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**SHIN BUDDHIST STUDIES**

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**GREETING FROM  
THE JAPAN  
DISTRICT  
REPRESENTATIVE**

*By Naito Tomoyasu, Professor Emeritus, Ryukoku University*

**“Transmission of Buddhism to  
Other Cultural Spheres”**

As Buddhism emerged from India it was transmitted to Japan by way of China, yet Indian Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism and Japanese Buddhism all differ in their characteristics. Jodo Shinshu, founded by Shinran, can be said to be Buddhism with a Japanese character. Thus, the Pure Land teachings conveyed in the *Three Pure Land Sutras* and furthermore, addressed by such Buddhist masters as Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu, and Danluan, Daocho and Shandao, represent Indian Pure Land and Chinese Pure Land teachings respectively.

However, Shinran seemingly transcended the temporal, social and cultural differences that the Pure Land teachings of each of these cultural spheres held as their foundation and background. In so doing, Shinran captured the religious truth (understood by Shinran as the Original Vow of Amida) that ran consistently through the different cultural spheres and established the teachings of Jodo Shinshu on the cultural foundation that reflected the temporal and social makeup of Kamakura Japan. This teaching, then, came to transcend the temporal limits with the power to appeal to basic Japanese outlook after the Kamakura period and beyond.

Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are all “world religions,” precisely because they possess the ability to adapt to the various ethnic, social and cultural circumstances. For example, Christianity throughout Europe, North America, South America, and Asia each exhibit distinctive features. This is the result of Christianity having adapted to the differing ethnic, social and cultural conditions.

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**PURE LAND JOURNAL**

The IASBS annually publishes *The Pure Land: Journal of Pure Land Buddhism* (ISSN 0911-7660), an academic journal in English that contains research articles, essays, translations, and book reviews. Subscriptions to the Journal are available through [membership in the IASBS](#). All the past volumes of the Journal are currently hosted online by the American Theological Association Series. Members, please login to the [IASBS homepage](#) to view and download copies of the *Pure Land*.

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IASBS

### SUGGESTED READING



**The Body, Self-Cultivation  
and Ki-Energy**  
by Yuasa Yasuo



This book is an inquiry into ki-energy, its role within Eastern mind-body theory, and its implications for our contemporary Western understanding of the body. Yuasa examines the concept of ki-energy as it has been used in such areas as acupuncture, Buddhist and Taoist meditation, and the martial arts. To explain the achievement of mind-body oneness in these traditions he offers an innovative schematization of the lived body. His approach is interdisciplinary and cross-cultural, offering insights into Western philosophy, religion, medical science, depth psychology, parapsychology, theater, and physical education.

I believe that for Jodo Shinshu, which originates in Japan, to take root in American society, it needs to be a Jodo Shinshu that is adapted to the cultural and spiritual needs of American society. That is to say, while maintaining the core elements of the Jodo Shinshu tradition, it is vital that Jodo Shinshu becomes Americanized. Of course, if the essence of Jodo Shinshu is altered, then we could no longer call it “Jodo Shinshu,” but if it is not Americanized, then Jodo Shinshu would, in the end, fail to take root in American society.

Pure Land Buddhism that emerged in India was adapted to China by Danluan, Daocho and Shandao while retaining its essential elements. Likewise, the sinified form of Pure Land Buddhism underwent a process of Japanization by Honen and Shinran. Wouldn't it, then, take the same process of Americanization in order for us to say that Jodo Shinshu has truly taken root in American society?

What should we Shinshu scholars in Japan be doing to assist in the Americanization of Jodo Shinshu while retaining its essential features? I believe we need to accurately convey the teachings of Jodo Shinshu that we have learned. If the Japanese scholars were to explain the teachings merely to overly accommodate themselves to the American way of thinking, then it would compromise the essence of Jodo Shinshu. Just as Danluan adapted the teachings to China and Shinran to Japan, those born and raised with the American way of thinking must carry out the task of Americanization of Jodo Shinshu. Thus, we Shinshu scholars in Japan should not be overly concerned, as if taking a multiple-choice test, to artificially select whether the teachings would be acceptable or not to Americans. Instead, we should be correctly conveying Shinran's Jodo Shinshu teachings in a manner that enables those born and raised in America to grasp the essential elements of Jodo Shinshu.

(Translated by Kenneth Tanaka)

See Japanese translation on the following page

# THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IASBS

異なった文化圏への仏教の伝播

内藤知康

(龍谷大学名誉教授・国際真宗学会理事)

インドで成立した仏教は、中国を経て日本に伝わるのであるが、インド仏教・中国仏教・日本仏教は、それぞれ性格を異にする。親鸞を宗祖とする浄土真宗は日本的な仏教であるといえよう。しかしながら、浄土三部経や龍樹・天親の浄土教、曇鸞・道綽・善導の浄土教は、インド的な浄土教、中国的な浄土教であるが、親鸞は、それぞれの浄土教が基盤・背景として持つ時代性・社会性・文化性の相違を超えて一貫して流れる宗教的真実（親鸞においてそれは弥陀の本願といわれる）を把握し、鎌倉期の日本という時代・社会の文化的な基盤の上に浄土真宗の教義を構築したのである。そしてそれは鎌倉期という時代性を超えて、普遍的な日本的感性に訴える力を持つものとなった。

仏教・キリスト教・イスラム教は世界宗教といわれるが、それは異なった民族・社会・文化に応じる柔軟性を持っているからである。たとえばキリスト教についていえば、大きく分けても、ヨーロッパ・北米・南米・アジアのキリスト教はそれぞれ性格を異にしている。それは、それぞれの民族・社会・文化に応じた結果である。

私は、日本で生まれた浄土真宗がアメリカ社会に根付くためには、アメリカ社会の文化性・精神性に応じた浄土真宗でなくてはならないと考えている。それは、浄土真宗の最も重要な本質をたもちながらもアメリカ化された浄土真宗である必要がある。浄土真宗の本質が変容してしまったならば、もはやそれは浄土真宗とはいえず、アメリカ化されなかったならば、結局は本当に根付くことなく終わってしまうであろう。

インドで生まれた浄土教がその本質をたもちつつ曇鸞・道綽・善導によって中国化され、中国化された浄土教が同じくその最も重要な本質をたもちつつ法然・親鸞によって日本化されたのと同様の経緯をたどって、浄土真宗がアメリカ化されてこそ、本当の意味で浄土真宗がアメリカに根付いたといえるのではないだろうか。

浄土真宗が、その最も重要な本質をたもちつつアメリカ化するために、私たち日本の教学者のなすべきことは何だろうか。それは、自らが理解した浄土真宗の教義を正確に示すことである。日本の教学者がアメリカ的なものの考え方に迎合して説くならば、時に浄土真宗の最も重要な本質を変質させることになり、また本当の意味でアメリカ化されたことにもならないだろう。曇鸞等によって中国化され、親鸞によって日本化されたように、浄土真宗のアメリカ化は、生まれながらにアメリカ的なものの考え方が身に付いた人々によってなされなければならない。私たち日本の教学者は、これはアメリカ人に受け入れられやすいだろう、これは受け入れられにくいだろうとか取捨選択するのはではなく、アメリカ文化の中で生まれ育った人が、浄土真宗の本質を的確に把握できるように、親鸞の説いた浄土真宗を正確に示さなければならないと考えている。

# THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IASBS

## **Update on the Forthcoming 2015 IASBS Conference**

*By Dr Scott A. Mitchell, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley, CA*

### **2015 IASBS Biennial Conference: Subjectivity in Pure Land Buddhism**

August 7 - 9, 2015

We are pleased to announce the 2015 Biennial IASBS Conference. Our theme this year will be Subjectivity in Pure Land Buddhism. The conference will be hosted by Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, CA, with generous support from the Jodo Shinshu Center and the Numata Foundation.

\*\*\* The deadline for **proposals** and **abstracts** has now been extended to **January 15** \*\*\*

For questions or more information, please visit: <https://iasbs2015.wordpress.com/>

Or contact Scott Mitchell [scott@shin-ibs.edu](mailto:scott@shin-ibs.edu)

## 17<sup>th</sup> Biennial European Shin Buddhist Conference

### Overview

*By*

*Rev John Paraskevopolous*

The 17<sup>th</sup> European Shin Buddhist Conference was held in the English city of Southampton on 1-4 September 2014. It was only the second time such a conference was hosted in the United Kingdom, following the memorable gathering at Wadham College in Oxford 16 years ago which was so ably organised by Jim Pym.

The European conferences are distinguished by their blend of academic papers and presentations that are more focused on the devotional lives of followers and their personal journeys. At this conference, it was quite refreshing to hear some excellent papers from Shin poets such as Marcus Cumberledge and Diane Johnson, who also offered recitations of their work. Other themes canvassed at the conference were the meaning of gratitude, attitudes to the environment, lives of the *myokonin*, a day in the life of a European Shin minister, a reappraisal of Rennyō among other subjects of topical interest in Jodo Shinshu today.

Of particular note was a discussion about the perceived 'over-psychologising' of Buddhist thought today. While it was generally agreed that the language of contemporary psychology can be useful in helping us to understand certain Buddhist concepts as they apply to our lives, it was also acknowledged that there are dangers in suggesting that the profound insights of the Dharma can be merely reduced to these concepts. This tendency, which is so prevalent in the modern world, must be resisted if the properly spiritual and transcendent truths of Buddhism, and Jodo Shinshu in particular, are to be safeguarded from the corrosive influence of reductionism.

The conference was honoured by the presence of His Excellency Koshin Ohtani who was attending his first European conference in his capacity as Zenmon-sama of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha. His Excellency also conducted a *kikyoshiki* ceremony for European candidates at the Jury's Inn Hotel.

A special thanks to the ESBC organising committee (Rev. Daichi Gary Robinson, Gordon Backhouse, Matt Backhouse and Craig Holloway) for a magnificent effort in running a flawless and memorable event, including a wonderful excursion to Stonehenge and Winchester.

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For further information pertaining to this event see the following web link:

<http://www.chomonhouse.org/>

Editor