Local Ties Between Small and Middling Temples in Edo:
The Ichigaya Minami-teramachi Association

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Edo-period castle towns were partitioned into three kinds of district: military house districts, temple districts, and townsmen districts. In the case of temple districts, especially the small and middling temples of Edo which constituted the city’s majority of temples, there is little accumulated research. Study of the local community ties between temples is necessary to any understanding of urban society in Edo whose temple districts also notably comprised competing sects. To date, no such research exists. Taking the local association of Ichigaya Minami-teramachi as its focus, this study examines local community ties between temples in Edo, shedding light on the following four areas: 1) Nine temples, differing in sect, size, and status, were relocated during construction of Edo castle’s outer moat in Kan’ei 11-12 (1634-35). The association was formed by these nine temples to assign land to create shared roads and to build a gate at the entrance to the district’s interior. 2) The association’s basic functions included management of the gate and roads, the gatekeeper’s residence, and the gatekeeper. The association collected funds from military houses for the maintenance and management of shared roads, but association operations were run exclusively by the temples. Within the association, temples were of equal standing regardless of size and status. 3) The gatekeeper assumed responsibility for keeping the area around the gate clean as well as for opening and closing the gate. The gatekeeper’s principal source of income derived from sales conducted at the gatehouse. Although the gatekeeper was initially independent of the association, subsequent to Horeki 6 (1756) the association strengthened its control over the gatekeeper. 4) By the late 18th century, a variety of individual incidents had led the association to assume responsibility for a monthly position that dealt with unusual occurrences (e.g., the collapse of a passerby), for the mutual guarantee of property through the practice of internal resolution (naisai) in the case of disputed land, and for mutual financial assistance through the operation of lending circles (tanomoshiko).

Given the above, the study concludes that the Ichigaya Minami-teramachi association was an autonomous local association of temples which, by the late 18th century, had taken on the character of an urban residential association.