Grace for the Wicked: A Doctrinal Analysis of Shinran's *Akunin Shōki* within Shin Buddhism

by

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Abstract

The doctrine of *akunin shōki* has had a profound impact on Japanese religious and intellectual history. The idea that "the object of Amida's salvation is evil people," has a long history both within True Pure Land Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū) and outside of it. I argue that, while there have been different perspectives on what has been understood by *akunin* related to *akunin shōki*, patterns can be seen by thinkers in the medieval and modern periods. I do this through historical and doctrinal analysis of *akunin shōki* itself and by framing it as a process of intellectual and religious evolution that had been ongoing in Japan for some time, even prior to the introduction of Buddhism. Using thinkers such as James C. Dobbins, Ogoshi Aiko, and Jamie Hubbard, I seek to evaluate the relationship between the internal world and the external realm through a doctrinal discussion regarding *akunin shōki*. I use historical texts written by Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1263) to show how his perception of *akunin* was informed by preceding ideas while also being influential on future thinkers. With this I seek to show how cosmology affects anthropology and vice versa in the practical effects of doctrinal influences on Japanese history.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Jarrett Stalinger. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity.

-Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Pro Publio Sestio* [For Publius Sestius]

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Introduction

"Errare humanum est" / "To err is human"
-Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) [Based off a Latin proverb]

Throughout Japanese history since the medieval period, True Pure Land Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū, henceforth usually rendered as Shin Buddhism) has been a powerful religious, political, social, and economic influence. One particular doctrine, however, has been argued by different scholars to have had a profound effect on thinkers and philosophers, both political and religious to very different degrees. This doctrine is that of *akunin shōki* 悪人正機. This doctrine is often associated with the Buddhist school known as founded by Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1263). However, more recent scholarship has the idea originating with his master Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212), the founder of Pure Land Buddhism (Jōdo Shū) in Japan. The phrase *akunin shōki* can be translated as "The object of Amida's salvation is evil people," and will be discussed more thoroughly later on. The idea is that those who are considered evil have an easier time being reborn in the Pure Land outside of the cycle of birth death and rebirth because of their reliance on Amida's grace and his overabundant merit. This project is an attempt to understand the historical context of *akunin shōki* from three different angles.

The first angle will be one regarding historical linguistics, more specifically etymology and comparative semantics. The doctrine of *akunin shōki* did not always exist in Buddhist intellectual history, thus I wish to explore the implications of the preceding words used to describe similar ideas. The first chapter, thus, looks at the linguistic history of a *tsumi*, *ma*, and *aku*; each different Japanese words that relate to the concept of "evil" and how they have changed throughout history. These words are related either to Buddhism or Shinran's characterization of *akunin* and have developed and changed throughout Japanese history. The moralistic transformation from cosmological to anthropological is repeated in this chapter amongst all the given examples to show precedence for my argument.

The second angle is one of doctrine, and the primary focus of this project. What did Shinran himself say, and was it different from Hōnen's perspective? The second chapter proceeds to look deeper at the origins and doctrinal explanations of *akunin shōki*. Here I will explicitly deal with the thoughts of both Hōnen and Shinran and their religious philosophy surrounding the salvation of evil beings. This chapter explicates what is meant by "evil people as the object of

salvation" and attempts to get to what Shinran and Hōnen both meant by it, how they thought differently regarding it, and how they were similar in their understanding.

The third angle I seek to use regards the impact of this doctrine. The third and final chapter brings history and doctrine together to show how the concept of *akunin shōki* has been used by writers, artists, philosophers, and historians in various different ways. Since many thinkers during the 19th and 20th century were inspired by Shinran's concept of *akunin*, I look at various ways this has political consequences throughout multiple periods in Japanese history. By framing *akunin shōki* as a logical evolution of moral and religious intellectual progress, I seek to show the process of how *aku* became *akunin* which became *akunin shōki*. The evolution does not stop at Shinran's *akunin shōki*, however. It continues through history, inspiring and affecting people both inside and outside of Shin Buddhism. It is this process that I wish to emphasize and explore, concluding by sharing some patterns that erupt in the thoughts of various thinkers surrounding *akunin*.

I utilize the three categories of anthropology, soteriology, and cosmology that William Young uses as a general pattern of religious themes. I particularly use this because of his emphasis on the transformative aspect of religion that can be seen in psychological and physical aspects of religions. In this usage, anthropology refers to that which humans do and discusses the nature of humanity at large. Soteriology refers to the solution to the problems that plague the nature of humanity. Cosmology is the prevailing context surrounding the process or "the ultimate" that invites a reaction from human beings.[1] All of these themes will be seen throughout the discussion of Shinran, who believed that human beings were incapable of good (anthropology) due to the effects of *mappō* (cosmology) and that it was Amida's grace that would yield salvation (soteriology) from such an existential catastrophe.

When referring to Hōnen and Shinran's movements and contemporary thinkers that started their own schools, I refrain from utilizing the loaded phrase "Kamakura Buddhism" throughout my thesis and instead use "Kamakura-period Buddhism." This is to avoid the dichotomous rhetoric of "good" versus "bad," or "old versus "new."[2] I especially make it clear

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[1] William A. Young, *The World's Religions: Worldviews and Contemporary Issues*, 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson, 2005, 4-7.

[2] For more see Jacqueline I. Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 1999), especially 58-62; James H. Foard "In Search of a Lost Reformation: A Reconsideration of Kamakura Buddhism." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 7, no. 4 (1980), particularly

that *akunin shōki* is a product of a long line of logic, thus such a division would not be helpful in the analysis. With respect to this analysis, I attempt to synthesize the intellectual history of Sueki Fumihiko and the institutional history of Taira Masayuki.[3] While my general stance lies more with Sueki who looks at the progression of doctrine and ideas, I do not discount the political influences that Taira points out throughout history. This synthesis can be seen clearly in my attempt to create a composite analysis of the external and the internal in the following pages.

My project also builds off two different scholars who argue for the historical influence of *akunin shōki* but come to different conclusions surrounding it. Ogoshi Aiko argues for an "*akunin shōki* theory" that looks at various thinkers relying on the logic of the doctrine to justify evil deeds, specifically those that occurred during WWII and were perpetrated by the Japanese military (and sometimes its civilians).[4] She argues that various thinkers and philosophers during the 20th century that lived through the war were influenced by *akunin shōki*. Because of this, since *akunin shōki*, specifically the doctrine of Shinran, argues for the salvation of evil people, it justifies evil. Her conclusion is that *akunin shōki* is an antinomian ideology, that is, it argued for licensed evil.[5] Ogoshi proposes that the doctrine of *akunin shōki* is an oppressive one, that causes and perpetuates suffering rather than presenting salvation, despite what it claims.

The other scholar is a bit more optimistic about the doctrine. James Dobbins argues that akunin *shōki* had immediate effects on both Shinran's physical descendants and on Rennyo 蓮如 (1415-1499), one of the primary reasons Shin Buddhism became so popular thanks to his institutionalization activities. These influences continued throughout history, but *akunin shōki* itself is part of a larger pattern of logical inversions that became doctrines. However, because Shin Buddhism grew around this particular doctrine, it becomes important throughout institutional history. Despite this change in time and doctrinal interpretation, there was still a

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263-265, 284-26; and Payne, Richard K., ed. *Re-Visioning "Kamakura" Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998, specifically 6-11.

[3] Regarding *akunin shōki*, see Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士, *Nihon bukkyō shisōshi ronkō* 日本仏教思想史論考. Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1993, 431-438; and Taira Masayuki 平雅行, *Nihon chūsei no shakai to Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Hanawa shobō, 1992), 222-226, 251-257. Regarding their disagrement historiographical issues, see Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士. "A Reexamination of the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23, no. 3–4 (1996), particularly 452-453; and Taira Masayuki 平雅行. "Kuroda Toshio and the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23, no. 4–3 (1996), particularly 427, 444-446.

[4] For more on her theory, see Ogoshi Aiko 大越 愛子, *Kindai nihon no jendā: Gendai nihon no shisōteki kadai o tou* 近代日本のジェンダー : 現代日本の思想的課題を問う (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1997).

[5] Aiko Ogoshi, "A Feminist Critique of the Issue of War Responsibility in Postwar Japanese Thought" (2004), particularly 74-80.

significant overlap regarding the perception of evil.[6] Dobbins discusses the historical impact of the doctrine amongst purely Shin Buddhist thinkers and leaders of the sect itself.

I do not fully agree with Ogoshi's conclusion, but I do think her premise, that *akunin shōki* has had historical reverberations, is correct. Additionally, While I think Dobbin's argument that *akunin shōki* is not a unique occurrence is correct, that does not mean it has not had particular practical effects throughout history. I build off Ogoshi and Dobbins by discussing more broadly the pragmatic effects *akunin shōki* had during the modern period as well as contextualizing it with the medieval thoughts of Hōnen and Shinran, who themselves would have been reacting to doctrinal antecedents that used the concepts explored in chapter one. I wish to build off these two scholars to give *akunin shōki* a broader frame as a doctrine and idea that has undergone a process of evolution, being both the authority by which people are changed, and being changed by people in authority.

It is this precise pattern that reveals itself in my employment of doctrinal analysis, my primary manner of analysis in this project instead of more historical methodologies. As I will bring up throughout the thesis, I agree with Jamie Hubbard that religious doctrine and social conditions have a "symbiotic relationship."[7] That is to say, it is not strictly politics that determines doctrine, nor is it doctrine that determines politics. It is a dynamic back and forth throughout history that continues, even in the present day. Because of this I do bring in some politics throughout the present study, as it would be insufficient without doing so. However, doctrine tends to be overlooked (at least by many contemporary scholars) with an emphasis placed on politics. The pendulum has swung too far in my view towards political, economic, and social forces and has generally consigned doctrine, in Hubbard's words, "to 'last place' in a tidy ranking of the relative importance of different aspects of religious traditions."[8] This can even be seen in Ogoshi's argument where the doctrine of *akunin shōki* matters little in the analysis as the more important facts to her are the effects of the doctrine on politics and how it has been used by political thinkers in relation to particular social issues. This is not an issue, *per se*, however I

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[6] James C. Dobbins, "'The Evil Person Is the Primary Recipient of The Buddha's Compassion' The *Akunin Shōki* Theme in Shin Buddhism of Japan," in *Sins and Sinners: Perspectives from Asian Religions*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara, vol. 139, Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), particularly 107-11.
[7] Jamie Hubbard, *Absolute Delusion, Perfect Buddhahood: The Rise and Fall of a Chinese Heresy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), VII.
[8] Jamie Hubbard, "Premodern, Modern, and Postmodern: Doctrine and the Study of Japanese Religion," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 19, no. 1 (1992): 4.

think it is only one piece of the puzzle. Again, I agree with Jamie Hubbard when he argues: “I do feel that human agency is involved in the creation of institutions (for better or, more often, for worse) and hence the worldviews and particularly the doctrinal propositions that help form those worldviews are an important factor in institutional history.”[9] Ogoshi argues some thinkers use *akunin shōki*, but she does not get into the details of why this is done or how his logic relies on it. It is for this reason I believe the premise is something that is both capable of being constructed further, and an endeavor worth completing.

Another example of this general passing on doctrine as a primary method of study can be seen in the debate between Neil McMullin and Jamie Hubbard. McMullin argues for the significance of social, political, and economical forces in the shaping of religious organizations and institutions throughout history. [10] In his response to McMullin, Hubbard does not discount the importance of economic, social, and political events, but he warns against total reliance on these as a method of evaluation. Religion that is characterized as “merely a functional response to other causative social, political, and economic phenomena,” leaves a rather “sanitized picture” and does not reveal as much as it could.[11] The social context of religion is something that absolutely needs to be addressed, and I attempt to do so here in this thesis. Yet, just like Hubbard, I am concerned by the pendulum that has swung too far from seeing doctrine as useful. I seek a more mediated ground between the external forces that religion reacts to and the forces within the religion that allow it to change internally. “Appreciating religious doctrine allows the fully nuanced understanding of both the cultural or political context…of religious history.”[12]

The complementary nature of external forces like society and politics and internal forces like doctrinal review and debate create this “symbiosis” within institutions that cannot be overlooked. It makes it so that one does not exclusively view religions as platonic, idealistic doctrines separated from everyday life, while also avoiding the alternative extreme that they are entirely at the mercy of capricious politics. “This approach to the study of Buddhism affirms the rhetorical value and agency of the insight claimed by the tradition at the same time that it encourages discussion of the institution’s relation to that agency and its functional interaction

[9] Jamie Hubbard, *Absolute Delusion, Perfect Buddhahood* (2000), XI.
[10] See McMullin, Neil. “Historical and Historiographical Issues in the Study of Pre-Modern Japanese Religion.” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 16, no. 1 (1989), specifically, 6-11 and 25-29.
[11] Hubbard, “Premodern, Modern, and Postmodern” (1992), 4.
[12] Hubbard, “Premodern, Modern, and Postmodern” (1992), 22.

with the world."[13] These forces are influencers, not determiners, and they do not always provide clear (or right) answers. Yet, as the old saying goes, "to err is human" and that is precisely what the goal of this project is to pursue. By yielding answers to the questions surrounding the evolutions of the doctrine of *akunin shōki*, there is also a cursory story surrounding the institutional history of Shin Buddhism in an exploration of what it means to be human.

[13] Jamie Hubbard, *Absolute Delusion, Perfect Buddhahood* (2000), IX-X.

Chapter 1 - Linguistics

« L'enfer, c'est les autres »/"Hell is other people"
- Jean-Paul Sarte, *No Exit* (1944)

Before even getting into doctrine, there is a practical issue in dealing with *akunin* 悪人, that issue being precisely what it means. Semantics are fluid, malleable; they are much easier to change than the syntax of a language and that makes it difficult to pinpoint what is meant psychologically, doctrinally, and literally by the phrase *akunin shōki*. For example, the *aku* part of *akunin* is traditionally translated as "evil," especially when combined with *shōki.* Additional translations include "wickedness," "wrong," or "vice," thus generally referring to some type of transgression against "good." The character is also used as a general adjective for "bad," *warui* 悪い such as in "bad thing," *waruimono* 悪い物, in modern Japanese. In classical Japanese, 悪し can be romanized as either *ashi or waroshi* depending on its particular use case. *Ashi* holds similar meanings as its modern counterpart but also includes understandings of "bad" as "inconvenient" or "unfortunate" as well. *Waroshi*, similarly, maintains a general understanding of "evil" but includes using "bad" to occasionally refer to something of "poor quality," or be attributed to someone who is "unskilled" or "inept." This becomes a translation issue really quickly. I will thus continue to use the translation "evil" for the *aku* part of *akunin* throughout the thesis for the sake of ease, and since that is the most common English-language scholarly translation but admit that there may be better alternatives.

While the difference between "bad" and "evil" may seem like semantics, colloquial English differentiates between different levels of "bad," with "evil" usually being something that is categorically different" than something that is "bad" in the unfortunate sense. For instance, stealing a candy bar from a store is a bad thing, but explicitly calling it evil would be unlikely. On the other hand, serial murder is a bad thing, but in this case, bad feels insufficient to describe it, so evil might be used. This may seem simple, but if the understanding of *akunin* has changed over time, that is an important piece to consider when discussing doctrinal interpretation. What is exactly meant by "evil" as well? There are different words for "evil" in Japanese as well. In modern Japanese one can use not only *aku* 悪, but also *yokoshima* 邪ま, which means "wicked," "bad," or "evil," along with *wazawai* 災い, which can refer to "evil" alongside "calamity" or "disaster." This gets into a larger linguistic issue. When Shinran was writing about his idea of salvation, and used the word *akunin*, what did he have in mind? And, whatever that was, can we

say for sure it was the same concept of *akunin* that Rennyo had while compiling Shinran's writings and reorganizing Shin Buddhism? Or even beyond that, is it the same idea that is seen in contemporary Shin Buddhism?

With these questions in mind, it would be prudent to look at a linguistic history of *aku* and similar words to try to understand what happens to words over time, especially when those words are packed with moral value distinctions and indicate benevolence or malevolence. This chapter will be a quick overview of the history of *tsumi* 罪 (usually translated "sin" but I'll be following Yoko Williams' lead and using "transgression" instead), *ma* 魔 an explicitly Buddhist understanding of evil, and *aku* 悪 understood here as evil and used in multiple compounds. First, *tsumi* will be examined looking at it from an ancient lens. Second *ma* will be explored, coming closer to the Kamakura period (1185-1333). Finally, *aku* will be looked at from a more political lens rather than a religious one. I will conclude this chapter by looking at some repeated themes mentioned throughout pre-Shinran moral conversations.

While not as relevant to the topic of this project as the evil part of the kanji compound, the human part should still be noted. The *nin* of *akunin* is usually rendered "people " or "person" since the Japanese does not differentiate between the plural and singular here. It can also be used in the word "humanity" *ningen* 人間 or used to describe a particular vocation, for example a *tabibito* 旅人 is a "traveler" or more literally, "a person that travels." The important point, however, is that Hōnen and Shinran are explicitly referring to humanity in their understanding of *akunin*. In Buddhism, enlightenment is not exclusive to humans. While it is true that humans are usually the ones who get enlightened, and the human realm is usually described as the realm most conducive to achieve that enlightenment, the phrase "sentient beings" is normally used which includes beings and entities outside of humanity, such as gods and animals. Hōnen's and Shinran's understanding of Amida's ability to save was universal, they both include "good people" in their understanding of who can be saved after all.[14] Do they exclude animals or other creatures from Amida's grace on purpose? Or are they simply using it to refer to people because that is with whom they are primarily concerned? I think it would be difficult to argue Hōnen or Shinran were excluding other sentient beings, such as hungry ghosts, from Amida's grace. There

[14] This assumes that humans can be grouped into either good or bad based on any number of parameters. While I do not think this to be the case, this dichotomy is often repeated in both primary and secondary sources.

are creatures that would have been discussed during his time. *Yūrei* 幽霊, *oni* 鬼, *mononoke* 物の怪 (all supernatural entities), *kami* 神, or "gods," and more non-human beings are all present in a cosmological sense during the Kamakura and surrounding periods. Hōnen did not actively promote worship of the *kami*, nor did he actively ban worship of them as deities. Shinran on the other hand did explicitly prohibit worship of the *kami* but explained that the deities protect those who recite the *nenbutsu* 念仏, which is the recitation of Amida Buddha's name.[15] The intentions behind both of these are different, but stem ultimately from a view they both share: that the *nenbutsu* is the most effective way to be saved in the latter days of the dharma. Rennyo (1415-1499) views the *kami* as ultimately stemming from Amida, and therefore encourages faith in Amida himself, not his manifestations. However, he warns his followers against defaming the *kami* or other spiritual beings.[16] For these Pure Land thinkers, the *kami* were relevant to the world, but they were not salvific. Thus, while not exclusionary, the more important idea for these thinkers was not even the *akunin* portion at all, but rather the *shōki* portion. While this has been examined by many scholars, I would like to look at *akunin* more specifically. Thus, while other sentient beings may be present, I am going to deal primarily with the human audience that Hōnen and Shinran were addressing.

Tsumi and Social Evil

Traditionally, the word *tsumi* has had multiple translations into English with "sin" being one of the more common ones. The difficulty with this is that, even in English, "sin" is a word with conflicting definitions, ideas, doctrines, and understandings.[17] Sin comes from Christian doctrine and has deep ties to Christology, eschatology, and soteriology for that specific religious tradition. In addition, there is not always a clear consensus on what "sin" might be. Catholics might believe in "original sin" (the fall of man) but that may not be shared by Protestants. Islam and Judaism have differing views of what sin is as well. In general, using a term from the Abrahamic religions to describe medieval and pre-medieval Japanese sentiments is difficult to argue for, especially as other scholars have shown, even intrareligious definitions of that word

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[15] Robert F. Rhodes, "Shin Buddhist Attitudes towards the Kami: From Shinran to Rennyo," The Eastern Buddhist, New Series, 27, no. 2 (1994): 55-61.

[16] Rhodes, "Shin Buddhist Attitudes towards the Kami" (1994): 76-77.

[17] Yoko Williams, Tsumi*: Offence and Retribution in Early Japan* (London: Routledge, 2003). 1.

have evolved over time. [18] With this in mind, I follow Williams' suggestion and will use "transgression" in place of "sin" not just because I find it to be a more concise translation of the concept, but also to avoid the exact orientalism that Williams is attempting to counter with her argument.[19] Williams also offers "offences" as an alternative and uses the two interchangeably throughout her book.[20]

By the Heian period (794-1185), the concept of *tsumi* had become a much more private affair with a more centralized legislative body and the introduction of Buddhism.[21] Yet the context of *tsumi* and how it has changed is precisely what makes it so important for a discussion of the evolution of the understanding of *akunin*. In ancient Japan, prior to legislative bodies, the concept of *tsumi* was vital to communal harmony. While there is information on the various types of *tsumi* one might commit in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (The Record of Ancient Matters) (712) and the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (The Chronicles of Japan) (720) a good amount of information we have on the various *tsumi* comes from notations on purification rituals in the *Engishiki* 延喜式 (Procedures of the Engi Era) (927). What is intriguing is that the sources indicate a separation of the *tsumi* into two different categories. The first category is *kunitsutsumi* 国津罪 ("earthly transgressions"). These transgressions were concerned with individuals and could be viewed as very primitive "laws" or sometimes taboos.[22] The second type of *tsumi* was called *amatsutsumi* 天津罪 ("heavenly transgressions"). These offenses trace back to the story of Susanoo who offended the sun goddess Amaterasu. Upon the offense, the goddess hid in a cave and the sun ceased to shine until, through festival and a mirror, she was eventually coerced back out of the cave and the sun resumed shining.[23] *Amatsutsumi* are more communal offences and were early attempts to manage any harm that came to farms, sources of food, or, especially, rice paddies.

There are multiple transgressions labeled as *kunitsutsumi*. It seems generally that *tsumi* had both a criminal portion to it, that being the actual crime or offense done, such as murder, and a pollutant portion to it, that being the spiritual corruption of an individual by the defilement of

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[18] James Robson, "Sin, Sinification, Sinology: On the Notion of Sin in Buddhism and Chinese Religions," in *Sins and Sinners: Perspectives from Asian Religions*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara, vol. 139, Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 73–92.75-77.
[19] Williams, Tsumi (2003),1-4
[20] Ibid, 42.
[21] Ibid, 2, 5.
[22] Ibid, 42, 45.
[23] Ibid. 43

the purity, or ritual cleanliness, of the human. Blood is an excellent example of a pollutant. Killing someone not only causes them to die, but one might get blood on themselves, thus it is an offense on two fronts.[24] There is a slight difficulty, however, of whether death itself was considered a pollutant. During the Heian period it was especially influential on the nobility, but prior to this there is scholarly disagreement on whether death itself and contact with the dead was an impurity or just considered a normal aspect of life.[25] There are four different groups of *kunitsutsumi*. The first deals with killing or destroying living things. This included murder, torture, or intentionally causing suffering to another person or animal. It also included the desecration of corpses. This is more focused on the offense aspect of *tsumi*. The second group deals with physical abnormalities (such as leprosy). It is unclear precisely what is considered the offense to be punished, whether it is the cause of the abnormalities, such as a curse or known disease, or the person themselves who is afflicted with it. This section deals more with the pollutant aspect. Third, any taboo behavior, especially referring to sexual relations amongst close family members was included. While our modern word "incest" could be used, not all relationships that 21st century laws consider incestuous were considered taboo here. For instance, the crimes included a taboo on a man sleeping with his daughter, as well as the mother of his wife, but does not have a taboo on a man sleeping with his sister. The relationship emphasizes the relationship between the mother and familial ties to her. This then emphasizes both the criminal and pollutant aspects of *kunitsutsumi*.[26]

The fourth and final group of *tsumi* in this category is something I find unique and highly valuable to this study. Williams titles this group as "calamities" which is a good word, but what is interesting is that these "offenses" are not intended by an individual, in fact they are not even acts or states of being but rather something like "misfortune." Whether they be centipedes causing harm to an individual, wasps killing a person, a fire caused by a lightning strike, crows eating crops, or birds of prey harming a person, the calamity that befell a person was considered a "tsumi."[27] Williams points out that it was perceived by the early Japanese that calamities were tied with *yomi* 黄泉*,* the underworld of death and *tsumi*. This, similarly to Susanoo, is tied to a cosmogonic myth. In this case it is the story of Izanagi and Izanami, who is pursued to the realm

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[24] Ibid, 45
[25] Ibid. 46-47.
[26] Ibid, 50-52
[27] Ibid, 49.

of death by the former and ultimately abandoned there after her beauty fades from decomposition and pollution.[28] Misfortune was framed cosmologically, and later, calamities were seen to be caused by *tsumi*, though here, in an earlier time, the calamities themselves are considered *tsumi*.[29] This is important because the cosmological reality of *mappō* (which will be addressed in the next chapter) was something Shinran referred to, was aware of, and the entire premise that he built off in his understanding of evil and humanity. Even prior to Buddhism's introduction to Japan, there is evidence of the cosmological structure of the universe being partly responsible for the suffering and evil of the world, a series of logical steps that is mirrored by both Shinran and early *tsumi* despite being over five centuries apart.

The "heavenly offenses" committed by Susanoo and others are different in nature from *kunitsutsumi*. *Amatsutsumi* includes two major different types of transgressions. The first is crimes against the community. This includes acts such as disturbing the irrigation of crops or destroying the waterways that would supply the rice paddies. This included other actions that disturbed harvest, such as hiding stakes in paddies so people who tried to harvest the rice would harm themselves on the stakes or harming the plants themselves.[30] Additionally, crimes against the community could include actions that disrupted natural religious ceremonies, such as a ritual to pacify the gods or call forth rain during a drought. In these cases, "heaven" may not necessarily refer to a realm above that community, but the concept "above" the village itself (i.e. abstract) which would refer to life together. In a reversal of a famous quote, when it comes to *amatsutsumi* one could say that "heaven is other people." The disturbance of religious ceremonies, however, does seem to refer to an actual cosmological heaven as the object of the offense. This is the other section of acts that are considered *amatsutsumi*, that being any action that "infringes on the sanctity of the deities."[31] This again goes back to the story of Susanoo and his interactions with Amaterasu. Williams refers to a few scholars in this regard, but the primary point is that part of the infringement could include any threats to a Japanese "sovereign" would include the possibility of communal disharmony. Basically, if the person in charge had their authority questioned, an uprising could occur, and that would be problematic for any attempts to maintain peace. This included not just the relationship between a community and its leader or

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[28] Ibid, 69.
[29] Ibid, 78.
[30] Ibid, 59
[31] Ibid, 62.

overseers, but also a community and the deities. Any act that could cause the balance between these two groups, or any event that disturbed the power distribution could shatter the harmony within the community, causing an even larger issue.[32] "We observe that *amatsutsumi* as noted in the primary texts possesses not only the element of the infringement of the interests of agricultural society, but also the element of rebellion against superiors and established interests in the community."[33] The pollutant aspect is much more abstract here, but the crimes one might commit against the community are very clear. Even if the crime is not against the community, but an encouragement of rebellion, then that is all the more problematic.

With the lateness of the sources in history, it is difficult to place these two categories of *tsumi* in a century, but water cultivation began towards the end of the Jōmon period and so we can guess that at least some of the crimes mentioned here were considered transgressions around 300 BCE.[34] What is important for this project, however, is not the inception of these concepts, but their transformation. There is evidence that *amatsutsumi* began to include more crimes, especially regarding land ownership, as a more elite and wealthy class started to rise. Additionally, these *tsumi* come to us in a compiled format by those who read the myths into them. It is possible the story of Izanagi and Izanami did not stress the pollutant of death earlier in time as that was a primary concern during the Heian period.[35] Regardless, it is clear that "*tsumi* brought chaos to both the universe and the community. Whilst *amatsutsumi* disturbed the social order, *kunitsutsumi* disturbed the cosmic order."[36] This theme of order versus chaos is something that will be addressed in more detail later. However, the changes *tsumi* undergoes are more the focus of this section.

Tsumi began to lean more into the political realm with the rise of kingships in Japan. During the fourth and fifth centuries, Japan's political realm grew, and more formalized laws came to be more prominent in the structuring of social, moral, and civil actions. State laws, along with trials by ordeals became just as important in dealing with transgressive activities as ritual purification and banishment had been for *tsumi* prior to this. This does not mean that *tsumi* had disappeared, just that it changed.[37] Cosmological structure still mattered when discussing *tsumi*

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[32] Ibid, 62-63.
[33] Ibid, 64.
[34] Ibid, 71.
[35] Ibid, 71-72.
[36] Ibid, 72.
[37] Ibid, 74-76.

but the political system grew in importance during this time. Williams talks about these two categories as "cosmic" *tsumi* and "political" *tsumi*. It is during this time that "calamities" came to be considered to be the logical consequences of *tsumi*. This is the "cosmic" aspect that is referred to. It is also during this time that incest between brother and sister, something missing prior to the definition of taboo relationships up to this point, became unacceptable in the eyes of society. General relations between individuals were expanding and evolving. If one were to transgress against their family, it was expected a calamity or misfortune would befall them shortly afterwards. Again, cosmologically, such actions would bring disorder to the universe so it was only right that natural order would be restored either by punishment of the *tsumi* or an unfortunate happenstance.[38] This is more or less an evolution of *kunitsutsumi* and contained many similar premises, though the exact taboos had increased.

A parallel adaptation occurs with *amatsutsumi*. A good example of a political *tsumi* under kingship would be treason or slander against the king.[39] This mirrors the rebellious perception of *amatsutsumi* and the disharmony it could cause in the community. In this case, threatening the king's land or power was no longer just perceived as a communal threat, but a threat to the king's power. I think this can especially be seen in the institutionalization of slander, something absent from before this point. Political *tsumi* was now something the powerful could use, on a less formal level than something like state law, to persuade a populace to accept their rule. That being said, *tsumi* still maintained some of its communal roots during this period of transition to more formal power structures. This political shift is what I want to emphasize and trace through history.

Prince Shōtoku (574-622) is famous for his promotion of Buddhism and under him, *tsumi* becomes more formalized, but also more balanced. That being said it is important to know that most attributions to Prince Shōtoku regarding this are apocryphal in nature and this makes it unclear what exactly are his contributions in this case.[40] At least regarding civil policy, failure at maintaining diplomatic duties or relations with other clans or governments became tied up with *tsumi*. Failure to acknowledge, participate, and uphold the superior-inferior relationship as well

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[38] Ibid, 79-80.
[39] Ibid, 81, 84.
[40] William E. Deal, "Hagiography and History: The Image of Prince Shōtoku," In *Religions of Japan in Practice*, edited by George J. Tanabe, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, 320-321.

became a staple part of understanding *tsumi* as well.[41] It is at this point the transgression truly brings out its connotations as well, as failure to uphold another culture's social mores puts the "trans" (across in latin) in "transgression" due to the crossing of borders, whether social or political. In his Seventeen-Article Constitution, Shōtoku attempts to balance punishment and actions regarding *tsumi*. Additionally, with the influx of various philosophies from China, such as Confucianism and Buddhism, along with the legalism at home, *tsumi* began to be perceived differently, and in a much more political manner. Interestingly, it may be due to *tsumi* that Buddhism adapts its thinking and legitimates the superior-inferior relationship. This is significant because it means that the Japanese understanding of *tsumi* was, to some degree, adopted by the Buddhist moral hierarchy that became especially powerful in Japan at the higher levels.[42] "By the sixth and seventh centuries… the personal power of the ruler had waned. The nature of rulership itself had been transformed from that of a personal, heroic ruler to one occupying a position within an organizational-type framework of political rule."[43] The institutionalization of the superior-inferior relationship lost most of its communal-focused sentiment it had in the beginning and became a more formalized and hierarchical political system.

The *ritsuryō* state of Japan was yet another change in the political system where the primary system of maintaining order was laws and ordinances. It is at this time that one can see the foreign influences on *tsumi*. Confucianism particularly could be seen as *tsumi* was considered not just an action that upset the order within a family, but also something that could upset social order. This was particularly true as the *ritsuryō* state attempted to institutionalize social status more broadly through "categorization."[44] Similarly, Legalism became a more prevalent philosophy and, while punishment itself was not new, reasonably fair punishments for different crimes became normalized during this period, with broader corporal punishment options, such as particular ways of beating a person.[45] What I find significant here is that, in the actual *ritsuryō* codes, the word *tsumi* is used not just to refer to transgressions themselves, but also the punishments for those actions. "This reflects the ancient Japanese view of the sameness of crime and punishment."[46] While this is earlier than Shinran's time, this is an important psychological

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[41] Williams, Tsumi (2003), 105-106.
[42] Ibid, 109-110.
[43] Ibid. 110.
[44] Ibid, 113.
[45] Ibid, 116.
[46] Ibid, 117.

cultural fact. If crime and punishment are not separated, then grace is especially needed for evil people, because there is no separation of their evil from the retribution of their evil. Again, this is not to say that such a cultural paradigm was fully present during Shinran's time, as *tsumi* was no longer institutionalized during the Heian period to the extent it was in the *ritsuryō* state. However, there is a premise to the logic of Shinran here prior to his time within the linguistic connotations of the word *tsumi*. Buddhism during the *ritsuryō* period was more institutionalized into the laws and ordinances of the time as monastic hierarchies were coded into law.[47] However, so was *tsumi*. It is not unthinkable for their commingling in a more formal scenario to continue, and in fact, as discussed prior, that does indeed occur.

Tsumi had multiple resolutions. Punishment was more formalized as time went on for transgressions, but the most prevalent one seems to be purification.[48] In fact, older more localized purification rituals became recognized officially under the *ritsuryō* state and eventually a national purification ritual was created.[49] Along with the nationalizing of a purification ritual, there was also a system of pardons that were placed into the law. These pardons even show up in the *Nihon shoki*.[50] What is interesting about this time is that the creation of a national purification ritual emphasizes that communal aspect that, while downplayed due to more formal structures being in place, showed the collectivistic responsibility that would be addressed by the great purification ritual. The ritual attempted to expunge *tsumi* from the land itself. After all, if a diplomatic transgression occurred, it is true the diplomat would be responsible, but he is acting in an office of representation for the entire country. Thus, there would need to be a way to balance the country as well, not just the offense of the individual. This is due to the "continued link between purification and calamity" that remains throughout the utilization of *tsumi*.[51] The cosmological structure surrounding taboo acts or offenses remained part of the psychological understanding of the Japanese surrounding *tsumi* at least until the Heian period.

Because the *ritsuryō* state included influences from both Buddhism and China it may be prudent to note that confession of transgressions was rather common in throughout both Chinese and Indian Buddhism. The Mahāyāna tradition, which includes Pure Land, has "a pronounced

[47] Ibid, 119
[48] Ibid, 136, 143.
[49] Ibid, 128.
[50] Ibid, 155.
[51] Ibid, 163.

emphasis on the soteriological potential of acknowledging the evil actions one has committed."[52] One particular writing, the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (The Compendium of Precepts) specifically writes about various rituals and purification methods to deal with problematic transgressions. The salvation from such a sin does vary depending on the act, but there is no sin that cannot be repented if the rituals are done correctly.[53] This continued into Chinese Buddhism where rituals for lay persons would offer repentance. Of interest is that Pure Land monasteries offered daily services to cleanse people of their sins through the power of Amida's original vow.[54] Repentance for sins had practical effects too in Chinese understanding, just like in Japan, albeit the exact political consequences were different. It was believed that if repentance was sincere enough and the right avenues were taken, illnesses could be cured or disabilities could be removed. Repentance is not the same as liberation of course, but that is not quite the point here. Buddhism has had a consistent intellectual history that promotes a belief that there are practical anthropological effects to repenting of personal transgressions.[55]

The "meaning" of the *tsumi* may not have changed but it did begin to include more acts and punishments as time went on, meaning the context did change and the word had to be reviewed and adapted to that context. It is for this reason that I wanted to spend so much time looking at *tsumi*. *Tsumi* shows a connection between the language of morality (whether personal or communal) and cultural moral hierarchies. *Tsumi* took on a more political structure as more politically minded people started to use it for their own ends. The word did not receive an overhaul of its meaning, but it was used to legitimize power structures that were in place. Additionally, it combined cosmological perceptions of the world with anthropological ones, thus politics and religion were not separated in understanding evil. It is these two evolutions I wish to keep in mind, and show repetition, as we look at the evolution of two other words.

Ma and Religious Evil

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[52] Robson, "Sin, Sinification, Sinology: On the Notion of Sin in Buddhism and Chinese Religions" (2012), 79.
[53] Ibid, 79-80.
[54] Erik Zürcher, "Buddhist *Chanhui* and Christian Confession in Seventeenth-Century China," in *Forgive Us Our Sins: Confession in Late Ming and Early Qing China*, ed. Nicolas Standaert and Ad Dudnik (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006), 103–27.
[55] Robson, "Sin, Sinification, Sinology: On the Notion of Sin in Buddhism and Chinese Religions" (2012), 83-85, 89.

The word *ma* is another word that has a relationship with cosmology. Wakabayashi separates the term *ma* from *aku* by defining *ma* as "temptations of desire and passion that hinder one from attaining enlightenment. In this sense, evil is the antithesis of the Buddha or Buddhism."[56] This is separate from *aku* which refers to moral evil and can be used irreligiously. *Ma* is a multifaceted understanding of evil that is tied to Buddhist doctrine; thus, it refers to a more "universal" evil of perpetuating suffering (likely due to the three poisons of hatred, delusion, or greed) by both internal and external forces.[57]

Wakabayashi begins with the argument that "representations of evil are often constructed to explain phenomena that disrupt society. Identifying those who disturb social order as evil (usually challengers or defiers of authority) legitimizes the institution seeking to determine that order."[58] This is something that could be seen with the evolution of *tsumi* as well. Her argument then goes on to say that *ma* is not only a social construction that explains the world, but also something that legitimizes an institution that requires its existence.[59] The concept of social construction on language will be addressed very briefly at the end of the chapter, but I think it is a significant insight in saying that *ma* explains the world, not the other way around.

Wakabayashi is interested in the connection between *ma* and *tengu* 天狗. *Tengu* comes from a Chinese word meaning "celestial dog," (Ch. *tian gou* 天狗) and they are normally depicted as creatures with long beaks or noses, the wings of a bird, and the body of a human.[60] Early drawings of *tengu* usually depicted them as kites, or birds of prey.[61] As time went on, *tengu* grew to be used synonymously with *ma*, a word that "initially referred to 'that which causes death,'" in Sanskrit.[62] *Ma* has multiple connotations, but the significant part is that it refers to both internal evil, such as delusion or the five aggregates, and external evil, particularly the heavenly demon king or *Tenma* 天魔. This is important context to a Buddhist concept of evil because this means there is both an internalized reason that a person might not do good things, such as being deluded, and there is an external malevolent force that attempts to stop people

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[56] Haruko Wakabayashi, *The Seven* Tengu *Scrolls: Evil and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy in Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2012), XV.
[57] Wakabayashi, *The Seven* Tengu *Scrolls*, (2012), XV
[58] Ibid, XVI
[59] Ibid, XX
[60] Ibid, XIII
[61] Ibid, 6
[62] Ibid, 13

from doing good things. The heavenly demon king attempts to keep people from achieving enlightenment and doing socially productive or ethical things that may relieve suffering.[63] In the story of the Buddha's life, Māra actively works against the enlightenment of the Buddha, sending to him hordes of demons to harm him and women to seduce him. He does not succeed, but this cosmological structure surrounding the awareness of evil is important, since *ma* can be both the delusions within a person's mind, and the demons that create those delusions outside a person's mind.[64]

Engaging with Māra was something that Eison 叡尊 (1201-1290) warned about. Eison founded the Shingon Ritsu sect of Buddhism but warned his disciples and fellow practitioners against the corruptive influences of Māra. During the medieval period of Japanese Buddhism, because esoteric Buddhism included sexual rituals and rites that guaranteed power or safety to higher ranking clan members, practitioners were especially vulnerable to such influences. Eison warned against the inability to control the power that the rituals held. If one were to be unable to have such control, they would be influenced by Māra, and be unable to achieve a good rebirth or may even "become the enemy of the Dharma."[65]

While *ma* was present during the Heian period, it began to spread rapidly with Pure Land Buddhism as a catalyst for its prevalence. Particularly a genre of writing called *ōjōden* (tales of those who have been reborn in the Pure Land) provided one of the primary pathways for its growth among not just other Buddhists, but lay members as well. Genshin 源信 (914-1017CE) even responds to the concept of *ma*, relying on *ōjōden* and similar stories, that solely the *nenbutsu*, the recitation of the name of Amida Buddha was sufficient.[66] I will revisit Genshin in the next chapter, but what is important is to connect *ma* not just to the transformation of a language of evil, but also the evolution of a Buddhist doctrine of evil. This is especially the case in the idea that *only* the recitation of Amida's name can save a person from *ma*. The stories of the *ōjōden* were written in the late Heian period, but very few are known to have been written down during the Kamakura period. Wakabayashi claims this is due to the rise of the idea of *nenbutsu* being the exclusive pathway one must follow.[67] If this is true, then there is a possibility that

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[63] Ibid, 13.
[64] Ibid, 14.
[65] Ryūichi Abe, "Mantra, *Hinin*, and the Feminine: On the Salvational Strategies of Myōe and Eizon," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 13 (2003 2002): 110-111.
[66] Wakabayashi, *The Seven* Tengu *Scrolls* (2012), 15-16.
[67] Ibid, 35

exclusive *nenbutsu* may have been Genshin's original idea while Hōnen and Shinran simply ran with it to a greater extent than he did by thinking through the idea's various doctrinal implications. This lies outside of this project and is still debated amongst scholars, but this is another preceding idea that may share Shinran's logic.[68]

Tengu are not the only form of *ma* that comes up in these tales of rebirth. Demons of various ranks worked with the *tengu* to hinder the path to enlightenment. One of the ways that *tengu* specifically trick people is by deluding them that they are entering the pure land. By suggesting to people that they have achieved one of the primary goals of pure land Buddhism, the *tengu* is able to reinforce delusion in their lives. The methods used include tricking them by showing them similar sights they would see in the pure land or performing miracles that were attributed to a buddha or bodhisattva.[69] Another method is by preaching heretical, or antithetical, doctrines and disguising them as coming from an enlightened monk or being.[70] The stories in the *ōjōden* emphasize Buddhist rituals as being sufficient in dealing with these roadblocks to Nirvana, which is important to Wakabayashi's argument. Buddhist rituals work in these stories to reinforce the necessity of the institution to be able to deal with these external, as well as internal, threats to individuals and the nation.[71] By the end of the Kamakura period, the period that is most relevant to this study of Shinran's ideas, *tengu* were considered a significant external threat to enlightenment.[72] There is something to say about the trickery aspect of *tengu*, especially if one ties the spreading of heresy by these agents of *ma* with the expansion of Shin and Nichiren Buddhism during this time.

The concepts of *ma* 魔 and *mappō* 末法 are tied in this period beyond just a general Buddhist understanding of evil and decadence. The pure land, or *jodō* 浄土, was only one place that an individual could end up. Both *madō* 魔土 and *tengudō* 天狗土 became cosmological solutions to a very practical problem in the eyes of Buddhist monastics. While the goal would have been to be taken to Amida's pure land, those monastics who could not overcome the temptations of this world and failed to achieve entrance into the pure land instead went into the "land of *ma*" or "*tengu* land." It was here that the monastics who failed to succeed in their mortal

[68] See, for example, Fujimoto Kiyohiko (1996) which I reference specifically in Chapter 2.
[69] Wakabayashi, *The Seven* Tengu *Scrolls* (2012), 23.
[70] Ibid, 30.
[71] Ibid, 18-19.
[72] Ibid, 31.

life could pursue the same goal and continue practicing.[73] These alternate lands emerged as *ma* began to be interpreted not just in an external to Buddhism sense, but within the religion as well. As Kamakura reformers like Hōnen or Shinran grew in popularity, they had critics that accused them of *ma* such as Jōkei (1155-1212) and Myōe (1173-1232). Both Jōkei and Myōe were staunch critics of Hōnen with his emphasis on the *nenbutsu*. Myōe explicitly uses the word *masetsu* 魔説, or "words of *ma*," and even conjectures that Hōnen may be an agent of Māra to lead people astray. His use of *ma* is not just to attack other schools though. Jōkei writes about *makai*, or the world of Māra, and warns people against insincerity and the nature of practice during *mappō*. Nichiren also utilizes this rhetoric in attacking almost every other school of Buddhism, invoking the use of *tenma* to describe the origin of Zen Buddhism. *Ma* was no longer seen outside the Buddhist temple as just an external force, nor was it seen as the three poisons or five aggregates. As Buddhism transformed during the Kamakura period, accusations of heresy and insincere practice developed using the terminology of *ma*.[74]

According to multiple Buddhist writers, Jōkei being one of them, many practitioners of the past failed to achieve entrance into Amida's pure land and put forth some reasons why this may be. Genshin is even doubted to have attained the desired entrance. Monastics who were unable to maintain peace of mind during life, particularly in the last few moments when death is approaching, are not going to *jodō* but rather *madō*.[75] Wakabayashi writes that "those who lack *bodhicitta* and seek fame and profit are also destined for *madō*."[76] The *bodhicitta* (Buddha-mind) aspect is particularly interesting because this is one of the grounds upon which Myōe criticizes Hōnen. With his emphasis that only the *nenbutsu* has any efficacy under *mappō*, Hōnen claims that anything else, including having *bodhicitta*, is a hindrance to enlightenment, not advantageous. Myōe disagrees heavily with this and attributes such an idea to the heavenly demon king, *Tenma*. It is here that we can see the idea that *madō* is specifically for those who are in conflict with other schools of Buddhism.[77] This is not just charismatic teaching from a single individual either. These ideas are perpetuated and believed to be true beyond just the reformers. In the *Hirasan kojin reitaku* 比良山古人霊託 (The Spiritual Oracle of the Old Man of Mount

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[73] Ibid, 32.
[74] Ibid, 33-36.
[75] Ibid, 37-38.
[76] Ibid, 38.
[77] Ibid, 39-40

Hira) a story about the dialogue between a monk and a *tengu*, Myōe is said to have achieved a favorable rebirth where he has achieved liberation. Meanwhile, Hōnen and his students have been reborn into the hell realms and the beast realms. This "pro-establishment" sentiment echoes the pervading idea that the traditional and institutional sects are correct while the "new reformers" are painted in a light of degeneracy and delusion.[78] While during the Heian there were conflicts between sects of Buddhism, they were framed in terms of *ma* during the Kamakura and Muromachi periods (1336-1573).[79] The rhetoric of *ma* changes then to include not only enemies of Buddhism, but Buddhists who are perceived as enemies.

The word *ma* was used to describe the monk Ryōgen 良源 (912-985). Depending on the perspective, he was viewed as someone who had control over *ma* with his rituals, while others, specifcally those who were critical of Tendai and Enryakuji characterized him as a "Devil King" or *Maō* 魔王. Ryōgen's personage as the demon king came to be worshipped as a being who was both steeped in *ma* but a protector of Buddhism.[80] He was a fierce rhetorician, and his ritual efficacy granted him political ties to high-ranking rulers. After his death he was attributed powers and authortiy, and aristocrats would come to Mt. Hiei to receive his protection.[81]

In 981 he relieved the emperor of an evil spirit and his ability to perform evil conquering rituals gave rise to a popular equation of him to Fudō Myōō 不動明王, a guardian deity in Buddhism that vanquishes evil. This attribution was so strong that it was believed statues of Ryōgen were capable of overcoming the influences of *ma*, including demons and evil spirits.[82] There were political implications to this as well. In 1274 a statue of Ryōgen was propped up by an Enryakuji priest to defend against the Mongol invaders and to bring peace to the country.[83] But not everyone saw Ryōgen's institutionalizing efforts as good or beneficial.

The *Hobutsushū* 宝物集 (Collection of Treasures), written in 1179, accuses Ryōgen of becoming a *tengu* because he was too attached to Mt. Hiei and Enryakuji. Later, during the Muromachi period, he was portrayed as *Maō*, the demon king, and conspired to bring chaos to

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[78] Ibid, 47-49.
[79] Ibid, 40.
[80] Haruko Wakabayashi, "From Conqueror of Evil to Devil King: Ryōgen and Notions of *Ma* in Medieval Japanese Buddhism," *Monumenta Nipponica* 54, no. 4 (1999): 481–507.
[81] Wakabayashi, "From Conqueror of Evil to Devil King" (1999), 485.
[82] Ibid, 487-488.
[83] Ibid, 490.

the world.[84] This characterization seems to have stemmed from the criticism against his arrogance and attachment to this world. However, to normal people, there was not a distinct difference between *tengu* and other evil spirits that walked the earth, such as *yōkai*. This is important because, although *ma* was originally Buddhist, as such evil creatures became popularized amongst everyday persons, they became assimilated into a popular cosmology.[85] Thus, practically, while *ma* was tied to Buddhism in theory, it reached far beyond just monastic Buddhism and into popular culture, especially through entities like the demon king. Interestingly, this trend stills continues with the archetype of *Maō* being portrayed in several manga, anime, and cultural products of the last few decades.[86]

In the *Heike monogatari* (The Tale of the Heike) (c.1240) there is dialogue discussing why some monks become *tengu*. In this dialogue it is explained why it is easy for *tengu* to deceive monks of learning. In fact, there seems to be a connection between high-ranked monks, and the likelihood of them becoming *ma*. Additionally, not all *tengu* are "bad." There is a distinct difference between a "bad" tengu who seeks to delude and go against the faith of Buddhism and "good" *tengu* who believe in Buddhism but were unable to rid themselves of worldliness or were being hindered by "superficial wisdom."[87] This is yet another significant evolution of *ma* as there are now "good *ma*" and "bad *ma*" each with their own contexts, motivations and reasons for being barred from enlightenment. Wakabayashi puts it perfectly by stating that the idea of *madō* "was created by medieval Japanese Buddhists, on one hand, as a solution to the crisis of the Final Age and, on the other, as a criticism of what they saw as evidence of the Final Age—that is, the degeneration of Buddhist society in the real world."[88]

The idea that there can be "good *ma*" and "bad *ma*" is an intriguing idea for this project. Remembering that *ma* and *tengu* could be used interchangeably, one of the tasks of "good *tengu*" in *tengudō* was to restrain the "bad *tengu*." The bad *tengu* would attempt to keep people from doing good acts. Yet good *tengu* still practiced Buddhism in this realm and could achieve enlightenment. One of the ways they would do so was to inhibit the actions of bad *tengu* and

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[84] Ibid, 491, 493.
[85] Ibid, 494.
[86] One example is Wagahara Satoshi 和ヶ原聡司, *Hataraku Maō-Sama!* はたらく魔王さま, 30 vols. (Tokyo: Asukī Media Wākusu アスキー・メディアワークス, 2011).
[87] Wakabayashi, *The Seven* Tengu *Scrolls*, (2012), 50-51.
[88] Ibid, 51.

decrease their influence in the various lands in the cycle of rebirth.[89] Good *tengu* would discuss the "restoration of the Dharma" and would be portrayed as singing or meditating. Bad *tengu*, in their trickery nature could be seen attempting to deceive practitioners of the *nenbutsu* that they were Amida who had come to take them to the Pure Land when in fact they meant to drag the practitioner into the realm of the *tengu*. Bad *tengu* would be portrayed as drinking or generally engaging in revelry.[90] Wakabayashi argues that this can be understood under the idea of "indiscrimination," or *mabutsu ichinyo* 魔仏一如, the idea that "*ma* and the Buddha are one" and can be attributed to *hongaku* 本覺 thought.[91] The term *hongaku* refers to the concept of "original enlightenment" that was part of the religious landscape of the time and was an important part of Tendai Buddhism in Japanese religious history. The idea of "original enlightenment" is more relevant to the next chapter rather than this one. Briefly, it is the idea that all sentient beings have within them the innate ability to achieve enlightenment and realize it as part of themselves. Enlightenment is not a substantial change to the person themself, but rather a realization of that potential that was previously either dormant or incompletely influential.[92] More simply put, there is inherent Buddhahood inside every sentient creature, and it is the affirmation of that potential awakening that is meant by enlightenment and how one acts like a Buddha. There are some philosophical implications to this idea. The first is that even evil, hell creatures have *hongaku* and it is from that idea that one could deny the difference between the Awakened One and evil incarnate. Genshin was a Tendai monk as well as one of the reformers within Japanese Buddhism with his influence of the Pure Land sutras, *nenbutsu*, and Amitabha Buddha. He claims in his writings that the realms of the Buddhas and the realm of *ma* are the same formless void. There is no difference between decadence and virtue in *hongaku* thought. This is because enlightenment lies beyond the conventional patterns and distinctions of ordinary existence. Good and evil are no opposites, they are counterparts. In fact, they are required for each other. After all, there could be no understanding of what a good action is if there is no concept of what an

[89] Ibid, 151.
[90] Ibid, 147-150.
[91] Ibid, 153.
[92] Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (1999), 37-39.

evil action is.[93] It is with all of this in mind that one could claim while both were *ma*, there were still good and bad *tengu*.[94]

There is a noticeable issue with this, however. One could claim there can be no discrimination between good and bad *tengu* under *hongaku* thought. But there still is something that was noticeably different. *Hongaku* thought still discriminated between different types of *tengu* with enlightenment as the primary measurement. Thus, while some *tengu* used their knowledge of Buddhism for benevolent deeds and their own enlightenment, other *tengu* used that exact same knowledge to trick practitioners, act malevolently, and revel in their attachment to existence. Even if one accepted *hongaku* thought conceptually, pragmatically there was still a discrimination between good (seeking enlightenment) *tengu* and bad (inhibiting enlightenment) *tengu*.[95]

Ryōgen became deified as a protecting demon king precisely because of this logic. Because of the idea of *mabutsu ichinyo*, there does not have to be discrimination between that which could be considered bad, *ma*, and that which could be considered good, the dharma. Wakabayashi puts this well by saying,

> [E]ven Buddha possesses *aku* in his nature. This does not mean that he is bound by *aku* or that he will commit evil deeds, but that, being well acquainted with *aku*, he has the power to freely control it. He is able to understand the hearts of those who have committed evil and knows the means to save such people. *Aku* is therefore a tool or means for bringing people to salvation.[96]

In fact, by becoming the demon king, Ryōgen was given even more power, because not only was he in a position to protect people, but he also had the power to punish those who tried to harm Mt. Hiei. This promoted artistic renditions of him on woodblock prints, amulets, and charms. It is precisely the story of Ryōgen that shows how *ma* grew to refer to enemies of orthodox Buddhism at large, meaning the language of *ma* had political aspects as well.[97]

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[93] This is related to a much older Buddhist idea of Interdependent Origination and deals with Buddhist epistemology, but this lies outside the realm of this thesis. For more on this, see: Jurewicz, Joanna, “Playing with Fire: The *Pratityasamutpada* from the Perspective of Vedic Thought,” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 26 (2000): 77–103.
[94] Wakabayashi, *The Seven* Tengu *Scrolls* (2012), 155-157.
[95] Ibid, 160.
[96] Wakabayashi, “From Conqueror of Evil to Devil King” (1999), 501.
[97] Ibid, 502-503.

While natural disasters, political violence, and disruptive religious leaders were defined as realities under *mappō*, they were also described using the language of *ma*. Violent acts from other temples were sometimes described as "deeds of the *tengu.*" Political decrees included references to "agents of *ma*." While the concept of *ma* was tied to Buddhist cosmology, the influence of Buddhism on warriors, court officials, the imperial family, and artisans cannot be understated. The Buddhist understanding of the world through the lens of *ma* had effects on the political and social world, not just the religious one. Wakabayashi's final argument concludes by arguing how *tengu* were used to legitimize Buddhist social order. Buddhists would label each other as *ma*, but also label those they saw as problematic politically. While some droughts could be seen as effects of political policies, or actions deemed as foolishness, they were also attributed to consequences of *ma* or *tengu*. The concept of *ma,* however, was not always used this way. It used to refer to the internal struggle of the self and the inhibitions we ourselves put in the way of our own enlightenment. As *ma* became more and more external, it transformed from the acts of the heavenly demon king to the evil of one's own neighbor or countrymen.[98] "Evil is born of the fear of chaos. However, chaos is subjective. Those who defy social order are often represented as evil… [yet, images] of evil evolve with a society and its view of the world"[99] Once again the theme of chaos versus order comes up in the discussion of rhetoric surrounding evil. Both this theme and the idea of social constructivism will be addressed after discussing the historical and political context of *aku* during the medieval period.

Akutō **and Political Evil**

During the Kamakura period, there is a significant amount of evidence that the structures that lead to civil wars and eventually the warring states period were already present during this time. Yet they did not necessarily depend on warriors as the only ones who were capable of being "movers and shakers" of society.[100] The *akutō* 悪党, literally "evil bands," were an important aspect of conflict, not necessarily always violent, during the Kamakura period.[101] This

[98] Wakabayashi, *The Seven* Tengu *Scrolls*, 164-167.
[99] Ibid, 168.
[100] Morten Oxenboell, *Akutō and Rural Conflict in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2018), 4.
[101] Oxenboell, *Akutō* (2018), 1.

is important because this is a common use of the word *aku* outside of the context of *akunin shōki*, which can give us a broader context to how the word *aku* was used by medieval Japanese.

The *akutō* are described in sources as murderers, robbers, perpetrators of tax evasion and crop theft, and as general rebels against the powers that be. That being said, many historians agree that this is a hyperbolic description of *akutō*. These bands were not necessarily robbers or bandits in a traditional sense. They acted more like rebels against what they perceived as unjust authority, excessive control, or unfair policies. "There was not one kind of *akutō*, and they were not formed from one class or one social group. Rather, the term was a rhetorical construct that tells us more about the conflicting parties and their ambitions and values than it does about criminal behavior."[102] Again we see the idea of how a particular word can be used by the powers that be to define what is legitimate or what is illegitimate. The word originally referred to gangs of unruly subjects or true bandits that would accost peddlers and peasants alike. However, during the Kamakura period, *akutō* became an important legal term and grew exponentially in its use and applications. More succinctly, while its denotation did not change, the word's connotation was drastically overhauled.[103]

One of the interesting aspects of *akutō* during this time was their connection to local communities. True bandits are usually wayfarers or opportunists, they do not necessarily need deep ties to a local community. If anything, the connection that actual vagabonds would have with a village would be one of predation, not protection. Oxenboell points out, however, that:

> A significant number of the leaders of *akutō* groups that we find in sources from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries held a variety of offices in the estate bureaucracy, or they performed other high-status roles in local society. Many of the people accused of being *akutō* were thus firmly established as administrators at some level in estate hierarchies until their actions earned them the *akutō* label.[104]

Assuming this to be true, that would mean that these "evil bands" had deep cultural, economic, and political ties to these communities. Opportunism would not be unheard of, but it likely was not unfetter banditry as the word used to describe. One example given was that, because proprietors did not have complete control over the administrators of their land, sometimes things

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[102] Ibid, 9.
[103] Ibid, 10.
[104] Ibid, 28.

would occur against their will, especially if the administrator had a lot of political influence in the community. This is precisely what happened with Tarumi Shigemasa (d.u.), who was to be replaced very shortly after being hired. Shigemasa seems to have reacted poorly to his new status of unemployment, as, according to historic documents, the temple accused him of leading bandits against the estate and stealing tools for farming. What is interesting here is that Shigemasa was capable of mounting this "assault" less than a day after his firing, implying he had a lot of local leverage or political power. The conflict seems to have been over differences between what the temple proprietors wanted him to do in comparison to what he himself chose to do with regards to administration. Regardless, actual "bandits" would not usually have such pull with the local population to be able to gather such a force very quickly, especially if they were not prepared to do so prior.[105]

This gets to some of the nuances of the rhetoric surrounding the use of *akutō*. Temple proprietors seemed to have no issue in using such language when their own revenue was under threat. For example, if the administrator found the taxes requested by the temple to be outrageous, there would be conflict between the two parties, and the administrator would likely be called *akutō*. However, if the complaints were from the residents that the administrator was being extortionist or there was conflict between powerful families, as long as the temple received the desired revenue, no report nor accusations would be made.[106] "The main priorities of the temple were peace inside the estate and the stable flow of revenues from the estate, and only when these objectives were challenged by the residents did the temple react."[107] If open civil war was occurring within the state, the temple would of course take notice. However, if the conflict was more subtle, even if the residents' lives were endangered or sometimes even lost, some actions might be taken by a policing force. But the rhetorical use of *akutō* was not guaranteed in comparison to petitions from the temple to the central government surrounding late revenue payments by an administrator. One example of withholding money surrounds the story of the Tōji temple monks and some of the residents on its estate. Due to multiple invasions by neighboring estates, the residents withhold the dues and revenues or *nengu* 年貢 for the temple. The temple accused the residents of stealing the money and being *akutō*. The temple decided to

[105] Ibid, 30-31.
[106] Ibid, 32.
[107] Ibid, 89.

employ a more heavy-handed administrator. However, that is precisely what the villagers had been asking for since someone like that would be able to repel the invaders into the estate more effectively. Here we can see that though the actions may be defined as "criminal" the residents had good reasons to challenge that incompetent authority of the temple.[108]

The exact crimes that the *akutō* were accused of were mostly vague. They were charged with major crimes, such as murder; they would also be charged with minor crimes such as gambling.[109] While murder, robbery, and arson are crimes that detail the precise *action*, the accusations do not give us information on the precise *victim*, nor can we completely discount the possibility of these accusations being hyperbolic in nature. Robbery might tell us that someone stole something, but that does not necessarily give us access to what they stole or why they stole it. Arson might tell us that something was set ablaze, but there is a significant difference between setting a barrel on fire, and setting the entire village on fire. However, there is another word that Oxenboell introduces that is both vague, but insightful: *rōzeki* 狼藉 (rampage). Rampage is difficult to define legalistically, but there seem to have been some different general types of rampages perpetrated by the *akutō*. The first type is *tsuiho rōzeki* 追放狼藉 or "expulsive rampage." This action normally entailed running out and chasing away a group of peasants and taking their belongings. That being said, this only gives us a glimpse into the action. It does not say whether the housing that the peasants belonged to received new inhabitants, nor does it engage with the possibility of the peasants returning after the rampage. Another type of rampage was *roji rōzeki* 路地狼藉 or "highway rampage." The English phrase "highway robbery" is precisely the context for this type of rampage. It entailed the seizure of goods or money on a public road. Yet once again, this does not tell us why the stealing occurs, nor what happens to the goods afterwards. It also referred to blocking entrance to an estate or passageway on a road. This could be an accusation when residents specifically denied entry of delegates from a proprietor but merchants or itinerant monks were still allowed to pass through.[110]

There is a type of rampage that I want to compare to the *tsumi* discussion earlier. One type of rampage that the *akutō* were accused of included the cutting of crops (*karita rōzeki* 刈田狼藉, "field cutting rampage"). This was a heavenly offense, an *amatsutsumi*, and was

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[108] Ibid, 116-117.
[109] Ibid, 59.
[110] Ibid, 37-38

considered a significant offense, yet is quite common within Kamakura sources.[111] I find this to be an interesting pattern to be repeated. As discussed, harming the harvest goes against the well-being of everyone involved as it means less food for a community. Yet there are some differences here when talking about *akutō*. First, land disputes during this time, especially along the borders of particular estates if there was no natural barrier between the two, were quite common. One example was a clash between some residents and the temple Tōdaiji. One of the branch temples under the control of Tōdaiji contested the land that was being cultivated by residents. The central government courts ended up siding with the residents, but the temple denied this decision. The residents went ahead and harvested the land anyway and were accused of *karita rōzeki.* This deals much more with bureaucratic and legalistically defined boundaries than a malicious intent to starve one's neighbors. Likewise, this example includes a group of residents not "destroying" in a rampage but more "stealing" at least from the view of a temple. Another example pits a single resident against a temple. While his fields were under quarantine by the temple, the resident grew angered at the attempt to keep him from his land, tore up the signposts that barred him from his farm, and harvested the land. The temple charged him with rampage as well, despite being on his own land. In this case, it is the authority of the temple itself that is challenged (and what they are reacting to), not necessarily border or resource disputes.[112] Individuals who had their land confiscated by the government were often not very pleased with that state of affairs, thus reactionary methods were common.[113] The disputes over land show that *akutō* were complex. They could gather a resistance or have some feeling of legitimation for what they did, at least in the cases defined above. Temples used the labels surrounding rampage and *akutō* to attempt to fight back the moves against their authority. While temples were not always the ones to do this (though they own a lot of land and many temples were proprietors), this rhetoric can be found beyond just these examples given.[114]

Now that the crimes and some context has been given, it's time to explore the word *akutō* itself. While the word literally means "evil" or "bad" it was occasionally used as a positive adjective. The Takezaki scrolls show the exploits of Takezaki Suenaga 竹崎季長 and his fights with the Mongols during their invasions in 1274 and 1281. During a lull in the fighting, Takezaki

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[111] Ibid, 38.
[112] Ibid, 39-40.
[113] Ibid, 55.
[114] Ibid, 42.

goes to the temporary lodging of a *bakufu* official and commander by the name of Gōta Gorō Tōtoshi. Upon meeting him, Takezaki is referred to using the phrase: *dai mōaku no hito* 大猛悪の人, "the baddest man around."[115] The context and connotation of *aku* in this case is not "bad" in the pejorative sense, but "bad" in a way that one stands out from a crowd, does something praiseworthy, or fights particularly vigorously or ambitiously.[116] This can happen in English too. Someone who is a "bad boy" normally refers to a type of dating or sexual partner that has particularly "masculine" or "edgy" qualities to them. In slang English, "bad" can mean "cool" or "something to aspire to." Either way, the point is that there are precedents of the word being used outside of a standard moralistic framework and that has broader usage than just malice. It should be noted as well, however, that the commander sees Takezaki as a liar having done so in order to join the fight against the Mongols. This is not seen as a problem in this light, but that is to say what normally would have been seen as an issue, lying to a governmental official, was overlooked because of the results of his actions and the outcome of the battle.[117]

Akutō could also refer to impetuous behavior by monks. Those considered to be *akusō* or "evil monks" were not heretics or practitioners of evil rituals. Rather, these monks "employed drastic measures in their struggles against the government, rival religious institutions, or other competitors for power and resources."[118] This connotation is more political, but still remains in the realm of morals and ethics in comparison to "stand-out ambition or strength." The word first appears in an encylopedic work called the *Ruijū kokushi* 類聚国史 that is attributed to Sugawara no Michizane 菅原 道真 (845-903). While it included violent monks, it also included monks who disturbed the peace that governing bodies wanted to maintain, thus, subversive monks could also be defined as *akusō*, not just violent ones. This shows that monastic violence of rebellion was not always religious and often tied to the secular world.[119]

In one case, some monks from Kōfukuji were exiled in 1142 for rebellious activities against the state. The reason this is interesting is that these monks were educated in legal

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[115] Thomas C. Conlan, trans., *In Little Need of Divine Intervention: Takezaki Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan*, Cornell East Asia Series 113 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2001). 21, 155.
[116] Oxenboell, *Akutō*, (2018), 43.
[117] Conlan, *In Little Need of Divine Intervention* (2001), 154-155.
[118] Oxenboell, *Akutō* (2018), 43.
[119] Mikael S. Adolphson, *The Teeth and Claws of the Buddha: Monastic Warriors and* Sōhei *in Japanese History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

proceedings and governmental structures. This means that even those who were in higher classes could be given the *aku* label if the government perceived their activities as outside their framework for control. Rebellion does not necessarily mean that they were armed bandits, it could just mean that they were subversive to government control. Sometimes *akusō* referred to monks who did not obey the highest-ranking monk at their temple. Other times it did indeed refer to armed monastics, but this does not account for all of the instances of the use of the term.[120]

Communal perspective was another key in understanding the concept of *akusō*. Monks were sometimes accused of being *aku* by residents or resident officials if they did things that were not taken well, such as asking for dues. It was also used by monks themselves to refer to other monks who acted without authorization from a higher-level monk or against the wishes of a community at large. Communities in general legitimated the actions of monks, officials, or residents. Anyone could justify their actions if they perceived such deeds as benefiting the larger community. *Akusō* was sometimes connected to protests by monks towards government officials due to this exact issue. If the monks believed they were in the right, especially if they believed their position was justified by a higher power, than they would act in subversive manners.[121] It is important to remember "that *akutō,* like *akusō*, reflects the bias of rulers and a concern with threats to the social order as conceived in ruling ideologies."[122] The term *akusō* reflects how monks were already being labelled as "evil," sometimes even by themselves. Thus, the term showed a precedent of using *aku* to describe monastics prior to the time of Shinran.

While *akunin* is the specific term studied in this project, it did not necessarily refer to an evil person in a religious sense. The term *akunin* along with *akugyōnin* or "evildoer" were both used to define people who killed animals [123] Buddhist precepts for both lay and monastic practitioners prohibit killing, but hunting was tolerated since there were purification rituals, or other doctrinally accepted methods to rid a person of evil karma attained by killing an animal. This did not just stay in the realm of estate residents killing animals either. Some residents were accused of being *akutō* for hunting or lumberjacking on temple estate land. The rhetoric surrounding these accusations is of note due to the religious usage of *kekkai* 結界, which is a

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[120] Adolphson, The Teeth and Claws of the Buddha (2007), 62-63.
[121] Ibid, 64.
[122] Ibid, 65.
[123] Oxenboell, *Akutō*, (2018), 44.

term that could be rendered as "sacred" but has the connotations of a forbidden area that outsiders would bring impurities into should they enter. The premise of these accusations was less about political land disputes and more about religious perceptions of purity. To spill blood on "sacred" land was considered a grave offense.[124] This idea of purity versus impurity is reminiscent of *tsumi* and shows the continuing influence of this line of thinking on perceptions of good and evil in Japan.

In 1218, administrators of Mt. Kōya accused another official in Yoshino province of encouraging residents to cut down wood and hunt animals on the temple property. Cutting down trees was not rare, as residents required wood for their livelihoods, whether to heat their homes or to sell the logs for money. It was due to the latter accusation that the residents were denounced as *akutō*. Cutting down wood to sell on other markets was not uncommon in medieval Japan. Yet the trespassing was perceived as particularly criminal because the land was considered to be sacred (*kekkai*) or set apart. Due to the connection of the rhetoric of poaching and defilement, tree cutting was actually elevated in criminal status in comparison to simple trespassing. The sacrilege against temple grounds was invoked as a threat to the ritual efficacy of that temple's procedures. If this was the case then, the cutting of wood or hunting of animals on temple land could be considered a threat to the nation.[125] Th This was not always the case with this crime, it was an evolution. There is obvious political and economic ramifications to the concept of *kekkai* and how it was used by clergy when invoked. And yet it is precisely mirroring the evolution of *tsumi* into a more politically relevant ideology than purely a social or religious one.

While both the ideologies of non-killing are relevant, they are not the complete story. Oxenboell argues that politics and economics need to be taken into account too. During the invasion by the Mongols, external factors caused the government to want more control, and it is precisely the reorganizing power structures and resistance to shogunate policies of control that produced *akutō*.[126] This leads to an important contextual connotation of the word *akutō*. "The shogunate probably chose this term not because it referred to 'evil acts' from a Buddhist perspective but because its general meaning of 'banditry' conveyed a sense of something difficult to control and something threatening the new jurisdiction of the shogunate."[127] I think

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[124] Ibid, 44, 160.
[125] Ibid, 44-45.
[126] Ibid, 46-47, 162.
[127] Ibid, 57.

this is the most significant aspect of *akutō*. Even if you remove the ideas of Buddhist morality, it still provides the idea of an entity that is ungovernable or uncontrollable. This is precisely how Shinran would understand the depravity of the world under *mappō*. Evil was uncontrollable. It was ungovernable by the intellect. Precisely due to this status of evil in the world Amida's vow was needed. Evil was everywhere in the world, and temples were no exception. One example of this was in 1312 when some monks from Kōfukuji were sent to a nearby estate. While the temple portrayed this act as sending an envoy, it was quite clearly perceived as an invasion of the rights of the administrators and residents of the nearby estate, who fought back fiercely. In this case, the invading was done by a temple, but the rhetoric of *akutō* was not used. Here we have an excellent example of doing the exact crimes that *akutō* would be accused of and yet no accusation against the temple for such a crime was levied. This does not mean that the temple was above such laws, just that the power dynamics seem to indicate a preference for the temple's point of view.[128]

More complications in the politics of *akutō* can be seen in the cooperation between temples and *akutō*. There were numerous conflicts between Kōfukuji and Tōnomine, a branch temple estate of Tōdaiji for a little over two centuries. One example of this occurred in 1173, when Kōfukuji set up new tollgates. Tōnomine monks destroyed one gate and there was a violent retaliation by Kōfukuji clergy.[129] The conflict in 1312 was different. Both Tōnomine and Tōdaiji gathered together armed groups and joined these forces to fight Kōfukuji. The main temple also sent a letter to the estate under Kōfukuji, promising that their past crimes would be forgotten and punishments revoked if they fought against Kōfukuji. These residents had originally been charged as *akutō*, yet the temple still attempted to recruit them despite their position.[130] Additionally, *akutō* were sometimes entreated by the temples to harass neighboring estates and in return would receive protection by the temple and monastic estates.[131] This shows that, despite differences, temples were willing to ally themselves with those they vilified in order to achieve their goals. Not only that, proprietors sometimes worked against other authorities in their pursuit of the *akutō*. Residents worked with *akutō* as well, especially if their village or fields were being harassed by neighboring forces. Farmers and peasants are not going to stand back and just watch

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[128] Ibid, 105.
[129] Adolphson, The Teeth and Claws of the Buddha (2007), 42-43.
[130] Oxenboell, *Akutō*, (2018), 81.
[131] Ibid, 84-85.

their hard work be trampled on or burned.[132] Likewise, temple servants often had relationships in the nearby town. They were sometimes torn in their loyalties to those who paid them, and those whom they lived with.[133] Yet, when an estate was attacked by external forces, these monastic servants would also assist in defending land, property, and lives.

In stories about the monk Ippen 一遍 (1234-1289), founder of the Ji-shū branch of Pure Land Buddhism, *akutō* are referenced and some scholars even speculate they could have been converts of Ippen. What is intriguing here is that these stories give good evidence that the *akutō* were organized and could be reasoned with. There is even a possibility that these stories indicate the so-called "bandits" were actually protectors of highways, especially itinerant monks, though this is likely rhetorical flourish. While these stories do praise the activities of Ippen, it is of note that the possibility that the *akutō* could be converted is evidence of "an almost carnivalesque scenario in which the world was turned upside down and order was created through chaos."[134]

Oxenboell notes the interesting disappearance of *akutō* from legal sources after the Nanbokuchō period, the period leading up to the Muromachi Shogunate. He argues this was because *akutō* were incorporated into larger provincial warbands and the newer authorities in play provided legitimations for *akutō*, and thus they lost the same legalistic connotations that had been present prior.[135] The term did not disappear, nor did the groups that had been denigrated as *akutō*. Yet it returned to mean general banditry, and the nuanced legal usage and temple rhetoric that had been prevalent during the Kamakura period seems to have subsided.[136] Conflict was used by temples, residents, proprietors, the shogunate, and administrators as a form of communication with another group. *Akutō* arose and were condemned within this dynamic conversation, and it is precisely because the Kamakura period was a time of nuanced *aku* that it is useful for this thesis.

Chapter Conclusion

We have looked at three different terms and the changes they went through under the use of powerful groups, individuals, and an evolving society. While they are different terms during

[132] Ibid, 101.
[133] Ibid, 80.
[134] Ibid, 53.
[135] Ibid, 135-136.
[136] Ibid, 142, 176.

very different times in Japanese history, they share a pattern that is vital for my argument. *Tsumi* became more political and was used by those in power to legitimize their power. *Ma* was used by traditional institutions to accuse newer ones or actions they found particularly revolting. *Aku* in its numerous compounds had a complex meaning but was used especially by temples in power to accuse groups of crimes when their bottom line was under threat. In each of these cases, the powerful construe the rhetoric to fit a narrative that legitimates their activities and decries the activities or status of those they perceive to be antithetical to their own.

Ogoshi Aiko's argument, fundamentally, is that 20th century rhetoric surrounding *akunin shōki* was used as a legitimation of evil actions, but in this case, it is a bit different. The accusation of "evil" in all three examples provided in this chapter were always vilification of the other to delegitimize their actions, status, position, or doctrine. Yet Ogoshi Aiko is specifically criticizing the legitimating rhetoric of 20th century philosophers that use "Evil" not to vilify, but justify. In the same way Shinran reversed the normal understanding of the roles of good and evil under the original vow of Amida, so too do the 20th century authors criticized by Ogoshi continue that logic. The switch, however, is not to legitimize the actions of an individual by calling it good, however, the switch is to call it bad, *and that is precisely why it is good*, at least in her view. Vilification is not meant for the other, but rather for the self. In all three examples of *tsumi*, *ma*, and *aku*, these are accusations of evil that demand death, banishment, retribution, or other punishments. Yet, under *akunin shōki* theory, according to Ogoshi Aiko, this has been reversed.

All three words mentioned in this chapter have been discussed using the rhetoric of "order" and "chaos" by the authors and researchers writing and studying these linguistic transformations. When discussing morality and society together, it is nearly inevitable due to the logical implications of maintaining authority that the topics of order and chaos are brought up. Evil is generally perceived as disorderly, especially by those in power. Likewise, order can be synonymous to control in some respects and is looked at with rose-tinted (or sometimes completely opaque) glasses. That being said, it would be incorrect to equate order with good and chaos with evil. While these terms are helpful in understanding origins of good versus evil rhetoric, I think it is more useful in this case to see it as control by institutions or humans. Order is not necessarily societal order, but rather what is perceived as order. Disorder and order are not only perceived by elites, or those at the top of social hierarchies, so I want to nuance this

statement first. However, with all three examples given, either political institutions, religious institutions, or both together, had a hand in defining what was considered evil and what was considered good. While cosmology certainly played a role (something we will get to in the next chapter), the political influence of the elites' perception of what they could control directly affected their perception of whether something was chaotic or not, irrespective of whether it thrust society into chaos or not. It is reasonable to consider, on a sociological level, famine and starvation from destroyed fields to be "chaos." The rioting, looting and consequential poverty of such events is well documented, and countless lives have been lost throughout human history. However, it is more difficult to say that refusal to pay dues to a proprietor because they are not protecting the residents is the same level as the first statement. Despite this, the rhetoric of chaos is used by those who perceive things to be out of their control. This is anxiety, or angst in existential philosophy, and an important factor in seeing how words change throughout time.

This leads to the noticeable pattern of the "construct" idea regarding this discussion. Regardless of whether it is "social," "governmental," or "rhetorical," the view that the concepts of *tsumi*, *ma*, and *aku*, are constructs, that they are contrived, is insufficient in understanding them as a whole. While its true that, by definition, the words themselves are constructs, I wish to reevaluate the relationship that is perceived between these terms and the ideas attributed to them. In understanding *akunin shōki,* there are a variety of influences and not all of them are internal, or of human creation, at least doctrinally. For the Pure Land Buddhists in the Kamakura period and beyond, there is no way to escape *mappō*, an external and existential reality that one needs to grapple with. Because this is an external influence, I think it is difficult to argue entirely that the reactions to this are "constructs" as usually understood.

The terms are certainly constructed, but the concepts behind those terms can be differentiated from the terms themselves. Society may influence morality, but I find it to be a stretch of logic to say it *determines* it. To say that the concepts were socially influenced I think would be more accurate and comprehensive. Ethical concepts in humans have evolutionary roots and anxiety itself is an existential reality that one has to grapple with. Polyvagal response theory in psychology (the theory that the autonomic nervous system, something humans cannot directly control outside of breathing, affects how we adapt to the world around us) has made strides in showing how our biology and autonomy influence our responses to the world around us. Meanwhile, epigenetics (the theory that different environments actually affect the mutations

within an individual's genetic code) continues to show us how our actual bodies change with that world.[137] With these, science has shown how human beings, unintentionally and sometimes against their own will, do things and engage with the world because of physiobiological reactions.

I thus do not think it is sufficient to say concepts are constructs entirely, especially when it comes to *akunin*. Even if it is misdirected or derives from a sense of control, the angst felt by elites or those in power is not just a construct. Likewise, people more broadly in their everyday lives have anxieties that may make them do things against what they wish to do. Sociologically, societal mores are malleable and change with time. Yet this is not cut off from human psychological responses to war, floods, famines, and death. It is from this position that I wish to restate the symbiotic relationship between the external and internal worlds. To point affirmatively at one or the other to be determinative loses a piece of the puzzle. This is not to deny the social mechanisms and systems that are used for and against human beings throughout history. Nor do I wish to deny that humans do construct things and attribute value to them. That is precisely what laws are. Morality is socially influenced but not socially constructed, and anxiety and external existential realities have as much to say about how people perceive good and evil as social and internal bias does. I think this is clear in how the terms themselves changed and are used by various groups to achieve control over a narrative or create an explanation of the world. These terms may be used to influence the concepts, but not necessarily dictate what they are. The relationship between the internal world of thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and values is interdependent with the external world of politics, society, pragmatics, and indeed constructs. All of these influence conversations surrounding reality, making the relationship a multi-layered one. It is precisely this synthesis of the external realm and the internal one within *akunin shōki* that this project wishes to emphasize.

Words change through time and the meanings and connotations to them matter, especially to those who believe in those words and act according to that belief. The concept of *akunin* extends beyond linguistic contexts. It affected how people lived, both for good and bad.

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[137] This is far beyond the scope of this paper so for more see Richard C. Francis, *Epigenetics: How Environment Shapes Our Genes* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2012) and Stephen W. Porges, *The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-Regulation*, 1st ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011).

The conversation changes now to more doctrinal concerns than linguistic. In order for us to fully engage with the idea, let’s turn now to Shinran’s words themselves.

Chapter 2 - Dogmatics

"All human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil…"
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886)

Shinran's disciple Yuien 唯円 (1222-1289), despite Shinran's claiming not to have any disciples, wrote down some of his master's words that he remembered and put them together in what is now known as the *Tannishō* 歎異抄 (Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith). It is in these writings that Hōnen and Shinran's reversal of a classic idea in Pure Land thought occurs. Before going further, however, I want to reference the main part of the *Tannishō* that is being discussed by this project. The third section of the *Tannishō* states:

> "Even a virtuous man can attain Rebirth in the Pure Land, how much more easily a wicked man!" But ordinary people usually say: "Even a wicked man can attain Rebirth in the Pure Land, how much more easily a virtuous man." At first sight, this view may appear more reasonable, but it really is quite contrary to the intention of the Other Power of the Original Vow.[138]
>
> 「*Zennin nao mote ōjō o togu, iwanya akunin o ya*」*. Shikaru o, yo no hitotsu ne ni iwaku,*「*akunin nao ōjō su, ikani iwanya zennin o ya*」*. Kono jō, ittan sono iware aru ni nitaredomo, hongan tariki no ishu ni somukeri.*
>
> 「善人なほもて往生をとぐ、 いはんや悪人をや」。しかるを、世のひとつねにいはく、「悪人なほ往生す、いかにいはんや善人をや」。この条、一旦そのいはれあるに似たれども、本願他力の意趣にそむけり。[139]

The passage shows the reversal of the traditional idea that "even a wicked man" can be saved while getting to the heart of the matter for Shinran, the power of Amida's original vow. This idea is foundational to the doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism or *Jōdo-shū*, but especially so for True Pure Land Buddhism, or *Jōdo Shinshū*. With this passage being the primary text of study and analysis of this project, it is important to first give it context as well as some explanation, including the influence of *mappō*. Afterwards, I will dive into an analysis of Hōnen's and

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[138] Yuien, *Tannishō: Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith*, trans. Bandō Shōjun and Harold Stewart, vol. 83, Taishō no. 2661, BDK English Tripiṭaka (Berkeley, California: Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), 5.

[139] Umehara Takeshi 梅原 猛, trans., *Tannishō 歎異抄*, Kōdansha Gakujutsu Bunko 講談社学術文庫 (Tokyo 東京: Kōdansha 講談社, 2000), 28; quotation marks are mine to line up with the English translation.

Shinran's thoughts on evil before concluding with a possible interpretation of how *akunin* might be understood, not just in this quote, but more broadly doctrinally in both Pure Land and True Pure Land Buddhism.

Interestingly, there is a good argument that the *akunin shōki* idea came from Hōnen first, not Shinran, who instead continued with the line of thinking (though he himself believed he was just saying what Hōnen had been). The scholar Fujimoto Kiyohiko explains the history and evidence for this argument that I wish to lay out. A biography about Hōnen by one of his disciples was found at Daigoji in Kyoto in 1917. In this biography, the final article in the last section includes the same phrase quoted at the beginning of the chapter, verbatim, from the *Tannishō*. Hōnen's disciple says that such words came directly from his teacher's mouth, and therefore the idea originates with him.[140] Prior to this point, it had mostly been believed that Shinran was the one to be credited with thinking up *akunin shōki*, and so there was an intense debate over the authenticity of the last section of this Hōnen biography. Some scholars believed it to be editorial, as such an idea showed up nowhere else in the collected writings of Hōnen. Others, however, found the rest of the document to be similar to what Hōnen had previously written, or those attributed to him, and stood by the authenticity of the newly found biography. To make things more complicated, however, those that stood by the authenticity of the new source debated over whether these were Hōnen's words, or the words of one of his multiple close disciples. During this debate, another document was uncovered at a Shin Buddhist temple that had the same phrase from the *Tannishō*. This time the document was attributed to a "grand-disciple" of Hōnen. However, this is significant, because that meant then that the idea was not just handed down from Hōnen to his disciples, but then carried on to the disciples of his disciples. In the 1980s the argument had relatively concluded that Hōnen was likely the one responsible for the inception of *akunin shōki*.[141] While this project is not exclusively interested in *who* came up with the idea, it is interested in how the idea came to be understood, and therefore it is significant if Shinran has a different view of *akunin* than Hōnen.

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[140] Kiyohiko Fujimoto, "The Study of Hōnen's Doctrine of Akunin-Shōki (Evil Men as the Object of Salvation)," Special Presentation, from the International Symposium on the Life, Thought, and Legacy of Hōnen-bō Genkū, co-sponsored by the Buddhist Studies Program of the University of Hawaiʻi and the Hawaiʻi Council of Jōdo Missions, Honolulu: Jōdo Shū Research Institute, April 12, 1996, 2.

[141] Fujimoto, "The Study of Hōnen's Doctrine of Akunin-Shōki" (1996), 3-6.

According to Fujimoto, there is no specific definition for what is meant by evil in Hōnen's writings. Fujimoto proposes that Hōnen understood evil as someone who was incapable of practicing the "three teachings" of the precepts, meditation, and wisdom. An evil person is also a faithless person, or at least someone who is incapable of having belief in Amida. For Hōnen, an evil person that is aware of their evil is not necessarily one who is guilty or ashamed of what they have done, but rather one who laments what they cannot do. It is the awareness of one's inability to do so that turns him into the precise object of salvation for Amida, who does whatever is required on behalf of that person who believes.[142] In this definition, "evil" is removed almost entirely from its ethical understanding and instead the word *aku* could be understood as "incapable" not "immoral." While I agree with Fujimoto, that *akunin* does have a connotation of inability, I do think that is more because of the context of *mappō*, not necessarily because a person is inept, though this will be explored a little later.

Taira Masayuki also stands by the idea that Hōnen was the originator of *akunin shōki* and argues that "good" originally referred to the higher, more elite level of society. He proposes that, since Kamakura period Buddhism includes more popular movements historically, the newer movements prioritized "evil" people (those not on the higher rungs of the societal ladder) because that is whom both Hōnen and Shinran were primarily interacting with, especially after they both were sent into exile.[143] This is an intriguing idea and does bring in the historical context of the times more, yet again, I think it discounts the influence both Hōnen and Shinran believed the Latter Age of the Dharma had on the thoughts and ideas of people. This is not to discount the political insight of Taira's proposal; I think it is a possibility that needs to be considered when understanding the word *aku* in *akunin*.

Sueki Fumihiko points out that *akunin shōki*, as itself, never appears in any of Shinran's or Hōnen's writings. Instead, it was a phrase that was later developed to describe the idea that Shinran and Hōnen were writing about. This may be because the *Tannishō* was more popularly read in the modern period rather than the medieval one, likely due to the continuous growth of the institution over the modern period in comparison to its relatively non-elite status as a religion

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[142] Ibid, 7-8.
[143] Ibid, 8-9. For more see Taira Masayuki. *Nihon chūsei no shakai to Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Hanawa shobō, 1992), 222-226, 251-257.

in the medieval period.[144] Both Sueki and Taira make important points in how *akunin shōki* should be framed, and that while there are certainly political implications, it is important to remember that in history, not everyone was familiar with the concepts discussed in the *Tannishō*.

Fujimoto makes a good case for the distinction between what he calls *Akunin ōjō setsu* 悪人往生説, or Doctrine of Rebirth of Evil People in the Pure Land, and *Akunin shōki setsu* 悪人正機説, which is the Doctrine of Evil People are the Object of Amida's Salvation. To clarify this, Fujimoto returns to Taira and explains that *Akunin ōjō* refers to the line (as quoted above) "Even a wicked man can attain Rebirth in the Pure Land, how much more easily a virtuous man." *Akunin shōki* is the reversal of this statement: "Even a virtuous man can attain Rebirth in the Pure Land, how much more easily a wicked man!"[145] Fujimoto suggests that understanding the former helps us understand the latter, which I believe is true. He also mentions that some other scholars have suggested the reason Hōnen did not explicitly write down his ideas of *Akunin shōki setsu* was because of the politics of the time, which would have preferred the more traditional *Akunin ōjō setsu*.[146] This gets close to explicating the *shōki* aspect and it is important to note that the idea of *akunin ōjō* had been around in Japan for centuries prior to Hōnen and Shinran. This would assist in making the argument that a reversal of priorities in this doctrine would be reversing the *status quo* and causing political issues because of this. Again I think the political context is important, but that explanation alone is insufficient in explaining why such a change may have occurred.

The "Reality" of *Mappō*

One of the primary reasons both Hōnen and Shinran emphasized the salvation of evil persons was because of *mappō*. While briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, I want to go deeper into this contextual idea that both thinkers believed was the primary motivation for reliance on Amida's vow. The thinking around *mappō* did not uniquely affect Pure Land Buddhism; both Zen and Nichiren Buddhism, for example, were affected as well.[147] The logic of

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[144] For more see Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士, *Nihon bukkyō shisōshi ronkō* 日本仏教思想史論考. Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1993, 431-438

[145] Yuien, *Tannishō: Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith*, trans. Bandō Shōjun and Harold Stewart (1996), 5.

[146] Fujimoto, "The Study of Hōnen's Doctrine of Akunin-Shōki" (1996), 9-10.

[147] See Jacqueline I. Stone, "Seeking Enlightenment in the Last Age: Mappō Thought in Kamakura Buddhism: Part II," *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, 18, no. 2 (1985): 35–64.

akunin shōki is premised on the idea that the message of the Buddha's dharma is in decay and that the world is in a state of decadence. Without this contextual understanding, complete reliance on Amida is unnecessary. It is for this reason that I argue politics, economics, and social forces are not enough to explain the idea of "evil" in *akunin*. *Mappō* had been discussed far before Hōnen and Shinran were born, and their inheritance of such logic is important to admit in this case. It was the existential reality that they found themselves in. "Buddhist tradition held that in this age, owing to human depravity, the teachings of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni would become obscured, and enlightenment all but impossible to attain."[148] It is this concept that I wish to talk about before diving deeper into *akunin*.

Jacqueline Stone calls awareness of this decadence "*mappō* consciousness," and it was present everywhere in Buddhism during the Kamakura period, whether it was intentional or not. *Mappō* is actually the third stage in a chain of Buddhist traditional eras. The first is known as the "Age of the True Dharma" (Jpn. *shōbo* 正法) and refers to the time of the Buddha's actual lifetime and a couple centuries afterwards (the specific dates differ depending on the source). Afterwards comes the "Age of the Counterfeit Dharma" (Jpn. *zōhō* 像法). Again, the dates differ, but the core of this age is that while the teachings remain, whether oral or written down, and practices continue, enlightenment begins to become ever more elusive and difficult to obtain. Pure Land Buddhism in Japan burst onto the scene as an independent school during the "Latter Age of the Dharma," the last and final era where neither practice, teaching, nor the merit of Buddhism can be found in the world.[149] It is this era to which I refer when discussing *mappō*.

Buddhist chronologists attempted to estimate the beginning of *mappō* so as to prepare for it, and by the Heian period, it was predicted that 1052 CE would be the year marking the beginning of *mappō*. By the mid eleventh century, rebellions, wars, famines, earthquakes, natural disasters, and political turmoil all added to the doomsaying and the dread filling the minds of people throughout the social hierarchy. *Mappō* had been popularized by Genshin's stories about the pure land, and it was a good explanation for the chaos that was unfolding around people.[150] This is significant because it means *mappō* was not just an idea that was in either Hōnen or

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[148] Jacqueline I. Stone, "Seeking Enlightenment in the Last Age: Mappō Thought in Kamakura Buddhism: Part I," *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, 18, no. 1 (1985), 28.
[149] Stone, "Seeking Enlightenment in the Last Age: Mappō Thought in Kamakura Buddhism: Part I" (1985), 28-30.
[150] Ibid, 33-34.

Shinran's minds but rather part of the collective existential consciousness of the Kamakura Japanese who had to live with the real angst of life.

It is this reality that Hōnen had in mind when thinking about *mappō*. He considered the effects of the time and the capabilities of the people living within that time. He agreed with Genshin that the best practice for *mappō* was the recitation of the *nenbutsu*. Because normal people are limited by their own delusions and "karmic hindrances," it would be the quickest way a person would be able to attain rebirth in the pure land.[151] Shinran agrees with this as well, however, his "*mappō* consciousness" was more internalized and this led to his perception of the world to be different and thus his doctrinal emphases to vary from Hōnen.[152] This can be seen in the way Shinran understood good and evil in the lives of human beings.

For Shinran, the degeneracy of *mappō* meant that an individual was not even capable of good deeds. Shinran was very critical of what he calls *hakarai* 計らい, which is usually translated as "calculation" or "contrivance." Shinran argued that "good people" rely on *hakarai* and calculate their merit or goodness and therefore taint the virtue of their good deeds. The reason a person should do a good deed is because it is good, not so that they can receive a reward in the end. Shinran was critical of those who believed they could achieve salvation on one's own good deeds or works since this was "essentially egotistical." Relying on anything outside of Amida's grace was not going to get you anywhere. It is precisely this emphasis on the depravity of humankind that allows Shinran to laud the Original Vow of Amida over anything else.[153]

I would argue that without *mappō*, there can be no *akunin shōki*. This is not because evil people would not be saved by the grace of Amida, but rather it would not be *necessary* as there would be a variety of options for enlightenment, cultivation, and virtuousness. The idea of *mappō* led to their rejection of the precepts, to the egalitarian stance they had towards the laity, towards their doctrine, ethics, rituals, and even community.[154] It is not an exaggeration to claim that *mappō* is the predicate to Pure Land Buddhism in Japan as it is today. While it is not ignored, I do not think it is often given enough credit for what it truly does, especially its importance in *akunin shōki*. If good people are not "truly" good, *aku* might not refer to "evil"

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[151] Ibid, 36-41.
[152] Ibid, 44.
[153] Ibid, 44-45.
[154] Ibid, 47.

people, but rather "all" people, despite the universality of the salvific power of Amida being present in the rest of the statement surrounding both good and evil persons in the *Tannishō*.

Ethics

One important question to ask is whether Shinran refers to unethical actions himself, and indeed he does. In Buddhism, karma and ethics are intrinsically tied. Intention is an important part of the equation. In the thinking of both Hōnen and Shinran "ethics is not part of a path towards liberation, as in most other Buddhist schools, but a consequence of belief that one is *already* saved."[155] This is difficult because Buddhism, in a general sense, does argue that ethics matter, since both good and bad deeds produce merit and demerit. However, how those ethics produce karma, and precisely what those ethics are, vary across the multitude of Buddhist schools.[156] Danluan (476-542 CE) and Shandao (613-681 CE), both Chinese monks who were vital in the evolution of Pure Land doctrine and understanding, claimed that good moral action was karmically effective. Genshin as well believed that other Buddhist practices were karmically effective, though he still claimed that the recitation of Amida's name was the *most* effective method. Genshin went so far as to write that the *nenbutsu* annulled sinful karma.[157] Shinran was a bit different from these thinkers as though he did not deny the workings of karma, he denied the possibility of achieving merit from doing good deeds.[158] However, it would be prudent to look briefly at a portion of *The Larger Pure Land Sūtra* and *The Contemplation Sūtra* to see how Amida's vow views karma.

Amida's vow in *The Contemplation Sūtra* goes against some of the retributive effects of karma and the responsibility held by people since the popular interpretation of it claims that the merit accrued by Amida is enough to override any amount of demerit held in an individual karmic line. This is indeed one of the criticisms levied against Shin Buddhism in general, since it could promote moral irresponsibility.[159] This is something that plagues Shin Buddhism even in the present day, despite both Shinran and Rennyo writing much against it. That being said, the particular nature of one's rebirth in the Pure Land is affected by the amount of good merit one

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[155] Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 143.
[156] Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (2000), 28-29.
[157] Gil Fronsdal, "The Understanding of Karma in the Pure Land Tradition," *The Pure Land* 6 (1989), 234-237.
[158] Fronsdal, "The Understanding of Karma in the Pure Land Tradition" (1989), 238.
[159] Ibid, 230.

accrues in a lifetime. The *Contemplation Sūtra* classifies practitioners according to "nine grades" of rebirth in the Pure Land.[160] But even in the original text of the *The Larger Pure Land Sūtra* regarding Amida's vow, there is a denial of the efficacy of repentance if too much evil karma is accrued in a single lifetime.[161] The translation from Chinese by Hisao Inagaki and Harold Stewart reads, "When their lives are about to end, fear and revulsion arise in turn. Not having previously done any good, they are filled with remorse when they come to their end. But what good will that do then?"[162]

This idea is lost and more or less denied by the later Pure Land Buddhist thinkers, specifically Shandao (613-681) in China, who argued this was more of a warning against evil to reduce malicious actions rather than a statement of exclusive salvation.[163] Frondsal points out that if one were to compare these two aspects of *The Contemplation Sūtra* and *The Larger Pure Land Sūtra*, one would find the former to be more inclusive than the latter. It is interesting to note, then, that *akunin shōki* is technically an invention outside the original sūtras but seems to repeat the logic of *The Contemplation Sūtra*, albeit furthering it towards an egalitarian sentiment. The sūtras also argue for the causality of karmic lines, basically that both good fortune or misfortune follow good karmic deeds or bad karmic deeds respectively. This, itself, may not be denied by the concept of *akunin shōki*, but it certainly becomes less relevant in regard to soteriology. However, responsibility is not removed from the individual as some might criticize. This is because, even if one accepts the premise that the *nenbutsu* is salvific, it must be said with intention or sincerity. It was believed that actions would greatly affect future spiritual lives and there was a distinct difference between the fruits of those actions.[164] However, as Shinran will argue, one cannot rely on willpower alone to change either the self or one's deeds.

Shinran believed that any effort, even good effort, was *jiriki* 自力 or "self-power." He believed that, because of *mappō*, one's own efforts were ultimately fruitless. This is in contrast to

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[160] Hisao Inagaki and Harold Stewart, trans. *The Sutra on Contemplation of Amitāyus*. Vol. 12, Taisho no. 365. BDK English Tripiṭaka. Berkeley, California: Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003, 79.
[161] Fronsdal, "The Understanding of Karma in the Pure Land Tradition" (1989), 231.
[162] Hisao Inagaki and Harold Stewart, trans. *The Larger Sutra on Amitāyus*, Vol. 12, Taisho no. 360, BDK English Tripiṭaka. Berkeley, California: Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003, 53.
[163] Dobbins, "'The Evil Person Is the Primary Recipient of the Buddha's Compassion' The *Akunin Shōki* Theme in Shin Buddhism of Japan" (2012), 95.
[164] Fronsdal, "The Understanding of Karma in the Pure Land Tradition" (1989), 232-233.

tariki 他力 or "other-power." Shinran refers to Amida's vow and his power to save people when using this term. Shinran's perspective was one where almost everything was considered *jiriki*, even reciting the *nenbutsu*. In Shinran's view, the *nenbutsu* was "an expression of faith and not a means of obtaining it."[165] Thus, it was not the recitation that did any work, it was the grace of Amida, and recitation was simply a reflection of that faith in Amida. Shinran also writes that in one of his letters that Amida is unconcerned with being good or bad since that is irrelevant. He writes in 1258:

> Amida's Vow is, from the very beginning, designed to bring each of us to entrust ourselves to it—saying "Namu-amida-butsu" —and to receive us in the Pure Land; none of this is through our calculation. Thus, there is no room for the practitioner to be concerned about being good or bad.[166]

What is more important to Amida is whether a practitioner has faith in him and relies on *tariki*.[167] This is a significant statement, because it implies, similarly to Hōnen, that the *aku* part of *akunin* does not seem to refer to moral evil in the traditional sense, but rather those who are aware of their inadequacy. An "evil" person to Amida is not one who commits arson or murder; these are actually irrelevant activities when put against his own overriding merit. Rather, what is significant, at least in Shinran's view, is that a person has faith. In this way a truly "evil" person could actually be quite good but is skeptical of the power of Amida and instead relies on their own actions. *Tariki* freed people from one's own karmic concerns and bore the burden of shame of the many mistakes an individual might make. For Shinran, one's own karma had nothing to do with the fulfillment of Amida's vow.[168]

A good example of Shinran's understanding of the salvific power of Amida to evil people is the story of King Ajātaśatru. Shinran wrote about this story to give an earlier example of how evil people could be saved and what he was referring to when he talked about faith. The story begins with the murder of Ajātaśatru's father by Ajātaśatru himself. He had been told that his father had attempted to kill him in the past, and so his father is imprisoned and forced to starve and die in a jail cell. Ajātaśatru also imprisoned his mother to stop her from trying to save his

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[165] Ibid, 239.
[166] Shinran, *The Collected Works of Shinran*, vol. 1, 2 vols., Shin Buddhist Translation Series (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), 530.
[167] Fronsdal, "The Understanding of Karma in the Pure Land Tradition" (1989), 239.
[168] Ibid, 240-242.

father from death. However, after being informed that his father had died, Ajātaśatru becomes sick and large sores and boils form over his body, causing him great pain. Ajātaśatru is told by his advisors that he has done nothing wrong, but the pain and sickness does not go away. His mother takes care of him by applying medicine to his wounds, but they only spread and get worse. It is eventually revealed by the Buddha that the illness has been caused by his guilt for killing his father and his realization of the terrible thing he has done has only made the pain worse. The Buddha teaches him about the causes and conditions of evil deeds. Out of gratitude for his compassion, Ajātaśatru shows faith in the Buddha and, upon repentance, is ultimately saved from the illness that plagues him.[169]

Shinran admires the *shinjin* 信心 which is expressed by Ajātaśatru in gratitude for salvation. While Nabeshima uses the phrase "pure faith" to translate *shinjin* into English, it is in fact more nuanced than this. The word literally means "believing heart/mind" but refers to more than intelelctual understanding or existential awareness. Bloom rather uses the phrase "true entrusting," and talks of *shinjin* as an experience that one undergoes.[170] Indeed, that is precisly what happens to Shinran, saying that even if he were to "fall into hellish torment" for entrusting himself to Amida, he would "have no regrets at all."[171] It is not enough to "believe." It is not enough to "do." The editors of the *Collected Works of Shinran* describe *Shinjin* as that which "is born from an awakening to the fathomless evil of oneself made possible through the working of Amida…there is a transformation in which evil (the good and evil of the foolish being) becomes good (the good of the Buddha)."[172] This is what is meant by an experience. The faith aspect itself is not something one can even come to without the intercession of Amida. It is also impossible to separate the transformative aspect from that faith as well; they are inextricably tied. This is why "faith" is an insufficient English word to translate *shinjin*, though it often is. Gratitude that is tied to the realization of evil has transformative power on individuals, but the primary originator of this entire pathway is Amida himself, not the *akunin* or *zennin*.

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[169] Naoki Nabeshima, "The Emancipation of Evil Beings: The Story of the Salvation of King Ajātaśatru," *Pacific World*, Third Series, 10 (2008), 47-53.
[170] Alfred Bloom, ed., *The Essential Shinran: A Buddhist Path of True Entrusting* (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2007), 59-61.
[171] Yuien, *Tannishō: Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith*, trans. Bandō Shōjun and Harold Stewart, vol. 83, Taishō no. 2661, BDK English Tripiṭaka (Berkeley, California: Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), 4.
[172] Shinran, *The Collected Works of Shinran*, vol. 2, 2 vols., Shin Buddhist Translation Series (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), 107.

There is a similar term that is often also rendered as "faith" in English. *Anjin* 安心, the "resting heart/mind" has a nuanced and often debated difference with *shinjin*. While the debate lies outside of this project, what can be said is that the terms differ in meaning. While *shinjin* refers to the experiential realization, transformation, and eventual enlightenment of a Shin Buddhist practioner, *anjin* refers to what Bloom calls the "settled or traingquil mind."[173] Another important aspect is that the term became a distinct part of doctrine due to Rennyo's institutionalization activities. In the *Anjin ketsujōshō*, a text that Shinran was unaware of, but his great grandson was, there is much discourse about assurance of faith.[174] This seems to be the primary difference between *shinjin* and *anjin*. While the former concerns the transformative experiences of faith, the latter concerns the continuative gratitude and peace instilled by that faith.[175]

The gratitude part was very important for Shinran. Ajātaśatru fell into all three traditional categories of an evil person. The first category is one who slanders the dharma, or teachings, of the Buddha. The second is someone who commits one, some, or all of the five great offenses. These offenses are: killing one's father, mother, or an arhat; bleeding a buddha; or disrupting the harmony of the sangha or community of Buddhists. The third and final category is people who "have severed the roots of goodness (or mind of goodness) and are dispossessed to the seeds of Buddhahood."[176] Shinran understood karmic evil as stemming from delusion and an inverted understanding of what truth is. He claims "that, by its nature, evil does not have a firm substantial form."[177] In the story of Ajātaśatru, the Buddha tells the king that he should not look at retribution for his actions as something that is determined. That is to say, karma is consequential but not fatalistic. However, the Buddha encourages Ajātaśatru to remember his crime, so that the guilt transforms him to refrain from repeating such an action and instead pursue amends. Shinran again writes that karmic evil is like ice and water. Ice is the obstruction, the evil, while water is the good produced by repenting that evil and being transformed into one who does good. The more ice one has, the more water is made when it melts. In this case, it is

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[173] Bloom, *The Essential Shinran: A Buddhist Path of True Entrusting* (2007), 227.
[174] Winston L. King, "An Interpretation of the *Anjin Ketsujōshō*," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 13, no. 4 (1986): 277–98.
[175] See more in Winston L. King, "An Interpretation of the *Anjin Ketsujōshō*," specifically 285-291.
[176] Nabeshima, "The Emancipation of Evil Beings" (2008), 46.
[177] Ibid, 54.

Amida who is doing the melting.[178] For Shinran, it is precisely because of our evil that transformation is possible, and that may be why it is easier for *akunin* to be saved; they in the end can get more water because they have more ice.

This is why Shinran was so entranced by the story of Ajātaśatru. He viewed self-awareness as a requirement to understanding *akunin shōki*. Nabeshima aptly writes,

> *Akunin shōki* is the crystallization of profound self-reflection on human evil and loving compassion. Illuminated by the light of the Buddha's wisdom and compassion, we become aware of our real selves and realize that even within our own good mind, an evil mind is hiding. We realize the falseness hidden inside of good appearances. When we human beings transcend our attachment to the mind of calculation on good and evil, we become aware that all human beings are interconnected with each other.[179]

The story of Ajātaśatru signifies the concept of *akunin shōki*. To make things even more complicated, an *akunin* is not just an "evil" person but a person who is acutely aware they are an "evil" person and responds to that awareness by relying on *tariki* and, in gratitude, changes their ways to good. The awareness of our interdependence and the effects our negative actions have on each other is part of the way evil is snuffed out. Yet again, in Shinran's mind, all of this only comes from the outside. It only comes from Amida.[180]

This is where things get complex. At this point in the project, the word *aku* has so many meanings it is difficult to attribute precisely what is meant in the phrase *akunin shōki*. It is somebody who is "evil," but that evil comes from being ungovernable, being ignorant, being unsociable, or being unfaithful. The hard part is that they are all negative. I do not mean they are pejorative, though that may be true, rather they are defining *aku* by what it is not. An "evil" person is someone who does not know something, who does not act a certain way, who does not have faith, etc. This does not necessarily help in defining *aku* in a positive way. That is to say, what does an "evil" person actually do rather than not do?

The transformative aspect is critical in understanding Shinran's precise definition of evil. The transformative aspect of Amida's vow does not make good deeds more potent or human

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[178] Ibid, 54-55, 58.
[179] Ibid, 60.
[180] Ibid, 61.

actions more virtuous. Rather, evil human acts that stem from ignorance and delusion are transformed themselves by Amida, "just as they are."[181] This means they never go away truly, rather they are changed along with the individual. These actions and thoughts however are not necessarily criminal, but things that stand in the way of enlightenment or perpetuate the cycles of birth-death-rebirth. The word *akunin* certainly refers to moral and ethical ideas, but its primary function here is religious. This is due to the absorption of normal people by the self, a traditional Buddhist concept when dealing with the problem of delusion. Evil is not just an intellectual position on ethics, or a concept of why people do what they do, it has yet another role. "Evil, for Shinran, describes the nature of the self that one becomes aware of only at that level at which one can encounter Amida's working, and only within the light of the Buddha's wisdom."[182]This is why the order of events is important in the previous story. There are clues that Ajātaśatru is aware he has done something wrong, but it is only after the Buddha reveals to him the reasons for his illness that he understands the gravity of his actions. It is only after this realization that transformation occurs in his life and he repents out of gratitude for this revelation. There is more to this concept of realization in Japanese Buddhism, however, so I would like to return to the concept of *hongaku* thought brought up in chapter one.

For both Hōnen and Shinran, *hongaku* thought plays an important role in their understanding of Buddhism. The idea of original enlightenment works well with the rejection of the precepts, of traditional rituals (outside of the *nenbutsu*), and of the other schools that both these thinkers ultimately promote. This was opposed to the cultivation of religious rituals which both saw as superfluous, and possibly insidious (this was one of many things that Shinran denounced as self-power). As Repp writes, *hongaku* thought "shifts the focus from potentiality to actuality."[183] Another interesting similarity between *hongaku* thought and Pure Land Buddhism in Japan is the focus on *akunin*. Under this idea of inherent awakening, there is no need to pursue the purgation of evil karma to achieve liberation because liberation had already been achieved. The *Kankō ruijū* 漢光類聚 (Digest of the Light of Han), a Tendai Buddhist writing during the time of Dōgen 道元 (1200-1253) or a bit later, equates evil karma, *akugō* 悪業, with liberation.

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[181] Yoshifumi Ueda and Dennis Hirota, *Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought* (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1989), 153.
[182] Ueda and Hirota, *Shinran* (1989), 154.
[183] Martin Repp, "The Problem of 'Evil' in Pure Land Buddhism," in *Probing the Depths of Evil and Good: Multireligious Views and Case Studies*, ed. Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, and Hendrik M. Vroom, Currents of Encounter 33 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 163.

The difference in this text, however, is that it does not argue that there needs to be a change in the actions of the individual, who is already liberated regardless of their deeds. The Tendai understanding of *aku* seems to include much of the political and social references that were present in the first chapter. Repp argues that one of the reasons *hongaku* thought developed was because it legitimized the evil deeds of monks or warriors affiliated with temples.[184]

Stone refutes this by arguing that *hongaku* thought was not concerned with ethics and "there was little about it that would have worked actively in such circumstances to counter clerical misbehavior and promote good conduct."[185] Just because monks broke precepts or vows does not necessarily mean they justified it on the grounds of *hongaku* thought. Additionally, the criticism that it lacked a distinction between good and evil is not unique to this doctrine as it has been a repeating theme throughout Buddhist history in East Asia. Plenty of nondualist ideas exist in Mahāyāna Buddhism, including the thought of earlier Buddhist monks in Japan.[186] There may have been moments on an individual level where monks utilized *hongaku* thought to justify their misdeeds, but there are others examples of doctrines that were accused of doing so as well, particularly the exclusive *nenbutsu* of Hōnen and Shinran along with their doctrine of *akunin shōki*.[187] Again, these are accusations on the individual level, but throwing these accusations on an institution-wide scale, as Repp argues, is difficult to accept considering the evidence at hand.

Taira Masayuki argues in relation to this idea that *hongaku* thought contributed to "aristocratic monopolizing of high clerical offices and to a climate in which strict observance of monastic precepts was devalued."[188] Here Taira sees politics as being a clear external influence on the ethics of clergy members, which may well be true. Yet this is hardly the whole picture. Sueki Fumihiko shows that there are numerous formulations for what was *hongaku* thought.[189] This means that while some may have been used to legitimize behaviors that went against the precepts, not all did. What is interesting to point out here is that the ethical dilemmas that were present in Tendai carried over into Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. This simply means that Hōnen and Shinran are continuing yet another repeated theme in Buddhism, tying them to an

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[184] Repp, "The Problem of 'Evil' in Pure Land Buddhism," (2007), 163-165.
[185] Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (1999), 360
[186] Ibid, 360-362.
[187] Ibid, 226.
[188] As cited in Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (1999), 84.
[189] As cited in Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (1999), 363-366.

evolution in institutional doctrinal understanding rather than just being maverick entrepreneurs on the concept of *akunin shōki.* This also means they had to deal with this pattern in their own way with their understanding of Amida.

Hōnen does not have a clear distinction between "good" or "evil" persons. In a commentary on the Amida Sūtra, Hōnen clarifies what is meant by "good men and women." While the word used is *zennin*, or "good persons," the same word used in the *Tannishō*, the word implies the inclusion of *akunin*, or evil persons.[190] On an existential level, this happens as well. A person who relies on the power of Amida's vow has evil within them. However, Amida's saving power is good and coexists in their life. This "commingling of good and evil," as goes the literary phrase, means that a person is full of both good and evil at the same time. Repp argues that Hōnen neglected the "good" in order to save the "evil." It is in this context that Hōnen equalizes good and evil on an existential level.[191] If this is true, then, at least rhetorically and philosophically, there is no practical difference between a good and bad person in the eyes of Hōnen. The incapability of the individual weighed heavily on Hōnen. While it does not seem he goes as far existentially as Shinran, there do seem to be similarities with how they understood the difference between *zennin* and *akunin*, or seemingly lack thereof.

Nature

Shinran deals with the existentialism of *akunin* in a interesting matter. Shinran talks about a person's nature, or *jinen* 自然. Shinran wrote multiple *wasan* 和讃, or Buddhist hymns in colloquial Japanese. This shows he considered his primary audience to be normal, everyday persons, not the monks who were used to reading Sanskrit or Chinese. In some of these *wasan* he discusses the *akushō* 悪性 or "evil nature."[192] This term is also used to describe a malignant cancer, something that will destroy the body unless it is addressed, which I think is precisely what Shinran is referring to here. Shinran does not separate evil from ordinary existence. He talks about *bonbu* 凡夫, the ordinary person, as ignorant, mediocre, and "sinful" or "transgressor" (Shinran actually uses the term *tsumibito* 罪人, which is why *tsumi* was given so

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[190] Repp, "The Problem of 'Evil' in Pure Land Buddhism" (2007), 160.
[191] Ibid, 161.
[192] Lynn M. Olson, "Evil Nature in the Wasans of Shinran Shonin" *The Pure Land* 3 (1986), 156.

much time in the first chapter).[193] Shinran explicitly writes that we, sentient beings, “are fools bottom-deep in afflicting passions, / And utterly without a mind of purity or truth.”[194] Humans are existentially burdened by their evil, it is something so innate that it drags us down while being inescapable. In his *Shōzōmatsu Wasan* collection, Shinran writes what has come to be known as the *Wasans of Lament*. In these hymns, he makes it clear that he does not deny the existence of true goodness, he denies the capability of human beings to know what the nature of true goodness is *and* be able to implement it in a genuine and meaningful way. For example, in the fifty-sixth *wasan*, Shinran writes:

> Although we have the teachings of Śākyamuni,
> There are no sentient beings who can practice them;
> Hence, it is taught that in the last dharma-age,
> Not a single person will attain enlightenment through them.[195]
> *Shaka no kyōbō mashimasedo*
> *Shusubeki ujō no naki yue ni*
> *Satori urumono mappō ni*
> *Ichinin mo arajito tokitamau*
> 釈迦(しゃか)の教法(きょうぼう)ましませど
> 修(しゅ)すべき有情(うじょう)のなきゆゑに
> さとりうるもの末法(まっぽう)に
> 一人(いちにん)もあらじとときたまふ。[196]

Hakarai gets in the way because we, as ignorant creatures, calculate our own deeds. This means that even “good” people are not truly “good.”[197] As can be seen in the *wasan*, enlightenment itself is unattainable because of the existential nature of the world around those that are stuck in samsara during *mappō*.

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[193] Olson, “Evil Nature in the Wasans of Shinran Shonin” (1986), 160-161.
[194] Shinran, English translation from Lynn M. Olson, “Evil Nature in the Wasans of Shinran Shonin,” *The Pure Land* 3 (1986), 165.
[195] Shinran, *The Collected Works of Shinran* (1997), 412.
[196] Jōdoshinshū honganjiha sōgō kenkyūsho 浄土真宗本願寺派総合研究所, ed., *Jōdoshinshū Seiten Chūshaku-Ban* 浄土真宗聖典註釈版 (第二版）, dainihan 第二版 (Kyoto: Honganji shuppansha 本願寺出版社, 2004), 611.
[197] Olson, “Evil Nature in the Wasans of Shinran Shonin” (1986), 168-169.

For Shinran, the context of *mappō* is as an important factor of human nature as greed, hatred, and delusion. He considers people to be equally affected by ignorance, self-power, and *mappō*. It is precisely these things with to which he is concerned, and why he writes these hymns in the common Japanese tongue. *Mappō* consciousness is something that is immutably present in the daily lives of all people, and there is no way to remove it. Shinran passionately preaches that there is a way to overcome it through Amida, but unfortunately there is no way to remove the malignant tumor anymore.[198] In a way, *mumyō* 無明, ignorance in the sense of blindness in the dark, is relieved by Amida, whose Sanskrit name "Amitābha" means "Buddha of Infinite Light."

Regarding *mumyō*, Shinran writes a parable in another one of his writings, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証 (The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way). In his thinking, Shinran attributes ignorance not to just the root cause of suffering, as the Buddha did in the Four Noble Truths, but also to the mind of *jiriki*, or to the person who believed they could do things themselves. Ignorant people could then include other monks from other schools. In order to explain what he meant by reliance on *jiriki* versus *tariki*, Shinran writes about two rivers which I will briefly summarize. There is a traveler who is attacked by bandits and runs away. During his flight from danger, he comes to the bank of a river that is split down the middle. On one side there is a river that flows south full of fire, while the other side holds a river that flows north full of water. The rivers are endless and to cross them, one must cross a narrow bridge that is low to the flames and waves, making it precarious. The traveler fears death from either bandits or the rivers and is hesitant to cross. Suddenly, he hears a voice on the other side of the riverbank across the narrow bridge saying that he will be safe if he determinedly crosses the rivers. He chooses to cross and begins his transmigration before hearing the bandits on the other side shout for him to come back since it is too dangerous to cross and that he will surely die if he does not return. The man ignores the pleas of the bandits for his life and, "single-mindedly," crosses to the other side. The man is pleased he is no longer in danger from either the two rivers or the bandits and that he has met a good fellow to continue his travels with.[199]

Shinran explains that the rivers are the hate and greed we bear within us, and that the call from the bandits is the pull towards the cycle of suffering due to *samsara*. However, what is significant is that, even after choosing to cross the river, which would mean having faith in

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[198] Ibid, 170.
[199] Lynn M. Olson, "Evil Nature in the Kyōgyōshinshō of Shinran Shōnin," *The Pure Land*, no. 4 (1987), 151.

Amida, the passions, delusions, and holds of *mappō* still assault the path that one walks on. The solution, however, is "single-mindedness." This is in direct contrast to what Shinran calls "double-mindedness." A person who is "double-minded" wants to attain rebirth in the pure land while still holding on to things in this world. This is criticized heavily in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, and one of the hallmarks of this person is someone who still believes in the efficacy of good and evil.[200] Here, Shinran is a bit more practical with what this means by saying that those who believe in the dichotomy of good and evil perform "'poisoned and mixed good' and also 'deluded and deceitful practices.'"[201] Good intentions do not necessarily produce good outcomes. The contrivances that people think up to justify, defend, or legitimate their actions poison the deeds themselves, even if they are truly good. These are people who Olson calls "stuck" in a space that is empty and "bound by the golden chains of our religious and moral practices."[202] I will come back to this idea of being "stuck" but the important aspect here is that again we see the denial of goodness by Shinran, not as an ontological category, but as any meaningful salvific means to achieve enlightenment, or even change the world. At the end of a poem in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, he writes that "good people" are foolish, meaning that while he might use the two categories of "good" and "evil" people separately, and their causes of suffering are different, they are ultimately the same because they need help from Amida.[203]

Historically, there was a difficult disagreement between various Pure Land schools surrounding the recitation of the *nenbutsu.* Some argued that the recitation of the name of Amida should be done once, while others argued that recitation should occur multiple times. These were the *ichinengi* 一念義 position and the *tanengi* 多念義 position, respectively. Shinran wrote on the topic as there was a passionate conflict amongst his followers, which he struggled to end, over the number of recitations.[204] Shinran's views of the conflict are complicated and that extends beyond the *akunin shōki* doctrine I'm emphasizing, but the important part of this is the premises lying within the two arguments. The *tanengi* position demands multiple recitations

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200 Olson, "Evil Nature in the Kyōgyōshinshō of Shinran Shōnin" (1987), 146-147.
201 Shinran, *Kyōgyōshinshō: On Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment*, trans. Hisao Inagaki, vol. 83, Taishō no. 2646, BDK English Tripiṭaka (Berkeley, California: Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003), 105.
202 Olson, "Evil Nature in the Kyōgyōshinshō of Shinran Shōnin," (1987), 148.
203 Shinran, *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way: A Translation of Shinran's Kyōgyōshinshō*, vol. 1, Shin Buddhist Translation Series (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1983), 166-167.
204 Mark Blum, *The Origins and Development of Pure Land Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 42.

occur throughout one's lifetime, meaning there is a semblance of ritual practice to it. Mark Blum writes, "[t]he famous Shinshū doctrine of *akunin-shōki*, best expressed in the famous passage from the *Tannishō* that the Buddha is happier to welcome someone evil than someone good into the Pure Land, is only possible from the presumption inherent in the *ichinengi* position that a morally proper life does not guarantee reaching the Pure Land after death…"[205] Once again, the idea that morality is irrelevant comes up. The discussion regarding the *ichinengi* fizzled out as time went on. Yet, the de-emphasis on moral action, what Shinran would call "self-power," is fundamental to the idea of *akunin shōki*. Human nature is one that continues to push for meaning in morally good actions; this is even part of the basis of karma. Yet for *akunin shōki*, the morality of an individual is irrelevant, showing that it's not necessarily the case that "evil" people can get in easier than "good" people, but that such qualifications of a person are of no consequence for rebirth in the Pure Land.

When discussing human nature in Shinran's ideas, there is one more issue that needs to be taken into consideration. His description of Amida Buddha is one that seems to equate Amida with the very nature of the world. Hōnen discusses Amida as something truly "other" in the sense that he exists outside of individuals and the world itself. Shinran, however, does not do this in his *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Instead, he talks about Amida as being the "true nature of sentient beings" in an ontological sense.[206] It is here that we see Shinran's idea of *jinen* more clearly. He writes of *jinen* as that which becomes itself. There is no distinction between Amida, the ultimate other, and one's own self. It is precisely because of this non-differentiation that transformation by other-power is possible. Reciting the *nenbutsu* was not enough, it needed to be done in faith, in gratitude to Amida, which itself had to be given by Amida as an overturning of the *akushō*, or evil nature, of humanity.[207]

The process of "becoming" is not something that is unique to religion. The neo-analytic psychologist Carl Jung's conception of "Individuation," or the lifelong process of becoming an individual, is very similar to this idea. Jung believed that the process of "shadow-integration" was paramount for the development of the individual.[208] The "shadow" is not necessarily the

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[205] Blum, *The Origins and Development of Pure Land Buddhism* (2002), 43.
[206] Fronsdal, "The Understanding of Karma in the Pure Land Tradition" (1989), 242-43.
[207] Ibid, 243.
[208] Of note, D.T. Suzuki, a prolific author on Zen and Pure Land Buddhism met with Carl Jung during his lifetime, and the latter even wrote a foreword to one of his books on Zen, making this an interesting connection. See Suzuki, D. T. *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism: Foreword by Carl Jung* (New York: Grove Press, 1994).

"evil side" of a person, though it can be. Rather the "shadow" in Jung's view is that which is repressed or hidden away from everyday consciousness. Literally, it is our "blind spot" that we cannot see (or rather do not take notice of) yet it walks with us always, just like one's own shadow during a sunset. Getting too far into the concept is beyond the scope of this thesis, but Miyuki argues that Shinran's shadow integration (a part of the self-becoming part of the "whole" self) was something he struggled with throughout his life.[209] Perhaps this is what Shinran meant when he said Amida was one's own mind. In a sense, he could mean that Amida is a mental motivational force that pursues shadow-integration, individuation, "becoming," etc.

With this in mind, I wish to return to the idea of being "stuck" previously mentioned. Markus Ruesch compares Shinran's ideas to Heidegger, a German existentialist philosopher. He explains that Shinran viewed Amida as the only true source of self-objective reflection.[210] In Heidegger's philosophy, the relationship one has to natural existence is one of truth seeking (Gr. *techne τέχνη*). In this pursuit of truth, the self is the pursuer, the motivator, and the attainer all at once. In Shinran's view, it is Amida's grace that elucidates the nature of the world.[211] Here we connect this to Olson's idea of being "stuck."[212] Normal people are floating in existential oblivion and "stuck" in the sense that they cannot move from this state. Amida, however is, what Ruesch calls, *Ugokasu chikara de aru*「動かす力である」, or "the power to move."[213] As long as there are still people who are stuck in that existential oblivion, Amida is the power to move. Returning to the parable, it is not just that he is the one on the other side of the two rivers trying to call over the traveler, he is the psychological force of *wanting to do so* in the first place, or so it seems. This puts Amida as both an ontological being and a psychological force, all at once. If this is true, then the *hongan ryoku jinen* 本願力自然, or the nature of the power of the original vow, is one that lets Amida be a mover of people despite their stuckness in the existential oblivion that is *mappō*. It may be because of the nature of this power that it transcends good and evil. Rather than saying that good and evil are not different, it is saying that the innate

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[209] Mokusen Miyuki, "A Jungian Approach to the Jōdoshinshū Concept of the 'Wicked,'" in *Essays on Jung and the Study of Religion*, ed. Luther H. Martin and James Goss (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 126-128.

[210] Markus Ruesch リュウシュ, マルクス, "Shinran to Haidegā to no「taiwa」-「shizen」no gainen o megutte 親鸞とハイデガーとの「対話」 -「自然」の概念を巡って," *Jinbun Gakuhō 人文學報* 110 (2017), 25, 28.

[211] Ruesch, "Shinran to Haidegā to no「taiwa」" (2017), 27.

[212] Olson, "Evil Nature in the Kyōgyōshinshō of Shinran Shōnin" (1987), 148.

[213] Ruesch, "Shinran to Haidegā to no「taiwa」" (2017), 29.

psychological forces that drive a person to do good or evil are not the forces that matter.[214] While this is different from Heidegger's pursuit of truth to the extent that Amida is outside of the individual providing elucidation, he is the motivator and attainer all at once. I do not want to give the impression that Shinran just thinks of Amida as some abstract force, as he was clear that faith with gratitude in Amida himself was necessary; when dealing with some of his more abstract and difficult ideas, precise wording starts to fail.

While these are interpretations, and therefore not infallible evidence, I think these authors and this general, more abstract interpretation of Amida can assist in our insight to what Shinran means when he refers to evil people. And this is where it is important to note that Shinran does not justify or license evil. The philosophical term is antinomianism, meaning "against the law," and basically boils down to ideas that legitimate evil, or argue against laws that define things as evil in the first place. This was a significant issue for Shinran during his lifetime, and he has a famous quote from the *Tannishō* addressing this issue: "Just because you possess the antidote, do not become addicted to the poison."[215] Shinran wrote a plethora of letters to various followers (both lay and monastic) stating a similar idea or clarifying phrases he said (or was believed to have said) so that he explicitly did not justify evil. Later in life, one of Shinran's disciples was summoned to trial to testify against numerous accusers that Shinran's teachings did not justify evil, meaning there was significant political pressure on Shinran from outside his group.[216] Again, while he denies the effectiveness of good deeds and bemoans the poisonous nightmare of *mappō* that none can escape from, at no point does he also say that doing evil is a good thing, as that would still be *jiriki*. This nuance is critical in analyzing *akunin shōki* as one must be careful when saying good deeds cannot be done in this present age since it can be easily misinterpreted as good deeds *should* not be done and "evil" should be extolled.

Chapter Conclusion

This study began by looking at *akunin*, but any definition of *akunin shōki* that does not bring in the affliction of the external cosmological framework of *mappō* is insufficient. While many other scholars have written on it in English, few emphasize the logical priority of *mappō*

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[214] Ibid, 29.
[215] Yuien, *Tannishō* (1996), 13.
[216] For more on this issue, see James C. Dobbins, *Jōdo Shinshū: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), specifically 53-62.

enough when discussing *akunin shōki*. For both Hōnen and Shinran, *mappō* was a reality that was inescapable. They both build off their earlier counterparts in China who argued that Pure Land practice was the best option for this degenerate age. This shows that *mappō* consciousness was present in Pure Land Buddhist thinking prior to it even becoming a significant school in Japan. Again, this is not to say other scholars have not written or even argued much about *mappō*; however, not enough credit is given to the cosmological and existential state that these Pure Land Buddhists had to wrestle with not just doctrinally, but as a quotidian reality that permeated the lives of renunciants and laypersons equally. Any understanding of *akunin* is insufficient without the context of *mappō*, and not just in the sense that *mappō* makes it difficult to do good or achieve enlightenment. Hōnen's writings showed he thought long and hard about how *mappō* affects humans, but Shinran takes it further, truly bearing his struggle in humility in his writings, and especially in his various *wasan*. For Shinran especially, *akunin* and *zennin* were not all that different (if truly different at all). This is not to say good people do not exist in Shinran's view, but rather to say that everyone is in the same boat that is stuck out in the ocean. In that boat, some people try to jump to swim to shore, some mistake a mirage for a nearby island, some try to captain the boat themselves and say they know the way. But the reality is that, until *someone else* comes along to help out, the most sentient beings can do is put out a flare and send out an S.O.S signal. To make something of a pun, one can see *akunin* and *zennin* in the same way under Shinran's thought. In a way *akunin* 悪人 is *zennin* 善人. But more to the point, it seems that *akunin* is ***zen**bu-**nin**gen* 全部人間 (all of humanity). While *aku* certainly might mean "evil," in the doctrine of both Hōnen and Shinran, it is not a fundamentally different category. They might use the words colloquially used to refer to good people and bad people, but in the end, they do seem to be referring to "all" people. This makes sense because of the universality of Amida's vow; yet more important to *akunin shōki* is the universality of karmic "evil" in the lives of humans and their struggle rather than the universality of Amida's vow. It is for that reason that evil people are the object of Amida's salvation.

This chapter was dedicated to exploring the various issues surrounding the writings and doctrine of *akunin shōki* itself, but the doctrine has far-reaching consequences. What people think affects what they do, and I would next like to explore some of the practical consequences of the various interpretations that the doctrine has undergone since the time of Hōnen and Shinran in the Kamakura period. Ogoshi Aiko's specific critique is that the idea has been used to

justify horrible atrocities throughout Japanese history. I now wish to examine whether this is true and look at the pragmatics of the dogmatics of *akunin shōki*.

Chapter 3 - Pragmatics

「君も罪の子 | 我も罪の子」/"You a child of sin | I a child of sin"
- Yosano Akiko, *Tangled Hair* (1901)

The *akunin shōki* idea we have been looking at so far has had a profound effect on Japanese intellectual history in various ways, both religious and non-religious. The premise of the "*akunin shōki* theory" that Ogoshi Aiko presents is that modern Japanese thinkers have been influenced by this idea in various ways. Indeed, Pure Land Buddhism itself has had a massive impact on social programs, artistic themes, and more generally the vibrant cultural evolution of Japan itself.[217] This chapter will overview various creators, thinkers, and reformers that have explicitly stated the influence of *Jōdō Shinshū* ideas on their lives and philosophies. While a large timespan will be reviewed, this is neither an exhaustive list, nor does it include only good innovations to Shin Buddhist policies. At this point in the thesis, I am going to deal specifically with Shin Buddhism and leave *Jōdō Shū* as a possible expansion. It would be worthwhile to explore to what degree the disciples of Hōnen were influenced by the concepts of *akunin shōki*, but again, I want to deal with popular creators, thinkers, and reformers that specifically claim to draw from Shin Buddhist doctrine.

Discrimination

The first general topic I want to take up is discrimination. It should be no surprise that institutions with long histories have, at some point (and indeed still do), endorsed discriminatory policies. This is problematic for my argument, which is why I specifically want to address this topic. In chapter 1 I argued how the environment and the individual are intrinsically tied by influence but not determined by that relationship; the same occurs here. Religious doctrine heavily influences the ethics of individuals who participate and adhere to that religion, but it does not determine these ethics. A perfect example in Shin Buddhism of a clash between doctrine and practical ethical policy regards the *eta* 穢多 and *burakumin* 部落民.

[217] Ugo Dessì, "Introduction: Shin Buddhism and Japanese Society," in *The Social Dimension of Shin Buddhism*, ed. Ugo Dessì, Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions 129 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 10.

There were outcast groups prior to the Edo period (1600-1868) but the origins, extent of existence, and details are still argued and debated.[218] Shinran was fully aware of social outcasts and the marginalized during his time, even writing about them by claiming they, too, are capable of receiving the grace of Amida, just like anyone else.[219] This is not too surprising given Shinran's perspective. As mentioned already, Shinran did not believe he had disciples, and instead used the terms "fellow companions" (*dōbō* 同朋) or more often "fellow practitioners" (*dōgyō* 同行). Ugo Dessì talks about this concept in terms of "religious equality," and it seems to help form the basis of a Shin Buddhist egalitarianism.[220] It is in this concept that Shinran legitimates his famous phrase "neither monk nor lay" (*hisō hizoku* 非僧非俗). That is to say, although Shinran studied as a Tendai monk on Mt. Hiei, was discipled by his master Hōnen, and became regarded as the founder of a different sect of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, he did not consider himself to be a monk. Likewise, despite his marriage, time spent in exile, and consumption of alcohol and forbidden foods, he did not consider himself a layperson either.[221] Galen Amstutz argues that *hisō hizoku* is actually tied to *akunin shōki*. Shinran's awareness of his own evil and his experiences both as a renunciant and in exile formed him to where he felt in no better place than anyone else and complete reliance on Amida was the only solution.[222] This means that, although not immediately apparent, the doctrine of *akunin shōki* already held some egalitarian sentiment within Shinran's perception of the idea, and was something that was (at least in the ideal) continued on throughout the centuries in Shin Buddhism.

"Although Shinran may have rejected blaming persons for past karma or promoting the idea that the karmically polluted should suffer patiently… such ideas nevertheless entered Shin discourse over time."[223] The Tokugawa shogunate encouraged growth and participation in a variety of Buddhist sects, including Shin. This was largely because of the anti-Christian campaign the government decided to implement. The government mandated registration of

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[218] Galen Amstutz, "Shin Buddhism and *Burakumin* in the Edo Period," in *The Social Dimension of Shin Buddhism*, ed. Ugo Dessì, Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions 129 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 63.
[219] Galen Amstutz, "Shin Buddhism and *Burakumin* in the Edo Period" (2010), 64.
[220] Ugo Dessì, "Introduction: Shin Buddhism and Japanese Society" (2010), 4.
[221] Takami Inoue, "Shinshū Followers' Resistance to the Meiji Government's Suppression of Buddhism: The Case of the Matsumoto Domain," *The Pure Land* 12 (2006), 75.
[222] Galen Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida: History and Orientalism in the Study of Pure Land Buddhism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 10.
[223] Galen Amstutz, "Shin Buddhism and *Burakumin* in the Edo Period" (2010), 95.

individuals with local temples in 1635. There is no remaining evidence this registration was done solely to root out Christians in Japan, but it was certainly one of the methods utilized by the government to expel them from their shores.[224] In the Tokugawa period (1600-1867), this connection between temples and government grew closer, which may have made the temples lose some of their self-governing abilities, but it offered legitimation by the state.[225] It is with these records that we find an intriguing connection between Shin Buddhism and the outcasts known as *burakumin*. Discrimination occurred on social, economic, political, and religious levels, and to this day there are still stigmata associated with Burakumin, though there are large movements to end such discrimination. Reasons for discrimination include jobs related to uncleanliness (related to similar topics mentioned surrounding *tsumi* in chapter 1), impoverished conditions, and location of residence, along with many others.[226] However, the importance of the discrimination in this project is due to the relationship between the discriminated group and the Shin Buddhist institution more than the origins and specific occurrences throughout the country at the time.

Around 90 percent of Edo period *eta* were affiliated with a Shin Buddhist temple. This means that while not all *eta* were Shin buddhist, a large population of the marginalized group was connected to a Buddhist sect which started with strong egalitarian propensities. Even more significant, more than 400 temples were assigned as *etadera* 穢多寺, or temples specifically dedicated to serving outcasts.[227] These temples, however, were not treated as equals within the hierarchy in the Shin temple network. These temples would be subordinated to higher level temples.[228] The discrimination was not just regarding institutional organization. There were educational restrictions as well. *Etasō* 穢多僧, or *eta* priests, were barred from the more regular and prestigious seminaries for monastic and doctrinal learning. There were also restrictions on the ordination of *etasō* requiring either extra steps or higher fees. Some ritual practices were restricted to *burakumin* who traveled to larger temples on pilgrimages.[229] There is, in contrast, ample evidence that Shin Buddhism was quite fervent amongst *etadera* along with stronger

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[224] Ibid, 73-74.
[225] Ibid, 77.
[226] For more on this topic, see Gerald Groemer, "The Creation of the Edo Outcaste Order," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 27, no. 2 (2001): 263–93.
[227] Galen Amstutz, "Shin Buddhism and *Burakumin* in the Edo Period" (2010), 80.
[228] Ibid, 83.
[229] Ibid, 87-88.

community ties and ritual adherence.[230] While explicit exclusion from Shin organizations was not present, the general social marginalization seems to have been pervasive, despite the pious nature of Shin Buddhism among the *burakumin*.

While there was certainly unfair treatment of *burakumin* in Shin temples due to doctrinal justification through karmic lineages, there were outside political forces as well. The political samurai class pushed for more and more restrictions on *burakumin*, such as travel ones and requiring them to take on jobs attributed to being "ritually unclean."[231] This does not mean that Shin Buddhism fully digested the perspective of the samurai legislative class, but nor does that mean they openly defied such ordinations during this time. Rather they worked through the issue by evaluating and synthesizing the influences of the external (law, society, etc.) with the ideas of the internal (doctrine, tradition, etc.).

Yet there is an interesting turn in the story of *burakumin* discrimination. Takeuchi Ryō'on (1891-1968) developed a practical ethic regarding *burakumin* that was heavily influenced by Shin doctrine, specifically, as we will see, *akunin shōki*. He was born in an Ōtani-ha temple to a priestly family and was steeped in Shin doctrine, thought, and daily life.[232] He studied philosophy in university and wrote his thesis on Shinran's letters. His family however struggled with poverty, but because of his hard work, he was financially supported by the head priest of the Ōtani-ha temple branch. As time went on, Takeuchi became more and more disenfranchised with Shin Buddhism. He saw it as fraudulent. Through discrimination, greed, and other institutional failures, Takeuchi became disgusted with Shin buddhism, yet he never left it entirely behind. He continued to advocate for reformation within the religious institution itself, and truly believed that the Ōtani branch could transform Japan.[233]

Takeuchi was employed by the government as a mediator between various *buraku* communities and other groups from governmental to educational institutions. It is here that he witnessed the intense discrimination against the *burakumin*. In 1918, farmers were paid very

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[230] Ibid, 88-90.
[231] Ibid, 97.
[232] The Ōtani branch of Shin Buddhism is one of two major denominations, the other being the Honganji (sometimes transliterated as Hongwanji). The split occurred during the Edo period because the government felt the Shin sect of Buddhism had grown too large. See Mark Blum, "Shin Buddhism in the Meiji Period," in *Critical Readings on Pure Land Buddhism in Japan*, ed. Galen Amstutz, vol. 3 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 805–74.
[233] Jessica L. Main, "To Lament the Self: The Ethical Ideology of Takeuchi Ryō'on (1891-1968) and the Ōtani-Ha Movement against *Buraku* Discrimination," in *The Social Dimension of Shin Buddhism*, ed. Ugo Dessì, Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions 129 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 141-142.

little for rice while consumers in the marketplace paid much more. Farmers saw this as problematic and this became the start of the Rice Riots. Many *burakumin* were farmers and there was a governmental stigma that the Rice Riots were tied to the *burakumin* as well as other problems, such as rebellious ideologies and social unrest. In order to solve this problem that many associated with poverty, many turned to Shin Buddhism with blame for the cause of these problems as well as with expectation for solutions. It is during this time and context that Takeuchi worked with *buraku* communities for both the government and the administration of the head temple of the Ōtani-ha.[234]

In this administration, Takeuchi was urged to bring his experience in social work and his knowledge from education to assist with *burakumin* issues the sect was facing. Takeuchi's thinking was greatly influenced by other *buraku* advocacy groups. The general sentiment amongst *burakumin* surrounding Shin buddhism was split. While on the one hand many believed the institution to be corrupt, most believed that Shinran's teachings were not. Some even viewed the teachings as "a source of strength, liberation, and solidarity for *buraku* communities."[235] Takeuchi believed that discrimination against the *burakumin* was a widespread social problem and sought to put together a solution.

Takeuchi Ryō'on proposed that social work, social engagement, and participating in bettering society are the core duties of Shin Buddhism. He even sees it as *the* method by which true transmission of the Dharma can occur. While there is certainly a place for religious rituals, this is to condition individuals to achieve the faith needed to go out into the world and help people. He justifies this using Shinran as a source, but most interesting is the idea of Shinran that he bases his thinking upon. Takeuchi premises his philosophy of engaging with suffering people on the idea that, since those who have *shinjin* in Amida also have a realization of their own evil, that is that they are *akunin*, they are pushed to engage in social work and engagement because they realize their own fallibility and finitude.[236] Jessica Main explains it like this:

> "The religious community and individual members move towards social engagement that is salvific, that plants the karmic causes and conditions for Amida's salvation in society, the very realization for, and reflection on, their

[234] Jessica L. Main, "To Lament the Self" (2010), 143-145.
[235] Ibid, 146.
[236] Ibid, 148-149.

> failing to do so (*hansei* 反省). And through the performance of social work, the temple priest learns the life of service to others and continuous gratitude (*hōsha sōzoku* 報謝相続).[237]

This is significant as it changes the understanding of the *shōki* part of *akunin shōki* into something that is both cosmological *and* political. Takeuchi would hold this position and advocate against discrimination by standing on the shoulders of Shinran. By using religion to legitimate the liberation of *burakumin*, he often clashed with the more Marxist *buraku* advocacy groups that saw religion as an obstacle to progress, not a vehicle for it.[238] Takeuchi believed in the vision Shinran had started and did not want to wholesale abandon the latent egalitarian principles in the ideas of Shin Buddhist thinkers. It is in this way that *akunin shōki* became foundational to a philosophy that sought to cease oppression, not reinforce it.

Discrimination in Shin Buddhism was not only experienced by *burakumin*, women were also discriminated against, though in different ways. Once again, we come to the issue of past karma as a justification for discrimination. The contemporary belief for Hōnen, Shinran, and even Rennyo was that women were hindered by their past karma and were thus born to be women instead of men. Nonetheless, women play a major role in not just the development of the tradition itself (Shinran's wife Eshinni [1182-1268] practically ran the sect for a few years after his death), but also the maintenance of the tradition, despite a trend of few ordained nuns.[239] Rennyo talks about how, because of *akunin shōki*, women have been granted a special position to be grateful to Amida.[240] Eshinni's role as a woman and spiritual supporter became archetypal of the expectations placed upon temple wives who still to this day play a crucial role in the maintenance and growth of the religious tradition. Yet that does not mean there has not been sexual discrimination as well with the Shin Buddhist tradition.

Regarding the doctrine of *akunin shōki* itself, Shinran is clearly addressing the thoughts of his times, but he does so in a universalistic manner. For instance, Shinran explicitly states in one of his many *wasan* writings that women will be transformed into men when transferred to the pure land. Iwohara argues that this is due to universality and that Amida can save anyone on

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[237] Ibid, 149.
[238] Ibid, 158-159.
[239] Again, for more on this topic, see James C. Dobbins, *Letters of the Nun Eshinni: Images of Pure Land Buddhism in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu, 2004).
[240] Jessica Starling, "Neither Nun nor Laywoman: The Good Wives and Wise Mothers of Jōdo Shinshū Temples," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40, no. 2 (2013): 281.

this earth regardless of their sex.[241] This however still accepts the fundamental premise that it is better to be reborn as male than as female. Iwohara does accept that this is tied to the thinking of Shinran's time, but still argues that Shinran's use of *bonbu*, the ordinary person, makes no distinction between age, sex, or race.[242] Indeed, *akunin* makes no distinction either. The words used in both cases refer to humanity at large or in general, not a specific group of people. Shinran, himself, claims that there is no discrimination in the pure land in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.[243]

Karmic justification of suffering is by no means unique to Shin Buddhism. While both of these examples show how doctrine can legitimate discrimination, it also shows how doctrine can be used to dissolve it, or at least attempt to. As mentioned in the first chapter, external pressures are influential, not determinative; so too does that apply here with doctrine. Internal forces are not determinative either, but that does not mean they should be overlooked because they are influential, sometimes to the point that liberating ideologies are premised on internalized doctrines. I bring these points up to argue against Ogoshi Aiko's conclusion regarding "*akunin shōki* theory" throughout history: that *akunin shōki* has been used primarily as a means to legitimate oppression. In fact, it has not been *akunin shōki* that has been the legitimator of oppression, but the *de*legitimator. It has been in spite of this doctrine that discrimination and suffering has occurred not because of it. That being said, the antinomian accusations forwarded have partly been addressed and will be discussed later. For now, I want to explore further how *akunin shōki* has influenced people in the practical, beyond just the political.

Artistry

Pure Land Buddhism has had a long-standing effect on not just politics but artistic creations as well. Shin Buddhism has had an impactful influence on woodblock printing, theater, the tea ceremony, and literature. While traditionally Shin Buddhism has been overlooked amongst these topics and favor has rested upon Zen amongst researchers, Shin Buddhism cannot be ignored in the artistic realm as well.[244] This project already looked at how Shin Buddhism has affected art in the first chapter. The *ōjōden* was popular literature, and the *tengu* scrolls were

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[241] John Iwohara, "Sexual Discrimination and Shinshu: Research on the Concept of 'Akunin-Shoki,'" *The Pure Land* 8 (1992): 141-142.
[242] John Iwohara, "Sexual Discrimination and Shinshu" (1992), 140.
[243] Ibid, 142-143.
[244] Elisabetta Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture*, Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions 121 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 226.

artistic renditions of popular pure land concepts.[245] In this section I would like to briefly look at how the concept of *akunin shōki* inspired various modern popular authors in poetry and literature and explore the way they took a religious doctrine and turned it into a motif of exploring the human experience.

The first and perhaps most obvious author is Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916). While researchers in the past mostly disregarded the influence Shin Buddhism had on his life and writings, Mizukawa Takao makes a significant effort to show how this is erroneous. Sōseki, in fact, was born into a Shin Buddhist family and his family temple was a Shin Buddhist temple.[246] It is also clear that he was influenced by the thought of Kiyozawa Manshi (1863–1903), who was a Shin Buddhist reformer during the Meiji period (1869-1912), though it is unclear if they ever actually met despite being contemporaries and in a similar business of publishing. It is clear that Sōseki learned a great deal from Kiyozawa's writings, which would have included basic and more advanced interpretations of Shin doctrine.[247] In Sōseki's novel *Kokoro*, there is a character named K who seems to have been directly inspired by the person of Kiyozawa Manshi. Even some of the details of K's fictional life and Kiyozawa's actual one overlap, though the more important point is that both pursued a spiritual life that was predicated on self-discipline.[248] In another of his works, *I am a Cat* (Jpn. *Wagahai wa Neko de Aru* 吾輩は猫である), the novel includes multiple *nenbutsu* recitations by either a character or the narrator.[249] It is quite evident that Sōseki was influenced by Shin Buddhism to some extent and that this affected his writings.

In particular, there is a very intriguing connection that I wish to look at in terms of *akunin shōki*. A year before *Kokoro* was published and two years before he started working on his popular but unfinished work *Light and Darkness* (Jpn. *Mei An* 明暗), in 1913, Natsume Sōseki gave a talk at a high school titled *Imitation and Independence* (Jpn. *Mohō to dokuritsu* 模倣と独立). Here he said something interesting:

> Suppose there is a person who can depict the true reality of things exactly as they are. Imagine further that this person has done things that are bad from whatever

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[245] Haruko Wakabayashi, *The Seven* Tengu *Scrolls* (2012), 80-82.
[246] Takao Mizukawa, "Natsume Sōseki and Shin Buddhism," trans. Michihiro Ama and Yokogawa Ken'ichi, *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, 38, no. 1–2 (2007): 146.
[247] Takao Mizukawa, "Natsume Sōseki and Shin Buddhism" (2007), 158-159.
[248] Elisabetta Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture* (2008), 105-107.
[249] Ibid, 112.

> angle you look at them. If this person succeeded in describing these things exactly as they are, without hiding or omitting anything, this person would be able to reach buddhahood precisely by the merits of that description. For the law he may have to go to prison but, in my opinion, his crimes are sufficiently purified by his descriptions. I firmly believe this.[250]

In the previous chapter we discussed how awareness of one's evil and reflection upon it was one of the core ideas expressed in the doctrine of *akunin shōki*. Sōseki seems to clearly indicate here that, even if he did not explicitly say the words, he refers to the overall concept and logic of *akunin shōki*.[251] I do not wish to give the impression I think Shin doctrine fundamentally changed Sōseki's writings, though I do want to highlight the ways that Shin doctrine, especially the specific topic of this project, may have influenced one of the most internationally known Japanese authors.

Natsume Sōseki is not the only author to have been influenced by Shin Buddhism in his popular writings. Fumio Niwa (1904-2005) was born into a Shin Buddhist family as well, though in his case he was ordained at the age of eight. He later left the priesthood but the temple that he grew up in, and indeed was ordained in, became the setting of his famous work *The Buddha Tree* (Jpn. *Bodaiju* 菩提樹). While he eventually renounced his ordination, Shin Buddhism greatly affected his writings, especially his characters in the novel.[252]

The story of *The Buddha Tree* follows the life of Sōshu, a head priest of a Shin Buddhist temple, and other members of his family in the tragic consequences of his wife leaving, and being run-out at the same time by her own mother, to follow an actor. Niwa gives a candid view of life in a Shin temple through the book, and while there has been much written on the novel, I want to focus on the idea of *akunin shōki*. The end of the novel includes a public confession by Sōshu to the members of his temple about his twenty plus years of having an affair with his mother-in-law. However, that is not the end of his failures. He confesses to working to force his wife to abandon their child and that he has also had an affair with another young female parishioner. The confession comes at a time when the parishioners are actively meeting to try to

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[250] English translation from: Shizuteru Ueda, "Sōseki and Buddhism: Reflections on His Later Works. Part One," *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, 29, no. 2 (1996), 184.
[251] Elisabetta Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture* (2008), 114-115.
[252] Interestingly, he later wrote multi-volume biographies of both Shinran and Rennyo, see Fumio Niwa 丹羽 文雄, *Rennyo* 蓮如, Volume 8 (Chuo Koron, 1983).

find a new wife for Sōshu, but they are caught off-guard by his confession, giving a good indication none of them knew about it prior and that it truly was a secret life he had been living for more than two decades. Earlier in the book, Sōshu says:

> 'I am a servant of the Buddha,' said Soshu with a faint, bitter smile. 'And a slave to the lust of the flesh. I admit it. But isn't it just such people as us that St Shinran longs to save?'[253]

This is foreshadowing for the reveal at the end of the novel when the public confession shows his penitent and vulnerable self folded open for his parishioners to see. The book goes on to show just how true this statement is, perhaps more than the head priest ever realized. The ending confession is passionate and fraught with emotion as Sōshu comes face to face with his evil, saying:

> 'The most brutish criminal would have stopped before going that far. And what I did, I did not once but for twenty years, long enough to corrupt a man in every part of his being. For the evil I have done I cannot hope to atone…To have accepted one's own weakness so complacently, to have been content, even happy, to let one's life be ruled by it for so long in spite of the warnings one received…such a man does not deserved to be saved. It is myself I hate most.'[254]

Sōshu has tears in his eyes at the final scene in the novel, not expecting forgiveness necessarily, and even vowing to leave the temple. Yet he shows to everyone that he has surrendered entirely to the same grace that Shinran writes about, and his conviction moves the hearts of those present. Niwa writes that there "was no longer any tension in his motionless, image-like figure, only the peace that follows upon repentance and confession, the proof of a new life already begun."[255] The motif here is not just one that "wicked persons are the object of salvation," though that certainly is present. What Niwa does is utilize this doctrine in a more humanistic matter. His writings characterize his perception of salvation in Shin Buddhism as not necessarily being saved from the cycle of birth-death-rebirth but being reborn in the sense of finding new life after confessing and giving up one's past evil, *within this lifetime.* In the story, *akunin shōki* is not just used religiously, it is also used as a literary device.[256] Niwa uses it as a motif for the repentance

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[253] Niwa Fumio, *The Buddha Tree*, trans. Kenneth Strong (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1966), 45-46.
[254] Niwa Fumio, *The Buddha Tree* (1966), 373-374.
[255] Ibid, 380.
[256] Elisabetta Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture* (2008), 230.

and redemption of a character through awareness of one's evils, realizing atonement is not possible, and being transformed by the gratitude one has for the grace Amida provides. For Niwa, then, I think one can say that *akunin shōki*, separated from any cosmological origination, simply means the humility one has in accepting one's evil, and, in gratitude, truly letting the self be transformed by the grace shown while maintaining a reflective attitude towards such personal evil.

It is not just novels that were influenced by this Shin doctrine. Poetry was as well. While there are many Shin poets (both Shinran and Rennyo wrote poetry), Harold Stewart (1916-1995) was an Australian poet who almost received ordination into Shin Buddhism during a trip to Japan but refrained from doing so at the last minute. Nevertheless, the influence of Japanese Buddhism on his poetry is clear.[257] To add to this, he is the supplemental English translator for the key *Tannishō* passage quoted in the previous chapter.

Stewart wrote a poem titled *Feeding the Pigeons at Higashi Ōtani*. In this poem he specifically writes about the "wicked" who can be saved by Amida's grace. The part of the poem that I wish to look at goes as such:

> Though they rely on their own power alone
> "Even the virtuous" so Shinran claimed,
> "Can still attain rebirth in Paradise,
> How much more so the wicked!" Those inflamed
> By violent cravings, plunged in crime and vice,
> Who, for some sweet addiction's sake, would sell
> Their hopes of heaven cheap, and choose to dwell
> Chained to one pleasure in the blaze of hell,
> Need call but once, and Amida responds
> By freeing them from their obsessive bonds…[258]

Stewart's description of the wicked in this case utilizes only English, but Shin Buddhism has had a rather large presence outside of Japan for over a century now. I am interested in how *akunin shōki* is understood and perceived by anyone, and the uses of the words "addiction" and

[257] Ibid, 132.
[258] Harold Stweart qtd. in Elisabetta Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture*, Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions 121 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 134.

"obsessive" are good translations for how Shinran perceived the evil of people under the oppressive reality of *mappō*. That is to say, though centuries and continents apart, I think Harold Stewart does an excellent job getting to the existential depravity that Shinran is trying to convey in his understanding of *aku* with *mappō* consciousness at the forefront. He maintains the futility of "self-power" in the beginning and includes an expansive characterization of the people that one could consider to be *akunin*.

Written media has no monopoly on influences of *akunin shōki*. There have been multiple iterations of visual media as well, such as anime and manga, that have attempted to get across the idea of Shin doctrine. One such anime film is *Rennyo Monogatari* 蓮如物語 (Eng. Rennyo's Story).[259] The movie was commissioned by the Ōtani-ha for the 500th memorial for Rennyo. The movie is biographical, but the concept of *akunin shōki* is centralized and continually associated with egalitarian ideas.[260] The film has obvious proselytization intention in both the production and animation, but could also be seen as an educative tool for Shin Buddhists themselves.[261] Along with this movie, another film commissioned by the Honganji-ha for the 750th memorial of Shinran was titled *Shinran sama: Negai, soshite hikari* 親鸞さま ねがい そして、ひかり (Shinran-sama: His Wish and Light). As with the previous movie, it was a biography of Shinran and his life, and it was directly released to DVD in 2008. In this special, the theme of *akunin shōki* appears again and is core to the production. Porcu points out that both of these movies follow a similar theme in that they portray Shin Buddhism, and both Shinran and Rennyo, as "emotional and anti-intellectual."[262] However, the interest of this project lies in the perception of the doctrine, not necessarily whether what they say about it is historically accurate or not. Takeuchi's move towards what one could call "political salvation" is exactly such a move, though it does base itself on historical arguments.

The last, and maybe the most extreme, example is a manga based on the *Tannishō*. Literally called *Manga Tanni-shō* 漫画歎異抄, the manga was serialized in a Honganji-ha monthly magazine from April 1999 to March 2002. Spanning almost three years, the manga

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[259] *Rennyo Monogatari* 蓮如物語 (Toei Animation, 1998).
[260] Elisabetta Porcu, "Speaking through the Media: Shin Buddhism, Popular Culture and the Internet," in *The Social Dimension of Shin Buddhism*, ed. Ugo Dessì, Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions 129 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 210.
[261] Elisabetta Porcu, "Speaking through the Media," (2010), 213.
[262] Ibid, 217.

touches on a variety of topics of Shin doctrine and history in an approachable manner. The author, Okahashi Tetsuei 岡橋撤栄, said it was intended to be a method of friendly proselytization.[263] For the interest of the project, the third chapter titled "What is *akunin shōki*" attempts to discuss this doctrine to the reader in a presentable way. Two high schoolers watch Yuien write the *Tannishō* while a priest explains some of the concepts that are trickier to understand. Occasionally, Shinran is present and conversing with Yuien.[264] When Yuien writes the exact lines quoted earlier regarding *akunin* and *zennin* and the reversal likely penned by Hōnen, the priest passionately claims to the students that "If we say *Tanni-shō*, this means '*akunin shōki'*! If we say '*akunin shōki'* this means *Tanni-shō*!"[265] What this shows is that in an official serialized publication by the largest Shin Buddhist organization in Japan, the doctrine of *akunin shōki* is literally equated to the *Tannishō*. There is a large variety of topics addressed in the *Tannishō* beyond just that of *akunin shōki*; some even were mentioned in this project. Yet to say that these are the same things is to show the prioritization of the doctrine, the intense influence it has had on both the identity of Shin Buddhism, and one of the primary concepts the organization proselytizes with. This makes *akunin shōki* one of the most important concepts for Shin evangelism in Japan, showing why discussion of the topic is so significant.

The chapter of the manga does not end there, however. The priest continues to discuss the doctrine by bringing up the idea of equality. Yet again one can see egalitarian themes in the perception and understanding surrounding *akunin shōki*. The priest explains that favoritism, rank, and general status in society are irrelevant to the salvific grace of Amida. Additionally, the topic of antinomianism is treated by the author. A warning is given to the students that the doctrine does not legitimate evil actions or the continuation of past evil actions. The chapter in the manga closes with the students seeming to clearly understand the concept, the nuances behind its meaning, and even some of the practical political consequences it may have. The style utilizes tropes in the characterization of the characters watching Yuien and Shinran to emphasize the mundane, ordinary nature expressed in Shinran's concept of *bonbu* as mentioned earlier.[266]

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[263] Ibid, 222
[264] Ibid, 223
[265] English translation from Elisabetta Porcu, "Speaking through the Media," (2010), 224. Jpn. *Tanni-shō to ieba 'akunin shōki'*! *'Akunin shōki' to ieba Tanni-shō* 『歎異抄』といえば『悪人正機』！『悪人正機』といえば『歎異抄』！
[266] Elisabetta Porcu, "Speaking through the Media" (2010), 224.

Anime and manga have not ceased to be a method of proselytization for Shin Buddhism in Japan, and indeed even New Religious Movements related to Shin have been utilizing the concept. The founder of a NRM called *Jōdoshinshū Shinran-kai*, Takamori Kentetsu 高森顕徹, published a book titled *Tannishō o Hiraku* 歎異抄をひらく in 2008.[267] The book received a film adaptation in 2019, and is a historical fictional story following the life of Yuien who meets Shinran and learns from him.[268] The nuances of the different doctrine between NRMs and the Honganji-ha films lie outside this project but would be an interesting comparison. The movie does, however, continue the general trend towards emotion over intellectualism that is present in the other two Shin movies mentioned above.

Philosophy

In order to refute this characterization, I would like to quickly view two more important thinkers to this puzzle, both lying primarily in academia. The first is Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962), a member of the Kyoto School of philosophy. Tanabe is famous (infamous?) for a variety of reasons, and Ogoshi Aiko specifically uses him to argue for her conclusion of rampant antinomian behavior by those who are influenced by *akunin shōki*. Tanabe was a philosopher that was influenced by Zen, Christianity, and Shin Buddhism at different times in his life, taking pieces from each but never truly landing at one place.[269] His famous work *Philosophy as Metanoetics* makes no mention explicitly of being predicated on *akunin shōki*, but his idea of *zange* 懺悔 is based on the greek concept meta-noia (Grk. *μετάνοια*), which translator Takeuchi Yoshinori describes as a "'thinking-afterward' or 'repentance' that entails the painful recollection of one's past sins, a feeling of remorse accompanied by the strong wish that those sins had not been committed."[270] Tanabe believed that, in more existential terms, evil negated our existence as individuals. In order to overcome evil, one must surrender the right for the self to exist by recognizing that evil and committing to *zangedō* 懺悔道 (The path of repentance). This logic is clearly similar to the logic of *akunin shōki*, and indeed, Tanabe specifically

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[267] Takamori Kentetsu 高森顕徹, *Tannishō o Hiraku* 歎異抄をひらく (Tokyo: Ichimannednō Shuppan, 2008).
[268] *Tannishō o Hiraku 歎異抄をひらく* (East Fish Studio, 2019).
[269] Hajime Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, trans. Yoshinori Takeuchi, Valdo Viglielmo, and James W. Heisig, Nanzan Studies in Religion and Culture (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), XXI.
[270] Hajime Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (1986), XLIII.

references *tariki* (other-power) as a mediating force in the whole process.[271] The logic of being made aware of your own evil by an external force that then transforms your life is clearly in line with what Shinran understood to be the doctrinal logic behind *akunin shōki*. While there have been a variety of criticisms leveled against Tanabe, and the Kyoto school of philosophy in general, the critical nature of *akunin shōki* (as well as other Shin doctrines) as a premise for his entire philosophy helps illuminate the broadening perception of *akunin shōki* in all the thinkers that have been looked at in this chapter.

The second academic was Ienaga Saburō (1913-2002) who is known for fighting governmental censorship in history books. While he is often affiliated with Marxism, this is a mischaracterization. He lived through Imperial Japan and WWII when persecution of politically left ideologies by the government was common, and any positive sentiment towards the ideas of Marx or Lenin could have easily been construed as promotion, but this was not always necessarily the case.[272] Ienaga was a philosopher and historian that was influenced by Kant throughout his life, as well as Shinran though in different ways throughout his life.[273] Most relevant to this project are his ideas surrounding *akunin shōki*. For Ienaga, Shinran's ideas about *akunin shōki* are derived from his realization of his finitude. That is to say, Ienaga saw Shinran's existential humility as stemming from realization of inescapable evil within the live of the individual. While Shinran would say this comes from Amida, Ienaga is more interested in the logic of *akunin shōki* than the specific content of it. He viewed Shinran's religion as one of self-reflection and awareness of the self after arduous consideration.[274]

The logic of *akunin shōki* that Ienaga finds appealing is one of negation. This negation occurs by denying the power of the self and relying on the power of Amida in dealing with the problem of evil in the individual. Ienaga takes this as influential for his ideas of how a religious individual ought to be a participant in society. To Ienaga, the religious individual is one who opposes (morally, structurally, cosmologically, etc.) society as a whole. They are rebellious in nature. Ienaga was inspired by the logic of negation of the self through Amida and uses that same logic to refer to the individual as the method by which society must negate itself. By negation he

[271] Ibid, 2-4. He also gives a not so subtle nod to the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.
[272] Melissa Anne-Marie Curley, *Pure Land, Real World: Modern Buddhism, Japanese Leftists, and the Utopian Imagination* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2017), 160-161.
[273] Melissa Anne-Marie Curley, *Pure Land, Real World* (2017), 188.
[274] Ibid, 176, 178.

refers to liberation of lower classes (Marxism) but he also means ideologically too. Ienaga saw the religious person as obliged to stand up to the government elected by the people on behalf of the people. That is what he means by self-negating society. Ienaga was inspired by the logic of *akunin shōki* to think that individuals, especially religious individuals, should be the ones, in the same way Amida does in the life of an *akunin*, to negate the bad parts of the self (society) and transform them into good.[275] While certainly abstract, we once again see how *akunin shōki* was the basis of liberating people from oppression, not maintaining it.

Chapter Conclusion

There are some themes that can be seen throughout this chapter regarding the change in perception of *akunin shōki*. The first and glaring one is the lack of mention that most of the people examined in this chapter have regarding *mappō*. In general, *mappō* consciousness began disappearing during the Edo period, and by the modern period it has not been a noticeable tie to any of the authors mentioned. Despite the importance it has as being the cosmological foundations for this doctrine, *mappō* consciousness has seemed to have turned into *mappō* unconsciousness. The reality of evil is still present in all the thinkers and creators that were presented, yet that evil is not necessarily tied to a fundamental existential reality, with maybe the exception of Tanabe. Rather it becomes more practical, political, and individual. Evil, especially awareness of evil, is seen throughout, and though these thinkers and creators might consider the causes to be different, they nonetheless emphasize the importance of consciousness of evil and contrition of deeds.

Another motif is the idea that *akunin shōki* brings some kind of egalitarianism to the table. This is different from the universalism that Hōnen and Shinran are particularly addressing in their writings. The egalitarianism used by Takeuchi and continued in some of the manga and anime is more political in nature. This is not difficult to get to, as Takeuchi does so himself. If, as discussed in the previous chapter, evil is a universal human experience, then it makes sense to treat everyone as equally the same since the defining trait of people can be seen as evil (at least in this case). If there are no exceptions, there ought to be no hierarchies.

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[275] Ibid, 179.

Finally, and easily the most important aspect of this chapter, is the sheer variance in comprehension surrounding the interpretations, perceptions, and practical enactments that occur among the different individuals presented in this chapter. Just like *aku*, *ma,* and *tsumi*, the phrase *akunin shōki* takes on new meanings here that are influenced by politics, but also are based on internal reformulations. This makes it difficult to answer the question: what is specifically meant by *akunin shōki*? The better question to ask might be: what has *akunin shōki* specifically come to mean? With this we look once more at Ogoshi Aiko's "*akunin shōki* theory," her premises and conclusions, and finally provide a framework for understanding *akunin*.

Conclusion

The sad truth of the matter is that most evil is done by people who never made up their minds to be or do either evil or good.

- Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (1978)

My goal for this project has been to explore the meaning of *aku* within *akunin* within *akunin shōki*. Throughout history, *akunin* has meant many different things to many different people. To Hōnen it meant those who were aware of their moral failures. To Shinran it meant those who were evil, as well as those who needed the salvation provided by Amida—basically everyone. To others before them, it meant those who were chaotic agents in rebellion against the state, whether they were true bandits or mavericks against a rigid legal system. To others after them, it meant traditionally morally evil people, but it also depends on the one speaking. When paired with *shōki*, *akunin shōki* also has various meanings depending on who is working with it. To Takeuchi, it held an egalitarian premise that had political consequences. To Tanabe, it was a system that enabled repentance and transformation within an individual. To Niwa, it was the awareness of evil that ultimately provided the foundation for a change in behavior in his writings. For all of these thinkers, *akunin shōki* was used as a motif to address the general concept of evil within humanity, but the nuanced understanding of why that evil was there, where it came from, and how to address it was different amongst them. The political philosopher, Hannah Arendt has an interesting concept called the "banality of evil." The idea is vast but one of the premises of the idea includes the fact that human evil is not something that can easily be separated from everyday life. She saw evil as coming out of the everyday existence of people, regardless of whether they were thinking about it or not.[276] While she never used the Japanese word for the "Latter Days of the Dharma," the existential state she describes sounds a lot like the world of *mappō*, where, regardless of their intent, people still do evil. Thus, while all of our thinkers might have different definitions or understandings regarding the *aku* in *akunin* in *akunin shōki*, there are similar themes within them all.

The first theme coincides with Arendt's idea: Human beings do evil in the everyday, not just in the extremes. During the medieval and early modern periods of Japan, this was attributed to the cosmological structure of *mappō* and its practical effects in human life. However, the attribution to *mappō* waned during the modern period, and from then on it became less attributed

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[276] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin Classics, 2006).

to cosmology and more to anthropology. Society itself was a purveyor of evil in many ways. But these are external explanations for why evil exists on an individual level. One of the interesting aspects of this theme in the understanding of *akunin* is that while there might be external pressures or influences, that does not free the individual from responsibility for their actions. Evil may be influenced by the outside, but the responsibility and guilt for that evil is still always something that must be internalized and engaged with inside oneself; no one is free from the guilt of wickedness.

The second theme within the interpretations of *akunin* is that it is universal. Evil is not something only "evil" people do or are prone to do, it is something everyone does. Something that I find interesting about this theme is that none of the thinkers exclude themselves from this fact either. They all include themselves amongst those who are evil, or at least amongst those who are aware of their evil, which is predicated on the fact that they have at least done *something* evil, or at least their perception of what is evil. The universality of evil was taken many different ways. It was used as the basis of egalitarian political movements. It was also used as the basis for a departure from the renunciant lifestyle endorsed by other Buddhist sects. It was used as the cornerstone for philosophers who tried to come to a logical proposition for a collectivistic taking of responsibility for war tragedies during WWII. In all these cases, the universality of evil, the idea that all humans are in the same sinking boat, was shared.

The third theme is a bit more optimistic. While the first two themes relate specifically to the *akunin* portion of the doctrine, this third one relates more to the *shōki* aspect. The third theme is the optimistic future that is within grasp of the evil person because of the intervention by an external entity. In most cases, that external entity is Amida as he is the "other" of *tariki*, "other-power." However, in some cases the other is not necessarily Amida himself, but others who have been saved by Amida. In Takeuchi's thought, humans act as *tariki* for those who are without faith to save them from their "evil," which in this case was oppression and discrimination. In Niwa's story, the congregation without condemnation acts as a positive influence for the priest during his confession. Either way, one cannot fully separate the concept of *akunin* from *shōki*, as characteristically of Buddhism, hell is not eternal. The despair brought about by evil is just as impermanent as the inspiration brought about by good. Yet none of the thinkers presented believed evil was condemnation that excluded a person from salvation. Salvation could always

be received regardless of the actions of the individual because it always came from outside the self.

I set out to argue that the concept of *akunin shōki* changed over time and that this was by no means a new or unique occurrence. From the very beginning of Japanese moral understanding of *tsumi* to the Buddhist introduction of *ma*, to the doctrinal integration of *akunin*, Japanese rhetoric surrounding evil has been ever changing. Nor is this something unique to Japan. Yet what I find interesting has been the influence of a single religious doctrine on the economy, politics, society, artistry, and overall culture of Japan for multiple centuries. The themes within *akunin shōki* resonated with people who tried to wrestle with the question of "what it means to be human?" throughout their lives. It has been this exact change in understanding regarding *akunin shōki* that has caused it to engage with the practical and existential lives of everyday people.

When I began this project, I was interested in seeing how *aku* shifted in meaning over time, and that was indeed addressed. But as I explored more about the logic regarding the understanding of *aku*, I realized just understanding it as "evil" was insufficient, because the word "evil" itself has many different meanings in different contexts with different connotations. As I read more, *mappō* became more and more vital to the understanding of *akunin* in the past, and I found the transformation of the concept to rely less on cosmology in the modern and contemporary periods to be a fascinating transition. There are a variety of questions that one could ask about that. There are numerous topics that I brought up throughout this thesis that would be interesting places to continue studying the influence of *akunin shōki*. Ogoshi Aiko perceived the idea to be antinomian and sexist which I think is false. There are good arguments against sexism in Buddhism and criticisms of Buddhist doctrines from that perspective. A*kunin shōki* is still "unfair" (in Ogoshi Aiko's words) in the sense that it is not predicated on good deeds. Those who see good deeds as salvific would see any argument that regards moral actions as irrelevant to be a mistreatment of their own efforts, but I would argue that such a view is precisely the calculative attitude that Shinran criticizes. This still means, though, that there are others who are not presented here. There are centuries of thinkers who have interpreted and denoted, whether intentionally or not, their understandings of evil onto *akunin,* and what I have brought to the table is but a drop in the bucket. Many of Shinran's disciples (or more accurately put, "fellow practitioners' ') would have various interpretations themselves of the idea, and I

would be curious to see if, among them, there is indeed a logical reading of the doctrine that does what Ogoshi accuses it of doing.

The philosophy of good and evil is something that permeates all religions, but that does not mean they all come to the same conclusions about the subject. Some see knowledge as salvific, some see actions to be the path to salvation. In Shin Buddhism, especially because of Shinran and Rennyo, faith is the primary way salvation is achieved, but faith itself is not that which saves a person, it is the external intervention of Amida that does. The existential nature of this salvation from everyday evil, as opposed to "radical evil" as Arendt discusses, is one of the interesting ways Shin Buddhism engages with the world and a likely reason the sect believes that *akunin shōki* is a premier doctrine for proselytization.

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