



Modern Shin Thought in the Ōtani-ha Honganji

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Edo Period Legacy

▶ Bakumatsu Politics (1840~1867):

- ▶ Tokugawa Bakufu issues newly strengthened law in 1825 requiring warlike response to any foreign ships entering Japan's waters, clearly signaling that Western ships were arriving in Japan more frequently.
- ▶ In the Morrison Incident of 1837, the *Morrison*, an American merchant ship trying to return seven shipwrecked Japanese sailors from Macau is fired upon and prevented from dropping anchor. French, British, and American warships appear in Kagoshima at this time as well.
- ▶ 1840 Britain is victorious in the Opium War in China, showing their power.
- ▶ 1853 Commodore Perry sails into Edo Bay (Tokyo), fires a few cannons to show what his ships can do. Unequal Treaties are signed with the Americans in 1854 & 1858 allowing U.S. ships to land and trade at Edo, Kobe, Nagasaki, Hakodate, and Yokohama. Similar treaties follow with other Western powers.
- ▶ Earthquakes and tsunami hit Japan in 1854 and 1855, signaling ?



Civil War

- ▶ Trade with foreigners wreaks havoc on the Japanese economy. E.g. the gold-silver exchange rate in Japan was entirely different than in the West, resulting in gold bought in Japan by foreigners could be sold at home for as much as double the price. 70 tons of gold left Japan by 1860.
- ▶ By the 1860s unemployment soars, famines occur, and peasant uprisings are common.
- ▶ 1863 new order is issued expelling barbarians, and there are violent attacks against them/ French, American and British ships come and demand reparations
- ▶ 1866 Bakufu govt. is openly fighting it's own civil war. It sends soldiers to Europe to learn naval skills, and participates in 1867 Paris World's Fair.
- ▶ 1868 Bakufu is finally overthrown by samurai from Satsuma, Chōshū, *rōnin*, etc., promising to restore the Emperor to power.



Two Honganji Divide Loyalties

- The transition from Tokugawa Bakufu to Meiji Government was a rough process that took years to complete.
- Hongwanji-ha aligned itself with the anti-Bakufu forces early in the conflict and remained supporters.
- Ōtani-ha remained loyal to the Tokugawa Bakufu to the end, which led to hostility from the Meiji government toward them, especially in the early years of the Meiji period.
- Therefore the Nishi side, being close to the highly nationalistic new Meiji government, thus became more Japan-centered, inward looking, and accepting of the new political and social culture under Meiji leadership
- The Higashi side, being alienated from the Meiji government, became marginalized and therefore more cynical toward the new regime, and also outward looking and open to Western ideas.



Meiji Government Hostility toward Buddhism

- ▶ All revolutions justify violence against the state by a sense of moral outrage and an expressed need to establish a new social order.
- ▶ The ideology of the Meiji government was based on three *nativist* principles
 - ▶ Only the Emperor can be the legitimate ruler of Japan, not a shōgun
 - ▶ Society needed to be restored to an ancient, original ideology, defined as being a fusion of National Learning (*kokugaku*) and Neo-Confucianism
 - ▶ Shinto was the only proper religion for the Japanese people Foreign religions were bad for society.



The New Order

- ▶ The Meiji Period tried to create a national religion dominated by Shinto that would provide all religious, ethical, legal, and political functions
- ▶ Prior to the Meiji Period:
 - ▶ Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism got along just fine
 - ▶ Buddhist priests lived in Shinto temples, Confucianism was taught in schools run by Buddhist temples
 - ▶ Ethics, law, education was primarily the domain of Confucianism
 - ▶ Apotropaic functions (healing, warding off evil, protection and support for difficult tasks like childbirth) was the domain of Shinto
 - ▶ Religion and philosophy was the domain of the Buddhists



Social Obligations of Buddhist Organizations in the Modern Period

- The Meiji period saw a variety of structural reforms attempting to fashion a new, modern society that would be strong enough to resist the imperialism of the West
- The bottom line was that traditional Buddhist forms had to justify their value to the state by arguing for their contribution to society.
- Although the intensity of the hostility waxed and waned, this “mood” continued for about 100 years from the 1840s until 1945 when fascism was finally destroyed by end of the war and the American occupation.
- This produced a variety of reactions, from pro-government nationalism to fatalism and apathy, to a radical turn inward, away from an “impossible to change social situation” to an inward life where change was possible.

Edo Period Intellectual Precedents

- ▶ Nishi Honganji went through a series of conflicts over Shinshū doctrine, culminating in the famous *Sangō wakuran* incident, where people came to blows and the govt. had to step in to settle things. People went to prison.
- ▶ The result was a relatively rigid structure of doctrine and belief on the Nishi side at the end of the Edo period.
- ▶ But the oppressive policies of the Meiji government led all forms of Shinshū to tighten control over their membership.
- ▶ E.g. in 1876 four Shin branches (2 Honganjis, Takada-ha, Kibe-ha) put out a joint set of regulations (宗規綱領) putting enormous power in the leader of each sect, giving them final say in who can be ordained, and even having the power to judge whether someone had *shinjin* or not (宗義安心ノ正否)



Impact of Meiji Policy:

Haibutsu Kishaku

- ▶ The term *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈 or “eliminate Buddhism, destroy Śākyamuni” is the name given to the persecution of Buddhism.
- ▶ Temples are burned down or smashed, books are burned, statues are burned or melted, land is confiscated.
- ▶ This starts locally among anti-Buddhist *daimyō* in the Edo period. In the Meiji period, between 1868 and 1874 under the guise of a national policy to separate Buddhism and Shinto.
- ▶ ~60% of all Buddhist temples in Japan sustained some damage. Estimates of temples destroyed is 18~20,000.
- ▶ A lot of Buddhist art left the country in the 1880s as a result, as many pieces were preserved when a temple was destroyed.



Impact of Western Ideas in the Meiji Period

- ▶ Christian missionaries were let back into the country in 1875
- ▶ But in 1862 Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi got on a boat to the Netherlands and studied philosophy at the Univ. of Leiden for 4 years.
- ▶ Social Darwinism was more of a threat than Shinto or Christianity. Katō Hiroyuki, president of Univ. of Tokyo and lecturer to Emperor Meiji was a strong advocate of this: letting the weak die is good for the country.
- ▶ Buddhism's relationship with Christianity went through 3 phases in Meiji
 - ▶ Antagonism, with each side publishing books saying the other's beliefs were ridiculous and/or false.
 - ▶ Mutual study of each other's doctrines and practices
 - ▶ Mutual respect and implicit borrowing from each other



An example of how Buddhism changed: Redefining of the Two Truth Doctrine

- ▶ ***Conventional truth*** refers to normal, phenomenal experience and what we know from analytic inquiry. That is, what we know from what we perceive. This includes the study of Buddhism. We believe in what we know but in fact we are deceiving ourselves because this level of truth is too limited to liberate us.
- ▶ ***Ultimate truth*** refers to direct perception of a truth that produces liberation. Thus the Buddhist teachings when perceived properly does produce liberation. But when merely learned as historical or psychological information, does not.
- ▶ Beginning in the 1840s, the two truths begin to appear as redefined as the medieval idea of “King’s Law & Buddha’s Law (王法佛法),” which refers to the truth of political power, i.e. the laws of society and the truth of the Buddhist teaching. I.e. rules of social obligation and internal, spiritual matters.
- ▶ Expressed as stated policy of Nishi Monshu at beginning of Meiji period, but Higashi later expresses same sentiment



Major Issues for Modern Shinshū in the Ōtani Branch (and everyone else)

- 1. Institutional Control v. Reform on How to Study Shinshū
- 2. How to Deal with Hyper-Nationalism
- 3. How will Buddhist Studies affect Shinshū Thought & Culture?
- 4. The Mythical Conception of Mahāyāna Sutras
- 5. How to Deal with Christianity
- 6. How to Deal with Science
- 7. How to Deal with Materialism & its Accompanying Nihilism
- 8. What is the Pure Land?
- 9. What does *tariki* mean?

Points of Emphasis in Modern Higashi Thinkers Associated with *Seishinshugi*

- Religious Experience is highly valued. Shinjin is an awakening, not a rational acceptance of a set of beliefs. People say, “that person has shinjin”, implying that most people do not have it.
- Questioning authority & tradition is essential—Shinshu is seen as a tradition of *inquiry* that leads to *shinjin*, which is liberation. It often appears that *shinjin* = *satori* in Higashi rhetoric.
- *Tannishō* is central to their way of seeing Shinran. Despite the historical problems with the provenance of the text, at some point in Meiji it became the entry way to studying Shinran.
- You read *Tannishō* to study *shūgi*, you read *Kyōgyōshinshō* to study *shūgaku*.
- The purpose of studying Shinran is to reach an understanding of Shinran’s religious perspective/mindset, not to maintain the tradition or to express fealty or debt (恩) to him as the founder of the sect.
- People respect Rennyo but want to jump over him to get back to Shinran. Edo-period *shūgaku* is seen as too heavily influenced by Rennyo, resulting in monto studying Shinran through the lens of Rennyo.
- Acceptance of buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*, *busshō*) doctrine as orthodox, but not original enlightenment (*hongaku*). Nirvana Sutra is highly valued; The Awakening of Faith is not.
- People often express their understanding in terms of personal experience, showing a kind of personal intimacy with the Buddha, the Patriarchs, the Vows, the Nenbutsu, etc.



Traditional Faith Structure (*shūgi*) v. Critical Study of Doctrine (*shūgaku*)

- Kiyozawa tried to argue for his position by asserting the difference between *shūgi* & *shūgaku*.
- Objective was not to rattle the leaders of the organization by teaching and publishing critical works on Buddhist thought, including the Pure Land sutras and even the works of Shinran
- *Shūgi* 宗義 represented what every Shin believer accepts on faith as the conceptual framework that defines them as following this form of religion. *Shūgi* is how we understand Shinran's liberation, his awakening. Kiyozawa valued this highly as well. But these ideas should be relatively uniform if understood *historically*, though not if understood existentially.
- *Shūgaku* 宗学 is about how to study all of the evidence that allows us to know what Buddhism is or was at any particular place and time, including Shinshū. This is where you deal with the fact that the *Larger Sutra* has 5 extant translations in Chinese, different looking texts in Sanskrit and in Tibetan, and the description of Amida's vows in all of them are different. These ideas need never be uniform as scholarly knowledge continually changes, but it must be convincing.

Apparent Differences in How the Branches Studied Shinshū in Meiji Period

➤ 1. *Tannishō*

- Although both branches published the text of the *Tannishō*, only Higashi scholars write about it. Beginning in 1662 I have gathered the names of 15 essays written by Higashi scholars in the Edo period, and 21 produced in the Meiji, including the story of a *Tannishō* text written in braille. Chikazumi Jōkan attains fame as *Tannishō* preacher. This is all Higashi.
- There are no known essays by Nishi scholars in the Edo period, and only 3 in the Meiji period. The earliest known Nishi essay is a short work published in 1909. Only in the Taisho period (1912-1925) do Nishi scholars turn to this text in earnest.

➤ 2. *Nirvana Sutra*

- Known for doctrine of buddha-nature; quoted by Shinran extensively. Strong influence in Soga, Chikazumi
- Tokiwa Daijao, a Higashi scholar, did the first modern translation. Otani U. has a tradition of one professor in Nirvana Sutra studies, such as Ōchō, Furuta, and now Oda but I don't hear of this at Ryūkoku.

➤ 3. *Anjin-ketsujōshō*

- Known for doctrine of *kihō-ittai*, unity of human and buddha. Written 14th c. (after Shinran)
- Loved by Rennyo & accepted by Nishi but rejected by Higashi in Edo period as a Jōdoshū text.



1. Institutional Control v. Reform on How to Study Shinshū

- Modern Japan brought in ideas of Democracy and freedom of choice
- Modern Japan also brought in a new political imperative to standardize everything, leading to strong central control.
 - Imperial Rescript on Education aimed at a standard curriculum for all schools and uniformity in teaching loyalty and sacrifice to the Emperor (= the State)
 - All Buddhist organizations were expected to “deliver” this kind of loyalty in its membership
- This led to a conservative movement within Otani branch temples, as the organization tried to continue an Edo-period curriculum and approach to what Shinshū studies should be.



2. How to Deal with Hyper-Nationalism?

- ▶ For 2 reasons, it appears that Higashi Honganji had a more difficult time adjusting to the hyper-nationalism of the Meiji-Taishō and early Shōwa period, i.e. 1868-1945.
- ▶ (1) the legacy of his support of the Tokugawa Bakufu led to deep alienation from the new Meiji Government
- ▶ (2) Edo period sectarian scholarship (*shūgaku*) in the Higashi branch was somewhat more open-ended, and less sectarian than the Nishi branch. There was nothing remotely like the Three Fights that led to the Sango Wakuran incident on the Nishi side.
- ▶ But although the leader of Nishi at the time of the Meiji Restoration explicitly told all Nishi priests to understand worldly truth as social and political laws, in time the Higashi leaders followed suit and did the same.



3. How will Buddhist Studies affect Shinshū Thought & Culture?

- ▶ Buddhist Studies was a new field imported from Europe but nearly all its scholars were clergy from Jōdo Shinshū or Jōdo-shū.
- ▶ They saw big problems in church leadership's attempts to drag Edo period religion into Meiji period Japan:
 - ▶ Everyone had learned about democracy in the West
 - ▶ By the 1890s all Japanese intellectuals were well aware of the emerging field of Buddhist Studies in Europe and its critical approach to understanding Buddhism
 - ▶ Darwin's theory of Evolution and Western science completely changed the world view of all educated people. As late as the early 19th century, Buddhist scholars in Japan were still arguing that the sun went around the earth.
- ▶ In 1895 Kiyozawa Manshi and 12 young intellectuals led a movement to reform the way in which Shinshū is taught in the Ōtani-ha.
- ▶ This included Inoue Enryō, Nanjō Bun'yū, Murakami Senshō, etc.



Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863-1903)

- ▶ From a family in which mother was devout Shinshū monto but father was a follower of Zen. Both forms of Buddhism can be seen in him.
- ▶ Studied Western Philosophy in the Department at Univ. of Tokyo under Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), and his first publication shows heavy philosophical orientation to religion: *Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion*.
- ▶ Creates a movement called *Seishinshugi*, which is not a set of doctrines or beliefs but rather an attitude of inquiry into how we can understand the Dharma, how we can understand ourselves
- ▶ Clearly sees ethics as a dead end, and moreover is unhappy about the govt.'s attempts to define Buddhism's contribution to society in ethical terms.
- ▶ His essay known by the popular title, "My Faith" (*Waga shinnen*) is an intensely personal statement about what he believes in and why.



Kiyozawa Manshi

- ▶ Kiyozawa is clearly the dominant intellectual voice in Ōtani Branch Shin thinking in the Meiji, Taishō and Shōwa periods; only in the last 25 years has his influence started to wane.
- ▶ He was inspiring intellectually and personally, but his charisma did not endear him to his church and he was in constant tension with it.
- ▶ Did not like the idea that *tariki* was taught merely by reading texts. The understanding of *tariki* for Kiyozawa needed to be deeply personal, the result of a kind of existential crisis wherein the individual could finally “hear” the meaning of the teachings as something that pertained to himself.
- ▶ Kiyozawa embodies Shinran quote in the *Tannishō*, “The buddha’s vows were made for me alone” in that religious language has to be made alive or “reborn” with oneself. In Zen to study someone else’s description is to study “dead words”. But to study this way meant that the Honganji could not control the curriculum/
- ▶ *Tariki* is only understand existentially (as opposed to intellectually) by practicing *jiriki* until you see its limitations. This is what Hōnen and Shinran did, so we must do the same to understand them.



Example of the Personal: From Kiyozawa's *Waga shinnen* 我信念 (1903)

“What is it that I believe in, and why do I do this? What sort of effects are produced by such a thing? There are various points to consider here. Let me look at effects first. This believing that I do has the primary effect of removing distress and pain from my life. . . . Particularly for someone hypersensitive like myself, and especially now when my emotional state is aggravated by illness, if this thing I am calling faith were not there, it would be impossible to avoid extremes of distress and anxiety.”

“It is only through personal experience that one can truly know the presence or absence of the benefits of faith.”

“But my belief in the tathāgata is not just the result of seeing the effects of this faith. It has another important basis. My belief in the tathāgata occurs at the limit of everything that I know.”

(*Cultivating Spirituality* 94, tr. Blum)



Example of Inquiry as the Basis for Faith, also from *Waga Shinnen*

“Within my faith there is an element that believes in the ineffectiveness of my own efforts.¹ And to believe in my own ineffectiveness, it was necessary first to exhaust my entire range of intellectual faculties to the point where I could not longer even raise my head. This effort involved an incredible ordeal. Before I finally reached this limit I speak of, time and again I concluded that religious truth must be such and such, only to have that conviction destroyed by subsequent experience. As long as one attempts to establish their religious grounding by means of logic or research, such upheavals are inevitable. What is good, what is bad? What is truth, what is falsehood? What is happiness and what is unhappiness? One cannot possibly understand any of these. When I stood on that ground of understanding nothing, I threw up my hands and came to trust in the tathāgata, and this became the focal point of my faith.”

(Cultivating Spirituality, 95)



Failure of Church Reform Effort

- ▶ Kiyozawa argued that administrative officials within the Honganji should be elected, and there should be freedom in the curriculum of schools that teach Shin thought and practice.
- ▶ This gained a lot of attention. 2500 supporters came to hear him lecture on this in Kyoto, and he launched a reform journal called *Kyōkai jigen* 教界時言, which means something like “Timely Words for the Religious World”.
- ▶ He published an essay criticizing Buddhist monks throughout Japan for their obsequiousness, for giving up their autonomy before government officials.
- ▶ The *honzan* (head temple) in Kyoto at this point punished Kiyozawa severely, taking away his clerical status, his position as the principal of a high school and effectively throwing him out of Kyoto.



Importation of Buddhist Studies in Shinshū Thinking & Ōtani Daigaku

- In 1901, under the name Shinshū Daigaku (university), after a change in leadership at the *honzan*, Kiyozawa was given back his clerical status and granted his wish to start a new and modern Buddhist university.
- He insisted this be located in Tokyo, away from the prying eyes of the *honzan*, and got his wish. Kiyozawa hired many of his friends from the Philosophy Dept. at the Univ. of Tokyo. The seminary in Kyoto continued for young men wanting only to be trained as clergy.
- His tuberculous worsened and he died only 2 years later. But the clean break from the seminaries of the past marks Otani as the first “modern” Buddhist university in not only Japan, but the whole world that admitted anyone from any background, without the need to be training clergy.
- In other words, this was *shūgaku*, not *shūgi*.



Studying Buddhism as History v. as Religion

- ▶ Kiyozawa was obviously very happy to be able to create a venue for the newly imported field of Buddhist Studies. Nanjō was its second president.
- ▶ Buddhist Studies looked at the history of Buddhism as a whole. Thus the original sutras were studied in Sanskrit for the first time, to see what changed when they were translated into Chinese.
- ▶ It also led to reading the early, pre-Mahāyāna sutras in a non-prejudicial way for the first time in Japanese history.
- ▶ But Kiyozawa always distinguished people who study Buddhism only for historical knowledge and people who study it to learn the truth about themselves and the world. He could very critical of the former but saw its value for everyone. There was no major in Shinshū Studies at his school.



What is New in Buddhist Studies?

- ▶ Higashi scholars, most famously Nanjō Bun'yū, go to study with Max Müller at Oxford in 1876, very early in the Meiji period.
- ▶ Nanjō returns in 1884. Thereafter the study of Sanskrit and Pāli in Japan attracts more and more scholars.
- ▶ Result is an entirely new understanding of the history of Buddhism, particularly the theories of periodization end up being quite different from the standard doctrinal systems created in China called *panjiao*.
- ▶ Three major ideas of Japanese scholars rock the Buddhist world:
 - ▶ So-called Hīnayāna Buddhism is attractive, not at all an inferior form of Buddhism
 - ▶ The Mahayana sutras were probably not spoken by Śākyamuni
 - ▶ Many religious tales in the sutras make more sense when seen as myth

4. The Mythical Conception of Mahāyāna Sutras

- The modern world puts a high value on rational, logical thought. This is one reason why the early, so-called Hīnayāna sutras became attractive for the first time in the Meiji period.
- So how to deal with the clearly mythic elements in the sutras? Myth was a new concept and it took time for it to be understood properly, as symbolic narrative.
- Kiyozawa's way of dealing with this (1890-1903) was to take a philosophical and existentialist approach, very similar to Søren Kierkegaard.
- In the 1920s Nonomura Naotarō on the Nishi side wrote a book critical of a literal reading of the Pure Land sutras, and on the Higashi side Kaneko Daiei published a book exploring what the idea of "Pure Land" could possibly mean beyond the idea of a land floating in the sky or on another planet.
- Both were young professors at Shinshu colleges and both were fired.

Soga Ryōjin 曾我量深 (1875-1971)

- ▶ First Legacy of Kiyozawa's *Seishin-shugi* movement are his disciples:
 - ▶ Sasaki Gesshō (1875-1958): scholar of Yogācāra and Shinshū
 - ▶ Kaneko (1881-1976): scholar of Kegon (Huayan) and Shinshū
 - ▶ Soga Ryōjin (1875-1971), scholar of Hossō (Yogācāra) and Shinshū
- ▶ Soga was a kind of mystic, and used his intellect to explain his religious experience. He combined
 - ▶ the philosophical approach in Kiyozawa,
 - ▶ notions of man's relationship to the Sacred from biblical myth, and
 - ▶ Yogācāra idealism about the human mind as arbiter of meaning
- ▶ For many people, Nishi and Higashi and even Jōdoshū, Soga's writings are amazing and inspiring, but hard to fully understand.



Soga's focus on Hōzō Bosatsu (Dharmakāra Bodhisattva)

- ▶ One of the major contributions of Soga's thought to Shinshū belief and intellectual culture was his insistence that we should be thinking about the bodhisattva called Hōzō before he became Amida Buddha.
- ▶ The meaning of *tariki* for Soga is not that the buddha as an other, an outsider impacts me but rather he *becomes me*. That is when Hōzō is born, and when we ourselves, as Hōzō, experience his awakening and becoming Amida.
- ▶ Soga is saying he could never fully believe in the myth of Amida as an *other* existing outside himself, but when he began to see him *subjectively* as part of who I am, then he felt the power of the buddha and knew he was real.



5. How to Deal with Christianity -- Soga's Response

- In the early Meiji period, many Buddhist writers were dismissive of Christianity, hoping that by disrespecting it Japanese society would follow. Of course that only increased the motivation of the missionaries.
- By the late Meiji period, we see Buddhist writers borrowing Christian themes for their own purposes. In the Seishinshugi tradition, Kiyozawa, Soga, and Yasuda are notable for this, taking a “philosophy of religion: approach
- For Soga, the eternal *dharmakāya* buddha is akin to the Creator God in that it is cosmic power itself but too remote to saves me. He likens the appearance of Hōzō (Dharmākara) in the world to the appearance of Jesus Christ—human manifestations of the divine who can function as saviors.
- But for Soga, Dharmākara is born in our minds, not as a physical human. This is essentially buddha-nature, though he does not use that term, presumably because the myth of Dharmākara has too much agency.



“Even supposing that the unhindered light illuminates the sea of suffering of actual existence, what benefit would that bring to the self that is drowning at the bottom of the sea? Indeed, what is truly demanded by actual present reality is not light in the sky but the ark of the vow on the sea of real human life. It is not the eternal *dharmakāya* buddha who is the savior of the real self; the savior of the real world must be a human buddha who deigns to appear in the real world. That Christianity speaks of a Trinity, posits Jesus as the mediator between God and human beings, and considers this God-man Jesus as the true and direct savior is undoubtedly for the sake of satisfying this demand. The Father, the Supreme God, being eternal light, is not a being in intimate contact with the real world. Between the father, who is eternal light, and us human beings, who are floundering at the bottom of the ocean of saṃsāra, there is a distance as great as that between heaven and earth. The majesty of the father cannot reach us directly. That is why he, dimming his light and adapting to the dust (wakō dōjin 和光同塵), deigned to appear as Dharmākara Bodhisattva, this savior who is a human buddha.” (A Savior on Earth, *Cultivating Spirituality* 111-112)



"Dharmākara Bodhisattva is the figure of the Tathāgata deigning to become me"

“Especially in connection with the very “subjective” act of faith, it is not fitting to speak of “the Tathāgata acting in my place.” Instead, we better speak of “the Tathāgata directly becoming me.” Precisely the true self of entrusting faith is the core of the eighteenth vow, and what is called “other-power salvation of the original vow” is ultimately nothing but the Tathāgata deigning to become the subject of the surrendering faith of the nenbutsu practitioner. As long as one places Dharmākara Bodhisattva or his original vow simply on the objective level, in the rank of object of faith, one cannot yet call that person somebody who has experimented with the original vow and has entrusted himself to it. . . . Precisely by experimenting with the true subject of the practitioner, which is entrusting, the Tathāgata fulfilled and revealed the parental heart that makes him pronounce the vow; at the same time, precisely through his parental heart, he experiences the children’s heart of entrusting. Truly, the eighteenth vow attests to the fact that Dharmākara Bodhisattva is the unhindered unity of the children’s heart of entrusting and the parental heart of the vow, and shows that his personality consists in the self-awareness of the unity of parent and child. Dharmākara Bodhisattva is the figure of the unity of Dharma and sentient beings, of the buddha-mind and the mind of the common mortal.”



Soga's Contribution: "Who is the I who believes in the Tathāgata?"

- ▶ Christian themes are used freely by Soga to enhance his own understanding. For him, Christianity is just another religious text to use as needed w/t apology.
- ▶ Soga offers a new (?) way of approaching faith and practice in Shinshū
- ▶ 1) The core issue he struggles to deal with two fundamentally related issues for all Shin believers
 - ▶ Who is the I who believes in the Tathāgata?
 - ▶ Who is the Tathāgata that I believe in.
- ▶ This are the same questions asked by Kiyozawa.
- ▶ 2) Soga turns to the *Anjin-ketsujōshō*, previously rejected in Ōtani tradition, attracted to its mystical conception of a unity between buddha and man.
- ▶ 3) The buddha cannot be understood as an objective other, but only as the subjective true self. It is when I awaken to that, that my faith is established. This is radical understanding of Shinran's idea that the buddha is the cause for faith arising in me.



Legacy of Kiyozawa and Soga

- ▶ Until very recently, studies of Shin thought in the Otani branch has been dominated by the influence of Kiyozawa and Soga.
- ▶ There is a simplicity, an existential honesty, and yet an philosophical sophistication on their approach to Shin religion.
- ▶ Most importantly, it is fueled by INQUIRY and the need for PERSONAL CONFIRMATION through religious experience.
- ▶ This is philosophical religion, but not the study of religion for philosophical purposes.
- ▶ Compare Kiyozawa: “The buddha stands at the limit of what I know” and Soga, “The buddha becomes me.”



Limitations of the Seishinshugi Approach

- Downside of the Kiyozawa-Soga way of believing is that not everyone is capable of the intense introspection required to make Shinshū work in the way they understand it.
- It is *too personal, too internally directed*.
- Neither addresses other important questions for Shinshū monto, like
 - (1) How do I live in the world as a person following the path of Shinshū
 - (2) What is the relationship between practice and faith?



Practice & Shinjin: the burning question

- What is the proper way to practice my faith?
- Practice is at the heart of any religious tradition, but the modern trend on the Higashi side has been a strong turn inward, away from practice.
- Higashi is to Rinzai Zen, as Nishi is to Soto Zen:
 - Rinzai values sudden enlightenment. It rejects the idea that there is a direct link between practice and realization. Sitting zazen as the means to awakening is like polishing a brick for the purpose of turning it into a mirror—it will never happen.
 - *Shinjin* is conceived as a sudden awakening in Higashi thought. It is not the acceptance of a set of propositions that constitutes faith, but a realization.
 - Soto does not value sudden enlightenment so much. Sitting zazen is itself an expression of satori. Practice in Nishi is similarly an expression of *shinjin*.



How Do We Get There?

- ▶ But if nenbutsu as the chosen, sacred practice for Shinran is not the means to attain shinjin, then it has a different function
- ▶ To the degree that a religious community is united, nenbutsu like chanting Shōshinge, can serve as a communal re-statement of everyone's common beliefs
- ▶ But in Japan those traditional communities are fraying, even in the countryside where many young people leave for the cities to find work.
- ▶ How can Shin temples function in a way that provides both individual confirmation for what the religion means to each person in a personal way, and also provide for communal celebrations when possible?



Tannishō in the Edo Period

- ▶ Another legacy of the Edo period is that there is strong evidence of a lively debate on how to read the *Tannishō* in the Ōtani branch, but not so much in the Hongwanji branch.
- ▶ Jinrei (1749-1817) and his student Ryōshō (1788-1842) both Higashi, had an interesting debate through published essays in the late Edo period,
- ▶ Enchi (d. 1669) was another Higashi scholar who also published a commentary as early as 1662.
- ▶ Our oldest Tannisho ms. contains a note added by Rennyō in which he refers to this as a secret text that should not be shown to outsiders.
- ▶ Thus the text was studied openly at least on the Higashi side. Perhaps only on the Higashi side?



Tannishō in the Modern Period

- ▶ By late Meiji, the Higashi side is talking about and publishing works on the *Tannishō*. Apparently this begins with Kiyozawa insisting that it be published in his journal *Seishinkai* so the whole world can read it.
 - ▶ 1903, Kiyozawa's student Akegarasu Haya begins to publish serially in *Seishinkai* along with his commentary.
 - ▶ 1905-1906:, a colleague of Kiyozawa, publishes the whole text with his own analysis,
 - ▶ 1907: Jinrei's commentary is published by Hōzōkan.
- ▶ But *how to read* the *Tannishō* is another question.

Chikazumi Jōkan 近角常観 (1870-1941)

- ▶ Contemporary and friend of Kiyozawa, Soga, etc. Grew up in small temple in Shiga.
- ▶ Studied in Philosophy Dept. at Univ. of Tokyo like Kiyozawa (and Inoue Enryō).
- ▶ Sent to America by Honganji to learn how Christianity is facing its modernizing difficulties.
- ▶ Upon returning became famous as a charismatic preacher of *Tannishō*.
- ▶ *Zangeroku* and *Tannishō kōgi* are his best known writings.
- ▶ He write in a colloquial, very personal style, talking about the Shin teachings in terms of what he experienced with them.
- ▶ “Do not believe what you want to believe. Believe what you find you have no choice but to believe” (信ぜんと欲して信ずるに非ず、信せざる可らざるゆゑに信ずる也.)



From Chikazumi's *Metanoia Record* (懺悔録), published in 1905

“The standard of confession/repentance (zange) upon which we know how to live is precisely what is explained in the *Nirvana Sutra* when Ajase (Ajataśatru) reached the point where he brought forth a faith within himself that had no karmic roots (aka “rootless faith”). . . These are the words that Shinran Shōnin took as his faith and called it Shinshū. The core of this is found most explicitly at the end of the chapter on Faith found among the six rolls that make up Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*, where the [*Nirvana Sutra*] passage is quoted extensively. This is where the Shōnin first speaks his mind about himself truly drowning in a sea of desire, lost in the mountains seeking fame, etc. Shinran's statement is brief but filled with deep significance when combined with the words of the *Nirvana Sutra*. I have privately thought that, whatever the nuance of the language here, I cannot help but feel that Shinran is using the confessions of Ajase instead of his own confession. In general, people speak of confession or repentance in the West as a means to express the process by which they came to faith, but in Buddhism we didn't have that kind of thing. But what Shinran is doing, even if he doesn't speak of it in that way, looks like an opening up of what is in his heart.” (*Zangeroku*, tr. mine)



Conclusion



- ▶ The Meiji Period was one of tremendous disruption and insecurity for the Buddhist world, not only because of the sudden internationalizing of Japanese society, but the new political climate in which the government turned hostile to Buddhism for the first time in Japanese history, seeking to reduce its presence and influence in society.
- ▶ Compared with Nishi, Higashi Honganji was much more alienated from the Meiji govt. because of its support for the Edo Period govt. This led to a sense of being marginalized. As an ‘outsider’ on the margins, this led to a strongly subjective, inward looking trend
- ▶ Higashi produced a fusion of Shinran-centered study, European Buddhist Studies, Western Philosophy, and a felt need to appeal to its *monto* on a personal level, one to one.
- ▶ Shinran is not a saint transcending history. Rather, it is his historicity that makes him appealing. That is, he is someone who came to accept his personal limitations and speak of them publically. This process came about as a result of reading the *Contemplation Sutra* and the *Larger Sutra* through the lens of the *Nirvana Sutra*’s story of Ajase.
- ▶ The summary or conclusion of this personal process of introspection, confession, and salvation in Shinran is best seen or most clearly seen in the Shinran we find in the *Tannishō*.