

## Donation Soliciting of Local Temples and Shrines during the Middle Ages

—Based on materials owned by temples and shrines  
north of the Lake Biwa—

Kōshō SASAKI

Generally, “*kanjin*” 勧進 tends to be defined simply as the soliciting of donations made by temples and shrines in order to raise funds to build up temple structures, to have statues or paintings made, or to cover the expenses needed for religious functions and meetings. From the standpoint of the *hijiri* (itinerant holy monks) and quasi-lay priests who engaged in this kind of activity, a religious undertaking which is possible only with a close relationship to the common people, its true delineation involves problems essential to the study of the history of religion and of the common people.

Little attention has been paid to the question of how *kanjin* was carried out by temples and shrines in the middle ages, and what kind of historical significance it then had. In the light of historical materials preserved in various temples and shrines north of the Lake Biwa, especially those kept by Kannonji at Santō-chō in the middle ages, *kanjin* was closely related to the establishment and development of commoners' temples. The task of *kanjin* was taken up by quasi-lay priests who resided in the priests' quarters of large temples. In local societies, contributions were raised among village units as well as among individuals. Lay devotees were not only donators but very often actively engaged in *kanjin* themselves. As for its methods, *kanjin* tablets were used to promote smaller, though numerous contributions from among a wider circle of common people, just like those extensively carried out in large cities. As is indicated in the memorial written on the occasion of raising a *stūpa* in the compound of Yahata shrine in Nagahama, entertainment gatherings were often carried out

to attract the masses and to promote their contributions. When we focus our attention on the consciousness of the common people who responded to this kind of activity, we find the presence of an aspiration for expiating themselves as well as others.