

Rennyō's Theory on Amida Buddha's Name and Its Relationship to Shinran's Thought, Part 2¹

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VI.

IN THIS SECTION, I WILL EXAMINE Rennyō's interpretation of the six-character Name (六字釈 *rokuji shaku*) as the relationship between practitioners and Amida's Dharma (機法門 *kihōmon*). In the *Letters* (Gobunshō, 3–7), Rennyō writes:

[F]ull realization of the significance of the six characters “na-mu-a-mi-da-butsu” is the substance of decisively settled faith. That is, the two characters “na-mu” indicate the receptive attitude of the sentient beings (機 *ki*) who entrust themselves to Amida Buddha. Next the four characters “a-mi-da-butsu” signify the dharma (法 *hō*) through which Amida Tathāgata saves sentient beings. This is expressed as “the oneness in ‘namu-amida-butsu’ of the person [to be saved] and dharma [that saves]” (機法一体 *kihō ittai*).²

This is one of the most commonly found examples of Rennyō's interpretation of the six-character Name. In these passages, Rennyō explains that “na-mu,” or “taking refuge” (歸命 *kimyō*), is on the side of sentient beings (*ki*) who entrust Amida Buddha; and “A-mi-da-butsu” is the Dharma (*hō*), or the power of Amida Buddha who saves sentient beings entrusting him. Rennyō identifies “beings” with the first two characters (南無 *na-mu*) and “Dharma” with the following four characters (阿彌陀仏 *a-mi-da-butsu*) in his understanding of “Namu Amidabutsu” as the oneness of practitioner and Dharma of Amida Buddha (*kihō ittai*). Rennyō interprets “na-mu” as the entrusting mind of sentient beings, or practitioners, who rely on Amida Buddha who saves them.

In the *Letters* (4–14), he then correlates the mind “aspiring for birth and directing virtue” (発願回向 *hotsugen ekō*) with the phrase “Amida-butsu is the practice” (即是其行 *sokuze gogyō*) which is the Dharma of Amida Buddha.

First, the two characters “na-mu” mean to “to take refuge.” “To take refuge” expresses the [entrusting] mind of sentient beings who rely on Amida Buddha to save them, [bringing them to buddhahood] in the afterlife. Then, “aspiring for birth and directing virtue” expresses the [Buddha’s] mind that embraces and saves sentient beings who entrust [to Amida]. This is the precise meaning of the four characters “a-mi-da-butsu.”³

Here, Rennyo explains the phrase “to take refuge” from the perspective of practitioners, that it is the entrusting mind of sentient beings who rely on the afterlife. He interprets “aspiring for birth and directing virtue” by applying the perspective of the Dharma of Amida Buddha as a manifestation of the mind of Amida Buddha embracing and saving sentient beings who entrust him.

In another *Letter* (3–6), Rennyo discusses the relationship between practitioners and Amida Buddha in the reverse order.

When we cast away the sundry practices and miscellaneous good acts and entrust ourselves to Amida Tathāgata with the single practice and single-mindedness, awakening the one thought-moment of taking refuge in which we realize that he saves us, [Amida] graciously sends forth his all-pervading light and receives us. This is precisely what is meant by the four characters “a-mi-da-butsu” and, also, by “aspiring to be born and directing virtue.”⁴

In these passages, Rennyo explains “Amida Buddha” as the light embracing sentient beings (光明攝取 *kōmyō sesshu*), which is then identified with the mind of sentient beings aspiring to be born and directing virtue toward them (*hotsugen ekō*).

In his *Letter* (5–13), Rennyo again writes about “na-mu” from the perspective of practitioners.

Shan-tao explains the six characters of this “na-mu-a-mi-da-butsu,” saying “‘Namu’ means ‘to take refuge.’ It also signifies aspiring to be born and directing virtue. ‘Amida-butsu’ is the practice. Because of this, we unfailingly attain birth.” How should we understand this explanation? [The answer is that] if, with [the awakening of] the one thought-moment [of entrusting], a person takes refuge in Amida Buddha—even if [his is] an existence like ours, burdened with evil karma and blind passions—[Amida], knowing that person, will save him without fail. In other words, “taking refuge” means that we entrust ourselves [to Amida] to save us. [Amida’s] bestowal of unsurpassed and great benefit on sentient beings who

entrust themselves in the one thought-moment is called "aspiring to be born and directing virtue."⁵

Rennyo interprets "taking refuge" as sentient beings' mind of entrusting Amida from the perspective of practitioners (約生 *yakushō*), and "aspiring to be born and directing virtue" as the Dharma of Amida which is his directing of unsurpassed and great benefit accomplished to sentient beings. However, he does not explain the meaning of "amida-butsumi." A similar interpretation is also found in his *Letters* (5–5).

For within the one thought-moment of taking refuge—"namu"—there is aspiration for birth and directing of virtue. This, in other words, is the *mind* [*kokoro*] that Amida Tathāgata directs to ordinary beings. In the *Larger Sūtra*, this is explained as "enabling all sentient beings to fulfill their virtue."⁶

In this *Letter*, "aspiration for birth and directing of virtue" is understood as the *mind* (*kokoro*) of Amida Tathāgata whose great benefit of the birth in the Pure Land is directed to sentient beings. In these passages Rennyo does not explain the meaning of the phrase "Amida-butsumi is the practice" because the unsurpassed and great benefit of Amida is itself the content of Amida's practice.

This interpretation is based on Shinran's understanding of the "mind aspiring for birth and directing virtue" discussed in the Chapter on Practice of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in which he states "the mind of the Tathāgata who, having already established the Vow, gives sentient beings the practice necessary for their birth."⁷ Based on this passage, Rennyo interprets the "aspiration for birth and directing of virtue" as Amida's *mind* of directing unsurpassed and great benefit to ordinary beings. The practice of sentient beings, therefore, is the practice directed from Amida Buddha which is the unsurpassed and great benefit for sentient beings creating the cause for their attainment of birth in his Pure Land. Therefore, Rennyo does not need to discuss the phrase "Amida-butsumi is the practice."

Rennyo does, however, at one point interpret the phrase "Amida-butsumi is the practice" from the perspective of the Dharma of Amida without discussing the meaning of the "aspiration for birth and directing of virtue." In the *Letters* (4–8), Rennyo says that "it must be understood that the decisive settling of faith in our tradition is expressed by the six characters (na-mu-a-mi-da-butsumi),"⁸ and then he explains the reason as follows.

Shan-tao explained long ago in his commentary: "'Namu' means 'to take refuge.' It also signifies aspiring to be born and directing virtue. 'Amida-butsumi' is the practice." When sentient beings take refuge in Amida—"namu,"—Amida Buddha, fully knowing those

sentient beings, bestows on them the virtue of a myriad good deeds and practices, countless as the grains of sand in the river of Ganges. This is what is meant by "Amida-butsu is the practice." Those who take refuge ("namu") are therefore one with the saving dharma of Amida buddha; we speak of "the oneness in 'namu-amida-butsu' of the person [to be saved] and dharma [that saves]," indicating this point.⁹

In this *Letter*, Rennyō interprets Shan-tao's phrase "Amida-butsu is the practice" to mean that Amida Buddha transfers his great virtue to sentient beings, and Rennyō thereby implies that "aspiration and directing of virtue" is directed from Amida Buddha to sentient beings. Therefore, Rennyō does not need to explain the meaning of "aspiration for birth and directing of virtues." In this *Letter* "namu" is identified as the *shinjin* of the practitioners who take refuge in Amida Buddha, and "Amida-butsu is the practice," as Amida's Dharma in which his mind of "aspiration and directing of virtue" to sentient beings is embodied.

As examined thus far, Rennyō's interpretation of the six-character Name has four characteristics. First, based on the passage of the fulfillment of the Primal Vow, he discusses it as the content of Other Power *shinjin* (section 2).¹⁰ Second, based on Shinran's interpretation on the Name, Rennyō discusses the six-character Name as the relationship between practitioners and Amida's Dharma by reinterpreting Shan-tao's interpretation of the six-character Name explained as the practitioners' aspiration and practice (sections 3 and 5).¹¹ Third, Rennyō interprets "taking refuge" as sentient beings' *shinjin* (*ki*) which is the "entrusting mind of sentient beings who rely on the afterlife" from the perspective of practitioners (*yakushō*). Fourth, he interprets both "aspiration and practice" and "Amida-butsu is the practice" from the perspective of Amida Buddha (約仏 *yakubutsu*) and synthesizes them by introducing the perspective of the oneness of practitioner and Dharma of Amida Buddha (*kihō ittai*). In the next section, I will discuss the influence of Shinran's interpretation of the Name on Rennyō's interpretation.

VII.

As I have discussed in a previous section (section 4),¹² Shinran's interpretation of the six-character Name appears in the *Songō shinzō meimon* and the Chapter on Practice in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. In the former text, Shinran explains the Name from the perspective of practitioners (*yakushō*) and in the latter text from the perspective of Amida Buddha (*yakubutsu*). The relationship between these two perspectives is like the two sides of a coin. Shinran, in the Chapter on Practice, interprets the six-

character Name as Amida's directing merit of Other-Power (他力回向 *tariki ekō*). In the *Songō shinzō meimon* he explains it as the working of the Name directed from Amida Buddha toward sentient beings. In the *Letters*, Rennyō accepts both of Shinran's interpretations.

Rennyō interprets "taking refuge" (*kimyō*) as practitioners' *shinjin* from the perspective of sentient beings following the *Songō shinzō meimon*. In the Chapter on Shinjin, Shinran interprets "taking refuge" as "the command of the Primal Vow calling to and summoning us." Shinran also provides two additional notes to his interpretation of the character "ki" (歸) of "kimyō" (taking refuge 歸命), saying that *ki* means "entrusting on" (ヨリタノム *yoritanomu*) and "relying on" (ヨリカカル *yorikakaru*). Shinran explains that the meaning of "namu," or "taking refuge," is Buddhas' command. In the *Songō shinzō meimon*, the *shinjin* of the sentient beings who accept the Buddhas' command is explained from the perspective of the sentient beings, that they respond "to the command and follow the call of the two honored ones, Śākyamuni and Amida."¹³

Rennyō's understanding of "taking refuge" is based on Shinran's above interpretation. For example, in the *Letter* (4–14), Rennyō writes, "'To take refuge' expresses the entrusting mind of sentient beings who rely on Amida Buddha to save them, bringing them to buddhahood in the after-life."¹⁴ In this passage, Rennyō demonstrates his interpretation of "taking refuge" from the perspective of sentient beings, which is practitioners' *shinjin* entrusting Amida's salvation.

In the *Songō shinzō meimon*, Shinran uses an expression that practitioners are to "follow the call" (召しにかなふ *meshi ni kanau*) and interprets "taking refuge" as practitioners' faithful entrusting (信順 *shinjun*) in the command of Śākyamuni and Amida. Rennyō, however, applies a different expression, "relying on Amida Buddha to save them" (たすけたまへとたのむ *tasuke tamae to tanomu*), to explain the meaning of "taking refuge." Here, we see the uniqueness of Rennyō's expression of settled mind (安心 *anjin*) which is developed out of Shinran's interpretation.

As for Shinran's interpretation of "aspiration for birth and directing merit" and "Amida-butsu is the practice," in the Chapter on Practice, he writes that "aspiration for birth and directing merit" is "the mind of the Tathāgata who, having already established the Vow, gives sentient beings the practice necessary for their birth" which is Amida's mind of great compassion to direct merit to sentient beings (大悲回向心 *daihi ekō shin*), or Amida's Vow mind of directing merit to sentient beings (能回向の願心 *nō ekō no ganshin*). "Amida-butsu is the practice," is defined as the "selected Primal Vow" (選択本願 *senjaku hongan*) which is the practice of those who receive Amida's directing of virtue (所回向の行 *shoekō no gyō*).¹⁵

In the *Larger Sūtra*, Amida Buddha has established Vows and directs to sentient beings the right practice for birth in the Pure Land and the

attainment of buddhahood through his mind of great compassion. Therefore Shinran understands that “Amida-butsu is the practice” means the virtue of the practice directed to practitioners which is none other than the Name (*myōgō*) praised in the Seventeenth Vow.

Based on Shinran’s understanding, Rennyo interprets both “aspiration for birth and directing merit” and “Amida-butsu is the practice” as the working of the Dharma of Amida Buddha. In the *Letters* (4–8), we find his major move.

Shan-tao explained long ago in his commentary: “‘Namu’ means ‘to take refuge.’ It also signifies aspiring to be born and directing virtue. ‘Amida-butsu’ is the practice.” When sentient beings take refuge in Amida—“namu,”—Amida Buddha, fully knowing those sentient beings, bestows on them the virtue of a myriad good deeds and practices, countless as the grains of sand in the river Ganges. This is what is meant by “Amida-butsu is the practice.”¹⁶

Here, Rennyo identifies Shan-tao’s words, “aspiration for birth and directing merit,” with “Amida-butsu is the practice” from the perspective of the working of Other-Power, or the perspective of the Dharma of Amida. This is considered to be Rennyo’s unique doctrinal elaboration developed on the basis of Shinran’s understanding of the Name discussed in the Chapter on Practice of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.

Why does Rennyo interpret the Name by identifying “aspiration for birth and directing merit” with “Amida-butsu is the practice”? According to Shinran’s interpretation, “aspiration for birth and directing merit” is Amida’s directing of his mind of great compassion, and “Amida-butsu is the practice” means the virtuous cause for sentient beings’ birth in the Pure Land (往生の因徳 *ōjō no intoku*), or the practice for the birth, which is the practice directed from Amida Buddha. Therefore, the relationship is the directing (toward sentient beings) and the directed (from Amida Buddha). Amida’s mind of directing to sentient beings (as “aspiration for birth and directing merit”) and the practice directed from Amida (as “Amida-butsu is the practice”) are one and inseparable (不離一体 *furi ittai*). They are accomplished inseparably within the Dharma of Amida’s Name. Where the working of the great compassion of Amida directing merit to sentient beings exists, there is the fulfillment of Amida’s great practice containing the unsurpassable merit for sentient beings’ birth in the Pure Land. And where the practice as “Amida-butsu is the practice” directed from Amida becomes accomplished, there is the fulfillment of Amida’s great compassion as his mind of “aspiration for birth and directing merit” for sentient beings. Amida’s mind of directing virtue and the practice he directs to sentient beings are, therefore, one and inseparable. They are none other than the manifestation of the compassionate working of Amida Buddha to

emancipate sentient beings. Therefore, Rennyo identifies Amida's "aspiration for birth and directing merit" with the meaning of the phrase "Amida-butsu is the practice."

Rennyo's understanding is clearly reiterated in his *Letters* (3–6):

[When we] entrust ourselves to Amida Tathāgata with the single practice and single-mindedness, awakening the one thought-moment of taking refuge in which we realize that he saves us, [Amida] graciously sends forth his all-pervading light and receives us. This is precisely what is meant by the four characters "a-mi-da-butsu" and, also, by "aspiring to be born and directing virtue."¹⁷

Rennyo developed a unique interpretation of the six-character Name as the relationship between practitioners and Amida Buddha (*kihōmon*), based on Shinran's interpretation of the six-character Name in the *Songō shinzō meimon* and the Chapter on Practice. For Shinran that "namu," or "taking refuge" (南無・歸命 *namu kimyō*) is practitioners' *shinjin* and "aspiration for birth and directing merit," and "Amida-butsu is the practice" is Amida Buddha's Dharma emancipating sentient beings. Rennyo understands that the *shinjin* of sentient beings (*ki*) and the salvific working of the Buddha (*hō*) are both accomplished in the Dharma of Amida's Name which is expressed as the oneness of practitioner and Dharma of Amida Buddha (*ki hō ittai*). This is the essence of Rennyo's interpretation of the six-character Name from the perspective of the relationship between practitioners and Amida Buddha.

VIII.

The last remaining issue regarding Rennyo's interpretation of the Name is his adaptation of the concept of the oneness of practitioner and Dharma of Amida Buddha (*kihō ittai*). As mentioned in the previous section, Rennyo's interpretation of the six-character Name as the relationship between practitioners and Amida Buddha (*kihō mon*) does not appear in any of Shinran's writings and is considered to be a doctrinal formulation unique to Rennyo. As has already been pointed out by various scholars, the term *kihō ittai* was coined by the Pure Land scholars in the lineage of the Seizan school of the Jōdoshū. The source for Rennyo's usage of the term can be traced to the *Anjin ketsujō shō*, a text thought to be composed within the lineage of the Seizan school.

The concept of *kihō ittai* is the central issue of the *Anjin ketsujō shō*. In this text, the concept of *kihō ittai* is addressed from two aspects. One is *kihō ittai* as Amida Buddha's accomplishment of the essence of Dharma (法体成就 *hottai jōju*), and the other is sentient beings' receiv-

ing of the accomplished Dharma (機相領受 *kihō ryōju*). As for the former aspect, the text explains,

Amida Buddha has already arranged the birth of beings there by wholly fulfilling, in our place, the vow or aspiration and the practice [that are essential in the Buddhist path]. When, for every sentient being throughout the cosmos, the awakening of aspiration and performance of practice were thoroughly realized and birth in the Pure Land thereby accomplished, Amida attained the perfect enlightenment embodied in Namu-amida-butsu as the oneness of practitioner and Dharma [*kihō ittai*]. The birth of foolish beings, then, is inseparable from the Buddha's realization of perfect enlightenment. When the birth of all sentient beings throughout the cosmos was consummated, the Buddha attained enlightenment; thus, the Buddha's realization of enlightenment and the fulfillment of our birth in the Pure Land were simultaneous.¹⁸

The concept of *kihō ittai* discussed in the *Anjin ketsujō shō* is, however, not the same as used by Rennyō in his *Letters*. In the *Anjin ketsujō shō*, *ki* (beings) refers to the mind of ordinary beings (凡心 *bonshin*) and *hō* (Dharma) is the mind of Amida Buddha (仏心 *bussin*). The usage of *ki* (beings) in the *Anjin ketsujō shō*, for example, is represented by the phrase, "practitioners who slander the Dharma or lack the seed of Buddhahood, or practitioners of the period one hundred years after the extinction of the Dharma" (謗法闡提の機、法滅百歳の機 *hōbo sendai no ki, hōmetsu hyakusai no ki*);¹⁹ and the passage, "For such practitioners as ourselves, who know only committing evil and who lack both the roots of good taught in the buddha-dharma and those valued in mundane life."²⁰ There are numerous usages of *ki* similar to these elsewhere in the *Anjin ketsujō shō*. The *Anjin ketsujō shō*'s understanding of *hō* (Dharma) is exemplified by this passage:

The Buddha-mind is great compassion. The Buddha-mind turning compassionate thoughts to us has pervaded and dyed us to the marrow of our bones. . . . There is nothing of the mind—including even the three poisons and blind passions—that is not thoroughly imbued by the Buddha's virtues. Practitioner and Dharma existing as one from the very beginning is expressed as "Namu-amida-butsu."²¹

According to these passages, "practitioners" (*ki*) refers to ordinary beings whose minds are defiled with the three poisons and blind passions, and Dharma (*hō*) is Amida Buddha. These passages illustrate the meaning of

kihō ittai in the *Anjin ketsujō shō* as the oneness of the Buddha's mind and the mind of ordinary beings.

In another passage, the *Anjin ketsujō shō* states, "The Buddha's virtues, from the beginning, have been fulfilled within the existence of sentient beings, in the oneness of practitioner and dharma."²² Here, the concept of *kihō ittai* is discussed as the oneness of sentient beings and Amida Buddha (生仏一体 *shō-butsu ittai*).

The *Anjin ketsujō shō* understands that *kihō ittai* has already been accomplished in the essence of Dharma (法体成就 *hottai jōju*). According to the text, Amida Buddha has already fulfilled the aspiration (願 *gan*) and practice (行 *gyō*) for the sake of sentient beings ten *kalpa*-s ago and accomplished the true awakening (正覺 *shōgaku*) by staking his Buddhahood on the birth of all sentient beings.²³ Therefore, the accomplishment of Amida Buddha's true awakening and the attainment of sentient beings' birth in the Pure Land are to be accomplished simultaneously. There is no birth of sentient beings without Amida Buddha's accomplishment of the true awakening. There is no true awakening of Amida Buddha without sentient beings' birth in the Pure Land. The birth of sentient beings (*ki*) and Amida Buddha's true awakening (*hō*), therefore, have already been accomplished together as one essence (一体 *ittai*). This relationship is called *kihō ittai* in the *Anjin ketsujō shō*. The oneness of the essence of sentient beings' birth and Amida's awakening as *kihō ittai*, which is the essence of the fruition of Amida's true awakening, is embodied in the Name of Amida Buddha, which is manifested as the *Namu-Amidabutsu* of *kihō ittai*. Hence, there is no birth of sentient beings without Amida Buddha's accomplishment of the true awakening, and there is no true awakening of Amida Buddha without sentient beings' birth in the Pure Land.

Then why are the minds of sentient beings still in the state of delusion? The *Anjin ketsujō shō* explains this problem as follows.

The *bhikṣu* Dharmākara, who vowed not to attain Buddhahood unless all sentient beings are born into his land, has already been Buddha for ten *kalpa*-s. [Nevertheless,] to this day we have been foolishly ignorant of the birth that has already been fulfilled on the part of Buddha (*buttai*) and have been aimlessly transmigrating [in *samsara*].²⁴

Sentient beings' delusion depends on whether practitioners know or do not know of the simultaneous attainment of their birth and Amida's true awakening (往生正覺同時俱成 *ōjō shōgaku dōji kujō*) accomplished ten *kalpa*-s ago. Rennyō, however, never mentions this theory of the simultaneous attainment of sentient beings' birth in his writings, nor does he discuss the concept of *kihō ittai* as Amida Buddha himself or as Amida's true awakening itself.

The *Anjin ketsujō shō*'s theory of *kihō ittai* as sentient beings' receiving of the accomplished Dharma (*kisō ryōju*) appears in a discussion of a passage from the *Contemplation Sūtra* that says, "The Buddha-tathāgata [Amida] is the body of the Dharma-realm, entering the minds of all sentient beings." According to the *Anjin ketsujō shō*,

The virtues of the Buddha, who is the body of the Dharma-realm, fill our ignorant and inverted minds to their depth; again, therefore, practitioner and Dharma are one and are Namu-amida-butsu.²⁵

The virtues of Amida Buddha's body and mind, which is the Buddha-body of the Dharma-realm, enter and fill the minds of ordinary beings so that the Tathāgata's virtues (*hō*) and the minds of ordinary beings (*ki*) become one. In the *Anjin ketsujō shō*, the concept of *kihō ittai* is discussed as the oneness of sentient beings and Amida Buddha (*shō-butsu ittai*). Rennyō, however, does not explain the concept of *kihō ittai* as the oneness of sentient beings and the Buddha. Instead he interprets the concept as the oneness of the Buddha's mind and sentient beings' minds (仏凡一体 *butsubon ittai*).

In the *Anjin ketsujō shō*, based on the understanding of the concept of *kihō ittai* from the perspective of sentient beings, the concept of *kihō ittai* is further explained as the oneness of the three modes of the working of Amida in the Pure Land and those of practitioners in this world (彼此三業 *hishi sangō*).

Further, Shan-tao explains concerning the contemplation of the true Buddha-body: "The three modes of activity of sentient beings of the *nembutsu* and the three modes of activity of Amida Tathāgata are mutually inseparable." The Buddha's perfect enlightenment consists of the birth of sentient beings, and the birth of sentient beings consists of the Buddha's perfect enlightenment; hence, the three modes of activity of sentient beings and those of Amida are wholly one.²⁶

Amida Buddha has already fulfilled the aspiration and practice for sentient beings and he has already accomplished the true awakening. Hence, sentient beings' aspiration and practice are none other than those of Amida Buddha. For sentient beings, there is no other aspiration and practice than the fruition of Amida Buddha's true awakening. When sentient beings take refuge in Amida Buddha, the virtues of the three modes of activity of the Buddha's true awakening manifest themselves in sentient beings through their recitations, worshipping, and mindfulness of Amida Buddha. The three modes of activity of Amida Buddha in the Pure Land and that of

practitioners in this world become one (彼此三業機法一体 *hishi sangō kihō ittai*).

In the *Anjin ketsujō shō*, the author's understanding of the concept of *kihō ittai* is based on the theory of the oneness of sentient beings and Amida Buddha (生仏一体 *shōbutsu ittai*), whether it is discussed as Amida Buddha's accomplishment of the essence of Dharma (*hottai jōju*) or explained as the sentient beings' receiving of the accomplished Dharma (*kisō ryōju*). This understanding is in accordance with the line of thought developed within the Seizan school scholars.

How does Rennyo adopt and reinterpret this Seizan interpretation of the concept of *kihō ittai* in the *Anjin ketsujō shō*? In the *Letters*, Rennyo clearly rejects the idea that sentient beings' settlement of mind has already been accomplished ten *kalpa*-s ago (十劫安心 *jikkō anjin*). This idea was particularly emphasized by the practitioners of the Jishū (時宗). Rennyo does not discuss the simultaneous attainment of sentient beings' birth and Amida's true awakening (*ōjō shōgaku dōji kujō*) ten *kalpa*-s ago. Therefore, it is clear that he could not possibly agree with the *Anjin ketsujō shō*'s interpretation of *kihō ittai* as Amida Buddha's accomplishment of the essence of Dharma (*hottai jōju*).

Nor does Rennyo accept the idea that *kihō ittai* means the oneness of sentient beings and Amida Buddha (*shōbutsu ittai*). Rennyo's theory of the oneness of the mind of Amida Buddha and the mind of sentient beings (*butsubon ittai*) is rather discussed as a benefit of *shinjin* and a virtue of Amida's Dharma. Rennyo does not agree with the analysis of *kihō ittai* as sentient beings' receiving of the accomplished Dharma (*kisō ryōju*) as it is discussed in the *Anjin ketsujō shō*. Therefore, we could conclude that, although Rennyo borrows the term *kihō ittai* from the *Anjin ketsujō shō*, he transforms and recasts its meaning in his *Letters*.

The most significant characteristics of Rennyo's adaptation of the concept of *kihō ittai* from the *Anjin ketsujō shō* can be summarized in the following two points. First, he discusses the concept of *kihō ittai* to explain the meaning of the Name, or Namu-Amida-butsu. Second, he reinterprets the *Anjin ketsujō shō*'s concept of *kihō ittai* by applying Shinran's understanding of the directing of virtue of Other Power (*tariki ekō*).

Regarding the first point, in the *Letter* (3–7), Rennyo says,

Therefore, full realization of the significance of the six characters "na-mu-a-mi-da-butsu" is the substance of decisively settled faith. That is, the two characters "na-mu" indicate the receptive attitude of the sentient beings who entrust themselves to Amida Buddha. Next, the four characters "a-mi-da-butsu" signify the dharma through which Amida Tathāgata saves sentient beings. This is expressed as "the oneness in 'namu-amida-butsu' of the person [to be saved] and dharma [that saves]."²⁷

“Na-mu” means sentient beings’ *shinjin* entrusting Amida Buddha. “A-mi-da-butsu” means the power of Amida Buddha who saves those who entrust him. Such beings and Dharma become one within the Name of Amida Buddha (Namu Amida-butsu). Therefore, all of the six characters of Amida’s Name are the *shinjin* of sentient beings (*ki*) and, at the same time, they are also Amida Buddha’s Dharma (*hō*). *Ki* and *hō* are, therefore, both accomplished by Amida Buddha’s working. Rennyō applies the words *ki* and *hō* to explain his understanding of the six-character Name. The *shinjin* of sentient beings (*ki*) and working of Amida Buddha (*hō*) who saves them are both accomplished in the Name as “Namu Amida-butsu” and directed toward sentient beings. When sentient beings come to realize this meaning of “Namu Amida-butsu” which is directed by Amida Buddha toward them, their *shinjin* becomes truly settled and their birth in the Pure Land becomes certain.

Regarding the second point, Rennyō’s understanding of the concept of *kihō ittai* as the working of the virtue of Amida’s Other Power (*tariki ekō*), Rennyō writes in the *Letters* (3–6),

When we reflect on Amida Tathāgata’s painstaking endeavors of five *kalpa*-s [of meditation] and innumerable, measureless *kalpa*-s [of practice], and when we think of the graciousness and wonder of his saving us so readily, it is hard to express our feelings. [Shinran] refers to this in a hymn:

The benevolence of “namu-amida-butsu,” [Amida’s]
 directing of virtue,
 is vast and inconceivable;
 as the benefit of his directing virtue for our
 going [to the Pure Land],
 we are led into his directing [virtue] for our
 return to this world.²⁸

Amida Buddha’s directing virtues, in both its going forth and returning aspects (往還二回向 *ōgen ni ekō*), are together embodied in the Name, “Namu-Amidabutsu,” of *kihō ittai*, which is directed from the Buddha toward practitioners. The concept of *kihō ittai*, according to Rennyō, demonstrates that the Dharma of Amida’s Name, which is *kihō ittai*, makes us entrust Amida. At the same time, we are embraced by Amida who makes us go forth to the Pure Land and then return to this world.

Rennyō reiterates this point in the *Jōgai no gobunshō*.

Sentient beings who entrust themselves to Amida Buddha and the Dharma of Amida Buddha become one. That is the meaning of the oneness of practitioner and Dharma [of Amida Buddha]. The

oneness of practitioner and Dharma [of Amida Buddha] is *Namu-Amida-butsu*. Therefore, the directing of merit in going forth and returning is the mind entrusting this *Namu-Amida-butsu*.²⁹

This *Letter* is a clear example of Rennyo's unique interpretation of the Name based on Shinran's teaching of the two aspects of the directing merit. The two aspects of directing of merit are accomplished in the teaching of the Name as *kihō ittai*. Amida Buddha makes practitioners go forth and return from the Pure Land through directing of his Name which is *kihō ittai*. By the working of the Name directed from Amida Buddha, sentient beings are made to attain *shinjin*, made to entrust (as *ki*), and to be saved (by *hō*). Here we see the accomplishment of the salvation by the Dharma of Amida's Name in *kihō ittai*.

IX.

In the previous section, I examined Rennyo's adaptation of the concept of *kihō ittai* from the *Anjin ketsujō shō*. In this section, I will examine how Amida's Name as *kihō ittai* works in the actual context of the *shinjin* of *nembutsu* practitioners.

In the *Letters* (4–14), Rennyo explains the meaning of “*namu*” or “*kimyō*” (taking refuge) as follows.

First, the two characters “*na-mu*” mean “to take refuge.” “To take refuge” expresses the [entrusting] mind of sentient beings who rely on Amida Buddha to save them, [bringing them to buddhahood] in the afterlife.³⁰

Rennyo understands that “taking refuge” is the entrusting mind of sentient beings who rely on Amida Buddha to save them and bring them to buddhahood in the afterlife. In the following passage of the same *Letter*, he interprets “aspiration for birth and directing virtue” as follows.

Then, “aspiring for birth and directing virtue” expresses the [Buddha's] mind that embraces and saves sentient beings who entrust themselves. This is the precise meaning of the four characters “*a-mi-da-butsu*.”³¹

Here, he understands that “aspiring for birth and directing virtue” is Amida Buddha's mind that embraces and saves sentient beings who entrust themselves. Then he identifies the phrase “aspiring for birth and directing virtue” with the four characters of “*a-mi-da-butsu*.” In these passages, Rennyo interprets “*namu*” as the *shinjin* of practitioners from the

perspective of sentient beings (*yakushō*). “Aspiration for birth and directing virtue” and “a-mi-da-butsu” are then interpreted from the perspective of Dharma of Amida Buddha (*yakubutsu*). He then concludes that the six-character Name is the accomplishment of Amida Buddha’s working.

Thus the two characters “na-mu” signify the sentient being, the person who relies on Amida. Further, the four characters “a-mi-da-butsu” express the dharma that saves sentient beings who entrust themselves. This, then, is precisely what we mean by “the oneness in ‘namu-amida-butsu’ of the person [to be saved] and dharma [that saves].”³²

According to Rennyō, the practitioners’ *shinjin* expressed as “namu” or “kimyō” (taking refuge) of sentient beings entrusting their afterlife to Amida Buddha and the Dharma of “Amida-butsu” who saves sentient beings are accomplished together within the Name of Amida Buddha, or Namu Amida-butsu. The six-character Name of *kihō ittai*, therefore, expresses Amida Buddha’s power to make sentient beings entrust him to save them.

In the *Letters* (4–8), Rennyō says,

We must bear in mind, therefore, that “namu-amida-butsu” expresses the full realization of perfect enlightenment [that was accomplished] when Amida Buddha vowed long ago (when he was the monk Dharmākara) that unless sentient beings attained buddhahood, he too would not attain perfect enlightenment.³³

The Dharma of Amida Buddha’s Name which is “Namu-Amida-butsu” in *kihō ittai* was completed by Amida Buddha who has already accomplished the true awakening through his aspiration and practice. All six characters of the Name, therefore, exist for the sake of sentient beings’ attainment of birth in the Pure Land and realization of buddhahood. The six-character Name as *kihō ittai* expresses Amida’s working to make sentient beings entrust him and to save them. From the standpoint of sentient beings, all six characters of the Name are *shinjin* entrusting Amida Buddha who saves them. From the standpoint of Amida Buddha, all six characters are the Dharma saving sentient beings who entrust him. The virtue of the true awakening of Amida Buddha has been completed as the Dharma of the Name. The Name is, therefore, the true cause of sentient beings’ birth in the Pure Land.

Rennyō’s interpretation from the standpoint of sentient beings, that the six-character Name is *shinjin* entrusting Amida Buddha who saves, is demonstrated in his *Letters* (4–11).

What is the meaning of “namu-amida-butsu”? And further, how are we to entrust ourselves to Amida and attain birth in the fulfilled land? What we must understand, first of all, is that we entrust ourselves to Amida by carefully discerning what the six characters “na-mu-a-mi-da-butsu” are all about. “Namu-amida-butsu” is essentially nothing other than the [entrusting] mind of us sentient beings who rely on Amida to save us, [bringing us to buddhahood] in the afterlife.³⁴

His interpretation of the six-character Name from the standpoint of Amida Buddha as the Dharma of Amida Buddha saving sentient beings who entrust him is discussed by Rennyo in his *Letters* (3–4).

What, then, is the meaning of the six characters “na-mu-a-mi-da-butsu”? We must realize that when anyone relies steadfastly on Amida Tathāgata, the Buddha saves him, fully knowing that sentient being. This is what is expressed in the six characters “na-mu-a-mi-da-butsu.”³⁵

In this *Letter*, Rennyo demonstrates his unique interpretation of the Name that sentient beings' *shinjin* entrusting Amida Buddha and Amida Buddha's power to save sentient beings, or his Dharma, are together accomplished in the Name as *kihō ittai*. Amida Buddha's working which makes sentient beings entrust him (*ki*) and saves them (*hō*) is concretely revealed in the Name of *kihō ittai*.

Rennyo interprets “namu” or “taking refuge” (*kimyō*) as the mind of sentient beings who rely on Amida Buddha to save them, bringing them to buddhahood in the afterlife. According to the understanding of the Chinzei lineage of the Jōdo school, “namu” or “taking refuge” (*kimyō*) is interpreted as sentient beings' mind requesting Amida to save them (度我救我 *doga kyūga*). Here it is noteworthy that Rennyo understands it as *shinjin* directed by the Other Power. In the *Letters* (4–6), Rennyo explains that,

“[N]amu” means “to take refuge.” We must know that, for ordinary beings like ourselves who lack good and do evil, “taking refuge” expresses the [entrusting] mind that relies on Amida Buddha. This entrusting mind is none other than the mind of Amida Buddha, who receives sentient beings into his great light of eighty-four thousand rays and grants to sentient beings the two aspects of the Buddha's directing of virtue, outgoing [from birth-and-death] and returning [into birth-and-death].³⁶

Rennyo interprets “namu” or “taking refuge” as the entrusting mind that relies on Amida Buddha. Then he explains that the mind of entrusting is the

mind of Amida Buddha who receives sentient beings into his great light and grants sentient beings Amida Buddha's directing of virtue, outgoing from birth-and-death and returning into birth-and-death. The mind of Amida Buddha (*hō*) who grants sentient beings the two aspects of the Buddha's directing of virtue is at the same time the figure of Amida Buddha's mind of directing merit to them, with the great compassion as the *shinjin* of sentient beings (*ki*) that is "the entrusting mind of sentient beings who rely on Amida Buddha to save them, bringing them to buddhahood in the afterlife."³⁷ Therefore, sentient beings' *shinjin* entrusting Amida Buddha has already been accomplished within the Name of Namu-Amida-butsu. Rennyo explains this in the *Letters* (4–6) cited above as "Thus faith has no other meaning than this. Everything is encompassed within 'namu-amida-butsu.'"³⁸

The mind of Amida Buddha directing to sentient beings his merits of going forth and returning is, in other words, his mind of aspiration and directing merit, or the Dharma of "Amida Buddha is the practice," reaching the practitioners' mind as *shinjin* which manifests in sentient beings as their entrusting of Amida Buddha who saves them and brings them to buddhahood in the afterlife. Rennyo interprets the six-character Name as *kihō ittai* from the standpoint of directing merit of Other Power which is the working of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow to make sentient beings entrust him to save them.

X.

In this essay, I have examined Rennyo's theory of the Name particularly focusing on its relationship to Shinran's thought. The key point of Shinran's understanding of the Name as the great practice (名号大行 *myōgō daigyō*) is that he developed his interpretation from the perspective of the directing merit of Other Power based on Amida's Seventeenth Vow. In the Chapter on Practice of the *Kyōgyoshinshō*, he interprets it from the perspective of the directing merit of Other Power (*tariki ekō*). And in the *Songō shinzō meimon*, by directly referring to Shan-tao, he interprets it as the working of the Name on sentient beings by the directing merit of Other Power from the perspective of sentient beings (*yakushō*). Based on Shinran's interpretation of the six-character Name in the Chapter on Practice and the *Songō shinzō meimon*, as well as the passages of Shan-tao's interpretation of the six-character Name, Rennyo interprets the six-character Name as the relationship between practitioners and the Dharma (*kihō mon*).

Rennyo's interpretation of the six-character Name is based on passages concerning the fulfillment of the Primal Vow. He interprets "namu" and "taking refuge" (*kimyō*) as sentient beings' *shinjin*, and "aspiration and directing merit" and "Amida-butsu is the practice" as the Dharma of

Amida Buddha. The *shinjin* of sentient beings and Amida's Dharma are accomplished together in the complete Name in the oneness of practitioner and Dharma of Amida Buddha (*kihō ittai*).

Rennyo adopts the term *kihō ittai* from the *Anjin ketsujō shō*. The concept of *kihō ittai* in the *Anjin ketsujō shō* is, however, discussed as the oneness of sentient beings and Amida Buddha (*shōbutsu ittai*). Rennyo transformed and recast the meaning of *kihō ittai* by introducing Shinran's concept of the directing merit of Other Power (*tariki ekō*). In his *Letters*, Rennyo demonstrates the nature of Amida's Name as the power of the Primal Vow which makes sentient beings entrust Amida who saves them. According to Rennyo, this is the context of *shinjin* in the phrase "hearing the Name, realize even one thought-moment of *shinjin* and joy" (聞其名号信心歡喜 *mongo myōgō shinjin kangi*) found in the passage of the fulfillment of the Primal Vow. The most important characteristic of Rennyo's interpretation of the six-character Name is in his explanation of Amida's Name, or Namu Amida-butsu, as the concrete content of *shinjin*.

Translated by Eisho Nasu

NOTES

1. Translator's note: This is the second part of the translation of "Rennyō Shōnin no myōgō ron: Shinran Shōnin to Rennyō Shōnin," first published in *Rennyō Shōnin kenkyū: Kyōgi hen 2*, edited by Jōdo Shinshū Kyōgaku Kenkyūsho (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1998), pp. 191–218, by Dr. Fugen Kōju (Prof. Emeritus, Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan). The first part of this translation was published in the *Pacific World*, Third Series 3 (2001): pp. 71–93. Translations of quoted passages have been taken, wherever possible, from available English translations in the *Collected Works of Shinran* (hereafter *CWS*) (Kyōto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), and in Minor Lee Rogers and Ann T. Rogers, *Rennyō: The Second Founder of Shin Buddhism* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991). All other quoted passages have been translated into English by the translator. The original Japanese for each quoted passage can be found in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* (hereafter *SSZ*) (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941), as indicated in the notes. Minor editorial changes and revisions have been made in the text and notes according to the journal's editorial guidelines and conventions of academic publication in English. The translator also wishes to thank Lisa Grumbach for editorial assistance.

2. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, p. 205; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 461.
3. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, p. 238 (modified); *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 497.
4. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, p. 203; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 459.
5. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, p. 252; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 510.
6. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, p. 245; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 502.
7. *CWS*, p. 38; *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 22.
8. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, p. 233; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 490.
9. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, p. 233; *SSZ*, vol. 3, pp. 490–491.
10. See "Rennyō's Theory on Amida Buddha's Name and Its Relationship to Shinran's Thought, Part 1," *Pacific World*, Third Series 3 (2001): pp. 72–75.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 75–79 and 85–89.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 79–85.
13. *CWS*, pp. 504–505; *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 567.
14. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, p. 238; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 497.
15. *CWS*, p. 38; *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 22.
16. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyō*, p. 233; *SSZ*, vol. 3, pp. 490–491.

17. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 203; *SSZ*, vol. 3, pp. 459.
18. Dennis Hirota, "'On Attaining the Settled Mind': A Translation of *Anjin ketsujō shō*," in *Rennyo Shōnin kenkyū: Kyōgi hen 2*, pp. 23–24; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 615.
19. Hirota, "On Attaining the Settled Mind," p. 26; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 617.
20. Hirota, "On Attaining the Settled Mind," p. 29; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 619.
21. Hirota, "On Attaining the Settled Mind," p. 40 (modified); *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 628.
22. Hirota, "On Attaining the Settled Mind," p. 47; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 634.
23. Hirota, "On Attaining the Settled Mind," p. 38; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 627.
24. Hirota, "On Attaining the Settled Mind," p. 24; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 616.
25. Hirota, "On Attaining the Settled Mind," p. 32; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 622.
26. Hirota, "On Attaining the Settled Mind," pp. 35–36; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 625.
27. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 205; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 461.
28. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo SZ*, vol. 3, p. 625 and pp. 203–204; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 460.
29. *SSZ*, vol. 5, p. 415.
30. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 238; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 497.
31. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 238; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 497.
32. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, pp. 238–239; *SSZ*, vol. 3, pp. 497–498.
33. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 233; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 491.
34. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 235; *SSZ*, vol. 3, pp. 493–494.
35. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 200; *SSZ*, vol. 3, pp. 455–456.
36. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 228; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 484.
37. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 238; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 497.
38. Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 228; *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 484.

