

A Guide to the Exhibition

Shinran and Shin Buddhism

Shinran (1173–1262)

National Treasure
Portrait of Master Shinran, Known as
Anjō no goei (“Anjō Portrait”),
(Reproduction of 1255 Version), detail
Hymns and inscriptions on reverse by
Rennyō (1415–1499)
Muromachi period, 15th c.
Nishi Hongwan-ji Temple, Kyoto
On view March 25–April 2



What kind of person was Shinran,
the founder of Shin Buddhism?



Official Museum Mascot
Torarin

850th Anniversary Special Exhibition *Shinran: The Life and Legacy of the Founder of Shin Buddhism*
March 25–May 21, 2023

Kyoto National Museum Heisei Chishinkan Wing

Guide produced by the Education Department, Kyoto National Museum / Translated by the Exhibitions Department, Kyoto National Museum

Issued on March 25, 2023 / Revised edition issued on April 19, 2023

Who was Shinran?

Heian period

1185

1173 (Age 1, by the old method of counting age) Born in Kyoto.

1181 (Age 9) Ordained as a Buddhist priest and begins religious training on Mt. Hiei, northeast of Kyoto.



Important Cultural Property
Illustrated Biography of the Master of Hongan-ji Temple [Shinran], Kōei Version, Volume I-1, detail
Inscribed by Kakunyo (1270-1351), illustrated by Kōrakuji Enjaku (n.d.)
Nanbokuchō period, 1343
Higashi Hongan-ji Temple, Kyoto
On view May 2–May 21

1201 (Age 29) After descending from Mt. Hiei, he spends 100 days in retreat at Kyoto's Rokkakudō Temple, where he receives a dream revelation from the bodhisattva Kannon. Becomes a disciple of the priest Hōnen.

Shinran encounters the teaching of Amida (Amitābha) Buddha, which says that “all beings will be saved equally.” He begins to teach that to be born in Amida's Pure Land all one needs to do is chant “Namu Amida Butsu,” a prayer known as the nenbutsu.

Many people who oppose this view attack and criticise Shinran.

1207 (Age 35) Banished as a criminal to the distant province of Echigo (present-day Jōetsu, Niigata prefecture).

1211 (Age 39) Forgiven of his crimes.

1214 (Age 42) Begins to spread his teachings in the Kanto region around this time.

1224 (Age 52) May have begun composing his magnum opus *Kyōgyōshinshō* around this time.

1232 (Age 60) Returns to Kyoto and composes many writings and letters.



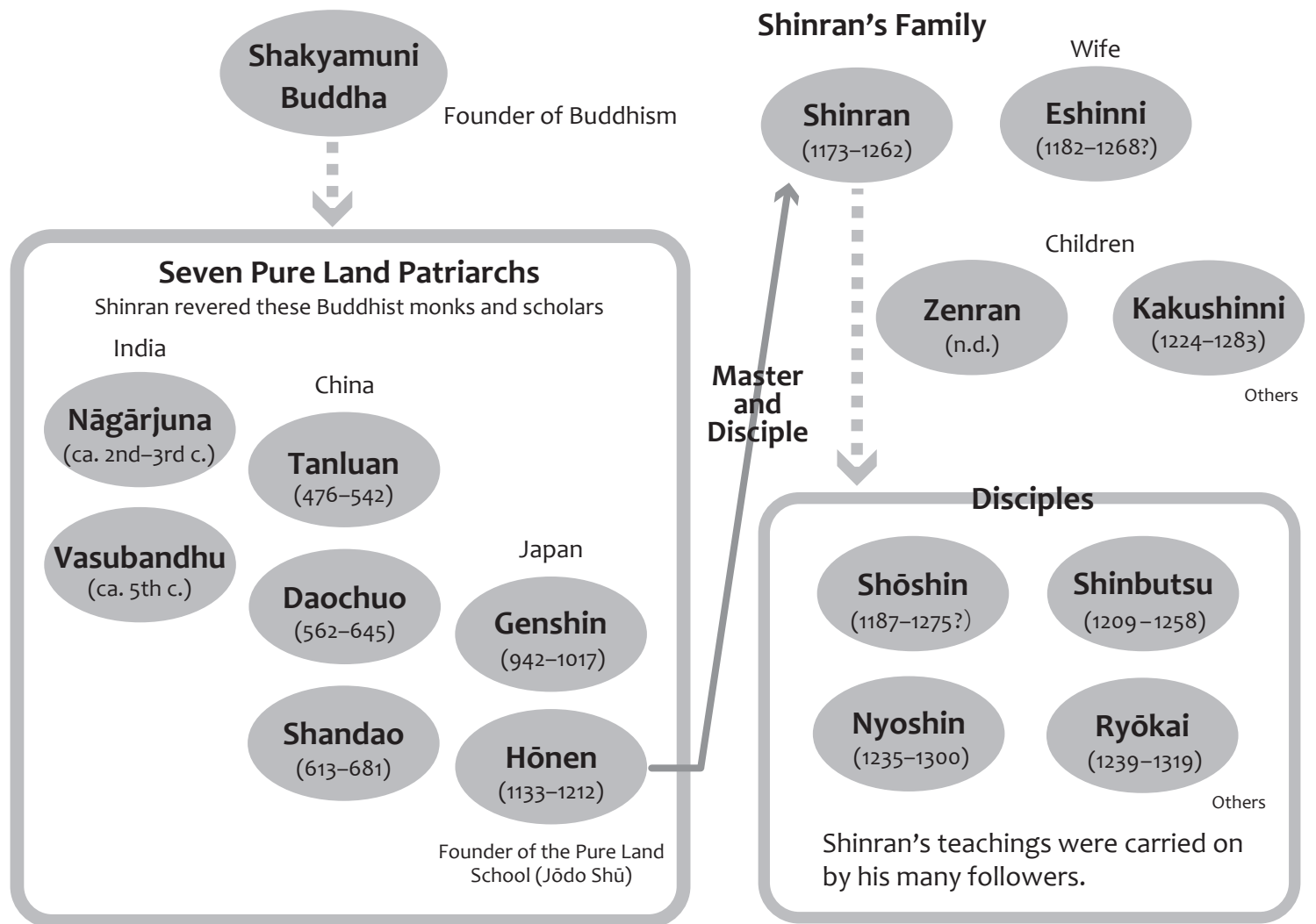
Kamakura period

1256 (Age 84) Shinran sends his son Zenran to Kanto to correct false understandings of his teachings that are proliferating there, but confusion ensues as Zenran himself advocates contrary teachings. Shinran severs ties with his son.

1262 (Age 90) Shinran passes away in Kyoto.

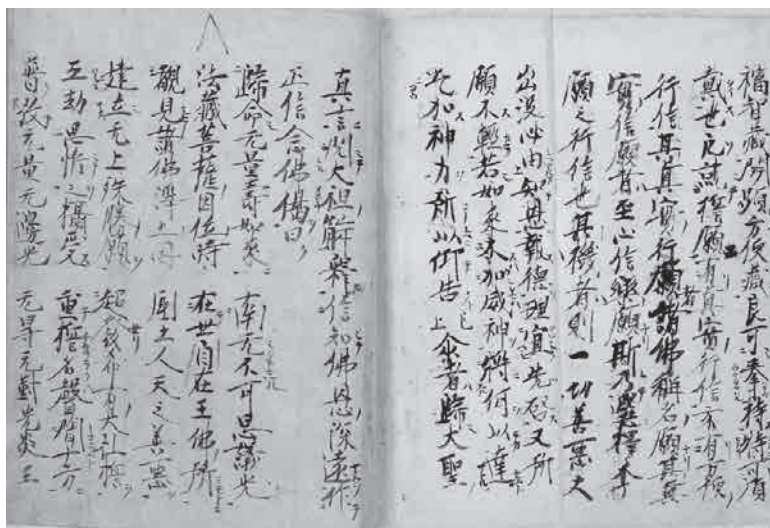
1272 Shinran's daughter Kakushinni and other disciples erect a temple hall that eventually evolves into Hongan-ji Temple.

The People around Shinran

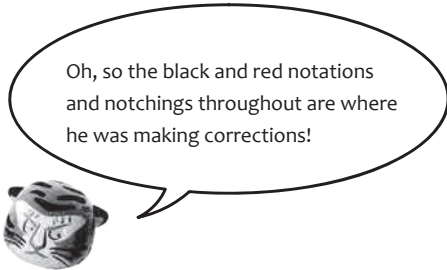


Shinran's On Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Realization (J: Kyōgyōshinshō)*

*Full title: Kenjōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō monrui



National Treasure
On Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Realization, Bandō Version
By Shinran (1173-1262)
Kamakura period, 13th century
Higashi Hongan-ji Temple, Kyoto
On view March 25-May 21

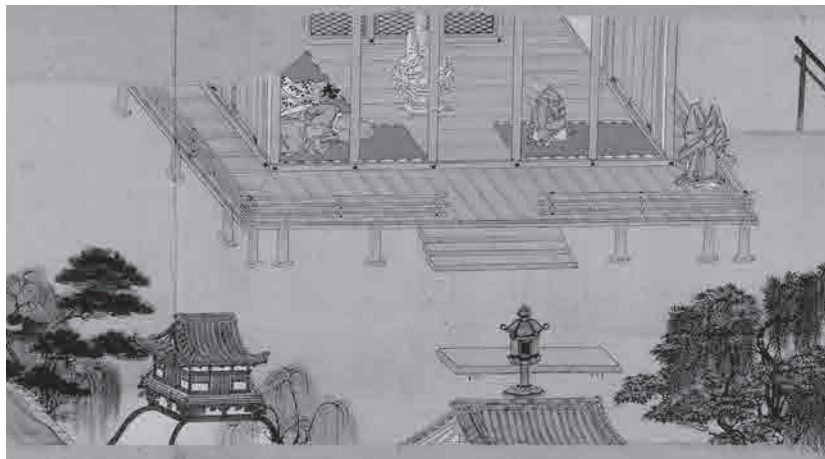


Oh, so the black and red notations and notchings throughout are where he was making corrections!

On Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Realization (J: Kyōgyōshinshō) conveys the fundamentals of Shinran's beliefs. Its contents concern the idea of "Birth in the Pure Land [by means of] the Nenbutsu" (Ōjō nenbutsu), the belief that one can achieve birth in Amida Buddha's Pure Land simply by reciting the nenbutsu prayer. He explains his beliefs by referencing key passages from about sixty Buddhist scriptures and Chinese classics.

The most revered text of Shin Buddhism, Kyōgyōshinshō, was preserved through copies made by Shinran's many followers. The National Treasure Bandō Version is the only surviving copy written in Shinran's hand. The traces of corrections and other markings throughout the text tell us that Shinran made repeated revisions to the work as he refined his thought over time.

Shinran's Life in Illustrated Handscrolls



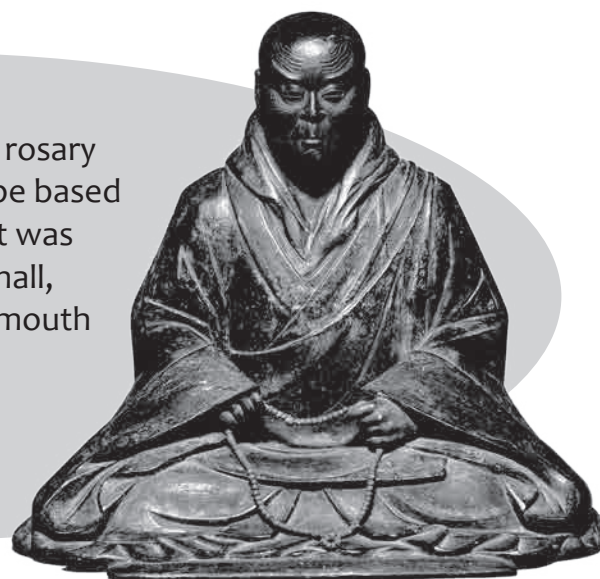
Important Cultural Property
Illustrated Biography of the Master of Hongan-ji Temple [Shinran], Kōei Version, Volume I-1, detail
Inscribed by Kakunyo (1270–1351), illustrated by Kōrakuji Enjaku (n.d.)
Nanbokuchō period, 1343
Higashi Hongan-ji Temple, Kyoto
On view May 2–May 21

Thirty-three years after his death, Shinran's great-grandson Kakunyo made a set of illustrated handscrolls that told the story of Shinran's life. The original was lost to the fires of warfare, and this version (the Kōei Version) was made to replace it.

This scene shows Shinran in retreat at Kyoto's Rokkakudō Temple, where he receives a dream revelation that leads him to become a follower of Hōnen.

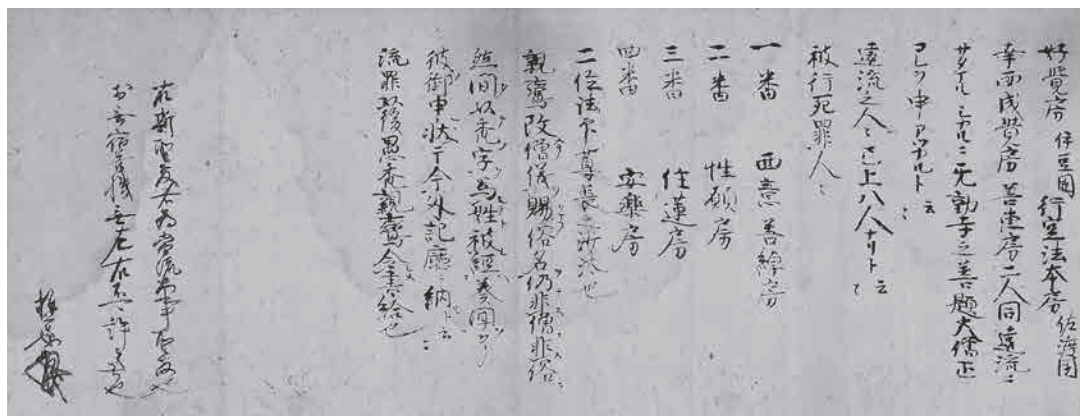
Shinran at Age 83

With his neck wrapped in a scarf-like *mōsu* and a Buddhist rosary clutched in both hands, this statue of Shinran appears to be based on a portrait painting made when he was 83 years old that was passed down in Nishi Hongwan-ji Temple. The statue is small, only about 30 cm tall, but its piercing expression, with its mouth pursed and eyebrows lifted, is realistic and powerful.



Seated Portrait of Master Shinran
Nanbokuchō period, 14th century
Senju-ji Temple, Mie
On view March 25–April 16

The Words of Shinran



Important Cultural Property
Lamentations on Divergence, Volume II
By Rennyo (1415–1499)
Muromachi period, 15th century
Nishi Hongwan-ji Temple, Kyoto
On view March 25–April 9

Lamentations on Divergence (J: *Tannishō*) contains the words and teachings of Shinran supplemented with further explanation. After Shinran died, many followers with incorrect understanding of his teachings began to appear. This work was composed to correct these misinterpretations.

Many copies of this text survive, but this scroll is the oldest. At the end of the scroll is a rare record of Shinran's exile in Echigo.