

COMMEMORATIVE LECTURE

The Many Faces of Shinran: Images from D. T. Suzuki and *The Eastern Buddhist**

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IN THE LATE nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Japanese Buddhism stood at a crossroads. Prior to that period it held a virtual monopoly on the Japanese mind. In ancient and medieval times almost all social, cultural, and intellectual activities—whether ritual, cosmology, art, literature, social organization, political legitimation, economic production, or religious life and practice—were tied directly or indirectly to Buddhism. By early modern times, that is, the Tokugawa 徳川 period (1603–1867), Buddhism stood as the dominant worldview, though other ways of thinking—Neo-Confucianism (*shushigaku* 朱子学), Western Learning (*yōgaku* 洋学), and Nativist Thought (*kokugaku* 国学)—began to destabilize its authority. At the beginning of the Meiji 明治 period (1868–1912), Buddhism tumbled from its place of prominence and underwent the harshest attack of its entire history in Japan under the so-called *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈 persecution. Portrayed as an antiquated mindset, irreconcilable with a new, modern Japan, it lost most of its social, political, and economic clout. It would take all of Buddhism's creative energies to reestablish its credibility in the face of this challenge.

This crisis brought to the fore a new generation of Japanese Buddhists who rose to the challenge. Instead of resisting modernization, they embraced it and sought to identify facets and dimensions of Buddhism that were fully compatible with the modern world. This was not an easy task, for on the

* Editor's note: In order to mark the ninetieth anniversary of the founding of the Eastern Buddhist Society, a public symposium was held at Otani University on 16 May 2011. The lecture presented by Professor Dobbins and responses by the current and a former Secretary-General of the society are included here in this commemorative issue.

one hand there were secular and political forces in Japan who were wary of Buddhism's resurgence and on the other there were conservative Buddhist forces who resisted any ideological or institutional change. Hence, Buddhist reformers had to advance their cause along two fronts, both externally in society and internally within their own sectarian organizations.

During this period every form of Buddhism had its own stories of advancement to tell, but Shin Buddhism, encompassing both the Higashi 東 and the Nishi Honganji 西本願寺 branches, stood out as a major contributor to these reforms. For instance, Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911) was the most eloquent defender of Buddhism during the darkest days of the persecution, and he subsequently helped articulate a new identity for Buddhism in the Meiji period. Nanjō Bun'yū 南条文雄 (1849–1927) and Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945), for their part, traveled to England to study Sanskrit with F. Max Müller (1823–1900) and pioneered a philologically based, critical analysis of Buddhist texts on which *bukkyōgaku* 仏教学, or Buddhist studies, was established as an academic field. Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903), on the other hand, helped formulate a new Western-inspired, philosophical style of discourse in which Buddhist ideas could be expressed. All these figures and many others ushered Buddhism into a modern age and reestablished it as a legitimate and respected voice in Japanese society only decades after its humiliation in early Meiji.

Among the many accomplishments of modern Shin reformers was the development of a new image of Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), the revered founder of Shin Buddhism. Beginning in Shinran's own lifetime, a sacred image of him had dominated Shin Buddhism. He was seen not simply as human, but rather as a larger-than-life figure—specifically, as a manifestation of Amida Buddha himself appearing in the world to deliver sentient beings to enlightenment. This depiction of Shinran has never been repudiated completely, but it was eclipsed in the modern period by a more humanistic representation. In this paper, I would like, first, to outline the pre-modern image of Shinran; second, to describe various ways that this image underwent change in the modern period; third, to identify the role of *The Eastern Buddhist* in this process; and fourth, to highlight an image of Shinran that D. T. Suzuki (Suzuki Daisetsu Teitarō 鈴木大拙貞太郎, 1870–1966) advanced in his later years.

The Traditional Image of Shinran

For all intents and purposes Shinran was looked upon as a sacred figure in pre-modern Japan. Despite the inexorable modern trend toward humanizing

his identity, remnants of this view can be found in present-day Shin Buddhism. The most visible example is the statue of Shinran installed in the main hall of both the Higashi and Nishi Honganji temples. Its enshrinement on the central altar follows the pattern of the enshrinement of other sacred beings in medieval Japan. The first thing to note is that throughout history Shinran's image, the icon itself, was treated as a living figure that had the capacity to interact with those approaching it reverentially. Special priests looked after the daily needs of the icon ritually, and if ever the temple hall was in danger the statue of Shinran was the first thing rescued. The image was, in short, the living embodiment of Shinran among the people and the focal point of their faith. In the modern mind his statue may be considered simply a symbol or representation of Shinran, but to pre-modern Shin Buddhists it was none other than the miraculous presence of Shinran among them.

The second thing to note is that the placement of Shinran's image on the central altar of the main hall is identical to the placement of the Buddha in the Amida hall of the Honganji. Furthermore, within the main hall the image of Shinran is flanked on the far left and right by large inscriptions of the *nenbutsu* 念仏 in its nine- and ten-character formats: *Namu Fukashigikō Nyorai* 南無不可思議光如来 and *Kimyō Jin Jippō Mugekō Nyorai* 歸命尽十方無礙光如来. Between these two inscriptions we would ordinarily expect an image of Amida or possibly the third type of *nenbutsu*, the six-character *Namu Amida Butsu* 南無阿弥陀仏 inscription. It is striking that in the main hall of the Honganji the image of Shinran occupies this central position instead. To the extent that the *nenbutsu* is regarded as the verbal and written embodiment of Amida, the implication of placing Shinran in this spot is that he too is the embodiment of Amida. Certainly that is the subliminal message of the iconographic layout of the Honganji, a message that would have been the default assumption of pre-modern Shin Buddhists.¹

The identification of Shinran as Amida Buddha appeared in other ways in traditional Shin Buddhism. Most notably, it is mentioned in the *Godenshō* 御伝鈔, the most prominent religious biography of Shinran produced only a few decades after his death by his great-grandson Kakunyo 覚如 (1270–1351). The text states explicitly that Shinran was an incarnation (*keshin* 化身) or appearance (*raigen* 来現) of Amida. This claim was based on a dream in 1256 of Renni 蓮位 (n.d.–1278), who was a close disciple of Shinran's, and on another dream in 1242 of Hokkyō 法橋 (n.d.), an artist commissioned

¹ For an in-depth examination of the Honganji icon of Shinran, see "Portraits of Shinran in Medieval Pure Land Buddhism" (Dobbins 2001), pp. 19–48.

to paint Shinran's portrait.² The *Godenshō* became the most authoritative biography of Shinran in pre-modern Japan and the basis for the Honganji's depiction of his life. Needless to say, Shin Buddhism's perception of Shinran as Amida Buddha did not imply that he was the only worldly manifestation of the Buddha, for Mahayana Buddhism has always assumed that Amida could appear in countless, miraculous ways. But it did mean that the orthodox understanding of Shinran was as a sacred being, not merely as a human.

The miraculous identity of Shinran also underlay innumerable stories and legends that emerged concerning his life. Examples of these can be found in later biographies such as the *Shinran shōnin shōmyōden* 親鸞聖人正明伝. This work is attributed, perhaps spuriously, to Zonkaku 存覚 (1290–1373) in 1352, but most likely received its present form at the hand of Ryōkū 良空 (1669–1733), who compiled and edited the text in the early 1700s.³ I would like to cite several passages from this biography to illustrate the image of Shinran that prevailed in pre-modern times. The biography begins with an account of Shinran's miraculous conception. His mother is said to have been a pious woman who put her faith in the path to enlightenment. One evening she went to sleep facing the west while reflecting on the impermanence of the world. In the middle of the night she had a miraculous dream in which a light suddenly enveloped her body and entered her mouth. This surprised her, so she looked in the direction from which the light came. To the west of her pillow she saw a person with solemn features and adorned with jewels who proclaimed, "I am Nyoirin 如意輪 (Wish-granting Jewel) [Kannon 観音] who bestows on you a male child."⁴ From that point Shinran's mother was with child. This story, of course, resembles the account of Śākyamuni Buddha's miraculous conception in the ancient Buddhist tradition.

The *Shōmyōden* biography also describes various episodes from Shinran's years at Inada 稲田 in the Kantō 関東 region, in which he interacted with mythical creatures and the spirit world, delivering them from suffering into the Pure Land. For instance, when Shinran was forty-eight, a priest petitioned him to pacify a ghostly female spirit haunting his temple at the grave of a mountain bandit who had come to an unfortunate end. Shinran, assuring the ghost that robbers and murderers are not excluded from the Buddha's compassion, collected small stones, wrote passages on them from the three Pure Land sutras, and piled them on the grave. He also chanted the sutras

² *Godenshō*, in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* 真宗聖教全書, vol. 3, pp. 641–42, 646–47. Hereafter, *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* is cited as SSZ.

³ Sasaki 1910a, pp. 2–3.

⁴ *Shinran shōnin shōmyōden*, in Sasaki 1910a, p. 19.

and the *nenbutsu* for five days. In the middle of the night on the fourth day a voice came from the grave saying that after forty years of suffering in hell the spirit would be born in the Pure Land immediately.⁵

This biography also describes an occasion when Shinran encountered a huge, ominous snake which, when addressed, shed tears like rain. It confessed that in its previous life it had been a greedy and angry wife, resenting clerics and furious at servants. Hence, when she died she was reborn in the form of a snake—still burning inside though living in the water, infested with poisonous vermin that pricked and pierced her skin and flesh. Shinran assured her that even the dragon maiden (*ryūnyo* 竜女) at the bottom of the ocean had attained Buddhahood because of her faith in the Buddha. He then bestowed on the snake an inscription of religious lineage containing its Dharma name (*hōmyō* 法名) and the name (*myōgō* 名号) of Amida Tathāgata of ten-thousand virtues, and he urged her to have faith. The snake thereupon died and its body floated to the surface of the water. Shinran asked nearby villagers to retrieve the body and bury it in a giant burial mound, and chanted sutras and the *nenbutsu* for three days and nights for the repose of the snake. Then in the middle of the night flowers fell from heaven and a female deity descended to venerate Shinran. She said that she had cast off the body of a snake and attained the form of a deity, and that it would now be easy for her to be born in the Pure Land. As she departed on a cloud, all the villagers put their faith in the power and virtue of Shinran.⁶

Yet another miraculous event that appears in this biography recounts a time when Shinran was traveling and he had a mysterious dream telling him to enter the middle of three caverns in a nearby mountain the next day. There he found two large pots, an earthenware one filled with water and an iron one that was empty. Presently a number of starving ghosts (*gaki* 餓鬼) came out of a hole at the back of the cave and each drank a single drop as their meal of the day, a gift from a benevolent local male deity (*nantai gongen* 男体権現). Because they had been avaricious and self-indulgent in their past life, they were reborn as starving ghosts, unable to drink even two drops without it turning to fire in their entrails. Shinran thereupon taught them that evil beings can attain birth in paradise simply by intoning the *nenbutsu* because of its virtue and Amida's vow, and he led them in the *nenbutsu* for two days and nights. Then he encouraged them to have water, and they drank it all up without it burning inside. At that point the demon

⁵ Ibid., pp. 49–50.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 52–53.

master of the ghosts came back to the cave. When he went to have a drink, he asked where the water had gone, and Shinran said he had allowed the ghosts to drink it. The demon was angry, but Shinran told him that it is easy to replenish the water. Shinran then turned in the direction of the male deity with concentration, and the pot bubbled forth with water again. Seeing this sign, the demon threw himself to the ground and declared Shinran to be a living Buddha. Describing his plight and crying tears of blood, the demon implored Shinran to save him and all the spirits of the cave. Thereupon, Shinran chanted the verse about Amida's light shining all around (*kōmyō henshō* 光明遍照), and he had them intone the *nenbutsu*. After a day an auspicious five-colored cloud entered the cave and swept up the entire assembly of spirits. It then disappeared into the clouds of the western direction led by birds from heaven.⁷

These various stories from this medieval biography portray Shinran not only as a sacred being but also as a miracle-worker who brought deliverance to humans, animals, ghosts, and demons alike. Needless to say, our own reaction to such accounts is to treat them as superstitious legends superimposed over the historical facts of Shinran's life. We should remember, though, that however implausible these stories may seem to us today they reflect the dominant mindset and worldview of medieval Japanese Buddhists. If we examine Shinran's own writings closely, we can see that he too recognized the existence of a variety of spirits, both beneficent and malevolent.⁸ He also believed that Amida Buddha and other Buddhist figures can appear in the world disguised or in human form.⁹ Though these beliefs were the stock-in-trade of the culture in which Shinran lived, at the beginning of the Meiji period they stood as an obstacle to Buddhism's passage into the modern world.

The Making of a Modern Shinran

Among the tasks of Meiji Buddhist reformers was to present a credible and compelling image of Shinran. The old miracle stories were no longer

⁷ *Shinran shōnin shōmyōden*, in Sasaki 1910a, pp. 56–58.

⁸ For references in Shinran's writings to spirits of various types, see *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証, SSZ, vol. 2, pp. 72, 175–201 *passim*; *Shinran shōnin kechimyaku monjū* 親鸞聖人血脈文集, SSZ, vol. 2, p. 718; *Jōdo wasan* 浄土和讃, SSZ, vol. 2, p. 498, v. 106; *Shōzōmatsu wasan* 正像末和讃, SSZ, vol. 2, p. 528, v. 101; *Shinran shōnin goshōsokushū* 親鸞聖人御消息集, SSZ, vol. 2, p. 700; and *Tannishō* 歎異抄, SSZ, vol. 2, p. 777.

⁹ For instance, Shinran identified his own master Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) as a manifestation of the bodhisattva Seishi 勢至 and also as Amida Buddha. See *Kōsō wasan* 高僧和讃, SSZ, vol. 2, p. 513, v. 106; and *Jōdo wasan*, SSZ, vol. 2, p. 500.

believable, and without some other way of understanding him, his tradition seemed locked in the past. The development of a new portrayal of Shinran did not occur quickly, but rather was an organic process in which different people contributed bits and pieces. There was no unified plan among them, and the various contributors did not always agree with one another. But compositely they produced an identity for Shinran that helped Shin Buddhism make the transition to the modern age. The net effect of their efforts was to advance a humanistic view of Shinran in contrast to his miraculous characterization. This humanistic image had roots in pre-modern times, but it was largely overshadowed then by the perception of Shinran as a sacred and revered figure.

The rearticulation of Shinran's identity was just one small part of a broad and protracted attempt to transform Buddhism into a modern religion. One aspect of this transformation could be described as scholarly. Buddhism had to confront Western styles of critical scholarship, which differed markedly from the pietistic approaches of traditional learning. The most noteworthy development in this area was the creation of Buddhist studies as an academic field, integrating Western methodologies into the study of Buddhism. Another sphere in which new scholarly practices emerged was the field of history. Modern Western historiography was built on the rigorous examination of documentary evidence and critical investigation of historical claims. What this meant is that pre-modern historical narratives—for instance, miracle stories of religious institutions (*engi* 縁起) and hagiographic biographies of revered Buddhist figures—became the object of scrutiny and suspicion. This included the traditional biographies of Shinran, especially their descriptions of the spirit world, revelations in dreams, and miracles.

Under the influence of Western historiography, Shinran himself became the focal point of a radical critique in the early twentieth century known as the *Shinran massatsuron* 親鸞抹殺論, the hypothesis that Shinran never existed. The arguments and rationale behind this critique were that Shinran had never been mentioned in the most reliable historical writings of his period; that his identity was largely the creation of later generations of biographers who had a vested interest in presenting him in an exalted light; and that his so-called handwritten works, which were scattered at various temples, could not be authenticated.¹⁰ Though this controversial theory

¹⁰ This summary of the *Shinran massatsuron* is drawn from *Shinran shōnin hisseki no kenkyū* 親鸞聖人筆跡の研究 (Tsuji 1920), pp. 2–7. Tsuji's book is aimed at refuting the claim that Shinran's various writings cannot be authenticated. The *Shinran massatsuron* was popularized in part by Tanaka Yoshinari 田中義成 (1860–1919) and Yashiro Kuniiji 八代国治 (1873–1924), though it was apparently advanced by them in oral presentations rather than

never received widespread support, it helped to provoke a scholarly search for the historical Shinran. The traditional biographies of him, to the extent that they continued to be cited, were used selectively and with caution, and the scholarly goal shifted to the depiction of Shinran as a human being rather than as a sacred figure.

One result of this search for the historical Shinran was a new emphasis on other sources that could provide corroborative evidence for his humanized identity. Perhaps the most widely quoted source for this changing image of Shinran was the *Tannishō*. We have Kiyozawa Manshi to thank for helping propel the *Tannishō* to prominence in the modern age. He proclaimed it to be one of the three most inspirational texts in his life, and he often paraphrased its passages to convey his understanding of Shinran's teachings. Kiyozawa inspired countless followers—among them, Akegarasu Haya 暁鳥敏 (1877–1954)—who championed the *Tannishō* throughout the twentieth century and made it one of the most popular religious texts in modern Japan.¹¹

Though ubiquitously known today, the *Tannishō* has a rather complex and obscure history. The earliest surviving manuscript of it, a copy by Rennyo 蓮如 (1415–1499), was not produced until two centuries after Shinran's death.¹² Moreover, the text did not circulate widely until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the Shin Buddhist canon was finally codified and disseminated in woodblock editions.¹³ This does not mean that the ideas of the *Tannishō* are problematic. On the contrary, twentieth-century scholars have examined it intensively and concluded that it is historically reliable and doctrinally consistent with Shinran's teachings.¹⁴ But it does mean that the work was not popular until modern times. Though the common reason given for this is that the *Tannishō* was previously suppressed as a revolutionary text, I myself sometimes speculate that pre-modern readers actually found it to be religiously unsatisfying and even odd, for it did not highlight the miraculous image of Shinran that they found so meaningful and powerful. The text does contain a few pre-modern religious assumptions—specifi-

in published works. See *Shinran wa ika ni ikita ka* 親鸞はいかに生きたか (Mori 1980), pp. 14–15.

¹¹ Yasutomi 2010, pp. 60–62, 101–9.

¹² See *Tannishō*, SSZ, vol. 2, p. 795, for Rennyo's postscript to the work.

¹³ The two canonical collections are the *Shinshū hōyō* 真宗法要 published in 1766 and the *Shinshū kana shōgyō* 真宗仮名聖教 published in 1811.

¹⁴ For an in-depth examination and annotation of the *Tannishō*, see *Tannishō shinchū zōtei* 歎異抄新註増訂 (Taya 1973).

cally, it recognizes a spirit world that included heavenly and earthly deities¹⁵ though modern readers typically ignored these. Whatever its history may be, the *Tannishō* seems to have anticipated modern sensibilities—perhaps unwittingly—more than the traditional biographies of Shinran did.

There are several passages in the *Tannishō* that have become famous in the modern portrayal of Shinran. The first one appears in section two of the work, which describes Shinran's response to several followers who had made the long and difficult journey to Kyoto to inquire about his highest Pure Land teaching. Shinran replied that he knew nothing but the *nenbutsu*, which was taught openly by his master Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212). And he added that this teaching might lead him to hell, instead of to the Pure Land, but that he had no regrets, since hell was his destiny anyway. Finally, he told his followers that they must make up their own mind whether to embrace the *nenbutsu* or reject it.¹⁶ A second passage from the *Tannishō* that is also cited widely comes from the concluding section of the work. There Shinran is quoted as saying that Amida Buddha made his grand vow specifically for one person: Shinran himself. He expressed how grateful he is for this salvation considering the heavy karmic burdens that he bears.¹⁷ Both of these passages present Shinran not as an exalted figure, but as a humble religious seeker. They humanize his identity, in contrast to the miraculous image that was dominant in pre-modern times. This humanization was tantamount to a desacralization of Shinran. But by shifting the spotlight away from his identity as a manifestation of Amida, it allowed Shinran to remain the central figure in a new type of Shin Buddhism. He was transformed into a role model for religious living in the modern world.¹⁸

Another historical source that is now cited universally in modern studies of Shinran is the *Eshinni monjo* 恵信尼文書, the letters of Shinran's wife.¹⁹ These were discovered in the archives of the Nishi Honganji in 1921. Up to that time the identity of Eshinni 恵信尼 (1182–1268?) was shrouded in mystery. She was sometimes mistaken for or conflated with Tamahi 玉日, the fictive daughter of the imperial regent and high-born aristocrat, Kujō Kanezane

¹⁵ *Tannishō*, SSZ, vol. 2, p. 777.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 773–75.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 792.

¹⁸ For a longer discussion of the humanized image of Shinran drawn from the *Tannishō*, see *Letters of the Nun Eshinni: Images of Pure Land Buddhism in Medieval Japan* (Dobbins 2004), pp. 118–21.

¹⁹ *Eshinni monjo*, also known as the *Eshinni shōsoku* 恵信尼消息, SSZ, vol. 5, pp. 99–115. For an English translation of these letters, see Dobbins 2004, pp. 23–42.

九条兼実 (1149–1207), whom, according to legend, Hōnen had urged Shinran to marry.²⁰ The discovery of Eshinni's letters—which were addressed to their daughter Kakushinni 覚信尼 (1224–1283), who was living in Kyoto with Shinran while Eshinni resided in Echigo 越後 (present-day Niigata Prefecture)—finally brought Eshinni's true identity to light, providing a wealth of information about her and also about Shinran. In fact, to the extent that they offered hard evidence that Shinran did indeed exist, they laid to rest the *Shinran massatsuron* once and for all. Since that time, Eshinni's letters have been a major source in virtually every biography of Shinran.

In content, the letters of Eshinni include a number of passages about Shinran, but the use of them to enhance his modern image has been complicated by the fact that the letters also contain a miraculous depiction of him. Specifically, in one letter Eshinni describes a dream she had in which Shinran was revealed to be a worldly manifestation of Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, and as a result she never looked upon Shinran as an ordinary person again.²¹ This dream, however, is not the primary passage that modern historians cite from Eshinni's letters. Rather, they focus on other passages about Shinran's life. One is Eshinni's account of Shinran's religious seclusion at the temple Rokkakudō 六角堂 in Kyoto after his departure from the monastic complex on Mount Hiei 比叡, and his subsequent pursuit of a way to salvation through the teachings of Hōnen. She quotes Shinran as saying that he would even follow Hōnen to hell, since he himself was lost anyway, a quotation that is faintly echoed in the *Tannishō*.²² A second popular passage from Eshinni's letters is the account of an illness that Shinran had when living in the Kantō region. While bedridden, he recited the larger Pure Land sutra²³ over and over again to himself. But after a few days he gave up this religious exertion, thinking that apart from faith and the *nenbutsu* nothing else is necessary for salvation.²⁴ Both of these passages depict Shinran not as a secret manifestation of the Buddha or a bodhisattva, but rather as a humble seeker of religious truth and salvation. This

²⁰ Concerning Shinran's marriage to Tamahi, see *Shinran shōnin shōmyōden*, Sasaki 1910a, p. 39. For an example of the conflation of Eshinni and Tamahi, see *Shinran shōnin shōtōden* 親鸞聖人正統伝, Sasaki 1910a, p. 167. For a contemporary historical critique of this legend, see *Rekishi no naka ni miru Shinran* 歴史の中に見る親鸞 (Taira 2011), pp. 105–9.

²¹ *Eshinni shōsoku*, SSZ, vol. 5, pp. 105–6; and Dobbins 2004, pp. 26–27.

²² *Eshinni shōsoku*, SSZ, vol. 5, pp. 104–5; and Dobbins 2004, p. 26.

²³ This is a common appellation for the *Wuliangshoujing* 無量寿經 (T no. 360), which is also often referred to as the larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtra* in English works.

²⁴ *Eshinni shōsoku*, SSZ, vol. 5, pp. 101–2; and Dobbins 2004, pp. 30–32.

image coalesced well with the portrayal of Shinran in the *Tannishō*, and thus provided a solid basis for the modern depiction of Shinran.

In the early twentieth century the life of Shinran became the subject of a variety of works, most of which presented him in this modern humanistic light. It is impossible to survey all of them, but I would like to focus on two that appeared in very different genres. The first is a literary work, the hugely popular play *Shukke to sono deshi* 出家とその弟子 (The Priest and His Disciples) published by Kurata Hyakuzō 倉田百三 (1891–1943) in 1917, before the discovery of Eshinni's letters.²⁵ This work is a fictional dramatization of Shinran's life that was performed on stage in the 1910s and 1920s and has remained in print for over ninety years. Kurata was clearly influenced by the *Tannishō* when he wrote the play. The second most important character in it is Yuien 唯円 (n.d.–1288?), Shinran's disciple who purportedly compiled the *Tannishō* from Shinran's sayings. Moreover, some of the dialogue in the play, as well as part of act 2, are based on passages in the *Tannishō*.²⁶ The play therefore became one conduit through which the ideas of the *Tannishō* spread into popular culture. In content, the story is structured around several events in Shinran's life, including some presented in the *Godenshō*, but many of the scenes and characters are fictional. It presents Shinran as a wise and compassionate teacher who endures agonies in his own life, including estrangement from his son Zenran 善鸞 (n.d.–1296?). Shinran exerts an influence on other characters as much by his own example as by the teachings he imparts. He acknowledges his own religious failings and displays kindness and empathy to others in pain. Shinran thus symbolizes the attempt to find meaning and peace in a world fraught with suffering and disappointment. Kurata's play appeared at a time of rapid modernization and secularization in Japan, and the image of Shinran he presented offered a model of humility and humanity for this complex age.²⁷

Another work that helped humanize the image of Shinran was the biography *Shijō no Shinran* 史上之親鸞 (The Historical Shinran) published by Nakazawa Kenmyō 中沢見明 (1885–1946) in 1922.²⁸ It was one of a number of biographies that appeared in the early twentieth century, but it has endured as a prime example of the critical historiography that arose in the wake of the *Shinran massatsuron*. In contrast to the literary freedom that

²⁵ Kurata 2006.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 77–85. *Tannishō*, SSZ, vol. 2, pp. 773–75.

²⁷ For a longer discussion of Kurata's *Shukke to sono deshi*, see Dobbins 2004, pp. 113–15.

²⁸ Nakazawa 1983. In some ways Nakazawa's approach resembles the search for the historical Jesus and the search for the historical Buddha in earlier scholarship.

allowed Kurata to create his own dramatic portrayal of Shinran, Nakazawa was held to narrow and rigorous standards of historical documentation and reductionistic analysis. He was dismissive of sources that proclaimed miraculous revelations or sacred identity as the basis for understanding Shinran, and he became a harsh critic even of Kakunyo's *Godenshō*, the oldest and most widely recognized account of Shinran's life. He considered it a partisan religious document aimed at creating a cult around Shinran to enhance the influence of his teachings and school.²⁹ Nakazawa was cautious about which sources to use in constructing his biography. He relied principally on Shinran's handwritten works, the letters of his wife Eshinni (Nakazawa's book was the first to employ this source), other materials that seemed historically credible such as the *Tannishō*, and Kakunyo's biography, purged of its aggrandized portrayal of Shinran. Nakazawa's biography helped establish a new standard for what episodes in Shinran's life may be recognized as historical and what sources may be used to verify them, a pattern that has been followed by most scholars since then. Throughout his study, Nakazawa was intent on excising the miraculous identity of Shinran and advancing the characterization of him as a *gudōsha* 求道者, a seeker of the way.³⁰ The net effect was to produce a humanized image of Shinran that was compatible with Kurata's, though grounded in the stringent principles of modern historical research.³¹

Images from The Eastern Buddhist

I would next like to turn to *The Eastern Buddhist* during the first two decades of its operation, 1921–1939, as a setting in which the modern image of Shinran was also advanced. The journal was established as an English-language forum for Buddhist scholarship, and its original purpose seems to have been twofold. First, it was to help revitalize and modernize Buddhism in the wake of the devastating blow it had received at the beginning of the Meiji period. In several issues of the journal reports of various Buddhist activities are presented as evidence of Buddhism's resuscitation and new-found vitality. Second, the journal was intended to counter the Western perception of Mahayana as a fringe and degenerate form of Buddhism. By this time the Theravada interpretation of Śākyamuni and Buddhism

²⁹ Nakazawa 1983, pp. 1–2.

³⁰ Nakazawa (1983, p. 2) says that Shinran became Hōnen's disciple because of his "fervent desire to seek the way" (*netsuretsu naru gudōshin* 熱烈なる求道心).

³¹ For a longer discussion of Nakazawa's *Shijō no Shinran*, see Dobbins 2004, pp. 115–17.

was so deeply etched on the Western mind as the most authentic form of the religion that it was difficult for Japanese Buddhism to receive Western acknowledgement and affirmation. *The Eastern Buddhist* became a powerful and eloquent voice on behalf of Mahayana and the East Asian traditions on the world stage of Buddhist scholarship. Amid the vast range of topics elucidated in this context, Shinran and Shin Buddhism were one. Two entire issues were dedicated to this topic, volume 2, number 5 (1923) and volume 7, numbers 3 and 4 (1939), and numerous other articles and editorials were likewise devoted to it.

It is hard to pinpoint a single, unified image of Shinran in *The Eastern Buddhist* during this period simply because he was invoked and interpreted by so many different people. Nonetheless, the various images bear the general characteristics of a modern, humanistic portrayal of Shinran, consistent with other depictions of him in the modern period. *The Eastern Buddhist* did develop its own approach and orientation in how to treat Shinran, which differed somewhat from other modern interpreters. It is these distinctive features that I would like to explore, distinguishing the journal's representations of Shinran from other contemporaneous ones.

Among the primary contributors to the journal were the two editors themselves: D. T. Suzuki, who is best known for his work on Zen 禪, but who perennially expounded on Shin Buddhism also, largely through the lens of his modernist interpretations of Buddhism; and his wife Beatrice Lane Suzuki (1878–1939), who was a gifted and widely read student of Buddhism, who sometimes approached it through the appreciative and universalizing sentiments of Theosophy. In assessing the contents of *The Eastern Buddhist* we must not underestimate the importance of Beatrice Suzuki, for she was the person most heavily involved in the production of the journal, influencing not only its language but also its editorial outlook. Other important contributors to Shinran's image were members of the journal's editorial board, specifically Sasaki Gesshō 佐々木月樵 (1875–1926), Yamabe Shūgaku 山辺習学 (1882–1944), and Akanuma Chizen 赤沼智善 (1884–1937). All three had been disciples of Kiyozawa Manshi and were on the faculty at Otani University. Sasaki had collaborated with D. T. Suzuki on Shin Buddhist projects in 1910 and 1911 in Tokyo and recruited him in 1921 as a professor at Otani, where Sasaki was the architect of its emergence as a modern Buddhist university.³² Yamabe and Akanuma, for their part, had studied in South Asia and England in the 1910s before returning to

³² "The Late Professor Gessho Sasaki" 1926, pp. 73–74.

Otani. Yamabe co-translated a selection of Shinran's verses, or *wasan* 和讃, that was published as *Buddhist Psalms* in London in 1921, and Akanuma, who specialized in Pāli texts, became a major scholar of early Buddhism.³³ In addition, numerous other contributors to the journal helped define the image of Shinran, some of them reputable scholars of Shin Buddhism and others casual students with humanistic interests. One that deserves mention is Mrs. Lily Adams Beck (née Elizabeth Louisa Moresby, a.k.a. E. Barrington, 1862–1931), a very successful author and enthusiast of the Orient who collaborated with Yamabe on the translation of Shinran's verses and who spent the last year and a half of her life in Kyoto.³⁴ Other noteworthy contributors were Sugihira Shizutoshi 杉平巖智 (1899–1984), a professor of English at Otani, and Yokogawa Kenshō 横川顯正 (1904–1940), a young professor who had studied with both D. T. and Beatrice Suzuki.³⁵ In all their writings, the various references to Shinran, great and small, helped to shape the image of Shinran that emerged in *The Eastern Buddhist*.

It is clear, first of all, that the prevailing trend in the journal was to present Shinran in humanistic terms. An editorial note in volume 1, numbers 5 and 6 (1922) reads as follows:

A kind of Shinran revival is sweeping over Japan just at present, and it centers around his personality. . . . The publishers are busy in producing books on Shinran, the founder of the Shin sect of Pure Land Buddhism. They are of various kinds, some literary, and some philosophical, while others treat of him from the humanistic point of view. The interest the people take in him lies principally in his humanness, and not always in his character as a religious leader or as the propagator of absolute "other-power" doctrine. Of course, his personality is inseparable from his leadership in a new religious movement. But the Japanese are at present regarding him as a character most human in the history of Buddhism in Japan. He was not a Buddhist saint as the term is generally understood. He was too richly endowed in human qualities to be such. He struggled hard against the stiff and inhuman conventionalism of the time. To assert his humanism was a most gigantic task in those days, but he was too true to himself to be a mere formal and lifeless follower of scholarly and ascetic Buddhism. He

³³ Shinshū Shinjiten Hensankai 1983, p. 2 (s.v. Akanuma Chizen 赤沼智善); p. 494 (s.v. Yamabe Shūgaku 山辺習学); and Yamabe and Adams Beck 1921.

³⁴ "Notes" 1931, p. 383.

³⁵ Wada 2010, pp. 1459–60.

confessed his sinfulness and ignorance, left the orthodox school, and asserted his human weaknesses or rather virtues. This is what most appeals to the younger generations with modern education.³⁶

This passage casts Shinran squarely in a humanistic and humanized guise, departing emphatically from the pre-modern representation of him as a manifestation of Amida. What made Shinran compelling was his own human failings as well as his awareness of them. For the younger generation, this image provided a model for confronting their own shortcomings and developing a life of self-awareness.

The journal's affirmation of this image of Shinran is reflected also in its reports of Kurata Hyakuzō's play, *Shukke to sono deshi* (The Priest and His Disciples). There are two references to it in *The Eastern Buddhist*, in volume 1, number 2 (1921) and volume 2, number 5 (1922). The second one is found in a brief report entitled "The Shinran Revival of the Last Year." It notes that Kurata's work was at the leading edge of an outpouring of enthusiasm for Shinran and that a spate of other popular works followed in its wake. The article, while acknowledging the human side of Shinran reflected in these works, points out that they take liberties with the facts of his life and even indulge in literary fabrication. It also finds fault with them to the extent that they only emphasized Shinran's human side without recognizing his ardent search for truth and his insight into human nature.³⁷ This characterization of Shinran, as a subtle, sensitive, and deep religious thinker, was one of the hallmarks of most articles in *The Eastern Buddhist*.

In portraying Shinran as a profound religious seeker, the *Tannishō* is cited here and there throughout the journal as a basis for this depiction. It is by no means the only work of Shinran's quoted, but it does appear more frequently than his magnum opus, *Kyōgyōshinshō*. For example, D. T. Suzuki's important essay of 1927 comparing the Zen and Pure Land approaches to Buddhism quotes the first section of the *Tannishō*, "there are no merits that excel the *nenbutsu*," and "no evils are strong enough to stand in the way of Amida's Original Vow." It also paraphrases Shinran's famous declaration that he did not know whether the *nenbutsu* would lead him to hell or not, but that he could only put his faith in Hōnen's teaching.³⁸ Likewise, Sugihira Shizutoshi's essay on the *nenbutsu* in Pure Land doctrine published in 1931 cites the *Tannishō*'s provocative claim that the *nenbutsu* is "neither a deed

³⁶ "Notes" 1922, p. 395.

³⁷ Kogetsu 1923, pp. 285–91.

³⁸ Suzuki 1927, pp. 90–91, 114. For the original Japanese text, see *Tannishō*, SSZ, vol. 2, pp. 773–75.

of merit nor one of goodness.”³⁹ Again, Yokogawa Kenshō’s article of 1939 cites two of the *Tannishō*’s most popular quotations: “Even a good man is reborn in the Pure Land, and how much more so with a wicked man!” and “I, Shinran, have no disciples to be called mine.”⁴⁰ These are just a few of the instances where the *Tannishō* appeared in *The Eastern Buddhist*. Though other works attributed to Shinran were also cited—including selections from Shinran’s *wasan* verses by Yamabe Shūgaku and Beatrice Suzuki⁴¹—the repeated appearance of the *Tannishō* across various articles created a recurring image of who Shinran was and what he thought. It is not surprising that the Eastern Buddhist Society published an English translation of the entire *Tannishō* in 1928, one that D. T. Suzuki apparently helped polish.⁴² All these references reinforced the modern view of the *Tannishō* as a foundational text in Shin Buddhism and as the crowning expression of Shinran’s teachings.

Another noteworthy characteristic of the journal’s treatment of Shinran is how little attention is paid to the historical details of his life. If there is any biographical sketch of Shinran in the early issues, it is the brief account written by Lily Adams Beck in 1921. It expresses great praise for Shinran, but gives little more than a chronological outline of his life: his noble birth in 1175, his loss of parents, his childhood ordination as a Buddhist cleric, his discipleship under Hōnen, his marriage to Kujō Kanezane’s daughter, his banishment to Echigo, his spread of the teachings in Hitachi 常陸 province (fulfilling the revelation at the Rokkakudō), and his return to Kyoto and death there.⁴³ What is surprising about this account is how simplistic it is, and even inaccurate. It gives the wrong date for Shinran’s birth and uncritically recounts the legend of his marriage to Tamahi instead of to Eshinni. In some ways it is difficult to fault Adams Beck for these flaws, for she was not a historian or a scholar of Buddhism, but a novelist and an ordinary Westerner intrigued with Buddhism.

The only other extended account of Shinran’s life in the journal was the English translation of Kakunyo’s *Godenshō*, published as “The Life of Shinran Shonin” in 1923.⁴⁴ It appears there without any critical introduction or

³⁹ Sugihira 1932, p. 38. For the original Japanese text, see *Tannishō*, SSZ, vol. 2, p. 777.

⁴⁰ Yokogawa 1939, pp. 300–301, 340. For the original Japanese text, see *Tannishō*, SSZ, vol. 2, pp. 775–76.

⁴¹ Yamabe 1921, pp. 70–79; and Lane Suzuki 1939, pp. 285–95.

⁴² Imadate 1928. For a review of this book in *The Eastern Buddhist*, see “Review of *The Tannishō*” 1931, pp. 381–82.

⁴³ Adams Beck 1921, pp. 140–46.

⁴⁴ Suzuki 1923, pp. 217–35.

annotation. This piece was actually a reprint of the translation that Sasaki Gesshō had recruited D. T. Suzuki to do a decade earlier, published jointly in 1911 soon after their friendship began.⁴⁵ By that time Sasaki was a recognized scholar of Shinran's biography. He compiled the most important collection of Shinran's biographies in 1910, titled *Shinran den sōsho* 親鸞伝叢書 (A Compendium of Shinran Biographies).⁴⁶ And he published his own extensive essays on Shinran's life the same year.⁴⁷ We would thus expect to find a scholarly exposition of Shinran's biography by Sasaki in *The Eastern Buddhist*. But by the 1920s when the journal was launched Sasaki's scholarly interests had shifted in other directions.

Lack of concern with the historical details of Shinran's life is reflected in other ways in *The Eastern Buddhist*. For instance, there is no review of Nakazawa Kenmyō's important book, *Shijō no Shinran* (The Historical Shinran), even though other major works on Buddhism were routinely reviewed. It is also noteworthy—even startling—that the journal contains no report of the discovery of Eshinni's letters.⁴⁸ No event in the early twentieth century influenced scholarship on Shinran's life more than this discovery. The letters made it possible to speak with historical certitude about Shinran's life, not unlike the impact of the Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscripts on the study of early Zen history in China—a topic that interested D. T. Suzuki intensely.⁴⁹ The fact that Eshinni's letters never emerged as a topic in the journal reflects one of its distinguishing characteristics—namely, *The Eastern Buddhist* was not a historically oriented journal, or at least not engaged in the search for the historical Shinran.⁵⁰ In fact, it seemed to have a greater tolerance for historical

⁴⁵ Sasaki and Suzuki 1911.

⁴⁶ Sasaki 1910a.

⁴⁷ Sasaki 1910b.

⁴⁸ The only place I can detect the influence of Eshinni's letters on the contents of the journal is in an article by Yokogawa (1939, p. 327), where it indicates that on the ninety-fifth day of Shinran's seclusion at the Rokkakudō he sought out Hōnen as his teacher and that he visited Hōnen daily for the next hundred days no matter how bad the weather was. This description matches the account found in one of Eshinni's letters (*Eshinni shōsoku*, SSZ, vol. 5, pp. 104–5). Yokogawa, however, may not have gotten these details directly from the letters, but rather from secondary scholarship, for the information in Eshinni's letters had become the basis for most historical accounts of Shinran by the time Yokogawa published this article in 1939.

⁴⁹ For an example of Suzuki's interest in the manuscripts discovered at Dunhuang, see "Reviews and Notes" 1932, pp. 107–10.

⁵⁰ The one example I have found of historical research published in the journal is the very brief survey of Western scholarship on the historical Buddha: Saunders 1927, pp. 162–68.

inexactitude and mythical representation than twentieth-century critical historiography would have allowed. What this means is that the journal had to deploy other strategies to articulate its modern and humanistic image of Shinran, strategies that might best be described as theological and philosophical.

One approach was to link Shinran to the model of Śākyamuni Buddha and Shin teachings to the doctrines of early Buddhism. By the time *The Eastern Buddhist* began publication in the 1920s, the prevailing view in the West was that the historical Buddha and the account of his teachings found in the Pāli texts of Theravada Buddhism were the original and authentic form of Buddhism. Moreover, there was a concerted scholarly effort to depict Śākyamuni Buddha as just a human and his teachings as a rational attempt to confront the sufferings of the world.⁵¹ *The Eastern Buddhist* was established in part to legitimate Mahayana Buddhism in the face of these scholarly trends. It did so, however, not by criticizing early Buddhism, but by linking Mahayana to it and arguing that Mahayana actually fulfills its true goals. Needless to say, this type of argumentation was based not on historical linkages, but on essentialist thinking—that is, Mahayana was presented as the actualization of the essence of early Buddhism, and hence not in conflict with it.

These assumptions had an impact on the rhetorical discourse of Shin Buddhism during the modern period. Prior to that time the three Pure Land sutras and the extensive Buddhist literature based on them were the core sources for validating Shinran and Shin teachings. But with the advent of Western-style Buddhist studies, new explanations and rationales were developed to situate Shin Buddhism within this modern Śākyamuni-centered understanding of Buddhism. Examples of this can be found in *The Eastern Buddhist*. For instance, Akanuma Chizen's article, "The Buddha as Preacher," draws a parallel between Śākyamuni and Shinran, specifically claiming that the personality and missionary spirit of the two were essentially the same.⁵² Another example is Yamabe Shūgaku's article, "The Buddha and Shinran," which argues that the three refuges taught by Śākyamuni in early Buddhism, especially to lay disciples, are the psychological and religious equivalent of the faith taught by Shinran. Yamabe concludes with the statement, "When the Buddha is more humanly understood, the inner relationship between the Buddha and Shinran will grow more apparent."⁵³ This type of argument, associating Shinran with Śākyamuni in early Buddhism, allowed Shinran to

⁵¹ For an overview of these developments in Western scholarship, see Snodgrass 2007, pp. 186–202.

⁵² Akanuma 1921, pp. 182–83.

⁵³ Yamabe 1923, pp. 275–77.

draw on the prestige that the humanized image of the Buddha had amassed in modern Buddhist scholarship. It is ironic, though, that just when the pre-modern association of Shinran with Amida became discredited, it was replaced by the modern association of him with Śākyamuni.

Other strategies for enhancing the identity of Shinran can be found in the contributions of Sasaki Gesshō to the journal. He published five articles in *The Eastern Buddhist* before his untimely death in 1926, all of them about Shinran and Shin Buddhism. Sasaki, though a specialist of Shinran's biography, did not focus on Shinran as a person but rather on his teachings, which he no doubt saw as the expression of Shinran's true identity. Sasaki sought to define and explicate Shin teachings within a wide range of religious, philosophical, and Buddhist ideas, thereby arguing that Shinran's teachings are more profound than they might appear on the surface. Like other interpreters of Shinran, Sasaki links him to early Buddhist ideas as well as to Mahayana philosophies that had not traditionally been used to interpret Shinran. If there is a recurrent theme in Sasaki's essays, it is that the inner experience of transcending self and other, *meum* and *teum*, or I and Thou, is at the heart of true religion.⁵⁴ Sasaki associates this idea variously with the concept of egolessness in early Buddhism and with the enlightened mind of the Buddha. He also links it to the themes of emptiness and supreme knowledge (*prajñā*) found in the thought of Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250), as well as to the concept of the *Ālayavijñāna*, or storehouse consciousness, in the teachings of Asaṅga (c. 395–470) and Vasubandhu (c. 400–480).⁵⁵ All of these, Sasaki argues, are inherent in and expressed by Shinran's idea of faith.⁵⁶ By interpreting Shinran in such an expansive way—beyond the parameters of conventional Shin dogmatics—Sasaki cast him as a major thinker in Buddhist history. He attached Shinran's identity not only to the teachings of early Buddhism, but also to the philosophies of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, which gradually emerged in the modern period as the most compelling systems of Mahayana thought.

D. T. Suzuki, the co-editor of and contributor-par-excellence to *The Eastern Buddhist*, also wrote several important articles on Pure Land Buddhism, frequently focusing on Shin Buddhism as its prime example. He was not a specialist in this area, so his expositions on Shinran and Shin Buddhism were sometimes subjective, though important and influential. Throughout his various articles, Suzuki hardly addresses the biography of Shinran. One

⁵⁴ Sasaki 1921, pp. 41–42, 45–46; and Sasaki 1922, pp. 154, 162.

⁵⁵ Sasaki 1921, pp. 42–45; and Sasaki 1923, pp. 240–43.

⁵⁶ Sasaki 1921, pp. 45–46; Sasaki 1922, p. 154; and Sasaki 1923, p. 240.

event in Shinran's life, though, apparently made an impression on him: the episode from the *Tannishō* in which Shinran declared that he would even follow Hōnen into hell in devotion to the *nenbutsu* teaching.⁵⁷ Like Sasaki, Suzuki focuses on the ideas of Pure Land and Shin Buddhism rather than the identity of Shinran. But we should assume that he considered these ideas traceable to Shinran in one way or another. One line of argument that Suzuki follows is similar to that of the other scholars in the journal: to situate Shin Buddhism in the lineage of the larger Buddhist tradition—Śākyamuni, four noble truths, karma, Mahayana concept of mind, suchness, and emptiness.⁵⁸ He thus frames Shin Buddhism as a direct descendant of earlier Buddhism, rather than as an aberration. Another feature that Suzuki highlights is Shin Buddhism's integration of religion into an everyday secular lifestyle instead of a celibate clerical life, and he attributes this specifically to Shinran.⁵⁹ One other theme in Suzuki's exposition is the demythologization of the concept of the Pure Land. He argues against the idea of the literal existence of a paradise in the western direction where people will be reborn after death. Instead, Suzuki emphasizes that the Pure Land can be experienced in the present for those of true faith—that is, those who have relinquished all personal contrivances and entrusted themselves to the power of the Buddha.⁶⁰ The net effect of Suzuki's interpretations was to help define a Shin Buddhism for modern times: secular in lifestyle, proclaiming the Pure Land in the present, and standing squarely in the Buddhist tradition. In this respect, Suzuki joined the other contributors of *The Eastern Buddhist* in articulating a compelling, humanistic image of Shinran.

D. T. Suzuki's Living Shinran

Finally, I would like to examine one more image of Shinran that D. T. Suzuki presented long after he had published his articles in *The Eastern Buddhist*. That image appears in an address he made at the dedication ceremony of a fifteen-foot bronze statue of Shinran in the courtyard of the American Buddhist Academy, now known as the American Buddhist Study Center, in New

⁵⁷ Suzuki 1924, p. 98; and Suzuki 1927, pp. 113–14. This second article indicates that Suzuki also relied on a similar passage in the *Shūjishō* 執持鈔, SSZ, vol. 3, pp. 37–39. But he apparently did not consult the corresponding passage in Eshinni's letters (*Eshinni shōsoku*, SSZ, vol. 5, pp. 104–5).

⁵⁸ Suzuki 1939, pp. 229–35.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 273–76.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 265–67, 283–84. This idea of the immanence of the Pure Land is not unique to Suzuki, but is also advanced by other modern interpreters of Shin Buddhism.

York City on 11 September 1955. This was the period when Suzuki was lecturing at Columbia University.

The history of this statue is fascinating and poignant. In appearance, it presents the familiar image of Shinran in traveler's garb: broad-rim hat, robe, rain cape, walking staff, and straw sandals. This is the guise of Shinran as a traveling teacher of the Dharma, reflecting his compassionate outreach to other human beings. Such statues are now found all around Japan. This particular one originally stood in Hiroshima only two and a half kilometers from the epicenter of the atomic bomb blast on 6 August 1945. Approximately 140,000 people died from the explosion and virtually all the buildings in Hiroshima were destroyed, but miraculously this statue survived.

Ten years later a devout Shin Buddhist and successful industrialist named Hirose Seiichi 広瀬精一 (1895–1979), who was the original donor of the statue, made it possible for it to be shipped to New York for installation as a symbol of world peace. And Rev. Seki Hōzen 関法善 (1903–1991), founder of the American Buddhist Academy, made the arrangements and received it on behalf of the academy. It was for this occasion that Suzuki presented his dedication address. I would like to cite a long excerpt from it to present yet another image of Shinran:

Ladies and gentlemen. What we want most seriously, most urgently at this very moment is not Shōnin's statue, but his person most vivaciously alive, and not the person coming out of the pages of history but the person who properly understands the spirit of the modern world and knows perfectly well how to adjust his teachings to the needs of modern man.

I want not a Shinran Shōnin who is gone to the Pure Land seven-hundred years ago, but the Shinran Shōnin who is back from his long trip to the Land of Bliss to this *shaba* [娑婆] world, . . . filled with all forms of inequity or injustice in spite of our loud and boisterous proclamations, a world also filled with things tending in a direction altogether opposite universal brotherhood so-called.

Such Shinrans, not one Shinran, who thoroughly understand the spirit of the modern world, must be discovered among our fellow Buddhists here gathered today. Let them announce—not necessarily loudly, but quietly and persistently and in most practical ways—what not the dead Shinran but the living Shinran would say and do, not as he said and did in those Kamakura days, but in this modern world where the atomic bombs may at any moment explode again. . . .

What then is the meaning of this celebration we see going on about us today? As far as I can see, it must be in finding the living Shōnin who is surely among us answering to the call of his name. Only we have not been able to hear his response; our ears have not yet been fully opened innerly as well as outwardly to the still small voice. Perhaps we can hear it, at least a little portion of Shinran's living voice, when the Buddhist Academy begins to operate properly equipped not only in externalities but in spirit and personnel. No doubt, Shinran Shōnin will find many more things to do besides establishing a school. As it happens, let him start with it and steadily go on doing things not only educational in its narrower sense but more comprehensively social and spiritual.

We must realize that modern civilization is thoroughly oriented towards dehumanizing humanity in every possible way—that is to say, we are fast turning into robots or statues with no human souls. Our task is to get humanized once more. In conclusion I wish to call out: “O Shinran Shōnin, here is your statue; and where are you?”⁶¹

This powerful address catapults the image of Shinran onto yet another plane of understanding. It, first of all, empties Shinran of external and objective content. The Shinran of history is dismissed, and even the sublime thinker fades into the background. His physical appearance in the form of this imposing, noble statue is treated as a misplaced focal point. For Suzuki, the only location where Shinran survives is in the still small voice within human beings. In a sense, Shinran is transmuted into a pure subjectivity and interiority. This may be the ultimate and most eloquent humanization of Shinran for the modern world. It is a Shinran—to paraphrase Kiyozawa Manshi—who exists because we believe in him, rather than our believing in him because he exists.⁶²

⁶¹ I would like to thank the American Buddhist Study Center, 331 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10025, for permission to cite Suzuki's address, transcribed by Wayne S. Yokoyama. I have made slight editorial changes in spelling and punctuation.

⁶² Kiyozawa Manshi's original quotation is: “We do not believe in deities and buddhas because they exist. Deities and buddhas exist for us because we believe in them.” See Ōtani Daigaku 2002–3, vol. 6, p. 284.

ABBREVIATIONS

- SSZ *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* 真宗聖教全書, ed. Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho Hensanjo 真宗聖教全書編纂所. 5 vols. Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō. 1941.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–34.

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