



“Kyoto’s Yamashina Mido was completed in 1483. In spite of some residual rivalry, particularly from the Takada Sensuji in the Kanto, Rennyo had effectively realized the unfulfilled aspirations of his ancestor Kakunyo in making the Honganji the undisputed centre of Jodo Shinshu and the authority for the authentic teaching of Shinran.

Rennyo was now nearing the end of his life, but did not lack descendants to carry on his work, for he left 15 daughters and 13 sons, the last born when he was 84 years of age. So, with his succession secure Rennyo retired in 1489 and handed over the headship of the Honganji to his son Jjitsunyo. Rennyo spent the first few years of his retirement within the compound of Yamashina Mido, but in 1496 he began to yearn for solitude, so he built a hermitage on a sweeping bend in the Yodo River downstream from Kyoto. It lay on a long sloping, wooded

plateau, and the “long slope” gave the place its name: Osaka. A contemporary account noted how Rennyo had established his chapel “on Ikutama manor, at a place called Osaka; the first documented use of the name of what is now Japan’s second city.

Osaka provided tranquility for only a short time however, because even in retirement Rennyo commanded a huge and loyal following. Thousands flocked to pay homage to him, so his simple hermitage was soon replaced by great prayer halls, residences for visiting Jodo Shinshu priests and extensive gardens. The growing complex was surrounded by formidable moats and walls. Tradesmen moved in, and by the time of Rennyo’s death in 1499 the new foundation, now called Ishiyama Honganji, was beginning to take on its final shape. By the 1520’s at least six residential neighborhoods had grown up around the religious complex. Jodo Shinshu continued to

grow and prosper under Shonyo, the tenth leader of the Honganji, who took over following his father Jitsunyo’s death in 1525.”

- excerpted from “*Japanese Fortified Temples and Monasteries AD 710-1602*”
Stephen Turnbull, Osprey Publishing

Gassho,

Rev. Mae