, it is also well understood that other broad aspects of that continent's changing informational and civilizational circumstances led to an advancing psychological interiority. Specifically this refers to the gradual onset of decentralized social and economic politics favored individualization, differentiation, and complexity in inner mental life. Such observations are commonplace in the description of European history, and have been additionally explored by means of the concepts of public and private.[65] The genre of "private life" research is concerned with the history of differentiation in society and consciousness. Its approach is multidisciplinary, covering fields ranging from political theory to religion to printing to literature. According to these studies, a key marker of the arrival of greater public-private differentiation is the expansion of print and publication along with literacy, resulting in the "increasingly private devolution" of information. In general, "private life" questions are not about overt political theory or governance; they are questions about domestic housing design, codes of personal behavior, education of children, clothing, refuges of intimacy such as gardens, gift exchanges, property and property rights, male-female relations, marriage, sexuality, parent-child relations, family relations, childhood, canons of aesthetic taste including food, crime, festival life, literature and its practices (diaries, family records), friendship, neighborship, kinship, sensibility about the body, voluntary associations, death ritual, and above all conceptions of selfhood.[66]

In Europe it has been obvious that certain thinkers will anticipate such developments in complexity that will take very long periods of time to fully manifest themselves (e.g., Aristotle's ideas on politics, or Augustine's on personal interiority in Christianity). And (just as the orality-literacy theorists stress in the case of the growth of literacy)

the public-private, differentiation approach is not any simplistic evolutionary or modernization theory, especially of a linear type. Rather, the question aims to reveal carefully qualified, gradual, multidimensional processes that extend over long periods of time. Nor should any "history of private life" be confused with the "constitution of the individual as subject" in any strict philosophical, political, or psychological sense, or with any libertarian caricature of individualism.

When we come to the context of religion, then, at its broadest the category of "private" is thus not about Near Eastern monotheistic theology, but instead it is about complexity per se. Therefore a "protestant" shift, to the extent that we can speak of one, is not towards any crude "individualism" so much as a gradual, long-term movement in sensitive balances between single self and community. In other words, there occur complex transitions of explicitness in the dialectical formation of the spheres of state and local, individual and communal, or household and village. The Reformation promoted "secularization" by an "explicitation" that purified religion by separating it out from its cultural matrix, a process that gradually focused on the individual, especially as clan patriarchalism was undermined.[67] In sum, in Europe "Protestantism" is at the meta-level not a matter of Christian theology, it is a question of altered information structures.

THE CONCEPT OF A "LONG REFORMATION"

One further point should be particularly underlined. The scholars of the above literacy and privatization theses emphasize that the changes in consciousness they point to were not deterministic, were inconsistent, and took a long time to result in gradual effects on the societies in question. In this context of the long view, recent scholarship on the European Reformation emphasizes broad similarities between Protestantism and the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Such similarities include the importance of attending to the practical effects of reform ideas (effects going beyond theological abstraction), changes in ritual practice, the very lengthy implementation of reform, the ongoing dialectics between popular and reform religion, and the difficulty of ever even evaluating the "success" of the Reformation.[68] In Europe the relation between local folk religions and official Christianities remained inconclusive for centuries, so much so that one line of argument holds that European common people were not truly Christian prior to the Reformation (with doubts persisting after as well) and

that their religion was just a paganism and magic with a veneer of Christianity. Moreover, regarding the success problem, some historians have remained skeptical that even the Reformation ever became fully successful in effecting fundamental or revolutionary change and that popular piety never came close to meeting the high goals of the reformers.[69]

BACKGROUNDS OF THE SHIN CASE:
LITERACY AND BUDDHISM, BOOKS AND JAPAN

The dominant global scholarship on the above problems has addressed Buddhism only in relatively tangential ways, but a certain amount of relevant thought is available. Regarding literacy, Buddhism as an organized tradition was in the estimation of most scholars surely the product of writing. According to the survey of Daniel Veidlinger,[70] media of communication have always been important in Buddhism and have always presented a key issue for the monastic tradition, since the Pāli canon, including the *Vinaya*, was transmitted orally for about four hundred years. Writing was known in the time of Asoka, but was not used at that point to record Buddhist texts. Thereafter, however, the use of books evolved and created a distinct literate cultural life within Buddhism. Here the effects included loss of control over information and the development of varied uses for manuscripts, including both cultic uses (as ritual objects) and discursive uses (as words actually read for content). Because information stored as writing may reach people through secondary orality, oral and written modes continued to flow back and forth into each other. Buddhist chronicles from Southeast Asia suggest a creeping development from strictly oral transmission to more and more literacy over time. There is evidence for traditional convictions among Buddhists about the use of memorization as a way to deeply infuse knowledge in the mind, despite awareness of the practical difficulty of keeping a memorizing tradition going without the security of a written format. Thus even after writing, traditions of oral textual transmission remained strong and writing did not displace orality. Thai chronicles suggest that writing was probably still overshadowed by orality at the time of Buddhism's transmission to northern Thailand. Occasionally some monks seem to have seen written books as challenges to their own authority and influence as key mediators of the Buddha, and thus the historical pattern is one of different competing monastic groups with different attitudes towards

written texts. Contemporary written texts have continued to have multiple purposes, such as satisfying donor desires for making merit, the creation of knowledge about Buddhism, and reading and studying in monastic education. In sum, different groups have long approached the written word differently and in relation to varied social and religious roles.[71]

Together with such broad perspectives on the blending of literacy and orality in "orthodox" monastic Buddhism in Asia, we also know a good deal about literacy and books in Japan—although not nearly as much as would be desirable for this topic. Following the masterful survey of Peter Kornicki,[72] it can first be observed overall that premodern Japan (at the same time that a rich oral life has always flourished) was essentially a bookish culture because of the tremendous influence of Buddhism and Confucianism. The bookishness reflected a complex internationalized East Asian cultural production that was not monocultural or monolingual.

A political aspect of this productivity in Japan was of great importance. Namely, aside from a brief episode in modern times (i.e., from the 1880s to 1945) no historical government ever seriously interfered with the transmission or production of books. The Tokugawa period in particular was a bookish culture with a substantial distance between a free-form world of commercial (and religious) publishing and the state. (Tokugawa supervision seems to have been negligible in comparison to other early modern states, with even little positive sponsorship of various types of canon formation.) Of course, modern critics have pointed out that printing and literacy do not per se lead to spread of power or growth of knowledge, but are always channeled by systems of authority. Kornicki remarks that "in pre-modern Japan language and hence literacy are inextricably tied to systems of state control and determine access to élite culture."[73] At the same time though, especially in the Tokugawa period, culture was nevertheless more and more rendered into the accessibility of print language. The complexity of the writing environment effectively blurred any simple binary distinction between literate and illiterate. Eventually the Tokugawa actually featured a "plurality of print languages each with their own demands, conventions and social and cultural boundaries" that were not directly correlated to a single educational or cultural hierarchy.[74]

As for religion in particular, within East Asian Buddhism many features long supported publishing. Such features included the absence of

antipathy towards the idea of printing sacred texts, which were not the word of God; the early use of printing as a major part of magical ritual; the practical need for visual contact with the texts, since they were Chinese translations that could not be made oral; and the political fact that no one group was in authority over the textual traditions. Printing before 1600 was dominated by Buddhist institutions and yet also not centralized, and Buddhism never monopolized the use of printing like Christianity did in Europe in the Middle Ages. In the Japanese publishing explosion of the early seventeenth century, the range of types of books became extremely wide. Buddhist books (along with Sinological classics et al.) were offered among the many products for the commercial market. The first book printed in Japanese *kana* rather than in Chinese had been a Pure Land Buddhist book, a collection of sayings of Hōnen (1321, the *Kurodani shōnin gotōroku*), and the continued production of such printed material was a feature of Pure Land throughout. The Tokugawa period's Buddhist printing has yet to be extensively studied, but it was clearly a substantial proportion of the output of commercial publishers in the seventeenth century. The noted Zen preacher Suzuki Shōsan (1579–1655) observed the great popularity of printed Buddhist books in his day, and lists of the Buddhist books always precede the rest of the listings in categorized seventeenth-century catalogues (in the oldest surviving such catalog, from the 1660s, the Buddhist books occupy the first 117 of the 266 pages). Among such catalogs, for Shin Buddhism there was for example a *Jōdo shinshū shōgyō mokuroku* (1752) and a *Shinshū kyōten shi* (1780), the latter a study guide that includes biographical information about the authors and short explanations of the contents. The Buddhist proportion of the market gradually declined towards the nineteenth century but remained significant at least in Kyoto, whose publishing activity in fact probably equaled that of Edo for much of the Tokugawa era.

It is clear that reading was still long tied to oral modes of communication and also that manuscripts long continued to coexist with print. The extent of active literacy, outside of Zen monasteries, in the whole Kamakura and Muromachi periods is blurry. However, literacy dramatically increased in the Tokugawa period, especially in connection with the rise of governmental record-keeping. The local schools known as *terakoya* dramatically increased in numbers, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century. Peasant literacy is difficult to gauge, but the existence of books such as Miyazaki Antei's agricultural

handbook *Nōgyō zenshō* (first published in 1697) suggests widespread functional ability. Literacy was higher in some regions than others, but it is well known that foreigners who visited Japan in the nineteenth century before 1868 were often surprised by the rate of literacy.[75]

European historians in the Eisenstein tradition observe that printing as a technical innovation had a strong and rapid impact on literacy in Europe. In Japan there was no such dramatic dividing line, but rather the evolution of the information system seems to have been more organic and gradual. The technical capacity by itself for printing did not kick off any information revolution. Also, blockprinted books retained the "calligraphic personality" of authors, in Kornicki's view reinforcing a general Tokugawa bias towards the particular rather than the universal in culture.[76]

WAS SHINRAN'S THOUGHT A PHENOMENON OF PRODIGIOUS "HYPERLITERACY?"

In any case, from such evidence the argument is strong that premodern Japan had a complex knowledge and information regime comparable to Europe's or China's during contemporaneous periods. It is also clear that from the prehistoric beginnings through the nineteenth century Buddhism was fully involved in that regime. While this picture is deeply suggestive from the standpoint of the Ong thesis, it does not obviously provide any conclusive etic explanation why it might be in Shinran's case—at a seemingly early point in the twelfth century[77]—that his thought evinced its well-known turn to marked interiority and autonomy.[78] Of course it is a truism that something seriously new was going on in Shinran when he manifested a certain conceptual transcendence of the varieties of Buddhism available to him in his time. Shinran's spiritual odyssey began with his departure from Mt. Hiei and its rich, multi-dimensional inherited traditions. A deeply rooted emic tradition of apologetics for this departure included Shinran's sense of personal spiritual powerlessness, the *jiriki* emphasis of Tendai tradition, disgust with power politics, the strains of celibacy, *mappō* pessimism, or a craving for social equality. (Alternatively, critics attribute it to a complete loss of grasp of principles of basic Buddhist orthodoxy!) An even more interesting follow-up question, however, is why Shinran was apparently also dissatisfied with the numerous other life options available in the Kamakura Buddhist world *after* he left Hiei. Since medieval Japanese Buddhism was apparently as loose, multi-stranded, and

multidimensional as the Buddhism in traditional Tibet[79] or in China, why did Shinran feel he had to make a radical break from *almost every choice* around him? In the medieval Japanese context, with all of its seeming options for Buddhist practice both inside and outside existing institutions, why did Shinran come up with a radical new substitutionary creative system? Perhaps standard explanations yield an underestimation of the extent to which, quite beyond sectarian apologetics, there really is an originality and unprecedented quality to Shinran, a quality even stronger than the sectarian tradition actually wants to admit.

The more robust explanation offered here requires etic attention to the macro-historical context. To start with, the existence of a long-running decentralized social politics that has favored differentiation and complexity in inner mental life (if not quite the same individualism as in European tradition) is now close to being commonplace in the evaluation of premodern Japanese history. Second, in the background of Shinran's cultural experience in Kamakura-period Japan surely was a contemporary expansion of literacy. The revival of systematic communications (including commercial trade) with China during its Sung-period flourishing, which was undertaken by the late Heian court under the influence of Taira interests, led to a renewed surge of intellectual activity. In China itself, the Sung was an exceptional period for both economics and scholarship, and many examples of Chinese book production made their way to Japan and stimulated Japanese printing and scholarship. The spread of literacy produced a proportionate spread of semi-literacy and the dissemination of information via secondary orality.[80]

From such a perspective, the arising of Shinran's ideas in Kamakura Japan can be seen in conjunction with the evolution of literacy and the associated experiential shifts that were beginning to force a new interiority on the educated inhabitants of late Heian Japan. Shinran's transformation was not random; it was a response to a new psychological, existential crisis that motivated, for example, the contemporary interest in the (surface) doctrine of *mappō*. In one obvious sense, the ideas of both Hōnen and Shinran (not to mention certain predecessors such as Genshin) were derived in an intensely textual manner. Technically speaking both men obtained their ideas about *nenbutsu* largely from books, that is, from their independent reading and appropriation of Buddhist literature, not from a received tradition of living

practice passed down from prior living teachers per se. And especially with Shinran we also further seem to see a profounder stage in the process of an evolving literacy in Japan. The early literate rationality (according to Ong's model) that overdraws and oversimplifies the complexity of experience, and perhaps even helps bring out the conscious self in the very initial stages, seems to proceed to a later literacy that needs to go back towards and into an unconscious. This later, evolved unconscious, however, is not the exterior, visionary one of the ancient shaman, but now one deepened and layered in a protomodern kind of interiority.[81]

The proposition thus advocated here is that Shinran and the later Shin tradition gradually and cumulatively, far from being "simplifications" of Buddhism, were products of literacy and all that is implied by literacy. Would it then not be meaningful to describe Shinran's thought as hyperliterate, reflecting Ong's conception of a literacy-generated complexity of mind in which some kind of "tipping point" was achieved initially in Shinran's experience? Again, needless to say, the conception that Shinran moved Buddhism in a more extremely interiorized direction has long been the "orthodox" interpretation of Shin texts.[82] It should be made explicit that this sort of approach is not reductionist—it is not to propose that Shinran's experience was some "mechanical" product of literacy—but rather that Shinran's thought was a sophisticated, synthetic response to a general sense of crisis brought about loss of a plausibility of earlier modes of Buddhism. That plausibility was lost due to underlying changes in the whole information regime of Japanese civilization.

The argument for an evolved interiority in the case of Shin is reinforced by how it was associated with additional expressions of interiority that gradually distinguished it to a meaningful extent in relation to other forms of Japanese Buddhism. These present quite obvious similarities to shifts in consciousness in early modern Europe of the kind evaluated by Ellington. One of these expressions was Shin's turn to the relatively nonvisual (in the sense of non-imagistic) in Buddhist communications. Famously, the most preferred representation of the teaching (the *honzon*) in Shin was not a sculpture or a picture, but the verbal phrase composed of Chinese characters *Namo Amida Butsu* (to take refuge in Amida Buddha).[83] Whatever the complex histories of literacy in other kinds of Buddhism, other traditions (at least in Mahāyāna) were actually more concretely imagistic than

Shin.[84] This phenomenon was reflected in the Shin sense that enlightenment would be an internal experience without specified external expression, i.e., without predetermined conceptions of what would be expressed in terms of the physical body. Shin's second tendency then was to internalize, abstract, and simplify ritual. A third related aspect of interiorization was Shin's famous turning away from polytheistic animism and magic in the larger religious environment in favor of concentrating on its own inward "devotional" perspective.[85] In the end Shinran's thought catalyzed (at least ideally) a whole combination of elements. These included the shift to (ultimate) involuntariness psychology; delegitimation of the conventional institutional model (based in *vinaya*); a template of a spiritually egalitarian community; an increase in subjective selfhood and a certain "political" autonomy of the individual; a rethinking of the traditional canon via literacy; an internalization of orientation; and a simplification and internalization of symbolic representation and communication.[86]

OUTLINING SHIN TRADITION OVER THE CENTURIES AS A "LONG REFORMATION" TOWARDS PERSONAL INTERIORITY IN AN EXCEPTIONALLY LITERATE SOCIETY

It must be granted that to a large extent the argument in the case of Shinran himself has to be theoretical and conjectural because of the paucity (outside of Shinran's own works) of corroborating historical data in the early stages. Shinran's move was highly prodigious, in the sense of being chronologically far ahead of the majority development of consciousness in the Japanese economy and society around him.[87] However, the later historical data also suggest that such a "big picture," macro-historical, etic interpretation, even if speculative for Shinran, is clearly sustained for the long-running Shin tradition that derived from Shinran's ideas. The argument is supported by those analogies with the patterns of literacy, complexification, and the public-private differentiation, which have been best studied in the case of Europe. The strangeness of overlooking such a complex, nuanced *longue durée* modernization narrative in the case of Shin—or indeed in the case of any kind of Asian Buddhism—is that such narratives are obvious to Western historians and sociologists in disciplines outside of religion.[88]

Of course the working out of various themes in Japan was significantly different than in Europe. Certain themes seem to be similar between the two regions. We might consider "protestant separation"

in religion and state; print culture; complex interplay between communal and individual dimensions of religious life; ambiguity in (patriarchal) family organization; the emergence of private property; or differentiating effects of elaborated market economies. On the other hand, numerous other themes were decidedly different. Missing in Japan were explicitly theorized discourses on political representation (this was hugely different in Europe, such that the absence of explicit democratizing theory in Japan before Meiji has been vastly misleading). The discourse on women and sexuality was much less obsessive in Japan. The aims of literary genres were different, especially the novel (the narration of private life had a much more prominent literary history in Europe).

Otherwise, however, picking up the hints from recent European scholarship suggests the following line of analysis. First, there is no problem with the notion that the basic ideas of Shinran could reflect serious cognitive reform, even if the innovations were in a sense far ahead of their time.[89] Second, in terms of broad expectations, it is a misconstruction to think that reform ideas did have or could have widespread immediate impact on the inner thinking of any large numbers of people. It has taken European scholars a while to adapt to the idea of modest evidence about long-term, subtle changes in practical religious mentality as a result of Reform thought. Similarly, it is going to take scholars of Japan and Shin Buddhism a while to adapt to the idea that Shin's most widespread impact occurred in the Tokugawa period, extending perhaps even into the twentieth century. Third, the Shin religious culture (or cultures) should not be oversimplified, for reasons of institutional apologetics, into an image of some frozen, standardized Shin orthodoxy set in a dichotomy against some putative eternal foundational essence of a uniform, "generic" Japanese religion. Some have described the pluralism of Japanese religion as a "buffet." Shinran's interiorized *tariki* Buddhism was always set against this buffet and needs to be reevaluated as a long-term, never perfected, hybridizing process of cultural persuasion. It was initiated, but no more than initiated, by Shinran and retained and continues to retain geographical, temporal, and intellectual variations.

Looked at the above way, using standard factual data from standard sources one can sketchily describe a capsule "*tariki* history" of Japan formulated in terms of a "long reformation" that falls into

a series of loose stages. Such a sketch possesses a plausibility going beyond conjecture.

(a) Responding to the pressures of a changing civilization, the elite-educated Shinran developed a *tariki* formulation of doctrine. It expressed a realization of a subconscious and a newly different individuation and internalization of Buddhism, accompanied by a de-emphasis on ritual and neutralization of precepts. In his writings, Shinran produced the idiosyncratic, hyperliterate *Kyōgyō shinshō* but also material (*wasan*) for new kind of general ritual use.

(b) However, there is no reason for his own lifetime and for perhaps several centuries afterwards to think that more than a handful of people ever understood Shinran's doctrine well. It was inconceivable for many to do so against the pervasive background of mixed *shinbutsu* and folk religion. Shinran's own son is understood to have misrepresented the teaching. At the same time, it was perhaps widely possible to pick up from Shinran's thought the more literal surface ideas of equality, nonmonasticism, and some kind of Pure Land birth. A little later, though both of the men seem to have understood the reform nature of Shinran's teaching, great-grandson Kakunyo was the staunch defender of original Shinranian difference but Zonkaku the great-great-grandson was the early promoter adapting and popularizing the ideas so that boundaries with other streams of Buddhism were blurred. The most successful temple centers in the early generations were Takada-ha and Bukkōji-ha. These have been considered, if the later Honganji position is taken as standard, as divergent interpretations that were somewhat off the mark of Shinran's austere core idea. Most significantly, during the first two hundred years, Shinran's ideas in any form reached an extremely small sector of the Japanese population.

(c) During the economic and political transformations beginning in the late fifteenth century, Rennyo was able to turn a corner by establishing a popular rhetoric that was ambiguous because his Pure Land interpretation could overlap with folk ancestralism. At the same time, Rennyo's language was yet still capable of conveying the more sophisticated Shinranian message and was also relatively sharply differentiated from most of the religious language and practice around it in Japan in the fifteenth century. Evidence about the inner intellectual circles of Shin is limited, but it appears that a high-level, if small-scale, intellectual tradition of reading and interpretation had been maintained. Plenty of ambiguities about the nature of the general audience

reception remain, but Rennyo's works began to be published by block-printing in the sixteenth century. (However, compared to Europe nothing so dramatic in terms of media revolution happened.) As membership jumped, Shin Buddhism became more unified around Honganji, but the political side of Shin teaching began to have unintended side effects in the form of the *ikkō-ikki* local political autonomy movements, in which the religious understanding per se remained highly unclear.

(d) Despite the *ikkō-ikki* activity and the politico-economic growth of the late sixteenth century, by 1600 still only a small fraction of the Japanese population, supporting only maybe two hundred or so well-established temples, was involved with Shin. However, the policy of the Tokugawa *bakufu* to require some temple membership of every resident of Japan (the *terauke* system), which was promulgated in conjunction with an intense spate of economic and population growth, led to a huge membership increase. By about 1700 the two Honganjis had about eight thousand well-established temples. Probably the religious understandings of the majority of new members remained as ambiguous as ever, as people joined temples for many reasons, not always including deep religious interest. Shin religious leadership was confronted with an enlarged challenge of getting members to hew to its official ideology of austerity and interiority, thus in a new context setting Shin teaching against the world of folk/vernacular religion that surrounded it.

(e) Incremental growth in membership continued during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but as the membership eventually settled down, Shin solidified and developed more and more as an intellectual tradition. Educated ministers became much more numerous and their training more systematic. By the mid- to late Tokugawa period the practice of replicating or rehearsing Shinran's hyperliteracy became the essential intellectual core of the ministers' education. As clerics, they subsequently tried to transmit to members as much of this orientation as they could. Meanwhile diffuse literacy and knowledge among the general public grew independently: in this new context Shin Buddhism acquired a close relationship with publishing. Regularized versions of Shinran's higher-level ideas began to be persistently delivered to a large cumulative audience. Perhaps a significant mass of Japanese members really began to catch up with Shinran's interiority ca. 1750–1850! Still, viewed locally, Shin culture was in some areas folkish, in other areas orthodox and austere. By 1850, Shin had

around ten thousand well-established temples that had built a subculture in Tokugawa Japan.

(f) The era of Meiji reform that was stimulated by Westernization and globalization considerably, perhaps fundamentally, recontextualized the Shin tradition. Goaded by modern Christianity and science, religious reformers received a new impetus in their ancient battle with Japanese folk religion and promoted a surge of purified, intellectualized Shin teaching. Such ambitions set up damaging tensions within the membership that persisted through the twentieth century. On the other hand, Shin leaders were walled in by modern political and cultural nationalism, leading to missteps such as dreadful World War II policies and reactionary intellectual isolationism that undercut the legitimacy of the tradition in the later twentieth century. In the postwar period another new set of circumstances existed, now involving accelerating general secularization of consciousness and/or postmodernist religious individualism in a society flooded with information. For the first time, the postwar period weakened the former cultural authority of Shin Buddhism *qua* traditional institution.

To recapitulate in conclusion the most important single point of such a summary: Shinran's conceptions in their "fully interiorized" form only influenced a large number of people gradually, inconsistently, incompletely, and over a long period of time. This sort of perspective on cultural history, of course, whether in Europe, Japan, or anywhere else, requires an incremental imagination and a long-range vision replete with nuance. It is not conducive to simplistic, caricatured, decontextualized, or short-term views of Shinran's ideas or the institutional tradition that more or less organized itself around them. This *longue durée* evolution accounts for the particular, not-fully-consistent mix of coexisting interpretations and cognitive styles that has marked Shin tradition up to the present.[90] Such an observation ought to be merely a truism that one would actually expect to be applicable to other forms of Buddhism or in fact to any complex religious tradition.

BRIEFEST OF CODAS

The kind of modeling that needs to be made about Japan and Japanese Buddhism has been better accomplished for European history. The history of the latter was unquestionably characterized by a rise in interiorized self-consciousness over the course of a long period of development. The intellectual discovery of the unconscious that we

think of as modern followed that rise as the self-awareness finally rose into conceptual view. According to one survey, from around 1750 a shift began in emphasis from static toward process concepts of experience, probably due to the growing intellectual influence of biology. Subsequently, the notion of unconscious mental processes became conceivable by 1700, topical by 1800, and effective by 1900, emerging as "an unavoidable inference from experience." Along the way, from various perspectives the rising unconscious mind was interpreted according to various orientations and vocabulary. It was treated by mystics as the link with God; by Romantics as the link between individual and universal powers; by early rationalists as a factor operating in memory, perception, and ideas; by post-Romantic thinkers as organic vitality expressed in will, imagination, and creation; by dissociated "self-conscious man" as a realm of darkness and violence; by physical scientists as some product of unknown physiological factors; by monistic thinkers as the prime mover, the source of both order and novelty; by Freud as inhibited memories ruled by the pleasure principle, usually forgotten or inaccessible; or by Jung as some pre-rational realm of collective myth and religious symbolisms. The point is that decades or even centuries before Freud, European thought had been saturated with reflections and speculations on the nature and existence of mental complexity, including the subconscious.[91]

If with more acute awareness and expectations we drill down again below the surface in premodern Japan, what we can certainly find there too is evidence of a gradually increasing literacy, differentiation, personal interiorization, and related consequences. These factors are the essential matter of Shin Buddhism at least in its true "Shinranian" modality, even if the Japanese record does not seem as rich in quite the same way as the European.

Shin Buddhism in Japan actually seems to be baffling to some not because its theory of knowledge is Christian, but rather because its implicit tendencies to psychological complexity departed to some extent from other, earlier kinds of Buddhism and were partly parallel in their evolution to developments particularly in the Euro-American sphere. How could this be misunderstood? Merely because it has not been expected in the case of Asian Buddhism. Yet in principle the operation of Buddhist teaching in a highly complex, differentiated, "modernizing" or "protomodernizing" society has to be somehow unlike its operation in early Indian tribal society, or a Southeast Asian caste

society, or a Chinese Confucian society—no matter what abstract theories of Buddhist philosophical interdependence or universality may exist in the background.

Of course, it may be asked skeptically, does a revised explanatory paradigm for Shin like that suggested above have any significant implications for the future reception of and engagement with Shin Buddhism outside of Japan? Probably not! To the mind of this researcher, one of the persistently intriguing things about the comparative problem in Shin Buddhism is why it has drawn so little interest from the scholarly community in general. Not to put too fine a point on it, *to not be interested in the "protestant" problem in explaining Shin Buddhism is approximately equivalent to not being interested in the broad topic of modernization—which is roughly the same as not being interested in the past three or four hundred years of systemic global history. And yet, is it an exaggeration to suspect that this peculiar disinterest may in fact be true of many Buddhologists and many historians of Japanese religions?*

Unfortunately, by too often dismissing the Shin tradition and failing to adequately pick up the hints offered from the very beginning of the encounter by the protestant analogies, modern Western Buddhist scholars have put themselves in a peculiar position. They have too far discounted a major form of Asian Buddhism that was of key importance in an Asian civilization and which displayed a level of complex differentiation in consciousness equal to that in the leading Western societies. It is most odd, but perhaps no non-Japanese outside of Japan has ever taken the Shin tradition quite as seriously as the Jesuits did four hundred years ago!

NOTES

1. Giambattista Vico, *La Scienza Nuova* (orig. pub. 1725); quoted from Leon Pompa, *The First New Science*, ed. Giambattista Vico (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57.

2. Janet Abu-Lughod, "The World-System Perspective in the Construction of Economic History," *History and Theory* 34, no. 2 (1995): 86.

3. Allessandro Valignano, *Historia*, 160–161; trans. in George Elison*, Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1973), 43.

4. Valignano, *Historia*, 161; trans. in Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, 43–44. For a discussion of Europeans and Shin during the Christian Century, see Galen Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida: History and Orientalism in the Study of Pure Land Buddhism*

(Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 44–49.

5. Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida*, 55–81, 123–140.

6. It should be specified that this analogy for Shin Buddhism goes on quite separately from a discourse about modern "Protestant" Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, which has been explored by authorities such as Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere in *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 216–217.

7. Elisabetta Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008).

8. Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida*.

9. A more recent study has further expanded the argument that the peculiar political circumstances of modern Shin have caused it to subordinate and distort its own self-understanding in order to meet the requirements of securing a modern Japanese identity for a modern Japanese audience (especially under conditions created by *early twentieth century* Western intellectual traditions). Galen Amstutz, "Kiyozawa in Concord: A Historian Looks Again at Shin Buddhism in America," *Eastern Buddhist* 41, no. 1 (2010).

10. The career of Weber in Japan has been tracked in the magisterial research work of Wolfgang Schwentker. See especially Wolfgang Schwentker, *Max Weber in Japan: Eine Untersuchung zur Wirkungsgeschichte 1905–1995* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998); and Wolfgang Shwentker, "The Spirit of Modernity: Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic* and Japanese Social Sciences," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 5, no. 1 (2005): 73–92.

11. Relevant passages have been translated into English several times. See Max Weber, *The Religion of India*, trans. and ed. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958), 278–279; Karl-Heinz Golzio, "Max Weber on Japan: The Role of the Government and the Buddhist Sects," in *Max Weber in Asian Studies*, ed. Andreas E. Buss (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 90–101; Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida*, 70–71.

12. The larger difficulty is of course that Weber's intention in the Protestant ethic thesis is itself a hugely problematic and controversial issue. The original argument was quite theological and entered the worlds of Lutheran, Calvinist, and some other streams of theology in considerable detail, the idea being that certain features of Calvinist thought—individualism, predestination and the sense of election, the necessity to express election (state of grace) through this-worldly profit-oriented economic activity, the consequent sense of calling modified from Luther's thought, and pervasive anxiety—gave capitalism a drivenness and hyper-rationalism that were unique among world traditions and helped account for Euro-America's world-beating economic aggressiveness. According to some scholars, probably that argument should always have

been seen as hypothetical, self-referential, and constructed, not as an actual historical explanation testable against facts. See Peter Breiner, "Weber's *The Protestant Ethic* as Hypothetical Narrative of Original Accumulation," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 5, no. 1 (2005): 11–30.

13. Naitō Kanji, "Shūkyō to keizai rinri—Jōdo shinshū to Ōmi shōnin" (Religion and Economic Ethics: Shinshū and the Ōmi Merchants), *Shakaigaku (Nihon shakaigaku nenpō),* 8 (1941): 243–286.

14. Schwentker, *Max Weber in Japan,* 168–172. Naitō (1916–?) was a somewhat obscure sociologist active in the 1950s mainly noted for a couple of books on history and sociology and Japanese society.

15. Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957).

16. Schwentker, *Max Weber in Japan*, 272–282. Atypically, Serikawa Hiromichi-Hakutsū, in *The Modernization of Japan and Her Religious Ethics: On Ohmi Merchants in the Early Modern (Edo) Period* (Tokyo: Taga-Shuppan, 1997), tried to make a case for Ōmi *shōnin* behavior as a type of early modern rationalization along Weberian lines, which is duly problematic, but the author helpfully listed fifteen categories of the merchants' economic/moral spirit: abstinence and diligence, spirit of social service, honesty, forbearance, spirit of harmony, stable growth, trade practices profiting both oneself and others, sound management, mathematical accuracy in business practice, quality control over goods, religious faith, consciousness of the ancestors and the public alike, responsibility to one's own business first, profit as blessing, and law-abidingness.

17. See Ogasawara Shin, *Kindaka to shūkyō—Makkusu Vēbā to Nihon* (Kyoto: Sekai shisōsha, 1994), 60–88. Empirical survey research by James A. Dator in the 1960s concluded about the essential religious question: "the strong cultural values of diligence, hard work, and the rest need not derive from anxiety or a sense of sin in the face of a transcendental referent" (James A. Dator, "The 'Protestant Ethic' in Japan," *Journal of Developing Areas* 1 [1966]: 23–40, cited in Schwentker, *Max Weber in Japan*, 37). Nevertheless, the relationship of Shin and economic activity is mixed up with larger questions about modernization in general. Ogasawara noted that Shin never really attained any dominant political weight in Japanese civilization so that it could be a primary explanation of modernization. Ogasawara concluded that there are elements of Shin that resemble the role played by Protestantism; however, Shin could not and did not play the central role played by Christian Reform in Europe; it did not grow enough to invade the core of the society and achieve the hegemony that Reform developed in Europe. (Nor was it strong enough, on the other hand, to obstruct modernization in any way.) Shin's Tokugawa inheritance was one of finding its own space inside the compartments of the Tokugawa system but not of any revolutionary threat to that enclosing system.

18. Shwentker, "The Spirit of Modernity," 75.

19. Galen Amstutz, "Notes on Shin Buddhism and Economic Growth in Pre-modern Japanese History: Can the Relationship Be 'Religiously' Interpreted?" *Shinshugaku: Journal of Studies in Shin Buddhism* 116 (2007): 1–40.

20. Galen Amstutz, "Shin Buddhism and Protestant Analogies with Christianity in the West," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 1 (1998): 724–747.

21. Galen Amstutz, "From Kyōdanshi to Internationalized Comparative Social History: An Example from Reading Peter Burke on 'Popular' Culture," *Shinshugaku: Journal of Studies in Shin Buddhism* 111–112 (2005): 1–11.

22. This may be compared with the defense of Christian Protestantism. Of course from the emic or internal point of view there exists a classical Shin interpretation of itself as the culminating product of a long, self-contained "Pure Land tradition" in which Shin doctrine stands as a *sui generis* (and superior and progressive, yet in many ways strangely ahistorical) form of Buddhist teaching that crowns Mahāyāna; that interpretation is well-known but is not comparative in the sense sought here.

23. E.g., Akira Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).

24. James C. Dobbins, "Envisioning Kamakura Buddhism," in *Re-Visioning "Kamakura" Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 24–42. The debates over Kamakura Buddhism might almost be understood as a reprise, in the context of Japan with Japanese scholars as contestants, of battles between Marxian and Weberian thought from Europe. Tomoko Yoshida has studied in detail how two major modes of interpretation derived from Europe—Weber via Robert Bellah, and Marx via Kuroda Toshio—have both rendered accounts of Shin Buddhism, but both have been problematic. Tomoko Yoshida, "Kuroda Toshio (1926–1993) on Jōdo Shinshū: Problems in Modern Historiography," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 33, no. 2 (2006): 379–412.

25. James C. Dobbins, *Letters of the Nun Eshinni: Images of Pure Land Buddhism in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).

26. Christoph Kleine, "Der 'protestantische Blick' auf Amida: Japanische Religionsgeschichte zwischen Orientalismus and Auto-Orientalismus?" in *Religion im Spiegelkabinett: Asiatische Religionsgeschichte im Spannungsfeld zwischen Orientalismus und Okzidentalismus*, ed. Peter Schalk (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2003), 145–193.

27. This has so far remained the case even when, along recent revisionist lines, the great civilizational importance of Buddhism in the Edo period is re-recognized. See Orion Klautau, "Against the Ghosts of Recent Past: Meiji Scholarship and the Discourse on Edo-Period Discourse on Edo-Period Buddhist Decadence," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 35, no. 2 (2008): 263–303.

28. E.g., in various works by Robert Morrell, James Ford, James Dobbins, George Tanabe, Ian Reader, and Clark Chilton.

29. Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century: Volume II: The Wheels of Commerce* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 134.

30. For a survey, see Jack Goody, *Capitalism and Modernity: The Great Debate* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004).

31. Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Millennium: A History of the Last Thousand Years* (New York: Scribner, 1995).

32. William H. McNeill, *The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye View of Human History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003).

33. Shigeru Akita, "World History and the Emergence of Global History in Japan," *Chinese Studies in History* 43, no. 3 (2010): 84–96.

34. John P. Powelson, *Centuries of Economic Endeavor: Parallel Paths in Japan and Europe and Their Contrast with the Third World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994). See also Eric Jones, *Growth Recurring: Economic Change in World History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

35. For such discussions, see for example Michael Woolcock, "The Next 10 Years in Development Studies: From Modernization to Multiple Modernities, in Theory and Practice," *European Journal of Development Research* 21 (2009): 4–9; Raymond L.M. Lee, "Reinventing Modernity: Reflexive Modernization vs Liquid Modernity vs Multiple Modernities," *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 3 (2006): 355–368; and Björn Wittrock, "Modernity: One, None, or Many? European Origins and Modernity as a Global Condition," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 31–60.

36. For example, Robert W. Hefner, "Multiple Modernities: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism in a Globalizing Age," *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1998): 83–104; Christian Smith, "Future Directions in the Sociology of Religion," *Social Forces* 86, no. 4 (2008): 1561–1589.

37. Jack Goody, *The East in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); interestingly, pp. 31–33 touch on the rationality of traditional Buddhist doctrinal discourse in Japan.

38. Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

39. Ricardo Duchesne, "The World Without Us," *Academic Questions* 22, no. 2 (2009): 138–176; and Ricardo Duchesne, "Asia First," *Journal of The Historical Society* 6, no. 1 (2006): 69–91.

40. Arif Dirlik, "Global Modernity? Modernity in an Age of Global Capitalism," *European Journal of Social Theory* 6, no. 3 (2003): 275–292; citations on 289, 275.

41. Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 255.

42. Victor Lieberman, "Transcending East-West Dichotomies: State and Culture Formation in Six Ostensibly Disparate Areas," in "The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400–1800," special issue, *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 486.

43. Ibid., 469.

44. Ibid., 463–546.

45. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," in "The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400–1800," special issue, *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–762.

46. Jerry H. Bentley, "Myths, Wagers, and Some Moral Implications of World History," *Journal of World History* 16, no. 1 (2005): 51–82.

47. One of the contradictions of Japanese studies is that viewed from the standpoint of economics or political science, Japan has never really been considered a "stranded tradition."

48. The Tokugawa saw certain kinds of integration (of information networks, the polity, markets, urbanization, transportation, education) but a multiplication of diversity too, resulting in a complex kind of social cohesion. A conclusion that pertains to Honganji is that a robust "public" sphere (neither negligible nor overwhelmingly strong, though not one aiming at serious political democracy) can coexist with an authoritarian state. Mary Elizabeth Berry, "Was Early Modern Japan Culturally Integrated?" in "The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400–1800," special issue, *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997); and Mary Elizabeth Berry, "Public Life in Authoritarian Japan," *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998): 133–165.

49. Shmuel Eisenstadt, Wolfgang Schluchter, and Björn Wittrock, preface to *Public Spheres & Collective Identities*, ed. Shmuel Eisenstadt, Wolfgang Schluchter, and Björn Wittrock (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001), ix.

50. This consideration of literacy does not focus on the intra-religious studies debate concerning the dialectical, complementary, interactive roles played by written vs. oral versions of religious language (William Graham *inter alia*). Clearly Shin along with other Buddhist traditions had such interplay, and in the case of Buddhism it was further salted by the idea of the two truths (any informational formation could be seen in terms of its false [static] dimension or its true [dynamic, inessential] dimension). Instead, the comparative historical issue here is that literacy allows the buildup of more complex, layered, networked, involuted worlds of human consciousness and cultural content.

51. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (orig. pub.

1982; repr., London: Routledge, 2002).

52. This topic is profoundly absent in Japan, where Ong is known but not cited, and of Goody's many books in relation to the literacy problem, only *Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) has ever been translated into Japanese (Goody's work on Eurocentrism is also almost completely unknown in Japan). Neither of these (according to informants) are ever cited in connection with Buddhism. There may well be a historical angle to the lack of interest: it was mainly in Europe that a self-conscious legacy of discourse about literacy existed; see Nicholas Hudson, *Writing and European Thought 1600-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

53. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 81.

54. Ibid., 145.

55. Ibid., 150.

56. Ibid., 131.

57. Ibid., 174–176.

58. For related lines of discussion see also Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Jack Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Jack Goody, *Domestication of the Savage Mind*; and Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

59. On both Ong and Goody, see the critical survey by Khosrow Jahandarie, *Spoken and Written Discourse: A Multi-Disciplinary Perspective* (Stamford, CN: Ablex, 1999); on Goody see 80–87 and 102–106. For other critical reviews see David R. Olsen and Michael Cole, eds., *Technology, Literacy, and the Evolution of Society: Implications of the Work of Jack Goody* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, 2006); and David R. Olson and Nancy Torrance, eds., *Literacy and Orality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). It should be stressed that the scholars of the literacy thesis are not hard-edged determinists about any effects of writing or printing; literacy is just one conditioning factor in a culture.

60. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

61. Ibid., 225–272.

62. Ibid., 43–159, 303–378. Eisenstein pointedly objects to how Weberian tradition has neglected the role of printing, i.e., the fundamental information

regime, in shaping the modernization changes with which it has been concerned; see 378–421.

63. Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

64. Ibid., 186, 243.

65. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, eds., *A History of Private Life*, 5 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987–1991); Roger Chartier, "Introduction: Forms of Privatization," in *A History of Private Life*, ed. Ariès and Duby, 3:163–165; and Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

66. See *passim* in Ariès and Duby, eds., *A History of Private Life*; e.g., Nicole Castan, "The Public and the Private," 3:403–445.

67. McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity*, 33–39, 54; Yves Castan, François Lebrun, and Roger Chartier, "The Two Reformations: Communal Devotion and Personal Piety," in *A History of Private Life*, ed. Ariès and Duby, 3:69–109 (the authors discuss the rebalanced private-communal relationship in European Christianity after the Reformation).

68. Jeffrey R. Watt, preface to *The Long Reformation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company), ix–xi.

69. Watt, introduction to *The Long Reformation,* 1–9. Such conceptual challenges suggest that just as the permanent foundational essence for the entirety of Japanese religion has been promoted as "Shintō," the permanent foundational essence for the *entirety* of European religion could equally well be promoted as *Druidism.* But how many apologists for Europe take that position seriously? Two main questions from this historiographical perspective that are especially relevant to Shin Buddhism in Japan are these: What actually happened with popular religion when reform ideas came on the scene? And, how and when can an episode of reform be accounted a "success?"

70. Daniel M. Veidlinger, *Spreading the Dharma: Writing, Orality and Textual Transmission in Buddhist Northern Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).

71. On textuality in premodern Theravāda, see also Anne M. Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-Century Lankan Monastic Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001). Theravāda Buddhism was dynamic and changed shape in the early modern period. The reformulation had to do with changing "textual communities" and new forms of commentary and education and emphasis that *both* lay and monks should engage texts (139–196, 202). Such eighteenth-century changes prefigured the later

nineteenth- to twentieth-century Theravāda reforms (although of course pre-modern Lankan Buddhism retained the monk-lay structure and also patronage and other earlier types of interactions with the king's government and aristocrats).

72. Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); see also William M. Bodiford, "The Medieval Period," in *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions*, ed. Paul L. Swanson and Clark Chilson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 163–183.

73. Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, 32. This observation may be somewhat misleading in the Shin Buddhist context, however.

74. Ibid., 33.

75. See also Richard Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

76. Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, 20–29.

77. However, this was contemporaneous across the world with the changes in Europe described by Stock in *The Implications of Literacy*.

78. And an intimately related problem is the following. Given due recognitions of the similarly rather complex evolutions of literacy at least in China and perhaps some spots in Southeast Asia, an obvious modernization question would be: Why did no Shinran-like Buddhist thinker emerge in China or Southeast Asia before the twentieth century? Other than reiterating that the long-term civilizational politics of Japan seem to have differed somewhat, in the manner that was abruptly revealed in the Meiji period, this article makes no attempt to address the question directly at present.

79. Georges B.J. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 38–41.

80. Paul M. Varley, *Japanese Culture*, 4th ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 83–84; Bodiford, "The Medieval Period."

81. Such a notion of interiority, implicitly recognizing an inaccessible subconscious, is highly compatible with certain emphases in contemporary cognitive science. At least for modern people, most brain activity is unconscious; influences on the subconscious from culture, individual experience, and genetics are extremely diverse, complex, and untransparent; over a period of time (probably quite long) unconscious patterning can be tweaked (but rarely more than tweaked) by what can be provisionally and ambiguously interpreted as "conscious volition." Yet even the "volitional will" springs forth from the subconscious. (Introductory presentations include Guy Claxton, *The Wayward Mind: An Intimate History of the Subconscious* [London: Abacus, 2005]; Tor Norretranders, *The User Illusion: Cutting Consciousness Down to Size* [New York: Penguin, 1997]; or Frank Tallis, *Hidden Minds: A History of the Unconscious*

[London: Profile, 2002].) Conventional or classic Buddhist thought was surprisingly limited in its recognition of anything resembling the (inaccessible) cognitive subconscious. The proposition that through meditation the subconscious can be comprehensively and directly known is a huge claim that is not supported by the findings of modern cognitive science. The interiority associated with literacy involves an increasingly rich human experience of consciousness linked to increasingly elaborated sociopolitical environments that yield more and more complexity "inside" the theater of individual minds (with less of the complexity expressed on the "outside"). For a longer argument see Galen Amstutz, "Shinran's 'Evolved Interiority' in Outline," in *Scholars of Buddhism in Japan: Buddhist Studies in the 21st Century: The Ninth Annual Symposium for Scholars Resident in Japan*, ed. James Baskind (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2009), 21–47.

82. Close reading of Shinran's texts is not the goal here, but it would seem that the time is ripe for considering the texts in terms of critical concepts such as intertextuality. Manuscript culture had already taken some intertextuality for granted, but Shinran pushed this to a new level for premodern Buddhist writing. Inasmuch as the context is Mahāyāna Buddhism and Mahāyāna text-centrism—no phonocentrism or logocentrism is necessarily involved, and Derridean deconstruction need not be applied—the ontological flavor of premodern Buddhist Pure Land thought in Japan at its best (when it entails a combination both of high literacy and emptiness sensibility) has no parallels in Europe or perhaps any other Asian country either.

83. Mark Blum, "Rennyo Shōnin, Manipulator of Icons," in *Rennyo and the Roots of Modern Japanese Buddhism*, ed. Mark L. Blum and Shin'ya Yasutomi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 109–134.

84. In contrast, for example, to all kinds of tantric traditions. On the visual see Malcolm David Eckel, *To See the Buddha: A Philosopher's Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); and David L. McMahan, *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahayana Buddhism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

85. For the probable European analogue here, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin, 1971).

86. That is, until the current twentieth- and twenty-first century phase of global Buddhist development, in which Shin-like ideas and institutions are being independently reinvented repeatedly.

87. A heuristic analogue on the Christian side might be the intense (but similarly culturally premature) interiority of Augustine, whose pioneering inwardness continued to be worked out gradually in Christian teaching for the next sixteen hundred years.

88. It appears again that the development of modern Japanese historical

thought (especially thought about religion) has inappropriately shut out an important slice of ideas from contemporary European method. Although a good number of Japanese scholars are interested in political theory and of course in Marxism through the twentieth century, the "private life" or "public-private" discourse seems to be little exploited; major works by Ariès and Duby or by Habermas have not been translated into Japanese and are practically unknown, except perhaps among historians of Europe. The idea of gradually emergent individuation is a basic assumption of Shin modernism and its (often ahistorical) studies of Shinran the founder, but is otherwise weak in inquiries into pre-Meiji Japanese religion. Historians who have constructed a narrative of Japanese religious history have ignored these wider, more abstract (sociological, systems theory) implications of the idea of a "protestant" species of religiosity existing in Japan.

89. As Stock and many other historians have shown for European Christianity, reform ideas developed inside the medieval church long before they blossomed as oppositional institutions and theologies during the Reformation.

90. For a view of how this polysemy works out in terms of one dimension of Shin "belief," see Galen Amstutz, "Steadied Ambiguity: The Afterlife in 'Popular' Shin Buddhism," in *Practicing the Afterlife: Perspectives from Japan*, ed. Susanne Formanek and William LaFleur (Wien: Verlag der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften / Beitraege zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, 2004), 137–160.

91. Lancelot Law Whyte, *The Unconscious before Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1960); citation, 64.