Excavations and Restoration of the Yamashina Jinaichō

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Yamashina Jinaichō (a temple town) was a planned city of the Sengoku period constructed almost in the center of the Yamashina basin. The center of the town was Honganji, reconstructed by Saint Rennyo. After careful preparation, construction began in 1478. It prospered as a central jinaichō supported by many followers in various districts but was attacked by enemies and was abolished in 1532. The purpose of the study is to clarify the features of the Yamashina Jinaichō objectively through the results of the research of extant sites, of excavations which were conducted twice, and from old pictures remaining in various places.

The land where the jinaichō was constructed could have been acquired due to the fact that the beliefs of the Honganji sect had spread to the villagers of Yamashina and not only because Saint Rennyo had been an acquaintance of the feudal lord, Sanpoin. The jinaichō was composed of Gohonji, Uchijinai (inner temple town) and Sotojinai (outer temple town). Until recently the remains of earthen walls and moats could be found, and the domain of those days could be traced quite easily. However, due to recent building land developments, the remains are at the point of being destroyed. In 1973 and 1974, excavations were conducted, and from an area near the center of the jinaichō, remains were found of the facilities of the town, such as moats, stone walls and smithies, as well as of the structure of a building that contained stone chambers constructed in the inner part of Gohonji. Moreover, the large quantity of earthenware excavated is a valuable historical source that indicates the exact date of the remains.

Meanwhile, quite a few old pictures showed Yamashina-go (a unit of several villages) and the site of the Jinaichō were produced during the Edo period. Some of them are owned by Nandenkōshōji and Saishūji, which are closely connected to the Jinaichō. The restoration of the Yamashina Jinaichō and the Nanden that Saint Rennyo used as a retreat was attempted from these historical sources and extant sites. The importance of restoring the most of these sites and of making them in understanding regional life is stressed.