

The Shinshu Sect and feudal power in late premodern Japan:
The case of the Ianjin incident at the beginning of the 19th century
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Since the 1980s, Japanese Buddhist sects operating during the regime of the Edo Bakufu have been described as religious communities retaining their autonomy under the authority of the shogunate. During the past few years, historians have come to affirm that it was possible for each sect to coexist within the late premodern feudal system, leading to attention being directed at the characteristic features of the shogunate's religious policies and its position regarding religious conflicts. However, the question of how those policies affected the religious communities concerned and the manner in which they were managed has yet to be studied.

This paper examines an incident concerning an issue of religious doctrine, a matter that should have been a part of Buddhist community autonomy, but during which the feudal authorities interfered nonetheless. The incident arose within the Higashi Honganji Temple Shinshu sect involving five monks from Owari Province accused by the head temple's abbot of heresy (*Ianjin* 異安心). After undergoing an interrogation by the temple's office of inquiry, the monks were found to be innocent. However, the not guilty judgment brought about internal dissension within the community, leading to rioting among the sect's adherents in Owari fief. Moreover, when the verdict was reported to the fief's authorities, the Honganji's Nagoya-Gobo temple, acting as herald (Furegashira 触頭), reported that the temple headquarters had judged the priests to be heretical, leading to a misunderstanding between the feudal authorities and the temple.

The use of the term *fuseigi* 不正義 (incorrect) *Ianjin* in the public proclamation made by the Owari authorities led to confusion among both the sect's priests and its adherents. The feudal authorities dealt with the situation by ordering the temple to modify its judgment so that it would fit the Owari

proclamation; and the temple complied. However, this meant that the temple had forfeited its own autonomy regarding matters of doctrine, which in return lead to a backlash among its priests and adherents.

This incident reveals the confrontation that existed surrounding the autonomous interpretation of religious doctrine within Buddhist sects brought about by the shogunate's religious policies.