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I

In the main current of Mahāyāna Buddhism the Pure Land school took its form as a most practical way of realizing the Buddhist ideal. Though having a phenomenal, relative aspect of being born in Amida’s Pure Land, it ultimately aims at the realization of the indiscriminate, absolute truth—Tathatā, or Thusness. These two aspects of relative and absolute, phenomenal and noumenal, are recognized throughout Mahāyāna Buddhism. The presence of this characteristic in the Pure Land ideology was already pointed out in China by a distinguished master, T’an-luan. In explaining in his Wang shèng lùn chū the term ‘birth’ (in the Pure Land), he showed emphatically that ‘birth’ is in essence a dependently originated phenomenon and that it is identical with ‘non-birth’. His successor Tao-ch’o clarified in his An lo chū that when we say ‘desire for birth’ we mean the desire for birth in the ‘phenomenal’ Pure Land but the Pure Land is in itself ‘non-phenomenal’ and transcendental. The point of their insistence is that the deluded ordinary men living in the sphere of relativity and phenomenality have no other means but to aspire for birth in the phenomenal Pure Land. In the Chinese Pure Land Buddhism this phenomenal, relative nature in the practical method of attaining the final goal was made clear against other schools, on one hand, and, on the other, it was recognized as the intrinsic characteristic of Amidism.

In Japan such a problem as how to conceive of the 'Pure Land ide-
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ology in the common ground of Mahāyāna Buddhism was not taken up so seriously at first. But when Hōnen wrote the Senjaku Shū\(^{(1)}\) and proclaimed in it the single practice of the Nembutsu based on the Other-Power of the Original Vow, abandoning all the intrinsic elements of the Path of Sages, such as Bodhi Mind, meditation, and observance of precepts, bitter criticisms were unleashed against this school. Köben’s Zaija Rin\(^{(4)}\) and others refuted Hōnen’s teaching as a non-Buddhist theory based on a substance-view of things which contradicted the Mahayanistic principles of Śūnyatā, unsubstantiability of things, etc., as shown by Nāgārjuna in his P’u i hsin li hsiang lun\(^{(3)}\). Indeed, Hōnen’s writings and collections of his words reveal that he did not practically make any effort to explain the relationships between his Nembutsu teaching and the basic concepts of Mahāyāna Buddhism. This problem, therefore, became the central subject among his disciples.

Ryūkan, for example, sought to establish a relation between Mahāyāna and Pure Land Buddhism through such concepts as ‘conformity of the Pure Land with Dharmatā’ in the Wang shēng lun chu\(^{(4)}\) and the ‘Middle Way’ of the Tendai doctrine. Shōkū, based on the Tendai theory of ‘eliminating the distinction of the Three Vehicles and merging them into the One Vehicle of the Lotus-flower’ 開會, contended that the noumenal essence of Amida Buddha is all-pervading. Kōsai developed a theory based on the Kegon concept of ‘Dharmadhātu in the One Mind’ and on the Tendai meditation which consists in contemplating the noumenon in accordance with the principles of the One Buddha Vehicle. Benchō similarly based his theory on the Tendai concept of ‘Oneness and Thusness of all things’. Chōsai expounded the Nembutsu teaching through the medium of fundamental Buddhist principles such as ‘all things in One Mind’ and ‘original state of

\(\text{(1)}\) 選擇集, 2 vols., the full title is Senjaku Hongan Nembutsu Shū 選擇本願念佛集, Taishō. Vol. 83, No. 2608.
\(\text{(3)}\) 菩提心離相論, Taishō. Vol. 32, p. 541.
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mind being equal to Thusness'.

The above are the main standpoints of the leading characters under Hōnen. We shall next see how Shinran, one of his disciples, established his system in relation to the basic principles of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

II

At the present state of scholastic investigation into the basic materials, we cannot conceive any conclusive view on how Shinran formed his doctrinal system. I shall here deal with his copied scriptures, writings, and recorded words, and trace the developmental process of his system as revealed by them. The whole process may be roughly divided into the following stages: (1) before fifty years of age, the period in which he is supposed to have completed the collection of notes to the Kuan wu liang shou ching and the A mi t'o ching, (2) from fifty to about seventy-five, the period in which he compiled the Kyō Gyo Shin Shō, (3) from seventy-six to eighty-five, the period in which he composed the hymns in Japanese such as the Jōdo Wasan and Shōzōmatsu Wasan, (4) from seventy-eight to eighty-five, the period in which he wrote the Yuishinshō Mon’i, Ichinen Tanen Shōmon, etc., (5) the last period in which he wrote the Jinen-hōni Shō (in the 12th month at the age of 85) and the Mida Nyoirai Myōgō Toku (at the age of 88).

(1) The collection of notes to the Kuan wu liang shou ching and the A mi t'o ching betrays Shinran's attempt to form his system based primarily on Shan-tao's commentaries. It is surmised that he adopted in his system Shan-tao's concepts on Tathātā, Śūnyatā, etc. Obviously he paid special attention to Shan-tao's and T'an-luan's comments on the 'Dharmadhātu-kāya' in the Kuan wu liang shou ching and to Yūan-chao's interpretation of the passage in the same sūtra, "This mind becomes Buddha; this mind is Buddha". That he noted down Yūan-chao's opinion on 'the unen-

(1) Kan Muryōji Kyo Shucchu 觀無量壽經集註 and Amida Kyō Shuccha 阿彌陀經集註, 1 vol. respectively, contained in the Shinran Shōnin Zensha.

(2) Refer to 舊彌陀經疏 by 元照, Taishō. Vol. 37, p. 362a.
lightened and the Enlightened' is worthy of notice in view of the fact that the Pure Land teaching inculcates the practice of the Nembutsu to unenlightened common men so that they can be born in the Pure Land of the Enlightened One. The distinction between the unenlightened and the Enlightened, it is to be added, is eventually abolished in the Dharma-dhātu, the Realm of Dharmatā, which is permeated by Amida's Body and Mind and His indiscriminate, all-perfect Wisdom.

(2) As we come to the *Kyo Gyo Shin Shō* (1), Shinran's principal work, we find a noticeable development of his system. He still retained the above-noted inclination towards Shan-tao's doctrine, quoting him abundantly in the chapters on Faith, Enlightenment, and True Buddha and Land, but another great emphasis was placed on T'an-luan's commentary and the Ta nieh p'an ching. In his attempt to adopt T'an-luan's ideas he quoted from the commentary almost throughout the *Kyo Gyo Shin Shō*, i. e., from the chapter on Practice to the last chapter on Transformed Buddha and Land. His attention was especially paid to T'an-luan's concepts on 'the Pure Land being conformable to Dharmatā', 'two aspects of Dharmakāya', 'birth identical with non-birth', 'identity of Birth-and-Death with Nirvāṇa', etc. On the other hand, he incorporated in his system such ideas in the Ta nieh p'an ching as 'Asaṃskṛita like the void', 'neither produced nor perishing', 'Satya' (Truth), 'One Path', 'immanence of the Buddha-nature in all sentient beings', and 'Faith identical with Buddha-nature'. Besides this sūtra, he quoted from the *Hua yen ching*, too. He cited a passage from it, for example, in the chapter on Practice to elucidate the idea of the One Vehicle with Kegon concepts of 'One Dharma', 'One Mind', and 'One Path'. He also introduced into his system the idea of 'all-complete fusion' 圓融 in Japanese Tendai doctrine. In view of these facts he is no doubt justified in saying in the *Kyo Gyo Shin Shō* that Great Practice is the 'treasure-ocean of merits of Tathatā, or One Truth' and that Great Faith is the 'ocean-like Faith of

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(1) 敦行信證, 6 vols.
(2) 大涅槃經
(3) 華嚴經

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Tathatā, or One Truth.

(3) Having gone through the maturing process, the above-mentioned Mahayanistic ideas were presented anew in his Japanese hymns. In the first place, depending on the *Ta nei h p’an ching* and *Hua yen ching*, he expressed in the hymns on the sūtras the Mahayanistic concepts of ‘Tathāgata’, ‘Nirvāṇa’, ‘Buddha-nature’, ‘equality of men of True Faith with Tathāgata’, ‘identity of Faith with Buddha-nature’, etc. In the hymns on T’an-luan he chanted the praises of T’an-luan’s philosophy representing it in such terms as ‘all-perfect One Vehicle of the Original Vow’, ‘substantial identity of evil passions with Bodhi’, and ‘identity of Samsāra with Nirvāṇa’. Lastly, the hymns on the Three Ages eulogize the profound Mahayanistic ideas, such as ‘oneness of evil passions and Bodhi’, ‘original purity of the mind-nature’, ‘identity of man’s mind with Buddha’, and ‘identity of Avidyā (ignorance) with Dharmatā’. From the second through this third stage we can trace that Shinran assimilated into his system the idea of ‘all-perfect fusion’ as emphasized by scholars of Japanese Tendai school, such as Gen-shin in his *Ōjō Yō Ša* and Kakuchō in his *En’yū Butsui Ša* and *Jissōgi Mondō*.

(4) The characteristic ideas in the previous stages are shown in the writings of this stage in a further developed form. In the *Ichinen Tanen Mon’i* we come across such terms as ‘all-perfect unhinderedness of the One Vehicle of the Original Vow’, ‘abstruse principle of Tathatā, or One Truth’. In the *Yuishin Shō Mon’i* we find the idea of ‘turning’ coupled with that of ‘naturalness’; that is, Shinran said that all evils are ‘naturally’ turned into goods. Also in the same book, he explained the phrase ‘Land of the Utmost Happiness, the Realm of Asamksrīta and Nirvāṇa’ by the ideas of ‘permeation of Tathāgata in the minds of all sentient beings’,

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(1) 諏經讚, Nos. 7, 8.
(2) 嵐鸞讚, Nos. 12, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22.
(3) 正像末和讚, Nos. 21, 39, 40 in the original text.
(4) 一念多念文意
(5) 唯信證文意

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‘two kinds of Dharmakāya’, etc. It is easily surmised that in Shinran’s system all the developed philosophies of Mahāyāna Buddhism were adopted and turned to the use of enriching the doctrine of Shin Buddhism, on one hand, and, on the other, they were given the practical meaning in the way in which they were focused on the idea of ‘salvation of the most wicked by turning evils into goods’.

Shinran’s most matured ideology is seen in his “Passage on Naturalness”. In this short passage all the discriminations on the side of man are set aside and the natural, spontaneous workings of Amida Buddha are brought to the fore. Amida’s Dharmakāya is above all forms and notions, being in itself the natural and the uncreated. Also, His workings to save sentient beings do not deviate from the natural law of Tathatā. This is the essence of Shin Buddhism, which Shinran showed in a plain, single term ‘naturalness’.

III

To sum up, the shaping-up of Shinran’s religious system started from the dependence upon Shan-tao’s commentaries and, after incorporating Mahayanistic ideas, it reached the peak in the idea of ‘naturalness’. In his attempt to assimilate other Mahāyāna philosophies in his system, it must be noted, he was not lost in mere speculations to which other fellow-disciples of Hōnen tended. Other exponents of Hōnen’s Nembutsu teaching emphasized the substantial equality of Buddha and man so strongly that they naturally became less conscious of the actuality of man as an evil, delusory being. Shinran’s doctrine was, on the contrary, thoroughly characterized by the consciousness of his being an evil, helpless man. And all the Mahayanistic ideas adopted were only to subscribe the salvation theory and strengthen the exclusive practice of the Nembutsu.

(1) 自然法爾章

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