HONGANJI, LORD OF ISHIYAMA

By

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STATEMENT BY THE AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

Studies of medieval Japanese history have often presented the upper-crust of society as divided into three distinct groups: warriors, nobles, and religious institutions. However, this model creates a sharper distinction between social classes than reality. Using the history of a sect of Buddhism called Honganji, this thesis seeks to problematize the tripartite model in order to demonstrate how blurred the lines between the social classes were. This is done through direct comparison between the actions of Honganji and daimyo, regional lords of the 15th and 16th centuries. The three ideas I focus on are: military action, organizational structure, and the creation of personality cults.
Introduction

Studies of medieval Japanese history have often represented the upper crust of society as having been separated into three forms of power: the warriors, the nobility, and religious institutions, most often meaning large Buddhist monasteries. Kuroda Toshio is the main proponent of this structure, and his student Taira Masayuki goes a step further, claiming that religious institutions were of lower status, essentially making this a two-part structure.¹ While Kuroda’s model serves as a useful conceptual scheme, it is not without weaknesses. First, it presupposes that there was a firm separation between warriors and nobility. Nobles, such as the Hino family, often intermarried with high-ranking warrior houses² and warriors like Hosokawa Masamoto often adopted nobles as their heirs.³ Accordingly, there are many historical figures whose identity cannot be exclusively defined as warrior or noble. Similarly, Kuroda’s model characterizes Buddhist institutions as fundamentally different forms of power, particularly to warriors. This is problematic when considering the fact that powerful Buddhist institutions often behaved comparably to powerful daimyo households. In fact, the similarities between daimyo and Buddhist establishments represent an understudied area in the field of medieval Japanese religious history.

This thesis is an attempt to analyze this previously neglected topic. Here, I focus on Honganji, a Buddhist institution belonging to the True Pure Land school, and the years between 1465 and 1580, when the sect exhibited behavioral patterns thoroughly resembling many warrior houses. Yoshida Tomoko has argued that Kuroda’s structure lasted until the late 15th century and that it should only be considered in conjunction with that time,⁴ but scholars since Kuroda have

¹ Ron, 25-6
² Richmond Tsang, 49
³ Richmond Tsang, 145
⁴ Yoshida, 381
often found ways to implement his model on later periods. Carol Richmond Tsang, for example, declares that the sect distinctly never held daimyō-level power.\(^5\) I argue in this thesis that there are several noteworthy ways in which the Honganji patriarchs, the hereditary leaders of the sect, can be considered as parallels to daimyo. I demonstrate this through three analytical angles which highlight how Honganji functioned like a daimyo household: military activity, organizational structure, and the creation of personality cults. Through this thesis, I hope to problematize the tripartite model of medieval power structure and call for a more nuanced approach in understanding the power relations that dominated the medieval world.

**Previous Scholarship**

The majority of work in English specifically dealing with Honganji is by Carol Richmond Tsang. The focus in her book, *War and Faith: Ikkō Ikki in Late Medieval Japan*, is the rise and fall of the *ikkō ikki* movement, or military uprisings made by the lower classes in the medieval period, as a separate entity from Honganji, though there were deep connections between them. Honganji and *ikkō ikki* became so intertwined in popular viewpoints in medieval Japan that people referred to it as *Ikkō Sect* at times, even though that was the name of a different form of Pure Land Buddhism.\(^6\) Though Nichiren sect operated with a similar military structure, Honganji is the one more commonly associated with *ikki*. The reason *ikkō ikki* were important, and thus a focus of most research on the sect, is that it transcended class and territorial borders. Honganji therefore had the capacity, as will be shown later, to draw forces away from rivals because of the *ikkō ikki*. While her work is foundational in the study of Honganji, Richmond Tsang presupposes the validity of the separation of the three powers, as she declared that

\(^{5}\) Richmond Tsang, 198
\(^{6}\) Richmond Tsang, 65
Honganji never held control over a region in the same manner as a daimyo. Her article, “Marriage, Adoption, and Honganji,” explains the use and impact of marriages and adoptions in the province of Kaga through the 1530s. The reason the article is important is because Kaga was the basis of Honganji’s power starting in the 1480s. The system of marriages and adoptions there were a strong portion of how the sect was able to create and maintain a high level of control there. As the Kaga community was the most ardent supporter of Honganji patriarchs when they issued military orders, a thorough understanding of that province is vital.

In terms of Japanese works, *Ikkō ikki hyakunenshi: “hyakusho no mochitaru kuni” gohyakunen kinen* (100 Year History of Ikkō Ikki: A 500 Year Commemoration of “Peasant Rule”) by Asai Shigeto offers a chronological account of the *ikkō ikki* movement in Kaga from the late 15th century to the late 16th century. Therefore the purpose was more to illuminate unclear portions of history than create a new way of looking at the *ikkō ikki* movement. Other studies on Honganji tend to focus on economic or political histories surrounding the *ikkō ikki* movement. While they do talk some about the interaction between *ikkō ikki* and daimyo, it is done from the perspective of economics or politics alone. Though politics and economics are included here, they are considered to be thoroughly intertwined with other activity, and therefore blended into each section.

This thesis takes a different approach from previous works by challenging the often assumed tripartite model. Much work of other researchers further deepens the separation of Honganji from its connection to daimyo by divorcing the *ikkō ikki* from the sect’s structure. The point is somewhat valid, as the forces patriarchs commanded were not perfectly obedient. To say that this makes Honganji especially different from daimyo presupposes that regional lords never faced insubordination or betrayal. A portion of this thesis is intended to demonstrate that total

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7 Minegishi, 6
daimyo control over people was a myth. Though daimyo armies were not perfectly loyal, daimyo were inseparable from their military force, much as how the *ikkō ikki* is integral to Honganji’s existence. Much of the problem stems from a view that daimyo were a sort of uniform monolith, rather than a vague category. In reality, “daimyo” was a fluid title which adapted to the ages, and was by no means the same in the 16th century as in the 17th. However, as a category, the 15th and 16th century daimyo had enough in common with one another to demonstrate collective a pattern of behavior. While there were many different individual experiences, there were plenty of similarities between different daimyo of all regions. This feeds into the overall goal of demonstrating Honganji patriarchs as comparable to daimyo in its own right and the elimination of the separation between warriors, nobles, and religious institutions.

While the three-part model is useful, in that it provides a delineated conceptualization of history, allowing for an entirely clear distinction between warrior and militant religious institution is problematic. Separation suggests that these institutions had starkly different aims with their militarism and that perhaps religious institutions were simply out to preserve Buddhist teachings, not to acquire more land and tax revenue. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, all of them were fighting over things like land, taxes, and the ability to hold independent power and sway over national politics, if not control it outright. While not completely identical, similarities between daimyo and Honganji patriarchs are difficult to ignore. As the similarities are often neglected in academia, this leads many to ignore religious institutions as valid subjects of study in military history. This thesis therefore aims to dispel some of this misconception.
Methodologies

The methodology utilized in this thesis is historical and comparative, designed to highlight clear similarities between Honganji and daimyo households. My treatment of Honganji from 1465 to 1580 is chronological, though I refer to daimyo families from different time periods to draw comparisons. For example, a comparison is made in one case between Honganji in 1480 and the Oda household at the same time, but not long afterwards, another comparison is made between Honganji in 1488 and the Date family in 1590. Although comparisons to contemporary daimyo would have been preferable, I used examples of daimyo from different time periods when it was more advantageous. This is useful to demonstrate that the methods used by leaders were not exclusive to similar times, but stretched across a period of more than 100 years.

Primary figures

Among the people most often mentioned in this thesis, there are six in total, with three representing Honganji and three representing traditional warriors. There are also several other people covered to a varying degree in either category. The people are used as exemplars for their position of power. While, even combined, the people shown do not demonstrate the full extent of daimyo or patriarch experiences and behaviors, they are useful to demonstrate firm similarities.

Starting with Honganji, the sect is most represented by Rennyo (1415-1499), the eighth patriarch, known as the second founder of the sect; his son Jitsunyo (1458-1525), ninth patriarch and first to overtly issue orders for Honganji followers to engage in warfare; and Kennyo (1543-1592), the eleventh patriarch, most well known for his resistance to Oda Nobunaga’s rule. These three were the patriarchs who had the largest amount of activity during their reign. Some of the others figures within Honganji sect mentioned are Shōnyo (1516-1554), tenth patriarch; Jikken, a
son of Rennyo born from a noble household, makes several appearances; sections also deal with members of the Shimotsuma family household retainers bound to the sect as both military and civil servants. Each figure makes several appearances, but prominence is reserved for the first three. Shinran (1173-1263) is also brought up several times due to his position as originator of the patriarchal line. However, other than him, the patriarchs prior to Rennyo are not dealt with due to the low level of popularity the sect had during their reigns.

On the warrior side, focus is on the three conquerors of Japan: Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616). The primary reasons for using these three were their long careers and the fact that each had several contemporary biographies written about them. They and their families also set many standards by which daimyo of the 16th century are measured. Other daimyo such as the Mōri, Takeda, Uesugi, Date, and Asakura appear within this thesis to some degree. While not the most powerful houses in the country, they were nonetheless major players at times and maintained many commonalities. The fact that most of the daimyo mentioned interacted with Honganji throughout their history is also useful in drawing parallels.

These daimyo each exhibited patterns of behavior that patriarchs comparably maintained too thoroughly to be ignored. Daimyo treatment of Honganji sect militarily, such as the cases of alliances and warfare, is used to demonstrate how the sect must be viewed in similar light as daimyo.

**Background and Key Terms**

Honganji is a Jōdo Shinshu (True Pure Land) Buddhist institution claiming Shinran as its founder. This sect takes on the view that, because people are wicked, one cannot rely on
themselves to exit samsara, but must rely entirely on faith in the Buddha Amida. One of the more important aspects of the sect for this study is that monks were permitted to marry and have children. Because of this, there is a hereditary line of patriarchs leading the sect based on patrilineal bloodline from Shinran. Patriarchs acted as heads of the sect, maintaining the organizational structure and ordering military action, on top of their religious duties.

The term Honganji is used here in a variety of ways. Oftentimes, when the term is alone, it is meant to apply to the sect as a whole. Historically, it was also often used to mark the head temple of the sect, and therefore there are examples such as Ōtani Honganji, Yoshizaki Honganji, and Ishiyama Honganji, whereas the temple at Nagashima does not receive that appellation. Unless connected to a name, a temple, or the patriarch, Honganji should therefore be considered as a term meaning the sect in general terms. This is in comparison to insiders of the religion would have used the word montō (literally, “the group of the gate”) to describe the followers of the sect. Because multiple sects are mentioned throughout this thesis, Honganji is used to describe the sect itself in order to decrease confusion.

_Ikkō_ _ikki_ is a commonly mentioned term in studies of Honganji. The phrase means “uprising with a single purpose,” and this was the sect’s initial military force. As mentioned previously, Honganji was so thoroughly intertwined with _ikkō_ _ikki_ in a popular view that it earned the title of _Ikkō_ sect. Eventually, direct militaries were created and fought alongside _ikki_ forces, but Honganji’s first forays into warfare came from volunteers in the movement. Another important aspect is that _ikkō_ _ikki_ are considered to transcend social status or region.\(^8\) _Ikki_ in multiple provinces worked together at times, and both the peasantry and samurai joined in with the fighting because of a recognized common goal. There were also multiple categories of _ikkō_ _ikki_, specifically marking it as being connected to a region, land, or warriors.

\(^8\) Richmond Tsang, 114
Certain ranks are mentioned which are specific to the period. Starting simply, a shogun was officially the highest ranking warrior in the land, at least nominally acting as leader of the country. Shugo was the title for military governors granted control over a province by the shogun. Some controlled an entire province, while others only half of one.\(^9\) This title was later replaced by daimyo, who initially were people powerful in a province who took more power than the shogun permitted shugo to have.\(^10\) Eventually, daimyo became the standard title for a regional lord. It should be noted that there was a great deal of diversity in the term, as daimyo owned anywhere from half a province to half the country, depending on who they were and where they were in their career. Lastly, the term kampaku appears in conjunction with Toyotomi Hideyoshi. While an important title, it was largely ignored in the time period looked at here. This often translates to Prime Minister, and was specifically used to describe a regent for an adult emperor. This was not officially a military position, though powerful warriors held it at times.

**Chapter Outline**

Chapter One overviews Honganji’s military activities, as recorded in war tales and biographies of important figures. Honganji fought in many wars against and alongside daimyo, as well as other religious institutions. Honganji as a military power started with being taken into vassalage by Enryakuji in 1465 and ended when the sect was stripped of military power by Oda Nobunaga in 1580. The chapter covers many of the wars Honganji engaged in during that time, though not all. Because daimyo are most associated with warfare, this chapter is the most immediately applicable to the argument at hand, as the patriarch repeatedly ordered armies into

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\(^9\) Sansom, 201  
\(^10\) Sansom, 205
battle to protect the sect’s land holdings and tax rights. Due to the repeated similarities of participation in warfare, the patriarchs must be considered along the similar lines as daimyo.

Chapter two covers Honganji’s organizational structure. Topics include military household structure, the maintenance of alliances, and even the impact of sending heirs to live with rival households. Much of this chapter also deals with aspects of Honganji’s military position, but such is somewhat inescapable, as noted by the time period being known popularly as the Sengoku, or Warring States, period. Though samurai did engage in religious and cultural activities in this time as well, the defining characteristic of the 15th and 16th centuries was warfare. Just as in the more direct aspects of warfare, Honganji maintained similar organizational patterns as its warrior rivals.

Finally, the third chapter covers attempts by both Honganji and daimyo to create a personality cult around leaders. These were an important set of actions used to create and maintain an obsession with the leader of these groups. Such actions start with association of the leader with Buddhas, kami, or famous households like the Minamoto and Taira. Another aspect of the chapter is Honganji’s use of powerful temples, just as daimyo used castles, designed to visually and militarily dominate the landscape. Lastly, how daimyo created household regulations to tie their heirs and provinces together is presented. This chapter is perhaps the least directly tied to warfare, but still touches upon it at times. Here again, I demonstrate Honganji behaving similarly to many daimyo.

In each of these three chapters, daimyo and Honganji patriarchs parallel their behavior in many cases. While there are occasional deviations in terms of specificity, such as patriarchs being less willing than daimyo to execute dissenters, the macro-scale pattern remains the same. Through this analysis, I seek to demonstrate that the position that Honganji held in medieval
society must be considered comparably to that of daimyo households, rather than describe it exclusively in terms of a religious institution separate or unique from warriors.

Existing scholarship has largely overlooked the influence of Honganji and other militant religions. By declaring certain military powers to be different from others, one runs the risk of arbitrarily invalidating or ignoring certain forces. Claiming Honganji was “merely” a sect of Buddhism suggests that it is not worth being studied in military history, giving an image of it being somehow inferior, as Taira Masayuki claims about religious institutions in general. Specifically, he states that, “The jike [clerical establishment], unlike the court nobles (kuge) or warriors (buke), were hampered by decisive weakness: the lack of independent coordinating organization.”¹¹ This so-called dependence was something he claimed to be a flaw in Kuroda’s theory of the separation of powers. While neither Kuroda nor Taira were specifically writing about Honganji or the 16th century, Kuroda’s model is often applied in relation to this time period by other scholars, consciously or otherwise. Because Taira’s works are so thoroughly intertwined in considerations of Kuroda, ignoring his writing here would be problematic. Therefore, while the tripartite structure is being reevaluated, Taira’s claims of religious institutions being dependent on warriors and nobles, who were independent from religions, must also be looked at. Reasoning for this separation or subordination to warriors becomes questionable when comparing actual behavioral patterns. Underestimation of Honganji led to Nobunaga being devastatingly defeated twice when attacking the Nagashima temple. The tripartite model, as it currently stands in separation of daimyo from nobility and religious institutions, characterizes such battles as insignificant because Honganji was a temple. Such a characterization is problematic, as it prioritizes titles and institutional designations over historical events.

¹¹ Taira, 442
With the above considerations in mind, Honganji can be usefully approached like a daimyo through its military endeavors, organizational structures, and in fostering personality cults. Patriarchs of Honganji raised armies, cemented alliances, and tied people to their leader just as well as, if not better than, daimyo of the age. The following chapters are an attempt to clearly illustrate the place the sect and its patriarchs held in relation to daimyo based on a direct comparison of behaviors from Honganji and its warrior contemporaries.
Chapter 1: War Just Like Any Other

One of the primary ways in which the Honganji establishment behaved in a manner befitting a true daimyo was through military activity. This included skirmishes, civil wars, and ongoing conflict with neighboring powers. Opponents in these fights were other temples almost as often as daimyo and shugo. Like most of its contemporaries, Honganji did not have a stated goal of national hegemony, though it did amass a great deal of power. Instead, wherever the religion’s followers spread, more temples were built in an attempt to protect the adherents and the revenues they brought in. This led to a constant, gradual upward creep in territorial holdings. Though singular militaristic events carried little meaning, many combined across a century form a link between daimyo and Honganji patriarchs.

This chapter aims to demonstrate how Honganji’s growth as a military power mirrored that of daimyo. For Honganji, this chapter is written with a direct chronology, meaning that it is in sequence from 1465 until 1580, without returning to earlier years. I first focus on how patriarchs maintained the sect’s existence when it lacked military power by submitting in vassalage to an aggressive neighbor. This overlaps with the methodologies daimyo used to preserve small households. Later in the chapter, I demonstrate how leaders unified their rule to prevent insubordination. Lastly, I break down three aspects of Honganji’s military force at its height of power. Each section is paired with daimyo activity for direct comparison, though “traditional” daimyo examples appear based on when they are most appropriate, rather than being dependent on a timeline like Honganji, as mentioned above.
Vassalage to Outside Powers

Just like many daimyo, such as the Mōri household, Honganji accepted a position of vassalage in an attempt to preserve the safety of both the patriarch household and the followers, allowing the sect time to grow, rather than risk a fight with stronger forces. Daimyo had a tendency to strong-arm weaker nearby forces into vassalage rather than destroy them outright. While the vassal power was not considered to be entirely absorbed into their lord’s forces, the relationship was by no means equal. It was a simple measure that avoided the costly uncertainty of war and for the force taken into vassalage, it was a way to stay safe. While oftentimes a drain on household coffers or military forces, the position came with added security with the connection to a larger house.

An aspect of the early reign of Rennyo (starting in 1457) showed that Honganji was not simply lacking in wealth, but it also lacked a great deal of social and military power. At no time was this more apparent than when its first temple, Otani Honganji, contended with Enryakuji for local power. In 1465, after a few brief skirmishes, Enryakuji sent a small force to burn down Otani and Honganji itself was forced into a position of vassalage to the older temple.\(^{12}\) Officially speaking, Enryakuji attacked to stop heretical teachings. However, Honganji was not ordered to disband or be fully absorbed into its rival. Instead, the sect accepted itself as a subsidiary of Enryakuji and regularly paid what amounted to tribute as a branch temple.\(^{13}\) This behavior suggests that Rennyo’s method of preaching directly to the common people in person was cutting into the profit margins of its rival, and so payment was demanded. Rather than being told to stop teaching exclusivist Pure Land thought, Rennyo was merely ordered to cease the use of specific

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\(^{12}\) Richmond Tsang, p. 52  
\(^{13}\) Richmond Tsang, p. 52
phrases in temple dedications.\textsuperscript{14} This demand appears to be more of an excuse than actual concerns over doctrine, or restrictions on Honganji would have been significantly tighter. While placed in an even more vulnerable position, in many ways dependent on Enryakuji, the sect at least was permitted to continue existing. It was therefore left to be of continued use to its new master. This follows the patterns of one feudal power attempting to exploit another, rather than a simple conquest.

The act of one power taking another into vassalage by force or intimidation was a common one among daimyo. The main options for a landholder to protect their position were limited to, “…become militarily irresistible in his own right, to seek protection by alliance with others like himself, or to subordinate himself to some superior, stronger power.”\textsuperscript{15} Many daimyo who were powerful late in their career, such as Mōri Motonari and Uesugi Kenshin, started in a position of vassalage to someone else. However, Tokugawa Ieyasu was an even clearer exemplar of this pattern. When Ieyasu was too young to rule a territory, his father died, leaving a power vacuum in Mikawa. The result was that Imagawa Yoshimoto, a neighboring daimyo, swept in and took Ieyasu as a vassal, absorbing him into the Imagawa forces.\textsuperscript{16} Tokugawa was taken in both militarily and personally, as he was fostered with his invaders for some time to ensure the cooperation of his house. Imagawa was, in a way, ensuring the continued prosperity of his neighbor, though this is a rather generous claim. In reality, a weak and unstable neighbor was a potential danger to Imagawa’s forces, as the Oda house could have marched into Mikawa and taken over the territory. This would have led to a more powerful neighbor acting as a rival. Since Imagawa already had two formidable rivals, in the form of Takeda and Hōjō houses, it was in his best interests to strengthen Mikawa, while also making it subservient. Attacking Mikawa would

\textsuperscript{14} Rogers and Rogers, 65
\textsuperscript{15} Elison, 4
\textsuperscript{16} Sansom, 385
have stretched his own military too thin and put his forces elsewhere at risk. However, Ieyasu was in no position to resist any sort of attack. Being a child with only a portion of a small province under his command, he had a small military and no experience to wield it with. Moreover, his retainers had no desire to get themselves killed fighting a significantly more powerful foe. Thus, just as with Honganji, taking a position of vassalage was his only option to avoid destruction. Both similarly recovered in a powerful way, but that took some time.

Weak daimyo often found an alternative route to continue existing when force was not an option. Vassalage was not a ubiquitous experience among daimyo and religious institutions. However, it was a common enough event to be of importance. Surrendering to maintain some control over territory, rather than be crushed, was a tool many weaker forces found useful. Once they built up enough strength to expand from vassalage, Honganji and daimyo started on the next phase of growth: crafting powerful bases.

**Establishment of a New Base**

Honganji built many temples indistinguishable from daimyo castles, including moat, wall, and tower construction. They were made with the same intent and with similar plans for their surroundings. Where and how daimyo established bases of operation was greatly important, as it demonstrated the household’s standing as a military power. Impregnable castles in remote locations were as irrelevant in war as defenseless castles inside of population centers. Therefore, building a new base was vital for a small power to create a sense of independence from neighbors who wanted to put them into vassalage.

While Honganji was still weak, Rennyo was unwilling to remain within easy reach of Enryakuji’s might. In order to relieve his concerns, he ventured to the province of Kaga and
spread his teachings there. His base of operations was established on the border of Kaga and Echizen, in a town called Yoshizaki. He built a temple which demonstrated his recent experiences. In terms of the terrain, it, “…sat on top of a hill on the coast, surrounded on three sides by water, strategically a very defensible site.”  

Over the years, it was fortified more firmly until it became as formidable as many of the stronger castles in the land. This position was near several trade routes, so it was advantageous for proselytizing as well. Not only was the position great for defense, but a dedicated following of Rennyo sprouted up in the area because of his very public presence. Establishment of a temple in such a manner cannot be seen as the behavior of a religion completely separate from a daimyo’s behavior. The temple at Yoshizaki was built with the knowledge that it would likely be facing a great deal of danger. While the nearby trade routes were important for commerce, they also drew bandits. As more people came, both for religious and economic reasons, the area became more populous. Had Honganji ignored the threat of banditry, people would have lost faith in the establishment itself as a protector and the sect would have been weakened. As a result, it needed to create and maintain a force to protect the local adherents and this was the founding of the _ikkō ikki_ movement in Kaga. *Ikkō ikki* became the defenders of Honganji and the forces which held on to the sect’s military bases just as any military force would.

While castles and their defenders were ubiquitous throughout medieval Japan, Azuchi was a standout for the link between Honganji and daimyo. Oda Nobunaga was no stranger to establishing new bases of operation. After expanding from Owari, he often had to find new locations from which to work. Two of the most famous places were Gifu and Azuchi. While Gifu and Gifu castle had already been well established before he arrived, the village of Azuchi in Ōmi province was a place generally ignored by daimyo. Nonetheless, it was excellent strategically, as

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17 Richmond Tsang, 57
the village was near Kyoto and many of Nobunaga’s more dangerous rivals had to pass by Azuchi to reach the capital.\textsuperscript{18} This positioning along several crossroads was one important step, with the structure itself being on top of a mountain, and having been designed with artillery in mind was another. Nobunaga did not stop with defensive power or military significance. Because he wanted the city to become a thriving cultural center, his plans included welcoming in a local religion. He also established laws to transform the place into an economic powerhouse. Towards this end, he encouraged the creation of a Pure Land sect temple in the town and declared that Azuchi would be a free market without taxation.\textsuperscript{19} Within a few short years, the local population skyrocketed. While Nobunaga did not have the position of being a religious patriarch to stand upon, he certainly did not lack resources to draw people in. Any military force establishing itself in a secluded area followed the same general methodology. A religion gave distraction to the people and economic strength gave them a general contentedness. In medieval Japan, these strategies were the most effective methods for creating a strong and dedicated populace.

There was little difference between a daimyo or Honganji castle because the goal and outcome of the construction were the same. A larger population around an important site led to increased growth in economy, agriculture, and military capability. Whether warriors or monks guarded the townspeople, conditions were essentially the same. Creating powerful positions was a firm step toward emancipation from the grip of other powers. Yoshizaki was, in a sense, an attempt at breaking away from Enryakuji’s influence, even though the two groups did not fully separate for some time. Likewise, the creation of Azuchi was a start towards clearing Nobunaga from the trappings of the imperial and shogunal court. Both of these fortresses were near Kyoto,\textsuperscript{18} Sansom, 301 \textsuperscript{19} Sansom, 302
but just distant enough that they were able to create a separate identity. Understandably, the increased power led to further conflicts with neighboring forces over local dominance.

**Overthrow of the Shugo**

Daimyo and Honganji both used their stronger hold on the local area, partially due to newly established bases of operation, to take on the role of provincial ruler for themselves. They were able to do this because of the weakness of the Ashikaga shogunate. *Shugo*, military governors assigned by the shogunate, became increasingly vulnerable, especially around the time of the Ōnin war (1467-1477). A *shugo* had the options to either to become a daimyo in their own right by taking any additional power they could or be crushed by rising daimyo. These options were essentially the same for all military powers.

The Kaga *shugo*, Togashi Masachika, realized the power that the sect started to wield in his province and tried to work with it. Masachika lost control over parts of the province around this time to both outsiders and to his own family. People were trying to take advantage of the provincial instability and he was no exception. He sought assistance from Honganji in fending off an enemy and was victorious because of this help. Soon after, though, there were complaints that Honganji adherents had not received appropriate recompense for their actions. The expectation had been a tax break which was not forthcoming. While not the typical land reward that most daimyo expected, exemption was just as important to those who were being taxed. Either way, land was the source of Honganji’s income and whether its land was increased or the already owned land was not taxed, the result was profit. Being able to keep a greater portion of the profits of land work made a great deal of progress toward the growth of Honganji’s power. However, by both enlisting Honganji’s aid and taxing it, Masachika was essentially breaking the

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20 Richmond Tsang, 79
terms of a contract with them. The sect was protecting him just as much as he was protecting it, if not more. Since the taxation was in exchange for protection and he was not holding up his end, the taxation was difficult to justify. To permit such behavior could have created a habit for Masachika to continue using Honganji’s aid without any reward in exchange. After all, if he did it once, there was precedent, and what would stop him from doing so repeatedly?

The most immediate result of Masachika’s actions was a small uprising by Honganji adherents. Initially, this was not much of a threat and was put down for a time. For the next few years, Honganji grew in strength, but Masachika never fully consolidated his power. Due to his local disfavor and a conflict with the shogun, Honganji followers, alongside some of Masachika’s own retainers, overthrew the shugo in 1488.21 At the end of this rebellion, there was a siege of Masachika’s primary castle and he killed himself, rather than be killed. While Honganji was not declared the shugo of Kaga immediately after this incident, through the ikkō ikki movement it did gain a significantly more powerful position in the province. Officially speaking, the newly appointed shugo was Togashi Yasutaka, a relative of Masachika’s who held the position for the rest of his life. The sect was allowed a position as his advisor within something akin to a ruling council for Kaga. This was the first true showcase of the type of military power that Honganji was able to muster. The result of Masachika’s overthrow was a significant gain in potential military power for Honganji across the province. Moreover, the sect’s actions came with no negative repercussions from the shogunate, though this was mostly due to intercession by Rennyo and Hosokawa Masamoto. As will be seen later, Hosokawa’s defense of Honganji came more with considerations of it as a military power than the fact that he was also a follower. The overthrow of Masachika was Honganji’s equivalent of an early foray into the popular Sengoku period daimyo behavior of gekokujo.

21 Richmond Tsang, 83
Gekokujo, simply translated, is “the low overthrowing the high.” Such acts became so commonplace that they are considered to be one of the main defining characteristics of the 15th and 16th centuries. Placing a moralistic view on this is impossible, as perspective can easily change. If a shugo were to leave his province for Kyoto and stay there for several years, he would likely have found his territory’s administration completely taken over by one of his retainers, perhaps one he left in charge during his absence. To the shugo who suddenly lost his source of power and income, the situation was terrible. While a takeover by the daimyo could be seen as opportunism, it would be impossible to take over a province peacefully from the inside without popular support, such as what Honganji had with the ikkō ikki.

The Oda house came to ascendency in Owari through similar conditions as the example given above. Owari and Echizen were nominally administered by the Shiba house with Oda and Asakura acting as deputies of their respective provinces. Rather than remain in these remote locations, important members of the Shiba house resided in Kyoto. With the lord gone, his deputies gained more influence and power, while his own dwindled. Oda Nobuhide, Nobunaga’s father, gained enough power as a deputy-assistant that he became the de facto ruler of the province. Similar events led to the Asakura becoming the daimyo over Echizen. While this was more gradual and passive than what happened in Kaga, the pattern was nonetheless similar. These people did not hold a title granting them official power over the province, but they held actual control. What power they had was taken by a mixture of popular influence and military power, not inherited or granted by a distant and nearly irrelevant power. Had the Shiba attempted to return to Owari and assert their dominance, the end result would likely have been Oda rebelling directly. In that case, much as how Togashi Masachika was supplanted by a coalition of

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22 Minegishi, 4  
23 Sansom, 245-6
Honganji and his own retainers, the Shiba would have been overthrown by the Oda and other “loyal retainers.” Strength was the nature of Sengoku power and people pounced upon any perceived weakness.

Power growth from a minor power to a major one was filled with potential dangers for small houses like Honganji and the Oda. Staying within the confines permitted to them by their shugo or the lords who took them as vassals would have left them as weak pawns for their superiors. In a sense, Honganji would have just been in vassalage to the Togashi, just as it was to Enryakuji. The combination of a weak shugo and powerful underlings led to the rise of the daimyo. Daimyo had a tendency to take a tighter grip on their vassals and population to prevent anyone from rising the same way they did.

**Conquest of Disobedience**

As daimyo increased their power and expanded their forces, the risk of disobedient retainers also rose, and patriarchs worked in the same way as their contemporaries to prevent potential acts of gekokujo. Their methodologies made sure that they preserved their position as military powers. These leaders were, in essence, working to prevent the same rise to power they enacted.

For Honganji, the time soon came when Hosokawa Masamoto called for assistance as reward for protecting the sect against punishment for the overthrow of Togashi Masachika. Hosokawa, as the deputy-shogun, usurped the power of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshizumi, becoming the real power behind the throne. In his rise, Hosokawa created numerous enemies, such as the Hatakeyama household, who had deep ties to Honganji. However, in order to receive military assistance, he likely saw potential rewards as outweighing risks and demanded

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24 Minegishi, 10
in 1506 that Honganji come to his aid in a war against the Hatakeyama. Jitsunyo, the Honganji patriarch at the time, resisted, but eventually gave in and asked the temples in Settsu and Kawachi provinces to join in with the fight.\footnote{Richmond Tsang, 131} These temples refused, claiming that no patriarch had issued direct orders for temples to engage in war. This response cannot be taken at face value, however, as it is an oversimplification of the situation. The heads of those temples and their regional leader had connections with some of the families Hosokawa was fighting against. While these temples never joined in with the fighting for Hosokawa’s side, the Kaga temples and others did and soon defeated the enemies of their ally.

Had these temples simply objected to Jitsunyo’s attempts to militarize them, perhaps the situation would have been left alone, since the Kaga forces fought in their place. They proved otherwise with two actions. One was to claim that the patriarch had overstepped his boundaries and they attempted to supplant him with Jikken. Notably, he was Rennyo’s fifth son, born from a Hatakayama household wife.\footnote{Richmond Tsang, 132} The second was that they took up arms against Hosokawa. Jitsunyo banished Jikken to a temple in Ōmi, where he had no political power, for his part in the conflict. While Honganji forces appeared across several provinces, such as Kaga, Mikawa, Owari, and Gifu, these were primarily in support of Hosokawa and his allies. Settsu and Kawachi provincial temples were the outliers and fought against other forces affiliated with Honganji.

Essentially, each force within Honganji was fighting to help strengthen their own alliances, even if this was against the patriarch’s orders. In the aftermath of the war, these regions were certainly watched more carefully, though the temples were not razed. The fact that Jitsunyo’s successor, Shōnyo, made the Ishiyama Honganji in Settsu his home speaks a great deal of how well the rebellious attitudes in the province were suppressed.
Each daimyo dealt with disobedience within their ranks in a different way. Disobedience could mean anything from changing sides and associating with another lord to refusing to join a battle. One of the more extreme examples came from Oda Nobunaga in 1578. At the time, there were rumors that Araki Murashige, one of his vassals in Settsu, was sympathetic to Nobunaga’s enemies, the Mōri and Honganji. Regardless of what the situation might have been, Murashige was given an opportunity to apologize to Nobunaga in person at Azuchi. While he had considered the possibility, the likelihood that the apology would take the form of an order to commit suicide led to him rebelling. This resulted in over a year of warfare between Nobunaga and his former vassal. Even within this small subsection of the war, there were troubles with intertwining loyalties, as some of Murashige’s own vassals were convinced to return to the opposing camp. After some persuading, both religiously and in terms of how untenable their positions were, Takayama Ukon and Nakagawa Kiyohide surrendered and were rewarded. This is in comparison to Murashige, whose entire family was executed for his betrayal. While Jikken was not executed by Jitsunyo, there were many similarities in the behavior presented. The person who held the highest potential danger, either in terms of ability to assemble forces or in terms of leadership, was given the harshest punishment and removed from power. For one, this meant being stuck in an insignificant position, for the other this meant exile and death. Smaller players were co-opted back into the primary force. While their loyalty was questioned, destroying them was more of a hassle than it was worth. Revenge was a significantly worse strategy than control, as revenge led to far too many uncertain factors. Other daimyo also demonstrated how betrayal could be used to make great gains in power.

27 Lamers, 156
28 Lamers, 177
In 1551, Sue Harutaka overthrew his lord, Ōuchi Yoshitaka, and replaced him with a puppet daimyo, taking the real power in northern Kyushu and the edge of Honshu for himself. Mōri Motonari, another retainer of the Ōuchi, was not content with this change in power. The end result was the Battle of Miyajima, where Mōri lured his much larger foe to the little island and crushed them. Sue Harutaka and his son were killed soon after the battle and his family held no power afterwards. Up until the overthrow of his lord, though, Sue had been a rather ideal retainer, fulfilling a wide range of duties and doing them well. As a result of the battle of Miyajima, the Mōri had a great increase in power, while the Ōuchi faltered. The initial cause of this change in power was a weak leader unwilling to deal with an insubordinate vassal who was too aggressively trying to help his lord gain as much power as possible. This was exactly the kind of situation that the Honganji patriarchs feared. Had Jitsunyo been overthrown and replaced with Jikken, the successor might well have simply been a puppet for the Settsu and Kawachi temples or the Hatakeyama and there would have been an extreme power shift. Under this new rule, the religious communities in Kaga, Mikawa, and other places which had lent their support to Hosokawa would likely have been second-class followers for the new leaders to abuse, just as Sue abused several of the Ōuchi retainers during his reign. Therefore, potential dissenters had to be controlled, not alienated. Jitsunyo could not have taken the same route as Nobunaga because killing Jikken would have led to much more open rebellion. He also could not have been too lenient, or he risked suffering the same fate as Ōuchi. Thus, while the actions presented were not fully the same, they represented the same behavioral pattern. If insubordination went unchecked, whether patriarch or daimyo, it often led to destruction. The patriarch needed to know when to be firm and when to let his subordinates get away with going against his orders.

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29 Mōri senki, 24
30 Arnesen, 219
As Honganji and daimyo power grew from an insignificant force to a national power, threats of disobedience became more likely. Larger administrations required more people to control them and differences in views were inevitable. Taking a firm hand against dissent was vital to continued power growth or the situation would have been much like what happened to Togashi Masachika, the Shiba, or the Ōuchi. The instability of the country meant that more wars were looming just ahead and Honganji needed all the potential forces it could get. As a result patriarchs strengthened efforts to more fully unify their forces.

**Elimination of Internal Strife**

As an extension of preventing disobedience, Honganji had to work to maintain a unified purpose within the sect, just as daimyo did for their household. A structure without unity meant that retainers might have been committing themselves to causes separate from their leader. While not inherently devastating in battle, these distractions certainly weakened any military force.

A factor which distracted Honganji from its full potential was the idea of the *ichimon* temples. These temples existed initially to create a position for Rennyo’s children who were not heirs to the patriarch position. Their analogues among samurai would be subsidiary branches of a household. Most of the structural hierarchy of the sect was based on a pyramidal form. Small local temples reported in groups to the branch temples in each region, which, in turn, reported to the patriarch. This meant that the *ichimon* occupied a strange place, in that no temples reported to them, but they also carried a great deal of influence due to the head monks being directly related to Rennyo. As such, patriarchs had reason to question where loyalties stood. If the *ichimon* were to band together against the patriarch, which side would the branch temples within their sphere of influence support? In 1531, the *dai-shō ikki* started as part of a disagreement.

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31 Richmond Tsang, 27
between two branch temples and three ichimon temples over the former snatching land left behind by a slain Hosokawa daimyo. He had no heirs, so there was nobody to take over his territory. Several temples in Etchu therefore attempted to seize the land. The ichimon temples disagreed with this action and soon destroyed the branch temples. This led to a conflict within Honganji, with the new patriarch Shōnyo being against the ichimon temple actions. This was not something strange about the war. The strange aspect was that, while Mikawa and other provinces unanimously sent aid to the patriarch’s side, Kaga forces were split in their support and did not participate.

This ability to divide loyalties was the most dangerous part of the position of the ichimon temples. While these ones were all destroyed in the war and the head monks either made to kill themselves or scattered to territories of other daimyo, they still created disunity within the sect’s structure. While they were not a threat to Honganji as a whole, this event did demonstrate a need for a unified force. Being in a civil war was a problem, but when the ichimon allied themselves with the Asakura daimyo in order to fight against the patriarch, the temples showed that they were only loyal so long as it suited their needs. Since they carried enough influence to sway some of the Kaga community to their side, there was more than enough potential to cause a full schism in the religion. As must be noted, no supporter had been more ardent or unified than the Kaga community, as they were the first to rally to Hosokawa’s side previously when Jitsunyo called for aid. Another danger presented within this was the ichimon alliance with the Asakura daimyo. While Asakura’s assistance came to nothing, there was still a great deal of potential for danger. Had the ichimon been able to fend off the main Honganji army, they likely would have become their own sect and taken a large portion of Kaga along with them. Considering that this

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32 Richmond Tsang, 161
33 Richmond Tsang, 164
alliance existed between a daimyo and these temples, it showed just how unstable the balance of power was at that time. If the *ichimon* temples, led by relatives of the patriarch who reported directly to him, were willing to make such a break, what would keep less well connected temples from doing the same?

Daimyo across the country faced the same sort of danger. When Mōri Motonari began his family’s first interactions with Oda Nobunaga, the only forces between these two large powers were daimyo who came to power by acts of *gekokujo*. As a result, there is an apocryphal story where he gathered together his three sons, Mōri Takamoto, Kikkawa Motoharu, and Kobayakawa Takakage, and demonstrated the importance of unity by breaking a singular arrow and not being able to break arrows that were bundled together. While the event was fictitious, the lesson is certainly accurate. Had these three brothers, not unified with a single name, split their allegiance when Nobunaga’s armies entered their territory, the Mōri lands would have fallen apart almost immediately. Likewise, the small forces between Oda and Mōri were quickly overpowered by their neighbors because they would not unite with one-another. External threats were not the only ones that daimyo faced because of the uncertainty of the feudal social structure.

Sanada Masayuki was another good example. While not a famous person, he did still have an important impact on the growth of the Oda and Tokugawa. His family had been retainers of Takeda Shingen and he served Takeda Katsuyori. However, in 1575, Masayuki refused an order to join in at the battle of Nagashino, where the Takeda forces were decimated and his two elder brothers were killed in battle. This made him the head of his house while also not weakening him specifically, since he did not contribute forces to the battle. His rejection of the battle was soon followed up with attacks on Takeda lands in Kōzuke and an alliance with the

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34 Sansom, 283
35 Walsh
36 Abe, 378
Uesugi, traditional rivals of the Takeda. These events served as a strong reminder that everyone, even hereditary vassals, were beholden to the difficulties of the time; every person needed to do what was best for their name and loyalty was to one’s self first. While his overall impact on the Takeda household’s defeat was negligible, he did still find a way to profit from it and steal some lands from them, becoming an independent power. The ichimon temples were in a position to do the same thing had they been allowed. First, they took lands from the two temples they destroyed, then they would have become more and more independent until eventually becoming a full rival for power with the patriarch. The fact that this did not happen was more because of capability than intent.

Disobedience was trouble on its own. Internal strife was a significantly more dangerous threat which any force had the potential to face due to mismanagement. Because there was no way to fully guarantee stability, steps had to be taken to squash rebellion. Doing otherwise meant risking loss of power that had been painstakingly accumulated. All of this was equally applicable to patriarchs and their daimyo rivals. The dai-shō ikki civil war resulted in Honganji having a firmer sense of military unity, just like the Mōri attempts to prevent familial split. This newly cemented unity was absolutely necessary for the wars to come.

Alliance and Expedience

When a regional force became too powerful, other forces oftentimes allied with one another to tackle the new threat, regardless of whether they were religious institutions or warriors; Honganji, just as some daimyo, found itself on both sides of this system of alliances on several occasions. With the ichimon temples pacified, Honganji freed itself to engage in more military activity. Patriarchs had less fear of its forces not showing up to a battle, such as Sanada
when abandoned the Takeda at Nagashino, and so became more willing to engage in conflicts. With this new power, Honganji, much like Oda Nobunaga and other powerful daimyo, became more of a target.

Honganji was certainly not the only religious institution with a great deal of control over a province. Kōfukuji, for instance, was the officially appointed shugo of Nara. Honganji’s proximity to Nara and its ever-expanding influence over commoners meant that followers of the sect inevitably entered its rival’s territory. In 1532, members of the Honganji community gathered together in an ikki and attacked several buildings owned by Kōfukuji, though they notably left the Kasuga shrine mostly unharmed.37 Because of entangling alliances and the usual fight against rivals, this led to Honganji being engulfed in a war on three sides. Its opponents were Kōfukuji, Hosokawa Harumoto, who was the deputy-shogun and former ally of Honganji, and also the Nichiren Buddhism temples in Kyoto. These last two were the more difficult to explain combatants of the time. Hosokawa had only recently been greatly assisted by Honganji forces, and yet he was decrying the sect for what happened. It has been argued elsewhere that he was looking to ally himself with Kōfukuji or was more afraid of its army than he was of Honganji’s.38 Either way, this was a standard example of fighting not over ideologies, but over alliances and convenience. The Nichiren temples answered a call to arms from an exiled Ashikaga shogun, but the question remains as to why they did so. At the time, Nichren Buddhism gathered a great deal of power in Kyoto and built up over twenty well-fortified temples. Because of the chaos of the time, these Nichiren temples essentially reigned supreme in the capital. Being an exclusivist sect, while they certainly had no love of Honganji, the same was also true about their relationship with Kōfukuji. While they were not particularly antagonistic,

37 Richmond Tsang, 171
38 Richmond Tsang, 172
Kōfukuji was still a potential hindrance to Nichiren Buddhism’s spread. The best way to explain the participation of these temples in the war must then be to gain favor with both warriors and nobility while also stripping rivals of their influence. Even if the Nichiren temples eventually intended to establish a foothold in Nara, that was an easier task with fewer religions to compete with throughout the entire region.

In a similar case, Oda Nobunaga made an alliance with Takeda Shingen before marching to Kyoto in 1568. It was a rather sensible move, since his alliances with the Tokugawa and Azai theoretically protected him from the other directions where threats might attack his territory. The alliance did not last, however, and soon enough the two were at war, with Takeda starting by attacking Tokugawa. The result of this was Oda joining an alliance brokered between Tokugawa and Uesugi Kenshin, Takeda’s rival.\textsuperscript{39} Considering the distance between their territories, Uesugi had little reason to go along with this alliance, other than to have an excuse to fight against the Takeda. At that time, with Nobunaga’s efforts being focused on Kyoto, there was little material support to be expected from that direction. Uesugi’s goal in the conflict was to gain more power at the expense of his rival by any means necessary. Eventually he turned his back on the alliance, but that was only after the death of Takeda Shingen.

The primary difference in this comparison was the outcome for the instigators in the fight. For Honganji, the war was extensive and frustrating, but the end result was that it was able to acquire enough of a foothold to later create a \textit{jinjaichō} (temple town) in Nara prefecture.\textsuperscript{40} Overall, Honganji had a relatively unified force at that time, and so was able to create a better position for itself, even though its forces were more spread out than Takeda’s. It also helped that the sect’s enemies were less organized. Takeda initially had a great deal of success against

\textsuperscript{39} Lamers, 78
\textsuperscript{40} Richmond Tsang, 173
Tokugawa due to a lack of reinforcements from the Oda and was only in danger once their opponents more firmly unified with one another. While there was a second conflict for Honganji, it ended prematurely when the Nichiren temples in Kyoto were destroyed in a single day by Enryakuji. No such stroke of luck came for the Takeda and they were ultimately eliminated from the national power struggle.

Entangling conflicts and the importance of the unity of a force were some of the most important factors in the continued existence of a military. If an army did not have a unified goal toward which it worked, it was likely to be eliminated. Likewise, old enmities were more important than certain other factors, such as positioning or potential growth of rivals. Enryakuji would have benefitted from the destruction of Honganji, Kōfukuji, or the Nichiren temples, and yet opted to assume direct control in the situation and attack the nearest enemy. Likewise, Uesugi would have benefitted from the destruction of the Takeda, Tokugawa, or the Oda, and yet opted to target the old household rival who was nearest at hand.

These were the situations which made unity of force an absolute necessity. Honganji succeeded in these conflicts because it was able to gradually increase in power compared to the forces it was in competition with. Had there been an internal power struggle like the dai shō ikki in the midst of this war, Honganji would undoubtedly have collapsed. As any military power grew, alliances with and against them became more common. Honganji’s position was no different. A few years after fighting Kōfukuji, Honganji’s next fight further demonstrated the complexity of alliances in the feudal system.

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41 Civil War, 165-6
Mikawa *Ikkō Ikki*

After making gains in war, the next task for any military power was to make sure that those gains were preserved, but since neighbors were expanding their lands at the same time, Honganji and daimyo needed to reevaluate how they engaged in war and maintained alliances. As will be shown, this often led to strange alliances and splits within households. Honganji came out ahead in the war against Kōfukuji, Hosokawa, and the Nichiren temples. While the war itself, and the battles Honganji lost, were a drain on the sect’s power, the result was a net gain. However, the Mikawa *ikkō ikki* taught the patriarch, Kennyo, important lessons about competition with daimyo over resources and how to manage a war. While unsuccessful, this war contributed to the depth of Honganji resistance to Oda Nobunaga some years later.

In 1563-1564, there was an uprising in the province of Mikawa. This was a conflict between the Tokugawa (Matsudaira at the time) and Honganji, with the sect’s allies being sectarians, discontented Tokugawa subordinates, and rival lords within the region. The origins were simple enough, in that when Tokugawa’s liege Imagawa Yoshimoto was killed in battle by Oda Nobunaga’s forces, Tokugawa opted to abandon his former overlord. Then, he allied with the Oda, who had long since been considered rivals with his household. Neither of these decisions were favorable to some of the more conservative warriors among Tokugawa’s forces. In order to fund a potential campaign against Imagawa, he took away some of the rights of the numerous Honganji *jinaichō* in his territory, such as tax exemptions and exemptions from military service. These rights had been upheld under Imagawa rule. Likewise, several semi-independent lords had been allowed to build up their forces in the southern part of the province and, more likely than not, wanted to take as much power for themselves as the opportunity allowed. All three of these forces then had some reason to fight against the Tokugawa main

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42 Richmond Tsang, 205
forces. It should be noted that, while all forces in the alliance championed Honganji’s rights, the higher ranking samurai were not devotees.\textsuperscript{43} It is also notable that no parts of the religious teachings of Honganji were being stifled. This main conflict must then be considered in terms of a fight over economics and social power, with little to do in religious doctrine. While tax exemptions were useful to help a religion spread, having so many full cities which were free of taxes was likely more of a drain on the Tokugawa than anything else.

To combat these foes, Tokugawa allied himself with a temple which was a rival to Honganji and used them as an early warning system for sectarian activity. Takada sect, his ally, had been gradually losing power to Honganji over the years, but still had Tokugawa as their patron. While there was a possibility for them to lose tax exemptions from this situation as well, they allied with him in order to help combat Honganji. This secondary portion of the fighting could be claimed to be based in doctrine, but it was also focused on power. With a rival sect eliminated, Takada would be free to expand more. With this alliance in place, the first targets were the nearest samurai who had left Tokugawa’s side. They were isolated from each other and from Honganji. This led to their destruction one at a time. Tokugawa’s actions prevented any possibility of unity among the temples and the samurai, while keeping his own force cohesive. Eventually, each group was defeated individually and the Mikawa Honganji temple surrendered. Tokugawa later banned the sect from the region for several decades and the rebellious temples were destroyed.

The two important things to look at are the causes of the conflict and the treatment of Honganji. Honganji’s stake in the conflict was maintaining tax exemptions. Initially there was no direct threat to the religion. Likewise, the samurai who allied with the temples were primarily not supporters of the religion itself. They were allies based on the conveniences of a common

\textsuperscript{43} Richmond Tsang, 218
opponent and nothing more. Within this conflict itself, both the temples and their samurai allies were all obeying the same patterns in order to get the most benefit for their own ambitions. This even goes along with the end of the conflict as well. While those who continued to resist Tokugawa rule were killed or exiled, he did allow former Honganji monks to join him as vassals as he did with the samurai who had fought against him. So long as these monks were willing to renounce their position within the sect and not stand up in its defense when he struck out against it again, they were welcome to be a part of his forces. Tokugawa’s response certainly suggests that the sect’s monks on their own were no different from any warrior, as they were recruited or rejected in the same manner. While these were not the leaders of the temples, they were nonetheless treated in the same way as the samurai, likely because Tokugawa had been at least somewhat impressed by their dedication to fight against him.

Both the treatment of the warriors and the temples in this war were similar. There were allowances made for them as impressive fighters and their main reason for fighting was to prevent encroachment on their power. Tokugawa’s methodologies in fighting demonstrate how dangerous cooperative alliances were, as compared to simply confederated alliances. While unsuccessful in maintaining a base of operations in Mikawa, the sect demonstrated itself as a dangerous enough enemy that it had to be isolated. Not long after the Mikawa ikkō ikkī, Honganji showed even more dedication in fighting against Tokugawa’s main ally.

**Honganji and Nobunaga**

Kennyo, the eleventh Honganji patriarch, saw a pattern of behavior in Tokugawa’s taxing and eventual destruction of Honganji temples in Mikawa, and therefore prepared the sect for warfare through creating alliances with many daimyo around Kyoto. If a daimyo was willing to

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44 Richmond Tsang, 217
ally with Honganji, that was good. Daimyo unwilling to compromise were a danger that had to be dealt with immediately. Because of this attitude, Honganji came into war with Tokugawa’s ally, Nobunaga.

When Oda Nobunaga marched his forces into Kyoto in 1568, reactions to him were mixed. Some of these forces began to fight him before he even arrived in the city. Kennyo initially sent gifts and letters of congratulations to Nobunaga for his conquest of Mino and entrance into Kyoto as a way of securing friendly relations. After some time of attempting this, the possibility that Honganji and the Oda would not be continuing on friendly terms for long likely became clear. Nobunaga demonstrated early on that his plan was to consolidate power with himself and that the powers in that region had the choice to either bend to his will or be crushed under it. An initial step for this was that he made a decree that those who were denied access to the shogun were, “[Daimyo] and prince abbots, the warrior monks of Mount Hiei…” While this was not so much a direct stab at the powers of Honganji as it was to Enryakuji, the decree meant that Kennyo was unlikely to get an audience with the shogun. However, this action was more of a symbolic action, since the shogun had no real power except what he wielded through Nobunaga. As a result, the Honganji attitude toward him was likely one of caution more than of antagonism. Soon enough, both temples were faced with attempts to take away their privileges. For Enryakuji, some land was confiscated, while Ōsaka, then the temple town for Ishiyama Honganji, received a 5,000 kan taxation. Certainly both temples had the income to weather such an attack, but one instance was not their concern. If he was willing and able to take away rights from the temples once, odds were likely that he would do so again. The more he did

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45 Richmond Tsang, 222-3
46 Lamers, 64
47 Richmond Tsang, 224
so, the weaker they would become while he was strengthened. There was a real possibility of them being economically dominated into military irrelevance.

The result was these temples joining in with the first anti-Nobunaga league as a way of curtailing Nobunaga’s power, if not destroying him outright. This league was composed of Honganji and Enryakuji as the main temples involved, along with the daimyo houses of Azai, Asakura, Saitō, Rokkaku, and Miyoshi. Takeda Shingen later joined this coalition and it became even more formidable. While any of these had enough forces to combat the shogun and the small force that he controlled, there were no forces large enough among them individually to combat Nobunaga. Takeda and Honganji were likely exceptions to this due to their large territorial holdings, but that assertion is questionable because they were also surrounded by enemies. The overall goal of these alliances was clearly the prevention of hegemony in the area around the capital. There was a form of security in the chaos in that it made sure that no one force grew strong enough to eliminate all of the other powers. Nobunaga challenged that by not being willing to make peace with his enemies and not being the type of person to compromise. From Honganji’s perspective, the Miyoshi were in no way strong enough to challenge them or enforce a tax on temple lands. Nobunaga, on the other hand, had the power to enforce his will.

This idea of joining forces with small rivals, including ones against which Honganji had previously fought, may sound strange at first, but was something of a common pattern in medieval Japan. A prime example of this came from the relations between the Takeda, Hōjō, and Imagawa families. These three forces were all of similar strength and shared a region with one another as neighbors. These forces maintained a balance between them through a constant shifting of alliances. Usually one was allied with another in a war against the third, but broke the

48 Lamers, 73
49 Sansom, 275
alliance as soon as concerns arose that their rival was becoming too strong. This led to an
alliance with the former enemy in order to neutralize their former ally. Since all three of them
were doing this in order to gain the upper hand, there was a constant shift in territory with little
real progress made. Even when all three made peace together through marriage alliances, there
were still conflicts looming at all times. The arrangement was only altered by the death of
Imagawa Yoshimoto. At that point, the Imagawa lands became more or less open for the taking
and the new third party to the fighting became Uesugi. Daimyo did not want any one power to
control too much because that created too much of a threat. Chaos was good for each of them
because there was always a possibility for expansion within chaos. Under hegemony, there were
no opportunities and no independence. Honganji likely had no love for its allies, but understood
that, unlike Nobunaga, they were less likely to cause any lasting harm.

The first league fell apart with the defeat of Enryakuji, as well as the Azai, Asakura,
Rokkaku, and Miyoshi. Honganji, while sustaining a ten year long siege at Ishiyama, eventually
lost a temple at Nagashima as well as its hold on Kaga. Alone, it could not have survived this
long because of the drain on supplies. Ishiyama as a fortress was an astounding place, but it had
limitations. In order for the sect to survive, it took on allies once again, and this is considered to
be the second anti-Nobunaga league. The Takeda, under new leadership after Shingen’s death,
the Mōri, and eventually Uesugi heeded the call.⁵⁰ Takeda and Uesugi were near enough to help
Kaga’s temples in the war. Mōri, with their headquarters near Hiroshima, were not so well
positioned to lend aid. What the Mōri did have was a powerful navy and access to Ishiyama
Honganji via water routes.⁵¹ This meant that the temple was able to maintain its resistance
because there were no worries about the soldiers starving to death or running out of water for

⁵⁰ Sansom, 288
⁵¹ Asai, 155
most of the siege. So long as the temple continued to fight, Nobunaga had to dedicate forces and supplies to continue the siege, which made things more difficult for his own forces elsewhere. Honganji forces continued the fight for five years after the defeat of the Takeda, four years after the defeat of their own forces in Kaga, and even after the Mōri were no longer capable of bringing supplies due to Nobunaga’s armies on their doorstep.

While the siege was eventually successful and the temple surrendered in 1580, it demonstrated not only the power of Honganji, but also the absolute importance of military alliances at the time. Smaller forces relied on one another to fight larger forces and Honganji was as much of a member of the leagues as the daimyo. Though one could claim that it was more of a sacrificial member of the coalition, existing only to soak up punishment from Nobunaga, that duty was no different than what was expected of Tokugawa Ieyasu in regards to the Imagawa and Takeda when Nobunaga was in Kyoto. No ally was insignificant, though there were the occasional detrimental allies. Consider the battle of Sekigahara. While the Mōri, Kobayakawa, and Shimazu all appeared on the battlefield to support Ishida Mitsunari, two of them made no action at all in the fighting and Kobayakawa actively changed sides. Though none of these were individually the most powerful forces at Ishida’s side, they were each important enough that their actions, or inactions, lost him the battle. Likewise, had Honganji stayed out of the fighting and surrendered its position to Nobunaga right away, Takeda would not have lasted as long as they did, and many of the smaller allies in the first coalition would have been decimated immediately. Because of the sieges at Ishiyama and Nagashima, Nobunaga not only had a constant threat at his back door to deal with, but he was also handed several military defeats at the hands of this temple.

52 Sansom, 395
Even through its end, Honganji followed the same patterns as daimyo did. While it was the only member of the coalitions to surrender to Nobunaga, Mōri and Uesugi surrendered to Toyotomi Hideyoshi just a few years later. The alliances made were meant to improve on the Mikawa _ikki_ with greater cooperation, and in many ways they were successful. Creation of these alliances and the unity of Honganji’s forces were the result of years of experiences no different from that of daimyo.

**Conclusion**

Throughout nearly a century of dealing in warfare, Honganji sect held a position equal to that of many daimyo. While not a contender for hegemonic power over the country, it more than proved itself to be a powerful and dangerous opponent, as well as a very useful ally. Though it did not have complete control over its vassals, this was clearly true for Nobunaga, Takeda, and others, as they all faced betrayal. This temple fought in wars, engaged in acts of _gekokujo_, and made strong alliances throughout that time. It also fought less over hegemony than over a balance of local powers, much like the three-way fighting between Takeda, Hōjō, and Imagawa. While Honganji is not considered to be the most powerful force in medieval Japan, the same account was true of the daimyo it allied itself with, such as Miyoshi and Azai. In regards to military action, Honganji behaved much like a daimyo and this clearly challenges the tripartite model separating warriors, nobles, and religious institutions. As will be seen in the next chapter, Honganji did the same organizationally as well.
Chapter 2: Organizational Structure

While the samurai were most noted for military activity, the organizational structure of their households was also a defining characteristic of the class. This structure ranged anywhere from how retainers were taken as part of the household to dealings with marriage. Honganji followed similar patterns, albeit with some alterations. Beyond the minor differences between Honganji and daimyo households, there are strong parallels between household structures.

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how Honganji and daimyo organized their household structure. First, I present the hierarchical structure of Honganji and how even the organization of the daimyo household was a useful tool in maintaining order. After that, I show how children were raised and how that both impacted and was impacted by the hierarchical structure of households. I also compare patriarch and daimyo roles in order to show how they handled stages of power. Then, I demonstrate the comparative importance of the interior household structure, namely the *ie* system, followed by how hereditary vassals were utilized. Finally, I use differing types of alliances to show how relations with neighboring forces were vital to the continued existence of all military powers. Honganji’s organizational structure starts with the framework used by patriarchs and daimyo to keep them from being overwhelmed by responsibilities.

**Structure of Honganji**

Honganji used a simple pyramidal organizational framework comparably to daimyo household structures; since the household structure was vital to daimyo power, it created the foundation for a connection between Honganji and daimyo households.
Honganji, as a populous sect, had a large following across many regions within Japan. Had every single head monk from each temple affiliated with the sect reported directly to the patriarch, it would have been impossible to maintain the religion in any sort of organization because there was no filter to incoming information. The need for cohesion was the basis for the primarily pyramidal structure that the sect maintained. How this structure worked was that the small branch temples reported to their local temple, which then relayed information to the head temple. Branch temples also occasionally had dōjō, which were smaller places of worship led by a layman. The reason why this system is qualified as “primarily” pyramidal above is for the simple reason of the ichimon temples. These temples were led by descendents of Rennyo and they were affiliated with neither local temples nor branch temples. Even with this slight irregularity, the temples were still designed to maintain a structure for people to follow. Organization led to unity and unity was a source of power.

Had a province not been unified, but instead contained several small samurai houses all allied while still in pursuit of their own interests, there was a constant risk of them being overrun while they bickered over the minutiae of cooperation. The role of the daimyo was then to collect groups and create a larger, singular force. While one might consider the daimyo’s job to be a completely unitary ruler, each one still maintained the same pyramidal structure that expanded as they grew in power. As one example, Akechi Mitsuhide could not have been able to assassinate Oda Nobunaga in 1582 had it not been for a loyal band of retainers and followers. One cannot march an army of 13,000 to kill one’s own lord without officers who understood the situation and were loyal. He also could not have mounted his defense against Toyotomi Hideyoshi afterwards if not for his own retainers. Within their own household structure, daimyo acted as

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53 Richmond Tsang, 27
54 Lamers, 216
commander-in-chief, with his chief retainers reporting directly to him. These retainers, upon being granted land as reward for conquests, started to accrue their own band of followers who they parceled out land to in exchange for services. The similarities can be seen in the equivalent of the dōjō that Honganji held. Jizamurai, often considered to be lower-level samurai, took up work for the samurai serving the daimyo’s retainers, and they did this on a part-time basis.

A parallel for the ichimon is slightly more difficult to find, but it does have its proper place. Again, using Oda Nobunaga as an example, prior to his death in 1582, he granted land in Shikoku to his son Nobutaka; Nobunaga did this before the island was even conquered. Given that Nobutaka was born in 1558, he likely did not have many military victories under his belt and therefore had not accrued many followers. This can be seen as a simple act of nepotism, as there was little to justify the appointments. Just as the ichimon temples were created to grant a position to the descendents of Rennyo in order that they had a proper place when the sect’s power base expanded, so too was land parceled out for Nobunaga’s son. If the later-born children of powerful people were allowed land of their own in a way which was separate from other sources of power, represented by a separate island for Nobutaka and unconnected temples for the ichimon, there was a lower likelihood of them coming into conflict over power with the household heir. Inheritance, after all, was a constant concern for samurai and Honganji both, and is a subject which will be handled in more detail later.

This simple pyramidal structure was vital to the continued growth of any power. When Honganji controlled Kaga, as well as large portions of Settsu, Kawachi, Gifu, Mikawa, and other provinces, delegation was necessary to maintain unity. The same concerns are applicable to Oda Nobunaga once he expanded beyond Azuchi. As such, both groups used the same structure to

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55 Lamers, 213
maintain order. However, one of the complications to this pyramid came with treatment of children in the patriarch or daimyo household, especially when weak.

**Fostering Children**

Both Honganji and daimyo fostered children with other powers as a means of preventing destruction of their household when vulnerable. Fostering in medieval Japan meant either sending a child to live with a powerful, aggressive neighbor as a hostage, while being part of the fostering household, or as an adopted son. Tokugawa Ieyasu, for instance, was fostered with the Imagawa to prevent conflict with Tokugawa lands. Similarly, many Honganji patriarchs received training in childhood from Kōfukuji or other comparatively old and powerful institutions to prevent the sect from being destroyed. In either case, the goal for the parent was peace with the larger power and a proper upbringing for their child with access to training in war and social behavior that a higher degree of wealth could grant. For the party who did the fostering, this was an opportunity to influence the heir of the other power more toward favoring the foster family. This way of dealing with children was integral to daimyo military politics.

In its early history, Honganji was not a powerful institution. It was in competition not only with other newly established sects, such as Nichiren, but also older temples like Enryakuji and Kōfukuji. Rennyo’s rise as the temple’s eighth patriarch was the catalyst for Honganji’s growth due to his proactive recruitment of new followers among the lower classes. He traveled the country more than his predecessors and wrote letters in plain language meant to be read to average followers. Under him, the sect grew astoundingly. As a sign of his impact, Rennyo was the last patriarch to send his children to other temples for their education. However, when he took power, the sect was small and his sons were sent to get a more diverse education similar to

56 Richmond Tsang, 48
his own at Kōfukuji, rather than staying within the limits of Honganji. Willingness of other temples to accept his children might also seem somewhat irregular, since they were clear rivals. This was eased by Rennyo’s family connections. Because Honganji priests were permitted to marry, they built up political connections throughout the nobility and samurai class, which meant that those connections were able to help place the children. Both temples and samurai or noble relatives had hopes of influencing children of patriarchs. The intention was that the next patriarch would be more predisposed to the teachings of the temple he was fostered at, especially in case of defending the older institution, or to relatives for placing him there. Relatives gained the advantage of gratitude for their efforts and sponsorship.

Fostering one’s children with a neighboring power was no unusual event among the samurai and was usually intended either as hostage-taking or to cement alliances. The most appropriate situation to compare this to was when Hosokawa Masamoto, the deputy-shogun and a Honganji adherent, adopted two sons as potential heirs. He adopted one from a noble family which previously held the title *kampaku*, and the other was from a weak branch of the Hosokawa house. The adoptions were primarily to placate Masamoto’s retainers, as he had no children of his own. Taking these children into his household led to him exerting more power over the other families. He was, in essence, making the households more dependent on him militarily.

Moreover, Masamoto made sure that these boys were predisposed to the cause of his branch of Hosokawa. It might have been that his intent was also to pass following Honganji on to his heirs in order to continue alliances after his death. While his hopes had some success, with periodic alliances between his heirs and Honganji, they were more often at odds with one another. However, this shows more the vicissitudes of war than planning by key players. As the heirs of many daimyo later showed, children were often unpredictable and prone to radical behavioral
shifts from their parents. Hosokawa’s goal was to assert dominance over the houses he adopted from, as well as his own retainers with the adoptions. In some regards, Hosokawa did gain power with fostering these two heirs, though his attempts were overall unsuccessful.

At first, Rennyo was doing little that his ancestors had not done. He made alliances and ensured that his heirs had the best opportunities possible for growth. In such a weak position, he had to foster his children with rival forces. The risks of a child favoring the house they were fostered with were worth taking because survival of the Honganji depended on the relations made. Both weak and powerful daimyo houses managed these relations from their own positions, either sending away or taking children for the benefits the new relationships created. However, eventually the growth of the sect did lead to further changes in how the household operated.

**Role of the Patriarch**

The role patriarchs played links to every other aspect of their power and how they adapted their behavior to the times they lived in, and this is similar to the role of many daimyo. Simply put, the patriarch was the top of Honganji’s pyramidal order. Changes in a leader’s role often coincided with factors such as whether or not they needed to foster their children with rivals to survive. Both internal and external factors impacted this, such as unity of the force and the relative strength of neighbors.

Rennyo never officially ordered resistance against the Kaga shugo, but did give covert orders to do so. Because Honganji was extremely weak during the late 15th century, Rennyo was forced to behave as though he was not officially giving sanction to these activities. As the head of the religion, he would have been held responsible had he given public orders. On the other hand, with the power patriarchs wielded in the late 16th century, Kennyo was able to openly

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57 Richmond Tsang, 80
put out a call to arms against Nobunaga.\textsuperscript{58} The difference, however, was not just based on whether Honganji was capable enough defensively. By Kennyo’s time, the sect had built enough precedent for military action that it was considered to be entirely acceptable for direct orders to be given.

A changeover from reticence towards battle to being more open about it was not unusual behavior for daimyo. In 1590, the Date house, while attempting to gain a power base in the northeastern portion of Japan, received summons from Toyotomi Hideyoshi, demanding that they participate in the siege of Odawara. Date Masamune, the head of the house at the time, did join in with the siege, but only after the battle was essentially over. Given his proximity to the area and the length of the siege, he was more than capable of arriving on time. It has been speculated that he was intentionally delaying his arrival to make sure that Toyotomi did not abandon the siege because of the logistical problems of maintaining a massive army for a long period. The strategy of waiting made perfect sense for his position. If the siege had collapsed, Date would have stood alone against a more powerful neighbor to the south, while he had several rivals in his own area. In essence, bowing immediately in obedience to Hideyoshi could have lost him his lands, so caution was necessary. During the battle of Sekigahara, on the other hand, there was little incentive for holding back. His response to Tokugawa Ieyasu’s call to arms was to immediately send troops toward the battlefield.\textsuperscript{59} By 1600, his fate was intertwined with Tokugawa’s because of a marriage alliance, but he also had objections to the Toyotomi because of several disagreements. Even participation in the invasion of Korea was a part of his reason for joining the Tokugawa.\textsuperscript{60} In either case, preservation of the Date house and expansion of territory were chief concerns. As such, he had to be careful when choosing his battles. In the end, both the

\textsuperscript{58} Richmond Tsang, 223
\textsuperscript{59} Sansom, 413
\textsuperscript{60} Hawley, 608
Date house and the Honganji patriarchs made decisions about when and how to fight which benefitted the position of their families, though the results took some time to materialize.

Another vital behavior for the patriarchs was the validation of temples as being part of Honganji. One of the ways in which validation was given was through gifts of portraits of patriarchs or variations on kōmyō juji myōgō (Amida’s name written in ten characters) written in Rennyo’s hand.61 These gifts were more symbolic than anything else, but still provided a tangible representation of the patriarch’s support. Any gift made with a connection to a revered figure was one of great value. Without legitimization for a temple, it ran the risk of being isolated. Even being symbolically isolated was a great threat to any power in medieval Japan, as many powers were intent on taking advantage of any weakness. Validation was also important for the patriarchs to grant because it more firmly tied local temples to Honganji. The stronger the imagery was that bound them together, the more difficult it was for the temple to break off. A temple with physical evidence marking it as connected to Honganji would have had difficulty breaking away and joining in with another sect, or in creating its own form of Buddhism.

Names, whether connected to religious figures or warriors, were another form of power in medieval Japan. In some cases, they were simple affiliations, such as when Hideyoshi started using the name Hashiba early in his career. He took the shiba character from the name of a man who was one of his superiors at the time, Shibata Katsuie. Adoption of this name was primarily a symbolic gesture and not a demonstration of adoption, as the name Toyomi later was. An example of this having been a sign of dominance over someone came from Tokugawa Ieyasu in his youth. Upon being taken in by the Imagawa house, his personal name was changed to Motoyasu.62 Moto, in this case, came from Imagawa Yoshimoto. The change in name was there

61 Rogers and Rogers, 61
62 Richmond Tsang, 205
to create continuity between houses, and this attachment was intended in both a social and political form.\textsuperscript{63} With the names more closely related, other local powers were likely to associate the two houses with one another. Had someone attacked Imagawa, they would have likely started with Matsudaira, since his was the weaker force. This would then turn supporting the Imagawa into more than a simple obligation to the daimyo-retainer relationship, but something approaching kinship. The connection between names left little room for doubt as to affiliation, just like the gifts from Honganji patriarchs to their affiliated temples.

The organizational and military role of a patriarch changed over time to best suit the state of Honganji’s power. He was outwardly timid when necessary and bold when possible. Daimyo often made the same decisions when they knew boldness was likely to get them killed. Accepting vassalage, covered in the previous chapter, was a strong example for both. Similarly, both patriarchs and daimyo provided much needed validity to people within the pyramidal social structure. Without a well defined place, one ran the risk of being lost in obscurity. On the other hand, these leaders presented validity in order to preserve their own position, lest they be abandoned by retainers. The medieval Japanese household held a delicate balance and all those in the hierarchy were beholden to its power. Names held a distinction within these structures for daimyo and in many ways to Honganji as well.

The \textit{Ie System}

Honganji used the \textit{ie}, or household, system just as the samurai did, in an attempt to solidify their rule over retainers and followers. How names, especially family names, played a large role in the daimyo household structure came from the samurai adoption of the \textit{ie} system. The \textit{ie} was something which consisted not only of the direct bloodlines of a family, but also

\textsuperscript{63} Spafford, 282
focused on the importance of the continuance of the family name. Hereditary vassals were considered as part of the household, even if they had no blood relations to the daimyo. Samurai started adopting this system starting in the 12th century as a replacement for the *uji* system, which was focused entirely on bloodlines.

The title of patriarch was passed down patrilineally through the descendents of Shinran Shōnin with one exception. While the patriarch line stated with the son of Shinran’s daughter, the teachings were said to have spread starting with Shinran’s cousin, Nyoshin. Honoring this man was the origin behind the use of the character *nyo* in patriarch names, such as Rennyo, Jitsunyo, Kennyo, and others. It was also a method of making note of two ways in which the patriarch line was passed down: the daughter provided the valid bloodline while the cousin created a male originator for the line to transfer from Shinran to his grandchildren. An unbroken line of succession mattered more than the reality of the patriarch line. However, that did not mean that the only important figures in Honganji were patriarchs. While *ichimon* temples were headed by people directly related to Rennyo, many of the heads of standard branch temples were also distant relatives of the patriarch. One example as to how the line of succession was somewhat strange came from Rennyo’s eldest son, Junnyo. Junnyo had no sons of his own and, in order to have an heir, adopted one to marry one of his daughters. The son in question was the child of one of Rennyo’s daughters, and thus still Rennyo’s grandson. However, he was not considered to be a valid patriarch and Rennyo placed him as head of a branch temple instead. While he was theoretically in a position to become the next patriarch, it was still problematic. One of Rennyo’s sons could have easily claimed to have a higher degree of legitimacy. This had

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64 Spafford, 284
65 Richmond Tsang, 17
66 Richmond Tsang, 87
the potential to create a schism within the sect. The process of finding an heir to lead Honganji was one filled with specificity and exceptions, but samurai had a process no less unusual.

Some samurai, such as Hosokawa Masamoto and Uesugi Kenshin, never married and simply adopted their heirs. Both of them took two heirs, with each one taking a son from a separate branch in their family and another from a different family. Uesugi’s were his nephew and someone from the Hōjō house. Though these events were roughly seventy years apart, a similar result happened: the two heirs fought over supremacy of their inheritance, the one with closer ties to the previous lord won, and in the process lost some territory to outsiders because of the fighting.\textsuperscript{67} Most likely, the ones with closer ties to the previous lord won because they automatically received more support because of blood ties. Toyotomi Hideyoshi was keenly aware of this when his first son died in 1591. The result was a scramble to find a new heir for him immediately after. His stepbrother Hidenaga had been a strong contender for the position, but he also died in 1591, so the primary choices were Toyotomi Hidetsugu and Kobayakawa Hideaki, as they were both his nephews.\textsuperscript{68} He also suggested in a letter of naming a daughter of Maeda Toshiie to be his heir, but lamented that he could not because she was a woman. Because Hideaki was already heir to the Kobayakawa household, it was decided that Hidetsugu should be the successor to the Toyotomi line. This plan made the most sense, as Hidetsugu was older and he already carried the Toyotomi name. This meant that an uncontested power transfer could more directly carry on the title of Kampaku.

Had the ie system been simply about family structure and not bloodlines, the story would have ended there. Toyotomi Hideyori, Hideyoshi’s second son, was born on 1593. Within two years, the title of Kampaku was transferred over to this child and Hidetsugu was ordered to kill

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Abe} Abe, 132
\bibitem{Hideyoshi} Hideyoshi, 218
\end{thebibliography}
himself because of suspicious activities. There is little information to explain the execution apart from talk of Hidetsugu seemingly making preparations to defend himself from being attacked and Luis Frois, a Jesuit priest, writing about him being a cruel person. The simplest way of explaining the situation was that Hideyoshi wanted a smooth transition of power and felt that his infant son had a stronger claim to a hereditary position than his nephew did. As with the case of Rennyo’s successor, appointing an heir who carried the strongest case for legitimacy was important. In both cases, bloodlines of a specific format were used. The other options could easily have led to the same result as with the Hosokawa and Uesugi, which would have put years of growth and unification to waste. After all, with multiple contenders for the head of the household, one never truly knew where vassals fell in loyalties.

The *ie* system was more complex than a family where the name was all that truly mattered. While the family name was important, bloodlines were just as vital in most cases. Samurai households and Honganji figures often looked to adoption for heirs, but both of them were likely to abandon these children, even relatives, for a more direct carrier of the bloodline. For both Honganji and daimyo houses, family members and adoptees were not the only ones who were part of the *ie* system.

**Hereditary Vassals**

Hereditary vassals were also part of the daimyo’s household in the *ie* system as tools to reinforce the leader’s position and the household structure overall; Honganji used this with the Shimotsuma, a family of hereditary retainers attached to the sect. In any household, hereditary vassals were the backbone of the organizational structure. These people were considered to be the most dependable subjects of a daimyo because their families had served for generations.

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69 *Hideyoshi*, 219
Members of the Shimotsuma family were so important both in the military hierarchy and in the administration of Honganji that peace accords ending the war with Oda Nobunaga were signed by them, not the patriarch.\textsuperscript{70} The peace was not one which came easily, either, as it required that Honganji evacuate the Ishiyama temple and demilitarize their forces. The only reason the Shimotsuma were allowed to make such an agreement was because they were an integral part of the sect. Indeed, the family had been part of the sect since at least the early 14\textsuperscript{th} century, when Shimotsuma Shōzen was declared the caretaker over Shinran’s grave, acting as a temporary replacement for an unfit patriarch.\textsuperscript{71} This meant that, while the Shimotsuma could not actively serve as patriarchs, they carried enough weight that they could take over the patriarch’s duties in full. This was enough to equate them with the head of the household. The family was also widespread within the sect. For one example, during the \textit{dai-shō ikki}, there were members who served at many temples, including the \textit{ichimon} temples. When faced with defeat, several members of the Shimotsuma killed themselves along with their temple heads.\textsuperscript{72} Even with these deaths, the family served Honganji temples across the country. One could look at the hereditary retainer as being the archetypal symbol of loyalty within the medieval period. These people tended to be so deeply connected with their master’s household that there was no path for them other than maintaining their allegiance, as separation would have left them in a severely weakened state, surrounded by their former lord. They acted as councilors, generals, or teachers, depending on the occasion and that led to rich connections.

Perhaps no hereditary vassal in Japanese history is more famous than Honda Tadakatsu, a servant of Tokugawa Ieyasu. As a demonstration of how closely tied the two families were, his daughter was adopted by Tokugawa and used to secure a marriage alliance with Sanada

\textsuperscript{70} Lamers, 167  
\textsuperscript{71} Richmond Tsang, 15  
\textsuperscript{72} Richmond Tsang, 163
Nobuyuki. His son, Honda Tadamasa, was married to one of Tokugawa’s granddaughters. While a renowned warrior, Tadakatsu also served as an advisor to his lord throughout his entire life, both in battle and in social matters. Because of his position, Honda was as deeply set into the Tokugawa ie as one could be. Had another force overrun Tokugawa at some point during their career, such as when they were powerfully set upon by the Takeda, Tadakatsu would have had no choice but to share the fate of Ieyasu. With how closely they were connected, the execution of one would have been the equivalent of the death of a family member. Much like with the Shimotsuma, the Honda were clearly marked for this position of closeness even early in their association. Prior to 1563, the Honda were considered to be adherents of Honganji. When the Mikawa ikki broke out, Tadakatsu converted his own religion, as well as that of his entire family branch, to another type of Pure Land Buddhism. Another branch of the Honda family was not so uniform, and someone who was not the head of a branch sided with Honganji. However, Tadakatsu’s portion did all that it could to maintain its proper position within the ie. There were always families which worked multiple sides of a battle, but for the most part, hereditary vassals were too deeply rooted in their superior’s household to be fully defiant. The Shimotsuma and Honda maintained the same behavioral patterns throughout the ages. Overall, the relation of these hereditary vassals to their liege was the most stable part of the sixteenth century household.

Hereditary vassals were an integral part of the ie. Both patriarchs and daimyo used them in order to help support the house. They used these people both militarily and within the household to further stabilize their rule. Honganji followed the same patterns as daimyo with hereditary vassals and even used them the same way when it came to marriages.

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73 Totman, 71
74 Richmond Tsang, 219
Marriage Alliances

As mentioned with Honda, marriages were one of the more important methods of creating or maintaining alliances, and both daimyo and Honganji used these marriages and the children created by them to strengthen their household. Marriages were a form of soft power, in that while they were by no means binding, there was still a strong influence created by them. While the initial alliance between two powers by marriage was useful, the children created from this marriage were the more important part. Rulers used children to cement a stronger relationship between powers, which was a more passive method than the fostering mentioned above.

Because Honganji priests had permission to marry and have children, the sect often took advantage of marriages. Internally speaking, marriages to daughters of the patriarch were used to shore up loyalty and competency within the sect. One example came with a Honganji priest in Echizen. He was considered to be teaching incorrect lessons to his congregation and was exiled, then replaced by his own son. Afterwards, this son was married to a daughter of Rennyo. Part of the impact was a strengthening of ties with the temples in Echizen. With additions of the patriarch’s family to the region came more eyes on the area and, in general, a sense of value placed upon the temples. As with many other cases, this marriage meant that it would be significantly harder for the Echizen temples to break off and form their own sect. Any children born from this marriage were directly connected to Rennyo, so that meant any dealings with the patriarchs meant dealings with family. The position was also distant enough, both in terms of bloodline and source of power, as to not threaten the central power.

Marriages within a daimyo’s force were fairly common for similar reasons. When Azai Nagamasa was killed in 1573, his wife, Oda Nobunaga’s sister, was taken back into Oda custody.

75 Richmond Tsang, 89
Afterwards, she was married to Shibata Katsuie, one of Nobunaga’s original Owari retainers. While one might think that this marriage was of little purpose, due to the longstanding relationship between Nobunaga and Katsuie, there were good reasons for the marriage. With Azai’s defeat, the lands he and the Asakura controlled were parceled out to Oda retainers. In this case, Nobunaga granted the largest rewards to Shibata Katsuie and Akechi Mitsuhide. The lands themselves were not insignificant in size and, just as important, were near Kyoto. Both of these were factors as to why Nobunaga needed to maintain this man’s loyalty. Given that ownership of these lands essentially made Shibata a daimyo in his own right, there was always the potential for him targeting Nobunaga in order to pursue his own interests. His wife was meant as an anchor to maintain his connection with the Oda household, no matter how powerful he or his family became.

Marriages with external powers were just as important, if not more, to both daimyo and Honganji. Rennyo himself demonstrated this with the wives he took, including ones from the Anegakōji and Hatakeyama houses. The former was a courtier family while the latter was a warrior house. These marriages created alliances and deep ties between the houses involved. Likely the houses hoped, in sending their daughters to marry into Honganji, of having some measure of control over any children had by Rennyo. The ability to manipulate a future patriarch or his retainers was a useful tool. In a way, something like this did happen. In 1506, when the patriarch Jitsunyo agreed to assist Hosokawa Masamoto in a war against the Hatakeyama. His half-brother Jikken was in charge of the Settsu and Kawachi area temples which were asked to lend aid in the war. Jikken’s mother was Rennyo’s Hatakeyama wife. As a result, these temples did not join in the war for Hosokawa, even when the Honganji patriarch himself repeatedly sent

76 Hideyoshi, 217
77 Richmond Tsang (2005), 64
78 Richmond Tsang, 132-3
orders to do so. In effect, that was exactly what a marriage alliance was intended to do and it worked marvelously. Other provinces were willing to supply the troops needed for war, but there must have been some unease within the sect afterwards over the troubles of entangling alliances. The Hatakeyama even pleaded to no avail with Jitsunyo to allow Jikken to stay in the same region. Because the alliance was important and the family ties within the sect were also strong, the semi-rebellious brother was not executed, but placed in charge of a temple in Ōmi, far from his previous power base.

Attempts by samurai to create marriage alliances were no less tricky than those of Honganji. While useful, they were no guarantee of a lasting alliance. Oda Nobunaga’s marriage alliance with the Saitō wore off understandably fast, with the assassination of Saitō Dōsan in 1556, but his alliance with the Tokugawa lasted through his entire life. Other marriages were more complicated, and between 1565 and 1568, he married his sister to Azai Nagamasa and an adopted daughter to Takeda Katsuyori.79 Both of these had the ability to help him a great deal with isolating his enemies. With Azai, the goal was to help gain a foothold in the area around Kyoto, while with Takeda to make sure his enemies in Mino had nowhere to turn. Both of these backfired on him for different reasons. The Azai house had been allies with the Asakura for generations. When war came between Oda and Asakura in 1570, there was no good choice in the matter. Both sides sent requests for Azai Nagamasa to fight in the war against the other and staying neutral in the conflict would have been a betrayal to his allies. In the end, maintaining the family tradition of the older alliance won out and he fought against his brother-in-law. Unfortunately for him, Nobunaga did not have the luxury to be as forgiving as Kennyo, and the Azai house was brutally erased from history.

79 Lamers, 56
With the Takeda, the conflict was started by Tokugawa being eager to expand his territory and making an alliance with Uesugi against them.\(^{80}\) Because of the territorial positioning, Tokugawa’s choices for expansion were either toward the Takeda, who he was not allied with, or toward Oda, who he had long since supported. Thus, in 1570, a war started between Tokugawa and Takeda, with the latter scoring numerous immediate victories. For Nobunaga, the choice between which ally to support in the war must have been a simple one. Though Tokugawa’s forces were much smaller, he brought Uesugi with him in an alliance. Before fighting, Takeda made an alliance with numerous daimyo and temples which had already started fighting in the first anti-Nobunaga league. Soon enough, Takeda started attacking Oda lands as well. People who broke marriage alliances with Nobunaga were much clearer in their defiance than ones within the Honganji establishment. Other than that, the conflicts were essentially the same. Alliances were important to the continued existence of any medieval power, but the organizational structure and demands of the time meant that the image of marriage alliance was certainly neither clear nor absolute.

Patriarchs and daimyo could not allow for the extended arms of the household structure to fall apart, so they created marriage alliances. Both internally and externally, they used these new relationships to further cement their rule. However, marriage was not the only means of conducting an alliance.

**Other Alliances**

Throughout the 100 years that Honganji was active militarily, patriarchs created and maintained numerous alliances without the added burden of marriage, just as many daimyo did, in order to achieve a common goal that none of them could accomplish alone. While any two

\(^{80}\) Totman, 38
daimyo who allied eventually needed to break their alliance and assert dominance over each other, common goals were not unusual. Though more conditional than marriage alliances, Honganji and daimyo used alliances of convenience as helpful tools.

The most famous alliance that a patriarch forged was with Hosokawa Masamoto in the late 15th century. This alliance was started with a friendship between Rennyo and Masamoto, as well as the latter becoming a member of Honganji sect.81 The lack of a marriage alliance in this case was likely connected to the same reason that Masamoto never married. There were many different situations which were heavily influenced by this alliance. In a simple matter, Rennyo’s son Jitsunyo attained a sponsor in the family of the shogun’s wife, the Hino. This led to deeper connections between the three parties because of Hosokawa’s work arranging the sponsorship. More important was that he helped Rennyo deflect any harsh punishments from being levied upon the Kaga community after the overthrow of the shugo at their hands. Hosokawa’s support in this situation was what gave him the leverage to ask for assistance in his war in 1506 against the Hatakeyama. Jitsunyo ardently attempted to avoid bringing Honganji into the war, even after being asked numerous times.82 Hosokawa’s previous leverages were enough to outweigh the patriarch’s objections and the war was fought, just not by the intended regional community. Across the country, Honganji adherents attacked allies of the Hatakeyama simply because they were enemies of Hosokawa. Even when dragged into a war, the alliance to Honganji was a powerful tool.

The next famous groupings of alliances for the sect were the two anti-Nobunaga leagues. It must be mentioned that none of the members were followers of Honganji, and the alliances included Enryakuji, a temple following a different sect of Buddhism which had previously

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81 Richmond Tsang, 111  
82 Richmond Tsang, 131
attacked their temples, as well as both Takeda Shingen and Uesugi Kenshin, who by this point had taken vows as a Tendai monk and a Zen monk respectively. The sect had also previously been banned from Echizen province by the Asakura lords. Even so, the alliances were lasting, though the strength of the bond is hard to gauge, as there were few opportunities for Honganji to coordinate combat with these allies. Within the anti-Nobunaga’s forces, Honganji has also been referred to as Nobunaga’s, “…strongest single rival for sovereign power in the state.” While likely somewhat of an exaggeration, at least claiming Honganji to be one of Nobunaga’s strongest rivals would be accurate. It is also mentioned elsewhere as being the glue which held these alliances together, though that may be an exaggeration as well, as the leagues were never truly united. Each group stuck with its own power block and Honganji lent assistance wherever available. Primarily, though, Azai, Asakura, and Enryakuji worked with one-another, while many of the smaller daimyo coordinated efforts together. Honganji stood as a constant menace at Nobunaga’s back, ready to invade Kyoto if he were to leave it undefended. One could say that the temple’s work was focused on being a firm distraction for him, as even during the prolonged siege of Ishiyama, as he constantly maintained and supplied a force against them. This took away power which could have been useful in combat elsewhere and doubtlessly made the rest of his fighting more difficult. Without an alliance, even one not cemented by anything other than a common enemy, each force would have quickly fallen individually. At the very least, Honganji’s deep rooted alliances with many daimyo, which were maintained by Kennyo, helped each of them maintain some semblance of power for as long as they did.

For samurai, there were also many alliances made without marriage and, as with Honganji, the success and durability of these relations were tenuous at best. As a simple example,

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83 Lamers, 76
84 Sansom, 282
Uesugi Kenshin was allied with his former rival’s son, Takeda Katsuyori, during the second anti-Nobunaga league. The pact, while it did not attain its goal of defeating Nobunaga, did firmly unify these two parties until Katsuyori’s death in 1582. A broader demonstration of the power of alliances came with the battle of Sekigahara. The battle was fought in numerous places across the country, but at the field from which the event takes its name, roughly 200,000 soldiers fought. 100,000 present were under Tokugawa’s flag while 95,000 were following Ishida Mitsunari. Ishida’s personal forces paled in comparison to Tokugawa’s, but the ranks were filled out to be almost equal because of his alliances with the Ukita, Konishi, Mōri, Chōsōkabe, and others. No alliances in this case were connected by marriage and he banked heavily on the name of Toyotomi Hideyori to assemble his army. Unfortunately for him, names alone were not a stable source of power. Several of the commanders who were expected to show support for the Toyotomi, such as Katō Kiyomasa and Kobayakawa Hideaki, changed sides and fought against Ishida, while others, like the Mōri, chose to take no action in the fighting. It should be noted, however, that these people did not have any familial connection or alliance with Tokugawa. Their actions were a result of mismanagement and resentment toward Ishida. Sekigahara led to millions of koku worth of land transferring from Toyotomi loyalists to those who allied with Tokugawa and shaped the social sphere between daimyo for over 200 years. The impact of how alliances were managed in this case, as with what Honganji had tried to do, is hard to overlook. Tokugawa and Honganji both had a power to draw in allies and maintain them, even if they only had a somewhat common goal. The main difference came with Tokugawa being in a position to unify his forces under a single banner.

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85 Sansom, 412
86 Hawley, 571
Daimyo and patriarch alliances, whether based in marriage or a common foe, were tenuous at best. Both tended to break alliances when it was convenient to do so. While alliances of convenience were not integrated into the organizational structure or the ie system as marriages were, their maintenance was still important to maintain for household survival. Honganji could not have stood so long against Nobunaga without allies, just as Ishida lost due his weak grip on his alliances. Whether patriarch or daimyo, they were, in essence, no different.

Conclusion

The organizational structure of daimyo households and Honganji were vital to their continued existence. A daimyo who cultivated no relationships with neighbors or soon-to-be neighbors soon found himself completely isolated and was likely to be eliminated from his rule. Honganji operated within the same parameters and navigated the same social vicissitudes. While Honganji never had the depth of alliance that the Oda and Tokugawa had, the sect nonetheless crafted many strong alliances throughout its time. Within the household, every structural choice was vital to their continued existence. Therefore, patriarchs and daimyo maintained the same organizational structure for their households, again showcasing the daimyo-like qualities of the Honganji establishment.
Daimyo and Honganji patriarchs created personality cults around themselves in order to help solidify their reign and that of their descendents. To clarify, I do not use “personality cult” as an inherently religious concept, though religious imagery is used. Therefore, a “cult” here is a collection of people who are ardently devoted to someone. While devotion and worship have similarities, daimyo were generally in greater need of the former than the latter. Methodologies for crafting this system were numerous and included likening the patriarchs and daimyo to a Buddha or kami, while also using money and castles to control the local populace. All daimyo made attempts at this, but the most glaring examples came from the three conquerors: Oda, Toyotomi, and Tokugawa. This chapter compares the actions of the conquerors to that of Honganji patriarchs in regards to personality cults to further problematize any separation between powers.

The intent of this chapter is to clarify the overlap of methodologies used by both patriarchs and daimyo in their attempts to create a powerful ruler-vassal relationship. First, I use the connection patriarchs and daimyo made between themselves and powerful historical or divine figures as the basic outline of a personality cult. Next, I show how leaders used important family names to both distinguish themselves amongst rivals and family member and thereby attain additional symbolic power. I then demonstrate through the creation of castles as a representation of patriarchs or daimyo to aid their rule. Finally, I tie each of these concepts together through the use of house rules, as they maintained relations between a ruler and those living on his land. Daimyo made a conscious effort to create ties between ruler and subject, whether subtle or overt. No method on its own could have created a full personality cult, but
when several were used in concert with one another, a dedicated following was created for these powerful figures.

**Ties to Legends and the Divine**

Daimyo and Honganji utilized divinities and legendary figures associated with their household as an early step toward creating a personality cult around the leader. Certain powerful figures in the household were often represented as being earthly forms of kami or Buddhas. Other times, the household was simply linked back to famous houses, such as the Minamoto, Taira, or Fujiwara.

Like many daimyo houses, the line of patriarchs had a near-mythic figure to place as the originator of the line, which comes in the form of Shinran. While the creator of Jōdō Shinshu Buddhist practices, Shinran cannot truly be claimed as the founder of Honganji. Posthumously, he was named the first patriarch, and the first temple, Ōtani Honganji, was built as a place to house his ashes. Even Shinran’s cousin Nyoshin, the second patriarch, did not serve as a Honganji’s leader. He was merely a conduit through which Shinran’s teachings were passed on to Kakunyo, a grandchild born seven years after the founder’s death. Though Kakunyo was officially the third leader of the sect, he was the first person to act in that capacity. Kakunyo wrote a biography of his grandfather called *Honganji Shōnin Shinran den’e*, which was later revered as a centerpiece at annual thanksgiving services.\(^8^7\) Shinran’s ancestry was linked to the Fujiwara clan and in a later addition, another follower names Shinran as being an earthly incarnation of Amida Buddha. Additionally, Shinran’s master, Hōnen, was claimed as an earthly incarnation of Prince Shotoku by means of also being the bodhisattva Kannon. Anything connected to Shinran was fiercely revered along with the writings that he produced. Because of

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\(^8^7\) Rogers and Rogers, 14
Kakunyo’s writings, Shinran became a point of focus for Honganji. This was also something which passed on down the line of patriarchs. While the same process also raised up other forms of Pure Land Buddhism because of Hōnen, the comparative status must be noted, as he was depicted as representing a bodhisattva, with Shinran being a Buddha.

During Rennyo’s time as patriarch, paintings were produced of him sitting alongside Shinran. This was intended as a representation of all of the patriarchs as being manifestations of the will of Amida on the earthly plain. Understating just how powerful a position Rennyo and his successors were being set into with this would be difficult. By his time, the patriarchs were only just starting to be considered as having the power to grant people access to rebirth in the pure land. As the imagery between Rennyo, Shinran, and Amida become more firm, patriarchal grip on the minds of Honganji followers became stronger. However, unlike Shinran, who had been dead for some time, Rennyo was still a living figure when he was held up as Amida. More importantly, he was an incredibly engaged person socially, especially after the destruction of the Ōtani Honganji in 1465. In the years following that event, he personally went to oversee the construction of the Yoshizaki temple, on the border of Echizen and Kaga. This area was part of a major trade route, so people were constantly passing through from across the country. He preached in two ways there, both in person and through ofumi, letters, “…written in vernacular Japanese rather than the classical Chinese normally used for religious texts, explained the sect’s tenets simply, using words easily understood by the relatively uneducated.”

In a time when many older forms of Buddhism, such as Tendai and Shingon, were intentionally making their teaching difficult to understand through esoteric ritual and the use of classical Chinese, he was

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88 Rogers and Rogers, 57
89 Richmond Tsang, 58
simplifying the teachings. This trait of dealing with the common people was shared by many of the newer forms of Buddhism. Bringing teachings more directly to commoners must have created some feelings of gratitude toward Rennyo. When leaving Yoshizaki for his retirement in Yamashina, he had to do so under the cover of darkness because the crowds of people wanting to see him as he left were too great. One could then comfortably suggest that Rennyo had a dedicated following of people. Because of the direct connection to him through bloodlines and the association with Amida, it would be interesting to find out more about how much this dedication transferred over to his descendents. Unfortunately, as patriarchs rarely proselytized directly to the common people after Rennyo due to the increased danger of the times, their popularity is difficult to judge. Immediacy of the response to their call to arms does create a partial image of their popularity, but it is incomplete. Even that was dependent on both the region and who the conflict was meant to be against.

Daimyo had many ways of attempting similar connections to divine figures. The more direct method was demonstrated with Uesugi Kenshin who used a flag which bore the first character of Bishamonten, the Japanese Buddhist god of war. As a result, he was often compared with this figure. Others were less direct about dealing with gods. For example, Ōta Gyuichi, Nobunaga’s biographer, claimed that many of his lord’s victories came as divine assistance keeping him from harm. Given Nobunaga’s survival during, and victory against, the anti-Nobunaga leagues, the opinion is certainly understandable. Were this view openly expressed publicly, it would likely have drawn admirers to his force. Whether or not the claims were used in this manner is difficult to say. His biography was never circulated until after his death, so it is unlikely.

90 Kuroda, 250
91 Lamers, 223
A more clear set of comparisons comes from Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. Both of these men made preparations for their deification after death.\textsuperscript{92} Worship of these men as kami was not the important part of the deification. It created a narrative of divinity for the continuation of the houses. Hideyoshi had no true household lineage to trace back to with some divine or semi-divine figure in the past. Therefore, to create a way of helping his son retain legitimacy after Hideyoshi’s death, he established a divine ancestry. Hideyori was only six years old at the time of his father’s death and was in no way capable of running the country. One way of looking at the situation was that it would be harder for the guardians of the new Kampaku to betray him if there were many people worshiping at shrines dedicated to Hideyoshi. While the Toyotomi house still fell in 1615 and the shrine dedicated to Hideyoshi was demolished, the Tokugawa attempted the same process upon Ieyasu’s death. While his heir was not a child and had fought in the previous wars, the deification was for any shogun who came later. Rather than rely on questionable military skill to continue the shogunate, they used divinity. The deification of Ieyasu led to a situation where later shoguns could point to a deity and claim that they ruled by the guiding light of a kami. This was likely a less useful policy than the systematic poverty which Tokugawa bakufu maintain over daimyo, but every bit helped.

This method of connecting rulers to kami was similar in form to the idea of representing patriarchs as manifestations of Amida. Guardians of the household were not some distant kami or Buddha, but were directly tied to the lineage. Because people could easily reference divine figures in direct connection with leaders, they became more attached to the daimyo or patriarch household. However, divinities were not the only important figures these leaders connected themselves to.

\textsuperscript{92} Scheid, 310
Power of the Name

Family names were yet another daimyo and patriarch tool to create personality cults because they carried a legacy throughout generations, where the current leader’s achievements were tied to the entire household. Much like a kami or a Buddha, near-mythic historical figures carried a great deal of influence. The Taira lost their power in the Genpei War (1180-1185), and yet samurai in the 16th century were still connecting themselves to this house. Daimyo did so because of the power the family had wielded and for the power the name could be used to wield. The importance of the family name had an impact both on and off the battlefield.

Honganji had multiple ways in which it used names for the purpose of their power. When giving a history of the founder’s family, Shinran was connected to the Fujiwara, to the Taira, and even Tan-luan, the supposed founder of Pure Land Buddhism in China.93 The attempt was, in essence, to draw power from all directions. The Fujiwara descent helped to legitimize patriarchs with nobility, the Taira made them more interesting to warriors, and Tan-luan was a firm connection to Pure Land Buddhism similarly to being claimed as a manifestation of Amida. Anything which could grant legitimacy in the weakened stages of Honganji’s history was put to use. The other use of temporal names came from the character nyō in the names of patriarchs. The basis of this tradition was Nyoshin, Shinran’s cousin and student. This character in the name was used as a link to legitimacy within the power transfers in Honganji.94 Every patriarch’s name contained this character as a marker of their method of declaring legitimacy. After all, it was suggested that the teachings could not properly pass through the bloodlines alone, since Shinran’s grandson could not have been the second patriarch without someone to pass forward the legitimacy directly. Therefore, Nyoshin was the conduit for transfer of teachings and the

93 Rogers and Rogers, 116
94 Richmond Tsang, 17
proper standing of the patriarchs. The reason for this was that the patriarch’s position would have been shaky had his Honganji leadership exclusively come from his mother, as Shinran died before his birth. Both the callback to older houses and using names for legitimacy were common strategies for samurai.

One way in which battles were often impacted was through samurai hedging their bets to maintain the continuance of the family line. As mentioned in previous chapters, the Honda family fought for both sides during the Mikawa ikki. Honda Tadakatsu and his branch of the family changed religions to have no conflicts of interest in fighting for Tokugawa Ieyasu, while Honda Hirotaka and his branch did not change religions, but gave a hostage, and Honda Masanobu sided with Honganji.95 The situation within the family was convoluted, but made perfect sense. Regardless of the outcome of the war, one branch or another stood to benefit. Because Honganji was removed from Mikawa, Tadakatsu’s branch was most prominently seen as a supporter of Ieyasu. Had it been allowed to remain, Hirotaka’s branch would have worked with both sides after the war to expand their influence on either side. Lastly, on the odd chance that Honganji would have won the war, Masanobu was in a strong position to help with placement of the rest of his family afterwards. In a similar style, when the Sanada were asked to support Tokugawa at Sekigahara, Sanada Masayuki and his second son Nobushige sided with the Toyotomi while his eldest, Nobuyuki, maintained his alliance with Tokugawa.96 As was the case with the Honda, so long as all of the important family heads did not die in battle, the family name would always continue on and have a legacy to preserve. However, there were times when people created a new legacy for themselves with an entirely separate name.

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95 Richmond Tsang, 219
96 Abe, 377
Hōjō Sōun was the first head of what is known as the Go-Hōjō family. That is to say, he came from an exceedingly obscure background and took over a large area of the Kantō region, using the name Hōjō as a means of legitimacy.\(^{97}\) By the time Sōun created his household in that region, the Hōjō regents to the Kamakura shogunate had long since ceased to exist. As such, he was resurrecting an old and familiar name so that his line would seem much older and more respected on a national scale. This method of taking another name was not uncommon among the samurai, and Tokugawa Ieyasu used a slightly different methodology for his name change. Going through his genealogies, he took the name Tokugawa from an ancestor eight generations removed, Tokugawa Chikauji.\(^{98}\) There were two important reasons for this change. One was that the Matsudairai house was large and had many branches. He had to distinguish himself from the rest somehow and having an entirely different name was an effective means of doing this. Second, the Tokugawa name was also linked as descendents of the Minamoto. Perhaps, even so early in his career, he was thinking far ahead to the possibility of legitimacy for shogunal power. While unlikely, setting his hopes so high is an interesting possibility. The more likely consideration is that in using the name, and its connection to the Minamoto, Tokugawa presented a stronger symbolic legitimacy than Matsudairai. His branch of the household was thereafter set as the sole vessel for power within the family, with the Matsudairai being subsidiary.

Similar connections to ancient houses were common throughout that time period. The Oda, for instance, were able to trace their name back to Taira no Sukemori, and Nobunaga was therefore eligible to take the title of shogun.\(^{99}\) Nobunaga even came to the point where he was signing letters using the name Taira to emphasize his heritage. There has been speculation that the goal was to create a layer of separation between him and the Ashikaga shoguns, as they were

\(^{97}\) Sansom, 243
\(^{98}\) Totman, 35
\(^{99}\) Lamers, 20
of Minamoto descent. This is demonstrated by the fact that he constantly turned down offers of titles from the shogun. While separation is a reasonable suggestion, it could simply have been that he was giving justification to his position essentially as guardian, or puppeteer in reality, of the shogun. Another issue with that was his willingness to be allied with Tokugawa who, as mentioned before, claimed Minamoto heritage.

Because Hideyoshi was born into a peasant house, the possibility of him being able to claim descent from or connection to either Minamoto or Taira was remote at best. Therefore unable to attain the rank of shogun, he set his sights on the title of kampaku, which could translate to “imperial regent” or “prime minister” for an adult emperor. Like shogun, though, it was limited in who could attain the rank. Fujiwara ancestry was required, through the branch houses of Nijō, Kujō, Konoe, Ichijō, and Takakusa, so he arranged for his adoption by Konoe Sakihisa in 1586.¹⁰⁰ Even this political move was irregular, but people accepted it because of his powerful position in military standing across the country.

Honganji used names of important figures the same way as daimyo. All means available were used to reinforce legitimacy of the line. Because names like Minamoto, Taira, and Fujiwara carried weight for people in the upper crust of society, they were useful tools, albeit with limits. Names and divine figures were symbolic forms of power, but there were more concrete methods of creating personality cults.

**Castles and Temples as Effigy**

Castles and castle-like temples carried a comparable symbolic power beyond their defensive capabilities; these structures were a constant reminder of the ruler’s presence, further

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¹⁰⁰ *Hideyoshi*, 179
cementing the foundation of a personality cult. Unlike famous names, castles had the additional impact of being a tangible representation of power.

Castles were useless without a town to defend and people willing to fight to defend them; soldiers came from the castle’s proximity and a distant town meant that troops were limited to the people who lived within the castle grounds. Even the most powerful fortifications would not be able withstand a siege for long with only a handful of defenders. Therefore, Honganji built temples with defense in mind inside of a population center. Honganji had several famous temples which were built near rivers or mountains, with high walls, towers, and moats, such as: Yoshizaki, Yamashiro, Nagashima, and Ishiyama. There were others, but these were the most iconic. Among them, Yoshizaki and Ishiyama will be the ones dealt with here because of the higher availability of materials regarding them. Both of these temples built jinaichō around their base. The Yoshizaki temple carried the name of the town it was surrounded by and Ishiyama was within Ōsaka. Considering that Rennyo built Yoshizaki soon after his home temple was destroyed, the fact that Yoshizaki was created so defensibly should come as no surprise. Not only did he build it atop a hill, making it clearly visible from the surrounding countryside, but it was also surrounded by water on three sides, which funneled attacks primarily into one narrow position. Both of these aspects were ideal for defense, but also for local morale. The temple was a constant reminder of Honganji’s military power.

Similarly, Ishiyama was built upon a small hill, surrounded in most directions by waterways. While difficult to approach by land, it had easy capability of being reinforced by sea. The castle was considered to be nearly impregnable and was initially built as the temple of retirement for one of the patriarchs. However, those defenses call into question the idea of

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101 Richmond Tsang, 57
102 Sansom, 282
retirement. While the medieval period was a dangerous time, the preparation that place made for war was almost excessive in that regard. What made more sense was when it became the headquarters for the patriarchs, such as Kennyo. The construction of it was meant to face war, yes, but was also meant to be an imposing location. The massive stone walls simultaneously conveyed both control over the people living there, and safety from the nearby daimyo.

The jinaichō was also an important factor in these locations and the basis for it was used later by the three conquerors. As part of the personality cult around the patriarchs, it was important to draw people in as much as possible and make them devoted to Hoganji. For the most part, outside authorities respected jinaichō as being an extension of the temples themselves. This meant that the towns had military and tax exemptions, as well as something like diplomatic immunity from pursuit by temporal authorities. While the people on this land therefore owed the same duties to the temple instead of a daimyo, living there was also essentially their own choice. Many of the immunities were designed to draw in merchants to help increase the wealth of the surrounding area. More wealth then provided greater possibility for expansion of the city and greater prosperity in the surrounding area. It should also be noted that both Yoshizaki and Osaka were built along trade routes, which meant that they each had constant possibilities for expansion and for word of them to spread. All of these concepts were factors in the expansion of Honganji jinaichō and the personality cult revolving around the patriarch.

Oda Nobunaga also had a great deal of experience with powerful, imposing castles. The first one was Gifu castle, which he did not build, but did rename, along with the entire province it was in. Prior to 1567, it was known as Inabayama castle in Mino province. Changing its name added a symbolic layer to his victory, because it also signaled the changeover of

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103 Richmond Tsang, 24
104 Lamers, 28
Nobunaga’s territory to having its headquarters in Gifu. As a more central territory, Gifu’s location was more convenient than Owari. This way, rather than be boxed in by Tokugawa, he was in a prime position to face any threat. Though Nobunaga was leaving a more devoted population behind, he was also demonstrating his willingness to serve as a military bulwark for his territory.  

Azuchi castle, on the other hand, was one that Nobunaga designed himself and had his own forces build in an area which had a low population. Allegedly, the castle main tower was exceedingly tall at around 138 feet, as well as standing atop a mountain.\textsuperscript{105} This size and position was meant to draw as much attention to it as possible. Because it was placed specifically to overlook the Nakasendō, the castle certainly was also seen by a great number of people passing through the area. Many armies either had to pass under or at least near Nobunaga’s base of power in order to approach Kyoto. Understanding the same need as at Yoshizaki and Ishiyama, Nobunaga made efforts to create a real castle town. At the time, the nearest cities were in Kyoto and Gifu, which were both relatively distant. Rather than rely simply on chance and word of mouth to boost the number of people in the area, he enacted policies to draw people in. Toward this effect, he enacted thirteen rules for the town, including ones such as creating a free market, requiring merchants passing through to stay for the night, and a mandate that settlers around the castle, no matter where they were from, be treated the same as longtime residents.\textsuperscript{106} All of the rules were carefully crafted to draw in people as much as possible. Merchants especially were in a good position because there were no guilds or organizations to which they owed dues in Azuchi. Moreover, for the first two years of residency there, no taxes were owed to the Oda.

\textsuperscript{105} Lamers, 125
\textsuperscript{106} Lamers, 134-5
Overall, the plan was successful and the small town’s population blossomed until Nobunaga’s death.

Not long after Nobunaga was killed, Hideyoshi began his project of building Ōsaka castle along with Fushimi castle to become his place of retirement. Choosing a better spot for Ōsaka castle would have been a difficult task, as it was built upon the land that Ishiyama Honganji had previously occupied with few defensive changes to the grounds. Hideyoshi gathered workers from across the country to construct these two castles and, by one account, left people awestruck with these construction projects.107 Beyond that, the numbers of people working on both Fushimi and Ōsaka castles were alleged to rival, if not exceed the number of soldiers involved in the campaign going on in Korea at that time.

Hideyoshi ordered daimyo to send many construction workers from their territory in order to build Ōsaka and Fushimi castles as part of his bid to create a personality cult. A letter from Hideyoshi to Kikkawa Hiroie boasts that these people came from Dewa, territory of the Date far to the northeast, as well as the Kantō, which included Tokugawa, Sanada, and others.108 More provinces were involved, but these were the only ones mentioned specifically. This was a demonstration of power over the others in two ways. Daimyo were spending their own money and resources to build monuments for Hideyoshi. Not only was it a reminder of who they owed their allegiance to, but was also a strong marker of just how difficult it was to resist Toyotomi rule. While the whole country knew about Nobunaga’s siege on Ishiyama by that point, the thought of attacking such a place guarded by a full army in control of most of the country must have been too daunting to consider. Since the defenses were strengthened in the construction process, it would be hard to see the construction as anything less than a warning. Even when the

107 *Hideyoshi*, 131-2
108 *Hideyoshi*, 131
Tokugawa did lay siege to Ōsaka in 1615, it took a treaty requiring that Hideyori fill in the outer moat and inner moat, as well as removal of the outer ramparts, to make the attack possible. Considering the history and capability of the place, the castle’s imposing form presented a powerful image of the Toyotomi household to the local populace until Hideyori’s death. While the castle itself protected the lord, that protection was implicitly passed down to the castle town as well.

Considering these examples, it should come as no surprise that Tokugawa Ieyasu took a similar approach to constructing his own castle town in Edo. Chiyoda (Edo) castle was built using much of the same methodology as Ōsaka and Fushimi. However, when Tokugawa was initially transferred from his ancestral home in Mikawa, Edo was hardly a village, much less a city. Unlike his predecessors, Tokugawa therefore did not start with the castle itself, but built a city. He created conditions which were welcoming for farmer and merchant alike, as well as creating infrastructure, such as canals and bridges. This made the city easier to navigate and helped relieve some of the issues presented by the swampy nature of the region. While there were some light improvements to the previous castle, little was truly done until 1603. Before then, growth of the town had to remain Tokugawa’s first priority. Once he was officially named shogun, he carried the social weight to send out an order across the country for daimyo to supply materials to improve both the town and the castle. By the time construction was complete, Chiyoda was a castle of comparable standing to Ōsaka or what Azuchi had been. Moreover, because daimyo across the entire country contributed to its construction, they were aware of how formidable it was, thus creating a deterrent to resistance of Tokugawa rule. Because construction was not limited to the castle, the commoners in the area also had reason to be grateful toward the

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109 Sansom, 398
110 Totman, 66
111 Totman, 113
shogun. Money and further need for workers was flowing into town at a massive rate and both the economy and population boomed.

The building of castles and temple towns created a sense of community surrounding the daimyo and patriarchs. This community was the basis for a personality cult, with the castle standing as a devotional image in the center of the town. Outsiders likely considered a citizen of Osaka under Honganji to be an adherent of the sect because of his proximity to its sphere of influence. In conflicts, that meant that their fate was bound together. This is why Nobunaga gathered and executed 20,000 men, women, and children in the vicinity of Nagashima during his siege of the temple.\textsuperscript{112} For those who likely never had an opportunity to actually see their overlord in person, castles were a constant reminder of his existence. This gave something for the people to look at which was conspicuous in any part of the town and can be considered as comparable to repeatedly seeing a statue of an important figure. While the paradigm was not perfect, it did achieve results. Some form of a personality cult to these three leaders and the Honganji patriarchs specifically cropped up in areas around castles. One can still find many shrines adorned with the Oda mon across Azuchi village. Castles, however, were a passive way of creating a personality cult and needed to be connected to rules and laws in order to be fully used.

**Household Rules**

Patriarchs and daimyo wrote regulations ostensibly for their own people, designed primarily as behavioral modifier for their heirs and high ranking followers in order to help solidify a personality cult. While the ruler’s goal was to impact the lower levels of society, this was an impossible task with an absentee heir or head monks of local temples coming drunk to

\textsuperscript{112} Lamers, 103
important events. As mentioned in chapter one, the Asakura and Oda came to power because the shugo of their provinces was drawn away to the refined pleasures Kyoto could offer and did not return. Someone new could overthrow daimyo, patriarchs, or even lower-level landholders if these people followed the same patterns as shugo had before them. Inattentive patriarchs or head monks could just have easily led to a schism in Honganji if the followers became adequately dissatisfied with their service.

Rennyo made a similar set of regulations for his followers, especially in Kaga, and patriarchs after him took the rules quite seriously. In the same way as daimyo rules, these could be seen as ways of managing the behavior of branch temple heads which would carry over to the rest of the followers. As mentioned previously, one monk was expelled from the order for inaccurately teaching Honganji beliefs. While excommunication may sound like a tame punishment, exiled priests were known to starve to death because they were shunned by the other followers. A priest who would not follow Rennyo’s rules was not of much use to the sect. Therefore, following the regulations set down by Rennyo was imperative for priests. There was even room for interpretations that if the community ignored these rules, it was the fault of the local priest and he could therefore be exiled, though the possibility for exile was extended to normal followers as well. This led to a further strengthening of the connection between Honganji followers and the patriarchs. Though the personality cult in this regard was built partially on fear of excommunication, it was still a personality cult.

Of the eleven regulations Rennyo created, most of them were focused on how to be good members of Honganji. Many were worded in a way that suggests a desire to limit confrontation with shugo, daimyo, and other religious institutions. For example, they say to not

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113 Richmond sang, 191
114 Richmond Tsang, 66
slander other Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or gods, as well as to not speak up about the teachings of Honganji without being fully knowledgeable about them. In the more temporal cases, it says to not start conflicts with military governors. Considering that there were times that patriarchs and the shogun both gave orders for followers to resist the local shugo, this can be seen as more of a method of placation. However, it should be noted that these rules said to not instigate conflict, which is not the same as not fighting with a governor. Once Honganji was named the shugo of Kaga and took a strong military presence in other regions, it essentially became the local temporal power which the rules said to obey. The regulations reinforced temple power and, by extension, the patriarch, as being the ultimate temporal and religious power. Rather than obedience to the local lords, the behavior created was a personality cult towards the patriarchs. There were even regulations about decorum regarding consumption of food and alcohol. Disobedience of these, such as a priest conducting a nembutsu meeting drunk, certainly would have led to a drop in confidence toward Honganji. Therefore, Rennyo made the rules to present the best image possible and prevent monks from weakening the sect.

Many daimyo created similar sets of regulations for their households, though there was also a great deal of overlap between different lords. Their goal was to tie future daimyo to the land with provincial development and keep them from straying from their home. The Asakura house, for instance, had a list of seventeen regulations for future leaders. Most of these regulations were made to reduce extravagance, but there were others written in order to help maintain a personality cult around the heirs. Examples of these include running their forces as a meritocracy, expenditure of money for the greater good rather than for personal gain, and
impartiality in application of the law.\textsuperscript{115} Each of these took a different path toward a personality cult.

The meritocracy was aimed at creating a dedication among the military followers. For example, if one were effective in battle, but constantly passed up for command in favor of someone who served in the household for longer, that would lead to dissatisfaction and an urge to look elsewhere for employment. However, if one’s capabilities were constantly being recognized, they would more likely dedicate themselves to working for their daimyo and start to compete with rivals for improved performance. The portions on spending for the greater good were things like promoting cultural growth in the province, rather than paying people to come from other provinces to make performances, as well as a reminder that it would be a better use of money to be able to arm 100 people with average quality spears than to arm one man with a high quality sword. Both of these were good reminders that the daimyo and his holdings were one and the same. Without the promotion of the arts across his provinces, the place would culturally stagnate and be left behind. Likewise, any samurai who chose to richly arm himself while not arming his soldiers would soon find himself on the losing end of the battlefield. Promotion of either of these policies would have led to at least gratitude toward the leader for his efforts in improving the area or in military preparedness. However, the third mentioned is the most important. Impartiality in law was vital because any lord who always sided with samurai over peasants and religious institutions would have created deep dissatisfaction against his house. Eventually, people would have stopped coming to him for legal matters and his territory would become more chaotic. Honganji’s history even demonstrated what happened when impartiality was not applied by the daimyo. In the medieval period, no position was entirely secure, least of

\textsuperscript{115} Sansom, 251-3
all among those involved in the military. Therefore, creating strong ties with followers high and low was vital to survival of a daimyo house.

House codes were important for keeping heirs and influential vassals in line among the powerful houses. Many daimyo houses came to power by overthrowing shugo who abandoned their duties. Rules were a step towards preventing the same thing from happening to the daimyo house. Honganji patriarchs used rules in the same manner, because a few priests not following the regulations could have severely weakened the sect. A famous name and a powerful castle were no guarantee of power in the Sengoku period. Regulating the behavior of powerful figures within the household was a strong step toward maintaining a personality cult. Honganji’s dedicated resistance to control by temporal authorities led to a strong following by the peasantry and lower class samurai. While the rules Rennyo wrote were meant to lessen conflict, what they truly did was create an even stronger dedication to Honganji’s temple leaders and patriarchs which grew over time. Likewise, house codes such as what the Asakura produced were meant to regulate the behavior of the future heirs, but also had the strong potential to create a personality cult around future Asakura daimyo.

**Conclusion**

Crafting a personality cult was a key strategy for both Honganji and daimyo to preserve their power. This parallel only further problematizes the tripartite model of warrior, noble, and religious institution. Had Honganji been exclusively a religious institution, then there would have been no need to connect patriarchs to Fujiwara or Taira households, as these were temporal powers with no connection to religion. Castle-like temples would also have been unnecessary because the patriarch’s hold on the people would have been spiritual, not militant. Lastly,
household regulations would not have been important because all the rules for people to follow were in the sect’s doctrine. However, these tools were all necessary because patriarchs were essentially daimyo, and to claim otherwise suggests that despite behaving almost identically, they were still fundamentally different.
Conclusion

The historical framework that claims that there was a separation of three powers of warriors, nobles, and religious centers in medieval Japan is both persistent and problematic. It requires an assumption of absolutes, wherein each group was implied to have an entirely separate mode of behavior since they were separate powers. Had religious centers like Honganji exclusively stayed within the realm of religion, it would not contradict the framework. As clearly demonstrated, patriarchs regularly engaged in politics and military action. Honganji’s behavior militarily, organizationally, and in creating a personality cult, demonstrates patriarchs operating in no way different from their contemporary feudal lords, and thus has no reason to be considered as separate powers.

While militarism is something which might be considered the distinctive realm of the warrior class, Honganji was highly active in fighting to expand its territories and make sure that its privileges were protected. Even when taken into vassalage by an older and more powerful institution, the sect worked to gain power and eventually regained independence. The sect followed a path familiar to many daimyo in crushing internal strife and solidifying the patriarch’s rule. Wars Honganji fought and how they were conducted followed patterns comparable to daimyo activity. How the patriarchs controlled their sect in this regard was parallel to daimyo behavior.

Organizational structure of households used by Honganji patriarchs and daimyo was used in the same way to create order and control over their lands. Both maintained a pyramidal structure to properly manage forces, making retainers dependent on the position of the leader to maintain power, just as the leaders were dependent on them. These were also tied in with how they created and maintained alliances, not only involving marriages, but ones of convenience as
well. Much of the organization was highlighted by the roles of patriarchs and daimyo, in that they often started timid when small, sending their children away to be raised by dangerous neighboring powers in order to protect the household; later, they became more bold as their power grew and were less likely to bow to outside forces. All of this further goes to clarify that Honganji was not simply a religious order, but a power with the same trappings as daimyo carried with them.

Daimyo and patriarchs both made the same types of efforts toward creating personality cults around themselves to preserve their rule after death. There were many methods, but the main ones included symbols of power, through figures like Buddhas or famous samurai lineages, as well as the creation of castles. Even household rules were written so that they would tie heirs and the land together to prevent an overthrow of the future leader in order to preserve the other methods of creating a personality cult. Patriarchs were just as concerned in these regards as daimyo because a large force was more prone to schisms. The fact that Honganji and daimyo both created personality cults around the leaders is less important than the fact that they both followed the same methodologies in doing so. Between this, the organizational methods, and the military activity of the sect, there clearly was no firmly defined separation between Honganji patriarchs and daimyo.

Studies presupposing the tripartite model present a thoroughly skewed view of history. Warriors are given primacy and religious centers are treated as distant from the warfare and ineffectual in general. Ōta Gyuichi, Nobunaga’s retainer and biographer, was notably prejudiced against Honganji forces. When mentioning one skirmish against the ikkō ikki, he wrote, “…they were farmers and others of similar ilk, and therefore of no account.”116 In many ways, historians take Ōta’s words at face value and consider armies that the patriarchs raised to be insignificant.

116 Lamers, 103
Considering that the sect assembled massive forces and defeated Nobunaga in several battles, separation between the three powers needs to be reevaluated from the military standpoint alone. Were Honganji so insignificant in the fighting, Nobunaga would not have spent a decade besieging the Ishiyama temple. Neither warriors nor nobles would have married their daughters into a group powerless in military and politics; the sect structured itself like, and created the same kind of personality cult around patriarchs, as daimyo households did and drew in relations with military powers. Therefore, as this all comes together to show, the historical tripartite model separating warriors from nobles and religious institutions needs to be abandoned or significantly altered.

Honganji was, of course, a religious institution, which cannot be fully ignored. As such, the sect did engage in activities which daimyo themselves rarely dealt with. The concern in this thesis is not whether or not Honganji was a religious institution, but whether or not there is any reason to give it separate status historically from warrior households. Because of its engagement with military matters, the sect’s organizational structure, and attempts at creating a personality cult beyond the religious teachings, patriarchs must be considered as comparable to daimyo. Though the sect engaged in religious activity, there was more to it than religion alone, and that is why this thesis highlights Honganji in the terms of a temporal institution.

Moreover, it is my hope that the framework of religious institutions as daimyo can be extended to other powerful temples, such as Enryakuji and Kōfukuji. While the comparisons are less precise, due to having neither marriages nor hereditary lineages, many of the same points are present. When scholars demonstrate that Honganji was not an isolated case, there will be less ground for the tripartite model to stand on, thereby opening up new possibilities in terms of the validity of religious institution as subjects of military history.
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