

## The Separation of the Shinshu Honganji Order

— Formation of the East Honganji Order  
with Kyoto as the First Abbot —

During the fifteenth century when Rennyo flourished, the Shinshu Order made a rapid development with Honganji as its center. Since then the Honganji Order came to be established in a nation-wide scale. From the end of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, the Honganji Order split into two: the East and the West. The immediate motive for the split was the fact that in 1602 A.D. the Abbot Kyonyo was donated a piece of land at Shichijo Karasuma in Kyoto by the Shogun Tokugawa Iyeyasu and had the East Honganji temple built there.

The cause for the split, however, was based upon the more complicated historical circumstances. The prime motive for that sprouted at the time of the Battle at Ishiyama (1570–1580) fought between Oda Nobunaga and the Honganji Order. Although this battle came to an end with the peace treaty concluded between Oda Nobunaga and Kennyo, followed by the evacuation of the Honganji Order from Ishiyama in Osaka, Kyonyo, first son of Kennyo, anticipating Nobunaga's disloyalty to the peace terms, remained in the temple all the while, belligerent against Nobunaga. In the meantime Kyonyo appealed to the influential local temples to side with him. As a result, nearly half of the temples of the Honganji Order came to side with him. This was the initial cause for the subsequent split of the Honganji Order. For all this, Kyonyo evacuated from Ishiyama in less than four months and returned to his father's residence.

After Kennyo's death, Kyonyo succeeded him as the Abbot of the Honganji Order in December, 1592, but resigned the Abbotship in September, 1593, following the order from Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Following Kyonyo's resignation, Junnyo, Kyonyo's younger brother, became the Abbot of the Honganji Order. Even after his resignation, Kyonyo kept issuing various

official endowments to the local temples—a prerogative to which only the Abbot or his deputy were entitled. He went so far as to sign these endowments, implying to show his status equal to the Abbot's.

On the other hand, there arose a need for consolidating a fresh unity with Kyonyo as the leader among the local temples which sided with him at the time of the Ishiyama Battle. Sided with him were a number of local temples in the Hokuriku, Mikawa and Ohmi districts, where at the time of the Ikko Ikki (Insurrection of the Pure Land Buddhists against the feudal Government) the Honganji followers had been most vigorous. As the administrative power shifted from Nobunaga through Hideyoshi to Iyeyasu, and the centralized feudal system was established, local districts all over the country came to be placed under the rule of the central Government. Local temples put together in area groups were placed under the rule of feudal lords in local areas, who were all assimilated into the organic body of the central Honganji authorities. Under such circumstances, in which the centralized feudal system was in progress, local temples that had once sided with Kyonyo were unwilling to affiliate themselves with the Honganji headed by Junnyo, and demanded for the establishment of a new Hohganji Order headed by Kyonyo. Kyonyo responded to this demand from local temples by retaining the status equal to the Abbotship. It was in recognition of such a *fait accompli* as well as with a view to amicably incorporate the new Honganji Order headed by Kyonyo into the feudal system that Iyeyasu donated a piece of temple ground to Kyonyo.

This thesis was intended concretely and individually to consider such a process of the separation of the Honganji Order, focusing the attention to the internal affairs of the central Honganji Order, as well as to the situations in which local temples were placed.

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