

The Life of Kyōnyo and the Foundation of Higashi Honganji

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Who is Kyōnyo Shōnin?

KYŌNYO 教如 (1558–1614) was the twelfth abbot (*monshu* 門主 or *monshu* 門首) of the Honganji 本願寺, and the individual who established Higashi Honganji 東本願寺 (also known as Shinshū Honbyō 真宗本廟). He may also be called the founder of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha 真宗大谷派. He was born in the Osaka¹ (Ishiyama 石山) Honganji during the ninth month of the first year of Eiroku 永祿 (1558) as the eldest son of Kennyō 顯如 (1543–1592). Kyōnyo died at the age of fifty-seven on the fifth day of the tenth month of the nineteenth year of Keichō 慶長 (1614). Thus, 2013 is the year of his four hundredth memorial service.

During the period when Kyōnyo lived, the military leaders Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534–1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537–1598), and Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543–1616) were establishing their supremacy in the country. This was during the turbulent time in Japan known as the Warring States period (1467–1568). Kyōnyo, assisting his father Kennyō, negotiated with various warlords and also often met with these three military rulers.

It is said that Kyōnyo's face was roughly one *shaku* 尺 (thirty centimeters) long, which may be an exaggeration, but in any case, he had the longest countenance of any abbot of Honganji. The bridge of his nose was high and

¹ The characters used to refer to this area at that time were Ōsaka 大坂, which differ from Ōsaka 大阪, the characters currently used to refer to this city. As this city name has entered into common usage, it is transliterated throughout this article without the macron.

its tip was pointed down—a so-called Roman nose. He had piercing eyes, notable for their narrow shape. His lips were pursed, and the tip of his chin was somewhat sharp. These features can be seen in a portrait of Kyōnyo that was made during his lifetime.² It is said that his height reached six *shaku* (180 centimeters), and from his appearance one gets an impression of valor rivaling that of the period's famous military rulers.

This robustness was also directed toward maintaining the Buddhist doctrine and protecting his religious organization. In light of this, as I survey Kyōnyo's life, I will inquire into what it was that he sought to achieve.

Birth and Ordination

Kyōnyo was born in the Osaka Honganji on the sixteenth day of the ninth month of the first year of Eiroku (1558) as his father Kennyō's eldest son. His mother, Nyoshunni 如春尼 (1544–1598), was of aristocratic birth. At the time of Kyōnyo's birth, his father was sixteen and his mother was fifteen. Nyoshunni's second-oldest sister was the wife of the military leader Takeda Shingen 武田信玄 (1521–1573).

Kyōnyo's grandfather Shōnyo 証如 (1516–1554) had died at the age of thirty-nine, four years before Kyōnyo's birth. His grandmother Kennōni 顯能尼 (1522–1558) had died at the age of thirty-seven, just two months before Kyōnyo was born. For his father Kennyō, who lost his mother and then welcomed his first-born son into the family, this was a year containing both sadness and joy. When Kyōnyo was seven years old, his younger brother Kenson 顯尊 (1564–1599), who would become the seventeenth abbot of Kōshōji 興正寺, was born.

In the second month of the first year of Genki 元龜 (1570), Kyōnyo took ordination (*tokudo* 得度) at the age of thirteen. Sources indicate that after his tonsure, he performed a service together with his father Kennyō that included the recitation of the *Shōshinge* 正信偈 (Hymn on Right Faith)³ and Japanese-language hymns by Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262) in the Founder's Hall (Goeidō 御影堂, the building at Honganji that houses the statue of Shinran) as well as the *Amidakyō* 阿彌陀經 (Amida Sutra) in the Amida Hall. This service was followed by a banquet and a Noh performance, from which we can see the celebratory mood that surrounded Kyōnyo's ordination.

² See the frontispiece of this issue for another portrait of him.

³ The *Shōshinge* (also *Shōshin nenbutsuge* 正信念仏偈) is an important text by the Jōdo Shinshū founder Shinran that is used frequently in liturgy.

On the other hand, in the same year, the armed conflict with Oda's army known as the battle for Ishiyama Honganji (*Ishiyama gassen* 石山合戦) broke out.

Osaka (Ishiyama) Honganji

Here I will introduce the Osaka Honganji and the surrounding *jinaimachi* 寺内町 (commercial district) where Kyōnyo lived from his birth until he was a young man.

The Honganji in Yamashina 山科 (currently a district of the city of Kyoto), which had been built by the eighth abbot Rennyō 蓮如 (1415–1499), was burned down in the eighth month of the first year of Tenmon 天文 (1532) by followers of the Nichiren school and forces led by Rokkaku Sadayori 六角定頼 (1495–1552), the feudal lord from Ōmi 近江 (present-day Shiga 滋賀 Prefecture). The image of Shinran had already been relocated to a safe place prior to the fire, and therefore escaped harm.

In the seventh month of the following year, Shōnyō installed that image at the temple complex (*bōsha* 坊舎) that Rennyō had established in Osaka toward the end of his life, thereby dedicating this site as the new head temple. This was Osaka Honganji, which was located near the present-day Osaka Castle. After Shōnyō moved to Osaka he built various buildings one after another, establishing the administrative headquarters for the school. As it was also a time of upheaval, rife with insurrections against lords by their subordinates, in the area surrounding the temple he erected moats, fences, and earthworks in order to strengthen the temple's defenses against the violence outside.

Shōnyō recorded the Buddhist rites, political situation, artistic activities, and other happenings at Osaka Honganji in great detail in his *Tenmon nikki* 天文日記 (Tenmon Diary). For instance, at Buddhist services, a banquet (*otoki* お齋) would be held either before or after the liturgical services, and occasionally an ablution ritual called *kudokuyu* 功德湯 would also be held. Tea ceremonies were also often conducted in conjunction with the banquets.

Even today, after Hōonkō 報恩講 and other memorial services, *otoki* is served to the participants, a tradition that has continued for more than five hundred years. The *otoki* is an important part of Shin Buddhist services, as a setting for partaking in food and drink with people brought together by the Buddhist teachings. It is not only an opportunity for them to deepen their bonds, both familial and religious, but also for recognizing their fellow diners as companions in practice (*dōbō dōgyō* 同朋同行).

Whenever a Buddhist rite was held at the head temple, followers would make the pilgrimage from various regions, which built strong connections between these various groups. For instance, followers traveled to Honganji from different provinces to serve as guards for the head temple. It is said that even in times of calm more than three hundred people would gather to play this role. Also, there was another group of clerics called Hall Guards (*midō banshū* 御堂番衆) or Thirty-Day Guards (*sanjūnichi ban* 三十日番) who were permanently stationed at the temple to protect and maintain the Founder's Hall. When there was a crisis resulting from the civil war, nearby followers would hastily be mobilized to serve at the temple for emergency defense. The followers' resolute dedication to selflessly protect the head temple, in which the founder's image was enshrined, was constantly evident.

In the fourth year of Eiroku (1561) when Kyōnyo was four years old, the three hundredth memorial service for Shinran was held with great fanfare for ten days and nights. This is thought to have been the beginning of the custom of holding special services, or *goenki* 御遠忌, every fifty years to mark the anniversary of the founder's death. For young Kyōnyo, this must have been an exciting event that left a deep impression.

By that time Honganji had, due to the expansion of the religious organization since Ren'nyo, amassed considerable financial resources and military power in the form of the religiously motivated militias (*ikkō ikki* 一向一揆), and such assets propelled it to the status of a major player in the Warring States period.

The Jinaimachi of Osaka Honganji

The commercial districts that sprung up around Shinshū temples were called *jinaimachi*. These districts enjoyed various privileges such as exemption from taxes, and were autonomously administrated by local officials. Merchants and craftsmen from around the country gathered there and were able to conduct business freely. Thus, the *jinaimachi*, where *nenbutsu* followers assembled in an open, free atmosphere, functioned in those days as focal points for commercial activity, such that technical knowledge and wealth accumulated there, creating economic prosperity.

On the occasion of rituals at the Osaka Honganji, residents of the *jinaimachi* would hold Noh performances and tea ceremonies, as well as organize competitions such as rope-pulling tournaments, in which various districts competed with one another.

Kyōnyo was brought up in the midst of one of these prosperous temple districts where clerics and laity intermingled. We may also assume that he

constantly witnessed the comings and goings of all sorts of Shin pilgrims at the end of their long journey to the main temple from all around the country.

The Battle for Ishiyama Honganji

In the first year of Genki (1570), when Kyōnyo was thirteen years old, the battle for Ishiyama Honganji broke out. This was a conflict between Oda Nobunaga and Honganji along with its followers. At the time Kyōnyo's father Kennyō was twenty-eight, and Nobunaga was thirty-seven. The conflict subsequently continued for ten years, until the ninth year of Tenshō 天正 (1580).

Honganji was the force that most steadfastly resisted Oda's efforts to unify the war-torn country under his rule. One of the means by which he aspired to establish his supremacy was to decimate the military power wielded by religious groups, and the object of this effort—the enemy—was Honganji and its militias. Honganji at that time was both a religious organization of followers who were connected by the practice of the *nenbutsu*, and a gigantic power in possession of military and economic might. Unlike Oda, Honganji did not harbor ambitions to rule the country. But given its mission to protect the teachings of Shinran, a confrontation with Oda, who set out to eradicate the *ikkō ikki*, was probably unavoidable.

After his victory over Imagawa Yoshimoto 今川義元 (1519–1560) at Okehazama 桶狭間, Oda pursued the subjugation and control of various regions with unstoppable momentum. From that point he began making severe demands on Honganji, such as the payment of exorbitant sums of money, the cession of lands owned by Honganji, and the demolition of the head temple. Oda appears to have been aiming at two objectives: to take control of Osaka's *jinaimachi*, which was strategically situated on land and water routes and functioned as an economic center; and to weaken the military power of Honganji.

In the first year of Genki (1570), Kennyō resolved to fight Oda and sent letters urging Shin followers around the country to rise and unite against him. At the same time, he contacted feudal lords who were opposed to Nobunaga, such as Asai Nagamasa 浅井長政 (1545–1573) of Ōmi and Takeda Shingen of Kai 甲斐 (present-day Yamanashi 山梨 Prefecture). After Oda defeated the allied forces of Asai and Asakura Kagetake 朝倉景健 (1536–1575) at the battle of Anegawa 姉川, he constructed a fort to the west of Honganji. But Oda was soon forced to retreat from Osaka through the pressure of forces loyal to the temple, including detachments of gunmen

formed by Shin followers from Saika 雜賀 in the Honganji stronghold of Kii 紀伊 Province (which corresponds to present-day Wakayama 和歌山 Prefecture and the southwest corner of Mie 三重 Prefecture), a development which led to an eruption of *ikkō ikki* revolts throughout Japan. Thus began the battle for Ishiyama Honganji.

These local *ikkō ikki* revolts continued to alternately make gains and losses on the battlefield, yet there were almost no battles that took place at Honganji itself. Among those revolts, the Nagashima 長島 *ikkō ikki* at Ise 伊勢 (in present-day Mie 三重 Prefecture) is particularly well known. Nagashima's association of Shin followers, which had been formed around a temple established by Rennyo's sixth son, responded to Kenryo's call to arms and drove away Oda's advancing forces. This clash ended with several of Oda's prominent generals killed or wounded, which presumably inflamed his fury toward the Shin followers even more.

In the second year of Tenshō (1574), Oda once again began a campaign to quell the Nagashima *ikkō ikki*. Since he mounted an attack from the sea using his naval forces, those engaged in the uprising were surrounded and cut off from supplies. They begged Oda for peace, but he ignored their pleas, and instructed his forces to "put every man and woman to the sword." He later accepted a proposal of surrender from the Shin followers, but promptly broke his promise and opened heavy fire on them as they were trying to evacuate the islands in boats. He then fenced them in using stockades which he set on fire from all sides, burning the trapped followers alive.

This carnage at Nagashima had an influence on the resolution of the battle for Ishiyama Honganji. Kyōnyo, who was seventeen years old at the time, viewed Oda's ruthlessness with distrust, considering it a proof of his treacherous character.

There were repeated peace negotiations between Honganji and Oda, but Kenryo and Kyōnyo were ever wary of his duplicity, and these talks never materialized into an agreement. The various local Shin groups, on their part, kept organizing uprisings against Oda. In some regions, there were particular circumstances that led powerful provincial leaders to join the revolts as well.

In the fourth year of Tenshō (1576), Oda finally launched an all-out assault on Honganji, aiming to encircle and starve its people. He built forts around the temple and deployed his prominent generals to them. In order to make it impossible for Shin followers from other provinces to deliver aid, he blocked strategic points on the temple's access routes. The Honganji forces set up outposts in the vicinity while holding their main stronghold at the temple

complex. Although Kenryo urged Shinshū followers around the country to send provisions, circumstances made their delivery difficult, so the besieged forces suffered from a lack of adequate nutrition.

At that point, Honganji requested the help of Mōri Terumoto 毛利輝元 (1553–1625), who controlled Aki 安芸 Province (the western part of present-day Hiroshima 広島 Prefecture) and Suō 周防 Province (in present-day Yamaguchi 山口 Prefecture). The man who mediated between them was Ashikaga Yoshiaki 足利義昭 (1537–1597). Ashikaga had cut ties with Oda and raised an army against him, but having been defeated, moved to Yura 由良 in Kii Province and then to Tomo 鞆 in Bingo 備後 Province (the eastern part of present-day Hiroshima Prefecture). He strongly urged Mōri to send forces to suppress Oda and support Honganji. It is said that Kyōnyo went to Tomo in place of Kenryo to ask Ashikaga to act as an intermediary. Kyōnyo, then a young man of nineteen, thus did his part to help his father. Perhaps he was also motivated by personally witnessing the plight of those Shin followers who were tenaciously defending Osaka Honganji and suffering from lack of basic provisions.

Mōri decided to send food and provisions to the forces under siege at Honganji, and loaded as many as eight hundred boats with rice for the troops. Mōri's fleet, which was said to be the best in the country at that time, entered Osaka Bay. Leading pirates from the Seto 瀬戸 Inland Sea, his navy crushed Oda's forces and, receiving additional support from Shin followers from Saika, they delivered a great amount of food to Honganji. In the naval battle Mōri's forces used their trademark tactic, incendiary arrows loaded with gunpowder. These explosive arrows were unleashed in great numbers onto Oda's fleet, destroying it. This enabled Honganji and the *ikkō ikki* to maintain their resistance.

There is hardly any record of what Kyōnyo was doing, seeing, or thinking during the battle for Ishiyama Honganji. As Kenryo was serving as abbot at the time, Kyōnyo was probably playing a role behind the scenes and did not come to the fore. However, I think that as Kyōnyo witnessed, from age thirteen through the impressionable period of his adolescence, the Shin followers who were willing to risk their lives to protect the Buddhist bastion of Honganji, their resolve became firmly etched in his mind. Further, an extant letter written by Kyōnyo in the fourth year of Tenshō (1576) praises the accomplishments of the followers during this battle. Thus, it is conceivable that from this period Kyōnyo became conscious of his role as the next abbot of Honganji and began taking concrete actions on behalf of Kenryo.

The fact that Kenryo, Kyōnyo, and the lay followers stood in Oda's path even as he was attempting to unify the country under his command probably testifies to their religious zeal to defend Honganji in order to ensure the correct transmission of Shinran's teachings.

Kyōnyo and the Resolution of the Battle for Ishiyama Honganji

Thanks to the reinforcements received from Mōri, Honganji was for a time able to withstand Oda's starvation tactics, but soon his forces destroyed the militia from Saika, which included a musketry division. Uesugi Kenshin 上杉謙信 (1530–1578) of Echigo 越後 (present-day Niigata 新潟 Prefecture), in response to a request from Ashikaga and Honganji, aimed to march on the capital. As he entered Etchū 越中 (present-day Toyama 富山 Prefecture), Kaga 加賀, and Noto 能登 (the two regions constituting present-day Ishikawa 石川 Prefecture), he repelled Oda's forces. But in the third month of the sixth year of Tenshō (1578), Kenshin suddenly died. Honganji had been expecting reinforcements from him and aid from the Shin followers in the Hokuriku 北陸 region, so the temple fell into difficult circumstances upon his death. When Oda's forces advanced toward Harima 播磨 Province (in present-day Hyōgo 兵庫 Prefecture), Mōri's army resisted his advance but was defeated and had to retreat.

In the same year, Oda's ships appeared in Osaka Bay. Taking a lesson from his defeat by Mōri's navy two years earlier, he had built massive naval vessels. Large enough for five thousand people to board and strong enough to withstand gunfire, these ships blockaded Osaka Bay, sinking Mōri's fleet which was on its way to transport supplies to Honganji. This blow made Honganji's situation increasingly desperate, and it became clear that the forces were reaching the limit of their ability to maintain the stronghold.

In the twelfth month of the seventh year of Tenshō (1579), the imperial court made a move to promote negotiations between Honganji and Oda. An imperial envoy visited Honganji and urged reconciliation.

On the seventeenth day of the third month of the eighth year of Tenshō (1580), Oda put forth seven requirements for peace, promising that if the Honganji forces accepted these they would not be punished for their obstinate resistance. The list included a general amnesty (*sōshamen* 惣赦免), which guaranteed the physical safety of those who were inside the Honganji fortifications and exempted them from paying reparations. There were also stipulations that Osaka Honganji would be evacuated in the seventh month just before the Obon holiday and that Oda would return the two southern counties in Kaga that he captured when he quelled the local *ikkō*

ikki. Initially, Kenryo showed reluctance toward the evacuation, but after consulting with various groups, including his retainers and Shin adherents from the Saika *ikkō ikki*, he consented.

Twenty days later, on the fifth day of the third intercalary month, Honganji accepted Oda's seven requirements. The peace negotiations were concluded when a pledge sealed in the blood of three prominent Honganji retainers and oaths by Kenryo and Kyōnyo were presented to the imperial envoy. The confrontation had lasted nearly eleven years.

The Osaka Holdout: Its Background and Supporters

Although Kyōnyo had entered into a peace agreement with Oda, he was actually resolved to remain entrenched at Honganji. In the background of his decision was the presence of followers who had fought for Honganji, willing to give their lives to protect it. Also, there were people in the community who persistently voiced concerns about the evacuation saying that Oda was a person who might well betray his opponents and crush them in cold blood, even in spite of an imperially mandated peace agreement. An internal conflict had thus arisen within Honganji.

While this was going on, Kenryo took the main image of Shinran with him as he evacuated Osaka on the ninth day of the fourth month of the eighth year of Tenshō (1580). The image was installed the next day at a temple in Saginomori 鷲森 in Kii Province, which thus became the new head temple. Kyōnyo did not accompany his father there. Although Kyōnyo was disowned by his father for staying behind in Osaka, he vowed to continue resisting Oda's forces there, and once again sent a written appeal to the followers throughout the country. This is known as the "Osaka holdout" (*kakaezama* 拘様). Some of his letters, which enjoined followers in local areas to "act together with one spirit" (*ichimi dōshin* 一味同心), are dated to around the time of the peace negotiations with Oda. In them, one can see Kyōnyo's firm determination to fight in complete resistance against Oda's advances. Judging from these letters, there were three noteworthy reasons for the Osaka holdout. First, Kyōnyo did not want to hand the Osaka Honganji, which dated back to Rennyō, over to Oda, an enemy of the Buddhist Dharma. Second, he did not want to allow Oda's anti-Buddhist army to occupy the temple and desecrate the ground where Shinran's image had sat for so long with the hooves of its horses. Third, the consent of Mōri, who had hitherto provided Honganji with so much support, would also be necessary in order to surrender. Even as Oda was growing ever more powerful, Kyōnyo still had this strong commitment to an all-out confrontation with him.

Of course, it was not the case that Kyōnyo single-handedly went through with this holdout. There was also considerable support for remaining in Osaka among various branch temples, lay followers, and samurai retainers. Or perhaps the determination and exhortations of the fellow practitioners who supported maintaining the resistance came first, and these were what prompted Kyōnyo to take action. We could even say that a defining characteristic of the religious organization that grew up around Kyōnyo is that it developed in response to the intentions of its lay followers.

Kyōnyo began his holdout at Honganji in the fourth month of the eighth year of Tenshō (1580), and in the following month, he began bestowing articles such as images of Amida Buddha, Shinran, and the deceased abbots of Honganji to be enshrined in various branch temples or the homes of lay followers, as well as Dharma-name certificates, all of which served as evidence of their participation in the school. This testifies to the fact that there were followers in various areas who had specifically asked Kyōnyo to grant these devotional objects to them, something that normally was only done by the abbot of Honganji. By this time, the samurai retainers of Honganji had divided into different camps as well. According to Ōkuwa Hitoshi, one of the main causes of the rivalry between Kennyo and Kyōnyo was miscommunication, which may have been created through the machinations of some of their retainers. We may conjecture that there was a power struggle among the retainer groups as the drawn-out battle for Ishiyama Honganji was coming to its end that influenced the relationship between Kennyo and Kyōnyo.

The Period of Itinerancy and the Formation of Kyōnyo's Religious Organization

Beginning in the same year, Oda attacked and destroyed the outposts and other installations that had been supporting Honganji during the siege.

Considering it impossible to continue the holdout, Kyōnyo evacuated Osaka Honganji on the second day of the eighth month of 1580. He entrusted the temple to the aristocrat Konoe Sakihisa 近衛前久 (1536–1612), and that evening Honganji and the surrounding commercial district were consumed by a conflagration that lasted for two days and one night. The fire may have been set in order to prevent the hooves of Oda's horses from defiling Shinran's long-standing sanctuary. The place which Shin followers had revered and held close to their hearts, where they had come from afar to put their hands together in front of the founder's image, was reduced to rubble. Even considering that this was the Warring States period, the fol-

lowers still must have been struck with unspeakable grief, sorrow, and desolation. They must have recalled the aspirations of their fellow devotees and predecessors, who had joined the resistance against Oda's forces wishing to defend the religious organization and the head temple. Kyōnyo, who was brought up in Honganji until he was twenty-three years old, must have felt absolutely mortified.

After leaving Honganji, Kyōnyo set out for Saginomori, where his father was residing. But since Kenyo had officially disowned him, he sojourned near the harbor in Saika. At this time, he sent a letter to groups of followers who had joined him in the Osaka holdout, saying, "I have docked at Saika. My single-minded supporters, please do not worry."

After staying in Saika until the end of the tenth month, Kyōnyo set out on a journey known as his "period of itinerancy" (*rurō* 流浪), which lasted roughly two years. Recent research has shed light on the geographical area that Kyōnyo covered in his journey. Having left Saika, he passed through Yamato 大和 (present-day Nara 奈良 Prefecture) as well as Kotō 湖東 and Kohoku 湖北 (in present-day Shiga Prefecture), then traveled from Ōno 大野 on to Kuzuryūko 九頭竜湖 in Echizen 越前 (in present-day Fukui 福井 Prefecture) before heading to Shirotori 白鳥 in Mino 美濃 (in present-day Gifu 岐阜 Prefecture). From there, a road known as the Echizen highway (*Echizen kaidō* 越前街道) wound to Gujō Hachiman 郡上八幡 in the south, and to Gokayama 五箇山 and Jōhana 城端 in Etchū in the north. A large number of followers who supported and sympathized with Kyōnyo's activity lived in the regions along that road.

Around Kōzuhara 甲津原 in the northeast of Shiga Prefecture, there is a dance that has been passed down through generations called the *kenkyō odori* 顕教踊り, and in recent years, a similar dance that takes Kyōnyo's name has been performed at the Gomura Betsuin 五村別院, a temple in Nagahama 長浜 city. It can therefore be said that the traditions centered around Kyōnyo continue in that region even today.

Annyōji 安養寺 in Gujō Hachiman has in its possession the *Shūso goeden* 宗祖御絵伝 (Illustrated Biography of the Founder) in four scrolls. The dedication on the back is dated the ninth year of Tenshō (1581)—during Kyōnyo's years of itinerancy—and includes his handwritten name "Shaku Kyōnyo" 釈教如 and calligraphic signature. This illustrated biography is thought to be a masterpiece painted by Kanō Sanraku 狩野山楽 (1559–1635), so it appears that even while Kyōnyo was moving from place to place, he still maintained channels of communication with painters from Kyoto and other places. Many images of Shinran bequeathed by Kyōnyo during his

journey are also found in Owari 尾張 and Mikawa 三河 (in present-day Aichi 愛知 Prefecture). From the fact that there were temples and followers who requested the itinerant Kyōnyo to bequeath these images—which was the official duty of the abbot of Honganji—we can point out one important development: A group of supporters had begun to take shape, who sympathized with Kyōnyo's aspiration to build an organization of Shin followers based on the principle of being companions in the *nenbutsu*. This development may be called the germination of Kyōnyo's religious organization.

Kūshō 空勝 (1541–1622), the sixth abbot of Zentokuji 善徳寺 (present-day Jōhana Betsuin), had participated in the battle for Ishiyama Honganji and was one of the influential supporters of Kyōnyo during his holdout there. The wooden image of Kūshō at Zentokuji shows him holding a military leader's fan (*gunbai* 軍配) in his right hand. It is said that this fan was given to him as a gift by Kyōnyo and used during the battle for Ishiyama Honganji. The wooden image of Rennyo at Zentokuji is also said to have been a gift from Kyōnyo. Kūshō later received a portrait of Kyōnyo, indicating the close and trusting relationship between these two men. Zentokuji's branch temples are scattered throughout Etchū, Kaga, Noto, and Echizen, and because they influenced the spread of the teachings in the Hokuriku region, Kūshō's support of Kyōnyo cannot be overlooked when it comes to the formation of the latter's religious organization.

The Honnōji Upheaval and Kyōnyo

On the second day of the sixth month of the tenth year of Tenshō (1582), two years after the close of the battle for Ishiyama Honganji, when Kyōnyo was twenty-five, the upheaval at Honnōji (*Honnōji no hen* 本能寺の変) occurred. In this well-known incident, Oda, who was lodging at Honnōji in Kyoto, became the target of a surprise attack by his retainer Akechi Mitsuhide 明智光秀 (1528–1582) and, under siege, chose to die by his own sword.

Just when and where in his wandering Kyōnyo heard about this incident cannot be confirmed. What did he think when he heard this news? The sudden death of this longtime enemy, who had so often targeted Buddhist organizations, was completely unforeseen. Kyōnyo made no written mention of the incident, but since it was a time defined by such acts of treachery, he may have always regarded it as a possibility. It is likely that he was in fact relieved, thinking that the times would now drastically turn about and expecting that his own position would change as well. Or else, he may

have thought that he had better act with foresight to shape the future of the Honganji religious institution.

Having learned of Oda's death, Kyōnyo hastily headed to Saginomori, where his father Kennyo and mother Nyoshunni were living. Kyōnyo sent a letter of apology to Kennyo, and on the twenty-seventh day of the sixth month—just twenty-five days after the events at Honnōji—father and son were reconciled. Kyōnyo's younger brother Kenson of Kōshōji was instrumental in bringing about this reconciliation. Foreseeing political turmoil ahead, Kenson believed that having the two work together was better for Honganji. Just around that time, Toyotomi Hideyoshi defeated Akechi Mitsuhide at Yamazaki 山崎 (Tennōzan 天王山) in Kyoto, and was bolstering his position as Oda's successor. The political situation was transforming at a rapid pace.

The Relocation of Honganji

Toyotomi showed a favorable attitude toward Honganji, and returned land belonging to the organization's temple in Sakai 堺, measuring approximately 180 *koku* 石.⁴ Further, in the seventh month of the eleventh year of Tenshō (1583), Shinran's image was relocated from Saginomori to Gansenji 願泉寺 in Kaizuka 貝塚 (in present-day Osaka Prefecture) on Toyotomi's order. Kaizuka had served as an outpost of Honganji during the battle for Ishiyama Honganji, and it appears that Toyotomi ordered the move because he was in a confrontation with the monks at Negoroji 根来寺, a Shingon 真言 school temple in Kii Province, and was planning to suppress them.

In the eighth month of the thirteenth year of Tenshō (1585), Honganji was again moved according to Toyotomi's orders, this time to Tenma 天満 (a district in the city of Osaka). He had Osaka Castle constructed on the site of the ruined Honganji over the course of three years beginning in the ninth month of 1583. The Tenma Honganji was built on a spot directly in front of this new castle. Presumably, Toyotomi relocated the Honganji here because he was engaged in developing the district around the castle and valued the skills for commercial development and entrepreneurship of the many merchants and craftsmen found among its followers. There was no existing temple on the land at Tenma, so construction began with the Amida

⁴ One *koku* equals approximately 180 liters. *Koku* is a volume measurement representing the theoretical rice consumption of one person during one year. The size of a given territory was traditionally represented and taxed based on an assessment of its potential rice yield, rather than its physical dimensions. Thus, the land restored by Toyotomi was enough to feed 180 people each year.

Hall and the Founder's Hall. While there were no special privileges for people who were doing business and living within the temple precincts as there had been at Osaka Honganji, craftsmen and merchants migrated to the temple complex at Tenma from various regions. And so, the main temple of Jōdo Shinshū returned to Osaka, its old home.

Kyōnyo and Sen no Rikyū

Kyōnyo played a major role in the transfer of Honganji to Tenma. In fact, he had a close relationship with Sen no Rikyū 千利休 (1522–1591), who is famous for his role in the popularization of the Japanese tea ceremony. It is said that for about one year starting from around 1585, Sen and Toyotomi Hidenaga 豊臣秀長 (1541–1591, Toyotomi Hideyoshi's maternal half brother) were at the center of Toyotomi's government and in charge of policy measures. Sen supervised internal affairs within the administration, and Toyotomi Hidenaga handled problems arising among the regional feudal lords. Four months after Toyotomi Hidetoshi ordered the move to Tenma, Kyōnyo visited Osaka Castle to express his gratitude, and had a private conversation with Sen at the tea gathering they both attended.

As these two grew closer, Kyōnyo built diverse relationships with Sen's students by way of tea gatherings, and it would probably be safe to assume that he also developed connections with Toyotomi himself.

Kyōnyo's Accession and Retirement

As part of Toyotomi's project to redevelop the city of Kyoto, he ordered in the first month of the eighteenth year of Tenshō (1590) that Honganji be moved there. In the eighth month of the following year, Honganji was relocated onto land donated by Toyotomi at Shichijō Horikawa 七条堀河.

Toyotomi Hidenaga died of illness in the first month of the nineteenth year of Tenshō (1591). Then, in the second month of that year, Sen installed a wooden image of himself on the top floor of the main temple gate of Daitokuji 大徳寺 during its repairs. This act was viewed unfavorably, and he was ultimately forced to commit suicide. It is likely that a group of his opponents had worked behind the scenes toward this end. With the deaths of these two powerful men, the faction that supported them seems to have gone into decline.

The following year, on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month of the first year of Bunroku 文禄 (1592), Kenno died at the age of fifty after suffering a stroke. A funeral was held at Honganji on the tenth day of the

twelfth month, and his body was cremated on a pyre which had been erected at Shichijō Kawaramachi 七条河原町 in Kyoto. Kyōnyo served as the priest leading the service for interring his cremated remains. When Kennyo died, Toyotomi sent an official letter stamped with his personal seal to Kyōnyo, officially recognizing his accession to the abbacy of Honganji.

This letter was sent from Nagoya 名護屋 in Hizen 肥前 (comprising present-day Saga 佐賀 Prefecture and part of Nagasaki 長崎 Prefecture), where Toyotomi was staying as part of his first invasion of the Korean peninsula. Kyōnyo proceeded to visit him at his encampment. Keeping in mind that Sen, who had been his liaison in Toyotomi's administration, had died, this visit appears to have been a swift, politically oriented move on the part of Kyōnyo. Upon acceding to the abbacy Kyōnyo began to restructure the Honganji administration, bringing those retainers and branch temples that had supported him ever since the Osaka holdout back to the center of the religious organization. In the more than ten years since the battle for Ishiyama Honganji, the main temple had been relocated repeatedly, the samurai retainers had split into opposing factions, and followers in the branch temples throughout the country had been shaken and upset by the many changes in these tumultuous times. It was against this backdrop that Kyōnyo took over the abbacy of Honganji.

But amid these circumstances a significant event occurred. Toyotomi had returned from Nagoya to Osaka due to the birth of his third son Hideyori 秀頼 (1593–1615). While Toyotomi was staying at the Arima 有馬 hot springs, Nyoshunni went to visit him there. She revealed to him that there was actually a document in which Kennyo had bequeathed Honganji to Kyōnyo's younger brother Junnyo 准如 (1577–1631). It was purportedly written in the fifteenth year of Tenshō (1587), when Kennyo was forty-five, Kyōnyo was thirty, and Junnyo was eleven. Junnyo was ordained at the age of fifteen, which would mean that Kennyo had written the letter four years before the ordination. During this time, when Honganji was located at Tenma, Kennyo did not have any health problems or other threats to his well-being, and Kyōnyo, through Sen no Rikyū, was working closely with members of Toyotomi's administration on behalf of the religious organization. Would Kennyo, in spite of such circumstances, really have written such a document leaving the abbacy to the eleven-year-old Junnyo, who had not even been ordained yet? Such an act would be unthinkable in normal times, and as far as we know there were no extraordinary circumstances at the time the letter was written. Modern historical scholarship considers this letter to be a counterfeit.

After this, Toyotomi summoned several Honganji retainers, conducted a hearing, and indicated eleven points, consisting of problems to be addressed as well as measures to resolve them. Among these, the most notable are: (1) The problem of the number of Kyōnyo's wives (four in total). (2) The existence of the letter leaving the abbacy to Junnyo. (3) A requirement that Kyōnyo cede his position to Junnyo after serving as abbot for ten years. (4) A promise to supply Kyōnyo with three thousand *koku* of rice following his abdication. (5) An order prohibiting him from participating in tea gatherings.

Kyōnyo consented to Toyotomi's directions. Presumably, he did so having realized that the forgery of the letter, the initiation of the inquiry, and Toyotomi's conditions were all part of a deliberate plot. He probably faced this inquiry well aware that it was a move to undermine his position as abbot. It appears he had considerable prescience regarding political matters.

Some of Kyōnyo's retainers who were present at the inquiry resisted Toyotomi's decisions, expressing their doubts about the authenticity of the document. Their stance complicated the situation even more and enraged Toyotomi, who ordered that Kyōnyo resign immediately and Honganji be passed on to Junnyo. Owing to this, Kyōnyo's tenure as abbot only lasted for about eleven months. He was forced into retirement in the second year of Bunroku (1593), at the age of thirty-six, and his successor Junnyo was seventeen—a nineteen-year age difference.

Why did Nyoshunni present the counterfeit letter to Toyotomi, aiming to have Kyōnyo's right to the abbacy annulled? Various reasons have been offered, such as Kyōnyo's disobedience to his parents at the end of the battle for Ishiyama Honganji, Nyoshunni's preference for her youngest child Junnyo, conflicts among the retainers, and the charged antagonism that existed between Nyoshunni and Kyōnyo's concubine Kyōjuin 教寿院 (Ofuku おふく, n.d.–1633). One must wonder whether the Toyotomi administration really had no doubts regarding the authenticity of Kenno's letter, which was clearly a forgery. It would normally be expected that an authority that ruled the land with an iron fist would be capable of detecting the fabrication of such an important document. It is likely that through the scheming of a faction centered around Ishida Mitsunari 石田三成 (1560–1600), who opposed Sen's influence, the inquiry was initiated with full knowledge that the letter had been forged.

Although Kyōnyo had been ordered to abdicate, he did not see himself as being in retirement. He continued to grant devotional objects such as portraits to branch temples and followers, and just as he had done during his

itinerancy, was exerting the authority of an abbot. There were also many temples and followers that requested him to do so. It appears that Kyōnyo thought of himself as the rightful successor to Kenryo. He also put his efforts into propagation through activities such as publishing copies of the *Shōshinge*, *Wasan*, and *Ofumi* 御文 (Rennyō's collected letters).

There is historical evidence in the Namba 難波 area of Osaka that Kyōnyo had built a temple called Ōtani Honganji 大谷本願寺 prior to the establishment of Higashi Honganji. On a temple bell that is currently extant at Namba Betsuin 難波別院, there is an inscription indicating that the bell was cast on behalf of Ōtani Honganji in the fifth year of Bunroku (1596). This temple was founded in Watanabe 渡辺 in Settsu 摂津 (part of present-day Osaka and Hyōgo Prefectures), in a place thought to have been in the vicinity of Tenma. The fact that Kyōnyo built this temple on a site associated with the old temples of Osaka Honganji and Tenma Honganji, and did so with the assistance of branch temples and groups of followers that endorsed him, may also have served as a wide public display of his continuation of activities on par with a Honganji abbot. Furthermore, its proximity to Osaka Castle suggests that Toyotomi, who himself had ordered Kyōnyo's resignation, tacitly accepted the construction. Thus, we can see that even before the foundation of Higashi Honganji, Kyōnyo had already established an independent temple with the word Honganji in its name. The scale of this temple is unclear because a strong earthquake, comparable in magnitude to the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake, occurred in the seventh intercalary month of 1596, leaving only the bell intact. In the third year of Keichō (1598), the remains of the Ōtani Honganji were used as building material for the temple structures that were erected on the site of the present Namba Betsuin as part of the municipal reorganization project undertaken around Osaka Castle, so the temple bell is the only surviving relic from Ōtani Honganji.

Kyōnyo and Tokugawa Ieyasu

Kyōnyo's mother, Nyoshunni, passed away in the first month of the third year of Keichō (1598), and in the eighth month of the same year Toyotomi died. Kyōnyo was then forty-one, five years having passed since he was ordered to abdicate the abbacy.

One wonders whether Kyōnyo sensed how the political situation was going to change. Around this time he took action to create strong ties with Tokugawa Ieyasu. After a Buddhist image installation ceremony at the branch temple in Ōtsu 大津, Kyōnyo briefly returned to Kyoto, and on the second day of the seventh month of the fifth year of Keichō (1600),

he departed from the capital to visit Tokugawa's camp at Oyama 小山, Shimotsuke 下野 Province (present-day Tochigi 栃木 Prefecture). The content of their discussion there is not known for certain, but it is likely that they shared information about the activities of Toyotomi's people in the Osaka area following the death of their leader, or perhaps discussed the ongoing expansion of the groups of followers supporting Kyōnyo and his own position in the Honganji organization.

After meeting with Tokugawa, Kyōnyo promptly started making his way back home, but his return trip was fraught with difficulties. After receiving a warm welcome in the region of the three influential temples in Mikawa (Honshōji 本証寺, Shōmanji 勝鬘寺, and Jōgūji 上宮寺), he moved on to Mino Province where he encountered the first obstruction to his route: the presence of Ishida Mitsunari's forces on the banks of the Kiso 木曾 River. Even after crossing the Kiso with the help of the local Shin followers, at every turn he was confronted with the danger of an attack by Ishida's army. It is said that when Ishida launched a surprise attack on Kōkenji 光賢寺 in Anpachi 安八 District, Kyōnyo, who was hiding under the temple's altar, resigned himself to his fate and composed a poem bidding farewell to the world. However, upon learning of Kyōnyo's predicament, the nearby priests and laypeople rushed to his aid. The followers from the fifteen villages and twenty temples around Kōkenji who rescued Kyōnyo from danger were afterward referred to as the Dorotegumi 土手組 (Muddy-Handed Collective). The name refers to those followers who came to Kyōnyo's rescue carrying farming implements in hands still soiled with dirt from working the fields. Kyōnyo later sent them a letter of gratitude, writing, "Thanks to you, I escaped an otherwise certain death."

The resident priest of Saienji 西園寺 (in present-day Ōgaki 大垣 city) bore a remarkable resemblance to Kyōnyo, and so, acting as a decoy, he advanced through Sekigahara 関ヶ原, where Ishida's army, mistaking him for Kyōnyo, captured and killed him. In the meantime, Kyōnyo headed from the region at the base of Mount Ibuki 伊吹 (located on the border of present-day Shiga and Gifu Prefectures), crossed Sakanami 坂並 in Ōmi, and receiving help along the way from the Shin followers in the Kohoku region, managed to return to Kyoto.

The reason that Ishida was so tenacious in his attempts to kill Kyōnyo was probably that, as rival factions were vying for hegemony following Toyotomi's death, Kyōnyo's alliance with Tokugawa was a threat that could not be overlooked. At any rate, in the midst of such a fluid political situation, this move closer to Tokugawa meant that Kyōnyo was putting his life

on the line. Another noteworthy fact is the existence of temples and followers that supported Kyōnyo on his journey between Kyoto and eastern Japan, even though he had already abdicated his post as abbot.

The Foundation of Higashi Honganji

On the fifteenth day of the ninth month of the fifth year of Keichō (1600), the battle of Sekigahara broke out, resulting in a victory by Tokugawa's forces. Five days later Kyōnyo went to meet with Tokugawa in Ōtsu. This meeting is believed to have been arranged by Kanamori Nagachika 金森長近 (1524–1608), the warlord of Takayama 高山 in Hida 飛騨 (part of present-day Gifu Prefecture). Kanamori was also a master of the tea ceremony who had belonged to Sen no Rikyū's school. Therefore, we may say that Kyōnyo's strengthening of his bonds with Tokugawa was realized thanks to the connections he had made through Sen.

On the fifth day of the seventh month of the next year, Tokugawa visited Kyōnyo at Honganji, and on the fifteenth day of the following month Kyōnyo visited him at Fushimi 伏見 Castle. The next day Tokugawa again visited Kyōnyo at Honganji. Thus, in the short span of a month and a half, they had no less than three meetings. Since Kyōnyo was at this time the retired abbot of Honganji, Tokugawa came to see him at Kita no Gosho 北ノ御所, his personal residence in the temple compound.⁵ It is not possible to establish what was discussed between the two men, but it is very likely that they touched upon the independence of Kyōnyo's religious organization and the establishment of a separate Honganji. Kyōnyo's moves to gain the favor of Tokugawa before and after the battle of Sekigahara had laid the groundwork for this discussion.

In the second month of the seventh year of Keichō (1602), Tokugawa donated land at Higashi Rokujō 東六条 in Kyoto to Kyōnyo. The temple that Kyōnyo proceeded to build on that land is Higashi Honganji. Kyōnyo was at this time forty-five years old. Tokugawa's decision to donate this land was encouraged by the advice of Honda Masanobu 本多正信 (1538–1616), an aide who argued that since Honganji had split in two in Toyotomi's time, it was only appropriate that it remain so. In other words, Tokugawa acknowledged that in practice, the organization was already divided and therefore gave Kyōnyo the land to construct Higashi Honganji. It was not the case that Tokugawa set out to break up the mighty Honganji organization out of

⁵ The Kita no Gosho residence has been moved and is now preserved at Jōshōji 浄照寺 (in present-day Toyota 豊田, Aichi Prefecture).

political motivations, as is often said. Rather, the gift was validation of the fact that in actuality, Kyōnyo's own religious organization already existed.

After receiving the land for his temple, Kyōnyo initiated the construction of its various buildings. First, he dismantled the hall that he had constructed beside the Kita no Goshō residence to house an image of Shinran and used it as a temporary main hall for the new Honganji. Within two years, both the Founder's Hall and the Amida Hall were complete. Given the short construction time, they were probably modest structures.

The image of Shinran installed in the Founder's Hall was received from Myōanji 妙安寺 in Umayabashi 厩橋, Kōzuke 上野 Province (present-day Maebashi 前橋 in Gunma 群馬 Prefecture). Myōanji had been founded by Jōnen 成然 (1178–1265), the sixth of Shinran's twenty-four primary followers. It is said that Shinran himself carved this image at his hut in Inada 稲田 and bestowed it upon Jōnen as a remembrance before returning to Kyoto in order to ameliorate his sadness over Shinran's departure from eastern Japan. It is likely that Kyōnyo's desire to obtain this historic image from Myōanji was aimed at affirming himself not only in the legitimate bloodline linking him to the school's founder, but also, by means of the image given to a direct disciple of Shinran, in his position as the founder's doctrinal successor. When the time came to receive the image, it was Honda Masanobu who took care of its relocation.

The image arrived in Kyoto on the third day of the first month of the eighth year of Keichō (1603). Kyōnyo went all the way to the bridge at Shichijō Horikawa to greet it, and the image was installed in the Founder's Hall. In the ninth month of the next year, the Founder's Hall was finally completed.

Incidentally, the inscription on the bell that hung in Higashi Honganji's bell tower until 2010 reads, "Made by Osaka craftsman Jōtoku 淨徳, the twenty-eighth day of the fifth month of the ninth year of Keichō." This enormous bell, measuring 256 centimeters in height, is a relic from Kyōnyo's time still extant in the Higashi Honganji compound, and its great size relays the enthusiastic spirit surrounding the foundation of the new temple.

Establishment of Branch Temples and Propagation Activities

Having founded Higashi Honganji, Kyōnyo actively set about founding *gobō* 御坊, branch temples under the direct administration of the head temple, throughout the country. He did so for the purpose of consolidating his supporters in their respective regions and creating bases for the dissemination of the teachings. Throughout the Edo period (1603–1868), there

were about forty of these *gobō* in total, roughly half of which are said to have been newly built or reconstructed by Kyōnyo.

Kyōnyo sent his followers around the country dispatches with news related to the ongoing projects. The letters contain passages such as “Everyone at the local temples in Kanazawa 金沢 is diligently engaged in the construction”; “At Ibaraki 茨木 construction of the main hall is underway”; “The main hall in Nagahama is being relocated to a new building. This task requires the utmost effort of each and every one.” Kyōnyo went on to use language from Renno’s letters, writing that the “sole expression of faith” was “to abandon the mentality of performing sundry practices and wholeheartedly entrust oneself to Amida Nyorai.”

In his letters concerning the dissemination of the teaching, he repeatedly uses phrases such as “The propagation activity of our school’s founder,” “the pronouncing of the *nenbutsu* in repayment of one’s debt of gratitude to the Buddha,” “the significance of faith in this school,” and “the rules set forth by our patriarchs.” These letters show that Kyōnyo saw himself as a successor to Shinran and had a sense of mission about his responsibility to propagate the Shin teaching.

Among Kyōnyo’s advisors on doctrinal matters was the scholar Keishū 慶秀 (1558–1609). In the tenth year of Keichō (1605), Keishū wrote *Shōshin nenbutsuge shiki* 正信念仏偈私記, and the following year he wrote *Sanjō wasan shiki* 三帖和讃私記. Tokugawa praised Keishū’s efforts, donated land to him in his native Yamato Province, and had a temple built on it. The *Shōshin nenbutsuge shiki* was later circulated as a woodblock print book.

In addition, Kyōnyo set about making devotional objects to be used at *gobō*, other temples, and homes of followers through the country. For instance, small hanging scrolls were made containing his inscriptions of short quotations from Shinran’s works, as were scrolls in his hand that had passages from Shinran’s hymns written on either side of the ten-character name⁶ of Amida. Through this one can see that Kyōnyo was conscious of Shinran’s works while composing his own writings, a fact which probably stemmed from a keen desire to consistently return to the teachings of the founder. This desire must also have been the driving force behind his interaction with the three leaders who ruled the land during that period of transition.

As for Kyōnyo’s family, he had four wives, including his concubines. Among them Kyōjuin, who bore him two sons and seven daughters, is well

⁶ The ten-character name is the phrase “*kimyō jin jippō mugekō nyorai*” 歸命尽十方無碍光如来, a direct Japanese translation of Namu Amida Butsu, which is a Japanese transliteration from Sanskrit.

known. His eldest son Sonnyo 尊如 (n.d.–1596) and his second son Kannyo 観如 (1597–1611) both died when they were still young. Kyōnyo was able to overcome the burden of the sadness and heartache that he must have felt upon the loss of his two eldest sons, and it is likely that these experiences enabled him to respond sympathetically to those Shin followers who also suffered hardships in their family lives.

Kyōnyo died at the age of fifty-seven on the fifth day of the tenth month of the nineteenth year of Keichō (1614). His son Sennyō 宣如 (1604–1658), who was born to Kyōnyo's fourth wife Myōgen'in 妙玄院 (n.d.–1633), succeeded to the abbacy of Higashi Honganji when he was eleven years old. It may be said that Kyōnyo's turbulent life during the vicissitudes of the Warring States period embodied his ardent commitment to exert all of his strength for the sake of his mission. We can describe him as a man gifted with illustriousness and personal charm, which enabled him to surmount many difficulties.

I believe that Kyōnyo's appeal comes from his consistent attitude of striving to respond to the wishes of the Shin faithful. In the background of his willingness to risk his own life to protect the image of Shinran throughout the battle for Osaka Honganji was the desire of those Shin followers around the country to continuously transmit the Dharma as clarified by Shinran. Their desire gave Kyōnyo a sense of mission to inherit and pass along the teachings of the founder, a mission that ultimately led to the founding of Higashi Honganji.

(Translated by Jessica Starling)

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