

Kyōnyo Shōnin Letters List

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This paper introduces a database that lists collected letters of Kyōnyo Shōnin, the twelfth abbot of Higashi Hongan-ji. It is one of the fruits of the work carried out from the 2014 to 2016 academic year by The Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute's Kyōnyo Shōnin Research Group (Otani University).

Kyōnyo Shōnin was the founder of Higashi Hongan-ji. While repeatedly having conflicts and reconciling with the power-holders that created early modern Japan (Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Tokugawa Ieyasu), he had a considerable influence over them. In this way, he is a very important subject for not only Hongan-ji institutional history and history of religion research, but also in fields that study the political power, social order, and thought of his time.

Kyōnyo Shōnin went head to head with power-holders, presenting formidable challenges. For example, even at the final stage of the eleven-year long Ishiyama Hongan-ji War against Oda Nobunaga, he did not stop resisting, trying to protect Osaka's Hongan-ji to the very end. When forced to retire by Toyotomi Hideyoshi from his position as the 12th abbot of Hongan-ji, he was supported by followers throughout Japan and continued to engage in activities that usually would only be done by the head of Hongan-ji, such as giving those who supported him Amida Name scrolls and portraits of Shinran Shōnin. Furthermore, acquiring Tokugawa Ieyasu's considerable trust, after the Battle of Sekigahara he received land and established another Hongan-ji: Higashi Hongan-ji. On the other hand, it is also clear that Kyōnyo Shōnin was not someone who

power-holders could easily ignore, and they always had to keep a close eye on him.

Despite being in such an important position, Kyōnyo Shōnin, as well as the Higashi Hongan-ji institution, have not been adequately researched. There has been a need to compile foundational historical materials related to Kyōnyo Shōnin and organize relevant data. In this context, for three years the Kyōnyo Shōnin Research Group worked to collect basic historical materials related to Kyōnyo Shōnin and construct databases of them. The group covered a wide range of materials, including Kyōnyo Shōnin's letters, the Amida Name scrolls he gave to Shin Buddhists, portrait materials of Shinran Shōnin and others that served as objects of religious belief and practice, as well as biographies. The group (1) collected Kyōnyo Shōnin-related documents from already published collections of historical materials and (2) went to field sites (such as temples) to survey heretofore unknown Kyōnyo Shōnin-related historical materials.

In its three years of research activities, the group was able to collect over one thousand Kyōnyo Shōnin-related historical materials. Since there are some that the group was not able to gather within this time period, further work is necessary. However, it was able to develop the foundation of what is at present the most organized set of Kyōnyo Shōnin-related historical material databases.

This paper presents one of these databases: a list of Kyōnyo Shōnin's letters. Each entry includes the following information: (1) number, (2) date, (3) sender, (4) recipient, (5) holder, (6) type of content, and (7) original text. With this highly convenient list, one can both grasp the places to which Kyōnyo Shōnin sent letters and the nature of their content. However, this list is only a database, and there is a need for further research that makes use of it.