Analysis of the Tembun Hokke Rebellion as a Medieval City Study: in the viewpoint of Kyoto’s Nichiren temples depicted in paintings

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Considering the city of Kyoto in the late Muromachi Period, the Nichiren Sect of Buddhism (a religious group looking up to Nichiren as their mentor) in the city is an important element as a social organization. The Nichiren Sect in Kyoto started with the missionary work of Nichiro, one of Roku Roso (the Six Senior Disciples of Nichiren), in the city from the late Kamakura Period to the Nanboku-cho Period. Then the missionary work of Daikaku Myoitsu and Nichizo extended the influence of the religion. After granted an order of Shikai Shodo (missionary to the whole world) by the Emperor Go-Daigo, the sect steadily gained religious influence while constantly changing its alignment centered on the Shijo Monryu lineage. Reportedly, the Tembun Hokke Rebellion, also known as the Tembun Religious Persecution, broke out against the Nichiren Sect in 1536 (Tembun 5). This greatest persecution of the sect caused to temporarily expel its members from Kyoto though they were allowed by the Emperor to come back in the end. The management of the religious group continued to lack stability due to such factors as conflicts and realignments of divisions within the group and its defeat in the Azuchi religious dispute caused by Oda Nobunaga in 1579 (Tensho 7). According to the commonly accepted theory, the sect did not fully revive in the late 16th century.

Multiple paintings of Rakuchu-Rakugai-Zu (Scenes In and Around Kyoto) created around the Tembun Hokke Rebellion depict temples of the Nichiren Sect. In conventional studies of Rakuchu-Rakugai-Zu, the existence of these temples has contributed to dating the scenes. Considering that Rakuchu-Rakugai-Zu paintings are artworks depicting ideal scenes based on the aim of the sponsors, however, it is not very important to date an individual scene. Moreover, these Nichiren temples in the paintings vary from each other, and there are also differences in depiction. Therefore, the more important things to study are why the sect exiled from Kyoto was continually portrayed, whether there are any differences between head temples portrayed in the paintings and other head temples, and, if any, what social background the difference has. Quoting research results of the Rakuchu-Rakugai-Zu paintings that are being dated and whose purposes to be created are being confirmed, the present article is aimed at defining the meaning of the head temples of the Nichiren Sect depicted in the paintings.

Keywords: Medieval period, Nichiren Sect, Tembun Hokke Rebellion, Temple premises, Scenes In and Around Kyoto (Rakuchu-Rakugai-Zu)