

On Shinran's Changing His Name

NOBUTSUKA Tomomichi

Recently, Professor Honda Hiroyuki has argued that the change in name mentioned in the phrase “Further, since my name ‘Shakkū’ has been changed in accord with a revelation in a dream, on the same day he wrote the characters of my new name in his own hand” (Hirota 1997, I: 290, slightly amended) found in the passage concerning the copying of the *Senjakushū* in the postscript to the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, refers to the fact that Shinran changed his name from Shakkū to Shinran. This paper is my reflections to Professor Honda’s argument.

First, in the first chapter entitled “The Copying of the *Senjakushū* and the Word ‘Name’”, I argue that earlier scholarship has followed Kakunyo’s *Shūi kotokuden* in understanding that Shinran altered his name to Zenshin. However, Zenshin is the hermitage name (*bōgō* 房号), while Shinran is his real name. It is inconceivable that Shinran changed his real name “Shakkū” to the hermitage name “Zenshin.”

Moreover, since there is a hundred days between the time when the *Senjakushū* was copied to the time when Shinran changed his name, it can be imagined that a debate took place between Hōnen and Shinran over the master-disciple transmission. The *Senjakushū* was written to proclaim the independence of the Pure Land school. But since it does not represent the entirety of Hōnen’s thought, important topics concerning the principles of Mahayana Buddhism are left untreated there. The two central topics that remain include the fact that great *nirvāṇa* (*mahāparinirvāṇa*) is opened up in the life of non-retrogression realized in the faith of other power, and that fact that this is attained through faith turned over by the power of Amida Buddha’s vows. Could it not be that the debate between Hōnen and Shinran over the master-disciple transmission concerned these points?

The second chapter entitled “Remaining Issues in the *Senjakushū*” takes up the following point. Since Hōnen’s *Senjakushū* was focused on the mission and is-

sue of the independence of the Pure Land school, he only discussed one thing: the nenbutsu of the selected vow. Thus the issue of faith directed towards the original vow, epitomized in Hōnen's words, "Since it accords with that Buddha's vow," is not taken up directly, even though it functioned as the faith that the nenbutsu is truly the absolute Dharma. This is because, if the issue of faith is taken up, it will cause schisms among Hōnen's disciples, as is shown by the "debate on the identity of faith" that actually occurred. It is Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* that took up the problem of the faith based on the original vow, responding to the two issues mentioned above.

Turning to the third chapter, "Issues of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*," I note that two passages from the *Senjakushū* are quoted in Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*. The first is the following passage found in the *Shōshinge*: "Returning to this house of transmigration, of birth-and-death/Is decidedly caused by doubt./Swift entrance into the city of tranquility, the uncreated/Is necessarily brought about by faith" (Hirota 1997, 1: 73, slightly amended). The second citation, found in the Chapter on Practice, consists of the title of the *Senjakushū* and passage on the three selections found in this text. In Shinran's own words found immediately after the latter quotation, he declares that the former passage reveals the "practice of non-turning over." This reveals that the citation found in the *Shōshinge* takes up the issue of how great *nirvāṇa* is actualized in the life of non-retrogression, while the passage on the three selections shows the way in which the problem of faith turned over by the power of the original vow develops from the problem of "practice of non-turning over."

As a matter of fact, from the fact that these two issues—great *nirvāṇa* and faith turned over by the power of the original vow—are taken up in the "debate concerning the three minds and one mind" found in the Chapter on Faith, we can see that Shinran's responded to the issues he derived from the *Senjakushū* in the "debate concerning the three minds and one mind." In the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, his major work, he developed his Buddhist system of the True Pure Land Buddhism in six chapters: Teaching, Practice, Faith, Realization, True Buddha and Land and Transformed Buddha and Land.

In the fourth chapter, "Judgment concerning Faith and Practice and the De-

bate over the Identity of Faith,” I take my hint from the writings of Soga Ryōjin, and consider the two incidents that took place among Hōnen’s disciples taken up in the chapter title. In the *Godenshō*, the anecdotes about the judgment concerning faith and practice and debate over the identity of faith appear suddenly after the account of Shinran’s copying the *Senjakushū*. Soga argues that these two incidents reflect Shinran’s experiences upon copying the *Senjakushū*.

Since the judgment concerning faith and practice concerns the state of non-retrogression backed up by *nirvāna*, it reflects Shinran’s experience concerning the issue of the faith opened up by great *nirvāna*. The other incident, the debate over the identity of faith, reflects his experience concerning the issue of faith turned over by the power of other power. This is shown by the fact that Shinran uses the phrase “faith granted by the Tathāgata” in this context. Both are issues that Shinran inherited from the *Senjakushū* which he experienced in his youth as Hōnen’s disciple.

In the fifth chapter, entitled “The Transmission of the *Jōdo ronchū* in Japan,” I discuss how the *Jōdo ronchū*, which is already found in the *Shōsōin monjo*, was transmitted up to Shinran’s time. Before Shinran, the *Jōdo ronchū* was transmitted by monks of the Sanron school of Tōdaiji, such as Chikō, Eikan and Chinkai. Although there is the possibility that it was known on Mt. Hiei, it is not cited in any Tendai texts. Among Shinran’s contemporaries, only Hōnen’s disciples like Ryūkan and Chōsai cite the *Jōdo ronchū*, suggesting that Hōnen, who was closely connected to the Tōdaiji, owned a copy of this text. Probably, Shinran was advised by Hōnen to read this work right after he became a member of Hōnen’s community at Yoshimizu.

In chapter six, “Shinran’s Commentaries on the *Contemplation* and *Amida Sūtras*,” I take up these commentaries, the autograph copies of which are still extant, and hypothesize that they are notes of Hōnen’s lectures which Shinran heard during his Yoshimizu years. In these commentaries, Tenjin’s *Pure Land Treatise* is cited four times, while the passage on the virtues of Amida Buddha’s physical actions is cited once.

Hōnen maintained that the “three sūtras and one treatise” are the main texts of the Pure Land school. In his lectures, he mentions the *Jōdo ronchū* only in con-

nection with his exegesis on the two paths and generally relies on Dōshaku and Zendō. However, it can be surmised that Shinran, who attended Hōnen's lectures, attempted from a very early point in time to reinterpret the Pure Land teachings from the standpoint of Tenjin, Donran and their understanding of the *Larger Sūtra*. Moreover, since the passages from the *Jōdo ronchū* cited in the commentaries are totally identical to that cited in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* that Shinran personally annotated, it can be seen that he was already able to read the *Jōdo ronchū* accurately at this time.

Through this study, I have attempted to show that the “name” mentioned in connection with the copying of the *Senjakushū* in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* postscript refers to the name “Shinran” that Hōnen gave to Shakkū. Hōnen gave Shakkū this name because, through the discussion between Hōnen and Shinran over the *Senjakushū*, the latter's thoughts had coalesced into the two issues mentioned above. Realizing this, Hōnen took one character each from the names of Tenjin and Donran, and gave it to Shakkū.

Bibliography

Hirota, Dennis et. al. trs. 1997. *The Collected Works of Shinran*. 2 vols. Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha.