



Three Wheels NEWS



London Shogyoji Trust

October 2010

Number 18

ANNUAL PEACE AND RECONCILIATION CEREMONY

Mary Harrison chaired the 93rd London Eza, The Ceremony to Pray for World Peace and Reconciliation and The Memorial Service for the Soldiers Who Died in Burma during the Second World War.

The Ceremony began with an Opening Address, given by Mr Shingo Yamagami, Minister of the Japanese Embassy. During his address, Mr Yamagami drew attention to the fact that in spite of both countries having endured tremendous suffering and pain, there had nonetheless been 152 years of bi-lateral relations between Japan and the UK. Both countries now enjoyed solid diplomatic ties and a cordial relationship to one another.



Mr Shingo Yamagami, Minister of the Japanese Embassy.

Mr Yamagami went on to say that although the war had lasted only 3 years, its impact was enduring. It is because of this that the efforts of those seeking peace and reconciliation have been of great value so far. The exchange of trade and people between the UK and Japan since the war are developments that have taken place on this solid foundation of peace and reconciliation. It is up to the younger generation to build on this. Finally, he requested that we “all play our part to keep the momentum going”.

The address was followed by the chanting of several sutras by the members of Three Wheels, Venerable Bhikkhu Vajiro from Amaravati and Venerables Gyoho Nagahama and Gyoro Nagase from Nihonzan Myohoji. During the chanting, incense was offered by representatives of the Japanese Embassy, Burma Campaign Society and Three Wheels, in remembrance of the sacrifice of those who had given their lives during wartime.

Afterwards, Reverend Sato commented on how deeply

moved he had felt during the chanting, indeed, it was as if Mr Hirakubo had been sat beside us and all of the soldiers who had died were also gathered here. He then requested Venerable Bhikkhu Vajiro to say a few words.

The Venerable began by telling us how both his maternal grandfather and uncle were POWs during the Second World War. Although Venerable Bhikkhu Vajiro did not know his grandfather, he knew his uncle never felt any resentment. The Buddha suggested that human beings can feel happiness independent of conditions, free from the compulsions of desire to gain or to push away, attachment or revulsion. This is freedom. When we look to the Lord Buddha we can realise this.

This was followed by Reverend Sato’s keynote address, in which he spoke of how he would like to envision the future of such Peace and Reconciliation meetings. Reverend Sato highlighted that, although in many Buddhist traditions praying for our ancestors and others deceased is a standard practice, in Jodo Shinshu it is very different. Such practices are regarded as self-power and further, it is presumptuous of us to think that we can save our loved through our own means and efforts, whether by chanting sutras, the *nembutsu* or by some other means. All that is left then during these memorial services is “to express our sincere gratitude to the departed for what they have done for us, and humbly offer tribute to the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.” It is in this spirit of gratitude and humbleness, Reverend Sato continued, that the Peace and Reconciliation Ceremony should be carried forward.

Reverend Sato then gave a brief report on his recent visit to America, to attend the Buddhist Churches of America’s Fukyo-kenshu-kai (training assembly for Jodo Shinshu priests). It was during this report that, with great joy, he announced the publication of seventy-five advance copies of his translation and commentaries on the Tannisho – Great Living – in the Pure Encounter between Master and Disciple and announced possible future plans for publication of his talks on both Rennyo Shonin’s Ofumi (Letters) and Shinran Shonin’s Shoshinge (Hymn of Pure Entrusting) by The Institute of Buddhist Studies.

Mr Philip Malins, representative of the Burma Campaign Society and veteran of World War II was then asked to say a few words. The BCS was founded by war veterans who had fought in Burma and believed in the importance of reconciliation. “Kemmyo Sato was side by side with us in everything we did. We would like to pay tribute to Prof White. He has put a large amount of effort into TW and it

always gives us a great amount of pleasure to visit here. Because of everyone's efforts I feel that reconciliation with the Japanese is virtually complete. It is vital that we continue to preserve this close association with Three Wheels".

Mrs Akiko McDonald, chair of the Burma Campaign Society, commented that she was overwhelmed when she realised the number of countries that took part in WW2. Looking back over the life in UK some prejudices still remained towards Japanese people. The 2nd generation needs to look inwards and remember how many people died during the war and where these conflicts where they lost their lives took place.



During the ceremony

Mr Andrew Webb then proceeded to read out a letter from Mr Satoru Yanagi, a Japanese veteran and member of Shogyoji Temple. Mr Yanagi spoke of the great privilege of meeting Mr Morris Franses, a British veteran, through the ceremony and of how, upon each learning they had fought one another on the same battlefield and at the same time, both were deeply moved to tears, "feeling as if we were able to pass to one another the heavy burden we had been carrying within ourselves ever since the war." He extended his thanks to the late Mr Hirakubo and all those at Three Wheels through whose efforts he and his wife were enabled to become "part of the great wheel of the

Dharma movement that appeared to me richer and richer with every succeeding year". Finally, Mr Yanagi stated that it was entirely impossible for him to reach a stage of forgiveness and reconciliation through his own efforts, but that such an experience was a gift given to him entirely through the compassionate working of Amida Buddha.

Mr Andy Barritt then shared a few words – "This is the 8th year I have attended this meeting for peace and reconciliation at TW which for someone of my age is quite a large part of my life. I am grateful to be able to witness the encounter between Japanese and British veterans which has been beyond words. It is impossible to imagine what their experiences could have been like. I have always said at past meetings how I would like to carry the Peace and Reconciliation movement forward but have had no idea how I could do this. Now the older generation is passing away the problem has become more acute. Recently I have learnt from dialogue with Christian and Buddhist traditions. Speaking to my father who is a Christian I have realised I did not understand the meaning of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not, as I had thought, to diminish the pain and suffering experienced but the person who embodies forgiveness says that I will not be a vessel for carrying this pain and suffering into the future. I feel very grateful to have learnt from both traditions and participate in the dialogue between them. From this I feel I can move forwards."

Mr Jon Brown went on to say how he felt that his generation takes so much for granted of the tremendous sacrifices the older generation made. Often we treat the older generation as a nuisance and do not see the connection. Mr Brown felt "it is almost like encountering another world when I think of how they sacrificed their lives without question for the people around them."

The meeting was concluded with a few words from Professor John White, who reminded us all that "The number here is a few but this small body will have a great effect in the future. The effect of a few with quality is profound in the whole world."

Jon Brown

SPRING SCHOOL IMPRESSIONS

The 11th Spring School to promote the spiritual development of young people took place from 24 March to 5 April 2010. Eleven people (seven teenagers, three students and a priest) all flew over to London from Japan in order to take part. For most of those participating this was their first taste of a foreign country. It goes without saying that they all greatly enjoyed visiting the usual tourist spots such as the British Museum, Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, Buckingham Palace, Wembley Stadium and so forth. But the special feature of their Spring School experience was, of course, attending Service to the Buddha mornings and evenings. The young people also read a sutra, entitled *The Sutra on the Gravity of What Has Been Done by Our Parents*. They all visited Coniston in Cumbria and climbed Old Man Mountain, where eight of the twelve rocks used in the Zen garden at Three Wheels were originally found. They also visited University College London where they were given a very warm welcome by

Pro-Provost, Professor Philip Treleaven.

Three young priests, thirteen to fourteen years old, attended this educational session. Here are extracts of impressions given by four Spring School students, including those three students ordained two years ago.

Extracts from some of the impressions recorded by Spring School Students

By Kotaro Kasahara (13 years old)

What made the deepest impression on me at Spring School was the little trip we made to Cumbria. We were able to experience at first hand the kind of natural scenery one would never find in Japan, only in England. My memories of the countryside around Little Langdale, especially, will stay with me for the rest of my life. Other very enjoyable experiences were looking out from a boat on the River Thames or from the London Eye, watching the spectacle of the guards at Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace

and coming across the actor Rowan Atkinson (aka Mr Bean), performing in the musical “Oliver Twist.”

As we continued to read *the Sutra of the Gravity of What Has Been Done by Our Parents*, I came to recognise my own self in the sutra and to see how truly boundless was the love I had been receiving from my parents. Yet the ‘me’ that I now saw was a person who was totally unaware of this fact. To make matters worse, this ‘me’ had been taking for granted all that I had received from my parents, without thought as to how to respond to them with gratitude for their love. Whilst my parents had always been thinking of me, I now suddenly realised, I had never once thought about them, only of myself.

By Kyosuke Sudo (13 years old)

My special experience was reading *the Sutra of the Gravity of What Has Been Done by Parents*, a sutra that is the very essence of what Spring School is all about. When I came to the passage where it says, “Giving all her good clothes to the children, Mother is always wearing old, worn ones,” it reminded me of the way my mother, whilst buying all sorts of things for me, seldom buys anything for herself.

My parents have always put me first and I have simply taken everything for granted. I’ve always been begging them for extras and, what’s worse, not listened to their kind words but talked back to them defiantly. I really feel I have not been a good son to my parents. When I return to Japan, I would like to say “sorry” to them both.

When I showed Kenshin sensei my impressions of the first half of Spring School, he told me how lucky I was to have had the chance to become a priest, because being a priest means living one’s life in heartfelt gratitude. I had never heard from other priests how to be a priest, but now I thought to myself “I can live in this way. How lucky I am to have been ordained a priest.”

By Keisuke Sudo (13 years old)

I couldn’t really understand the title of this Spring School, “Supported by the invisible.” While reading *the Sutra of the Gravity of What Has Been Done by Parents*, however, I felt little by little that I was beginning to grasp the meaning. When I used to be asked to do something,

I would hardly ever say “yes”. Usually I would resist, saying, “Stop bothering me!” When reading the Sutra of the Gravity of What Has Been Done by Our Parents, however, I was taken aback to realise just how much I had received from my parents, ever since I was a tiny baby, which I don’t remember at all, and how much I continue to receive right up to the present day and on into the future. Amongst all the things I have received from my parents, I find there are so many that I have simply been taking for granted.

One day Kemmyo san said to me, “If your father and mother were strangers and you took all their gifts for granted, you would feel very sorry, wouldn’t you?” This awakened me to the fact that all the gifts from my parents that I had taken for granted were actually precious expressions of their love. I had always thought that “filial piety” was merely helping parents to do things, but towards the end of the sutra I found that the Buddha talked about various forms of filial piety – looking after one’s parents when they are ill, for example. Although many of these forms are beyond my abilities at the moment, I would like to try and be good to my parents.

I thought to myself that the term, “the invisible,” could mean all those who have been supporting me, including my own parents.

By Kei Matsunaga (14 years old)

One day during Spring School Kemmyo san, with tears in his eyes, said to Kyosuke, Keisuke and me, “It is you who will support and develop Shogyoji Temple in the future.” Feeling so grateful for his words, I thought to myself, “I should try and serve the Buddha properly.” Kemmyo san also asked us, “How can you behave responsibly towards your parents?” before going on to say, “There can be no other way than by becoming a good priest.” My father often tells me not to become a priest in outward form alone. He and Kemmyo san are making the same point, I think. In the future I should be a priest not merely in form but also in spirit. I would like to put into practice in my daily life what I have learned at Spring School. I would like to attend service to the Buddha at least at the weekends.

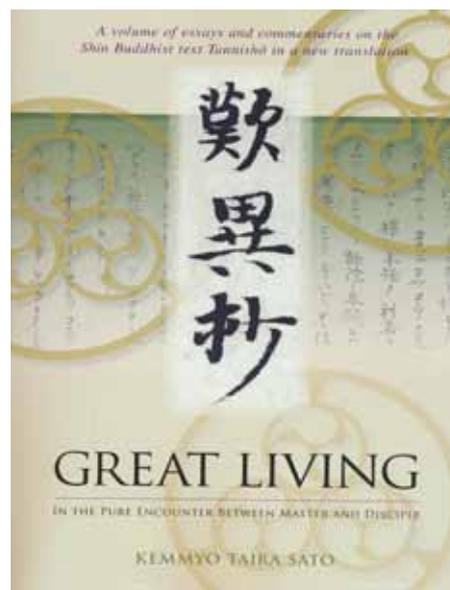


The students of the 11th Spring School

NEW PUBLICATION 'Great Living' by Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato

We are very pleased to announce that Reverend Kemmyo Taira Sato's new book 'Great Living – In the Pure Encounter between Master and Disciple' has just been published by the American Buddhist Study Centre Press, New York. This new publication is a volume of essays and commentaries on the Shin Buddhist text *Tannisho* in a new translation. The book has been revised and adapted from the series of talks Reverend Sato gave on the *Tannisho* at the Buddhist Society and is one of the most detailed examinations of the text that has been published in English. The publication of this book is the culmination of several years of careful revision by Reverend Sato of his groundbreaking translation of the *Tannisho* and has been eagerly awaited. Copies to purchase in hard and soft cover will soon be available from Three Wheels.

The Title 'Great Living' refers to our pronouncing of the Buddha-Name that realises itself as the working of the Buddha's great compassion.



THE FIFTH SHOKAI RETREAT

The 5th Shokai was held at Three Wheels Temple from 28th May to 30th May 2010 and was attended by fourteen people; nine men and five women.

At the opening meeting Mr Ant P. offered a vow of sincere practice on behalf of all those present. As such, having spoken briefly of his own encounter with the Buddha-dharma, and having expressed his gratitude to all those in the Shogyoji sangha who made the retreat possible, he said, "May we encounter each other in the Tathāgata's light, supported by the Primal Vow, always recalling the true reason why this Shokai is taking place."

The retreat was the last of a four-part series focusing on Shinran Shonin's *Kyōgyōshinshō* and took as its theme the subject of 'Realisation' or 'Enlightenment' (*Shō*). Consequently, at the opening service, Reverend Kemmyo Sato explained the major topics that would be explored during this Shokai. In particular he emphasised that whilst Realisation forms the goal in the majority of Buddhist traditions, it is actually taken as the starting point of the path in Jōdo Shinshū because Amida Buddha's own enlightenment takes the initiative in seeking to awaken all beings. He then went on to introduce the two phases of Amida's virtue-transference (*ekō*) which form the impetus for "our journey to the Pure Land and that of our return to this world to save all sentient beings," and which are both "to be realised as Amida's working ... to save us perfectly."

After sharing supper together the Shokai participants gathered for a chanting lesson. During the meeting, chaired by Ms Sanjee C. and led by Reverend Sato, previous lessons on the *Shoshinge* [Hymn on the Right Faith in the Nembutsu] were reviewed before we moved on to look at the first part of the *Sanjo Wasan* [Japanese Hymns by Shinran]. For many of the participants it was their first time chanting the *wasan*, which was rather daunting, but everyone showed a great deal of concentration and interest.

On Saturday morning Mr Andy B. gave a talk on *Amida*

Tathāgata's 11th Vow as discussed in the 'Realisation' chapter of Kyōgyōshinshō. The principal aim of this talk was to explore the nature of 'Equivalent Enlightenment' from an affective perspective. In order to do this Andy looked at the subject of the 'one-thought instant of faith' (*shin no ichinen*) in relation to the relationship between 'being' and 'time', and then discussed how the awakening of faith alters this relationship to reveal the field of Amida Tathāgata's activity. He went on to discuss how this new awareness is re-integrated into daily life and the necessity for Shin Buddhists to continuously return to their original starting point of awakening faith. During this talk Reverend Sato interjected many helpful comments, and even drew a diagram based on the thought of Nishitani Keiji. Using this diagram Reverend Sato showed how returning to the first experience of awakening faith does not mean going backwards but rather returning to the reality of one's karmic existence and simultaneously re-encountering the 'support' underlying our whole life. At this moment fear is dispelled and inward peace becomes settled.

In the afternoon Ms Mary H. gave a short talk about 'work practice' (*sagyō*) in which she said, "Whilst I stayed at Shogyoji last summer ... I remember working with the ladies in the kitchen of the dojo, where there was a great feeling of gratitude, even as they would cook for upwards of 50 people per meal. It was not considered hard work, because it was not work. It was *sagyō*. What is it that transforms our work into a part of our Buddhist practice? It is the interplay between the intention that each of us has towards our task and the compassion of Amida Buddha."

After listening to Mary's talk the Shokai participants then engaged in the afternoon work practice which involved removing, cleaning and replacing stones from the gutter of the Zen garden. As this had never been done since the garden was created the scope of the task was not completely clear in advance and it soon became apparent that it would be a vast undertaking. However, despite the poor weather conditions and extremely intensive work involved, everyone worked very hard and co-operatively so that

over half of the stones were cleaned and returned to the gutter. Much of this was thanks to the efforts of Mr Dave Z. who, as activity organiser, ensured that everything was well coordinated and that morale levels were maintained.

After supper and a rest everyone gathered once again in the Buddha-room where Reverend Sato and Mr Dave Z. led a period of *zazen* meditation.

On Sunday morning following morning service and breakfast everyone reconvened to hear Mr Andrew W. give a talk on the second part of the 'Realisation' chapter of *Kyōgyōshinshō* entitled 'Entering the Garden of Birth and Death'. At the end of his talk the previous day Mr Andy B. had described how the circular and endless dynamic by which Amida Tathāgata saves all beings is closely related to the spirit expressed in the 'Four Great Vows' (*shiguzeigan*) which begin "Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them all," and it was this spirit, embodied in the figure of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, that Mr Andrew W.'s talk sought to explore. As he said, "the career of the Bodhisattva does not end at the point of awakening enlightenment through birth in the Pure Land. Shinran clarifies ... that the true intent of the 22nd

Vow is that beings, on attaining enlightenment in the Pure Land and becoming true bodhisattvas, return again to the suffering world of humanity to save all beings. Being born into the Pure Land is only then the beginning of a new phase of movement: - *gensō ekō* "Amida's directing of virtue for our return to this world".

The 5th Shokai concluded at midday on Sunday 30th May with a short service and a talk of thanks to the Buddha given by Mr Duncan K. Duncan thanked Venerable Chimyo Takehara and his wife Bomori-sama for their support; Reverend Sato, for being our teacher and guide, and various other people, including Mrs Hiroko Sato, Mrs Kaori Punwani, and Mrs Mako Webb, whose kind efforts made the retreat possible. Duncan concluded with the words, "In offering [these words of] thanks, I offer them to that Eternal, Inconceivable Light and Life which is Amida Buddha. Namuamidabutsu."

Editor's note: The full text of this report can be found on the Three Wheels Website activities section under 'Shokai' www.threewheels.co.uk. The next Shokai retreat will be held 22nd – 24th October 2010.~ Andy B.



The Shokai participants

A letter of thanks from Christopher Dodd

Dear Kemmyo sensei and Hiroko san,

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to attend the 5th Shokai retreat, it really was a wonderful experience. The atmosphere was so friendly and welcoming and it was just a real pleasure and privilege to be around such kind and helpful people.

All of the talks were always well presented and easy to follow and everyone obviously must have worked really hard to make everything go so smoothly. I also enjoyed the work practice in your beautiful garden, and if you ever need any help in the future I would be very happy to help if I could.

I am sorry that my people skills at the moment are not very good, but I hope that in the future my confidence and understanding can improve, and that by being in the company of such fine people, I can also start to become a bit less selfish and awkward.

Once again thank you for looking after me so kindly and I hope to see you soon.

Gassho

Chris

THE 92nd LONDON EZA

At the 92nd London Eza held on Sunday 27th June 2010 we heard first-hand reports and reflections on three important activities in the Three Wheels calendar of events that had been held during the first half of this year.

Firstly Reverend Sato read some short written reports from the participants of the 11th Spring School, an educational event for young teenagers connected with the temple in Japan which was held between 24th March and 5th April. This was attended by eleven people from Japan (seven teenagers, three student helpers and a priest). During their stay at Three Wheels for this period they had services each day and reflected on their lives in the light of Shin Buddhist teaching as well as attending fun and educational activities in London and Cumbria.

The next event was the fifth Shokai retreat held from 28th – 30th May 2010 which was attended by 14 participants from a number of different locations including Nottingham, Warwick, London, Birmingham and the USA. Andrew Webb read out a full report on events by Andy B. who

had been instrumental in coordinating the activities of this Shokai. The full text of this report can be found in the activities section of the Three Wheels website (www.threewheels.co.uk). Ant, Chris, Sanjee, Dave and Andrew each gave their own impressions of the retreat, the theme of which was based on the Shin Buddhist teaching on 'Realisation (enlightenment).'

The last of the activities reported on was the annual Garden Open Day given by its organiser Mrs Kaori Punwani about which there is a separate article in this newsletter. Everyone was extremely pleased to hear of the success of this event which has become an important and well looked forward to event at Three Wheels.

Finally we heard from Mrs Mary Harrison and her husband Mr Andrew Harrison who gave a speech of thanks in gratitude for their recent wedding held at Three Wheels.

Andrew Webb

OPEN GARDEN DAYS

We took part again in the National Garden Scheme this year to raise funds for NGS supported British Charities. We opened our Zen Garden to visitors between 14:00 and 17:30 on the 8th and 9th of May as well as the 19th and 20th of June.

The two tea masters, Kumiko-san and Chizuru-san together with some helpers dressed in Kimonos, demonstrated and explained the tea ceremony to our guests. They served tea to over 100 people in 4 afternoons.

Thank you all so much to those who visited Three Wheels during the garden open days, and to all the volunteer helpers who made the event so successful. I hope that you all will continue your support and join in the running of the Garden opening next year. All the income generated from selling teas and books was donated to Three Wheels.

I should therefore announce that next year's dates are; **the 14th , 15th of May 2011 as well as the 18th and 19th of June 2011 from 2:00 to 5:30 pm.**

Kaori Punwani



Kumiko-san, Chizuru-san and helpers serving the traditional tea

Altogether we welcomed 143 visitors during the four afternoons; in May and June we had 77 and 66 people respectively. As a result we have raised £438 towards NGS supported British Charities. Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped us throughout this event. In total, we had 48 people that helped Three Wheels during those 4 days.

A special thank you to Professor John White, the designer of the garden, who ran a series of repeating talks lasting up to 1 hour each, providing visitors with a unique insight into the background and meaning of our Zen Garden.



Professor John White during his talk

TENRIN TAYA: The making of a Garden

Finding really good rocks for a stone garden is always more difficult than one thinks. Each stone has not only to be interesting in itself, but has to contribute to a final group which adds up to more than a mere sum of its parts. We were therefore extremely fortunate that Izumi Ida, who has an excellent eye, and who had come from Japan for the May Meeting of the Trustees at which the decision to transform the unprepossessing front garden of Tenrin Taya was taken, was able to accompany us throughout our search.

Since Masayuki Ogawa was due to arrive in four weeks to oversee the work, we were under considerable time pressure. We therefore began our search at the closest possible source, the CED stone depot at West Drayton. There, we quickly found an interesting, large, flat stone. But after that things became more difficult. However, we finally added four more, vertical rocks similar to that in the front garden of Gyosen Taya.

Nevertheless, even after returning to confirm the decision, we were not really satisfied that we had found an ideal solution. We therefore drove to the enormous depot at West Thurrock. There, amongst the hundreds of unsuitable rocks jumbled up in various piles, we luckily managed to find one outstanding stone. However, our troubles were not yet over, as it was totally incompatible with the ones at West Drayton.

The only possible solution was to make a long journey to the borders of Northumberland and what turned out to be a tiny, and very unpromising looking depot. There, against all the odds, we found, deep in the only possible

pile, two excellent, slightly smaller rocks, which were both interesting in themselves and which, we felt, would fit in well beside the big stone at West Thurrock.



The Stone Garden

So it was that the new garden came into being under the expert guidance of Ogawa san. All that now remains to be done is the replacement of the existing, uninteresting asphalt path when Masayuki returns next summer. The new design for it has already been agreed and the materials chosen.

When it is done, our original purpose of creating a visual linkage to act as a physical symbol of the spiritual relationship between Sanrin Shoja and its two Taya houses will finally have been brought to fruition.

John White.

SHIN BUDDHISM: The Reading of Rennyo Shonin's Letters

Reverend Sato began his talk on Fascicle 4:7 of the Letters by Rennyo by clarifying the difficult phrase "the virtue of exclusive practice and single-mindedness". Most of those present already knew that, in the Shin Buddhist teaching, the nembutsu is not said "in conjunction with other practices", however Rev. Sato pointed out that even if we follow a single-practice our minds may still remain unfocused and "mixed". Nonetheless this problem cannot be solved by any self-conscious efforts to purify our own minds but only by receiving the "single-mind" of true faith from Amida Tathagata, beyond any calculation, after which the single-minded practice of nembutsu flows forth naturally in gratitude and joy.

Turning to the second paragraph of the letter Rev. Sato highlighted the fact that in the letters concerning Hōonkō (Shinran Shonin's Memorial Ceremony), which tend to be very serious in tone, Rennyo Shōnin always uses the term "peaceful awareness" (*anjin*) in conjunction with the term "past good" (*shukuzen*). These two terms refer to different affective dimensions of the true faith gifted to us through Amida's eighteenth Vow.

"Quite paradoxically, the notion of *shukuzen* (past good) is fully understood only through our awakening to the irredeemable reality of our karmic

existence as *mu-shukuzen* (no past good). At the moment of awakening to ourselves ... our present existence as the accumulation of the whole of our past is rediscovered as "good" through our encounter with the Buddha-dharma." ... "The nembutsu of gratitude springs from this peaceful awareness, in which one finds oneself in the embrace of Amida's boundless compassion."

Rev. Sato then discussed Rennyo Shōnin's criticism of priests who ignore the profound significance of Shinran Shonin's famous words "I have no disciples" (*Tannishō* 6), and try to control nembutsu followers for their own fame and fortune. Rev. Sato pointed out that a samgha is "in its essence a community of followers of pure faith". As such authoritarian behaviour on the part of priests is not only undesirable from the perspective of human freedom but is also destructive of the spiritual well-being of the Dharma follower. Rev. Sato also added that an over-emphasis on form, such as attachment to rules and regulations, can be both a cause and a symptom of deviations away from the core concern of our tradition which is the settlement of faith.

The last part of the meeting focused on the third through

to sixth articles of the letter. On the third and fourth articles the question was raised as to why Rennyo Shōnin prohibited his followers from talking about their tradition in public places. “Surely this was due to historical factors such as the persecution of nembutsu followers?” asked one

Dharma friend. Rev. Sato replied that the most important point, still relevant today, was that it can be harmful to share the Dharma with someone without an awareness of another person’s karmic condition.

Andy B.

SHIN BUDDHISM: Who was Shinran?

Shinran was the founder of the Jodo Shinshu tradition of Pure Land Buddhism. He was born in 1173 in Hino (now a district of Kyoto, the old capital of Japan). In 1181 at the age of 9 following the death of both his parents, Shinran’s uncle enrolled him into ordination in the Tendai sect of Japanese Buddhism. In 1201, disillusioned with the spiritual practice he had been following on Mount Hiei in Kyoto, Shinran met Honen and learnt from him the essentials of Pure Land Buddhism. Through this encounter with his master, Shinran attained faith in Amida Buddha and went on to transmit this faith to others for the rest of his life. In 1207 following intense pressure from the established religious orders Honen along with several of his disciples were exiled to remote places in Japan. Shinran was exiled to Echigo on the remote north shore of Japan’s main island. De-tonsured Shinran described himself as neither monk nor lay-person and dedicated himself to propagating the teaching of Honen and exploring its foundations. During this period of exile Shinran took a wife, Eshinni and began to raise

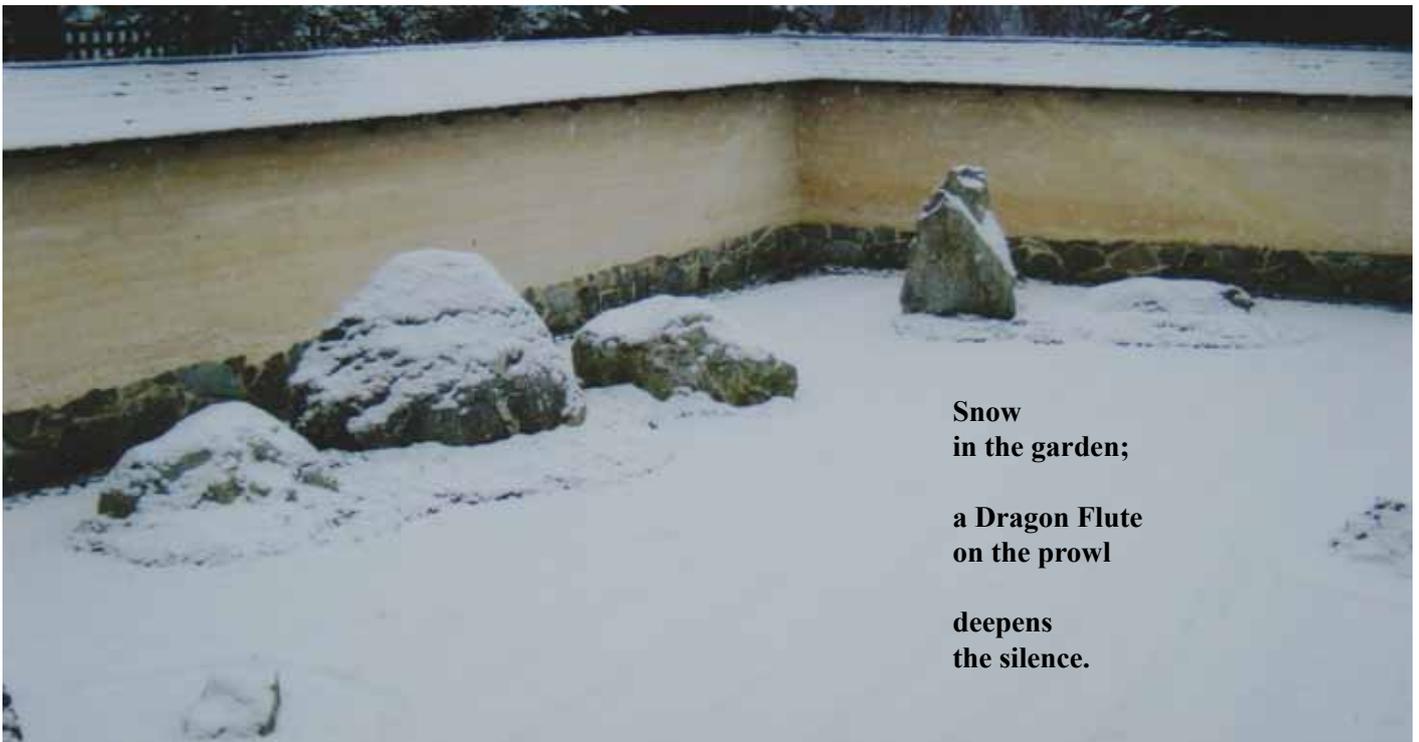
a family. Shinran was pardoned in 1211 but remained in Echigo until 1213 when he departed for Kanto where he continued his missionary activities and began compiling his most important written work the *Kyogyoshinsho*. In around 1235 Shinran returned to Kyoto where he completed some of his main writings in an intense period of composition including his Hymns in Japanese (*wasan*), as well as continuing by letter a lively dialogue with his disciples. Some of these letters can be found in an anthology called the *Mattosho*. In 1262 following an illness Shinran died in his ninetieth year.



Shinran Shonin

Andrew Webb

POET’S CORNER : John White



**Snow
in the garden;**

**a Dragon Flute
on the prowl**

**deepens
the silence.**

Editors’ Note.

For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter or if you want to provide material for inclusion, please contact Dr. Lucien Chocron, 31 Sherlock Court, Dorman Way, London, NW8 0RU, Tel: 020 7722 1693, Mobile: 07773581671, Email: lucienuk03@gmail.com

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