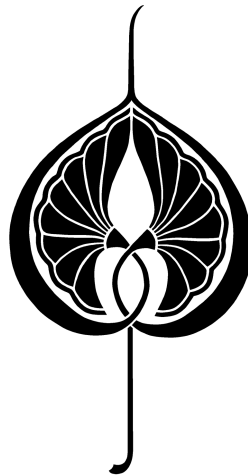


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**SPECIAL ISSUE ON T'AN-LUAN AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF SHIN BUDDHIST THOUGHT**



each other. Thus, we do not exist in alienation from other sentient beings and from our surrounding environment; rather we exist in profound interdependence, and this realization is said to yield a far deeper sense of love and compassion than that which is conjoined with a reified sense of our individual separateness and autonomy" (p. 173).

One of the issues facing contemporary cognitive science is terminological. This is evident in the disagreement over how far to extend the term conscious, e.g., are fetuses conscious?, are animal conscious? This is a definitional rather than an objective question. While these specific questions may not have been raised in the history of Buddhist psychology, there is a well-established terminology in Sanskrit and Tibetan detailing a variety of mental states. The value of this Buddhist psychological terminology, however, will continue to be limited until a standardized set of translation equivalents can be established.

For the relation between Buddhist thought and cognitive science one of the most important issues is also one of the subtlest. It is not directly expressed, but rather is revealed in the nuanced way in which the conversation has been structured. It would be very easy—and entirely misleading—to simply assume that the questions of contemporary cognitive science can be directly addressed to Buddhist psychology and coherent answers received. Not only are the terms of the two discourses not univocal, but the underlying assumptions are also vastly different. This work is informed by an awareness of this issue and is the better for it.

If Buddhism is to continue to develop as a living tradition, it is necessary that interaction of this kind be continued. There is much that is of value in traditional Buddhist psychology, but an ongoing process of discerning and replacing outdated physiological concepts is needed. At the same time it is also essential that some common, but mistaken preconceptions about cognitive science held by contemporary Buddhists be overcome as well.

The Collected Works of Shinran. 2 vols. Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997. xii, 706 pages (volume 1); viii, 364 pages (volume 2). Hardcover: \$ 50.00.¹

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Although Shinran (1173–1262) is known to have advised his followers that his teaching is “the true teaching easy to practice for small, foolish beings; it is the straight way easy to traverse for the dull and ignorant (*The Collected Works of Shinran* [hereafter, *CWS*], vol. 1, p. 3),” his writings are

nevertheless known for their difficulty even for modern educated Japanese readers (Kakehashi Jitsuen, *Seidoku Bukkyō no kotoba: Shinran*, [Tokyo: Daihōrinkaku, 1999], p. 247). Shinran wrote both in *kanbun* (Classical Sino-Japanese, or *kango shōgyō*) and *wabun* (Classical Japanese, or *wago shōgyō*). Reading his *kanbun* writings usually requires that the serious student spend years just to learn the Japanized transformed *kanbun* popular during the Kamakura period (1192–1333). Shinran's writings in *wabun*, which include various styles and forms of text, e.g., prose, verses, hymns (in *imayō*), letters, commentaries, and notes, are in no way easier. Even works written in plain *wabun* are typically loaded with highly technical Buddhist Chinese terminology and concepts, regardless of Shinran's saying that "I write only that foolish people may easily grasp the essential meaning" (*CWS*, vol. 1, pp. 469 and 490).

Considering these preexisting difficulties in the original texts, the completion of the *CWS* is a monumental achievement in the study of Shinran's thought. The *CWS* not only presents an accurate and readable English translation of Shinran's works (vol. 1), but also provides readers with academically sound and scholarly intriguing introductions to all translated texts, a handy glossary with a list of terms, and other reference materials, such as "Notes on Shinran's Readings," and "Names and Titles Cited" in the *Teaching, Practice, and Realization* with cross references to the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* and *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* (vol. 2).

From the perspective of bookmaking, the structure of the *CWS* in two volumes seems a little bit odd. Readers may wonder why the publication committee decided to place the introductions to all texts together in the second volume (pp. 11–169), rather than placing them in front of each translation. However, I have actually used the *CWS* in graduate level reading courses, and the two-volume style turns out to be very handy when students need to look up terms or find references in other texts within the first volume. With all the introductions in one place, the second volume by itself could in fact be used independently as an excellent reader for an introductory course on Shinran's thought. Although not explicitly stated in the *CWS*, the publication committee seems to have prepared the second volume not simply as a collection of supplementary reference materials. For graduate students interested in Shinran's thought or instructors who need to discuss Shinran's thought in college level courses, I strongly recommend the second volume as a must-read text.

The *CWS* is no doubt the best and most complete translation of Shinran's writings currently available in English. Even in an excellent work, however, there is always room for future improvement. There are of course a few mistakes here and there, and I was left with some unanswered questions. The most puzzling thing about the *CWS* is its lack of an explanation why the translation committee adopted the Japanese word *shinjin* as the translation of three different words, *shin*, *shinjin*, and *shingyō*,

in Shinran's writings. The issue and policy of the selective adaptation of the words *shinjin* and "entrusting" for *shingyō* are sporadically mentioned in the *CWS*, once in the footnotes of the *Teaching, Practice, and Realization* (vol. 1, p. 77), and once in the introduction to *Teaching, Practice, and Realization* (vol. 2, p. 42); they are also partially explained in the "Glossary of Shin Buddhist Terms," under the entries "Entrusting, *shinjin*" (vol. 2, p. 182) and "Shinjin" (vol. 2, p. 206). However, the reason for substituting *shinjin* for *shin* is not mentioned anywhere in the *CWS*.

The translation committee perhaps believe that their convention of using the word *shinjin* in order to avoid using an English/Christian word, such as "faith," has been accepted by readers as a result of their more than twenty-year publication project, and that therefore no further explanation is necessary. This may be true among practicing Shin followers. However, the issue of whether to use the word *shinjin* as is or to translate it as "faith" is far from settled in scholarly discussions. Rather, the debate seems to be expanding and getting more lively recently (see, for example, Hee-Sung Keel, *Understanding Shinran: A Dialogical Approach* [Fremont, Calif.: Asian Humanity Press, 1995], pp. 80–119, especially footnote 6, pp. 82–83). Given this continuing debate, it would have been helpful had the translation committee included an explanation on this issue as they did previously in the *Notes on the Inscriptions of Sacred Scrolls* (Shin Buddhism Translation Series, 1981, pp. 77–82).

To be fair to the translation committee, I should point out that they do attempt to differentiate their use of *shinjin* for the word *shingyō*. If readers are careful enough to read all the above mentioned notes and entries in the glossary before delving into the *CWS*, they will discover that the translation committee decided to mark the word *shinjin* "with an asterisk when used to render the term *shingyō*" (vol. 1, p. 77). From a stylistic point of view, however, this convention looks a bit odd. The reader must also be careful because the asterisks are occasionally missing in the translation (vol. 1, pp. 3 and 67).

Whether Shinran's original words *shin* and *shingyō* should be replaced with another Japanese word or translated into English is up to the translators' doctrinal interpretation. Yet, if the translators decided to adopt such an unconventional method to translate some of Shinran's most important ideas, at least they should more clearly inform readers at the beginning of the translation. It is also interesting to see that the word "faith" miraculously survives in the translation of the titles of *Yuishinshō mon'i* (Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone', vol. 1, p. 451) and *Yuishinshō* (Essentials of Faith Alone, vol. 1, p. 685), regardless of the committee's effort to purge the word "faith" from the English translation of Shinran's thought.

Another problematic policy set by the translation committee is their rather anachronistic adherence to what they call the doctrinal integrity of

the *Mattōshō* (Lamp for the Latter Ages) in editing Shinran's letters. In the *CWS*, Shinran's letters are first presented in accordance with the order of the *Mattōshō* (vol. 1, pp. 523–555), then supplemented with other collected letters as well as six letters which do not appear in any of the early collections (vol. 1, pp. 559–584). In the introduction to the *Letters* (vol. 2, pp. 156–165), this *Mattōshō* centered editorial policy is justified by reference to the fact that the majority of Shinran's letters are not fully dated and therefore are impossible to present in accurate chronological order. More importantly, they defend their conservative stance by stating, "Preserving the integrity of the early collections is useful for readers concerned chiefly with understanding Shinran's thought, though the principles of compilation may differ from the historical orientation of modern scholarship" (vol. 2, p. 156).

From the perspective of historical studies of Shinran's letters, however, these two reasons are no longer very convincing. It is true that the dates of more than half of Shinran's letters remain unidentifiable, but at least the dates of sixteen (or fourteen according to the edition in *Mattōshō*) out of forty-three letters have already been identified. Furthermore, modern philological studies have discovered that, although the *Mattōshō* is still the most popular collection of Shinran's letters, the date of compilation is later (1333) than other collections, and some of the letters in the *Mattōshō* are less authoritative than earlier ones. This problem is partially acknowledged by the translation committee of the *CWS*, who say, "Where the original letters of *Mattōshō* survive in Shinran's own hand (*Letters* 2, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15) or in the hand of the original transcriber (*Letter* 5), we have followed the originals" (vol. 2, p. 165).

The translation committee tries to play down the problems existing in the *Mattōshō* by saying "The only major variation occurs in Shinran's reply in *Letter* 7" (p. 165). However, given new information brought into light by recent philological studies of Shinran's letters, for example, scholars agree that *Letter* 19 (vol. 1, pp. 550–552) was originally three different letters (or more precisely one letter [vol. 1, pp. 550–551, l. 17] and two other parts [p. 551, l. 18–l. 30 and pp. 551, l. 31–552, l. 11] which were most likely postscripts Shinran attached to now unknown letters).

The translation committee's policy to neglect the "historical orientation of modern scholarship" to preserve "the integrity of the early collections," is therefore regrettably not always "useful for readers concerned chiefly with understanding Shinran's thought." In fact, this *Mattōshō* centered view of Shinran's *Letters* has been abandoned not only by academics but even by the Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, which happens to be the same organization producing this English translation, more than a decade before the publication of the *CWS*.

Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha has published two editions of Shinran's works in Japanese: one, a critical academic edition of the collection of Jōdo Shinshū scriptures, *Jōdo Shinshū seiten: Gentenban* in 1985; the other, a

popular edition, *Jōdo Shinshū seiten: Chūshakuban* in 1988 (both edited by Shinshū Seiten hensan iinkai and published by Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha in Kyoto). In these publications, Shinran's letters were edited according to the authenticity of the source texts and placed in chronological order as best as possible. Since these editions of the *Jōdo Shinshū seiten*, especially the *Chūshakuban*, are gaining recognition as standard editions of the Jōdo Shinshū scriptures among Japanese readers, in future editions of the *CWS*, the editorial committee should reconsider their *Mattōshō* centered editorial policy and revise the translations of Shinran's *Letters* to follow the order of the *Jōdo Shinshū seiten*, which is based on more reliable sources and solid philological studies of the letters.

The translation committee's disinterest in the "historical orientation of modern scholarship" seems to prevail beyond Shinran's *Letters*. In the introduction to the *Teaching, Practice, and Realization*, the committee says, "Many readers tend to place Shinran in the history of Buddhism that begins with Śākyamuni, and view *Teaching, Practice, and Realization* as the product of that historical flow. Shinran himself, however, stands on the Buddha-ground of Amida's Vow, which transcends history" (vol. 2, p. 25). I do not disagree with this statement as a Shin believer's view. But, in order to create a fruitful discussion in modern academic environment, such an absolutist statement is not very helpful for the reader.

In the same introduction, the committee continues their surprisingly hostile attitude to the modern historical approach, stating, "The modern perspective, while standing within history and viewing Śākyamuni, the Pure Land masters, and Shinran historically, seeks to come to the Vow-mind that transcends history through them. This is precisely the opposite of Shinran's perspective, and a true grasp of Shinran is extremely difficult from such an approach" (vol. 2., p. 26). I agree that Shinran did not write the *Teaching, Practice, and Realization* as a historical text, but perhaps they should leave it up to the readers to decide if a modern historical approach makes it more difficult for them to understand Shinran.

The committee seems to misunderstand what constitutes a modern historical approach to religious texts. Particularly troubling is the following statement, which seems to be merely a caricature of the historical approach: "The first step in understanding Shinran is to respect his alterations of the readings of quoted passages, which have been criticized from a perspective within history as 'completely arbitrary and audacious in the extreme.' To contradict his notes and read the quoted passages in *Teaching, Practice, and Realization* according to the literal meaning is to read his work as an historical document" (vol. 2, p. 26). Although very occasionally we still encounter such "bad" historicism, the modern academic approach—to read Shinran's work as an historical document—is precisely opposite to the committee's concern. In order to read Shinran's work historically, it is essential to read his writings as accurately as possible.

Philological studies of Shinran's work as medieval Japanese literature will also help solve many questions which are insoluble through a doctrinal approach only. Unfortunately, the translation committee of the *CWS* does not seem to appreciate the more significant developments in recent "good" historical studies of Shinran's works.

Another historical problem in the *CWS* is that, regarding the manuscript of *Teaching, Practice, and Realization* in the possession of Nishi Hongwanji, the translation committee refuses to concede that the manuscript is not by Shinran's own hand, stating, "The traditional ascription of this manuscript to Shinran has been questioned, however, and at present nothing is known of its provenance" (vol. 2, p. 73). Through meticulous philological and historical studies of the manuscript (e.g., by Shigemi Kazuyuki, *Kyōgyōshinshō no kenkyū* [Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1981], pp. 101–139), modern scholars have already proven that this manuscript is a very close copy of the Bandō manuscript, which is established as Shinran's own hand writing, and was probably completed in 1275, thirteen years after Shinran's death.

A final point concerns the episode in which Shinran received his name from Hōnen. Again, the translation committee overlooks modern scholarship that clarifies the incident. In the postscript of the *Teaching, Practice, and Realization*, Shinran's *bōgō*, Zenshin, is added in brackets by the translators as the new name given to Shinran (then Shakkū) by Hōnen (1133–1212) in 1205.

Further, since my name 'Shakkū' had been changed in accord with a revelation in a dream, on the same day he wrote the characters of my new name [Zenshin] in his own hand. (vol. 1, p. 290)

Although this agrees with the tradition of the *Shūi kotokuden* (in *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* [henceforth, *SSZ*], vol. 3, p. 731) compiled by Kakunyo (1270–1351), the third head priest of the Hongwanji, and the *Rokuyōshō* (*SSZ*, vol. 2, pp. 206 and 440) by Kakunyo's son Zonkaku (1290–1373), modern Japanese historians of Jōdo Shinshū, such as Hiramatsu Reizō, have pointed out that this new name cannot be Zenshin (Hiramatsu Reizō, *Seiten seminar: Shinran Shōnin eden*, [Kyoto: Hongwanji Shuppansha, 1997], pp. 104–105 and 116–119).² According to the custom of the Kamakura period, Hiramatsu explains, Buddhist priests usually had two names, a conventional name (*kemyō*, also called a residential name, *bōgō*), and a real name (*jitsumyō*, also called a reserved name, *imina*). The *kemyō*, or *bōgō*, was the name used publicly to identify a priest. The *jitsumyō*, or *imina*, was an official name used only sparingly (e.g. signing official documents) out of respect to the priest. For example, Hōnen's *jitsumyō* is Genkū but his disciples or followers commonly identified him with his *bōgō*, Hōnen, or Hōnen-bō.

In the case of Shinran, Zenshin or Zenshin-bō is his *kemyō* and before he changed it in 1205, Shakkū was his *jitsumyō*, which is proven by his signature in a document called the *Shichikajō kishōmon* (Seven Article Pledge), co-signed by Hōnen and his major disciples and issued in 1204. The postscript of the *Teaching, Practice, and Realization* says the name Shakkū, his *jitsumyō*, has been changed, but it cannot have been changed to Zenshin, which is his *kemyō*. Hiramatsu concludes that, although the name is mistakenly identified as changed to Zenshin by Kakunyo and Zonkaku, the new *jitsumyō* which Hōnen approved must be Shinran.

Whether the translation committee likes the “historical orientation of modern scholarship” or not, modern scholarship continues to provide objective and useful information. Even though they believe that “a true grasp of Shinran is extremely difficult from such an approach,” at least, in order to avoid these unnecessary problems, the committee needs to become more aware of the recent historical and philological studies on Shinran’s writings.

Despite the problems mentioned above, the translations and introductory materials provided in the *CWS* are, over all, of excellent quality. The accuracy and readability of the translated texts are very close or often better than the modern Japanese renditions of Shinran’s works (e.g., Ishida Mizumaro, *Shinran zenshū*, 5 vols. [Tokyo: Shūnjūsha, 1985–87]). The *CWS* is additionally valuable for the amount of new materials it renders into the English corpus of translations of Shinran’s works. With the translation of the remaining letters of Shinran, as well as the shorter works, the entirety of Shinran’s works are now available in English. *Gutoku’s Notes* is especially a most welcome addition in the *CWS*. Although the text merely looks like a collection of cryptic and sketchy fragments, *Gutoku’s Notes* systematically outlines Shinran’s view of the classification of Buddhist teaching and is an indispensable guide for scholars and students of Shinran’s thought.

Although the *CWS* collects all of Shinran’s works, it might also be helpful to translate the letters of Shinran’s wife, Eshinni. These rare and very insightful first hand observations of Shinran’s life help us to understand the socio-historical and cultural aspects of Shinran’s thought and the early Jōdo Shinshū community.

Although I find the translation committee’s general indifference to modern historical studies problematic, their twenty-year project has established a very high standard for English translations of Shinran’s works and the results are crucial for scholars of religion and students who learn to read Shinran’s work through English translations. In the future, even Japanese students may need to study the English version of Shinran’s works to understand his thought.

Notes

1. This review is based on the author's presentation for a Japanese Religions Group panel, "Intellectual and Pedagogic Reflections on *The Collected Works of Shinran*," at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (Boston, Massachusetts), November, 1999.
2. It is also noteworthy that the *CWS* and Hiramatsu's book on Shinran's biography were, coincidentally, published by the same publisher, Hongwanji Shuppansha, in the same year. Hiramatsu further elaborates his theory in his recent historical study on Shinran's life (Hiramatsu Reizō, *Shinran* [Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998], pp. 124–128). Hiramatsu's view is also supported by Satō Masahide, another modern scholar of Shinran (Satō Masahide, *Shinran nyūmon* [Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1998], pp. 74–76).