Book Review

by

Jerome Ducor


At the time of Shinran Shōnin’s 700th Memorial in 1961, Hongwanji started the publication of the Honganji Shi 本願寺史 (The History of Hongwanji), in three volumes (1961, 1968-1969) covering the history of the head-temple of Hongwanji-ha from the time of the Founder Shinran down to the accession of the 23rd Patriarch Shōnyo Shōnin (Zennonsama) in 1933. It was followed by a Chronology (Honganji Nenpyō 本願寺年表, 1981) and an Index (Honganji Shi Sakuin 本願寺史索引, 1984). All those volumes were published under the editorial supervision of the successive directors of the Historical Institute of Hongwanji, the late Miyazaki Enjun 宮崎恩俊 (1906-1983) and Chiba Jōryū 千葉乗隆 (1921-2008). This was a big work, the first comprehensive history of Hongwanji since the valuable Ōtani-Honganji Tsūki 大谷本願寺通紀 by Genchi 玄智 (1734-1794)1.

Recently, for Shinran Shōnin’s 750th Memorial, the Hongwanji has published the first volume of the “Enlarged and Revised edition” of the Honganji Shi (Zōho-kaitei Honganji Shi), the beginning of a series of four volumes, which is planned to cover Hongwanji’s history up to the contemporary period. From what can be seen from this first volume - covering the period from Shinran down to the demise of the 11th Patriarch Kennyo Shōnin (1592) - it is not only an enlarged and revised edition: it is a completely renewed book. As far as Shinran’s life is concerned, for example, the legendary elements are discussed separately from the historical facts. Most of all, this new edition benefits from the studies of the many Japanese historians who published about Shinran’s life and Hongwanji’s history during the past 50 years, and all the references to these new studies are clearly provided. To put it briefly, this publication will be essential to all serious researchers. To write Shinran’s long life is discouraging even for the best-intentioned biographer because it also includes many obscure parts besides clearly established historical facts. This new book does not claim to solve all of them. I would like here to give an example with the life of Shinran’s father, Hino Arinori 日野有範.

1) The biography of 3rd Patriarch Kakunyo written by his disciple Jōsen in 1352 states that Shinran lost his father while still “in childhood” (yōchi 幼稚), and that this event was followed by his adoption by his uncle Hino Noritsuna 日野範綱2. This is the earliest information concerning Arinori’s death and is far from anecdotal, in that it could in itself explain the ordination Shinran received, with Noritsu’s support, when he was 8 years old (1181)3. In addition, Arinori was born after his other brother Hino Munenari 日野宗権 (born 1142)4, thus implying that Shinran’s father would have passed away when he was around 40 years old. This theory about the premature death of Arinori (sōseisetsu 早逝説) was accepted during centuries by Jōdo-Shinshū chroniclers5.

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1 See my “Genchi et l’Ōtani-Honganji-tsūki”, in Bukkyō-bunka-kenkyūsho kiyō 佛教文化研究所紀要, no. 27 (Ryūkoku University, 1989), p. 73-87.
2 Jōsen 柔禅 (1295-1377), Saishū-kyōgen no kotoba 最適教重語詞 (Srss. 1, p. 950a).
3 Kakunyo 誉如 (1270-1351), Illustrated Life of Shinran (Den’ie 善傳, 1295) (Srss. 1, p. 520a).
4 Date provided by the Kugyō bunin 公卿補任 (2, p. 234). Munenari is the 2nd of the three brothers, and Noritsu is the eldest.
5 For instance Eḱi 慧空 (1644-1721): Sōrinshū 晓林集 (1698) (Srss. 8, p. 287b).
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2) However, most modern historians reject this tradition as contradicting another source related to Arinori’s death, which predates by one year Kakunyo’s biography written by Jōsen. This source is constituted by the colophons (okugaki 奥書) of a copy of the Infinite-Life Sūtra (Muryōjukkyō 無量壽經) in two volumes made by Kakunyo’s son, Zonkaku. According to those colophons, Zonkaku used as a model a manuscript that has been in the hands of Shinran and one of his younger brothers, Ken’u 兼の九. More precisely, colophon of Volume 1 states that Ken’u added marks to the text (kaihen 加點) during Arinori’s “intermediary state” (chūin 中間), that is the seven weeks following his death. It adds that Shinran wrote the title on the sūtra’s cover. Here is the translation of the two colophons:

(Volume 1) The 15th day of the 12th moon of the hare-metal-junior year of Shōei, I completed the punctuation and the pronunciation: those are the red marks. I copied them from an original, which for years passed as having been marked by the discipline master Ken’u during the intermediary state of the Lord great officer and recluse of Mimuroto (Arinori, His Eminence’s father). The title on the outside is by His Eminence’s brush. (…) Zonkaku 正平六歳辛卯十二月十五日，切句差音，朱點是也。本者御書室大進入道殿（有範，上人御親父）御中陰之時，兼有律師被加點之由，往従承襲之聞，所寫之也。外題者上人御筆也。（…) 尚覺

(Volume 2) The 17th day of the 12th moon of the hare-metal-junior year of Shōei, I completed the punctuation and the pronunciation: those are the red marks. The manuscript’s origins are recorded in the colophon of Volume 1.

Zonkaku 正平六歳辛卯十二月十七日，切句差音，朱點是也。寫之旨由來帝記上卷奧 Raises. 尚覺

The colophons were published in 1922 and they immediately attracted the attention of Nakazawa Kenmyō 中澤見明, a self-taught historian of Hongwanji-ha, who was the first to use critical methodology in the study of history. At the end of the same year, he published a book in which he stated that Zonkaku’s colophons contradict Jōsen’s record, making the point that if Ken’u was old enough to carry out this duty at the time of Arinori’s death, then his older brother Shinran could no longer have been “in childhood”. Nakazawa is therefore sceptical about the value of the colophons and considers that they recount little more than a “legend” (densetsu 傳說), since Zonkaku himself – writing decades after Arinori’s death – states that the original “passed for years” as having been marked by Ken’u.

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6 See Ducor 1993, p. 360. Zonkaku 存覺 (1290-1373) also copied the two other sūtras of the Pure Land Trilogy (Jōdo-Sanbukkyō 淨土三部記), formerly preserved at Jōkakudai 常楽院 (Zonkaku’s temple), these autographs are now at Honpa-Hongwanji (Sssm. 102).

7 The Muryōjukkyō manuscript was on display at Ryōkaku Museum in 2011 (see the catalogue Shukusen to Shinran, Shinran hen, 3, p. 17, n° 57).

8 Ken’u is the Buddhist name received by Arinori’s 3rd son at ordination (date unknown). According to the anonymous genealogy Hino-shi keizō 日野氏系圖 (early 14th c.), Arinori had four sons, in the following order: Shinran, Jin’u 観舟, Ken’u and Uji 有智 (Sssr. 7, p. 503); only the year of Shinran’s birth is known (1173), but all his three brothers could well have been born during the years preceding his ordination (1181). The family-tree Hino-ichiryū keizō 日野一流れ系圖, written by Jitsugo 實悟 (1492-1583) in 1541, adds a fifth name to the four brothers: Gyōken 顕兼; still, he was the god-child of Arinori, before being adopted by Noritetsu and eventually becoming Ken’u’s disciple (Sssr. 7, p. 521).

9 Discipline master (rishishi 律師) is the lowest of the three prelacies (sōgō 僧侶) in Japanese Buddhism. The Hino-shi keizō mentions Shinran’s brother as “the monk Ken’u (vice-discipline master)” (sōgō 律師; Sssr. 7, p. 503); he was a monk at Shōgūn 聖護院 (Jitsugo, op.cit.: Sssr. 7, p. 521).

10 Arinori was great officer (daishin 大進) in the household of a dowager empress but retired at unknown date and became a recluse (nyūdō 入道) at Mimuroto (or Mimurodo) 御書室, south-east of Kyōto. Ken’u also lived there at an unknown date (Jitsugo, loc.cit.); and Kakunyo retired there too, from 1308 to 1309 (Ducor 1993, p. 136).

11 About the title “His Eminence” (shōnin 上人) first applied to Shinran, rather than “His Holiness” (shōnin 聖人), see Ducor 2007, p. 122-123.

12 Zonkaku Shōnin shigoshū, p. 151b-153a. Cf. Sssm. n° 102, p. 293-308; Sasaki 2011a, p. 358b; Sasaki 2011b, p. 319ab. Colophon of Vol. 1 also in Dai Nihon shiryo, p. 161; a picture of it is provided in the Zōho-katei Honganji Shi, p. 7 (I don’t know why it said there that it was discovered at Honganji after the War).

13 Nakazawa, Shōjō no Shinran (1922), p. 26-29. Nakazawa says he has seen the duplicate of Zonkaku’s manuscripts thanks to the historian Washio Kyōdō 紇式俊雄 (1875-1928), who had just discovered (1921) the letters by Eshinni (Shinran’s wife) in Honganji’s treasure-house.

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However it may be conceded that these colophons hand down a reliable family tradition, through the mere fact of the anecdote’s originality as well as the Zonkaku’s authority, allowing himself to quote it. Thus Yamada Bunshō 山田文昭, the great historian of Ōtani-ha, adopted the theory of Arinori’s long life (chōmei setsu 長命説), on the basis of Zonkaku’s colophons, which he judged to be « important historical reference documents »5. From this time up to now, most the historians – if not all – have subscribed to his arguments6.

3) A few remarks should nevertheless be made at this point. First of all, it must be noted that the colophons do not state that Ken’u copied the original text of the sutra (shakkyō 写経), a task which would definitively be impossible for a child as he would have to write down some 17,473 Chinese characters (kanji 漢字)7. Neither do they state that Ken’u added the reading marks (kunten 訓点) needed to adapt the Chinese text to Japanese syntax (yomikudashi 読下)8. Last of all, they do not say that Ken’u noted down the transcription of the Sino-Japanese reading of the sutra (kudoku 講読), which would mean adding Japanese letters (furigana 拢音仮名) next to the Chinese characters.

What Zonkaku’s colophons tell us is that Ken’u provided “the punctuation and the pronunciation” (kugiri sashigoe 切句差声), as needed for a copy used for sutra psalmody (dokkyō 諱経). When chanting in this way, the Chinese characters are simply read aloud, one by one, according to the manner of “straight reading” (bōyomi 様読). Accordingly, all that Ken’u had to do was to punctuate the plain text of the sutra (hakubun 白文) by adding dots (●) between sequences of characters (kuten 句点), as the Chinese texts were composed of an uninterrupted series of Chinese signs. In addition, Ken’u added various dotes, circles and horizontal strokes (●, --, o-- o-) beside some of the Chinese characters to indicate their pronunciation in special cases (shōten 声点, nishōten 入声点). Admittedly, adding dotes and strokes – most likely under dictation9 – is not a particularly difficult task, even for a young child. In comparison, Kakunyo was 4 years old when he started reading literature10. If Ken’u were 5 years old when Arinori passed away, he would have been quite capable of accomplishing this pious task in his father’s memory.

There was another brother in the family, between Shinran and Ken’u: Jin’u. If we admit a three-year difference between Shinran and Ken’u, Shinran would have been only 8 years old upon his father’s death, which would confirm Jōsen’s statement in the Sai-shu-kyōju that Shinran was then “in childhood” (it should also be remembered that Zonkaku and Jōsen knew each other11). This would in addition correspond to the year 1181 during which he was ordained. To summarize, Zonkaku’s colophons do not prove that Arinori lived on after Shinran’s ordination. Conversely, Shinran’s adoption by his uncle Noritsuna remains a fitting argument in favour of the tradition of Arinori’s untimely death.

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7 That is 8,401 characters in Volume 1, and 9,072 characters in Volume 2; figures provided by Genchi 文智. Jōdo-Sangyō jōken 活布宗臨心 (Observations on the pronunciation of the characters of the Pure Land Three Sutras), p. 21ab.
8 Contrary to the explanations by Takahatake: Young Man Shinran, p. 15.
9 Contrary to the comments in the dictionary Shinran yomitateki jiten, p. 143.
10 For example, under dictation from his uncles Noritsuna and Munenari.
11 From the autumn of 1274, Kakunyo learned reading using the Collection of Japanese and Chinese Poems for Singing (Wakan Rōashū 和歌聯珠) by Fujiiwa Kintō 藤原公藤 (966-1041). See Jōsen, op.cit. (Srs. 1, p. 95b); Ducor, 1993, p. 95-96.
12 See Ducor 1993, p. 207, 326.
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4) To substantiate the theory of Arinori’s long life, attempts have been done to find traces of him in other historical records, but the results are scanty and uncertain. The name “Arinori 有範” can be found three times in two aristocrats’ diaries: once in the Sankaiki 山槐記 by Nakayama Tadachika 中山忠槐 (1131-1193), in the year 1192; and twice in the Meigetsuki 明月記 by Fujiwara Sadale 藤原定家 (or Teika, 1162-1241), in 1204 and 1207. Those dates are certainly later than Shinran’s ordination, but the name “Arinori” is quoted without any patronymic, and could simply be a homonym. Conversely, those diaries do mention titles and functions in conjunction with this name which are not seen in sources explicitly related to Hino Arinori. All in all, most historians — including the Zōho-kaihei Honganji Shi — refrain from using those references to justify the supposedly long life of Shinran’s father.

5) We still have to deal with a final argument related to Hino Arinori: the circumstances of his retirement to Mimuroto. One sufficient reason would seem to be the behaviour of his father Hino Tsurumasa 日野経尹. Although the details are unknown, his life was so scandalous that the Sorpi bunnōyaku genealogy labels him a “debauchee” (hōatsu no hito 放蕩人) and strikes him and his sons off the Hino family tree of the Northern House of the Fujiwara Clan — a line of brilliant Confucian literati — to unit them with a minor branch of the Southern House.

But another, more acceptable explanation has been put forward by historians: as a great officer in the household of a dowager empress (kōtaigō 皇太后), Arinori would have followed the custom of the time, which was to quit his position when the dowager passed away. However, no historical record gives the lady’s name, and various hypotheses are imaginable. According to the Zōho-kaihei Honganji Shi (p. 6) it was Fujiwara Kinshi 藤原景季, a spouse of emperor Go-Shirakawa: she became dowager in 1172, but the date of her death (1209) is too late for her to be seriously taken into consideration. Another name suggested already in the 18th century is Kōkamon’in 皇嘉門院, spouse of emperor Sutoku. This could fit as she received the title of dowager in 1141, but her death occurred on the 4th of the 12th moon of 1181, so that Arinori’s retirement would therefore have been several months after Shinran’s ordination, said to have been held in the spring of the same year.

Other hypotheses placing a dowager’s demise before Shinran’s ordination are possible; Kenshunmon’in 建春門院, for example, wife of emperor Go-Shirakawa, became dowager in 1168 and died on the 8th day of the 7th moon of 1176. One argument in favour of is that Shinran’s elder uncle Noritsuna was a member of Go-Shirakawa’s entourage, while his younger uncle Munenari was the study master of Go-Shirakawa’s son, prince Mochihito-ō 以仁王, killed by the Taira in 1180. This could also mean that Shinran’s family might have suffered from the conflict between the Court and the Taira, as well as from the war between the Taira and the Minamoto: for some historians, this might even be the principle reason for Arinori’s retirement, particularly as his mother — a daughter of Minamoto Munekiyo 源宗清 — was the niece of Minamoto Tameyoshi 源為義, who in turn was the paternal grandfather of the first shōgun, Minamoto Yoritomo 源義朝.

A final option represents a more interesting candidate: Kujōin 九條院, wife of emperor Konoe, who became dowager in 1158 and died two months after Kenshunmon’in, on the 19th day of the 9th moon of 1176. What is particularly interesting in

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23 Hata, p. 59a-61a.
24 Sorpi bunnōyaku 2, p. 453.
25 See also Fujiwara 1975, p. 81; Hata, p. 61. The information given here about the dowers of that time follows the dictionary Kamakura Muronmachī jirin jiten.
26 Genchi: Onami-Honganji Tsuki, vol. 1 (Ssr. 8, p. 348a); id., Hi-Shōtōden 非正統論 (Ssr. 7, p. 393a). According to Yamada (p. 186), this identification is unfirable.
27 See Shinran yomitoki jiten, p. 145-146; and Chiba, p. 30-31 (CCJ 1, p. 17), who quotes also the name of Fujiwara Tashi 藤原多子: wife of emperor Konoe, she became dowager in 1156, but then arch-dowager (tsukōtaigō 太皇太后) in 1158 and died in 1202.
28 See for example Fujiwara 1939, p. 61; Akamatsu, p. 23, sq.; Hiramatsu, p. 27, sq.
29 As according to Sorpi bunnōyaku 3, p. 232-233; and 2, p. 219. See Fujiwara 1939, p. 73-75.
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this case is that Hino Muneari, brother of Arinori, became the secretary (hōgandai 判官代) of Kujōin in 1159: it is thus tempting to imagine that Muneari was in a position to help his younger brother enter the household of this dowager. Though no definite conclusion can be made from this, the year 1176 during which both Kenshunmon'in and Kujōin passed away could also mark the moment at which Arinori retired at Mimurodo for the years preceding Shinran’s ordination in 1181. However, it should be noted that no historical source attests that Arinori did actually retire at the time of the demise of the dowager he was serving.

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Kugeyo bunin (2, p. 23a).
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GREETING FROM
THE PRESIDENT

By Kenneth K. Tanaka, Musashino University

"Subjectivity": A Provocative Theme

It has been exactly one year since the very successful Vancouver conference at the University of British Columbia under Jessica Malik's leadership. We are now looking forward to the 17th IASBS Biennial Conference to be held August 7-9, 2015 at the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) in Berkeley, California. (See details elsewhere in this newsletter) I hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend.

The theme of next year's conference will be “Subjectivity in Pure Land Buddhism,” a topic that appears at first glance to be antithetical to the primary Buddhist doctrine of “non-self.” Personally, I find it extremely intriguing as a theme, precisely because the issue of “subjectivity” demands further investigation and clarification for meeting the spiritual and ethical needs of contemporary audiences.

In fact, I have been heading a group of scholars associated with a research project sponsored by the Institute of Buddhist Culture at Musashino University, who have been working on this and related topics. In the coming years we hope to publish a volume entitled, Tide of Wisdom: Shinran’s Wisdom, Subjectivity and Societal Dimension.

I believe we can analyse the topic of subjectivity from three perspectives: 1) seeking Dharma as a deeply personal matter, 2) relying on one’s own judgment, and 3) realizing one’s true self. These three perspectives all point to the fact that Dharma cultivates seekers to become more committed, self-directed and actualized persons, and not be indifferent, other-directed and pessimistic as the critics of Buddhism past and present would want us to believe.

The deeply personal perspective of subjectivity can be seen, in my view, in the famous utterance attributed to Shinran in the Rantisho, “As I deeply consider Amida’s Vow made after five kalpas of deep contemplation, I realize that it was made for I, Shinran, alone.” He was certainly not monopolizing the Vow for himself, but making the admission that the Vow was meant exactly for persons such as himself and that there would be no liberation for him without it. Shinran’s search through the Dharma was initiated by a deeply personal issue and culminated in a profoundly personal realization.

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PURE LAND JOURNAL

The IASBS annually publishes The Pure Land: Journal of Pure Land Buddhism (ISSN 0811-7660), 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.