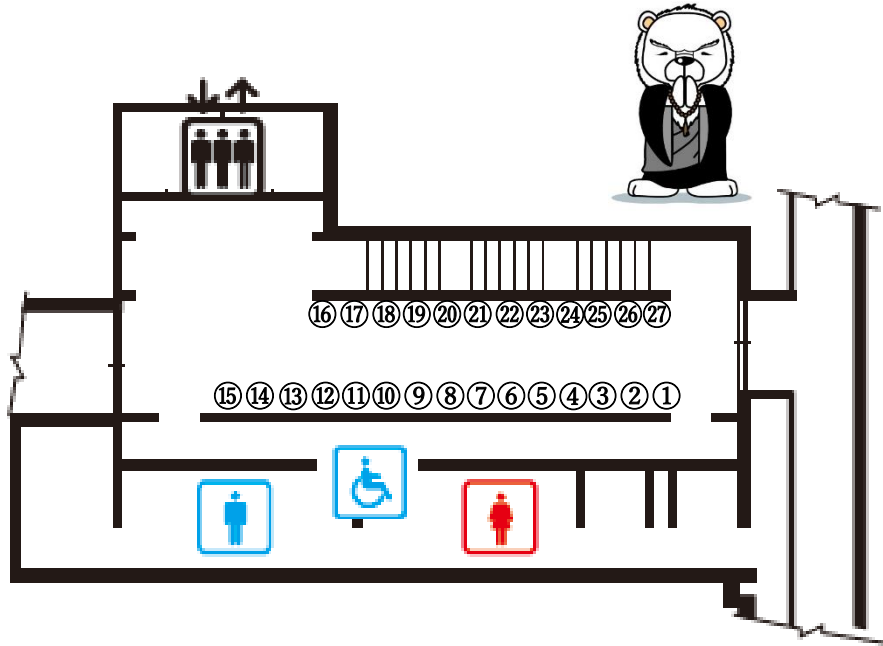


Celebration Theme Pavilion

1 F An Exhibition “Our Spiritual Forebear Shinran Shōnin”



① An Exhibition “Our Spiritual Forebear Shinran Shōnin”

Namu Amida Butsu: To Discover the Meaning of Being Born as Human Beings

② Introduction

Welcome to the 850th Celebration of the Birth of Shinran Shōnin and the 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of Jōdo Shinshū!

The Celebration is a religious opportunity for us to reflect on the meaning of the birth of Shinran Shōnin as well as of his dedication of his entire life to seeking the truly universal path of liberation for all people and to clarifying the path as the teaching of Jōdo Shinshū despite the political and social turmoil during his lifetime.

Through the observance of this event, each of us is expected to encounter the spirit of Namu Amida Butsu as taught by Shinran Shōnin. Especially in the Celebration, it is important for us to contemplate how we appreciate our having been born as human beings.

We the Shinshū Ōtani-ha have set the theme “Namu Amida Butsu: To Discover the Meaning of Being Born as Human Beings” for the Celebration. In this theme, we express our wish that all of us

will reflect upon whether we are truly living as a human being in the midst of all the challenges in our society while meditating on the teaching of Shinran Shōnin.

We sincerely hope that this exhibition on the life of Shinran Shōnin will help us discover the common ground between the challenges that the Shōnin faced and those that confront us in the modern age so that we can have better understanding of the Celebration theme.

③His Birth and Ordination (Age 1 to 9)

Shinran Shōnin was born into the aristocratic Hino family in 1173 (Jōan 3 by the traditional Japanese calendar). Legend has it that the name of his father was Hino Arinori, but his mother's name is not known although there are several theories about it. The Hino family has its origin in the Fujiwara family, a powerful aristocratic clan of that time.

Around the time of Shinran Shōnin's birth, the country was experiencing significant changes in its political and social system. The entire country was torn apart by power struggles, which led to the national civil war called the Jishō-Juei War (popularly known as the Genpei War). Many major Buddhist temples were destroyed by the conflicts. The established social order collapsed and there seemed to be no end in the disturbances in the foreseeable future. Shinran Shōnin spent his childhood in such social conditions.

It was in 1181 (Yōwa 1), at the age of nine, that Shinran Shōnin was taken to the residential quarters of Jien (1155–1225), which is believed to have been related to today's Shōren-in temple, by his uncle Hino Noritsuna to receive ordination. After that, he entered the Buddhist monastery on Mount Hiei named Enryakuji to study and practice the Buddhist teachings. In the same year, abnormal weather caused acute food shortages throughout the country. Historical records say that due to this natural disaster known as the Famine of Yōwa, tens of thousands of people died in the city of Kyoto.

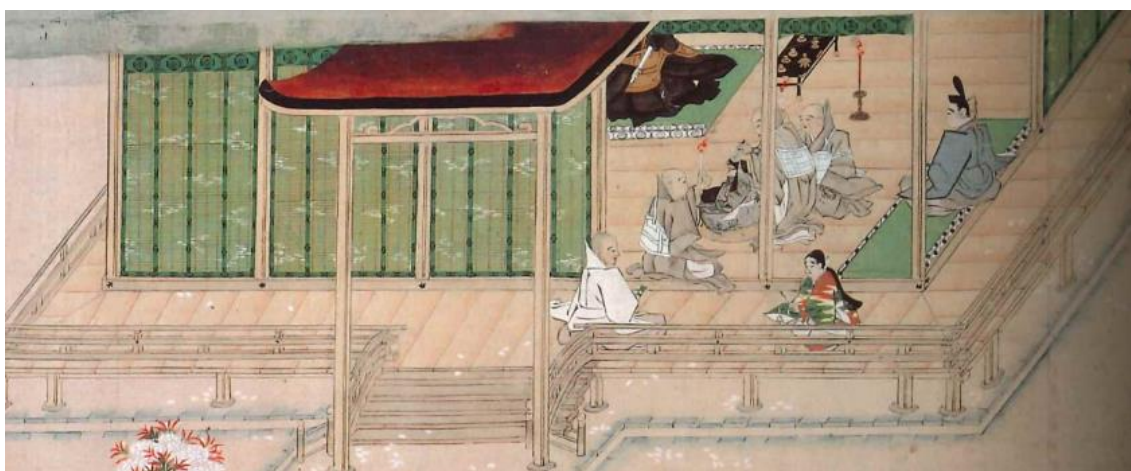
In such an environment, Shinran Shōnin was born as a human being and sought the path of truth.

④ His Birth and Ordination

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — In Dharma Words

Ah, in this world of dreams where nothing is true, how hard it is for us to hold on to this fleeting life of ours, when in the space of time it takes us to breathe in and breathe out we find ourselves suddenly reborn in the next world! Once we lose our human form the chance to assume it again will not come around for another ten thousand kalpas. If we do not awaken this time around, there is nothing even a Buddha can do to help us sentient beings! I beseech you to be deeply aware of the serious nature of impermanence. Never let yourself suffer the consequences to no purpose!

—*Kyōgyōshinshō*, Volume on Practice



The Renunciation of the Secular World and the Pursuit of the Path of Learning (*Honganji shōnin denne*, *Kōei* version. Photo courtesy of Higashi Honganji.)

⑤ His Birth and Ordination

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — From the Viewpoint of the Teaching

How to Live in the Times of Uncertainty

The passage in the “Dharma Words” here is quoted from a Buddhist scripture in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Volume on Practice, the major work of Shinran Shōnin. This passage expresses how uncertain everything is in this world as well as how important it is for us who have been born as human beings to seek awakening during our lifetime. We believe this statement gives us some clues as to what inspired Shinran Shōnin to receive ordination, renouncing the secular world at nine and pursuing the path of Buddhadharma throughout his life.

The society in medieval Japan in which Shinran Shōnin lived seems to be totally

different from our modern society in many ways. However, if we turn our eyes to the real world, there seems to be no end in the occurrences of critical problems such as wars, poverty, natural disasters, food shortages, and epidemics. Those problems cause grave uncertainties about our future.

A feeling of undefined anxiety over the uncertain future—that must be a lingering problem for anyone since the time of Shinran Shōnin. Therefore, the last phrase “Never let yourself suffer the consequences to no purpose!” is a valuable teaching on life that is also true for us in the modern society.

⑥ **The Razor Used for Shinran Shōnin’s Ordination Ceremony** **Courtesy of Shōren-in Monzeki**

The *Godenshō* is the biography of Shinran Shōnin written by Kakunyo (1270–1351), the third leader of the Honganji. It is stated in the biography that Shinran Shōnin was taken to the residential quarters of Jien (also known as Jichin) in the spring when he was nine by his uncle Hino Noritsuna to “cut off his hair.” Thanks to the courtesy extended by the Shōren-in temple, we have been able to borrow the razor used for Shinran Shōnin’s ordination ceremony, which has been preserved at the temple for centuries for this opportunity of the commemorative exhibition.

Shinshū Ōtani-ha

⑦ **About the Exhibition of the Razor Used at Ordination**

This razor is believed to have been used by Jien, the third abbot of our temple, at the ordination ceremony that Shinran Shōnin received to enter the path of Buddhadharma when he was nine.

Our wish is that this exhibition of the razor will give you insight into what resolution he made at the ordination ceremony. Despite his young age, he firmly and sincerely determined to renounce the secular life to walk the path of religious austerity in order to save all people from their suffering. How admirable and precious the resolution he made was!

We also wish that Shinran Shōnin’s pledge to seek the truth will be shared by all people and handed down to future generations so that our world will be filled with the wishful heart.

Gasshō,

Jikō Higashifushimi

Abbot, Shōren-in Monzeki

⑧ About the Shōren-in Temple

The Shōren-in temple has been known as one of the three major *monzeki* temples (Shōren-in, Sanzen-in, and Myōhō-in) for centuries. [The term *monzeki* refers to a temple where an imperial family member or a court noble serves as the head priest. This term also refers to the status of such temples or its head priest.]

Saichō (767–822), the founder of the Tendai denomination in Japan, built many residential quarters for priests on Mount Hiei when he established the Ichijō Shikan-in, which later became known as the Enryakuji temple, on the mountain. One of the main residences for generations of Tendai prelates in the Todō area on the mountain was the Shōren-bō, which is believed to have been the origin of today's Shōren-in temple. At the end of the Heian period (794–c. 1185), a priest named Gyōgen (1097–1155) was the 12th resident priest of the Shōren-bō. The Grand Emperor Toba (1103–1156) paid homage to Gyōgen and built another residential quarters in the city of Kyoto, which was later renamed Shōren-in. Gyōgen became the first abbot of the Shōren-in temple. Since then, the imperial family members or five regent family members (the families of Konoe, Ichijō, Kujō, Takatsukasa, and Nijō) served as the abbot of the temple until the Meiji period.

The third abbot of the Shōren-in, Jien (1155–1225), who also served as the Head Priest of Tendai from the end of the Heian and Kamakura (c. 1185–1333) periods, is believed to have presided over the ordination of Shinran Shōnin in 1181. Jien is also known for his openness to change in society as well as his support of the dedicated practice of the nenbutsu movement. He tried to protect Hōnen Shōnin and Shinran Shōnin from the oppression by the Enryakuji temple.

In the precincts of today's Shōren-in temple, there is a small hall named Uegami-dō, where the hair of Shinran Shōnin cut off at his ordination has been said to be enshrined in its altar.

The Shōren-in, A *Monzeki* Temple

Location: 69-1 Sanjō Bōchō, Awata-guchi, Higashiyama Ward, Kyoto

A 10-minute walk from the Yasaka Shrine. Located next to the north side of the Chion-in temple grounds.

Hours: 9 am to 5 pm (admission ends at 4:30 pm)

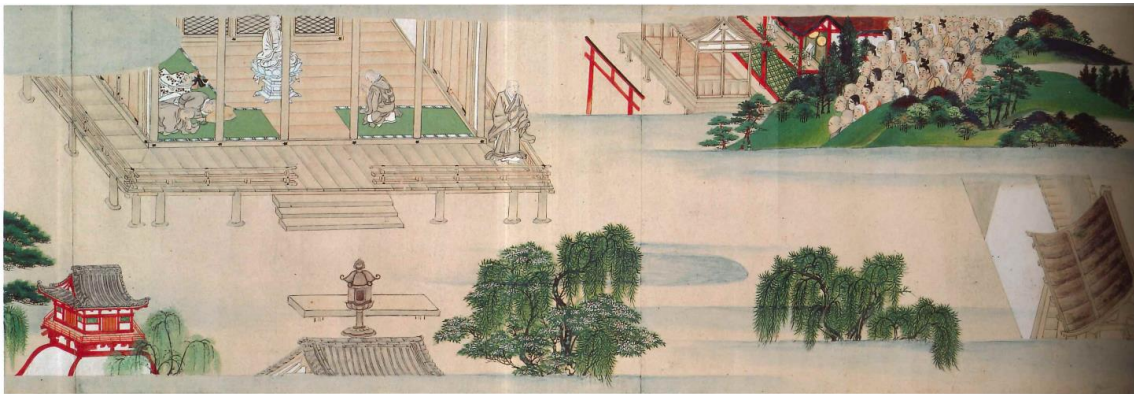
Website: shorenin.com

⑨ The Dream Vision at the Rokkakudō (Age 29)

After the ordination at age nine, Shinran Shōnin devoted himself to the study and practice of the Buddhist teachings at the Enryakuji temple on Mount Hiei. The temple compound was established by Saichō (767–822), who is well known for the words, “Those who have the aspiration for awakening are the treasures of the nation.” That was the fundamental spirit required for those who came to learn at the temple. The Enryakuji was the headquarters of the Tendai school but they offered not only the teaching of Tendai but also instructions on esoteric Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism. They even taught other fields of studies such as Confucianism, medicine, and pharmacy as well, just like a university. That was the environment where Shinran Shōnin spent his younger days in study and practice.

However, the more he studied and practiced the teachings, the more he found himself constantly rocked by unsettling waves in his mind and weighed down by the dark clouds of his blind passions. “Totally incapable of any kind of meritorious deed”—that is the only truth he finally found in himself after all the years of studying and practicing. After all, he wasn’t able to find the way of awakening he was seeking during the twenty years at the monastery. At age twenty-nine, Shinran Shōnin finally left Mount Hiei.

Even so, that doesn’t mean he abandoned his pursuit of awakening all together. Instead, he began a hundred-day retreat at a temple widely known as the Rokkaku-dō in Kyoto to find the answer. At midnight of the ninety-fifth day of his retreat, he had a dream vision where the image of Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, appeared before him to give him a message, which is shown in the “Dharma Words.”



The Retreat at Rokkaku-dō (*Honganji shōnin denne*, *Kōei* version. Photo courtesy of Higashi Honganji.)

⑩ The Dream Vision at the Rokkakudō

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — In Dharma Words

[Dharma Words]

O Seeker, if your being is made up of karma to transgress against the precepts,
I will take the form of the person with whom you are to transgress.
And throughout your life I shall continue to be your partner.
And at death I shall have you born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

⑪ The Dream Vision at the Rokkakudō

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — From the Viewpoint of the Teaching Self-Responsibility—A Form of Social Pressure

After the message in the dream vision, the Bodhisattva Kannon went on to tell Shinran Shōnin to spread the message among the people. As soon as he woke up from the dream, Shinran Shōnin decided to visit Hōnen Shōnin (1133–1212) to study his teaching of the nenbutsu.

Then what is the meaning of the message in his dream vision?

The key issue here is on monks having inappropriate contact with women, which is one of the transgressions of the Buddhist precepts. However, the most important point in this message is that the transgression is expressed as being the result of past karma. This indicates that all of our acts are not simply the outcome of our own conscious volition but they are actually made up of a countless number of causes and conditions that have been built up for a long period of time.

If our acts are the products made up solely of our free will, we are to blame for all the mistakes we make. However, there are some occasions where we must act against our own will in order to live.

Lately we have often heard the notion of “self-responsibility.” Of course, we are responsible for what we are at this moment in a religious sense. However, it is so unfortunate that the term “self-responsibility” seems to be mostly used to blame other people for what they have done, as if to say, “it is the natural consequence of your own deeds.” However, as mentioned above, it is impossible to attribute all acts to an individual’s free will. It can be said that we are creating unnecessary suffering by putting pressure on each other by the notion of “self-responsibility.” Shinran Shōnin, who felt a sense of failure in finding awakening through the way of self-oriented practices, might have had the same opinion.

In fact, many of us are suffering from strong social pressure to be “self-responsible.” We can find a solution to this social pressure in the episode of Shinran Shōnin’s dream vision.

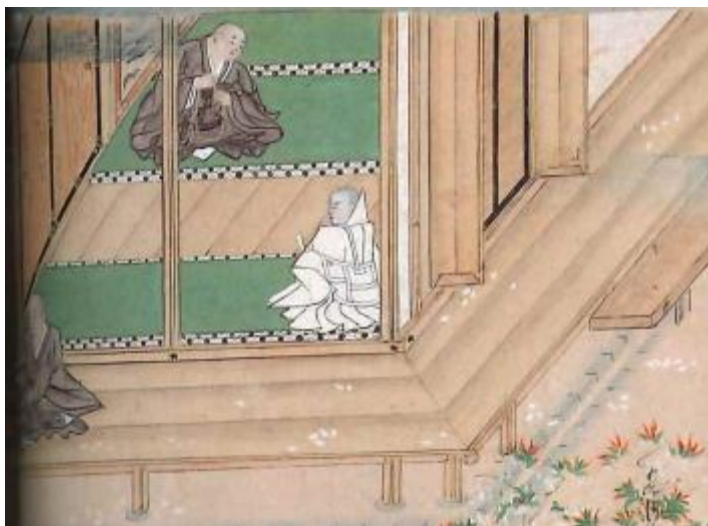


⑫Joining the Yoshimizu Sangha (Age 29)

In 1201 (Kennin 1), having had the inspirational dream at the Rokkaku-dō, Shinran Shōnin immediately went to Hōnen Shōnin’s hut in Yoshimizu in the foothills of Higashiyama, Kyoto. From then on, he attended their gatherings to listen to Hōnen’s teachings for one hundred days without fail whether it was rainy or scorching hot. The teaching of the nenbutsu that Hōnen taught finally brought strong conviction to Shinran’s faith in the Buddhist teaching. Shinran Shōnin describes his encounter with Hōnen Shōnin in the postscript of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* saying, “In the year Kennin 1 (1201), throwing out the ineffective practices, I, Gutoku Shinran, took refuge in the Original Vow.”

The teaching of the nenbutsu is based on the Original Vow made by Amida Buddha, who selected the practice of recitation of the Buddha’s Name (nenbutsu) for the universal liberation of all beings. Through his encounter with Hōnen Shōnin, Shinran Shōnin declared that it was the moment he took refuge in the Original Vow. This statement expresses Shinran Shōnin’s deep emotion that Hōnen Shōnin’s every word and attitude toward people from all walks of life were nothing other than the embodiment of Amida Buddha’s compassionate heart.

Shinran Shōnin expresses his appreciation for the encounter with the teacher in the *wasan* hymn as quoted in the “Dharma Words.”



Joining the Yoshimizu Sangha (*Honganji shōnin denne*, *Kōei* version. Photo courtesy of Higashi Honganji.)

⑬Joining the Yoshimizu Sangha

Let’s Reflect on Ourselves! — In Dharma Words

The radiant light of Genkū (Hōnen) Shōnin’s wisdom always illuminated his students. It was as though Amida Buddha’s Wisdom and Compassion were embodied in every word

and act of the Shōnin.

His brilliant light never discriminated between the wise and ignorant or between those of high status and those of humble origin.

⑭ **Joining the Yoshimizu Sangha**

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — From the Viewpoint of the Teaching Our Deep-seated Tendency to Compare Ourselves to Others

Medieval Japan was a hierarchical, class society. Buddhist priests renounced such a secular world to pursue enlightenment, but even their communities had hierarchies based on the classes and families they had originally been from. To Shinran Shōnin's eyes, Hōnen Shōnin's benevolence to accept all people regardless of their social status was nothing other than the embodiment of Amida's universal Compassion. Shinran Shōnin was so deeply inspired by the whole existence of Hōnen Shōnin that he was convinced that Hōnen's teaching was truly the way to realize the Buddhist goal of liberating all beings.

In our modern society, freedom and equality have been upheld as a basic principle and the elimination of discrimination has always been a key objective. However, we must ask ourselves if each of us has truly overcome our own discriminatory ways of thinking. Let's reflect on ourselves! In our heart, aren't we envious of other people who we think are more privileged than us or afraid of being looked down by others? Don't we want to look down upon other people so that we can feel comfortable? Our mind is inclined to evaluate people by our own standards. Let's face it. This is the reality of ourselves.

However, we are not saying that each of us is at fault. It is not a problem of an individual's attitude. The truth is that the inclination to judging or blaming people permeates throughout our society and each of us has unconsciously internalized this collective mindset and made it part of our own personality. Even if each of us is trying to hold up egalitarian ideals, the collective mindset can emerge as cases of discrimination at any time.

Each of us is living a precious life which is totally irreplaceable. Even so, as long as we are not liberated from the framework of our discriminatory mindset, we often find ourselves being judgmental of others. The only way to live our precious lives to the fullest would be to become fully aware of the mental structure that causes such discrimination, which is the stark reality of us human beings.

⑮ The Timeline of Shinran Shōnin's Life

1173 1 Shinran is born to Hino Arinori as his oldest son.

1181 9 In the spring, Shinran is taken by his uncle Hino Noritsuna to the residential quarters of Jien (1155–1225) to receive ordination. He is given the name Hannen. For the next twenty years, he studies the teaching of Tendai on Mount Hiei.

1201 29 He leaves Mount Hiei where he has served as *dōsō* [the priests who specializes in the constant practice of the nenbutsu].

He begins a retreat at the Rokkaku-dō. On the 95th day of the retreat, he has a dream vision of Bodhisattva Kannon. Being inspired by this dream, Shinran decides to visit Hōnen (1133–1212).

He listens to Hōnen's teaching for 100 days without fail. He becomes a disciple of Hōnen's.

1204 32 The conduct of Hōnen's disciples is called into question by the monks of Mount Hiei. Hōnen responds to it by issuing the "Seven Article Pledge" to urge his disciples to exercise restraint in their activities.

Shinran signs the Pledge under the name Shakkū.

1205 33 Shinran is given permission by Hōnen to copy his major work, *The Collection of the Passages on the Nenbutsu Selected by Original Vow*, as well as his portrait. Shinran is given a new name.

The Kōfukuji temple appeals to the imperial court to ban the dedicated practice of the nenbutsu promoted by Hōnen's group.

1207 35 The imperial court bans the dedicated practice of the nenbutsu and gives Hōnen's group sentence of death and banishment. Shinran is sentenced to banishment in Echigo. [Jōgen/Ken'ei Persecution] During banishment, Shinran starts to identify himself as Gutoku Shaku Shinran (Foolish Stubble-headed Disciple of Shakyamuni Shinran).

1211 39 Hōnen and Shinran are pardoned.

1212 40 Hōnen dies.

1214 42 On his way to Kantō, in Sanuki of Kōzuke province, Shinran tries to save people from famine by reciting the three Pure Land sutras a thousand times. But he realizes his insufficient understanding of the teaching and abandons the practice. Then he heads for Hitachi.

1224 52 Shinran states in his work *Kyōgyōshinshō* that the year (Gennin 1) marks the 683rd anniversary since the beginning of the Latter Dharma Age.

- 1231 59 On his sickbed, Shinran reads the Larger Sutra. But he reflects on what he tried to do by chanting sutras in Sanuki in 1214 and realizes the persistency of his attachment to the self-oriented way of thinking. He abandons the reading of the sutra. [A severe and nationwide famine breaks out in this year.]
- 1234–1236 62–63 Shinran moves to Kyoto from Kantō.
- 1247 75 Sonren, a follower of Shinran's, makes a copy of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.
- 1248 76 Shinran writes the Hymns on the Pure Land and the Hymns on the Pure Land Masters.

Thereafter he starts to write such works as the Notes on Once-reciting and Many-reciting and the Notes on the Essentials of Faith Alone.

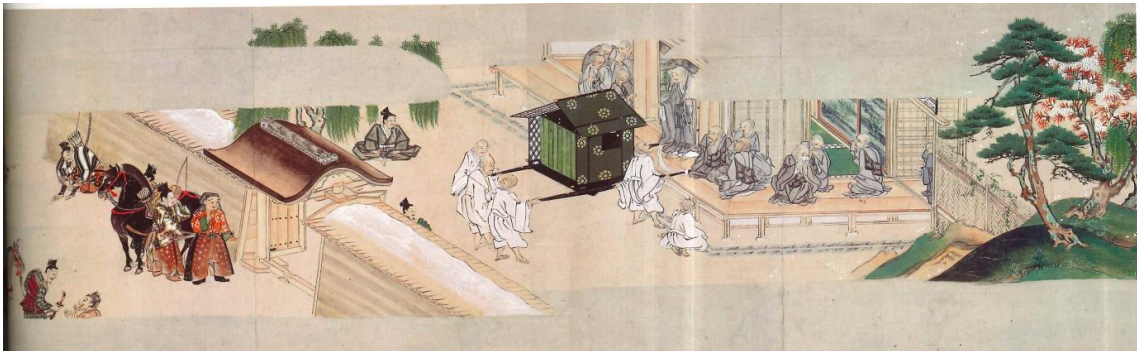
- 1256 84 Confusions as to the teaching arises among the Kantō followers. Shinran dispatches his son Zenran to Kantō to settle the situation. But Zenran only serves to heighten the confusion. Shinran disowns Zenran.
- 1257 85 Shinran has a dream vision that encourages him to entrust himself to Amida's Vow. He expresses his deep emotion about the dream in the Hymns on the Three Dharma Ages.
- 1262 90 On the 28th day of the 11th month, he dies at the Zenpō-in in Kyoto.

⑩ The Jōgen Persecution (Age 35)

Hōnen Shōnin taught that anyone could be liberated by the dedicated practice of reciting the Name of the Buddha (*senju nenbutsu*). But his teaching received harsh criticism from the established Buddhist schools alleging that he made light of other forms of Buddhist practices. The Kōfukuji temple in Nara appealed to the imperial court to crack down on the activities of Hōnen Shōnin's group.

In 1207 (Ken'ei 2/Jōgen 1), Hōnen Shōnin's disciples held a nenbutsu gathering, where two court ladies who served Grand Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239) attended. The Grand Emperor was enraged at their participation in the gathering. As a result, four members of Hōnen's group were sentenced to death, eight members, including Hōnen Shōnin himself and Shinran Shōnin, were sentenced to banishment. Since the death sentence was prohibited at that time, those executions are believed to have been illegal punishment by the Grand Emperor without proper procedures.

Because of this persecution, Shinran Shōnin and Hōnen Shōnin were separated from each other for the rest of their lives. Shinran Shōnin expresses his grief and resentment at their intolerance against Hōnen Shōnin's teaching and the injustice they committed in the postscript of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* as quoted in the "Dharma Words."



Shinran Shōnin Being Sent to Banishment (*Honganji shōnin denne*, *Kōei* version. Photo courtesy of Higashi Honganji.)

⑰ The Jōgen Persecution

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — In Dharma Words

The Emperor and his subjects went against the Buddhadharma and justice, and acted out anger and revenge.

As a result, Master Genkū, who made true Buddhist teaching flourish throughout the country, and a number of his disciples were unfairly sentenced to death based upon unfounded allegations, or were sentenced to banishment, stripped of their priesthood and given secular names. I was one of the latter. Therefore, I am no longer a monk or layperson. For this reason, I have taken the character *toku* (the stubble-headed) as my surname.

⑱ The Jōgen Persecution

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — From the Viewpoint of the Teaching Submitting to Authority and Our Way of Living

The imperial court's crackdown on Hōnen Shōnin's sangha was triggered by the wrath of Grand Emperor Gotoba, a person in the most powerful position at that time. But what originally set the stage for the crackdown was the repeated appeals made by Buddhist priests, who were supposed to pursue the true liberation for all people. Also, the officials at the court submissively followed the imperial order without taking a stand against the unfair use of imperial authority. The combination of all those factors resulted in the persecution. Shinran Shōnin was deprived of his priesthood by the authorities.

This incident revealed the deplorable reality that even Buddhists were willing to be a tool of the political power of the day even though they ought to work for the liberation of all beings. It shows a nightmare scenario that whoever resists the authorities can be subjected to purge with no regard to justice or religious ideals such as liberation.

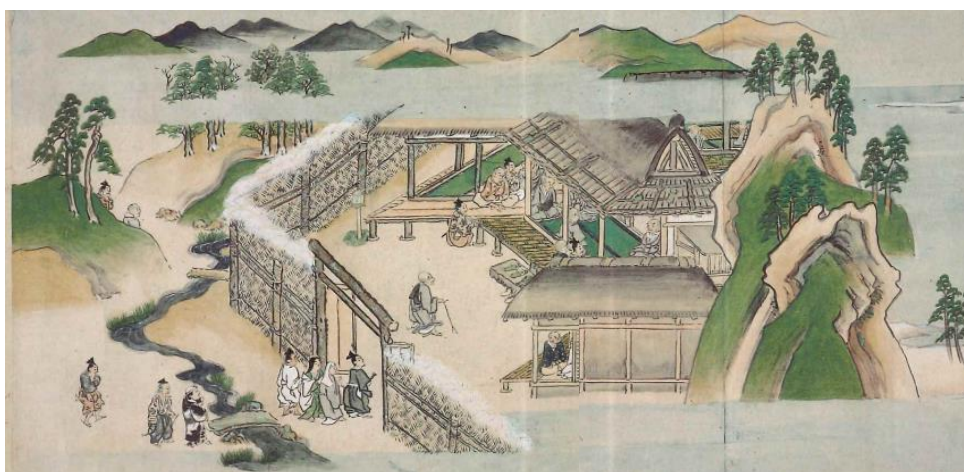
When we try to act in our firm belief, we will always have to choose between two ways of life: either to follow the authorities or to carry through our belief. And Shinran Shōnin's response to this question was the declaration that he was no longer a monk or layperson. What would we do if we were placed in a similar situation?

①9 The Beginning of Shinran Shōnin's Writing (Around Age 52)

Five years after being sent to Echigo province (present-day Niigata prefecture) for banishment, Shinran Shōnin was pardoned. However his teacher Hōnen Shōnin died in Kyoto soon after that. Shinran Shōnin made his way to Kantō (the surrounding area of present-day Tokyo) instead of returning to Kyoto where the teacher no longer lived. He stayed there to share the teaching with the local people for about twenty years. As a result, many communities of nenbutsu followers emerged around Shimotsuke province (present-day Tochigi prefecture) and Hitachi province (present-day Ibaraki prefecture).

Even during those years, the attacks on Hōnen Shōnin's teaching never ceased. In 1224 (Jōō 3/Gennin 1), the year of the 13th Memorial for Hōnen Shōnin, the monks of Mount Hiei made another appeal to the imperial court to ban the activities of the dedicated practice of the nenbutsu. Two years later, a large-scale crackdown on his teaching called the Karoku Persecution was instituted. That was the situation that Shinran Shōnin felt was nothing other than the Latter Dharma Age, one of the three Dharma ages when only the teaching (Dharma) remains alive but the Buddha and Sangha were no longer. Shinran Shōnin began writing his works in order to make clear the significance of the liberation shown by the teaching of Hōnen Shōnin. That is how the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was authored. We recognize the writing of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* as the milestone that marked the establishment of Jōdo Shinshū.

In the preface to the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran Shōnin expresses his profound joy of having encountered the Buddhadharma and praise to it, as shown in the “Dharma Words.”



The Rise of the Dharma in Inada (*Honganji shōnin denne*, *Kōei* version. Photo courtesy of Higashi Honganji.)

⑳ The Beginning of Shinran Shōnin's Writing

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — In Dharma Words

How joyful am I, Shinran, a foolish stubble-headed disciple of Shakyamuni, over the fact that I have now encountered what is difficult to encounter: the sacred scriptures of India and the central Asia and the commentaries by the teachers of China and Japan! I have already heard their message that is difficult to hear. I respect and accept the teaching, practice, and realization of the true essence of the Buddhist teachings and particularly recognize the depth of my debt of gratitude to the Tathāgata. Based on this, I rejoice over what I have heard and praise what I have attained.

㉑ The Beginning of Shinran Shōnin's Writing

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — From the Viewpoint of the Teaching The Wishes of Our Predecessors Who Confronted Their Challenges

Even after the death of Hōnen Shōnin, his teaching continued to meet with severe criticism and prejudice. Shinran Shōnin decided to write the *Kyōgyōshinshō* to clarify the true essence of Buddhism embodied by Hōnen's teaching as one of his bereaved disciples.

The *Kyōgyōshinshō* has a very unique structure. The content of the work is not entirely written by Shinran Shōnin himself, but mostly consists of quotations from Buddhist scriptures as well as commentaries written by Buddhist masters. It is because he did not write this work to express his personal opinions but just to devote himself to clarifying the true tradition of Buddhist teachings. Then he expresses his joy of having encountered the tradition by saying, "How joyful am I!"

Because of the considerable changes in values in today's society, many of us have felt anxious about the uncertain future. But we might be feeling more intensely that our anxieties are not understood by others, which adds to our feeling of isolation. If that is the case, what we need the most would be a friend or teacher who will guide us to the true way of life.

That might be the reason why we can feel enormous sympathy for our predecessors who went through suffering just like we do, but still continued to pursue the true way of life. Therefore, it is even more important for us to listen to the wishes of our predecessors at this time of uncertainty.

② The Disowning of Zenran (Age 84)

Shinran Shōnin stayed in the Kantō region to share the teaching with the local people for about twenty years. When he was in his sixties, we went back to his hometown Kyoto to spend his final years. His Kantō followers kept in contact with Shinran Shōnin by visiting him in Kyoto or exchanging letters and Buddhist writings with him so that they could confirm their understanding of the teaching.

However, about twenty years after his return to Kyoto, some confusion about the teaching began to arise among the Kantō followers as their surrounding situations changed. Around that time, Jishin-bō Zenran, Shinran Shōnin's son, was dispatched to the Kantō region on behalf of the Shōnin in order to settle the situation. However, Zenran's efforts didn't work out well. In the end, he had to resort to falsely claiming that he was the only disciple who secretly received a special instruction from Shinran Shōnin.

Zenran's claim only caused the situation to deteriorate further. Once informed of the incident, Shinran Shōnin had no choice but to disown Zenran in 1256 (Kenchō 8) at age eighty-four.

Having gone through this heartbreaking experience, Shinran Shōnin deeply lamented over the fact that the teaching was not correctly transmitted to his Kantō followers. In one of his letters to them, he wrote as shown in the "Dharma Words."



Sharing the Teaching with Followers While in His Sickbed (*Honganji shōnin denne*, *Kōei* version. Photo courtesy of Higashi Honganji.)

②③ The Disowning of Zenran

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — In Dharma Words

The faith that you thought you had attained was badly shaken by what Jishin-bō (Zenran) stated. But my understanding is that the incident has just uncovered the fact that your faith was not real. That should certainly be seen as a welcome event.

②④ The Disowning of Zenran

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — From the Viewpoint of the Teaching We Think We Have Understood Well — Our Ordinary Way of Thinking

The confusion among the Kantō followers and the disowning of his son Zenran were extremely heart-wrenching for Shinran Shōnin, who was in the final years of his life. He expressed his deep lament over the fact that his teaching turned out to not to be understood very well among the followers he trusted. Even though he lamented what happened, he also states that the incident was a welcome event.

This episode shows our deep-rooted tendency to believe that we have understood things correctly. It might be comfortable for us to live with the one-sided belief that we always have the correct understanding. But when we face the reality that our understanding is not always right, that opportunity can be a great turning point in our lives. This is what the episode tells us.

We are facing similar issues in our everyday life, aren't we? We are constantly dealing with some kind of problem in our lives. However, we mostly don't go into detail about other people's problems whether they are family or friends. On the surface, we tend to behave as though everything were fine. But is this really the right way of living? If we continue pretending to have no problem, we will eventually lose trust in each other and the problems we have will become even more serious.

Shinran Shōnin's heart-breaking experiences in his final years provide us with opportunities to reflect on such problems in our everyday lives as well as our one-sided belief that we always have the correct understanding.

㊦ On His Deathbed (Age 90)

At the end of the eleventh month of the year 1262 (Kōchō 2), Shinran Shōnin, who turned ninety, fell ill. Since then, he never spoke of secular matters but kept expressing his gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence while constantly reciting the nenbutsu.

At around the noon on the twenty-eighth day, his life of devotion to the nenbutsu finally came to an end. He is believed to have passed away with his youngest daughter Kakushin-ni (1224–1283?) and some followers at his bedside. The place was at his younger brother's residence called Zenpō-bō (located on the grounds of the present-day Kyoto Oike Junior High School). The bereaved family and followers cremated his body and buried his ashes in a place called Ōtani in Higashiyama, Kyoto. A few years after that, his tomb was changed to a memorial hall with his life-like image enshrined inside. This hall was the origin of today's Goei-dō (Founder's Hall) of the Honganji temple.

According to his biography, Shinran Shōnin lied down on his right side with his head toward the north and his face toward the west on his deathbed. This is the same position Shakyamuni took when he went into parinirvana (the full and perfect enlightenment). The term "nirvana" means the extinguishing of the fires that are likened to our blind passions. The "parinirvana" is the perfected state of nirvana. Shakyamuni's passing is described as going into parinirvana, which means he lived out his life to the fullest.

Even though he went through many hardships in his life, Shinran Shōnin encountered the teaching of the nenbutsu and lived his life to the fullest as a human being. Throughout his life, he never forgot his appreciation of the compassionate heart of the Tathāgata, who vowed to liberate all beings and leave no one behind.



On His Deathbed (*Honganji shōnin denne*, Kōei version. Photo courtesy of Higashi Honganji.)

②⑥ On His Deathbed

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — In Dharma Words

Those sentient beings who have entrusted themselves in the nenbutsu are assured to realize the full and perfect nirvana at the moment of death because they have attained the adamant heart to leap crosswise over the four raging streams.

②⑦ On His Deathbed

Let's Reflect on Ourselves! — From the Viewpoint of the Teaching What We Should Learn from Death

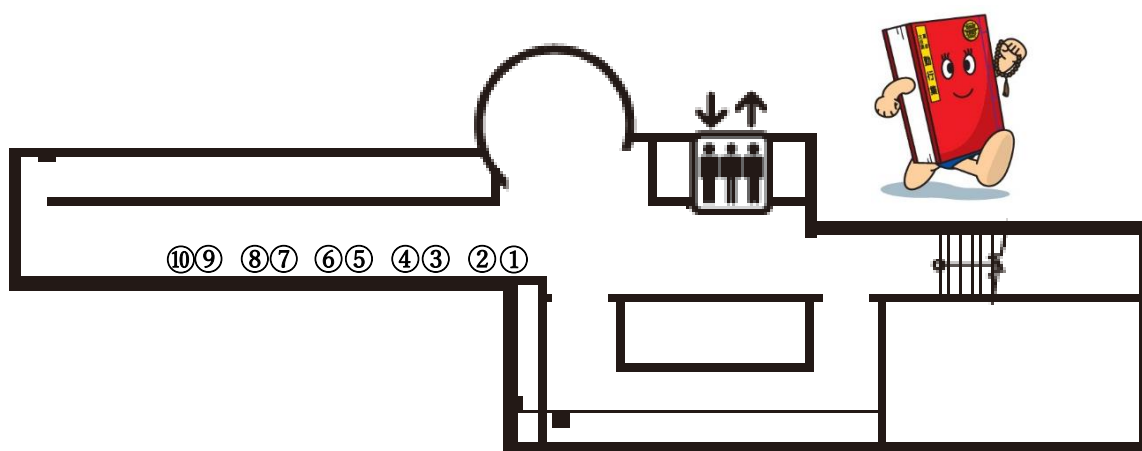
When do we become fully conscious of our own death? Of course, each of us has a different opportunity to be aware of our mortality. Some of us might be conscious of death because of the loss of our loved ones. Being stricken by grief, we might wonder if the deceased loved one lived a life full and complete, or if we could have done more for the person. But most of the time, we wouldn't be able to find an answer to those questions. All we can do is just to wish that the deceased lived a happy life.

Those experiences might be the basis of reflection on our own life. We, in turn, start contemplating whether we are living a truly meaningful life. Again, we might not be able to find an answer to the question. Then we try to make our life as meaningful as we can. Sometimes we might wonder if we can do more. Sometimes we might regret our experiences in the past. With mixed feelings of joy and sorrow over our life, we might think about death with weary resignation.

How can we find guidance on how to accept our life as it is even if it is filled with moments of distress and suffering? We can surely find a way to live our life to the fullest from studying the life of Shinran Shōnin!



B1F An Exhibition of Shinran Shōnin's *Kyōgyōshinshō*



①②An Exhibition “Shinran Shōnin's *Kyōgyōshinshō*”

Introduction

The 850th Celebration of the Birth of Shinran Shōnin and
The 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of Jōdo Shinshū

Theme: Namu Amida Butsu:

We of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha (Higashi Honganji) denomination are observing the 850th Celebration of the Birth of Shinran Shōnin and the 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of Jōdo Shinshū here at the Shinshū Honbyō this year.

On this occasion, we are holding a special exhibition of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in the hope that this Celebration truly becomes a precious opportunity for all of us to receive the spirit of the *nenbutsu* teaching.

The *Kyōgyōshinshō*, which consists of six volumes, is the most important work of Shinran Shōnin (1173–1263) and the foundational text for the teaching of Jōdo Shinshū. The formal title of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is the *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō monrui* (A Collection of Passages on the True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land).

There are several manuscripts of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, but the *Bandō-bon*, a National Treasure of Japan, is the only extant copy in Shinran Shōnin's own handwriting. When looking at the pages, we can see the traces of revision after revision. Those revisions show how Shinran Shōnin continued to deepen his understanding of the teaching for many years.

For us Shinshū followers, it is the custom to chant the *Shōshinge* (the formal title is the *Shōshin nenbutsu ge*—The Verse on the *Nenbutsu* of the Right Faith) every day. The *Shōshinge* is part of one volume of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.

In this exhibition, the actual pages of the *Shōshinge* in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* are on display as enlarged images. Please look at them closely and enjoy the details of the manuscript.

In closing, it is our sincere wish that through this exhibition, we can gain a better understanding of Shinran Shōnin’s life and the development of his thoughts on the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, thereby deepening our appreciation of the teaching of the *nenbutsu*, the essence of Jōdo Shinshū.

Shinshū Ōtani-ha (Higashi Honganji)

③④ **Shinran Shōnin’s Life and the *Kyōgyōshinshō***

Among the numerous writings that Shinran Shōnin wrote, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is considered to be his most important work. Its formal title is *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō monrui* (A Collection of Passages on the True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land). Shinran Shōnin dedicated the latter half of his life to writing this work.

Shinran Shōnin was born in 1173 at the end of the Heian period (from the late 8th century to the late 12th century). At that time, the society was filled with unrest because of continuous outbreaks of conflicts and famine. Shinran Shōnin spent his childhood in such troubled times. He received ordination at the age of nine and devoted himself to learning the Buddhist teachings at the monasteries on Mount Hiei, the mother temple of the Tendai denomination. The basic approach to the teachings offered at the monasteries was to try to acquire the highest wisdom to liberate oneself from the suffering of birth-and-death. However, no matter how deeply Shinran Shōnin dedicated himself to such a path of learning, he was unable to find the liberation he sought in those teachings. Eventually, he decided to leave Mount Hiei at around age twenty-nine.

In desperate search for the truth of the teaching beyond the established paths of learning, Shinran Shōnin decided to turn to Hōnen (also known as Genkū; 1133–1212) Shōnin, a Buddhist teacher who was sharing the teaching with people in a place called Yoshimizu in the Higashiyama area of Kyoto. For the next one-hundred days, Shinran Shōnin never failed to attend their gatherings to listen to Hōnen Shōnin. This encounter brought about a profound awakening in Shinran Shōnin, which he later described by saying that he “discarded sundry practices and returned to the Original Vow [of Amida Buddha].” He then became a disciple of Hōnen Shōnin’s.

What Hōnen Shōnin taught was the compassionate heart of Amida Buddha who made universal vows to unconditionally liberate every being, which was embodied as the teaching of the vows. Hōnen Shōnin found that the essence of Amida Buddha's vows was represented as the recitation of the Name of the Buddha "Namu Amida Butsu" (*nenbutsu*), a practice that any one of us is capable of. Therefore, he taught that the simple recitation of the Name would enable anyone to be embraced by the vow of Amida Buddha and to be born in the Pure Land without exception. His teaching, commonly referred to as the dedicated practice of the *nenbutsu* (*senju nenbutsu*), brought new hopes to many people regardless of the differences in their social classes or other backgrounds.

However, the teaching of "simply recite the Name" advocated by Hōnen Shōnin became the target of criticism for allegedly undermining the Buddhist authorities at that time and even disrupting the social order. In response, Hōnen Shōnin advised his disciples to exercise self-restraint in their activities. But in 1207, Hōnen Shōnin and some of his disciples were punished by the imperial court. As a result, Hōnen Shōnin was banished to Tosa province, present-day Kōchi prefecture (he was allowed to stay in Sanuki province, present-day Kagawa prefecture, which was closer to Kyoto) and Shinran Shōnin to Echigo province (present-day Niigata prefecture).

They were pardoned five years later, but Hōnen Shōnin soon passed away in Kyoto. After that, Shinran Shōnin did not return to Kyoto and headed for Kantō (the surrounding area of present-day Tokyo) instead. Historical records show that he settled in a place called Inada in Kasama, Hitachi province (present-day Ibaraki prefecture). After moving to his new place of domicile, he continued to learn and deepen his understanding of the teaching he received from Hōnen Shōnin while sharing the teaching with local people. It is in this setting that he is believed to have started writing the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.

⑤⑥ About the *Kyōgyōshinshō*

In the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, there is a section in which Shinran Shōnin declares that so many ages had already passed since the demise of Shakyamuni. Then he states that it was the year of Gennin 1 (by the traditional Japanese calendar; 1224 by the Gregorian Calendar), which he regards as the critical juncture. That year marked the 13th memorial for Hōnen Shōnin. It was also the year when the Buddhist monastery on the Mount Hiei made another request to the imperial court to ban the dedicated practice of the *nenbutsu*. Judging from the situation, we can assume that, while writing the manuscript of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran Shōnin reflected on the truly virtuous character of Hōnen Shōnin and deplored the traditional Buddhist circle's continued attempts to dispute his teaching.

We of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha have since recognized the year Gennin 1 (1224) as the most critical moment in the development of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* and now celebrate it as the date of the Establishment of Jōdo Shinshū.

The formal title of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is the *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō monrui* (A Collection of Passages on the True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land). As the title indicates, it is a compilation of Buddhist scriptures that expound the true teaching, practice, and realization of the truth of the Pure Land. The terms “teaching,” “practice,” and “realization” refer to the teaching as the foundation of one’s life, the practice of the teaching, and the realization of the practice, respectively. In other words, those terms represent all aspects of the Buddhadharma. Shinran Shōnin authored the *Kyōgyōshinshō* to clarify that the *nenbutsu* way of living by Amida’s Original Vow out of our aspiration to be born into the Pure Land, which was taught by Hōnen Shōnin, was truly the essential way of the Buddhadharma.

The *Kyōgyōshinshō* consists of six volumes: *kyō no maki* (the volume on teaching), *gyō no maki* (the volume on practice), *shin no maki* (the volume on faith), *shō no maki* (the volume on realization), *shinbutsudo no maki* (the volume on the true land of the Buddha), and *keshindo no maki* (the volume on the transformed body and land of the Buddha). At the beginning of the book, Shinran Shōnin elucidates that the true teaching is the Larger Sutra on Immeasurable Life which expounds the Original Vow of Amida Buddha (in the volume on teaching). He went on to explain the significance of the recitation of the Buddha’s Name “*Namu Amida Butsu*” as the true practice in living (in the volume on practice), the faith in the *nenbutsu* based on the Original Vow (in the volume on faith), the unfailing attainment of the enlightenment by accepting the faith of the *nenbutsu* (in the volume on realization).

In this way, Shinran Shōnin clarifies what the true way of the Buddhadharma is. In addition to that, he explains the working of the true wisdom and compassion of Amida, which is always trying to reach us and embrace us (in the volume on the true land of the Buddha), as well as the working of the Buddha’s various means to achieve those goals (in the volume on the transformed body and land of the Buddha).

Through those explanations, Shinran Shōnin shows how Amida Buddha’s universal Vow is tirelessly trying to embrace us all. At the same time, Shinran Shōnin also keenly indicates the fundamental problem of humankind: the attachment to our self. Because of this attachment, it is difficult for us to accept the Buddha’s benevolence no matter how hard it is trying to awaken us. Shinran Shōnin describes the problem as “the wrong, false, and misleading attachment [to our self]” in the volume on the transformed body and land of the Buddha.

With the profound awareness of the harsh reality of humankind, Shinran Shonin devoted the rest of his life to writing the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in the hope that it could help all of us to awaken to the benevolent working of the Buddha's Original Vow. By writing this book, Shinran Shōnin reaffirmed the significance of Hōnen Shōnin's teachings while clarifying the true essence of the Buddhadharma. He called this essence of the teachings as Jōdo Shinshū, the true spirit of the Pure Land.



⑦⑧ About the *Kyōgyōshinshō Bandō-bon*

—The Only Extant Manuscript of the Work in Shinran Shōnin's Own Handwriting

There are several extant copies of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran Shōnin's main work. However, only one of them is in his own handwriting, which is designated as a National Treasure of Japan. It is owned by the Shinshū Ōtani-ha (Higashi Honganji) and entrusted to the Kyoto National Museum for public display. This copy had long been preserved at a temple known as Bandō Hōonji in Shimofusa province (present-day Ibaraki prefecture). The Bandō Hōonji, a Shinshū Ōtani-ha temple, is currently located in the Taitō ward of Tokyo. That is why this copy has come to be known as *Bandō-bon* (the *Bandō* manuscript).

Shinran Shōnin is believed to have completed the first draft of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* when he was around sixty years old and continued revising this work until the final stage of his life. Therefore, it can be said that the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is Shinran Shōnin's lifework. The traces of his continued contemplation can be found all over the work in such forms as the revisions of the texts, the additions of several types of guiding marks, the annotations in red ink, the cut-off portions of the pages, the attachments of slips of paper with some sentences written on them.

There is a note [added to several copies of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*] saying that one of his

disciples named Sonren made a copy of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in 1247 when Shinran Shōnin was seventy-five years old. One of the possible reasons for giving Sonren permission to copy this work is that Shinran Shōnin thought the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was virtually complete at that time. Also, in 1255 when the Shōnin was eighty-three years old, he gave permission to copy it to another disciple named Senshin-bō Senkai. The copy of this version has been kept at the Senjuji temple of the Shinshū Takada-ha denomination, which also offers a glimpse of the process of revisions. If you compare the Senjuji version and the *Bandō-bon*, you can find several differences in their texts. Those textual differences show that even after Shinran Shōnin gave his disciples permission to copy the work, he continued his efforts to revise the text until the very end of his life.

The manuscript of the *Bandō-bon* was eventually given to a disciple named Renni, who was staying close to Shinran Shōnin to take care of him in his later years. After the passing of the Shōnin, in 1275, one year after his thirteenth-year memorial, another copy of the *Bandō-bon* was made. This newly made copy has been kept at the Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha (Nishi Hongwanji) denomination.

The *Bandō-bon* manuscript then passed into the possession of the Yokosone sangha, a group of followers led by Shōshin, a leading disciple of the Shōnin's. There is also a historical record [in a note added to a copy of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* kept at the Senjuji] saying that the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was published based on the texts of the *Bandō-bon* in 1291. Later, the manuscript of the *Bandō-bon* was kept at the Bandō Hōonji, a temple established by Shōshin.

Throughout the period from the 1600s to 1920s, the manuscript of the *Bandō-bon* was placed under strict control and was almost never shown to the public. But there was constant and eager demand for its public display. In 1922, a black-and-white facsimile edition of the *Bandō-bon* manuscript was published as part of the commemorative projects for the 700th Anniversary of the Establishment of Jōdo Shinshū. By this publication, Shinran Shōnin's handwritten manuscript was put on display to the public for the first time.

In 2005, as part of the anniversary of the 750th Memorial of Shinran Shōnin, a full-color facsimile edition of the *Bandō-bon* manuscript was published. This new edition has enabled us to see the traces of Shinran Shōnin's contemplation in more accurate detail.

⑨⑩ About the *Shōshinge*

We Shinshū followers traditionally chant the *Shōshinge* at home every morning and evening. Therefore, it is the verse most familiar to us. The *Shōshinge*, formally known as the *Shōshin nenbutsu ge* (The Verse on the *Nenbutsu* of the Right Faith), was composed by Shinran Shōnin and appears at the end of the *gyō no maki* (the volume on practice) of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.



On the pages of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, the *Shōshinge* appears in 60 lines. Each line has two phrases, each of which is made up of seven *kanji* characters. Shinran Shōnin deliberately composed this 120-phrase verse in perfect rhyme so that we could easily recite it to ourselves and familiarize ourselves with the true essence of the Buddha's teachings. After his passing, when Rennyo Shōnin (1415–1499) was active as the leader of the Honganji temple, the *Shōshinge* as well as the *wasans* (the hymns that Shinran Shōnin composed) began to be widely used for daily chanting. This tradition has been preserved and passed down to us today.

The *Shōshinge* begins with two phrases, *Kimyō Muryōju Nyorai, Namu Fukashigikō* (I take refuge in the Tathāgata of Immeasurable Life, I take refuge in the Light that surpasses all thought). The word “Amida,” as in the recitation of the Buddha's Name “Namu Amida Butsu,” has two meanings: the Immeasurable Life (Skt. *Amitābha*) and the Immeasurable Light (Skt. *Amitāyus*). These two opening phrases express the fundamental spirit underlying the entire verse of the *Shōshinge*: the dedication of ourselves to the Immeasurable Life and the Immeasurable Light.

The *Shōshinge* can be divided into two sections in terms of content. The first section explains the teachings of Shakyamuni as expounded in the Larger Sutra on Immeasurable Life, while the second section deals with how his teachings had been interpreted and transmitted by the seven masters in India, China, and Japan. By those explanations, Shinran Shōnin clearly shows that the reason why Shakyamuni decided to give his teachings as well as why Amida Buddha was making those universal vows was to liberate all of us from our suffering.

An examination of Shinran Shōnin's handwriting on the pages of the *Shōshinge* in the *Kyōgyōshinshō Bandō-bon* offers us a glimpse into how he was continuously deepening his thought on the teaching as he went along.

Take the line *Nyorai shoi kō shusse* (the reason that the Tathāgata [Shakyamuni] appeared in this world), for instance. The right side of the word *nyorai* (Tathāgata) is painted out with black ink. Research shows that underneath the black ink is the word

“Shaka[muni].” To cite another example, let’s look at the line *Ō shin nyorai nyo jitsugon* (Let us believe the Tathāgata’s word of truth). The handwriting clearly shows that the word *nyorai* is written directly on top of another instance of the word “Shaka[muni].” Both revisions indicate that Shinran Shōnin carefully contemplated the choice of words between “*nyorai*” and “Shaka[muni].”

Let’s look at another line, *Gyaku shin ken kyō dai-kyōki* ([One who] gains Faith sees the Buddha, respects the Buddha, and is filled with great joy), which is also familiar with us through daily chanting. This line obviously has gone through a complicated process of edits. The original writing was painted out with black ink (though they are slightly visible) and a new line has been written on the left side of the original. The original line underneath the black ink reads:

Ken kyō toku dai-kyōki-nin (One who sees the Buddha respects the Buddha and attains to the rank of the one who is filled with great joy).

In this *Bandō-bon* version, as you can see, the final edit reads:

Gyaku shin ken kyō dai-kyō-nin (One who gains Faith see the Buddha, respects the Buddha, and becomes a person filled with great joy).

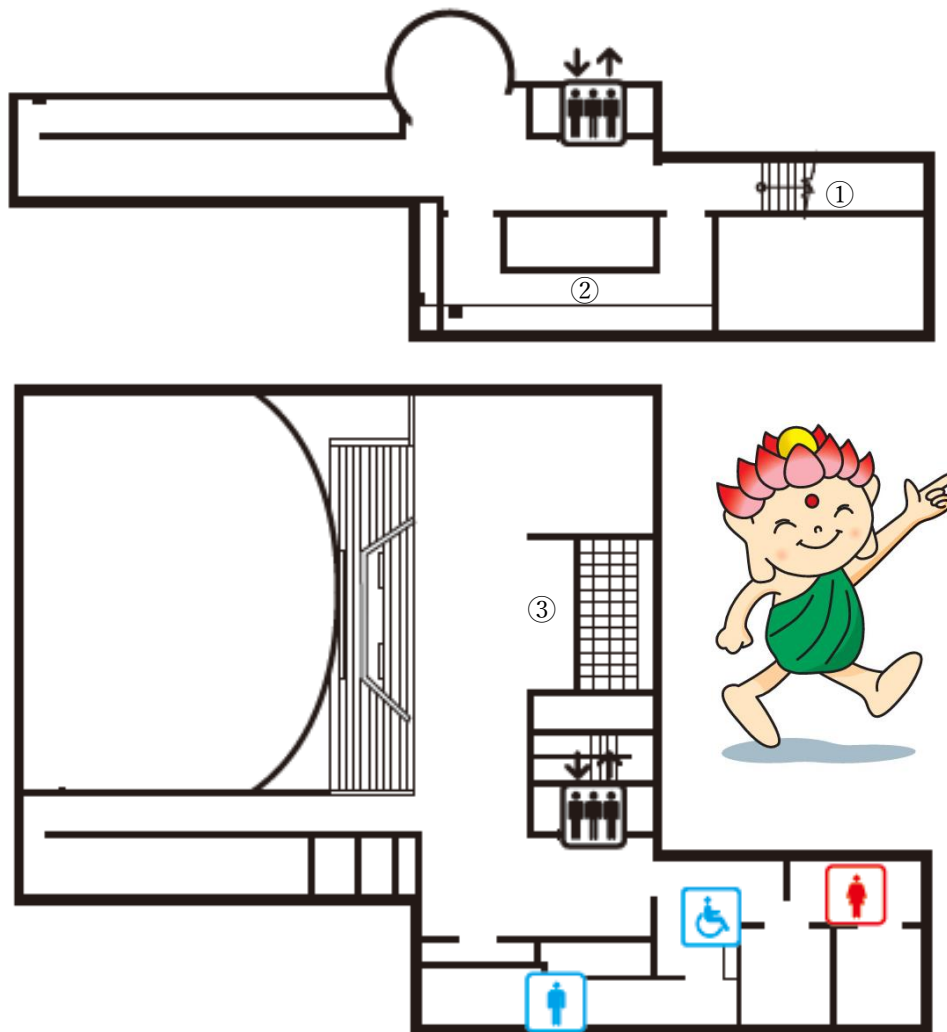
Also, Shinran Shōnin quoted himself in another work titled *Songō shinzō meimon* (Notes on the Inscriptions of Sacred Scrolls) as saying:

Gyaku shin ken kyō toku dai-kyō (One who gains Faith see the Buddha, respects the Buddha, and attains the great joy).

As mentioned above, the version of the line that we are familiar with reads *Gyaku shin ken kyō dai-kyōki* ([One who] gains Faith sees the Buddha, respects the Buddha, and is filled with great joy). This version appears in a different copy called the *Takada-bon* of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, which one of Shinran Shōnin’s disciples made while he was still alive. Another copy of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* known as the *Nishi Hongwanji-bon*, which was made around the time of the thirteenth memorial for Shinran Shōnin, has the same version of the line as well. As the two major copies of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* show, Shinran Shōnin’s immediate disciples wrote this line as *Gyaku shin ken kyō dai-kyōki* as we know today. One possible reason is that Shinran Shōnin might have given them an oral instruction to do so. In any case, the version of the line that the Shōnin’s immediate disciples embraced has been used for the services even until today.



B1F、 B2F An Exhibition of Artworks on Shinran



① Papercut art by Teppei Hayakawa (papercut artist)

Teppei Hayakawa

Born in 1982 in Kanazawa, Ishikawa, Japan, papercut artist Teppei Hayakawa lives and works in a remote mountain village in the city of Maibara, Shiga. He has produced papercut artworks with the motifs taken from the natural scenes of plants and animals in the wild that he comes across every day. His papercut art is well known for its finely crafted details, but he is also seeking new modes of expression for papercut art by the production of large-scale illustrations, illuminated art pieces, and other innovative forms. As a follower of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha, he produced the 18-paneled papercut artwork for the *shōji* screens on display in the hall of the Nagahama Betsuin temple, Shiga on the occasion of the 750th Memorial for Shinran Shōnin held in May 2019 at the Gomura Betsuin and Nagahama Betsuin temples in the Nagahama district.

② Illustrations by Akira Yamaguchi (illustrator)

Akira Yamaguchi

Born in Tokyo in 1969, contemporary artist Akira Yamaguchi grew up in the city of Kiryū, Gunma, Japan. He received his bachelor's degree in oil painting in 1994 and his master's degree in oil painting in 1996 from the Tokyo University of Arts. He has produced a wide range of artworks which include the large-scale pieces installed at the Narita International Airport as well as illustrations for a wide variety of serialized newspaper stories and novels. His publications include the illustrated book *Shinran: All Illustrations by Akira Yamaguchi* (Seigensha Art Publishing, Inc., Kyoto). He created the background artwork for the opening credits for the annual NHK historical drama television series in 2019, "IDATEN: The Epic Marathon to Tokyo." His manga *Shuto* has appeared serially in the monthly manga magazine *Morning Two* (Kōdansha, Tokyo).

③ A folding screen "Shinran" by Takehiko Inoue (cartoon artist)

Takehiko Inoue

The Japanese cartoon (manga) artist Takehiko Inoue was born in Kagoshima, Japan in 1967. He made his debut in 1988 by publishing the manga *Kaede Purple*, which won the annual Tezuka Award. His second work, *Slam Dunk*, the story of a high school basketball team, was serialized in a manga magazine from 1990 to 1996 and has sold over 100 million copies in book form. He began drawing *Vagabond* in 1998, a manga on the life of the legendary master swordman Musashi Miyamoto, and *Real* in 1999, the story of wheelchair basketball, both of which have appeared serially in magazines. He has won many awards which include the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Art Encouragement Prize for New Artists, the Agency of Cultural Affairs Media Arts Festival Awards for the Manga Division, and the Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize. In 2008, he began to hold "Inoue Takehiko: The LAST Manga Exhibition" in the cities of Tokyo, Kumamoto, Osaka, and Sendai, where a lot of huge artworks of his original drawings of Musashi Miyamoto were exhibited and attracted much public attention.

