

Feature:
Problems and Possibilities for Research
into the *Kyōgyōshinshō*

Editor's Introduction

THROUGHOUT the year 2011, services to mark the 750th memorial of Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262) have been held by the various denominations of the Shin school. As with previous such services, many events and projects have been undertaken to commemorate this rare occasion. The past five years have seen a flurry of activities by the various denominations themselves, as well as by the individual temples and educational institutions associated with them. In the field of Shin Buddhist studies, commemorative symposiums, conferences, and publication projects have led to a wealth of new research into Shinran's life and thought. This feature attempts to present one small portion of those results, particularly focusing on new research by scholars associated with the Ōtani-ha 大谷派 into Shinran's *magnum opus*, *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō monrui* 顕浄土真実教行証文類 (Collection of Passages Revealing the True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land), more familiarly known as the *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証.

This work has been the object of scholarly inquiry in Japan for over six hundred years since Zonkaku 存覚 (1290–1373), a fourth-generation descendent of Shinran, wrote the *Rokuyōshō* 六要鈔, the first commentary on it. Scholar-monks of the Edo period (1603–1868) who were associated with Nishi Honganji 西本願寺 and Higashi Honganji 東本願寺 produced detailed academic tracts that examined Shinran's text and expounded on its significance employing the methodology for Buddhist research and other scholarly inquiry that was prevalent in the period. As Western ideas and academic methodologies were introduced into Japan from the end of the Edo period and into the early Meiji period (1868–1912), research about Shinran

and his thought began to be conducted through a hybrid lens that combined these Western academic methods with the results of the research of earlier scholar-monks.

Some scholars aimed to translate Shinran's thought meaningfully for the concerns of modern Japanese thinkers and Shin faithful, while other, less radical scholars continued discussions of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in the interpretive vein laid out by their Edo-period predecessors. In the Ōtani-ha, Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903) and his followers advocated a direct encounter with Shinran's thought without reliance on the interpretive apparatus that came to be solidified over the course of the Edo period. Kiyozawa and many other progressive members of the Ōtani-ha, such as Akegarasu Haya 暁鳥敏 (1877–1954) and Chikazumi Jōkan 近角常観 (1870–1941), focused on the *Tannishō* 歎異抄 as a source for that encounter. Under their influence, the *Tannishō* became the main source through which the faithful could discover a clear expression of Shinran's faith for much of the past century both inside and outside Japan. However, many of the central ideas presented in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* are not fully expressed in the *Tannishō*. One of Kiyozawa's disciples, Soga Ryōjin 曾我量深 (1875–1971), endeavored throughout his career to lay the theoretical groundwork for approaching Shinran's thought directly through the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Soga's thought is unique in that it attempts to come face to face with Shinran by wrestling with the complex philosophical issues presented in that text through the interpretive framework of religious experience.

In the post-war period, the text has continued to be subjected to rigorous analysis from a variety of perspectives. Soga continued his philosophical explorations into the last years of his remarkably long life. Other thinkers in the Ōtani-ha took up his project, as well. Non-sectarian scholars such as Akamatsu Toshihide 赤松俊秀 (1907–1979) and Shigemi Kazuyuki 重見一行 (1933–) have made careful studies of the handwriting in Shinran's holographic manuscript, making convincing arguments about the way in which he continued to rewrite it well into the last years of his life. Historians have worked to give a fuller view of Shinran's life and times by moving beyond the sources traditionally used by sectarian representatives thereby providing scholars studying the *Kyōgyōshinshō* a better grasp of the context in which the work was written and the issues in the background of the themes addressed there. In this way, scholars throughout the post-war period have made advances from a variety of directions that allow us to see the Shinran who wrote this immense treatise in greater relief as a religious thinker.

This year's memorial service for Shinran has provided many opportunities for further advancement of such research by a wide range of non-

sectarian scholars and those from the ten Shin denominations, alike. This short feature cannot possibly introduce all of those works from all of the denominations. Since the authors below are all related to the Ōtani-ha, I will limit my remarks to that denomination. Among the many projects that have been undertaken by that organization, we should take particular notice of the following four that are directly related to the current feature. First the Ōtani-ha undertook a commemorative project to restore Shinran's holographic manuscript of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, the Bandō 坂東 version, and also published a replica of this text that not only photographically reproduces each page of the work clearly showing Shinran's notations and corrections, but also shows the way that he made additions to the text by opening bound pages or even gluing additional paper onto a page.¹ This replica provides scholars with a wealth of data about the text that was previously unavailable or extremely difficult to glean from earlier black-and-white reproductions. Second, in cooperation with Chikuma Shobō, the Ōtani-ha supported the publication of a ten-volume series by representative scholars of the denomination that reevaluates the significance of Shinran's thought in light of the past century's research on the subject.² Third, the research institute at Otani University undertook a project aimed at the reconstruction of the contemporary understanding of Shinran—our image of him—which resulted in a two-volume set that reconsiders both the significance of his thought and our understanding of his life.³ In the opening article in the first volume of the set, Nobutsuka Tomomichi, one of the contributors included below, points

¹ This work was published as *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō monrui (Bandō bon) ein bon* 顕浄土真実教行証文類(坂東本)影印本 (Kyoto: Shinshū Ōtani-ha Shūmusho, 2005).

² The ten volumes were published between 2010 and 2011 by Chikuma Shobō. Their titles and authors are: (1) *Rekishī no naka no Shinran: Shinjitsu no oshie o tou* 歴史のなかの親鸞：真実のおしえを問う, by Nabata Takashi 名畑崇; (2) *Shinran ga deatta Shakuson: Jōdo shisō no shōi* 親鸞が出遇った釈尊：浄土思想の正意, by Ogawa Ichijō 小川一乗; (3) *Shakuson kara Shinran e: Shichiso no dentō* 釈尊から親鸞へ：七祖の伝統, by Kono Shūzon 狐野秀存; (4) *Shinran no butsudō: Kyōgyōshinshō no sekai* 親鸞の仏道：『教行信証』の世界, by Terakawa Shunshō 寺川俊昭; (5) *Shinran no kyōke: Wago shōgyō no sekai* 親鸞の教化：和語聖教の世界, by Ichiraku Makoto 一楽真; (6) *Shinran no denki: Godenshō no sekai* 親鸞の伝記：『御伝鈔』の世界, by Kusano Kenshi 草野顕之; (7) *Shinran no seppō: Tannishō no sekai* 親鸞の説法：『歎異抄』の世界, by Nobutsuka Tomomichi 延塚知道; (8) *Shinran kara Rennyō e: Shinshū sōzō Ofumi no hakken* 親鸞から蓮如へ：真宗創造『御文』の発遣, by Ikeda Yūtai 池田勇諦; (9) *Kindai Nihon to Shinran: Shin no saisei* 近代日本と親鸞：信の再生, by myself; and (10) *Gendai to Shinran: Gendai toshi no naka de shūkyō teki shinri o ikiru* 現代と親鸞：現代都市の中で宗教的真理を生きる, by Honda Hiroyuki 本多弘之。

³ The two volumes are *Kyōgyōshinshō no shisō* 『教行信証』の思想 and *Shinran zō no saikōchiku* 親鸞像の再構築, ed. Ōtani Daigaku Shinshū Sōgō Kenkyūjo 大谷大学真宗総合研究所 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2011).

out the gap between the ideas presented in the *Tannishō* and those set forth in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* as a critical issue to be addressed in understanding Shinran's thought. Fourth, the denomination is assisting in the publication of a second edition of the partial translation of the text by Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966), which was originally published in 1973 in very limited numbers. This new edition will open up the possibility for further study of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* by a broader range of scholars and students outside of Japan.⁴

Thus, although the *Kyōgyōshinshō* has been the subject of sustained scholarly inquiry for over four hundred years, because of changes in academic methodology, in our understanding of the source materials, as well as in interpretations of the discursive world laid out in the Pure Land scriptural tradition, the text still warrants attention. The current feature is an attempt to show that there is vast potential for continued research into Shinran's thought in general and the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in particular. Each paper points to one avenue of exploration that deserves further attention and consideration in approaching Shinran's treatise. Fujimoto Masafumi discusses the significance of the Bandō version of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in understanding his thought. Kaku Takeshi calls into question the interpretative standpoint from which we view the text and, following Soga's lead, suggests that we should read it as containing two parts with distinct themes. Similarly, Nobutsuka Tomomichi argues that the text should be read in light of the advances made by Soga's thought. However, rather than discussing the structure of the text as a whole, he points out the need for a further investigation of a certain portion of the text, the chapter on the true Buddha body and land (*shin butsu do* 真仏土). Hase Shōtō takes up the issue of merit transference (*ekō* 回向) which forms the core of Shinran's argument in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* and is perhaps the most innovative aspect of his thought. Hase argues that it is necessary to develop an understanding of this concept that encompasses the spectrum of meaning with which Shinran uses it.

Each article presented here thus holds that there are critical aspects of Shinran's thought expressed in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* that require further clarification. Hase states that the current understanding of the key concept in the text is still insufficient. Nobutsuka argues that one chapter of the text—the chapter where Shinran describes his understanding of Amida Buddha and his Pure Land—has yet to be sufficiently understood. Kaku says that we must reevaluate the structure of the text as a whole. Fujimoto asks us

⁴ Forthcoming by Oxford University Press.

to look more closely at the document in Shinran's hand to see more clearly the message that he sought to instill in it. In this way, the pieces collected in this issue not only reflect the latest research into the *Kyōgyōshinshō* being conducted in Japan, but also provide hints regarding the direction that such research might take in the future.

I should note here, however, that because these short articles come out of four hundred years of academic discourse on the subject and are intended for an audience with a solid grasp of the Shin textual tradition, they make their arguments with perhaps too little explanation of primary concepts to be meaningful to readers of *The Eastern Buddhist*, who tend to have a slightly different knowledge set than the authors. Indeed, the authors assume a degree of conversance in the content and ideas of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* that can scarcely be expected from undergraduate majors at the leading institutions for Shin Buddhist studies in Japan. My hope in this short introduction is to provide our readers with some information that will make the feature more readable to an audience wider than the specialists for whom the articles were originally written.

First, let me begin by providing a general outline of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* and an overview of the primary themes that structure Shinran's arguments. The text as a whole, as its formal title suggests, is a *monrui* 文類, or collection of passages relevant to a given theme. Shinran collects passages from sutras, treatises, and commentaries in each of the six chapters of the work and intersperses his own comments and interpretations to construct his argument. The work begins with what is often termed the "general preface" (*sōjo* 総序) where Shinran speaks in broad terms about the central source of salvation in the Shin tradition, taking up the themes of the vow and the name of Amida Buddha, as well as the way that those come to work within human beings as teaching (*kyō* 教), practice (*gyō* 行), faith (*shin* 信), and realization (*shō* 証). Shinran interprets these four to be the central aspects of human religious experience and employs them to structure the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. They respectively serve as the theme of each of the first four chapters of the work as well as their informal titles. The last two chapters deal with the subject of Buddha bodies and lands. The fifth chapter takes up the issue of the true Buddha body and land, while the sixth discusses the transformed Buddha bodies and lands (*keshindo* 化身土) as expedient means for the ultimate realization of birth in the true Buddha land. The formal titles that Shinran provides for these six chapters are: "Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyō monrui" 顕浄土真実教文類, "Ken jōdo shinjitsu gyō monrui" 顕浄土真実行文類, "Ken jōdo shinjitsu shin monrui" 顕浄土真実信文類, "Ken jōdo shinjitsu shō monrui"

顯淨土真実証文類, “Ken jōdo shin butsudo monrui” 顯淨土真仏土文類, “Ken jōdo hōben keshindo monrui” 顯淨土方便化身土文類. In the articles below, these chapters are primarily referred to using the English translations of their informal names: the chapters on teaching, practice, faith, realization, true Buddha body and land, and transformed Buddha bodies and lands, respectively. In addition to these six chapters and the general preface, Shinran wrote a preface to the chapter on faith, which is widely called the “separate preface,” or *betsujo* 別序.

Aside from this chapterization, there are two points that readers should keep in mind about the overall structure of the argument presented in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. The first has to do with merit transference, which is the subject of Hase’s piece. Shinran begins the chapter on teaching with the statement, “In humbly considering True Pure Land Buddhism (*jōdo shinshū* 淨土真宗), there are two types of merit transference. One is the going aspect; the other is the returning aspect. Regarding the going aspect of merit transference, there is the true teaching, practice, faith, and realization.”⁵ Here, Shinran begins his argument by laying out merit transference as a concept central to the understanding of Shin Buddhism and the four aspects of religious experience in that tradition. The first sentences of the chapters on practice and faith also state that true faith and practice are related to the going aspect of merit transference. In the middle of the chapter on realization, Shinran writes, “Secondly, the returning aspect of merit transference means . . .”⁶ thereby starting the second portion of his argument in the text. In this way, at each major transition in his argument, Shinran makes reference to this concept. Therefore, this issue can be called the central pillar around which the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is structured.

The second point is the role of the vows of Dharmākara Bodhisattva, Amida before he became a Buddha, as presented in the *Wuliangshoujing* 無量壽經 (Sutra on Immeasurable Life), which can be said to form the supporting beams for the argument of each chapter. To state Shinran’s primary argument in the simplest of terms, one can say that he is trying to show that all aspects of human religious experience (*kyō*, *gyō*, *shin*, and *shō*) are entirely the result of the merit transference of Amida Buddha, which is brought about through the working of the various vows from his causal stage as Dharmākara. Thus, starting with the chapter on practice, each chapter begins with Shinran’s opening comment and a quotation of one of these

⁵ *Teihon kyōgyōshinshō* 定本教行信証 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989), p. 201.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

vows. His subsequent quotations and statements in each chapter can be seen as his explication of the significance of that vow and its fulfillment (*jōju* 成就) in concrete human experience.

The chapter on teaching does not include a quote from a specific vow. Instead, it is a discourse on the significance of the *Wuliangshoujing* and contains a quotation that describes the encounter between Śākyamuni and his disciple Ānanda that led the former to tell the story of Dharmākara, his vows, and his becoming Amida Buddha. The chapter on practice quotes from the seventeenth vow in the *Wuliangshoujing*, which Shinran calls “the vow for the calling of the name by the myriad Buddhas” (*shobutsu shōmyō no gan* 諸仏称名之願). Here, Shinran shows that great practice can be seen in the calling of Amida’s name by the myriad Buddhas, who take concrete form as the various teachers and guides who have tread the Pure Land path before one. The chapter on faith discusses the transformation of the mind of a person who hears these teachings about the name, discussing the eighteenth vow as the source of that change. In this chapter, Shinran describes *shinjin* 信心 (the mind of faith) as arising from the working of this vow and also describes in detail the way in which one who attains this mind comes to live a life that expresses and passes on the teaching contained in Amida’s name. The chapter on realization quotes the eleventh vow in order to show that all who attain *shinjin* also ultimately attain nirvana. In the second part of this chapter, Shinran quotes the twenty-second vow in his discussion of the returning aspect of merit transference, a topic whose full significance still requires clarification. Suffice it to say that this vow deals with bodhisattvas who, after having been born in Amida’s Pure Land, continue to work for the liberation of sentient beings in other, less favorable circumstances. The chapter on the true Buddha body and land quotes the twelfth and thirteenth vows, in which Dharmākara vows that as Amida both his life and light will be unlimited and therefore capable of liberating the unlimited ignorance of innumerable sentient beings. Here Shinran discusses the significance of Amida and his Pure Land as symbols of wisdom.

Although these first five chapters deal with what Shinran refers to as *shinjitsu* 眞実, the true and real, the final chapter discusses the various ways in which limited sentient beings can come in contact with that world of truth. There, Shinran discusses transformed Buddha bodies and lands (*ke-shindo* 化身土), which refer to provisional forms of Amida’s working to lead sentient beings toward the true. In particular, Shinran quotes the nineteenth and twentieth vows, describing them as the expedient means by which

Amida brings sentient beings into contact with the true teaching, practice, faith, and realization that arise through his merit transference. The nineteenth vow calls sentient beings to engage in sundry practices, while the twentieth calls them to think exclusively on Amida and his land. Shinran interprets these as compassionate vows that gradually bring the devotee, whose ordinary consciousness is incapable of fathoming the inconceivable depth of truth itself, into correspondence with the great practice and great faith that are expressions of its working.

This short synopsis fails to do justice to the complex issues that Shinran discusses in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, but my hope is that it might serve as a signpost in navigating the articles below. For centuries, scholars have used these three concepts—the four dharmas of *kyō*, *gyō*, *shin*, and *shō*; the two aspects of merit transference; and the eight vows—to summarize the central points of this work. Each of the articles below touches on one or more of these issues, so it seems appropriate to lay them out as a guide to our readers.

Since all of the papers presented here follow closely in the tradition of the Ōtani-ha's modern doctrinal studies, especially Soga Ryōjin's attempt to encounter Shinran directly through the words of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, a short note of introduction to this thinker and his methodology seems in order. As noted above, Soga was one of the scholars who attempted to reinterpret Shinran's thought in terms relevant to those who could not be satisfied with the idea of Amida as a savior figure that offered peace of mind in this world based on hopes for a heavenly existence in the next. This literal interpretation of some of the imagery in the Pure Land sutras was prevalent among followers in the Edo period but called into question in the modern period by thinkers such as Kiyozawa, Soga, and Akegarasu. In his quest to discover the immediate significance of the Pure Land scriptures, Soga tried to show that all aspects of the story of Amida in the *Wuliangshoujing* were mythological language that related directly to the human experience of faith in this life. Based on the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, he reinterpreted key concepts in the Pure Land tradition as having vital significance in the present. This stance ultimately entailed an outright denial of the positions taken by former fonts of doctrinal authority in the Ōtani-ha. Soga was, therefore, the subject of harsh criticism from more traditional members of the Shin academic community in the pre-war period, but he went on to become a central figure in Shin studies after the war, serving as the president of Otani University from 1961 to 1967. In a sense, Soga's method of inquiry, which seeks to hear Shinran's voice directly through the words of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, has become the norm for Shin Buddhist studies in the Ōtani-ha. The four articles presented

here not only take clues from certain assertions by Soga, they also take up the same type of methodology, seeking to clarify the significance of Shinran's thought by listening intently to the words he left behind in the text.

One note must be made on the terminology used in the papers. The problem of translating *shinjin*, one of the key terms in the Shin tradition, has been the subject of a lively and long academic debate.⁷ In many ways, the connotations of the English term "faith" differ significantly from the denotations that Shinran has imparted to the term *shinjin* and its derivatives. Some authors and translators have argued that the meanings of the two terms differ significantly enough to warrant the transliteration of the Japanese word. Others have attempted alternative translations into English, such as entrusting or understanding. None of these solutions appears to fully satisfy in that any single English word, even a transliteration, fails to relay the rich, varied meaning that Shinran imparted to this term. The editors cannot pretend to have found a clear and simple solution to this problem—a critical one that touches on the heart of Shin Buddhism—and have therefore chosen to leave the choices about the translation of this term up to the individual translators. This issue is yet another realm full of possibilities for further research and consideration.

Our hope is that this feature will serve to commemorate the 750th memorial service of Shinran by stimulating further interest in his thought.

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⁷ For a brief overview of this debate, as well as a compelling contribution to it, see John Ross Carter's "*Shinjin*: More Than 'Faith'?" in *Shinshū sōgō kenkyūjo kenkyūjo kiyō* 真宗総合研究所研究所紀要, vol. 4 (1986), pp. 1–40.