

The Problem of the True and the False in Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies: True Shin Buddhism and False Shin Buddhism¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

Issues Facing Shin Buddhist Studies Today

TODAY, IN THE EARLY STAGES of this new twenty-first century, the walls of our national borders are gradually starting to fall. As we cross over these national boundaries, we find ourselves entering an age in which people, cultures and religions will all have to engage in a broad range of interchange. It has been my experience that, in the midst of this situation, a growing number of persons from outside of Japan are taking interest in Japanese Buddhism, and particularly in Shin Buddhism. In this new age, Shin Buddhism must be able to open itself up even more widely to the world. In spite of that, however, the doctrinal study of Shin Buddhism today remains mired in a conservative traditionalism. As long as it remains that way, it will never be able to mesh fully with the aspirations of the people of the world. The world is looking toward Shin Buddhism with heart-felt expectations. Yet, as long as it fails to attempt to become modernized and globalized, all of those hopes will certainly end in disappointment. This is what I have been feeling quite keenly, as of late.

I would also like to ask this question of Shin Buddhism: Just what message does it have for contemporary society and how does it intend to respond to the myriad problems of today? Our twenty-first century scientific culture is now exposing a variety of contradictions within human life. Certainly, those aspects that fail to take account of the human intellect are being severely brought into question. In addition, an assortment of new themes have arisen, including bio-ethics and environmental ethics, as well as the problems of peace, human rights and other issues that are common to all humanity. In that sense, the present situation requires the involvement of religion within it. However, how on earth is Japanese Buddhism—and we must include Shin Buddhism here—going to be able to respond to

the truly perplexing problems of this new twenty-first century? If I might offer my frank opinion, it is very uncertain whether it will likely be able to do so. If Shin Buddhism is unable to say anything in regard to the new problems found in today's globalized society, then inevitably it will find itself abandoned not only by persons from outside of Japan, but also eventually by the Japanese people themselves.

Thus, Shin Buddhist Studies of today is directly faced with the problems of a new globalized society, and it is being asked how it will respond to them. More than anything else, I believe that Shin Buddhism of today and the future must cast off its traditional framework, which not only deviates from fundamental Buddhist principles, but also consists of convenient interpretations of them from institutional or sectarian levels. Shin Buddhism must be restored as a truly Buddhist school. As long as it fails to do so, it will be unable to respond to today's societal problems or to issues that are global or international in scope. A variety of recent experiences have convinced me of this.

Posing the Problem of the True and the False in Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies

Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies must clearly return to the fundamental purport of Shinran and to the true Buddhist teachings. However, prior to that Shin Buddhism must face the task of addressing the problem of what teachings it considers to be true and false. That is to say, we must be able to construct a clear theory for discerning and distinguishing "true Shin Buddhism" from "false Shin Buddhism." Shinran had earlier made critical classifications vis-à-vis traditional Buddhist teachings and other Japanese religions of his era, distinguishing between "true," "provisional" and "false" teachings. Today, the same kind of clear discernment of "true," "provisional," and "false" teachings must be made, in a way that accords with the actual situation that Shin Buddhism finds itself within. Since time will not permit me to take up this entire issue today, I will not touch upon the discussion of "true" versus "provisional" teachings. Instead, I would like simply to present a few of my thoughts regarding "true" versus "false" Shin Buddhism.

As we consider the problem of the true and the false in Shin Buddhism, what basic standard should we apply in order to distinguish between true Shin Buddhism and false Shin Buddhism? The first consideration should be whether or not Shin Buddhism is clearly grounded in the logic of the East, or, that is, in the logic of Mahayana Buddhism. Secondly, we must consider whether Shin Buddhism is being interpreted through the logic of the Primal Vow, as it is set forth in the *Muryōjūkyō* (the *Larger Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*), the fundamental Pure Land sutra. Third,

we must take up the question of whether or not it correctly comprehends the fundamental purport of Shinran himself. Any criteria or logic that falls outside of these three considerations ought to be excluded. Yet, these three points are not very clear in today's understanding of Shin Buddhism. What is evident instead is the blending of Shin Buddhist thought with sectarian and institutional ideologies. It is here that an array of problems exists.

Thus, a Shin Buddhism that correctly corresponds to the three theoretical points above is what we can call, "true Shin Buddhism." Any form of Shin Buddhism that contravenes those principles must be called, "false Shin Buddhism." It is not possible to avoid the fact that Shin Buddhism of today deviates in large part from those standards. I must firmly assert that, unless Shin Buddhism can return to its original state and take a correct stance with respect to these three principles, then, without question it will soon forfeit its societal and international position, and be reduced to just another Japanese folk religion.

It is from this context that I would like to discuss the contents of a theory of the true and false in Shin Buddhism. Although there are many ideas that I would like to take up along this line, time is limited, and so I will address the problem of the distinction between "true Shin Buddhism" and "false Shin Buddhism" from the perspective of three questions. They are:

1. Is Amida Buddha an Entity or a Symbol?
2. Is Shinjin in Shin Buddhism Non-dualistic or Dualistic?
3. Is Shin Buddhism a Religion of Power or a Religion of Path?

II. IS AMIDA BUDDHA AN ENTITY OR A SYMBOL?

The Formation of the Pure Land Teachings

I will first consider the question of whether Amida exists as a substantial entity, or a symbol. The conclusion that I will draw is that Amida Buddha exists as a symbol and that, as long as it is taken to be a substantial entity, there could be no "true Shin Buddhism."

Let us first take a brief look at the formation of the Pure Land Buddhist teachings. The notion of Amida Buddha can be identified with a stream of Mahayana Buddhist thought that arose around the first century of the Common Era—some five hundred years after the death of Śākyamuni Buddha. On this question there remain many unresolved issues from an academic standpoint, although scholarly research has made numerous recent advances in this area. Speaking only from my own understanding, it appears that after his death Śākyamuni's body was cremated by his

followers, who then divided the bones and ashes into eight parts and passed them on to other Buddhist followers. Stupas were then constructed to house the relics, which became the objects of Buddhist worship. With the passing of time, these stupas multiplied, and groups of Buddhist followers were formed, centering on such stupa worship. Undoubtedly, such groups must have included renunciant monks. In large part, however, the groups were made up of lay devotees, whose role it was to worship and maintain the stupas. Before long people began making pilgrimages to the stupas, and a belief system centered on stupa worship was born.

Gradually, within this current of beliefs and practices, a form of Śākyamuni worship came to be promoted. It was based on the notion that, although Śākyamuni Buddha left this world at the age of eighty, his life and the enlightened content of his life eternally continue to guide beings. As a result of this, the concrete human image of Śākyamuni eventually disappeared, and the idea of his new Buddha-body—Amida Buddha—was born. This then developed into the worship of Amida Buddha.

Amida Buddha is said to be the Buddha of immeasurable light (*Amitābha*) and immeasurable life (*Amitāyus*). The basis for this idea rests in ideas and expressions in praise of Śākyamuni Buddha's virtues found in stories about the Buddha's life. According to them, Śākyamuni might have passed on from this world, but his true life is immeasurable, and his teaching—his light—has unlimited reach. Hence, he continues to guide beings even now. The concepts extolling the eternal nature of Śākyamuni's life (his vertical axis) and the unlimited breadth of his light (his horizontal axis) eventually developed into the idea of a new and independent Buddha-body. We can see, for instance, that Śākyamuni's beginnings as a prince overlaps with the narrative of the *Larger Sutra*, in which the Bodhisattva Dharmākara is said to have originally been a king. Or, as another example, the *Larger Sutra* tells of fifty-three Buddhas that existed prior to Amida, starting with a Tathagata named "Dīpamkara," which is identical to the name of the Buddha said to have been Śākyamuni's teacher in the distant past. In this way, we can see that on many points the Amida narrative must have been based on the life story of Śākyamuni. It is quite evident that the idea of Amida Buddha arose as an extension and sublimation of Śākyamuni worship.

Amida Buddha as Symbol

In that sense, it is possible for us to say that Amida Buddha is a symbolic expression of both Śākyamuni Buddha's life and enlightenment, as clarified by Śākyamuni's teaching.

The word "symbol" contains a number of problems. However, I am now using it simply to refer to the use of analogy and other expressions in

the worldly dimension that use secular concepts to point to an ultimate, world-transcending truth. Ultimate truth or world-transcending existence is a reference to the content of the enlightenment realized by Śākyamuni and to the ultimate reality that he expounded. In Shin Buddhist terminology, it could also be said to refer to Amida Buddha's Primal Vow. This is the basic concept of the word "symbol."

A symbol represents a means or method of pointing to a world-transcending, ultimate truth. Accordingly, since a symbol must always be expressed in an analogical and worldly manner, at some point also it must necessarily be negated. This, then, is the fundamental meaning of the word "symbol." By negating worldly ideas even as it utilizes them, a symbol guides us to ultimacy, which transcends this world. Both "life" and "light" are worldly concepts. However, when both are expressed as "immeasurable," they then point to that which transcends this world. The word "life" basically refers to a life spanning from birth to death. However, when expressed as "immeasurable life," it could be said to transcend all worldly concepts. The phrase "immeasurable light" acts in the same way. Since the existence of "light" would illuminate the darkness, "unlimited light" would mean that no darkness could exist. That, however, would not be possible in this world. Here then is an attempt to talk about a world-transcending ultimacy by negating the worldly concept of "light," even while utilizing it.

In Nāgārjuna's *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* (*Commentary on the Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*)² we find the phrase, "Rely on the meaning, not on the words." Shinran cites this passage in the Chapter on Transformed Buddha-bodies and Lands of his *Kyōgyōshō monrui* (*True Teaching, Practice and Realization*).³ Here Nāgārjuna provides an easily understandable illustration involving the moon and a finger. Since we human beings always look downward when we walk, he says, we do not see the beautiful, brilliant moon in the heavens. Someone then taps us on the shoulder and, with his finger, indicates that we should look up at the beautiful moon in the sky. This is the so-called illustration of the "finger pointing to the moon."

Nāgārjuna explains that the finger represents "words," while the moon represents "meaning." "Meaning" here refers to true meaning, first principle, or true essence. As we have seen above, it corresponds to the life of Śākyamuni and the content of his enlightenment. In this illustration, ultimate truth is represented by the moon. Since we are not able to grasp this first principle directly, we are directed toward it by words and language—by the finger, or, symbol that points us toward the moon.

Nāgārjuna urges us not to mistake the finger for the moon. He tells us not to confound words and meaning, that is, not to mistake the secular words that are used to point to ultimate truth for that truth itself. We are able to see the moon because of the finger. However, we should not look at

the finger and think that it is the moon. This is the meaning of the phrase, "Rely on the meaning, not on the words." Here, the topic of our discussion is the significance of symbols. The Buddha-body called "Amida," that Buddha's Name, and all of the other words in the *Sutra* are all nothing more than "fingers." None of them constitute the "moon" itself. The entire content of the *Sutra* and the teaching of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow are expressed symbolically so that we can know the moon itself.

This idea can be more precisely explained by referring to the late Paul Tillich's understanding of symbols. Born in Germany, Tillich was a well-known Protestant theologian who spent the latter part of his life in America. I would like to offer a summary of my own understanding of his splendid explanation of symbols.⁴

For Tillich, first of all, a symbol is something that points to ultimate truth, which transcends the secular world. Thus, Amida Buddha, Amida's Name, all of the words in the sutras, as well as hell and the Pure Land are all symbolic expressions that point to an ultimate, world-transcending truth. Secondly, however, at the same time that a symbol points toward something, it also exists in a profound relationship with the thing itself. This is an important point, I believe. The finger points to the moon, and because of the finger we are able to look up to the moon for the first time. However, the finger is not simply a finger. It is because the finger is bathed in the light of the moon that, for the first time, the finger can engage in finger-activity, which is to point to the moon. The activity of the finger itself would not be able to exist in complete darkness. It is because the moon gives off light that the finger can exhibit finger-activity for the first time. In this sense, a symbol participates profoundly within ultimacy. It is none other than the self-expression of the ultimate.

Tillich's third point is that we can encounter ultimate truth or world-transcending reality for the first time through symbols. Needless to say, were it not for symbols we would not be able to encounter ultimate truth or Amida Buddha. Fourth, Tillich says that a symbol reveals the deepest levels our own, individual spirit. A familiar example might be that, if we continuously worship before a Buddha image everyday of our life, eventually our eyes will be opened to the transcendent, ultimate reality behind the image. Yet, at the same time, our spirit (or, spirituality) gradually becomes cultivated through this process. These four points, I believe, reflect the fundamental meaning of symbols in Tillich's thought.

Further, when discussing the transmission of symbols, Tillich states that a symbol must constantly be re-interpreted within every era and society. According to him, a symbol necessarily arises within a certain historical or societal context. The formation of the notion of Amida Buddha is a case in point. We do not know who produced the *Larger Sutra*. Although the *Sutra* indicates that it was expounded by Śākyamuni, he had

in fact died five hundred years prior to its development. However, even though we do not know who expounded the notion of Amida Buddha in the *Larger Sutra*, the *Sutra* had to have arisen within certain necessary historical and societal circumstances. I mentioned earlier that Amida worship probably arose out of circumstances involved in stupa worship. Tillich might say that, because it arose within a particular situation, Amida Buddha as a symbol could become extinct when those conditions greatly change. Thus, the length of a symbol's life could be extended and the symbol thus transmitted, depending on how it is re-interpreted in various era and societies. I am in complete agreement with this idea.

If such a re-interpretation is not skillfully done, however, the symbol would not be transmitted, and it would fall into decline. It would be reduced to a mere shell of itself, stripped of content or purpose. It would become nothing more than a magical incantation, and would lose its life for all eternity. Is this not, in large measure, the current state of Japanese Buddhism today? Today, Buddhist images and paintings have become exhibition pieces, lined up for display at museums. Previously, life continuously flowed within those images, as they served to nurture the spirits of a great many persons. Today, however, they have been completely reduced to simple skeletons and show pieces. Not only that, the names of Buddhas or Buddhist scriptures originally pointed beings to ultimate truth. Yet now, more than just a few of them have, in various forms, become nothing more than magical incantations. In Shin Buddhism as well, a re-interpretation and re-transmission of its symbols must be courageously attempted and accomplished in the midst of the actual conditions of today's society.

This kind of re-interpretation of symbols can be clearly seen in Shinran's thought. In the twelfth month of his eighty-sixth year, Shinran gave a sermon to Kenchi, a disciple who had gone to visit him at his temporary residence on Sanjō street in Kyoto. The topic of Shinran's Dharma message was *jinen hōni*, in regard to which he explained,

Amida Buddha fulfills the purpose of making us know the significance of *jinen*.⁵

Here the word "significance" (*yō* in Japanese) indicates a state of affairs, aspect, situation, circumstances, and indication, as well as form and the inner reality of that form. The phrase "fulfills the purpose" (*ryō* in Japanese) refers to a factor or element, or, a method or means used for the purpose of accomplishing something. In the context of our present discussion, this refers to symbol. Thus, according to Shinran, Amida Buddha is the symbol that fulfills the purport of making us know the truth of *jinen*. In other terms, *jinen* refers to ultimate truth, which flows throughout heaven, earth, and the universe. This truth pervades all of human history. It is the

universal principle that penetratingly includes both human beings and the entire universe. Śākyamuni awakened to, realized, and then taught this truth. Amida Buddha is the symbol—the finger—that enables us to know the significance of this truth. Some two thousand years ago, Nāgārjuna correctly expounded a Buddhist semiotic theory, and Shinran, nearly eight hundred years ago, further clarified this notion of symbols.

In this way, Amida Buddha and the Name are nothing more than symbolic expressions; they are fingers pointing to the moon of ultimate, universal truth and reality. What is important for us is to experience and awaken to this ultimate truth, which lies on the far side of the moon. Yet, there is great question as to whether this is fully understood by traditional, institutional doctrinal studies.

Erroneous Interpretations in Traditional Doctrinal Studies

Today's traditional doctrinal studies give absolutely no consideration to this understanding of Amida Buddha as symbol, that is, as a finger pointing to the moon. As a result, proponents of traditional Shin Buddhist doctrinal studies have a tendency in large measure to apprehend the Name of Amida Buddha as a substantial entity. One example of this can be found in the concept that "the Name and its substance are not separate" (*myōtai funi*). This notion was originally discussed in a text entitled, *Anjin ketsujōshō* (*On Attaining the Settled Mind*),⁶ a work of unknown authorship. According to current research in the area, the text is thought to have likely been associated with the Seizan branch of Jōdoshū. Kakunyo apparently long possessed his own copy of the text, and Rennyo is said to have compared the importance of the text to the unearthing of gold. As a result, the text has been accorded particular importance within the Hongwanji branch of Shin Buddhism as well. In the doctrine that "the Name and its substance are not separate," the Name refers to a designation or appellation attached to a thing. Substance means the thing itself, or its actual state. Thus, the notion is that the appellation attached to a thing and the substance of the thing itself are not separate; rather, they constitute a single entity.

I have a recollection that relates to this. Long ago, when I was still a student, a certain professor made the statement in a lecture on Shin Buddhist Studies that the Name of Amida Buddha is such that the "Name and its substance are not separate." To explain what this meant he wrote in a large size the kanji character for "fire" on the blackboard. Touching it with his hand, he said, "Gentlemen. Although I place my hand on this character it is not hot." I remember wondering what he was talking about. Next, he placed a piece of white chalk in his mouth and made the gesture of lighting a cigarette. "No matter how many times I do this, it will not light." Finally, he stated, "When we speak of names in this world, they are all simply

appellations and have no substance. Thus, the character for 'fire' is not hot; you cannot light a cigarette with it. However, the Name of Amida is not like that. The Name, as it is, is perfectly endowed with substance. Thus, the 'Name and its substance are not separate.'" Even now I can clearly remember that professor's gestures. Yet, my thoughts then (and now) were that this kind of thinking turns Shin Buddhism into nothing more than a kind of belief in magical incantations. Yet, isn't this kind of idea still being preached in Shin Buddhist sermons even now? If that is so, then shinjin in Shin Buddhism has become nothing more than a belief in magic.

It is also imprudent to try to understand, preach about, or propagate Shin Buddhism using ideas or terminology not seen anywhere in Shinran's works, but instead that are based on a classic book of unknown authorship and produced by another Buddhist school. That could not be considered Shin Buddhism. Moreover, the implication of the theory that the "Name and its substance are not separate" is that Amida Buddha exists as some kind of substantial entity. Hence, Amida's significance as a symbol becomes lost.

Doctrinal studies of the Hongwanji branch have produced yet another concept that takes Amida Buddha to be a substantial entity. It is the theory that the "Name is stamped (in the minds of beings) and arises as shinjin" (*myōgō ingen*). This theory appeared during the *Sangō wakuran* conflict that occurred near the latter stages of the modern era. In the midst of the conflict, Daiei of the Aki province wrote a text entitled, *Ōchō jikidō kongō bei*,⁷ in which he criticized the theory of "taking refuge in the three karmic modes of action" for promoting a shinjin of self-power. Daiei asserted that shinjin, as set forth in Shin Buddhism, arises when the Name is "stamped" into the minds of sentient beings. According to this idea, the Buddha inscribes on his hand the Name, "*Namu Amida Butsu*" in reverse-image characters so as to be able to confer it on sentient beings. When the Buddha stamps it onto the "white paper" of sentient beings' minds, shinjin arises in them. Thus, shinjin is said to appear when the Name is stamped onto their hearts and minds. According to this theory, shinjin in Shin Buddhism comes about when one receives the substantial entity of the Name, in which the "Name and its substance are not separate." This idea that the "Name is stamped in the mind of beings and arises as shinjin" is still being discussed in books written by Shin Buddhist scholars and sold commercially today. It is frequently mentioned in the sermons of Shin Buddhist preachers. This is an inexcusable misinterpretation of the Shin Buddhist understanding that shinjin is to become free of self-power and entrust in Other Power. What can be done to counter these erroneous views? We must resolutely return to the starting point of Shinran's teaching, and seek to learn the true Shin Buddhist teaching.

III. IS SHINJIN IN SHIN BUDDHISM NON-DUALISTIC OR DUALISTIC?

The Original Meaning of Shinjin in Shin Buddhism

Next, I would like to examine the question of whether shinjin in Shin Buddhism is non-dualistic or dualistic. My conclusion will be that shinjin in Shin Buddhism should be understood from the standpoint of the non-dualism of Mahayana Buddhism.

The original meaning of shinjin in Shin Buddhism emerges from the words pertaining to shinjin in both the passage of the Primal Vow and the passage on the fulfillment of the Primal Vow. The Vow passage presents it as “entrust with joy” (*shingyō*), while the fulfillment passage explains it as “shinjin and joy” (*shinjin kangī*). We can inquire into the original meaning of these phrases by referring to the Sanskrit version of the *Larger Sutra*. There, we find that the original meaning of shinjin is *citta-prasāda*. *Citta* indicates one’s heart and mind, while *prasāda* means that joy arises in the mind when it becomes pure and clear. When the mind becomes clear, things can be seen within it. This state of mind has connections with the sphere of *samādhi*, in which our deluded passions are transformed. It refers to the supramundane realm, which transcends this world.

Shinran certainly could not have known of these original Sanskrit terms. However, I believe that he fully understood their essential meaning. In the Chapter on Shinjin in his text, *Kyōgyōshō monrui*, Shinran explains that “entrusting in joy” means that one’s mind is “completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt.”⁸ Here, the “hindrance of doubt” is a reference to ignorance and deluded passions. Thus, since shinjin is not tainted or mixed with the “hindrance of doubt” it indicates a realm in which one has become freed of ignorance and where one’s deluded passions have been transformed. The concept of the “hindrance of doubt” can be seen throughout Buddhist literature. For instance, one can find it explained in detail in introductory texts to Tendai thought. Since in his early years Shinran studied Tendai doctrine, I believe that he must have frequently come upon the term “hindrance of doubt” and fully understood its doctrinal intent. With this as his background, he later explained that “entrusting in joy” or shinjin is “completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt.” In a variety of senses, shinjin can be taken to mean that one has become free of ignorance and that deluded passions have been transformed. For instance, with this passage in his *Shōshin nembutsuge (Hymn of True Shinjin and the Nembutsu)*, “The darkness of our ignorance is already broken through,”⁹ Shinran offers us a clear description of the realm of shinjin.

In explaining shinjin, Shinran uses phrases such as “the wisdom of shinjin”¹⁰ and “shinjin that is unsurpassed wisdom.”¹¹ In a similar way, he states,

[K]now that since Amida's Vow is wisdom, the emergence of the mind of entrusting oneself to it is the arising of wisdom.¹²

In this sense, the arising of shinjin is the arising of wisdom. By learning the Buddha-dharma, our ignorance and deluded passions are gradually transformed, and a new eye is opened. We come to see things anew. In other words, shinjin is the "experience of awakening," which transcends the secular world. Hence, shinjin does not mean to believe in something in a dualistic or objectifying manner. The meaning of shinjin is always that of a non-dualistic, or, subjective state of mind.

Originally, when shinjin was spoken of in simple terms, it was unavoidably described in relation to an object, such as "having faith in Amida Buddha" or "entrusting in the Primal Vow." As a result, Shinran's Japanese-language works almost always express shinjin as being addressed toward some object. However, the Chapter on Shinjin elucidates shinjin of Shin Buddhism in terms of Mahayana logic. There, it should be noted, shinjin is clearly discussed in a manner that is non-dualistic, or, subjective in nature.

To say that shinjin is the experience of awakening means, in a more concrete sense, that we awaken to the compassion of the Tathagata. Not only that, we also awaken to the depths and weight of our own karmic evil, which is illumined by that compassion. "Awakening" means that our eyes are opened in the direction of the light. Yet, at the same time, our eyes are also opened to the darkness in which we had been wandering up to this moment. The "experience of awakening" possesses this kind of two-fold directionality. This is also the structure of shinjin.

Shinjin as the Experience of Awakening

Let us discuss the structure of shinjin, and its inner reality, in a slightly more concrete way. The Eighteenth Vow of Amida Buddha (the Primal Vow) ends with this oath, "(If they) should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment."¹³

Concretely, this means that our attainment of birth and Amida Buddha's attainment of supreme enlightenment come about simultaneously. This notion has been long described with the phrase, "birth and supreme enlightenment are of one essence" (*ōjō shōgaku ittai*). According to the words of the Vow, the Buddha states, "I will enable you to be born without fail. If you should fail to be born, I will never attain Buddhahood." Hence, the import of the Primal Vow is that as long as we are not saved, the Buddha Amida will not exist. This the problem implied by the idea that "birth and perfect enlightenment are of one essence." This problem developed into a major theme in Shin Buddhist doctrinal studies from the Tokugawa period on.

How is this problem interpreted in traditional doctrinal studies? A number of other issues are also involved here, but basically most of the approaches have made a dualistic distinction between “our” attainment of birth and the Buddha’s attainment of supreme enlightenment. Even today, many persons hold to this understanding. For instance, later in the *Sutra*, it states, “Since he attained Buddhahood, about ten kalpas have passed.”¹⁴ According to this, Amida had already become a Buddha ten kalpas ago in the distant past. Traditionally, this has been interpreted to mean that Amida has already become a Buddha, at a time prior to our attainment of birth. In his *Jōdo wasan (Hymns on the Pure Land)*, however, Shinran comments on this *Sutra* passage with this phrase,

But he seems a Buddha more ancient than kalpas countless as particles.¹⁵

In other words, for Shinran, the existence of Amida Buddha—the Buddha of Immeasurable Life—originally began in the beginningless past. This would imply that Amida Buddha is eternally coming toward the secular world and manifesting itself in that world. As a consequence, Amida Buddha has no existence outside of our own subjectivity, or, our own *shinjin*.

However, in traditional doctrinal studies this problem has been separated dualistically into questions of logic and fact. Amida Buddha’s prior attainment of supreme enlightenment ten kalpas ago in the distant past is said to establish the logic of the possibility of birth. On the other hand, our remaining in the world of delusion without actually attaining birth is an issue of fact. Hence, the difference between logic and fact is likened to the difference between the existence of medicine and our taking of it. Amida Buddha’s attainment of supreme enlightenment means that the logic through which sentient beings can attain birth has been fulfilled. The medicine that will enable us to attain birth has been created. If we should take this medicine our illness would be cured without fail. That is, we would be able to attain birth.

Thus, according to traditional Shin Buddhist doctrinal studies, the medicine of our path to birth has been created with Amida’s attainment of supreme enlightenment. Thus, in effect, his work is over. What is said to remain is an issue of fact: Will we take the medicine or not? Will we walk the path or not? What remains is the problem of this self. Our task is to answer the question of whether to take this medicine that has been given to us already—that is, whether to progress along this path to birth. Thus, it is said, the supremely enlightened Amida Buddha calls to us from the Pure Land, “Come here! Come here!” What then is essential is that, in response to that voice, we immediately accept without doubt the medicine of the perfected, six-character Name.

However, is this really the purport of the Primal Vow? The passage of the Primal Vow reveals, in contrast, the truth that “birth and supreme enlightenment are of one essence.” That is, there is no Buddha apart from me; there is no me apart from the Buddha. This self and Amida Buddha, as well as our attainment of birth and Amida’s attainment of supreme enlightenment are identical—of one essence. This theory of simultaneous arising is a fundamental principle of Mahayana Buddhism. Accordingly, it is also the truth of Amida Buddha’s Primal Vow. Yet, in traditional doctrinal studies the idea of “one essence” is separated out in a completely dualistic and objectifying manner. This is how Amida Buddha is grasped in the traditional doctrinal studies of the Hongwanji branch of Shin Buddhism.

On the other hand, the doctrinal studies of the Hongwanji branch also discuss the notion of “innumerable attainments of enlightenment” (*saku saku jōbutsu*). In this case, the one essence of birth and supreme enlightenment is apprehended subjectively. The idea is that an individual Dharmākara Bodhisattva becomes manifest for each individual sentient being. That is to say, an individual Dharmākara Bodhisattva attains enlightenment in correspondence with an individual person’s attainment of birth. Thus, innumerable Dharmākaras are unendingly attaining Buddhahood. This is the meaning of “innumerable attainments of enlightenment.” We can fully appreciate the fact that this interpretation seeks to grasp the problem in a subjective way. However, we must also recognize that this interpretation is an abstract one, which is removed from each individual’s subjective experience of shinjin.

In sum, the issue essentially comes down to this: Unless I attain birth, Amida Buddha will not exist for me. Shin Buddhism teaches that Amida Buddha exists definitively for the first time—in the present moment and for this self—only in identity with the experience of awakening, which is the arising of shinjin. To say otherwise—to believe that Amida Buddha already exists somewhere, to ponder over it and engage in a dualistic search for an objectified Amida, and finally to accept that the Buddha must exist somewhere—this is not shinjin as taught in Shin Buddhism. It is not that, since Amida Buddha exists somewhere, we must believe in Amida. Rather, it is that, within our experience of shinjin, Amida Buddha reveals itself and becomes certain to us.

Guided by Shinran’s teachings and single-heartedly saying the nembutsu—within this life of nembutsu and in the continuation and deepening of the Buddhist path that it entails—we will eventually come to realize shinjin as the experience of awakening. In shinjin, for the first time Amida Buddha comes to exist indisputably for us. It is in the experience of shinjin that we can definitively know the existence of both hell and the Pure Land.

Erroneous Interpretations in Traditional Doctrinal Studies

However, this sense that *shinjin* is a non-dualistic and subjective “experience of awakening” is completely missing in the interpretations of *shinjin* found in traditional Shin Buddhist doctrinal studies. In its place, we find interpretations that are both dualistic and objectifying in nature. Such erroneous interpretations clearly began with Kakunyo’s approach to Shin Buddhism. In his youth Kakunyo had studied with the Seizan branch of the Jōdoshū. As a result, his understanding of Shin Buddhism deeply reflected the hues of the dualistic Seizan doctrines. This included his understanding of *shinjin*.

Kakunyo asserted that the meaning of *shinjin* was to “take refuge and submit to” or “take refuge and rely upon” the Buddha. That is, for him it meant that one must wholeheartedly take refuge in Amida Buddha. Furthermore, he stated that it was necessary to have as a mediator a “good teacher” who was a member of Shinran’s blood lineage. This good teacher, he maintained, would function essentially as a “living Buddha” or as the “official representative of the Tathagata.” By taking refuge in the good teacher in this way, one would be able to “take refuge in and submit to” or “take refuge in and rely upon” Amida Buddha.

Kakunyo’s eldest son, Zonkaku, also offered various explanations of Shin Buddhist doctrine in his voluminous writings. Like his father, he had also been influenced by the teachings of the Seizan branch of Jōdoshū. Thus, he identified *shinjin* with a person’s “taking of refuge” in the Buddha. In his text, *Rokuyōshō (Notes on the Essence of the Six-fascicle Work)*¹⁶, Zonkaku’s explication of the significance of *shinjin* appears to be based on general Buddhist literature, such as commentaries on the *Abhidharma-kośa* and the *Ch’êng-wei-shih-lun*. In fact, however, Zonkaku is simply attempting to draw meaning from mere fragments of the literature, often applying his own, forced readings upon them. This technique leads him to assert that the meaning of *shinjin* is really to enjoy hearing the Buddha-dharma (*aigyō*).

In this way, not long after Shinran’s death *shinjin* came to be interpreted in a completely dualistic or objective sense, as the “mind that takes refuge and submits to” or the mind is able to “take refuge” in the Buddha. From this point on, distortions in the understanding of *shinjin* in Shin Buddhism began to take place. By Rennyō’s time this sort of dualistic understanding of *shinjin* had come to be thoroughly accepted. This could be seen in the expression, “I entrust in the Buddha to save me” (*tasuketamae to tanomu*). From an early age, Rennyō took the position that the Japanese word “*tanomu*” (entrust or rely) was an appropriate translation for the word, “*shinjin*,” and in his later years he used the word extensively. For instance, he states in a *Letter*,

[W]hen we have the thought of clinging firmly to Amida Buddha's sleeve without calculation and entrusting ourselves to the Buddha to save us in the life-to-come, the Amida Tathagata will deeply rejoice.¹⁷

Clearly, *shinjin* is understood here to be a state of mind that is in a dualistic or objectifying relationship with Amida. We are able to see that this was in reality something completely foreign to the original sense of *shinjin*—that of *citta-prasāda*—as well as *shinjin* in the sense of Shinran's expression that, "the emergence of the mind of entrusting oneself to it is the arising of wisdom."¹⁸

Next, let us take a look historically at the interpretations of *shinjin* made within the doctrinal studies in the Hongwanji branch since the Tokugawa period. On the whole, they can be separated into two schools of thought: the Kūge school and the Sekisen school. According to Zenjō, a representative scholar of the Kūge school, *shinjin* is to "rely upon and put one's trust in the Name." This was typical of the dualistic interpretations of *shinjin*. In contrast, Sōe, a Sekisen scholar, stated that *shinjin* means that "the mind becomes pure and clear. That is the nature of *shinjin*." This view represented an excellent understanding of Shinran's purport—the original meaning of *shinjin* in Shin Buddhism. Yet, the Hongwanji branch labeled Sōe's doctrine as heterodoxy, and completely rejected it. The dualistic Kūge school became mainstream of Hongwanji thought, and remains so even today.

In sum, the prevailing understanding of *shinjin* that is found in the Hongwanji branch of Shin Buddhism was inherited from Kakunyo and Rennyo. According to this view, the sole practice in Shin Buddhism is the Name. *Shinjin* means that one takes refuge in, abides by and receives the Name of Dharmic-substance. In the Ōtani branch of Shin Buddhism, by contrast, the understanding of *shinjin* was inherited from Zonkaku. In this view, the practice of Shin Buddhism is to say the *nembutsu*. *Shinjin* refers to one's active reliance on the practice of the *nembutsu*.

Despite their apparent differences, the doctrinal interpretations in both branches essentially amount to nothing more than dualistic or objectifying understandings of *shinjin*. Needless to say, then, our task today is to correctly study the significance of *shinjin* as expressed in the passage of the Primal Vow in the *Larger Sutra*, as well as the significance of *shinjin* in Shinran's thought.

IV. IS SHIN BUDDHISM A RELIGION OF POWER OR A RELIGION OF PATH?

The Fundamental Standpoint of Buddhism

Next, I would like to address the issue of whether Shin Buddhism is a religion of power, or a religion of path. My conclusion is that Shin Bud-

dhism corresponds to the latter. It constitutes a religion of path and is not concerned with power.

The fundamental principle of Śākyamuni Buddha's teaching can be seen in the contents of his first sermon—the "first turning of the Dharma Wheel"—after his attainment of enlightenment. It was there that he expounded the teaching of the Middle Path. After his birth as a prince, Śākyamuni had spent long years in pursuit of pleasure within his castle walls. However, he came to have doubts about this way of life, and so he left his kingdom and assumed the life of a renunciant. For the next six years he utterly abused himself physically, as he undertook austere practices in the hope of achieving spiritual independence. However, he later engaged in a critical reconsideration of the two extreme paths of pleasure and hardship. As a result, he changed his mind and sat beneath a bodhi tree, there deeply pondering the fundamental truths of the universe and human existence. He became aware that both a life in pursuit of pleasure and a life of complete austerity were erroneous. Not only was it wrong to live a life solely directed by instinct or desires, but it was also wrong to live by abusing oneself physically in order to negate one's desires. He then awakened to the truth that the genuine path for human life was the "Middle Path"—a path of neither pleasure nor pain. This Middle Path did not simply lie between pleasure and pain. Instead, the paths of both pleasure and pain were to be rejected. With the rejection of both pleasure and pain, one would come to live one's life based on the negation of both. Śākyamuni taught that it was here that a true and real human life could come about.

In later years, this teaching of the Middle Path underwent numerous changes and developments, becoming, as it were, the tenet a number of Buddhist schools. In this sense, the way of life that Shinran exemplified—that of being "neither a monk nor one in worldly life,"¹⁹ or, as I wish to phrase it, "neither true nor worldly"—developed out of Śākyamuni's teaching of the Middle Path. What this means is that the life of a nembutsu follower is one of "pain" and "aspiration." To live within shinjin in Shin Buddhism means that our life is neither "true" nor "worldly." As we reflect on the present condition of our life—lived in disregard of the Buddha-dharma—we cannot help but feel a sense of "pain." Yet, at the same time, as we reflect on the present condition of our life—submerged and buried in the secular world—we constantly "aspire" to be able to draw nearer to the Buddha-dharma. This way of life, which Shinran described as "neither priest nor one in worldly life," is based on the Middle Path, which Śākyamuni expounded in the first turning of the Dharma Wheel.

In that first sermon Śākyamuni Buddha then went on to give a concrete explication of the Middle Path through his teaching of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path. This represents, fundamentally, both a challenge to us and an instruction on how we could live a genuine

human life. How could we, in our present state of being, come to realize our ideal self—the self that we ought to be? Śākyamuni Buddha revealed to us the way—the path that would lead to our attainment of enlightenment.

By inheriting this teaching as well, Shin Buddhism sets out a path upon which we can attain Buddhahood. This was Shinran's purport when he stated that,

Attaining Buddhahood through the nembutsu is the true essence of the Pure Land Way.²⁰

[O]ne who entrusts oneself to the Primal Vow and says the nembutsu attains Buddhahood.²¹

It is in this sense that we can say that Shin Buddhism is a religion of path. The path of human fulfillment, or, human maturation, in which one singleheartedly says the nembutsu, and with that nembutsu gradually casts off the skin of one's old self and realizes true growth as a human being—this is the path of Shin Buddhism. On this path, this “not-so-human” self becomes, little-by-little, a bit more human through the nembutsu. Directing our sight to the Buddha and the far-off Pure Land, we come to realize true human growth. This is the path of Shin Buddhism, the true essence of the Pure Land Way.

Shin Buddhism is the Teaching of “Attaining Buddhahood Through the Nembutsu”

The Shin Buddhist path for the attainment of enlightenment is the path of the nembutsu. On this path, one says the nembutsu and realizes shinjin. In today's Shin Buddhist doctrinal studies, however, this sense of the nembutsu has often been omitted. I was once shocked to hear of the distress felt by a Shin Buddhist follower, who had been rebuked by a priest in this way, “When you recite the nembutsu, that is not the practice of the nembutsu!” This is a shocking statement, since the Shin Buddhism teaches us first and foremost to say the nembutsu. A Shin Buddhist path that neglects the nembutsu would be absolutely meaningless. It is through the recitation of the nembutsu that the nembutsu opens up as shinjin. In other words, by saying the nembutsu one realizes shinjin. The nembutsu is the process and shinjin is the goal. However, at the same time, there can be no shinjin aside from the nembutsu. This is the notion of the “oneness of practice and shinjin” (*gyōshin ichinyō*), to which Shinran was referring when he said,

True and real shinjin is unfailingly accompanied by [saying] the Name. [Saying] the Name, however, is not necessarily accompanied by shinjin that is the power of the Vow.²²

[T]here is no nembutsu separate from shinjin. . . . There is no shinjin separate from nembutsu²³

Dōgen said essentially the same thing in this regard. In Dōgen's thought one realizes enlightenment through the practice of sitting meditation. Yet, although practice is the process and enlightenment is the goal, at the same time he comprehended that, "practice and enlightenment are identical" (*shūshō ittō*). We can see that the structure of the path to enlightenment is the same for both the nembutsu and zazen.

Since shinjin is realized in the true practice of the nembutsu, Shinran also states,

To entrust oneself to the nembutsu is to already have become a person who realizes wisdom and will attain Buddhahood.²⁴

Note that Shinran does not say, "one becomes a Buddha." Instead, he uses the phrase, "becomes one who will attain Buddhahood." Both Dōgen and Nichiren asserted, in contrast, that one becomes a Buddha in this body and in this world. Although Dōgen died at the age of fifty-two, he is said to have already become a Buddha. On the other hand, Shinran lived until he was ninety, but he was unable to attain Buddhahood in this life. Here we can make an inference as to the severity of Shinran's own critical self-scrutiny. He could become a person who "will become a Buddha," but he never spoke of becoming a Buddha. We can also sense the thoroughness of Shinran's thought. However, be that as it may, he also taught us that we can realize true human growth through the nembutsu. When this foolish, inferior human being says the nembutsu, we grow, little-by-little, to be a somewhat better human being. This is the meaning of shinjin.

However, this is not what the traditional doctrinal studies say. Rather, what we are told is that, upon the attainment of shinjin, all that happens is that our birth in the life-to-come becomes clear. Hence, our human nature does not change at all. Or, we are told that we attain enlightenment only upon birth in the Pure Land after death. But that is not the Shin Buddhism that Shinran taught. What he made clear was that, as we say the nembutsu, we come to be nurtured positively by that nembutsu, even in our current state. Little-by-little, we individual human beings each cast off the skin of our old self and realize true human growth. Shinran addresses this in his text, *Gutokushō* (*Gutoku's Notes*), where he gives the following explanation of shinjin, based on the passage on the fulfillment of the Eighteenth Vow of *the Larger Sutra*,

Concerning the entrusting of oneself to the Primal Vow, [to borrow the words of Shan-tao,] “in the preceding moment, life ends”

This means that “one immediately enters the groups of the truly settled” [T’an-luan].

Concerning immediately attaining birth, [to borrow the words of Shan-tao,] “in the next moment, you are immediately born.”

This means that “one immediately enters the stage of the definitely settled” [Nāgārjuna].

Further: “one is termed a definitely-settled bodhisattva.”²⁵

The two main passages here are from Shan-tao. In those passages, the phrases, “preceding moment” and “next moment” refer to preceding and succeeding moments of time. In other words, the passage indicates that, upon the realization of true shinjin (“entrusting in the Primal Vow”), our life of delusion in the *sahā* world came to an end in the preceding moment of time. In the succeeding moment of time, we “immediately” attain birth. What this means is that, we receive the life of the Buddha and, from that moment on, a new life in the Pure Land begins. This continues without limit through the nembutsu.

This process of casting off our old self and realizing true growth as a human being is continuously repeated and deepened. In this continuous repetition and deepening of shinjin, a human being is able to achieve ever more self-renewal and growth. Shinran described the person of shinjin as a “definitely-settled bodhisattva” and a person who is “the equal of all the Tathagatas.”²⁶ In this sense, it could be said that Shin Buddhism is a religion of path—a path that aims for true human fulfillment.

Erroneous Interpretations in Traditional Doctrinal Studies

However, this is not what is discussed in the traditional Shin Buddhist doctrinal studies. Rather, what is presented there is a religion of power. Shintō, the Japanese way of the kami, for instance, is a religion of power since it merely entails prayers to the kami, with no discussion of its teaching. After the death of Shinran, Shin Buddhism quickly joined leagues with Shintō. We have already seen that trend in Kakunyo’s thought, and his son, Zonkaku, united Shin Buddhism even more closely with Shintō. Despite the fact that Shinran had been severely critical of that very union, soon after he died Shin Buddhism embarked on a path that lowered it to the level of Shintō, a Japanese folk religion. This can be clearly seen in Zonkaku’s texts, such as the *Shojin hongai shū*.²⁷ According to Zonkaku, the Japanese kami could be divided into spirits of a variety of actual beings and

provisionally manifested deities. The former included animals such as the kitsune fox or snakes, which the Japanese people had worshipped as kami since ancient times. The latter referred to auspicious deities, including certain eminent persons who were worshipped as kami.

In his early writings, Zonkaku rejected the worship of the former type of kami, but claimed that the latter were in fact manifested forms of Amida Buddha. Later, however, he took the position that all kami, including foxes, snakes, or other actual beings were manifestations of Amida Buddha, and he thus urged people to value them all. This trend of thought was even stronger in Rennyo, who claimed that the meritorious power of all of the kami was completely embodied in the Name of Amida Buddha.

Recent scholarship suggests that Rennyo apparently made an inscription of the name of a heavenly deity—“*Namu Tenman Daijizaiten*” (“I take refuge in the God Maheśvara of the Tenman Shrine.” At that time, belief in the Tenman Shrine was apparently flourishing. According to one record, Rennyo’s children reverently held up his inscription of the name of the heavenly deity. In addition, a scroll inscribed, “*Namu Haishi Myōshin*” (“I take refuge in the illustrious spirit of our esteemed teacher”) in Rennyo’s hand was discovered. With these examples, we can clearly see how belief in the Japanese deities of heaven and earth became assimilated and overlapped with shinjin in Shin Buddhism.

This trend of thought eventually gave rise in modern doctrinal studies to a view often referred to as “conformity among the three teachings” (*sangyō itchiron*). Toward the end of the so-called modern age, pressure was being applied to Japan by foreign nations in particular to open its doors. In reaction to that, ultra-nationalism was slowly on the rise in Japan. Accusing Buddhism of being a foreign religion, Japanese classical scholars and Shintōists criticized Buddhism, using the theory that Buddhism was no benefit to the nation. By the end of the Tokugawa era, many tracts critical of Buddhism appeared. They claimed that Buddhist priests did nothing but drink sake and play go; that the Buddhist teaching said nothing about this world, but only talked about life after death; and thus that the Buddhist religion was meaningless. This kind of thorough-going criticism and denunciation of Buddhism eventually led to the anti-Buddhist movement in the Meiji era.

How did the Buddhist schools, and especially Shin Buddhism, respond to the rejection of Buddhism in Japan? For the most part, Shin Buddhism sought to reach a compromise with those critical of it, hoping thereby that the criticism would end. Few persons undertook a severe self-criticism of the actual state of Shin Buddhism. Rare also were movements seeking an accurate return to the fundamental standpoint of Buddhism. Instead, Shin Buddhism sought to reach a compromise with heterogeneous religious traditions by advocating the theory that Buddhism, Shintō, and Confucianism essentially taught the same thing. This logic of “conformity

among the three teachings” was representative of the direction that Shin Buddhism was taking in the modern age. Hence, when the modern imperial system, with its background in Shintō, arose in the twentieth century, Shin Buddhism found itself in a state whereby it had simply to cooperate with and submit to it. This would later lead, of course, to the formation of Shin Buddhist “wartime doctrines” during the Second World War.

As I have already mentioned, Shintō—the Japanese way of the kami—is a religion of power. All of the kami are said to have specialized functions, bearing the responsibility for carrying out various kinds of work. Numerous kinds of kami are said to exist, such as deities for entrance examinations, deities for personal relationships, deities for getting money, and deities for traffic safety. When a person prays to the kami, it is believed, one is bestowed with the power of that deity, and receives a benefit as the result. Hence, whenever Shin Buddhism is made to coincide with Shintō and Amida Buddha is connected with the kami, then inevitably Shin Buddhism also becomes a religion of power. It certainly appears that Shin Buddhism of today has both the character and tendencies of a religion of power.

In light of this, how we should understand the idea of *tariki*, which appears in the Shin Buddhist teachings and can be literally translated as “Other Power?” There may be some who will take the position that Shin Buddhism must be a religion of power, since it involves the notion of “Other Power.” Instead of that, however, I would submit that we must first examine the notion of “Other Power” very carefully. In other words, if Amida Buddha is understood to be some kind of substantial entity that is to be grasped in a dualistic or objective manner, then Amida Buddha would undoubtedly be thought of in terms of power. It would then be almost natural to equate Amida with some kind of *omamori* paper charm. Some Shin Buddhist followers have been known to want to buy *omamori* during their visit to the Hongwanji. This is not to say that such followers are bad Buddhists. Rather, the problem lies with the doctrines and sermons that encourage followers to think in that way. That is the problem with equating the notion of “Other Power” with a simple, conventional notion of power. The problem with translating *tariki* as “Other Power” is that it implies that *tariki* stands in contradistinction to “self-power.” Interpretations taking place at this level lead to a variety of misunderstandings.

Although it is believed that the term *tariki* is a Chinese translation of an earlier term, that original word is now unknown. Scholars have engaged in various investigations of this problem, but they have still reached no definite conclusions. It can be inferred, however, that the origin of *tariki* was the term *paratantra*. Nakamura Hajime’s *Bukkyōgo daijiten*²⁸ notes that this is the origin of *tariki*. However, other theories consider that to be

in error. Thus, we are unable to make any sweeping statement about the origin of *tariki*. Nevertheless, I believe that the term *tariki* arose around the periphery of the term *paratantra*, and in the extension of that concept. *Paratantra* has been translated as *engi* (dependent origination) or *eta* (dependent-on-other). Dependent origination reveals that all existences arise or come about through causes and conditions. For instance, all of you and I have been able to form a relationship here today because you have come here in the midst of your busy schedules. I have been healthy enough to be able to come here. Our mutual existence, at this instant, has indeed come about through these and other conditions. Because I am here, you are here. Because you are here, I am here. Certainly, our mutual existence at this instant takes place within a relationship of reciprocity and mutual interdependence. This is the meaning of dependent origination.

However, from the standpoint of Buddhism, it is a mistake to say, "You are here because I am here." This is not a Buddhist way of thinking. Rather, to say, "I am here," means that I am able to exist here because of all of you. Buddhism teaches us first of all to question the self. When this is the direction of our thinking, then we can understand that the self exists only as the result of others. Today, all of you have come here despite your busy schedules. Because of you, I am able to present this talk. Here, dependent origination has the same source as being dependent-on-the other. This level of understanding of *engi* or dependent origination would inevitably give rise to the term *tariki*. We could understand *tariki* in that way. Yet, it would be a mistake to take *tariki* to mean that one makes no effort by oneself or that things will somehow progress through the working of the other. This is not *tariki*. Rather, *tariki* can be understood when, even while one is making diligent efforts to do something, one stares deeply into the heart of the matter and discovers—one awakens to reality—that it is made to come about through others.

Often in discussions at Dharma gatherings one of the young people in the group will make this kind of statement: "If the Buddha is *tariki* (Other Power), then the Buddha should be able to save us unilaterally, whether we go to the temple or listen to the Dharma, or do not." How lamentable that this is the level at which some people understand the meaning of *tariki*! Yet, does the responsibility for such erroneous interpretations not lie with those who teach these ideas? This is the kind of thing that happens when we consider Amida Buddha to be some kind of substantial entity, and discuss Amida in terms of power. Today, Shin Buddhist observances for the deceased have been distorted in a variety of ways. As I have stated above, Shin Buddhism originally provided a Buddhist teaching for human beings to realize growth to a true humanity—to realize maturation even as they cast off the skin of their old selves. In that way, Shin Buddhism was a religion of a path. However, this fundamental meaning has been lost in many regions and by many priests, replaced by a religion centered on the

performance of rituals for the deceased. Amida Buddha is grasped solely within the context of power.

This understanding is based on an erroneous understanding of Shin Buddhism that began with Zonkaku. Three of his texts, *Jōdo kenmonshū*,²⁹ *Hō-on ki*,³⁰ and *Shidōshō*,³¹ focus on Shin Buddhist observances for the deceased. By examining the first two texts, we will see how Zonkaku presents this as Shin Buddhist doctrine.

According to the *Jōdo kenmonshū* after a person dies his sins and offenses are investigated by the King Emma for a period of forty-nine days. Thus, the living are instructed to perform memorial services for the repose of the deceased every seven days without fail. He states that the deceased also asks the living to do this. Depending on the way in which the memorial services are performed, the deceased will then be able to go to a better place. In the *Hō-on ki*, Zonkaku extensively discusses the importance of offering prayers for benefits in this life. He writes in detail about how the nembutsu is the most efficacious way to perform prayers for present-day benefits or memorial services for the repose of the deceased. The final text is the *Shidōshō*. Here, Zonkaku says that by performing memorial services for the deceased, that person will be able to move to a good location within the Pure Land. He also states that the activity of “directing of virtue in the aspect of returning” (*gensō ekō*) will differ depending on the merits generated by the observance of memorial services. Perhaps enough has been said about these ideas, except that in them the Shin Buddhist teaching has completely disappeared.

Yet, a paper recently presented at the Nishi Hongwanji’s Doctrinal Research Center took the position that Zonkaku’s three texts, which center on funerary rites for the deceased, are equivalent to the triple sutra in the current state of affairs, and should be actively used to teach the realities of Shin Buddhism to its followers. According to this position, the function of Shin Buddhist instruction and propagation is to teach and guide followers, even though, by advocating the observance of memorial services for the deceased and prayers for worldly benefits, it is completely submerged in Japanese customary practices and folk beliefs, and has totally compromised itself to them. This is truly shocking. At my temple, I am struggling hard against these secularized beliefs and customs. But, is the Hongwanji capable of saying the same? How truly lamentable it is. Each of us should take note of this situation and seek to learn correctly the teachings of Shinran.

V. CONCLUSION

I have discussed the problem of the true and the false in contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies by considering both “true Shin Buddhism” and

“false Shin Buddhism.” In this discussion, I have offered three conclusions:

1. Amida Buddha exists as a symbol, and must not be taken to be a substantial entity.
2. Shinjin in Shin Buddhism is a non-dualistic, or, subjective “experience of awakening.” It should not be understood in a dualistic, or, objectifying way.
3. Shin Buddhism is a religion of path, and must not be understood to be a religion concerned with power.

I believe that, as long as our understanding of Shin Buddhist doctrine does not clearly return, at least in regard to these three points, to a “true Shin Buddhism,” it will not be accepted or understood well by many persons on the international stage today. Further, anything other than a “true Shin Buddhism” will be unable to speak affirmatively as a religion with a fully developed societal presence or respond to the range of problems that are sure to gush forth from human society in the years to come.

Translated by David Matsumoto

NOTES

1. Translator's note: This essay is based on a lecture presented by Dr. Takamaro Shigaraki to the Shinshū Rengō Gakkai in Kyoto, Japan, on June 8, 2001.
2. Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa (Commentary on the Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra; Ta-chih-tu-lun; Jpn. Daichidoron)*, Taishō, vol. 25, p. 125 a25–b9, c1-3.
3. *The Collected Works of Shinran* (hereafter, *CWS*), (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), pp. 241–2.
4. In particular, see Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), pp. 41–54.
5. Shinran, *Mattōshō (Lamp for the Latter Ages)*, 5, in *CWS*, p. 530.
6. The text of *Anjin ketsujō shō* is available in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* (hereafter, *SSZ*), vol. 3 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941), pp. 615–638. For an English translation of the text, see Dennis Hirota, "On Attaining the Settled Mind: A Translation of *Anjin ketsujō shō*," in Jōdo Shinshū kyōgaku kenkyūsho, ed., *Rennyō Shōnin kenkyū: kyōgi hen*, 2 (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1998), pp. 19–54.
7. Daiei, *Ōchō jikidō kongō bei*, 3 vols. (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1879).
8. *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization*, Chapter on Shinjin, in *CWS*, p. 94.
9. *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization*, Chapter on Practice, in *CWS*, p. 70.
10. Shinran, *Shōzōmatsu wasan (Hymns of the Dharma-Ages)*, 35, in *CWS*, p. 407
11. Shinran, *Yuishinshō mon'i (Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone')*, in *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 624.
12. Left-hand notes to *Hymns of the Dharma-ages*, 34, in *CWS*, p. 407.
13. Cited in *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization*, Chapter on Shinjin, in *CWS*, p. 80.
14. *Muryōjyūkyō (The Larger Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life)*, in Hisao Inagaki, *The Three Pure Land Sutras: A Study and Translation from Chinese* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1994), p. 253.
15. Shinran, *Jōdo wasan (Hymns on the Pure Land)*, 55, in *CWS*, p. 340.
16. *SSZ*, vol. 2, pp. 205–442.
17. Rennyō, *Gobunshō (Letters of Rennyō)* vol. 2, no. 13, in *Jōdo shinshū*

- seiten: *chūshakuban* (Kyoto: Hongwanji Shuppanbu, 1997), pp. 1128–9.
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