

Shinran's Indebtedness to T'an-luan

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Shinran's Position in Pure Land Tradition

THE significance of Hōnen's appearance in Japanese Buddhism lies in his epoch-making task of achieving the independence of the Pure Land school, which had long been regarded merely as a by-stream of Mahayana Buddhism. From various Buddhist disciplines he adopted the Nembutsu practice, insisting that in the latter days of the Dharma, Nembutsu practice is the only way through which all people, men and women, young and old, noble and mean, may equally be saved by virtue of the great saving power of Amida's Original Vow. As his teaching spread rapidly to all parts of Japan, a strong reaction to it arose. Myōe Shōnin (1173-1232) of the Kegon Sect was a representative of the older sects. He published a work entitled *Zaijarin* ("Smashing a Heterodox Dharma-Wheel"), in which he severely criticized Hōnen's radical standpoint. By and large, his criticisms against Hōnen centered round the question of *bodhicitta*. Myōe held that whereas the position of *bodhicitta* (man's aspiration for Enlightenment) in the Way of the Buddha is crucial, Hōnen totally neglected its importance, replacing it by Nembutsu, and therefore that Hōnen's doctrine could not possibly be called Buddhism. As Myōe was one of the most revered Buddhist priests of his time, a strict follower of Buddhist discipline himself and free from any sectarian or political prejudices, the penetrating question he raised was thought deserving of serious consideration. As Hōnen passed away immediately after he was released from exile on the island of Shikoku, it was only natural that Shinran, who inherited Hōnen's teaching, should have felt obliged to answer Myōe's crucial question. The situation in which Shinran thus found himself became one of the main motives for his *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*.

According to the Mahayana conception of a bodhisattva (*bodhi-citta*-inspired man; a seeker of Enlightenment), arising of *bodhi-citta* is regarded as the starting point of the bodhisattva's career. There is no bodhisattva apart from

bodhicitta: *bodhicitta* is what makes a man a bodhisattva. In Nāgārjuna's *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-lāstra* is a statement, "When *bodhicitta* arises in man, at that very moment he attains Enlightenment." The first movement of *bodhicitta* in man's mind is a crucial moment, at which a bodhisattva is born out of an ordinary man. A bodhisattva is a man who is *bodhi*-centered, and no longer ego-centered. His mind is now oriented towards benefitting others rather than himself; he is ever ready to devote himself for the benefit of all the other beings, even at the cost of his own life. A bodhisattva embodies altruism. He identifies his own destiny with that of all sentient beings to the extent he feels, in Vimalakīrti's words, "A bodhisattva is sick because all sentient beings are sick." Therefore the appearance or presence of *bodhicitta* should be the central concern in all ages for all people who would call themselves Buddhists, not to mention the eminent figure Myōe of the Kamakura Period. It was no wonder, therefore, that Hōnen's insistence upon the Nembutsu practice as the only means for securing the ideal of universal salvation should have aroused in the minds of his contemporaries a grave doubt as to the authenticity of his doctrine. It was under such circumstances the question was raised as to whether the Nembutsu teaching expounded by Hōnen denied *bodhicitta* or not. Shinran's life-long task was to inquire into what Hōnen had actually intended to reveal, and to express his own conviction in his own terms. His main work *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* is none other than the outcome of his spiritual inquiries into the teaching of salvation through Nembutsu alone.

Shinran's *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* is made up of six chapters. It is written in Chinese. It was customary for Buddhist scholar-priests at that time to write in Chinese since all the sources from which they quoted were Chinese. In view of the fact that Shinran left a number of writings in Japanese, clearly meant for the generally illiterate common people, it may safely be said that his main work was addressed to his contemporary scholar-priests who were able to read classical Chinese. He purposely accommodated himself to this style of writing in order to appeal to the understanding of the educated Buddhist circle of his age to make his standpoint more readily understandable. In any case, there is no doubt that Chinese in his time was not only literary and formal but a means of communication and a common language among intellectuals. He entitled his main work, "A Collection of Important Passages Revealing the Truth of the Pure Land Teaching, Practice, and Attainment." In spite of this title, we

find in this work a lengthy volume on "Faith" in its own right which is divided into two parts. He, nevertheless, did not mention "Faith" in the title of his work. Herein also we find a clue to his motive of addressing it mainly to learned Buddhists such as Myōe, for he was fully aware of his position and of his responsibilities to his age, since "Teaching, Practice, and Attainment" are traditional categories of the way of a Bodhisattva. Namely, a Way-seeker is first of all expected to listen to the 'teaching,' and then 'practice' it faithfully, so as to reach the final 'Attainment' or Enlightenment. Shinran tried to transcend tradition by first accommodating himself to it.

In order to show that Pure Land Buddhism is truly Mahayana and not his own arbitrary invention, in his main work, *Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu Shū*, Hōnen quotes extensively from a number of sutras and commentaries in addition to the Five Eminent Pure Land masters. Shinran followed the pattern of his predecessors in his main work, in which he mentions the Seven Pure Land Patriarchs including Hōnen. How highly both Hōnen and Shinran regarded the tradition, rather than neglecting it, may be seen from the above-mentioned facts. One important fact to be remembered in this connection is that in the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* Shinran's own words amount to no more than one tenth of the whole volume, showing that Shinran thereby intended to make the centuries-old tradition speak for itself. Both Hōnen's *Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu Shū* and Shinran's *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* adopt the form of *monrui* (collected passages), derived from Sung Dynasty China, which serves to demonstrate that one's opinions are not arbitrary but are based upon scriptural evidence. As it is customary for Buddhist scholars to argue in a dual form of theoretical reasoning and textual evidence, *monrui* was the form commonly adopted by Buddhist scholars, progressive and conservative.

Though Shinran was traditional in his outward forms, his thought was, in reality, drastically revolutionary. His way of reading scriptural texts was highly characteristic of this. For example, he construed a passage in the Larger *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra* related to 'merit transference' (*pariṇāma*) to refer to Amida and not man as had been interpreted by all his predecessors. Shinran was firmly convinced that his way of reading best revealed the profound implications of the text. In the selected texts of the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* we find not a few similar examples.

Indeed, Shinran wrote the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* out of devotion to Hōnen, his

spiritual master, as an expression of his gratitude for the latter's religious guidance. It is also true that it was Shinran's formal answer to the established sects with his scathing criticisms of heretical views outside as well as inside of the Pure Land School. But it is above all the first systematic exposition of Pure Land teaching ever attempted. Shinran's mission after his master's death was to make explicitly clear the quality of Nembutsu 'Faith' accorded by Amida and not created by man. This quality of Nembutsu 'Faith' was expressed by Shinran as being *tariki ekō* 他力廻向 ('accorded by the Other Power' or 'motivated by Amida'). In this way Shinran proceeded to demonstrate the fact that Nembutsu 'Faith' is none other than the genuine *bodhicitta*, because of its freedom from man's agency motivated by self-will (*jiriki*). In the following, I should like to delineate in what manner Shinran tried to demonstrate the intrinsic nature of 'Faith' implied in Nembutsu practice, with special regard to his indebtedness to T'an-luan's thought.

Shinran and T'an-luan

Throughout his life Shinran was possessed of four names: Hannen 範宴, Shakkū 釋空, Zenshin 善信 and Shinran 親鸞. He named his first son Zenran 善鸞. Seeing these names, we are naturally reminded of the Seven Pure Land Patriarchs to whom, by his own acknowledgment, he was indebted for the formation of his thought. They are: Ryūju 龍樹 (Nāgārjuna), Tenjin 天親 (Vasubandhu) of India; Donran 曇鸞 (T'an-luan), Dōshaku 道綽 (Tao-ch'ō), Zendō 善導 (Shan-tao) of China; Genshin 源信 and Genkū 源空 (Hōnen) of Japan. Apart from 'Hannen,' the names of Shinran and his son are formed from characters used in the names of those eminent masters. However, when we focus our attention on the two characters that form the name Shinran 親鸞, we realize that they derive from Tenjin and Donran, and this not without reason in view of the fact that in *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* Shinran shows his special reverence for T'an-luan by designating him as a bodhisattva. Shinran was strict in his use of the three Chinese characters which denote 'to say or state': 言, 曰, and 云; using 言 for sutras, 曰 for commentaries and 云 for sub-commentaries. Despite the fact that T'an-luan's commentary on Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Pure Land* (which is a commentary on the Larger *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*) is a sub-commentary, to which he should have applied the character 云,

he used the character ㊦, which is only used for a commentary. Thus it is clear that Shinran equated the value of T'an-luan's thought as expounded in his main work, *Jōdo Ronchū* (*Wang-sbêng-lun Chu*) with the thought expressed in Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Pure Land*, upon which T'an-luan commented. Elsewhere in the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* we notice Shinran extensively quoting from T'an-luan's *Jōdo Ronchū*; the chapter on 'Faith' in particular is occupied mostly by quotations from the *Jōdo Ronchū*. Above all, we find that at the very beginning of the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* Shinran introduces the key term of *ekō* in its dual aspects, going and returning, which is none other than Shinran's inheritance from T'an-luan. All these facts are clear evidence that T'an-luan's position in Shinran's thought is predominant. Undoubtedly in Shinran's case, the name does show reality.

It was Hōnen who designated the three sutras and one commentary as the most revealing of the truth of salvation through Nembutsu. They are the Larger *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*, the *Meditation Sūtra*, the Smaller *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*, and T'an-luan's *Jōdo Ronchū* (Commentary on Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Pure Land*). Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Pure Land* is a product of his devotion to Amida Buddha and is characteristic of his systematic representation of the Pure Land, the detailed description of which is found in the Larger *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*. It might be said that both Hōnen and Shinran are indebted to Vasubandhu and T'an-luan for a full appreciation of the purport of the Larger *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*. While Shinran was among the disciples of Hōnen at Yoshimizu in Kyoto, he made an assiduous and extensive study of those scriptures. Among the documents now preserved by Nishi Honganji in Kyoto is a one-volume copy of the *Meditation Sūtra* and Smaller *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra* that was apparently used by Shinran at Yoshimizu. Tiny characters are written on the page margins, and among them is found the name of *Jōdo Ronchū*, clear evidence that in his early thirties Shinran was already acquainted with T'an-luan's thought. Therefore, it is highly probable that Shinran was introduced to T'an-luan by his master Hōnen. After Hōnen's death, it was mainly through the guidance of T'an-luan's thought that Shinran succeeded in making clear what was left unclarified by his master as to the true significance of 'Faith' in Nembutsu practice originally expounded in the Larger *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*. Before going into an analysis of Shinran's indebtedness to T'an-luan, let us consider two important factors: the nature of

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Shinran's life-long mission, and T'an-luan's contribution to Pure Land Buddhist thought.

The Roles of Shinran and T'an-luan

As the founder of an independent Pure Land sect, Jōdo Shū, Hōnen occupies a prominent position in the history of Japanese Buddhism. The leader of a newly established sect, he was naturally preoccupied with the task of defending the doctrine of his sect as well as his political stand besides being engaged in his authentic mission of expounding among the masses the doctrine of salvation through Nembutsu only. He had to face violent attacks from conservative minds belonging to traditional sects jealous of his popularity. However, for his successor, Shinran, it was only natural that the nature of his mission should differ somewhat from Hōnen's. After Hōnen's death, there appeared among his disciples a variety of views or different interpretations of his teachings. Some insisted that for a man to be saved, incessant recitation of Nembutsu was necessary, while others insisted that faith mattered rather than the reciting act. Shinran thus keenly felt the need for clarifying the true meaning of Hōnen's Nembutsu teaching. The *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* is nothing less than the fruition of Shinran's life-long endeavor. It might be said that Shinran's task consisted of the critical examination of the quality of 'Faith' in Nembutsu practice.

It is certain that Hōnen's definition of Nembutsu was comprehensive. Therefore his Nembutsu was inclusive of all levels, motivated by *tariki* or by *jiriki*. Hence his disciples' confusion regarding 'Faith,' with all manner of interpretations presented. In Hōnen's eyes, there were two categories of practice: Nembutsu and all other miscellaneous practices. In his main work, he declared that all practices other than Nembutsu are not efficacious for attaining salvation in this latter age of Dharma, since they are not in accordance with the spirit of the Original Vow of Amida. His typical attitude toward the problem of Buddhist practice was obviously that of "Either-Or." This attitude is widely known as *Senbaku* 選択 (to select and to discard). In his lifetime, critical examination of Nembutsu had not been thoroughly undertaken. This task was consequently taken up by Shinran.

There are two main Pure Land streams in China, Shan-tao's (A.D. 613-681) and Hui-yüan's (A.D. 334-416). The former is based upon the *Meditation Sutra*

and the latter upon the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra*. T'an-luan, Hōnen, and Shinran belong to the former stream. Although Nembutsu recitation is common to both traditions, the former saw a harmonious unity of the thoughts of Non-being (*prajñāpāramitā* philosophy based upon the principle of *śūnyatā*) and Being (Yogācāra or *viññaptimātratā* philosophy based upon the principle of *prajñapti* or phenomenal being), while the latter was more inclined to emphasize the principle of *śūnyatā*. Therefore the ultimate source of their teaching differed: for the former it was the three Pure Land sutras and T'an-luan's *Jōdo Ronchū*, for the latter it was the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras. The former spread among the common people while the latter remained confined to a small minority.

T'an-luan was most instrumental in clarifying and systematizing the doctrinal points in the former tradition of unifying the principles of Being and Non-being. His contribution to Pure Land thought in general is so enormous that it is extremely difficult for us properly to assess it. However, the following points may be mentioned as they seem to have special bearing on Shinran's thought: (1) A harmonious combination of Nāgārjuna's *śūnyatā* philosophy and Vasubandhu's *Viññaptimātratā* philosophy. (2) the concepts of *jiriki* and *tariki*. (3) the idea of *ekō*. In the following let us examine, mainly from the above-mentioned points, Shinran's indebtedness to T'an-luan's thought.

(1) Unity of Being and Non-being

The state of enlightenment is beyond man's descriptive power. Yet nothing is more real or affective than enlightenment, for once we are actually faced with a man of enlightenment, his spiritual radiance is unmistakably felt and its effect is overpowering. Since ancient times, this indescribable experience of enlightenment found various ways of expression. An Upanishadic philosopher refused to express it in terms other than "n'eti, n'eti." Nāgārjuna contended that the ultimate reality can only be expressed in negative terms, and revealed his famous categories of eightfold negation. In the Upanishadic tradition itself, however, there did appear the attempt to express the transcendental experience of salvation or deliverance (*vimukti* or *mokṣa*) in such positive terms as *sacchidānanda* (*sat*, substance; *cit*, consciousness; *ānanda*, joy). These terms may be said to be aspects of the experience of *mokṣa*. In the Mahayana *Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra*, along with a number of negative expressions, we find an equal number of positive expressions of the state of enlightenment: "refuge," "cave," "light,"

“lamp,” “Other Shore,” “Peaceful Place,” “Serenity,” “vastness,” and so forth. The term “Pure Land” is obviously one such expression, that points ultimately to the state of enlightenment, or *nirvāna*. In other words, “Pure Land” is a positive concrete expression of “*nirvāna*.” The reason the term “Jōdo” (Pure Land) has survived to this day may be due to the Chinese mentality which favors concreteness over abstraction. Vasubandhu was the first in the history of Buddhism to show the structure of the Pure Land. This he did in terms of 29 categories, a result of his encounter with the Larger *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*. He did not come to this sutra out of mere intellectual curiosity. He existentially encountered the spirit expounded in this sutra upon his conversion. This encounter constituted the motive for his *Treatise on the Pure Land*, at the very beginning of which we find his famous words of confession in praise of Amida: “O, Bhagavat, I take single-hearted refuge in the Tathāgata of unobstructed light penetrating through ten directions!” As is known, a detailed description of Amida’s land of bliss (*Sukhāvati*) is unfolded in the Larger *Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*. From devotion to Amida, Vasubandhu attempted to systematize the main features of the Pure Land that are described in detail in the Larger Sutra. He classified all Pure Land constituents into three categories: land, buddhas, and bodhisattvas. The first refers to the place itself, and the second and the third refer to the beings who dwell therein. As to each category, he mentions 17 qualities (*guṇas*) for the land, 8 for the buddha and 4 for the bodhisattvas. Altogether he mentions 29 qualities for the whole of the Pure Land, thereby delineating the Pure Land’s content. T’an-luan inherited Vasubandhu’s Pure Land ontology. This was accepted in turn by Shinran.

Vasubandhu’s inclination towards something concrete and objective, as is exemplified by his acceptance of the substantive description of Pure Land in the Larger Sutra, may easily be understood by looking into his philosophical background. Although Nāgārjuna’s Mādhyamika philosophy refuses to represent *nirvāna* in positive or material terms, Vasubandhu’s Yōgācāra philosophy makes allowances for doing so. This accounts for the basic feature of Pure Land Buddhism which, embracing the Yōgācāra standpoint through Vasubandhu, has held a wide following among the common people in the course of history, in sharp contrast to Zen Buddhism which, adhering throughout to Mādhyamika philosophy, has remained a religion for a relatively small minority.

On the other hand, T’an-luan, with a background of Mādhyamika philo-

sophy, attempted to re-interpret Vasubandhu's interpretations of the Pure Land. Thus the unity of two opposing philosophical streams comes to be realized in the thought of T'an-luan. T'an-luan had submerged himself in the study of Mādhyamika philosophy with Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*, *Dvadaśanikāya-sāstra*, *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, and Āryadeva's *Śatasāstra* before his conversion to Pure Land Buddhism. If supra-experiential reality is to be expressed, it must inevitably take the form of "Being." This "Being" may be said to be the essence of the so-called "mythology." Mādhyamika philosophy refused to resort to the *upāya* of mythology. T'an-luan found himself in a position to deal with the "mythological expressions" resorted to by his predecessor, Vasubandhu. Thus, it could be said that he performed the task of demythologizing the Pure Land so as to bring all those who are faced with this mythology into direct contact with its inner spiritual meaning on an experiential level. T'an-luan executed this epoch-making task resolutely, and the result of his efforts bore fruit in his *Jōdo Ronchū*.

It is noteworthy that T'an-luan, who had once encountered the depths of Mādhyamika philosophy, is seen positively affirming the 'Being' of the Pure Land with its various adornments. T'an-luan says:

Since Suchness is the state in which all illusions have disappeared, Dharmakāya is formless. Because of its very formlessness it can take all conceivable forms. Therefore, all the adornments of the Pure Land with various qualities are Dharmakāya itself.

These lines have a Lao-tzean tone. It is quite obvious that here T'an-luan is seeing oneness amidst diversity. After touching upon the relationship between the oneness of Enlightenment and the diversity of the adornments of Pure Land specified by Vasubandhu, T'an-luan says:

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are made up of two-fold Dharmakāya: Dharmakāya in its aspect of suchness, and Dharmakāya in its *upāya* aspect. Out of the former the latter appears. By way of the latter is the former realized. Though distinct from each other, these two aspects of Dharmakāya are inseparable. Though they are one, they should never be confused.

T'an-luan is trying to say that although buddhas and bodhisattvas are men-

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tioned together with the land among the 29 adornments of Pure Land as if they were separate entities in their own right, they are simply a part of Dharmakāya itself. In other words, he points to the fact that they are authentic manifestations of the same Enlightenment that constitutes the essence of the Pure Land. To T'an-luan's enlightened eye the diversity is by no means a hindrance to his vision of the true essence of the Pure Land.

With regard to the Pure Land expressed in objective terms, T'an-luan declares:

The so-called Pure Land is none other than a path which leads ultimately to Buddhahood; it is a supreme *upāya*.

Shinran quotes these statements in the Chapter on Attainment of the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*. Therefore, as the other important statements, these may be taken as Shinran's own views.

We cannot help but be amazed at the boldness of these words. For when we hear the word *upāya*, we are unreasonably annoyed by a suggestion of something adulterated or superficial. But essentially *upāya* is not a synonym for falsehood. Rather it belongs, in its essence, to truth. In other words, *upāya* is none other than the dynamic aspect of truth. The activity of transcendental wisdom (*prajñā*) itself is *upāya*. However what interests us most in this context is that T'an-luan did not hesitate to make such a statement. Through this statement it is apparent that he wanted to express the essentially non-dual relationship between *nirvāṇa* or ultimate state of enlightenment and the so-called Pure Land. For he was firmly convinced that once one is in touch with *upāya*, somehow or other he is already in contact with truth because of the intrinsic solidarity of the two. To attempt to objectify what can never be objectified—this is one of the characteristics of Pure Land Buddhism.

As to the soteriological problems, T'an-luan makes, among others, the following statements:

Among a number of passages in the Mahayana sutras and commentaries, we often see the statement, "Sentient beings are after all 'non-arising' just like vast space." Why is it, then, that Vasubandhu Bodhisattva spoke of 'desiring birth [in the Pure Land]'?

All such things as the substance of sentient beings as imagined by an

ordinary man, and the substance of 'birth-and-death' as seen by an ordinary man, are in the last analysis unreal, like the hair of a tortoise or vast space. What is meant by 'Birth' that was sought for by Vasubandhu Bodhisattva is 'dependent arising,' and so it was only tentatively so called.

In these lines T'an-luan is discussing in the form of question and answer the question of who it is that desires birth in the Pure Land. By his question and answer T'an-luan suggests that there is no substance in the abstract concept of 'sentient beings' who are supposed to be leaving this world and going to the other world desirous of birth in the Pure Land. In these lines we can clearly see T'an-luan's rootage in the soil of *śūnyatā* philosophy. T'an-luan further states:

Why is birth in the Pure Land expounded? When the Five-fold Path of Nembutsu is practiced by the so-called human beings of this world, a fore-thought becomes the cause of an after-thought. The so-called human beings of the defiled land and those of the Pure Land are neither decidedly identical with each other nor decidedly different from each other. The same holds true with the fore-thought and the after-thought. Why?

Because if they were identical, there would be no law of cause and effect; if different, there would be no continuity between them.

This two-fold question and answer is highly significant in that T'an-luan is suggesting that 'birth' ultimately means 'conversion.' "The so-called human being of the defiled world" is an unenlightened man and "the so-called human being of the Pure Land" is an enlightened man. The relationship between these two types may be compared to that of Saul and Paul. Saul was a man bent on persecuting Jesus, Paul was a man who faithfully followed the footsteps of Jesus. Are these two men different or the same? The same relationship is seen in the life of Shinran. Yamabushi Bennen may correspond to Saul in that he was bent on persecuting Shinran. Myōhōbō, known as Bennen before he was converted by Shinran, would thus correspond to Paul. Is Bennen different from Myōhōbō or is he the same? In answering such a question, T'an-luan resorted to the typical dialectic of Mādhyamika logicians. In these particular

passages, we must not overlook that T'an-luan has drawn out the innermost meaning of 'birth' (*ōjō*) by suggesting the spiritual transformation that takes place in man's mind at the experience of conversion. The above shows clearly that T'an-luan interpreted the religious experience of 'birth' not in terms of actually leaving this world and going to the other world, but in terms of the inner experience of man's mind. This might be said to be another example of T'an-luan's version of demythologization.

(2) Ideas of *jiriki* and *tariki*

We have seen in the above how T'an-luan made a great contribution to the Pure Land ontology and soteriology through his characteristic interpretations. Shinran understood the experience of enlightenment or salvation in terms of "birth in the Pure Land," mainly through T'an-luan's dialectical exegesis. Shinran thus had through T'an-luan's exegesis a great deal to learn from Vasubandhu's presentation of the full significance of "Pure Land." T'an-luan, while standing upon *sūnyatā* philosophy, positively accepted the schematized representation of the Pure Land, in full recognition of the *raison d'être* of Pure Land Buddhism which arose in defense of the cause of universal salvation. Nevertheless, T'an-luan was well aware that the ultimate meaning of "birth in the Pure Land" consisted not in the matter of geography or physical movement but in spiritual birth or conversion, which he clearly expressed in Madhyamika terms as "birth of non-birth." On the other hand, the final realization Shinran attained was that the essence of Nembutsu is none other than the whole connotation of "Pure Land," for the essence of Pure Land is *nirvāna* itself. Pure Land is not a static or physical place but a dynamic reality or a ceaseless functioning of *satori* itself. It is not only a place all men are expected to reach, it is something to be realized amidst the actual human existence beset with all forms of predicament and suffering.

Shinran was perceptive enough to see the essence of Nembutsu practice in Vasubandhu's "single-mindedness," which was expressed in his confession in praise of Amida. He reached the conclusion that Vasubandhu's "single-mindedness" was the key to unlock the mystery of Nembutsu practice. With his keen insight, he perceived that it did not in fact belong to Vasubandhu as a man, but that it was Amida's Original Vow materialized as Vasubandhu's aspiring heart. Shinran also perceived in the "single-mindedness" a unity of the so-called

three minds—sincerity, faith, aspiration for birth—contained in Amida's Eighteenth Vow. In other words, he discerned the essence of the Eighteenth Vow realized in Vasubandhu's "single-mindedness" led by his insight that Vasubandhu achieved the unity in order to enable unenlightened sentient beings to acquire understanding, since although Amida put forth the three minds as a prerequisite insuring the efficacy of Nembutsu, there is no other authentic cause for attaining *nirvāna* than "Faith." Shinran's contention was that Nembutsu can be a right cause for all people to attain *nirvāna* because the Faith in Nembutsu is essentially not man's but Amida's. He used the term '*tariki*' (Other Power) in order to express this. Defining '*tariki*' in the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* chapter on Practice, he states: "The 'Other Power' is none other than the Power of Amida's Original Vow." Hōnen was also, of course, fully convinced that the practice of reciting Nembutsu was effective for all people of the latter day as the sole cause of attaining *nirvāna*; that it was not because Nembutsu is sincerely recited by men, but because Nembutsu was in accordance with the spirit of Amida's Original Vow. This is the very reason why he could be so emphatic in expounding the teaching of Nembutsu as the founder of the Jōdo Sect. However, he did not distinguish precisely enough the two aspects of Nembutsu: *jiriki* and *tariki*. For Hōnen all Nembutsu was, so to speak, *tariki*, because Nembutsu itself, as the sacred practice selected by Amida's Compassionate Vow, was superior to all other practices. On the other hand, Shinran's historical mission was to scrutinize the inner motive of Nembutsu practice. He made a minute examination of the sacred practices leading one to birth in the Pure Land, which he recorded in the "Faith" Chapter of the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*. In the course of this process, the ideas of *jiriki* and *tariki* played a vital role. The examination of "Faith" cannot help but lead to the examination of the vows and sutras from which it derives and the modes of birth which it gives rise to. For vows are the basic principle or the prime, spiritual force of which the sutras are the expressions, and the ensuing modes of birth are an indication of the quality of faith which produced them.

The terms *jiriki* and *tariki* Shinran adopted from T'an-luan can of course be traced to their popular usage. Ordinarily *jiriki* stands for "self-power" or "self-effort," and *tariki* for "Other Power" or "external help." It was T'an-luan, however, who gave a religious significance to these popular terms. For T'an-luan, *tariki* was not simply an antonym to *jiriki*, but moreover it covered the

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transcendental extension of the term. It is not that he totally discarded the popular, relative meaning of *tariki*, but that he added to it a transcendental meaning to make it a religious term. T'an-luan transformed a popular term into a religious one. So the term *tariki* itself was not created by T'an-luan. It had existed far prior to him, and it can even be found in Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Pure Land*.

In the following let us look into the significance of the task T'an-luan performed in clarifying the dual meaning of *tariki*. When *tariki* means simply a dependence upon something else, and as long as the "faith" is characterized as such, such a "faith" is not instrumental in leading to one's enlightenment, to his true independence from all external things. By *tariki* "Faith" T'an-luan meant the establishment of the True Self, while by *ji-riki* "faith" he meant our enslavement to our self-power, our limited, relative human power. *Tariki* "Faith" must be something that enables man to establish his True Subjectivity. The establishment of True Subjectivity is none other than salvation, *nirvāna*, *moksa* or "birth in the Pure Land." Only the *tariki* "Faith" in its religious sense makes man truly autonomous or sets him free.

It is generally believed that when we embrace the faith of *tariki*, we lose our subjectivity. In such a case, *tariki* means not Vow Power but simply dependency upon something else. Such a faith enslaves man rather than sets him free. When we accept Vow Power through Nembutsu, Vow Power is realized in us. Then it is Vow Power that is our real Subjectivity. As long as faith remains *ji-riki*, our subjectivity also remains relative, enslaved, limited and dependent. It is at this moment a transformation takes place. Furthermore, T'an-luan went so far as to see *tariki* Faith as the effect rather than the beginning of the Vow. In other words, he considered that the fact of man's embracing *tariki* Faith is the realization of the Original Vow of Amida, and not the beginning of man's religious life. He saw the effect (realization or accomplishment) in the cause where an ordinary man would see merely the beginning. To the eyes of an unenlightened man, our act of believing is the start of religious life. For T'an-luan, however, our belief was none other than the realization of Amida's Original Vow. This interaction between Amida and man (though, essentially, they are not necessarily distinct from each other as between God and man) was called by T'an-luan "*eko*." This Shinran inherited from him.

(3) The Idea of *Ekō*

We have seen in the above that the term *ekō* has an important bearing on the event of "transformation" or the moment of birth in the Pure Land. As with *tariki*, *ekō* was a common term in India. It meant either "transformation" or "transferring of merit accumulated by someone for the benefit of others." In this case, too, everyday language came to be given a religious meaning: "*pari-nāma* which in Sanskrit originally meant a "change" or a "transformation," came to be used by Buddhists as "merit-transference." At least up until the time of Hōnen, *ekō* invariably meant man's act of transferring merit to others. But for the first time in Buddhism, the term *ekō* was given to mean Amida's transference of merit towards men. For Hōnen Nembutsu was always man's *ekō*, while for Shinran it was always Amida's. It was Vasubandhu who used the term *ekō* for the first time, presenting its two directions: going and returning. He meant by "going *ekō*" a Pure Land aspirant's direction from the defiled world to the Pure Land, while by "returning *ekō*" he meant an enlightened bodhisattva's direction from Pure Land to the defiled world. That is to say, for Vasubandhu there were two directions of *ekō*: one from the realm of *mayoi* (illusion) to the realm of *satori* (enlightenment), the other from the realm of *satori* to the realm of *mayoi*. T'an-luan accepted Vasubandhu's conceptions of the two directions of *ekō* and developed them further. T'an-luan, while accepting the ideas of the two directions of *ekō* shown by Vasubandhu, finally concluded that they were in fact reducible to one, the "returning *ekō*" alone, the direction of *ekō* from *satori* to *mayoi*. He showed it to be Amida's and not man's, and he qualified it as *tariki ekō*, the *ekō* motivated by the Power of Amida's Original Vow.

It was accordingly thought to be Amida's working itself that man acquires Faith, for essentially there is only one *ekō*. It is now apparent that Shinran's well-known teaching of "Faith in the Other Power" is thus indebted to this insight of T'an-luan into the nature of *ekō*. In the *Jōdo Ronchū* T'an-luan declares:

If we clearly look into the source of this idea, Tathāgata Amida is the promotive agent.

This declaration was quoted by Shinran in the Chapter on Practice of the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*. T'an-luan pointed out that ultimately our aspiration for the

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Pure Land itself originates from Amida. He then continues:

Of all things our birth in the Pure Land and the works of the bodhisattvas of other lands, arise from the power of the vows of Tathāgata Amida. Why is it so? Should things not arise from the power of the forty-eight vows of the Buddha, they would have been taken in vain.

Shinran expressed the meaning of *tariki ekō* in his own words as "*fu-ekō*" ("non-*ekō*"). *Fu-ekō* means "not man's *ekō*," hence Amida's. He states in the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*:

Therefore it is clearly known that this Nembutsu practice is not the practice of self-power by common men and sages. Therefore it is called the practice of *fu-ekō*.

Again, Shinran reversed the meaning of the expression "*Hotsugan ekō*" (To aspire for birth and transfer the merit) that had invariably been taken as man's action toward Amida, and says:

Hotsugan ekō refers to the Tathāgata's (Amida's) aspiration, in which he, having already taken the Vow, endows sentient beings with their Practice.

In this way Shinran's *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* might be said to be permeated throughout by the insight of *tariki ekō*. In this respect T'an-luan's influence upon Shinran's teaching is indeed considerable. In conclusion, it may be said that in the light of T'an-luan's insight, Shinran executed the task of examining the quality of Nembutsu Faith mainly from the view-points of *tariki* and *ekō*, and clarified that the Original Vow of Amida, that is usually regarded as the Other Power by man, realized itself in man's Faith, thus truly establishing his Subjectivity. That Amida's Vow realizes itself as man's Faith and at the same time Faith proves the presence of the Vow, and that the evidence of the realization of the Vow is none other than man's Faith—all this was the central theme of the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*. Without T'an-luan's genius Shinran could not have succeeded to the extent he did in making this clear.