

35 Shingyō: Mountains, Seas and Villages (1825)

Introduced and translated by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

The passage presented in translation below is taken from a three-volume work by the monk Shingyō 信暁 (1774–1858). Shingyō was a cleric of the Ōtani wing of the Jōdo Shinshū, but converted to the Bukkōji 佛光寺派 wing in 1820.^I Shingyō apparently wrote the original text shortly after his conversion and the founding of the Daigyōji 大行寺 of Haseyama Kita-no-in 長谷山北ノ院 in Kyōto (1821). This text is thus from the late Edo period, and, even for that reason alone, deserves special attention. Shingyō takes up various Buddhist themes in his work, including stating the “fact that priority is to be given to the ruler’s law” (*ōbō wo moto to suru koto* 王法を本とする事) in chapter 147.^{II}

The doctrinal view that priority should be given to the ruler’s law (*ōbō ihon setsu* 王法為本説) in the Jōdo Shinshū is traditionally attributed to Rennyo 蓮如 (1415–1499) (see text no. 31). In this respect, the work still represents a completely conventional and orthodox position for a cleric of the Jōdo Shinshū. Shingyō first emphasises the inseparability – not the identical nature! – of both nomospheres. In essence, he emphasises the compatibility of Buddhism with traditional Chinese ‘socio-cosmology’ and ethics.

This connects him with authors of the early Meiji period (see texts no. 37 and 38), who address the paradigm of the interdependence of the two nomospheres. Obviously, at this time, Buddhism was under massive pressure to justify itself. It was widely regarded as a doctrinal system that dealt exclusively with supra-mundane problems and questions of the afterlife, and had nothing to contribute to the organisation of social order, economic prosperity, or political stability. Accordingly, authors such as Shingyō endeavoured to prove that the Buddha had also made decisive contributions in relation to worldly matters.

Of particular interest is Shingyō’s use of ‘astronomical’ arguments. In the early nineteenth century, the preservation of “Buddhist astronomy” (*butsureki* 佛曆) or “In-

I Satoru Ibuki, “Daigyōji Shingyō No Chosho No Hanmoto, Hakkōsha, Hanken 大行寺信暁の著書の板元: Edo Jidai Kōki Kara Meiji Jidai Chūki Ni Okeru Bussho No Shuppan 江戸時代後期から明治時代中期における仏書の出版,” *Shomotsu, shuppan to shakai henyō* 書物・出版と社会変容 22 (2019): 1.

II Shingyō 信暁, *Sankairi* 山海里, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Shudōkan, 1892), 1:320–23.

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dian astronomy” (*bonreki* 梵曆) was a hot issue, and Shingyō was active in the so-called “Indian astronomy movement” (*bonreki undō* 梵曆運動) initiated by his teacher, the Tendai monk Entsū 圓通 (1754–1834).^{III} The movement attempted to defend the old Buddhist cosmology against the European astronomical system. First introduced by the writings of Jesuits living in China, and then by Dutch scholars, the heliocentric worldview gradually led to a fundamental rejection of Buddhist cosmology in Japan. This was a crisis for the survival of Buddhism, as it raised doubts about its very doctrinal foundations.

Bibliographical Information

The translation below is based on a printed edition of the text published in 1892:

Shingyō 信暁. “On the Primacy of the Ruler’s Law.” Chapter 147 in *Sankairi* 山海里, vol. 1. 3 vols. Tokyo: Shudōkan, 1892; 320–23.

Translation by Christoph Kleine

The ruler’s law is indeed inseparable from the Buddha’s Law; the Buddha’s Law is indeed inseparable from the ruler’s law.^I To consider the ruler’s law as the way that human beings walk in accordance with the conditions of heaven and earth (*tenchi no mama* 天地のまゝ),^{II} you must know that this is the heart of all Buddhist astronomy

III See Okada Masahiko 岡田正彦. “Wasureta ‘bukkyō tenmongaku’ – Bonreki undo to ‘kindai’ 忘れられた「仏教天文学」–梵曆運動と「近代」.” *Shūkyō to shakai* 宗教と社会 7 (2001): 71–90.

I CK: The rather Buddhistic phrase runs: *ōbō wa sunawachi buppō nari buppō wa sunawachi ōbō nari* 王法はすなはち佛法なり佛法はすなはち王法なり. Sometimes *sunawachi* 即 is misinterpreted as referring to the identical nature of two things, which is logically nonsensical, since in almost all cases the differences between the two parts connected by 即 are clearly highlighted – not only with regard to the particular designation, but in terms of their qualities. Accordingly, Mayer quite rightly argues that *sunawachi* should not be translated as “same” or “is the same”, but rather as “cannot be separated from.” Almut Mayer, “Yōmeigaku 陽明学 im Japan der frühen Meiji-Zeit: Yamada Hōkoku 山田方谷 (1805–1877)” (Doctoral Diss, Eberhard-Karls-University Tübingen, 2000), 40.

II CK: This phrase might be a reference to the scholar Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697–1769), an early protagonist of a school of thought that later became known as “National Studies” (*kokugaku* 國学). For him “*tenchi no mama*” basically meant “the way things are.” See Harry D. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 47. See Heinrich Dumoulin, “Kamo Mabuchi: Kokuikō: Gedanken über den ‘Sinn des Landes,’” *Monumenta Nipponica* 2, no. 1 (1939); Heinrich Dumoulin, *Kamo Mabuchi (1697–1769): Ein Beitrag zur japanischen Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, vol. 1, *Die Überwindung des Synkretismus* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1943); Heinrich Dumoulin, “Kamo Mabuchi und das Manyōshū,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 9, no. 1–2 (1953); Heinrich S. J. Dumoulin, “Zwei Texte Kamo Mabuchis zur Wortkunde,” *Monumenta*

(*tenmon* 天文).^{III} The [Chinese] character for ‘ruler’ (ō 王)^{IV} contains three horizontal strokes. This triple figure symbolises the three potencies of heaven, earth, and man. Humans live within the space between heaven and earth. Thus, since mankind resides in between heaven and earth, the middle stroke was inserted [to symbolise it]. Hence, we [literally] speak of ‘the human space’ (*ningen* 人間) [when we refer to mankind].

With its vertical stroke, the character for ‘ruler’ (ō 王) [in toto] straightforwardly symbolises the quality of connecting heaven, man, and earth. Understood in this way, the state of being of heaven (*ten no mama* 天のまゝ) is received on earth, and becomes the way of man (*hito no michi* 人の道) through the bodily activities of the ruler [in his capacity] as a man. [p. 320/321] Since this teaching is a teaching of the Buddha Dharma, the Buddha’s Law and the ruler’s law are indeed inseparable. The *Humane Kings [Perfection of Wisdom] Sūtra*^V and other [sūtras] all contain this doctrinal aspect. [. . .]

It must be recognised that “harmony and order in the world” (*tenge wajun* 天下和順) and “tranquillity and peace in the world” (*tenge taihei* 天下泰平) are the main concerns of the Buddha Dharma (*buppō no hon’i* 佛法の本意). This is why it is related in the *Sūtra [on the Buddha] of Immeasurable Life*,^{VI} one of the [authoritative] *Three Sūtras of the Pure Land*, that

wherever the Buddha comes to stay, there is no state, town, or village which is not blessed by his virtues. The whole country reposes in peace and harmony. The sun and the moon shine with pure brilliance; wind rises and rain falls at the right time. There is no calamity or epidemic, and so the country becomes wealthy, and its people enjoy peace. Soldiers and weapons become useless; and people esteem virtue, practice benevolence, and diligently cultivate courteous modesty.^{VII}

^{III} *Nipponica* 11, no. 3 (1955); Kamo Mabuchi and Heinrich Dumoulin, “Kamo Mabuchi’s Erklärung des Norito Zum Toshi-Goi-No-Matsuri,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 12, no. 1–4 (1956).

^{III} CK: Evidently, Shingyō alludes here to the ‘astronomical’ Sūtra on (Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva and the Sages’ Teaching on Auspicious and Inauspicious Times, Good and Evil) Constellations and Planets ([*Monjushiri bosatsu gyū shosen shosetsu kikyō jinichi zen’aku*] *shukuyō kyō* 文殊師利菩薩及諸仙所說吉凶時日善惡宿曜經; T 21, no. 1299), from which he quotes directly further below in his text.

^{IV} CK: The subsequent interpretation of the character 王 (Chin. *wang*) can be traced back to the Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE) and his *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露, a Commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋). See Anne Schmiedl, *Chinese Character Manipulation in Literature and Divination: The Zichu by Zhou Lianggong (1612–1672)*, Prognostication in History 3 (Boston: Brill, 2020), 29.

^V CK: *Nin’ō hannya haramita kyō* 仁王般若波羅蜜經 (T 8, no. 245).

^{VI} CK: *Muryōju kyō* 無量壽經 (T 12, no. 360).

^{VII} CK: Shingyō quotes this passage in Japanese. I have adopted Inagaki’s English translation of the original Chinese from Inagaki Hisao, *The Three Pure Land Sutras: A Study and Translation from Chinese* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1994), 304; original: T 12, no. 360, p. 277, c13–15.

In another translation of the *Larger Sūtra on Amida*, “harmony and order in the world” is rendered as “great peace in the world” [p. 321/322]. This is why the *Larger Sūtra* is also called “Sūtra on the Way of Man” (*nindōkyō* 人道經).^{VIII}

It follows from these expositions that, when one speaks of indications as to whether or not the ordering principles of heaven (*tenri* 天理) are fulfilled, one first assumes, in the spirit of the peasants, that the ripening of the crops is a blessing from heaven (*ten no megumi* 天のめぐみ). [. . .] Now, if there be no great peace (*taihei* 太平) in the administration of the country, in what place shall the people dwell in peace? If it is said that preserving this is the blessing of the worldly authorities, the feudal lords and the estate stewards, the grace of the country (*koku'on* 國恩) nevertheless comes first. Meanwhile, if any of the [four ranks of] warriors, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants lacks the treasures of the earth, how can there be humane persons (*jīnsha* 仁者) who carry on the spirit of the way of heaven (*tendō no kokoro* 天道のこころ)? [. . . p. 322/323 . . .]

People who have perceived the fundamental principle of the Buddha Dharma (*buppō no dōri* 佛法の道理) but do not sincerely align themselves with it, do not bear in their hearts the blessing of the natural [realisation] of the virtue power of the Dharma (*hōtoku jinen* 法徳自然), and are ignorant of the benefits of the *Sūtra of Harmony and Order in the World*. They do not partake of the Buddha’s great grace (*buchi no dai’on* 佛の大恩). [. . .]

VIII CK: This term apparently goes back to the Chinese title of the version translated by Zhi Qian 支謙 at the beginning of the Wu Dynasty (222–265), which is *Amida sanya sanbutsu satsurō butsudan kado nin dō kyō* 阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓佛檀過度人道經 (T 12, no. 362). The short title “Sūtra of the Way of Men” is highly misleading, because the preceding characters 過度, which indicate that the Sūtra is about “overcoming the way of men” (i.e. of human existence; 過度人道), are deliberately omitted.