

Honganji in the Muromachi-Sengoku Period: Taking Up the Sword and its Consequences

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INTRODUCTION—THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This essay sets forth a short account of the Honganji's involvement in the warfare that engulfed Japan during the Muromachi-Sengoku period and suggests the historical consequences of that involvement.

When Shinran, then named Matsuwakamaru, ascended Mt. Hiei to enter the priesthood in 1181, the Gempei war between the Minamoto (Genji) and Taira (Heike) (1180-85) had already begun. That war ended when the Minamoto annihilated the Taira and established the Kamakura *bakufu* (military government). The Kamakura *bakufu* headed by Minamoto Yoritomo, and subsequently by Yoritomo's successors and their Hojo regents, lasted from about 1185 to 1336.

In 1336, Ashikaga Takauji overthrew the Hojo regency and moved the *bakufu* to the Muromachi area of Kyoto. The period 1336 to 1573 is thus called the Muromachi period. However, the period from 1467 (the first year of the Onin era), when the Onin War began, to 1573, when Oda Nobunaga drove the last Ashikaga Shogun (Yoshiaki) out of Kyoto, is also referred to as the Sengoku period, the period of the nation at war. It was also shortly before the start of the Onin War that Rennyo Shonin (the eighth Abbot of the Honganji) was driven out of Kyoto by the *sōhei* (warrior-monks) of Mt. Hiei.

Following the overthrow of the Ashikaga shogunate¹, Japan was brought under centralized control through the military campaigns of Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu. The Tokugawa shogunate was established in Edo (now Tokyo) in 1603 and lasted until the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

During Nobunaga's drive for power, the Honganji branch of Jōdo Shinshū joined the forces opposing Nobunaga. In so doing, the Honganji risked the same fate that befell the Enryakuji in 1571—total destruction—but managed to survive, at a cost. It is the thesis of this paper that although the Honganji did survive as an institution, domination, control and manipulation of all religious institutions by the government for the next three hundred years resulted in the stifling of genuine religious thought and the stagnation of the hermeneutical development of Jōdo Shinshū from the seventeenth century on.

"IKKŌ IKKI"

The Honganji's war against Oda Nobunaga (*Ishiyama Honganji Gassen*—Ishiyama Honganji War) is often referred to as the "Ikkō Ikki." However, the terms *Ikkō* and *ikki* have various meanings. Moreover, some Jōdo Shinshū followers participated in other "*ikki*" before the Honganji-Nobunaga war. Thus, we need to place the terms *Ikkō* and *ikki* in context in order that the terms themselves do not mislead us as to the import of the Honganji-Nobunaga war.

Ikkō-shū was a name used by outsiders in referring to Jōdo Shinshū. However, there was another Jōdoshū sect founded by Ikkō Shunjō (1239-87), a disciple of Ryōchin of the Jōdoshū's Chinzei branch, which was also called the *Ikkōshū*². Because of the similarity of this sect to Ippen's Jishū, the Ikkōshū became identified as a branch of the Jishū.

From early in its history, Jōdo Shinshū was frequently mistaken for the *Ikkōshū*. In the fourteenth century, Kakunyo and his uncle Yuizen petitioned civil and religious authorities not to suppress Jōdo Shinshū followers alongside members of the *Ikkōshū*. In the fifteenth century, Rennyo also tried to divest the Jōdo Shinshū of its mistaken identity.³ Nevertheless, from the fifteenth century on, Jōdo Shinshū and its followers came to be called *Ikkō*.

Sansom explains the origin of the term *ikki* in the formation of leagues by small landowners known as *ji-samurai* or *kokujin* during the thirteenth century. These landholders formed *ikki* to protect their interests, both economic and social, against newcomers appointed to the provinces as overseers by the Ashikaga government.⁴ Thus, the word *ikki* meant an association of persons for joint action, a league. By extension it came to describe the activity of a league, usually by way of revolt.⁵ Today, *ikki* connotes actions such as riots, uprisings, insurrections and revolts. Thus, when the term *Ikkō ikki* is used to refer to the war between the Honganji and the forces of Nobunaga, there is an inference that it concerns a struggle between an oppressed Jōdo Shinshū

following and the forces of Nobunaga. However, it will be seen that it would be erroneous to consider the Honganji's war with the Nobunaga forces to have been a revolt or an insurrection, much less a riot or an uprising. Moreover, it would appear that, in that context, *Ikkō* should be considered to refer to the Ishiyama Honganji, rather than to all Jōdo Shinshū, since all Shinshū followers were not necessarily on the side of the Honganji in the Honganji-Nobunaga conflict.

In any event, the Honganji's direct involvement and participation in warfare ended with the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate in the seventeenth century—probably because of the effectiveness of the policies adopted by the shogunate to prevent not only the Honganji, but all religious orders, from ever again gaining military power sufficient to challenge the central government.

THE JAPANESE BUDDHIST ORDERS' LEGACY OF VIOLENCE

The Ishiyama Honganji under the abbacy of Kennyo Shonin (1543-1592) was, according to some accounts, Oda Nobunaga's most troublesome military opponent during Nobunaga's drive for supremacy over all of Japan. However, the role of the Honganji in warfare in medieval Japan should be viewed within the context of a long history of involvement in warfare by Japan's Buddhist orders even before Shinran's time. Accordingly, this section, which is based largely on Turnbull,⁶ describes briefly the involvement of the Nara and Kyoto temples in Japan's many internal wars and conflicts.

Ever since the move of Japan's capital from Nara to Kyoto in 794 there was rivalry between the older temples of Nara and the new Enryakuji and Miidera temples on Mt. Hiei near Kyoto. The wealth of the temples also became an inviting lure to warrior leaders not deterred by religious conscience, while government tax-collectors eyed the land holdings of the temples as potential revenue sources. Consequently the temples of Mt. Hiei began to maintain private forces to preserve their rights and privileges and to withstand threats from others.

To enlarge their armies, temples recruited men to the priesthood solely to train them in warfare. These recruits were often peasants who had abandoned their farms or were petty criminals. The *sōhei* (warrior-monks or soldier priests) were formidable and their military skills were like those of the samurai. The priesthood had traditionally been a gentleman's profession, although many upper class *gakushō* (scholar priests) readily joined in battle if the need arose. In Kyoto, most of the trouble was caused by *sōhei* from Mt. Hiei, who were referred to as *yamabushi* (mountain warriors). The use of this appellation was unfortunate since the term *yamabushi* also referred to itinerant priests who

toured the country preaching and doing good works, and the phonetic similarity of terms led to much confusion. Regarding the depredations of the *sōhei*, it is said that the ex-Emperor Shirakawa once commented sadly while looking out of his palace during one of the incursions, "Though I am ruler of Japan, there are three things which are beyond my control; the rapids on the Kamo River, the fall of the dice at gambling, and the monks of the mountain!"⁷

The most furious disputes were between the temples. The arguments were usually over land or prestige, not over religious or doctrinal matters. Issues were frequently settled by burning down the opposing temple. Alliances were formed, and easily broken. In 989 and 1006 the Enryakuji fought the Kōfukuji. In 1036 Enryakuji fought Miidera. In 1081 Enryakuji united with Miidera against the Kōfukuji. Later in the same year Enryakuji burned Miidera over a succession dispute. In 1113 Enryakuji burned the Kiyomizu temple during a dispute over the election of an abbot. In 1140 Enryakuji attacked Miidera again, and in 1142 Miidera attacked the Enryakuji. So the list of encounters continued until the inter-temple disputes were overtaken by the great Gempei war. In 1180, during the first phase of the Gempei War, the Enryakuji and Miidera of Mt. Hiei and the Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji of Nara sided with the Minamoto. The Minamoto lost this phase of the war. As a consequence, the Kōfukuji and the Tōdaiji, whose *sōhei* had fought aggressively against the Taira forces, were burnt to the ground on order of Taira no Kiyomori.⁸

Although this description of the role of the Nara and Kyoto temples in warfare is sparse, it places the later military role of the Honganji in a context which makes the events of the sixteenth century easier to understand.

THE NATURE OF IKKI BEFORE KENNYO'S CONFRONTATION WITH NOBUNAGA

The frequent risings by *ji-samurai* or *kokujin* which occurred as a protest against the government of the Ashikaga shoguns were described by such terms as Shirahata-ikki ("White Flag Uprising") and Mikazuki-ikki ("Crescent Uprising") in which the name referred to the emblems used by the protesting factions. And when the constables and their deputies (*shugo* and *shugo-dai*) appointed by Ashikaga shoguns tried to impose their control over a whole province (*kuni*) and the local landowners rose up in opposition, the resulting conflict was called a *Kuni-Ikki*.⁹

There are also records of armed peasants taking part in some of these movements as well as in true agrarian risings. However, these latter *ikki* were sporadic and poorly organized. These risings, known as

tsuchi-ikki or *do-ikki*, became better organized and effective toward the end of the fifteenth century. Some were plain revolts against the injustice of landlords and others were simply attacks against moneylenders. Although there were some protests during the fourteenth century, the first large-scale peasant uprising occurred in 1428 in Ōmi Province. This uprising was led by peasant cultivators in forcible protest against certain financial edicts. This rising started as a rising of teamsters (*bashaku*) that soon spread to the capital, and thence to Nara, Ise, Kawachi, Izumi, and other provinces. The mob broke into the premises of moneylenders¹⁰ (chiefly the sake-brewers and pawnbrokers) and even into monastery buildings, destroying evidence of debt and seizing pledges.

In 1441 the farmers rose against the landlords in country districts not far from the capital—in districts such as Miidera, Toba, Fushimi, Saga, Ninnaji, and Kamo.¹¹ These were attacks in force against persons and places and were joined by farmers from various locations in the environs of Kyoto. They seized and occupied houses in the western part of the city (Nishi-Hachijo). In one instance a force of from two to three thousand men occupied important temples at Kitano and Uzumasa.

Such risings continued at intervals of two or three years until the end of the fifteenth century, chiefly in Yamashiro province (Kyoto environs) and in the Nara district. Some were put down by force and the leaders executed. In other instances, the *bakufu* issued debt cancellation edicts (*tokusei*) to pacify the rioters. When debt cancellation began to hurt the *bakufu*'s revenues (which derived in part from taxes on the moneylenders), partial debt cancellations were issued, whereby the debts were cancelled on payment of a percentage directly to the *bakufu*. But on the whole the *bakufu* failed to stem the movement. It should be noted, however, that scholars are not in agreement on certain points, such as with respect to the constitution of the *ikki* and the status of the members. Thus, it cannot be stated definitively that *ikki* were all this or that. In some ways they seem to resemble what today are called "protest groups," some more militant and violent than others. Thus, the foregoing is intended to only suggest the nature of *ikki* and how the term came to be used.

THE POLITICIZATION OF THE HONGANJI

Rennyo Shōnin (1415-1499), the Eighth Abbot of the Honganji, is often called the second founder of Jōdo Shinshū. Clearly, it was because of his efforts that the Honganji was to become the dominant branch of Jōdo Shinshū as well as the force to be reckoned with by the warlords who eventually took control of Japan in the last third of the sixteenth century.

Rennyo was born into the then extremely poor Honganji at Ōtani. However, Rennyo's father, Zonnyo (1396-1457), had begun the enlargement of the temple in Kyoto and an increase in the number of affiliated temples in Kaga, Echizen, and Ōmi provinces. More importantly, Zonnyo gave Rennyo valuable lessons in religious leadership.¹²

Rennyo assumed the abbacy in 1457 following the death of Zonnyo and the settlement of an intra-family succession dispute. He then embarked on his proselyting efforts in Ōmi to the east of Kyoto where he had strong support. But, because of Rennyo's success in the provinces near Kyoto, *sōhei* swept down from Mt. Hiei in 1465 and destroyed the Honganji's temple complex. Rennyo escaped with the revered image of Shinran and carried it with him from place to place for the next four years, primarily in Ōmi province. Eventually, the image was placed in the care of Miidera, archrival of Enryakuji, where it was kept until 1480 when the new Honganji was built in Yamashina. In the meanwhile, the Ōnin War began in 1467 and threw the capital into turmoil.

Because of the constant threat from Mt. Hiei, Rennyo moved from place to place until 1471 when he moved to Yoshizaki in Echizen Province beyond the reach of the *sōhei* of Mt. Hiei. Before this move, Rennyo had continued to win converts not only in Ōmi province, but also in Mikawa and in areas south of Kyoto such as in Settsu and Yoshino.

Yoshizaki had been a desolate area but became a thriving religious center by 1473. Pilgrims by the thousands flocked there from nearby Kaga, Etchū, Noto, and Echigo provinces, as well as from the far-flung provinces of Shinano, Dewa, and Mutsu to hear Rennyo. What drew these pilgrims to Yoshizaki was Rennyo himself. Rennyo's success in the Hokuriku region came initially from his preaching tours. The Honganji had a network of congregations there dating back to the founding of the Zuisenji temple in 1390 by Rennyo's great-grandfather Shakunyo. Also, the Sanmonto branch maintained a long-standing influence in the area, and Shin'e of the Senjuji branch had been proselyting in Echizen, Echigo and other provinces some ten years earlier. Thus Rennyo could draw on the sympathy for Jōdo Shinshū which had already been created. And, when Rennyo returned to Kyoto in 1475 he commanded such widespread support in the provinces that Mt. Hiei could not pose a threat to the Honganji again.¹³

Dobbins gives us a good indication of Rennyo's proselyting methods which led to the enlarging and strengthening of the Honganji's following, and also set Honganji on a path which took it to the brink of total destruction. He writes that although Rennyo's foremost concern during his Hokuriku sojourn was to spread Shinran's teaching, he was not oblivious to the social and political events occurring around him. On the contrary, he perceived the formation of autonomous villages in

the region as a boon for religious recruitment if they could be penetrated. Rennyo's strategy was to convert village leaders first and through them win over the remaining village members. "Village leaders" refers to the local priest who may be of another school or sect, the elder to the head of each family in the village, and the headman to the most powerful cultivator of the community. All three were typically upper-class (*myōshu*) who dominated village affairs. Rennyo considered them crucial to the spread of Jōdo Shinshū, and he linked the success of Jōdo Shinshū to the emerging village organization. During Rennyo's years in the Hokuriku the *kō* or local congregation became the grass-roots unit of the Honganji's religious organization.

Rennyo's method, while apparently effective for the purposes of proselytization, also led Honganji's religious organization into becoming enmeshed in the politics of the period, initially on a local scale, eventually on a national scale. Even while Rennyo was at Yoshizaki, he and his following became involved in a power struggle between Togashi Masachika and Togashi Kōchiyo for the position of *shugo* (constable or governor) of neighboring Kaga province when pressure was placed on Rennyo to support one side or the other.

Rennyo's following in the Hokuriku region were primarily peasants, but gradually low-level samurai also attached themselves to the movement. Although samurai had political concerns different from that of the village peasants, common religious belief (of equality of all in Amida's embrace) made it possible for them to join together with peasants to form *ikki*. In 1473 the *ikki* of Jōdo Shinshū followers sided with Togashi Masachika.¹⁴ However, the alliance did not last long. In 1488 the Shinshū supporters fell into conflict with Masachika, surrounded his castle, and cut him off from outside reinforcements. Defeated, Masachika took his own life. And for the next ninety-three years administrative power rested in the hands of a political coalition of Jōdo Shinshū adherents.¹⁵

Rennyo's attitude toward the military ventures of his followers was always circumspect. He did his best to restrain their excesses and did not encourage them in their exploits. During Masachika's defeat in 1488, Shogun Ashikaga Yoshihisa ordered Rennyo to expel Shinshū participants of Kaga from his religious organization. Rennyo could not bring himself about to do so and eventually appeased the Shogun by sending reprimands to the temples that had mobilized members for battle, rebuking and admonishing them against further violence. This was the tack that Rennyo took throughout his career.¹⁶

The events of Rennyo's Yoshizaki period caused him to institute *okite*, or rules of conduct, to govern his movement. The rules present guidelines for behavior which all Shinshū followers were expected to

follow. However, such rules did not prevent the Honganji and Rennyo's successors from becoming drawn into the political-military conflicts of the Sengoku period after Rennyo's death.

Rennyo departed the Hokuriku in 1475 when the situation there became volatile. Rennyo based himself at Deguchi temporarily until he chose Yamashina in the eastern outskirts of Kyoto as the site of the new Honganji in 1478. All the while he continued his propagational work. And as before, he was successful in winning converts from the other Shinshū branches as well as from the Jishū, Ikkōshū and other schools of Buddhism. Because of the constant influx of new adherents, Rennyo's campaign against provocative behavior and heretical teachings was an ongoing endeavor. This increase in adherents also coincided with a proliferation of Shinshū *ikki* in various provinces. The involvement of Rennyo's followers in these uprisings confirmed the worst suspicions of his opponents, despite his efforts to improve the reputation of the school. The sheer number of adherents and their broad geographical distribution, however, gave adversaries pause before attacking the Shinshū.

By the time the new Honganji was completed at Yamashina in 1483, Rennyo's consolidation of his new following was nearing completion. In 1481, the bulk of the Bukkōji members shifted affiliation to the Honganji. Most Kinshokuji members followed suit in 1493. Combined with converts from other branches and schools, Honganji became one of the powerful religious institutions in Japan.

Beyond the increased strength in numbers, Rennyo strengthened the Honganji organizationally. He oversaw the development of an extensive network of temples and congregations under the Honganji. Generally this network took the form of a pyramid with the Honganji on top, intermediary temples in the middle, and local congregations, or *kō*, at the bottom. From these groups the Honganji received material support. Contributions, which gradually evolved into annual pledges came from congregations at all levels. This system of annual contributions provided sustained economic support for the Honganji at a time when the older Nara and Kyoto temples were declining because they lost control of the estates on which they depended.

Rennyo also developed a network of authority that stretched throughout the expanding religious organization. In addition to the regular hierarchy of head temple, intermediary temple, and local congregation, Rennyo established a family council called the *ikkeshu*, consisting of himself, his sons, and their sons. Rennyo strategically placed his children at major temples in regions where the Shinshū enjoyed greatest strength. Placing family members in regional temples had been a common practice among earlier Honganji leaders, but none used it to the

degree that Rennyo did. His twenty-seven offspring provided ample candidates to fill these positions, thereby making possible a family network extending throughout the Shinshū. The family council then became the de facto ruling body of the Honganji beginning with Rennyo's retirement in 1489, and it continued to serve in that capacity for at least two generations. During the decades following Rennyo's death the council built up extraordinary powers, wielding excommunication (*hamon*) and in times of warfare even the threat of execution (*shōgai*) as a means of enforcing its will. Despite the abuses that occurred, the influence of the Honganji and the number of followers joining its ranks continued to grow under the council's direction throughout the sixteenth century.¹⁷

Rennyo's tenure as head of the Honganji formally ended in 1489 when he yielded his position to his son Jitsunyo. At first he took up residence within the Honganji compound, but in 1496 he built himself a hermitage at what later became the Ishiyama Honganji in present day Osaka.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SECULAR POWER

When Jitsunyo succeeded Rennyo, he as a general rule cautioned the Honganji followers to obey the law and to avoid confrontations with the warlords. However, in 1506 he acquiesced to pressure from Hosokawa Masamoto, the Deputy Shogun, to lend him support in his campaigns against the Hatakeyama by ordering some Shinshū *ikki* to fight for the Hosokawa.¹⁸

Following Jitsunyo's death in 1525, he was succeeded by his grandson Shōnyo. According to Hayashiya Tatsusaburo, Honganji forces led by Shōnyo attacked Kenponji, one of the major Hokke-shu (Nichiren-shu) centers in the port city of Sakai in 1532. Then, following their successful siege of Kenponji, the Honganji forces turned on Nara, burnt Kōfukuji, and ransacked the Kasuga shrine. The news of the Honganji attacks caused apprehension in Kyoto where it was rumored that the Honganji forces would turn on the capital next. Thus, the Hokke *ikki* was formed to defend Kyoto against the Honganji forces. After initial setbacks, the Hokke partisans took the offensive at the end of 1532 continuing into 1533 when they joined forces with Hosokawa Harumoto.¹⁹ McMullin notes, however, that the Yamashina Honganji was burnt down in 1532 by the Hosokawa and the Rokkaku and their Nichirenshu allies.²⁰ And, McMullin adds that Shōnyo then moved to the Osaka area and built the Ishiyama Honganji, presumably on the site of the hermitage built by Rennyo. (Hayashiya writes that Hokke and Hosokawa forces attacked the Ishiyama Honganji in 1532, which did not as yet exist according to other sources.)

In any event, the Yamashina Honganji was burnt down, and the Ishiyama Honganji stronghold was built in what is now Osaka by Shōnyō. When Shōnyō died in 1554 he was succeeded by his eleven year old son, Kennyo. Although Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu are universally recognized as the triumvirate who brought an end to the Sengoku period and pacified all of Japan, it may be argued (as does McMullin) that Kennyo is the one individual who could have blocked Nobunaga's efforts and himself gained the supreme power had he aggressively sought it. However, such arguments would be merely speculative since some key events that helped Nobunaga, such as the sudden death of Takeda Shingen (whose wife was reportedly Kennyo's sister-in-law) on his drive towards the capital ahead of Nobunaga and the early death of Uyesugi Kenshin, could not have been foretold. In any event, Kennyo's Honganji forces and allies fought Nobunaga and held off the capture of the Ishiyama Honganji from 1570 to 1580.

I am unable to describe in detail the circumstances leading to each of the engagements of the Honganji forces with Nobunaga's forces and allies. Therefore, only brief mention will be made of some of the significant engagements without elaboration of the circumstances or explanation of the roles of the various sides involved.

In 1570, while Nobunaga fought Miyoshi Chokei near Osaka, Honganji forces including three thousand armed with arquebuses reinforced Miyoshi and caused Nobunaga's withdrawal. During this engagement, the Asai and Asakura brought an army down through Ōmi to attack Nobunaga. Then during that winter of 1570-71 while Nobunaga was driving back the Asai and Asakura forces, the *sōhei* of Enryakuji attacked Nobunaga's flank and caused his withdrawal back to Kyoto.

In September 1571, Nobunaga eliminated the threat from Mt. Hiei by attacking and completely annihilating the occupants of Enryakuji, burning down all structures and killing everyone encountered—man, woman and child. This action left the Honganji as the only clerical force capable of standing in Nobunaga's way.

In 1572 during Shingen's drive toward Kyoto, the Honganji forces were allied with Shingen along with the Asai and Asakura forces against Nobunaga's ally, Tokugawa Ieyasu, in the battle at Mikata-ga-Hara. Shingen died suddenly in April 1573, allowing Nobunaga to drive Shogun Yoshiaki out of Kyoto and to attack and defeat once and for all Asakura and Asai. During 1574, Nobunaga engaged Honganji forces and allies in Echizen, Owari, Ise, Kawachi and Settsu (and in other areas) and instituted a blockade of the Ishiyama Honganji. In 1575 Mori Terumoto, the powerful lord of Aki in the west, allied his forces with the Honganji at the instigation of the deposed Shogun Yoshiaki. Because of the sup-

port of Mori, who had a relatively large naval force, the blockade of the Ishiyama Honganji was ineffectual because the blockade could be breached by boats.

In 1575, in order to suppress the Echizen *monto*, Nobunaga sought the assistance of the Nichirensbū *monto* as well as the Shinshū Sanmonto, which had been at odds with the Honganji. The Takada branch may also have aided in Nobunaga's campaign against the Echizen *monto*. In any event, the Honganji supporters in Echizen and Kaga were defeated in September with, according to one source, 30,000 to 40,000 *monto* killed during the Echizen campaign. And in November 1575, a Nobunaga-Honganji peace pact was arranged. However, this peace was shattered in April 1576. Nobunaga's forces began to march against Mori, who had committed himself to assist the Honganji and to sponsor deposed Shogun Yoshiaki's cause. In response, Kennyo Shōnin sent out a call to his followers to rise up against Nobunaga once again. Kennyo's call was answered by the *monto* in Settsu and Echizen. In early June Nobunaga's vassal daimyo Harada Naomasa led 10,000 troops in an assault on the Honganji, but were repulsed by the Honganji's force of 15,000 and Harada himself was killed. In retaliation Nobunaga personally led an attack to the gates of the Honganji which resulted in the taking of 3,000 *monto* heads.

The war between Kennyo Shōnin and his allies and Oda Nobunaga raged on, back and forth, until 1580. Then in March 1580, Nobunaga petitioned the court to reopen peace negotiations that had been abruptly terminated by Nobunaga in 1578. The court granted Nobunaga's request and sent three imperial envoys to Kennyo with the injunction to Kennyo that he enter into peace negotiations with Nobunaga. Kennyo's position at the Ishiyama Honganji was by that time hopeless. However, Kennyo hesitated accepting the terms of the peace pact since it would have meant vacating the Honganji. Nevertheless, Kennyo finally agreed to the terms on April 1, 1580. But Kennyo had difficulty having his followers in the provinces as well as some within the Honganji, including his son Kyōnyo, accept the terms of the peace pact. In fact, Kyōnyo and his supporters initially refused to vacate the Honganji as required. When Kennyo vacated the Honganji in May 1580, Kyōnyo and his faction remained, until he was finally induced by Nobunaga to abandon the Honganji in August 1580.

Kyōnyo's actions in this situation led to Kennyo's reversal of his earlier decision to name Kyōnyo as his successor and instead naming Kyōnyo's younger brother, Junnyo, as Kennyo's successor.

THE HISTORICAL CONSEQUENCES

The events as they unfolded after the fall of the Ishiyama Honganji might suggest that the Honganji didn't fare too badly after all. With the defeat of the Honganji, Nobunaga was now free to continue his westward advance against the Mori and beyond. But in June 1582, Nobunaga was assassinated by one of his generals, Akechi Mitsuhide. Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who had been leading Nobunaga's advance to the west, returned quickly, attacked, and defeated Akechi and his forces. By this lightning stroke, Hideyoshi was enabled to take control of the Nobunaga coalition and gain supremacy over the land.

In March 1585, Hideyoshi engaged two Buddhist communities in battle, the Shingon monks of Negoro and Jōdo Shinshū *monto* of Saiga on the Kii peninsula. These were the only military incidents involving Hideyoshi and religious organizations following the death of Nobunaga. Negoro was a leading arms producer and had supplied the Ishiyama Honganji during that war against Nobunaga. Saiga was a Jōdo Shinshū bastion that had survived Nobunaga's attack in 1577. With their surrender, the last enclave of Honganji resistance was eliminated.²¹

Notwithstanding that Hideyoshi, like Nobunaga, was no friend of militant religious communities, he extended to the religious community a policy of reconciliation. He issued permission to the priests of Mt. Hiei to rebuild their sanctuary and then contributed fifteen hundred *koku* to the effort. He awarded the Honganji land for a new temple in Osaka to compensate for the loss of the Ishiyama Honganji, and even attended the consecration ceremonies for the completed enclave. In the meanwhile, Hideyoshi began the construction of his magnificent Osaka castle on the former site of Ishiyama Honganji in 1583. This castle was completed in 1590. Then in 1591, he invited Kennyo to select a Kyoto site for the Honganji. Kennyo settled upon a property of three square blocks that cut substantially into the compound of Hokokuji, the chief Nichiren temple of the capital.²² The Nishi Honganji now stands on this site. Although Hideyoshi was munificent in his treatment of the other temples, he gave the most expensive treatment to the Honganji.

Hideyoshi had risen in power, while holding off all opposing elements, including Tokugawa Ieyasu, until he reached the top in 1586. When Hideyoshi died in 1598, a Council of Regency was established under Ieyasu. Then following the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 which he won, Ieyasu was appointed Shogun in 1603. Thus was established the Tokugawa Shogunate that lasted until 1868.

Hideyoshi had recognized Junnyo as the successor to Kennyo Shonin as the head of the Honganji. However, in 1602 Ieyasu recognized Kyōnyo's claim to be a legitimate successor to Kennyo and granted

him land in Kyoto on which to build a temple that would be looked upon by his followers as the head temple of the Honganji branch of Jōdo Shinshū. That temple was built on the site of what is now the Higashi Honganji (Eastern Honganji), and the temple built by Junnyo and his followers came to be called the Nishi Honganji (Western Honganji.) Thus, Ieyasu, exploiting the rift between Kennyo and his son Kyōnyo, effectively split the Honganji branch of Jōdo Shinshū into two parts—as a means of weakening it.²³

In the first few decades of the Tokugawa period, the *bakufu* initiated a number of practices to keep the Buddhist temples within the shogunate's control. Some of these measures were:

Issuance in 1615 of "Regulations for the Court and Nobles," some of which governed the promotion, punishment, dismissal, and even the attire of court nobles and priests.

Reestablishment in 1632 of the "main temple - branch temple" (*honji* or *honzan* - *matsuji*) system of temple organization. Thereafter, there could be no independent, nonaligned temples. By establishing this requirement, the *bakufu* created a hierarchical structure within the Buddhist schools, absorbed them into the Tokugawa political system and facilitated the control of the temples by the *bakufu*.

Appointing, beginning in 1635, "temple and shrine administrators" (*jisha bugyō*) in every *han* (domain) who were charged with overseeing temple affairs and assuring that the temples observed the "temple ordinances" (*Jiin no hatto*) that were issued by the *bakufu*. Additionally, the *bakufu* also appointed *firegashira*, temples that were designated to receive instructions from the *jisha bugyō* and with transmitting those instructions to the branch temples.

Requiring each household to be registered at and to support a particular temple that would thenceforth be that household's "temple of registry" (*dannadera*). This system was called the "household temple system" (*danka seido*). From the year 1640 every household was required to be registered at some temple or other. At first the *bakufu* did not require all the members of a particular household to be registered at the same temple, but gradually this came to be required, and by 1788 the "one household - one temple" (*ikka-issshu*) rule was firmly established. The purpose of the "one household - one temple" system was to give the *bakufu* further control over the population and to put the burden of temple support on the shoulders of the population and not on the *bakufu*. The temples benefitted from this system because it assured that every temple would have a

paying membership. (At the same time, it may be seen that this system, along with a prohibition of proselytization, effectively dampened and prevented the emergence of the kind of propagational and evangelical fervor that had been demonstrated earlier by Rennyo Shonin.)

Establishing in 1640 the "Office of the Inquisitor" (*shamon aratame-yaku*), which was charged with making sure that every member of society was duly registered at an officially recognized temple.

Deciding when and where temples could be built.

Prohibiting "religious debates" in order to prevent conflicts among the various Buddhist schools that might result in violent disorders. Religious debates did occur from time to time, but the participants were severely punished. (Thus, it may be seen that such policy resulted in governmental control of religious thought and discourse and constrained religious inquiry and thought.)

Finally, toward the end of the Tokugawa period during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the *bakufu* did away with the privileges that had been enjoyed by the temples. Most of the landholdings of the temples were confiscated. Court ranks and titles for priests and temples were abolished. The custom of celebrating Buddhist ceremonies at the court was discontinued. And the practice of hereditary access to high priestly office was replaced by a government nomination system.²⁴

THE LASTING EFFECT OF TOKUGAWA POLICIES

The Honganji (now Nishi Honganji and Higashi Honganji) became the most powerful and influential religious organization in Japan during the Muromachi period largely because of the organizational and propagational skills of the Eighth Abbot, Rennyo Shōnin. Rennyo tried to keep his following from becoming involved in the political intrigues and turmoil of the time, but was clearly not successful. That the Honganji became involved in warfare during the Sengoku period was probably inevitable given the precedents set by the older Buddhist orders as well as the vicissitudes of the time. However, Honganji's success in gaining power also succeeded in further convincing the secular powers of the imperative to be wary of the threat posed to political control of the country by the religious orders such as the Enryakuji and Honganji.

Nobunaga was ruthless, but effective, in his dealings with the temples. And by Hideyoshi's time, the military threat from the temples had been eliminated by Nobunaga with only a minor cleaning-up remaining. With the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate, there

was no longer a need for further military action to bring the temples under government control. Rather, the issue was how to keep the temples under the control of the *bakufu*. The effect of the Tokugawa policies on the temples and Japanese society are clearly evident even today, a century and a quarter after the last Tokugawa Shogun. Tokugawa policies and control left in place self-perpetuating religious structures, but the motivation and stimulus for renewing and strengthening the faith in the context of changing times and place has been effectively removed or deadened. Socio-political changes forced on the Japanese by their defeat in World War II has not, and probably cannot, erase the historical consequences of the *dannadera*—*dankaseido* system that was enforced by the Tokugawa shogunate.

In the August 1986 issue of *PHP Intersect Magazine* of Tokyo, Japan, editor Robert J. J. Wargo wrote: "Most of the introductions to Japan, even those written by seasoned observers, talk about the casual attitude of the Japanese toward religion. The Japanese themselves seem to validate such an assessment when they go abroad and maintain that they 'have no particular religion' or they 'don't have much interest in such matters.'" And in the cover story in that issue, Norman Havens observed that "It is not easy being a student of Japanese religions when you are told that the subject of your study doesn't exist. For, when introducing myself and my field of interest to a new Japanese acquaintance, I am frequently met by an incredulous look and a cry of, 'But we Japanese aren't religious!'"

These anecdotal observations seem to be confirmed by Japanese government data reported by Hojo Ohye:

According to a 1983 government survey on religion, 80% of Japanese young people replied that they did not have any religion, but yet out of a total population of 119,438,000, the number of adherents belonging to various religious organizations totalled 220,783,000. This shows that, virtually every Japanese, from infant to the elderly, has two faiths....²⁵

At a time (the seventeenth century) when, according to Jeffrey Hopper,²⁶ the findings of science were setting the problems for philosophy which in turn was beginning to define new rules for theology and thus opening up religious dialogue and debate in the West, religion in Japan was placed under autocratic state control and religious dialogue and debate was stifled. The actions of the Tokugawa *bakufu* are understandable from a military-political standpoint. The government could not allow any institution to be a potential source of disruption of the public order. Although not mentioned above, Christianity was proscribed,

and the system of registration with temples was originally instituted as a means of rooting out "hidden Christians."

In terms of the lasting effect of the Tokugawa policies on religion (Buddhism) in Japan today, two of the policies have probably had the most devastating effect—that of the system of temple registration and the prohibition of religious debate.

The temple registration system and its related feature of requiring members to support their respective temples resulted in individuals belonging to churches, not because of religious faith, but because the government required that they belong. At the same time, a prohibition against proselytizing removed the need for the priesthood to concern themselves with religious messages other than those which would conform with governmental edict and would not incur governmental displeasure. Moreover, there was no need to deal forthrightly with questions on faith because faith *per se* was not relevant with regard to whether temples continued to exist or would be supported. Thus, there is little or no pastoral work or tradition, such as are found in Western churches, evidenced by Japanese Buddhist orders. And even though it has been over a hundred years since the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, the habits developed during the Tokugawa period seem to remain. Thus, many Japanese admit that they "belong" (i.e. have some tie with) to a particular temple or some temple, but don't know much, if anything, about that temple's religious or spiritual tradition other than perhaps some of its ritualistic customs and practices. Many Japanese appear to believe that they need to know what temple they belong to so that they will have a temple to go to arrange for family funerals. Of course there are the exceptions, probably many exceptions, wherein religious faith is the true reason that individuals do participate in and support their respective traditions. If it were not for such individuals, the respective traditions could not survive and only empty institutional structures devoted only to ritual and form would remain.

The prohibition against religious debate has also had its mark. While that policy has not been in effect for over a hundred years, the conservatism in discussion of doctrinal matters that developed during the Tokugawa period has had lasting effect. To avoid government intervention in ecclesiastical matters, religious institutions such as the Honganji exercised extreme care to avoid the surfacing of any kind of controversy. Failure to conform to governmental policy exposed one to charges of heresy and possibly excommunication. Again such habits are difficult to remove, particularly in a culture in which the conventional wisdom is that "the nail that sticks out is struck." Essentially, the emphasis continues to be on the perpetuation of doctrine—a doctrine set in concrete since the Tokugawa period.

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NOTES

- ¹ The terms "*bakufu*," "shogunate" and "government" are used interchangeably throughout this essay without any significant distinction.
- ² James C. Dobbins, *Jōdo Shinshū*, pp. 110-11.
- ³ See also M. Rogers and A. Rogers, *Rennyo*, p. 167 and fn85.
- ⁴ George Sansom, *A History of Japan 1334-1615*, p. 207
- ⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 207 and 427.
- ⁶ Stephen R. Turnbull, *The Samurai*, pp. 25-26.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, p. 33.
- ⁸ *Ibid*, p. 49.
- ⁹ Sansom, p. 207.
- ¹⁰ Since the early thirteenth century, the sake-brewers were also the principal moneylenders and came to be called *sakaya-dosō*. Likewise, the Gozan (Zen) monasteries also engaged in the moneylending business. See K. Grossberg, pp. 37 & 85.
- ¹¹ The 1441 "Kakitsu affair." See Hall and Toyoda, *passim*; H. Paul Varley, *The Ōnin War*, *passim*.
- ¹² Dobbins, p. 131.
- ¹³ *Ibid*, p. 137.
- ¹⁴ For a more detailed account of the background and details of the Kaga incident and the parties involved, see Rogers and Rogers, pp. 72-77. See also Stanley Weinstein, *Rennyo and the Shinshū Revival*, in Hall and Toyoda, pp. 354-56.
- ¹⁵ Dobbins, p. 140.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 141.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 152-53.
- ¹⁸ Neil McMullin, *Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan*, p.45.
- ¹⁹ Hayashiya Tatsusaburo, *Kyoto in the Muromachi Age*, in Hall and Toyoda, pp. 32-33.
- ²⁰ McMullin, p. 46.
- ²¹ Mary E. Berry, *Hideyoshi*, pp. 85-86.
- ²² *Ibid*, p. 202.
- ²³ McMullin, p. 243. See also A. L. Sadler, *The Maker of Modern Japan*, (p. 359) in which Sadler claims that Kyōnyo sought out Ieyasu before the Battle of Sekigahara and offered to stir up the *monto* of Muro [sic] and Ōmi to make a diversion on his side. Ieyasu declined, but later on

he obtained an Imperial Edict appointing Kyōnyo Monzeki (Imperial Abbot), and then had a temple built for him to the east of the main Honganji.

²⁴ McMullin, pp. 243-47.

²⁵ Hojo Ohye, "The Religious Sentiment of the Japanese" in *The Pure Land*, New Series No. 7 (Dec. 1990), p. 92.

²⁶ Jeffrey Hopper, *Understanding Modern Theology I—Cultural Revolutions and the New Worlds*, Fortress Press: Philadelphia (1987).

²⁷ Langdon Gilkey, *Message and Existence: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, p. 17.