

The Assimilation of T'an-luan's Teaching into Shinran's Thought and Its Subsequent Development

—A process in the formation of Shinran's Thought—

Akira HATAYA

This thesis, subsequent to my former one entitled "Introduction to T'an-luan's Teaching" (The Annual Report of Researches of Otani University; No. 17), is an attempt at inquiring into how T'an-luan's teaching was accepted and developed by Shinran in the course of the formation of his own teaching.

The Pure Land teaching in Japan unfolded itself from the beginning with Shan-tao's teaching as its mainstream, whereas T'an-luan's doctrine was accepted during the Nara period mainly by the San-lun sect. During the Heian period, however, T'an-luan's thought came to be assimilated into the Pure Land teaching of the Tendai school. The teachings of Genshin, who consummated the Pure Land teaching on Mt. Hiei, and Honen, founder of the Jodo sect, were formed predominantly by Shan-tao's teaching. Shinran too inherited Honen's teaching and by necessity Shan-tao's upon which it was based, both of which basically aimed at elucidating the universal deliverance of ordinary beings through the Way of Nembutsu. That is to say, the historical event of Honen's achieving independence of the Pure Land sect was brought about through his radical criticism of the general estimation of the value of the Nembutsu. According to Honen, the Nembutsu had theretofore in the Pure Land tradition been regarded as inferior in value to the other practices (i.e., keeping precepts and practicing meditation), and therefore only as skillful means despite its easily practicable nature. Through Honen's elucidation it became clear that the Nembutsu is not only supreme in value but a way of deliverance

by far the most accessible to all people.

Honen's task consisted in proclaiming the Nembutsu selected by the Original Vow, the basic theme of his *Senjaku-shū*. In other words, his interpretation of Nembutsu as being the fruit of selection by Amida's Original Vow must be called an epoch-making declaration. In Honen's interpretation, however, it was not yet fully reasoned out that the Nembutsu uttered by ordinary beings was in fact effected by Amida's working. For this reason, it was undeniable that the relationship between Amida and sentient beings was held to be relative, and therefore the Nembutsu came to be regarded by most people merely as a means of deliverance.

The task of Shinran's doctrine consisted in thoroughly criticising such an erroneous understanding of Nembutsu through clarifying that Nembutsu was a genuine religious practice free from man's self-seeking desires, and thereby consummating the cause of Honen's teaching. This was an attempt on the part of Shinran at carrying Honen's standpoint of "selection" farther to the teaching of "*ekō*" (*pariṇāma*). In contrast to Shan-tao's influence on Honen's teaching, it was T'an-luan's thought that had a significant role to play in forming Shinran's teaching.

Shinran proceeded to elucidate that Nembutsu was a practice accorded by Amida through the logic typical of T'an-luan's teaching. T'an-luan had apologetically interpreted the teaching of birth in the Pure Land by Mahayana, or in particular, Mādhyamika logic. At the same time it was Shinran who proved the Pure Land teaching to be the ultimate form of Mahayana Buddhism by positively reasoning that the Way of birth in the Pure Land was the Way of ultimately attaining the great Nirvana. In this sense, the significance of Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* lies not only in its being a prominent religious writing but a commentary on Mahayana Buddhist teachings.

Thus from such a viewpoint I have dealt with Shinran's view of T'an-luan in his *Kyōgyōshinshō* and *Nyūshutsu-nimonge* (Gāthā on the Entering and Outgoing Phases).