

# Three Wheels NEWS

London Shogyoji Trust

May 2002

Number 3

## New Year Ceremony

At Three Wheels, the New Year Ceremony was celebrated amongst friends, the Tathagata Family. The ceremony began by the chanting the *Sho Shin Ge*, a Japanese gatha by Shinran. The highlight of the Ceremony was the *Otosō* offering, when each participant drank a few drops of Sake served by Rev. Sato as a token of gratitude to the Founder of Shin Buddhism. After bringing the ceremony to a close, Rev. Sato gave a remarkable lecture on the Shin Buddhist tradition of Encounter and thanked everyone for helping the temple.



The offering

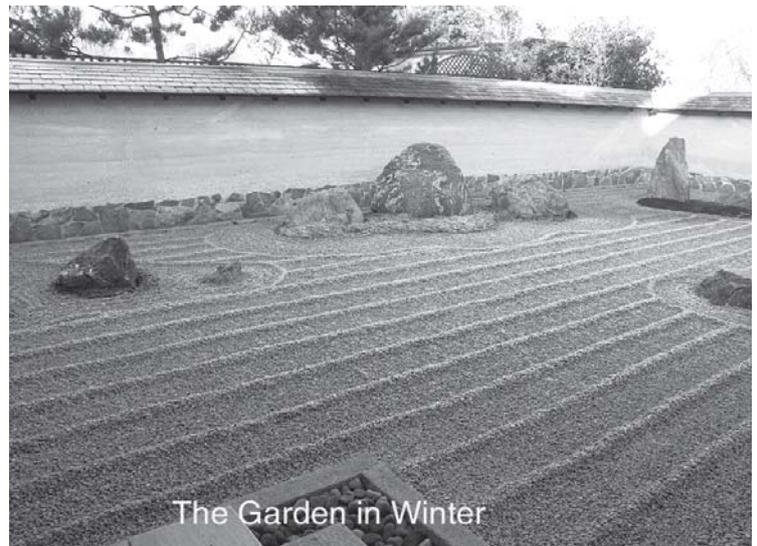
Rev. Sato quoted a parable concerning Buddha's life from *The Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* when one day his disciple, Ananda, asked him why he was so full of light, Buddha answered that if Ananda could see him enlightened, Amanda himself was fully awakened.

In the same way wisdom and enlightenment were passed from master to disciple in the Shin Buddhist tradition. Rev. Sato quoted from *The Gutokusho* by Shinran; Honen, the Founder of Pure Land Buddhism, considered himself as an ignorant person but his disciple, Shinran Shonin, saw him as an enlightened and wise person. This manner of passing wisdom and enlightenment from master to disciple continues today with the transmission of the Dharma to the Venerable Chimyo Takehara, Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple.

Rev. Sato read out one of the letters he had written to his master Venerable Chimyo Takehara, describing his master as a very wise and enlightened person who, following the Buddha's teaching, takes all the burdens and problems of everyone in the temple and yet is always the first to abandon all attachments on the way to the Pure Land.

Rev. Sato also spoke of his trip to Yakushima Island during his sojourn at Shogyoji Temple. The island is very well known for its beautiful mountains, the seven highest in Kyushu, as well as its ancient rain forests with magnificent cedar trees up to three thousand years old. Because it rains almost every day, the trees, bushes, old stumps and rocks are covered in moss.

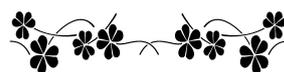
Describing his walk to the summit in heavy rain, Prof. Sato told us that when he reached the most beautiful point, the rain suddenly stopped and shafts of sunlight appeared, illuminating the millions of droplets of rain caught in the moss. The sight was so beautiful and breathtaking that he thought he was in the Pure Land.



The Garden in Winter

The participants enjoyed a traditional New Year meal and everyone went to view the Zen garden that looked particularly beautiful with the white frost accentuating the lines of the raked gravel.

Lucien Chocron



## A Few Words on My Translation

*Two years ago, after reading “Buddha of Infinite Light”, a book on Shin Buddhism by D. T. Suzuki, I felt deeply touched by its words and made up my mind to make a translation into my native language. Before returning to Spain (I was in the UK at that time) I met, almost by accident, Prof. Sato, who happened to be the last student of D. T. Suzuki, and was responsible for the translation of the very same book into Japanese. He offered me his help and support, and thanks to this unexpected encounter, I came to discover the luminous world of Three Wheels, where I suddenly felt back at my own long-lost home.*

*Since no work about Shin Buddhism had been previously published in Spanish, I had to face many new terms and concepts -particular to this Buddhist school- which had never been translated before. In the process of doing so, I learned more about these teachings than I could have ever imagined. For this, I can only be grateful and full of joy. Thanks to the good advice, kindness and loving support of Sato-sensei and everyone in the wonderful Three Wheels family, D. T. Suzuki’s book was successfully published in Spain and South America last year, and I am at the present moment working on a new, similar project. For this reason I’ve been asked to write about it, and I humbly present the following essay on the subject of translating.*

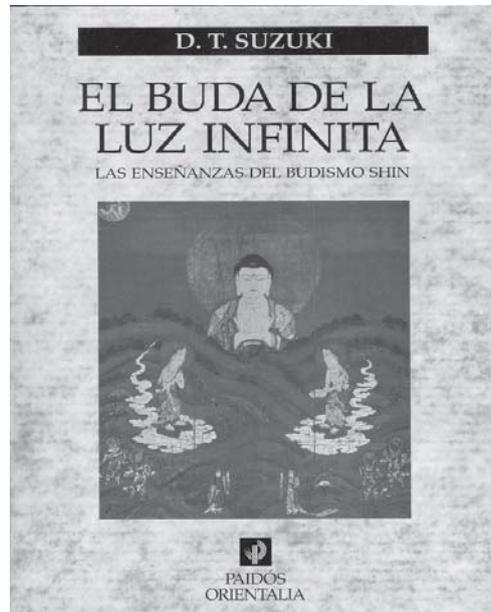


## On Translating

During my last visit to Three Wheels, I was asked by my good friends to write a short piece on the subject of the making of translations, that being my job at the present moment. Reflecting upon this, I’ve realized that there is in fact very little I know about this matter. Indeed, it could be said that I know nothing at all about translating! When I started doing this kind of job, it was merely out of enthusiasm and gratitude; being deeply moved by certain writings, I simply wanted to make them available in my mother tongue for the benefit of my peers, my friends and my family. Actually,

I would soon find out that I was to benefit greatly from this myself in a most crucial way.

Facing the challenge of translating such writings, I came to realize how ignorant and foolish I am! Namuamidabutsu. How could I possibly succeed in such a task? I had no other choice but to entrust myself to a higher power, a power beyond my own limited views and opinions. In this manner, translating became for me not only a learning experience in the small field of words and language, but mainly and most importantly it became a Way that enabled me to realize my own limitations and the infinite compassion and wisdom of the



Buddha. So I took refuge in Amida and jumped right in.

I believe that, beyond the lines written on paper, the True Meaning of a text lies in an invisible place, a place beyond words, a place of pure experience, of feelings and intuition, there where the original spirit of the author was rooted in the first place, in living freedom, before it was ever expressed through language. In this place, there are not different languages such as English, Spanish or Japanese; all languages are one, the language of no-words. I believe that translating should involve a quest for this original spirit, a quest beyond intellect, a quest based on detachment and release from all those little opinions and doubts we love to cherish and entertain ourselves with.

As the old Zen tale goes, there were once upon a time four monks arguing about a fluttering pennant. The first monk said: “The pennant being inanimate, it’s the wind

that makes it flap”. The second: “Both wind and pennant are inanimate, and none of them are able to flap”. The third: “The flapping happens indeed, and is due to a combination of cause and condition”. And the fourth: “I see no flapping pennant at all, but simply the wind moving by itself”. Then appeared the Patriarch Enō, and he interrupted their discussion with the remark: “It is neither wind nor pennant but your own mind that flaps!” This at once put a stop to the argument.

I believe translating (and writing) should be about this: “stopping the argument”, stopping the “flapping” of our minds, going beyond all those little unimportant details of form and style we so proudly bother with, diving straight into the essence with complete trust in the Buddha, who manifests himself through simplicity, spontaneity, naturalness and intuition. I believe writing and translating requires what D.T. Suzuki called “a total cleaning up of the house erected by logicians or semanticists”. Indeed, True Meaning is beyond logic, beyond semantics, linguistics and grammar. In fact, True Meaning is beyond language itself. It is free, it is alive, it defies any description, it can only be experienced and transmitted “from heart to heart”. As Sakyamuni said, all the writings by all the wise men of all ages are but a finger pointing to the moon.

“The Meaning that can be put into words is not the real Meaning”, so I should shut up right now! But I’m just an ordinary guy from Spain that, despite his self-confessed ignorance, seems to be full of crazy beliefs about what translating “should be”! If you ask me, translating is probably about listening carefully. Listening to our innermost self, listening to the Other. Certainly, listening is not easy. But truly, I don’t know much about all this. All I know is that it is only through humility and trust and gratitude that I have been able to complete the making of any translation at all. So there’s very little I can add to this, except to give thanks to all my dear friends who encourage me and help me in so many ways. Although it may seem lazy on my part, all I do is this: try to get myself out of the way and simply let the Buddha do all the work for me! Thanks be given, his wisdom and compassion towards us, little foolish beings, are eternally all-embracing and boundless!

Namuamidabutsu.

# On-going Construction of *Taya* - A Shin Buddhist Form of Accommodation

*Taya* is the word for a typically Shin Buddhist form of accommodation which first came into being at the time of Venerable Rennyō, Restorer of Shin Buddhism in 15<sup>th</sup> century. *Taya* houses are built both within and without the precincts of a Shin Buddhist temple.

In the case of Shogyoji Temple, it was Mrs Miyo Nonaka (later Dharma-Mother Ekai) who at the age of 32 first built a *taya* house in 1932 very close to the temple. She used the house both for herself and for her friends to study Buddhism under the instruction of her master, the Venerable Daigyoin Reion Takehara. She opened the doors to all those who wanted to stay there with her and seek the truth or Buddha-Dharma. The house was also used as a place where her friends could come to consult her and discuss their personal problems from a Buddhist perspective.

After the end of the Second World War, and particularly after the death of Ven. R. Takehara, a lot of *taya* houses were built one after another within the temple grounds under the leadership of Dharma-Mother Ekai. There were also a number of people, too, who built their own houses in the temple vicinity so that they could take part in the daily services and be involved in the numerous activities that took place in the temple.

Venerable Chimyo Takehara, our present master who took over the leadership of Shogyoji Temple from Ekai-sama, has also been building *taya* houses in various forms, responding to the spiritual wish of his followers to live together either within or nearby the temple precincts. Today, over a hundred people, both young

and old, are living together at the temple and helping one another. Under the leadership of Venerable C. Takehara, a lot of *taya* houses have been built. Amongst those established over the last ten years, Three Wheels in London (1994), Tobo *Taya* for aged people within the temple (1995), Takeo Hoshia at Saga Prefecture (1999), Sanmon Ryo for young girls, likewise within the temple (2001) and Nishigawara *Taya* inside the Tokyo Nembutsu Dojo (2001). Now another big *taya* house capable of accommodating 30 families is under construction very close to Shogyoji Temple.

When Reverend Seongwon, a young Korean Zen monk and a knowledgeable scholar in the field of Buddhist philosophy, visited Shogyoji Temple at the beginning of January this year to participate in the Winter Training Assembly, he greatly admired the lively and energetic *taya* system operating there. What impressed him most was the way both priests and lay people were living together in *taya* houses, helping one another, in the light of Buddha's teaching, with any problems that occurred, be they private or family related. According to this young scholar with his wide ranging acquaintanceship with Buddhism all over the world, this unity of priests and lay people living together in *taya* houses was something very special and unique, to be found only at Shogyoji Temple. In the Shogyoji *taya* houses, both priests and lay people, men and women, young and old, live their lives happily together, harmoniously fused in a perfect unity. There is no discrimination at all between them, because they are all *nembutsu* followers of pure faith, which in the end is all that matters.

K. T. Sato

## Japanese Brush Painting

Following the success of the Japanese Brush Painting classes held as part of Japan 2001, we have decided to continue the classes on a self-teaching basis. The classes are expected to be held once a month at Three Wheels, a Japanese Buddhist centre at 55 Carbery Avenue, London W3 9 AB.



Painting teacher in Japan, will continue to send us model paintings as he has done since the first Brush Painting class was held in May of last year.

Beginners are also welcome to the Brush Painting class. Participants will be provided with all the material they need. Just bring £3.00 for materials, including paper and ink.

K. T. Sato

Forty-seven people took part in the most recent classes on 26th and 27th January, twenty of whom expressed their desire to continue their training by taking part in further self-teaching classes based on the Japan 2001 event. Mr Mitsunori Takeo, our Brush



# Inauguration of the Burma Campaign Society

For the last five years, with the participation of the members of the Burma Campaign Fellowship Group, Three Wheels has been holding an annual memorial service for those who died in Burma during the Second World War, followed by a ceremony to pray for reconciliation and world peace. Last year in their speeches some of the members voiced the feeling that, with the majority of the veterans now over 80 years old, there was a need to enrol new, younger members in order to continue the mission of reconciliation.

In a dramatic meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2002, the members of the BCFG were disbanded and The Burma Campaign Society was formed. The aim of the Burma Campaign Society is to encourage reconciliation and the spread of an exchange of information on any aspect of Britain and Japan's encounter during

WWII and matters subsequently arising from it, especially anything to do with the Burma Campaign of 1941 – 45. Membership is open to anyone interested in the Society's aim.

The Committee officers have been elected: Masao Hirakubo, Chairman; Philip Malins, Deputy Chairman; Phillida Purvis, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer.

A website [www.burmacampaignsociety.org](http://www.burmacampaignsociety.org) has been planned and a newsletter will be produced.

The Annual Memorial Service at Three Wheels will be held on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August.

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**Website: [www.burmacampaignsociety.org](http://www.burmacampaignsociety.org)**

Lucien Chocron

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## In Gratitude

My name is Andy and I am writing these few words to express deep gratitude for my wonderful welcome into the Three Wheels Samgha.

I came to take refuge in Amida Buddha, and the Jodo Shinshu tradition, after experiencing the painful failure of my self-power in attempting to practice in the Soto Zen tradition. Unfortunately, however, my only friends who were Shin Buddhists at that time all lived in America. As such I felt very isolated in my new faith and the wonder of living the life of the Vow was tempered by sadness at my lack of a Samgha.

Happily, after some time, I heard about Reverend Sato and made arrangements to travel to London and visit Three Wheels Temple. This experience will always remain as one of the turning points of my life. Sato-sensei and all of the Three Wheels Sangha welcomed me without reservation or condition and immediately I felt embraced by great warmth.

Anyone who has visited Three Wheels knows about the beautiful shrine room and the special quality of the dry garden. Far more

precious though are the qualities of naturalness, compassion and friendship expressed by the Samgha members who are the living body of Three Wheels. How much joy I have felt in chanting the nembutsu with them, or in simply sharing a meal! The Samyutta Nikaya records an exchange where Ananda says to the Buddha; "O, Venerable One, when I think carefully, it seems to me that my having good friends and being with them is equivalent to my having already passed the middle milepost of the Holy Path. What do you think about this view of mine?" and Shakyamuni replies; "Ananda, that's wrong. Such a view is not correct. Ananda, our having good friends and being with them is not equivalent to our having passed the middle milepost of the Holy Path. Our having good friends and being with them is itself the entire Holy Path." Since my two visits to Three Wheels I have come to understand this passage for the first time ... not in my mind but in my heart.

Namu Amida Butsu!

Andy

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## My Encounter With Three Wheels

After meeting Rev Sato at the London's Buddhist Society I was keen to accept his invitation to visit Three Wheels. Having only just begun Buddhist practice and never having visited a Temple before, it was a pivotal encounter which will remain with me. I always look back on it as a very important milestone in my life.

The first thing that struck me, before even entering the door, was a deep sense of calm and presence in and around Three Wheels. This experience deepened for me as I sat and contemplated the beautiful Zen garden, the product of so many people's efforts and dedication. Seeing the Buddha shrine brought me closer to understanding the

essence and focus of Three Wheels. It evoked in me a sense of gratitude for the Dharma expressed in the building, the garden and most importantly for me, the lives of those whom I have met in and through the Temple. It is this real, living, quality of Samgha that is both my abiding memory and continuing experience of Three Wheels.

I am now availing myself of the opportunity to participate in some of the activities of the Temple. I have been learning to meditate at the Saturday evening classes and have very much enjoyed the meetings on Renny's letters, which have taught me a great deal.

Thank you to all at Three Wheels.

Andrew Webb

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**All donations are welcome**

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