

Chapter 4

CLERICAL VICES AND VICISSITUDES

Those who hide [their sins] are called monks.
(Retired Emperor Shirakawa)

The mosses on Jizō / Spreading like siphylis.
(Japanese *senryū*)

WE HAVE EXAMINED in the preceding chapters the various normative views entertained in the Buddhist tradition regarding desire and sexuality. Between this theoretical approach and the reality of social practices, the gap is wide at times. The Two Truths theory was often invoked to bridge this gap, for instance by arguing that traditional morality, as expressed in the Vinaya, was only reflecting conventional truth, whereas ultimate truth was beyond good and evil. This argument, which may sound disingenuous to some, reminds us of the words of Hegel at the end of his life, to a natural child who had come to him asking for recognition: “I know that I had something to do with your birth, but formerly I was in the accidental, while now I am in the essential.”¹

However, the Indian Vinaya itself, by looking for the origin of the rules it proclaimed in precise individual acts—errors that, for essentially practical reasons, it was important to prevent from recurring—unwittingly provided the image of a primitive community eroded by human passions. The vision that emerges hardly resembles the idyllic image—nostalgic cliché of a later period—according to which the mere presence of the Buddha in this world was a token of salvation for all those who could approach him. We are told that the Buddha had to confront several cases of insubordination within his own community. Despite the prolixity of Buddhist texts on sexual matters, however, it remains difficult to have access to the reality of practices. Even the most detailed source, the Vinaya, is an essentially prescriptive discourse, and we should be careful when we infer from the existence of the rules the reality of the illicit practices that they claim to remedy.

¹ Quoted in Derrida, *Glas: Que reste-t-il du savoir abolu?* (Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1981), 10.

MONASTIC DECLINE AND ANTICLERICALISM

The Buddha was on several occasions accused of having transgressed his own rule—a rule by which, strictly speaking, he was never bound.² A well-known episode is one in which a young woman named Ciñcā, after placing a bowl under a dress, accused him of having impregnated her. Her fraud was fortunately uncovered when the bowl fell from under her dress. An even more unpleasant incident is the case of Sundarī, whose corpse, found in the Jetavana (in the city of Śrāvastī), was presented as proof of the Buddha's debauchery and of the excessive zeal with which his disciples had tried to cover up their master's misdeed. Once again, the machination was discovered. This rather dark "report" on monastic life has inspired acerbic comments by critics of Buddhism. Apart from the danger of taking the Vinaya at face value, as if it were a mere reflection of social reality, there is the risk of giving too much credit to a strongly biased anticlerical discourse. Clearly, the Vinaya provides easy arguments to Buddhism's detractors. Our purpose here is not to express full agreement with those critics. One of the questions that will detain us is precisely to what extent the transgression—whether held in contempt, exalted, or simply dreamed of, whether purely incidental, disciplinary, or motivated by "philosophical" choices—may have passed into action and contributed to the supposed decline of Buddhism.³ This chapter will therefore examine some aspects of the social reality of Buddhism, in contrast to its normative tradition. However, the sources considered remain in various respects normative; they are not simply descriptive. At times, the agenda of the anticlerical critique is not even hidden. We must also keep in mind that the historical vision of a decadent Buddhism—for instance, that of Qing China or Tokugawa Japan—is essentially due to modern reformers, who use an idealized past as a standard against which to assess these periods.

Buddhism was often seen as a threat to society because it undermined the continuity of the family line by taking men and women away. To solve the problem posed by renunciators, Indian society had accepted the notion

² See Foucher 1949: 278–80.

³ Let us note in passing the interesting role played in the Vinaya narrative by Jialuo [Kāla?] or Jialiutuoyi [Garuḍa?], who seems to have been a convenient scapegoat for the early Buddhist community. This monk, otherwise unknown, is accused of every turpitude: not only does he indulge in masturbation, he often invites women to his cell and attempts to seduce them. If he happens to meet a former lover during his begging tours, he does not respect her status as a married woman. On every occasion, he manages to remain alone with beautiful women, nuns, or laywomen, and to tell them saucy stories. The list of his misdeeds seems endless.

of the four stages of life, which allowed a man to abandon the world only after he had fulfilled his familial duties. Women, however, were not given such a choice. In Japan, although we do not find any strong argument against renunciation, most women who became nuns did so after sixty, following widowhood or menopause—that is, when society was no longer interested in them. In China, Buddhism was criticized by Confucianists for its lack of filial piety. Even Daoists joined the partisans of moral order in their criticism of Buddhism. In the *Huahu jing*, for instance, the Buddha is presented as an avatar of Laozi, who advocated celibacy to Western barbarians merely in order to cut off their evil offspring.

The social impact of Buddhism may explain the hostility of conservative forces. It does not justify, however, the specific accusations of immoral behavior leveled at monks and nuns—individuals who were, after all, rejecting sexuality in principle. There is no denying that Buddhist morals have varied considerably across time and place, and alleged immoral behavior justified anti-Buddhist persecutions like that of Huichang (845) in Tang China. “Official” anticlericalism, however, was only the most visible manifestation of widespread scathing anticlerical feelings. Behind the wide range of criticism leveled at Buddhist monastic communities, we find the ideology of different social groups such as the government, intra- and inter-sectarian critics, special interest groups, and society at large. In China, for instance, popular sarcasm found a literary expression in satires such as *Monks and Nuns in a Sea of Sins*, which opens with a vitriolic song entitled “The Happiness of Monks”:

Don't tell me that monks are joyous;
 strong and violent are what they are!
 Wearing the robes,
 and with their heads shaven and shiny,
 they act as if they are prudent.
 But they are bald, on top as below
 and the two stones, below and above, are equally shiny.
 Bald and naked, naked and bald,
 indeed all monks are two-headed.
 Their two eyes the eyes of oil-stealing rats,
 their two fists the fists of blood-sucking leeches.
 Heads protruding, they search for cracks
 and summon charming girls,
 revealing the true shape of the Buddha's tooth.
 Thus the Pure Land becomes a sea of lust,
 and priestly robes entangle with rainbow skirts.

They preach in vain that Hell's hard to endure,
for they fear not the judgment of the King of Hell.⁴

The theme of the “monastery of debauchery” was common in Chinese tales.⁵ Already in the Northern Wei, the alleged discovery of weapons and evidence of debauchery in a Chang'an monastery was a pretext for the persecution of Buddhism by Emperor Taiwu (r. 424–452).⁶ As in Western pornography, monasteries and convents are described as a virtual brothels.⁷ Chinese Buddhism found its most severe critics in the popular literature that developed after the Song. The genre of vernacular stories (*huaben*) contains many tales involving Buddhist priests. One such tale is entitled “Chan Master Wujie Has Illicit Relationships with Red Lotus” (*Wujie chanshi si Honglian*). Its protagonists are two Chan priests, Wujie (Five Precepts) and Mingwu (Clear Realization), and a young girl named Red Lotus.⁸ Wujie was the abbot of a monastery in Hangzhou, and Mingwu was his disciple. Once, a female baby was abandoned at the gate of the monastery, and Wujie entrusted her to one of his monks. The child, named Red Lotus, eventually turned into a beautiful young woman. When Wujie, who had forgotten her existence, happened to see her one day, he fell madly in love with her. He told the monk to bring her to his quarters, and he subsequently took her virginity. The versified account of the defloration ends with the lines: “What a shame that the sweet dew of *bodhi* / Has been entirely poured into the corolla of Red Lotus!”

But the story goes on: while sitting in meditation, Mingwu saw with

⁴ See *Sengni niehai* (Taipei: Tianyi chubanshe, 1990), quoted [in Latin!] in van Gulik 1961; see also Levy 1965, 2: 11; Huang San and Basse 1992: 19.

⁵ See for instance the seventeenth-century story, “Magistrate Wang Burns the Treasure-Lotus Monastery.” In van Gulik's famous Judge Dee (Di) series we find an echo of these rumors.

⁶ See *Wei Shu*, translated by Leon Hurvitz 1956: 64–65.

⁷ See Robert Darnton, “Sex for Thought,” *New York Review of Books* 41 (21) (December 22, 1994): 65–74.

⁸ Patrick Hanan distinguishes Wujie from the bad priests caricatured in the vernacular literature. *Wujie chanshi si Honglian* belongs to a class of stories about poet-priests whose death is self-willed and related in some way to sex. In a variant from the Middle Period (1400–1575), “Red Lotus Seduces the Priest Yutong,” the priest dies and is reincarnated because of his opposition to a civil official. In the Yuan play *Yueming heshang du Liu Cui* (“The Yueming Priest's Salvation of Liu Cui”), Liu, an arrogant prefect of Hangzhou, dispatches a local singing girl to tempt an old priest, Yutong. By means of a stratagem, she succeeds. When Yutong realizes that he has been tricked, he wills his own death and sends a valedictory poem to Prefect Liu. Yutong is reincarnated as a baby girl born to the prefect's wife. The girl will become a prostitute when her family's fortune declines. See Hanan 1981: 71.

his “eye of wisdom” that Wujie, by defiling Red Lotus, had transgressed the rule against sex and suddenly ruined years of pure behavior. The next day, he invited Wujie to a poetic meeting and chose as his topic lotus flowers in full bloom. His own poem ended with the following lines: “In summer, to admire lotuses is truly delicious, / But can the red lotus be more fragrant than the white?” Realizing that his secret had been discovered, Wujie was so ashamed that he composed a farewell poem, then died while sitting in dhyāna. Realizing that Wujie’s karma would cause him to be reborn as an enemy of Buddhism, Mingwu decided to follow him into death. He was reborn as the poet-monk Foyin Liaoyuan (1032–1098), whereas Wujie was reborn as the famous Song poet Su Shi (alias Su Dongpo, 1036–1101), “whose only shortcomings were not believing in Buddhism and abhorring monks.”⁹ Fortunately, upon meeting Foyin during an excursion to Mount Lu, Su Shi was enlightened and eventually became—somewhat paradoxically—a Daoist immortal known by the name of Daluo Tianxian.¹⁰ As to Red Lotus, we are simply told that she was saved, as well.

The legend of Wujie’s reincarnation as Su Shi is quoted, for example, in the *Lengzhai yehua* by the Chan master Huihong (1071–1128).¹¹ The story of Su Shi’s awakening was apparently well known by the time Dōgen visited China, more than one century after Su Shi’s death. It is one of Dōgen’s favorite exempla, inspiring an important fascicle of his *Shōbōgenzō*.¹² Dōgen was probably unaware of Su Shi’s karmic antecedents,

⁹ Su Shi is given as the author of a famous anticlerical pun: “If one is not bald, one can’t be evil; / if one is not evil, one can’t be bald” (*bu du bu tu, bu tu bu du*). See Lévy 1965, 2: 45. Su Shi and Fayin also became the pretexts of further buffoonery in a literary genre very popular after the Song, consisting of comic dialogues. In Japan, the comic dialogue between Su Dongpo and Foyin has become a kind of *rakugo* (humorous story). See Sawada 1975: 179–80.

¹⁰ See *Qingpingshan tang huaben*, ed. (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubansha, 1957), summarized in Lévy 1978, 1: 57–60. See also Dars 1987: 425. The story is recited as a “precious scroll” (*baojuan*) by two nuns in the *Jinpingmei* 53; see translation by Lévy 1985, 2: 613.

¹¹ *Lengzhai yehua*, 7: 5a (ed. Jindai bishu, fasc. 112). The *huaben* (story book) is quoted in other Song works and in later collections of stories such as the *Yanju biji*. A variant appears in the *Jinpingmei* 73, trans. Lévy 1978: 59. See also the *huaben* entitled “Master Foyin Four Times Composes for Qinniāng” (*Foyin shi si diao Qinniāng*), in which Foyin, a poet who became a monk because of a whim of the emperor Shenzong, resists the advances of Qinniāng, a singer whom Su Shi has hired to seduce his friend and thus force him to unfrock. Impressed by Foyin’s example, Su Shi is converted to Chan. In a variant recorded in the *Jinlian ji*, however, it is Qinniāng who turns away Foyin. See Lévy 1978, 2: 621–22; and Lévy 1980: 147.

¹² The *Shōbōgenzō* “Keisei sanshoku” (The Sound of the Valley Stream, the Forms of the Mountains) refers to a line of the poem written by Su Shi after his awakening. For more details, see Faure 1987a: 121–42.

since he apparently did not understand colloquial Chinese. The two contrasting images of Su Shi are typical of the selective memory of the “great” and “little” traditions and of the Janus-faced character of their heroes.

The moral decline of the Buddhist clergy during the medieval period has also often been described in Japanese popular literature. Typical is the following tale, in which a priest is asked by credulous parents to change their daughters, aged 18 and 19, into boys. Nothing easier, says the priest, there is a method for “changing women into men” in the sūtras. He has the two girls put into two separate rooms and takes his pleasure with them all day long. Eventually he tells the parents that he has failed, probably due to the girls’ karma. When the parents question the girls, one of them says: “Although the monk exerted himself from morning to evening by planting his jade shaft, nothing grew.” The other adds: “That’s normal, he planted it the wrong way [*sakasama ni*, from behind].”¹³

Many sources argue that the decline of Buddhism increased during the Edo period.¹⁴ This situation is described in the *Usa mondō* by Kumazawa Banzan (1619–1691): “In recent years, from the time of the ordinance banning Christianity, a faithless Buddhism has flourished. Since throughout the land everyone has his parish temple (*dannadera*), unlike in the past, monks can freely indulge in worldly affairs without concern for either discipline or scholarship. . . . The freedom with which they eat meat and engage in romantic affairs surpasses that of secular men.”¹⁵

This anticlerical vision is reflected in the novels of Ihara Saikaku (1643–1693). In *A Bonze’s Wife in a Worldly Temple*, for instance, the heroine, a young courtesan, recalls: “In the course of time I urged this one religion [that is, sexual indulgence] on temples of all the eight sects, and I may say that I never found a single priest who was not ready to slash his rosary [that is, break his religious vows].”¹⁶

¹³ See *Ki no wakyō no monogatari*, Koten taikai 100: 88, Ishida 1995: 194.

¹⁴ The point is most forcefully made by Tsuji Zennosuke (1944–1955, 10: 404–89), who quotes in particular the *Yūdoben* (1866) by the Jōdo priest Ryūgyō (ibid., 485–89).

¹⁵ See Watt 1984: 190. See also Kumazawa Banzan, *Daigaku wakumon* (Nihon shisō tōsō shiryō 16: 128); Nakayama Chikusen (1730–1804), in *Sōbō Kigen* 4, “Jiin no koto” (ibid., 6: 515). Ueda Akinari (1734–1804), in the *Tandai shōshinroku*, criticizes the Pure Land schools (*nenbutsumon*), the Darumashū, the Nichirenshū, and the Montōshū (that is, the Ikkō sect). Likewise, the *Seiji kenmonroku* (1816) by Buyō Inshī, ch. 3, “Jisha jin no koto,” describes the misbehavior of monks. A similar description is found in the *Tenmeiroku* and in the *Keizai mondō hiroku* by Shōji Kōki (1793–1857). For the latter, the problem comes from the fact that monks have too much contact with laymen, and too many rituals. On all this, see Ishida 1995: 208.

¹⁶ Ihara Saikaku 1957: 149.

Another sharp-tongued critic of Buddhism is Tominaga Nakamoto (1715–1746):

This therefore was Śākyamuni's intention. He only wanted monks not to marry, and said that the monks who had no wives would be able to preserve his intention. However, later generations often found monks taking wives, which meant nothing less than the extinction of the Dharma. Again, the *Shoulengyan jing* and the *Guanshiyin tuoloni jing* . . . both have spells with which one can be released from the sins of passion or from the five sharp vegetables. Those monks of later generations with wives must have made good use of these spells!¹⁷

In the *Kashōki*, we find a revealing argument entitled: “The Monks of This Age Have Deep Carnal Lust.” To someone who complains about the current monastic decadence and argues instead that monks should be free of all desires, one of his interlocutors points out, albeit unwittingly, how elitist this conception is: monks of the past were virtuous because they were born from an aristocratic or warrior caste. Of course, “There may be exceptions, like Gyōki Bosatsu or Kōbō Daishi, who were born from a low-caste belly, but these two men were avatars of the Buddha, who took such a form as a skillful means.” Contemporary monks, however, like those of the Nichiren and Jōdo sects, or the Ikkōshū, are of common extraction, and this explains their laxity. It would be better to ordain people born from the nobility or the warrior caste “because they do not know the hardships of the lower caste, they are honest in nature, and often mix with good people; because they are familiar with the [Buddhist] scriptures, the Recorded Sayings [of Zen], poetry and literature, they understand the principle and are versed in the meaning.” Thus, most of them are good. On the contrary, people born from lower castes tend to be crooked in nature, and they keep dubious company. Thus they look for profit, and are prone to desire. Although there may be cases of stupidity or depravation among people of high extraction, they are still superior to similar cases of low extraction, who become monks to avoid poverty.¹⁸

In a section entitled “Night Laundry,” the same source tells of a priest who kept a young woman in his temple. When a parishioner asked the reason for this, the priest explained: “During the day, I have her entertain the women who come to worship; at night, I tell her to do the laundry.” From the medieval period, women often did the laundry for monks. The commentator says ironically: “Speaking of night laundry, I wonder what she could be washing indeed?”¹⁹

¹⁷ Tominaga 1990: 137–38.

¹⁸ *Kashōki* (1636) 1979: 5, 8: 231–33.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 233–34.

Wine-Drinking, Meat-Eating Clerics

As noted earlier, sexual relations were only one aspect of transgression, which also included the breaking of the precepts on alcohol and vegetarianism. Unlike sex, however, the taboo against meat extends to laymen. In the *Sōniryō*, meat and wine were lumped together with sex. Eating meat and drinking wine were regularly condemned. We know, for example, that several monks were implicated in 1409 in a scandal related to eating fish and meat and sent into exile as a result.²⁰ The Vinaya clause according to which meat and fish could on occasion be used for medicinal purposes lent itself to various kinds of casuistry. The drinking of sake, under the name of “water of prajñā,” was also (and still is) widespread. It was strictly forbidden in 1419 at Shōkokuji, one of the major official Zen monasteries in Kyoto. The following year, the prohibition was extended to all Zen monasteries.

Eating meat and fish were on many occasions condemned by Chinese and Japanese authorities as signs of the corruption of the Buddhist clergy—and these regular condemnations reveal the diehard reality of transgressive practices.²¹ In China, meat was a particularly dominant feature of social life, just as animal sacrifice was a regular part of religious life. As food, meat had considerable symbolic value as a marker of prestige. Whereas in India the vegetarianism of the renouncers was eventually coopted by the brahmins and became their trademark, exerting through them a major impact on Indian society, it was not so in China. Not all Indian renouncers abstained from meat, of course, and the Buddha himself was perhaps more nuanced in this regard than his successors. Vinaya regulations regarding the prohibition of meat were sometimes contradictory. In the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya (*Sifen lü*), monks can accept meat unless they see, hear, or suspect that the animal was killed for them.²² The Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya, however, increases the list of taboo foods.²³ In the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*, any kind of meat is forbidden.²⁴ Among the reasons invoked by the *Lankāvatāra* are that eating meat harms compassion toward all sentient beings and gives bad breath. The complexity of the regulations lent itself to casuistry. This point was not lost on Tominaga Nakamoto:

²⁰ Tsuji 1955, 5: 66–67; 6: 330–34.

²¹ See Kieschnick 1995: 29–42; Mather 1981; Tsuji 1944–1955, 5: 67–70; 10: 446–93; Wakatsuki Shōgo, “Edo jidai no sōryō no daraku ni tsuite: Sono shorei,” *Komazawa daigaku bukkyōgakubu ronshū* 2 (1971): 5–19; Michihata 1979: 275–91.

²² See *Sifen lü*, T. 22, 1428: 866c, 868b, 872a.

²³ See *Mohe sengqi lü*, T. 22, 1425: 487a.

²⁴ T. 12, 374: 386.

Thus in the *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya* three kinds of meat are declared pure, and in the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* there are nine. They both allow these to be eaten. The *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* also says: “At times I have taught the prohibition of the five kinds of meat and at times I have made it ten kinds.” It should be observed that while both taking and rejecting meat are provided for, only pure meat is allowed. This was how it was originally. However in later times the prohibitions became more severe. The *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* says, “In the *Hastikakṣyā*, the *Mahāmeghā*, and the *Āṅgulimālika*, as well as in this *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, I have decreed abstinence from meat.” From this we can tell that previous sūtras permitted it.²⁵

The ideal of purity was also undermined by the Mahāyāna tenet of nonduality and emptiness, as shown in the following passage in the *Damo lun* (Treatise of Bodhidharma): “The Dharma master Zhi, seeing the Dharma master Yuan in Butchers’ Street, asked him: ‘Have you seen the butchers kill sheep?’ Dharma master Yuan answered: ‘My eyes are not blind, how could I have not seen them?’ Zhi: ‘So you admit having seen them!’ Yuan: ‘But you, you are still seeing them!’”²⁶ Seeing animals killed, let alone eating them, is a transgression of the rule and a departure from compassion, but as long as it is done with a nondualistic mind, it is all right.

The Vinaya regulations regarding wine are hardly more straightforward: despite a theoretical prohibition against alcohol, wine was tolerated as medicine, like meat.²⁷ In China, the difficulty was compounded by the popularity of wine drinking as a literary topos. We may recall the cases of Jigong and other wine-drinking immortals. For once, Tominaga agrees with Buddhist casuistry, and offers a rebuff to the rigorist position represented by Huiyuan:

When Master Huiyuan was approaching his end, Qide told him to take some rice wine with soya to overcome his illness, but the master replied, “The Vinaya has no statement to justify it.” He told him to drink some rice gruel, but the master replied: “The day has passed noon.” Then he told him to drink some honey mixed with water, so the master asked him to open the Vinaya to see if it was permitted, but before he had got halfway through the master died. Because [Huiyuan] did not change the rules in a matter of life and death, it must be said that he kept the Vinaya well. Yet how petty it is to say that rice gruel cannot be drunk because the day has passed noon. . . . Well-versed men have determined Vinaya in accordance with time and place, so why should one be restricted to early form alone? Did not Master Yuan know this? Further-

²⁵ Tominaga 1982: 46, translated in Tominaga 1990: 139.

²⁶ Faure 1986: 126–27.

²⁷ On this question, see Michihata Ryōshū, *Chūgoku bukkyōshi zenshū* (Tokyo: Kaibushiki kaisha shoen, 1986), 7: 381–542; and Kieschnick 1995: 40–42.

more, if we reflect on the five precepts we see that stealing, adultery, and lying have always belonged to evil, but that taking life and drinking intoxicants have been undetermined. Taking life has been seen as not sinful, while drinking has been considered evil if it leads to a disturbance. The five precepts were originally precepts against evil, yet it is not possible to say that there should be absolutely no taking of life or drinking of intoxicants.²⁸

Furthermore, the discrepancy between theory and practice reflected the larger contradiction of East Asian Buddhism, where the ideal of begging remained, even while monks were being lavishly supported by the state and by laymen. There is also a discrepancy between the hagiographical accounts of religious virtuosi, on the one hand, in which monks are beyond temptation, and the “human, all too human” common monks on the other. As John Kieschnick puts it: “Perhaps it is because of this environment of suspicion that one searches the *Biographies* in vain for stories of temptation—the sort of genuine inner turmoil expressed in the *Lives of the Desert Fathers*. . . . Monks in the *Biographies* have no such moments of doubt.”²⁹ Thus, Buddhists may have had extenuating circumstances.

Buddhist Critiques

The above examples are only a sample of the many stories circulating about the Buddhist clergy. It is, of course, natural to suspect the bias of these anticlerical sources. The existence of similar stories in Buddhist sources, however, is more disturbing. As early as the Tang, the Japanese pilgrim Ennin (794–864) described the laxity of Chan monks he happened to encounter during his stay in China. The criticism against “meat eaters and fornicators” is also found among Chan monks themselves. For instance, the criticism of the Song Chan master Puan, which was perceived as still perfectly appropriate in the context of Tokugawa Japan, if we are to believe the Ōbaku master Chōon Dōkai (1630–1682), who quotes him verbatim: “And today there is an empty-minded Zen school, people who, without having the proper awakening, explain that to drink wine, eat meat, or commit adultery is no obstacle for the enlightened nature.”³⁰

²⁸ Tominaga 1982: 43, translated in Tominaga 1990: 133–34; and *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, T. 50, 2060: 361a. See also Zürcher 1959: 253.

²⁹ Kieschnick 1995: 27–28.

³⁰ See Dieter Schwaller, “Der Text *Mukai Nanshin* des Japanischen Zen-Mönchs Chōon Dōkai,” unpublished paper, 1987. As noted earlier, a representative of this trend of Chan during the Song was the “trickster” Daoji (Jidian, Jigong). Particularly significant in this context is the story of Jigong’s “encounter-dialogue” with the courtesan Hongjian and its resemblance to the story of Wujie and Red Lotus quoted above.

Such an attitude was apparently widespread in Japan long before the Tokugawa.³¹ It seems to have resurfaced in every period, but was perhaps most apparent in the Kamakura period with the development of beliefs about the “final age of the Dharma” (*mappō*). In his *Gukanshō*, the Tendai priest Jien criticizes as follows the antinomianism of Hōnen’s Pure Land teaching:

This strange teaching was embraced by priests and nuns who lacked wisdom and were foolish. But the teaching was very popular and grew rapidly. Among those who embraced it was Lay Priest Anraku who had served under Lay Priest Takashina Yasutsune. Calling himself a “practitioner of the select discipline,” Anraku associated himself with a priest by the name of Jūren. . . . Some nuns also became ardent believers in this teaching. The nenbutsu priests went so far as to make such promises as these: “If you become a practitioner of this teaching, Amitābha Buddha will not consider you the least bit sinful, even if you lust after women or eat fish or fowl. If you follow the select discipline singleheartedly, and believe only in [the efficacy of] nenbutsu, Amitābha will certainly come to welcome you [to the Pure land] at the time of death.”

While the movement was spreading throughout the capital and the countryside in this fashion, a Lady-in-Waiting at the Retired Emperor’s [Go-Toba] detached palace, as well as the mother of the princely-priest of Ninna Temple, became believers. These ladies secretly called Anraku and other nenbutsu priests into their presence to explain their teaching. Anraku seems to have gone with some colleagues to see these ladies, even staying overnight. Anraku and Jūren were eventually beheaded. Saint Hōnen was banished [in 1207] and not allowed to reside in the capital. Although the matter was disposed of with such [leniency], the movement really seemed to have been checked for a while.³²

Apparently, Jien regrets the “leniency” of the authorities, which forced Hieizan monks to intervene against the Pure Land school: “Because the ‘select discipline’—with its permissive attitude toward lust for women and the eating of fish and fowl—had not yet been checked, the priests of Mt. Hiei rose up and forced the *nenbutsu* priests to flee.”³³ Jien’s criticism seems to have been motivated, however, less by the alleged sexual transgression (in this respect, he was quite broad-minded, as we will see) than by the potential threat to the Tendai school caused by the success of the Pure Land teaching and its antinomianism. This antinomianism was also one of the characteristics of the “Innate Awakening” (*hongaku*) theory, as it found its main expression in Tendai esotericism. It was found in Zen as well, and was denounced, not entirely without sectarian motives, by the Rinzaï master Ikkyū Sōjun himself. In a poem entitled “For Stu-

³¹ See in particular Ishida 1995.

³² Brown and Ishida 1979: 171–72.

³³ *Ibid.*, 172.

dents of Pretense,” Ikkyū writes: “Sex in the temple, the Zen of demons”: “Calling followers in for a ‘mysterious *satori*.’ / That modern leper, Yōso./ Amidst universal sin, I alone follow nature.”³⁴ Ikkyū sharply contrasts his own “naturalism” with the moral laxity prevailing in Zen monasteries, a laxity that he associates with his codisciple Yōso. Nevertheless, both types of “naturalism” were conflated by the tradition, and the *Kyō-unshū* was for that reason forbidden. We must keep in mind the polemical context of Ikkyū’s criticisms. Famous among other things for having in his old age fallen in love with a blind female singer, Ikkyū had also had homosexual experiences in his youth (if not later). Furthermore, we know the name of his “true disciple,” that is, his son.

Ikkyū also accused his codisciple Yōsō, who had apparently contracted leprosy, of having secretly abandoned the yellow robe of the monks for the orange *katabira* (robe) of the lepers.³⁵ The orange robe, initially worn by the mountain ascetics (*yamabushi*), symbolized their sacred, “nonhuman” nature. This orange *katabira* became the emblem of “weird and strange” (*irui igyō*) people in the medieval period. Ironically, Ikkyū’s criticism echoes the growing discrimination against these marginals, among whom he himself once lived in Sakai. The Hieizan monks, for instance, criticized Zen monks as being no different from these *irui igyō* types. A similar criticism is voiced by the priest Eichō in Mujū Ichien’s *Shasekishū*:

Although monks today talk of receiving the precepts, they do not know what it means to observe them. While half-heartedly calling themselves priests, taking alms, and performing services, it is a strange breed of priests which abounds throughout the country, bringing disgrace to the disciples of the Buddha. Some have families and other bear arms, or go hunting and fishing. In these wretched latter days there are those who do not even know the meaning of the word “repentance.”³⁶

Mujū sees his fellow monks with the distance of irony and never loses a chance to reveal their absurdities. Incriminating worldly monks, he writes:

Some perform Buddhist services for profit, saying: “I am a disciple of the Buddha. This is what must be done.” But when it comes to observing the precepts and correcting their faults, then they say: “I follow the Mahāyāna, not the Hīnayāna.” The *Buddha Treasury Sūtra* calls such people “bat-monks” (*chōso biku*). If one says that they are numbered among the birds, they reply that they live on the ground, and go into their holes. But to escape the duties of living on

³⁴ *Kyōunshū* 351, in Sanford 1981: 135. See also Iizuna 1993.

³⁵ See *Jikaishū*, quoted in Amino 1993: 132.

³⁶ Morrell 1985: 189.

the ground, they say they live in the sky. Indeed, they are neither bird nor beast. So also the Law-breaking monk says that he is a follower of the Buddha in order to escape his secular duties. But then he does not observe the precepts, claiming to be an adherent of the Mahāyāna.³⁷

Even more scathing is Mujū's indictment of the yamabushi, through the words he puts in Eichō's mouth: "I see one from where I am sitting. I look and ask myself if he is a layman—but he wears a priest's scarf. He is neither adult, child, priest, nor menial. He isn't even shit, but something like diarrhea!"³⁸ In the *Zōtanshū*, Mujū is more nuanced: "Today, monks are like oxen and sheep wearing monastic robes (*kesa*); some monks may become oxen, others Buddhas, but fundamentally they are neither oxen nor Buddhas. All are only Vairocana."³⁹

Sometimes, according to Mujū, the problem is not so much the monks' evil mind or their antinomianism as their stupidity. He illustrates this point with the story of the preacher who tries to explain to his female patron, a widow, the notion of union with the Buddha:

Now the Great Sun Buddha illumines the great devotion of this lay nun, and feels intimately toward her. If the forehead of the Great Sun Buddha and the forehead of this lay nun were to come together, then hers would assume a golden hue. If the bosom of the Great Sun Buddha and the bosom of this lay nun were to come together, then hers would assume a golden hue. If the abdomen of the Great Sun Buddha and the abdomen of this lay nun were to come together, then hers would assume a golden hue. If the navel of the Great Sun Buddha . . .⁴⁰

At this point, however, the preacher is interrupted by another priest who has overheard and cannot bear to listen further. In another tale entitled "The Nun Who Praised a Preacher," Mujū describes a nun who, wanting to hold a Buddhist service, asks a monk whom she had known since his childhood to deliver the sermon. Finding the sermon to her liking, the nun extols the monk to a group of ladies as follows: "Since I raised him from the time he was a little boy and used to run around with his member hanging out, I was wondering how far he would go. And then he stood erect at the lectern. I had not expected anything extraordinary, but he did very well. As I was thinking to myself how wonderfully he was doing, he pushed forward to the end. I felt as though I had lost my senses." Comments Mujū: "A truly unhappy choice of words!"⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid., 141.

³⁸ Ibid., 189

³⁹ *Zōtanshu* 1, 3, in Yamada and Miki edition, 52–53

⁴⁰ Morrell 1985: 183.

⁴¹ Ibid., 184.

Nevertheless, we must keep in mind Michel Strickmann's remark that the depravity of monks and nuns is part of an eschatological topos and cannot be taken as a mere description of reality (any more than the piety of women, another Buddhist sign of the end of the world!): "The authors of apocalyptic visions put systematically into action the worst fears of Buddhist legislators."⁴² Conversely, Jan Nattier argues that the advent of the theory of the final age of the Dharma was triggered as much by anxiety over internal laxity of the saṅgha as by external persecution.⁴³ At any rate, the Buddhist critique itself should be submitted to an ideological critique. In the context of medieval Japan, for instance, we seem to be dealing with official priests finding fault with marginal monks who are perceived as muen or irui igyō types. Here, the case of Ikkyū is particularly significant since, as a trickster figure, he could be seen as a personification of the muen ideal, while in his criticisms he echoes the dominant ideology.

In Defense of Monasticism

The first Buddhist response to such criticism was denial: bad monks are still better than good laymen. When it does not seem possible to argue that transgression was done in the name of a higher truth, one falls back on a quasi-sacramental conception of the priesthood: the "essence of the precepts," once obtained through ordination, can never be lost. Already in fifth-century China, when the Jin emperor expressed his intention to weed out the saṅgha because of the monks' many transgressions, the Dharma master Huiyuan allegedly replied: "The jade that is extracted from Mount Kun is covered with dirt and grit. The Li river is rich with gold, yet it is also full of gravel. Your Highness must respect the Dharma and value its representatives." The Jin emperor, apparently convinced by this argument, issued a general pardon.⁴⁴ In Japan, a similar argument appears in the *Nihon ryōiki*:

Even a self-ordained monk deserves to be regarded with tolerance, for sages live hidden among ordinary monks. . . . Accordingly, the *Jūrin-gyō* says: "As an orchid, even if it has withered, excels other flowers, so monks, even if they violate precepts, excel non-Buddhists. To talk about a monk's faults such as whether he violates or keeps the precepts, whether he recognizes or does not recognize the precepts, or whether he has or has not faults is a graver sin than that of letting the bodies of innumerable Buddhas bleed."⁴⁵

⁴² Strickmann 1996: 98.

⁴³ See Nattier 1991: 128.

⁴⁴ See *Lidai fabaoji*, T. 51, 2075: 179c.

⁴⁵ *Nihon ryōiki* 3: 33, in Nakamura 1973: 268–69.

In his *Sanbō ekotoba*, a didactic work completed in 984 for a young princess about to become a nun, Minamoto Tamenori declares:

I even revere those monks who violate the precepts. In a sūtra it is said that though a monk may violate the precepts, he is still superior to a Wheel-King, and even though he may fall into one of the Evil Realms, he will be a king there. Though the *campaka* flower may wilt, it is still superior to all other flowers in their freshest bloom. The scent of sandalwood incense may burn away to nothing, but still it perfumes countless robes. . . . A bag that has held incense may lose some of its scent, but it still remains fragrant. A monk may have taken vows and then may break one, but still, the Buddha says, he is worthy of reverence. . . . A common man should not use his worldly mind to judge the sincerity of those who follow the path of Holy Wisdom.⁴⁶

Even a purely superficial acceptance of the precepts can provide salvation in the long run, as the story of the nun Utpalavarṇā, quoted by Dōgen, shows:

In a previous existence I was a prostitute and often uttered licentious words while dressed improperly. One day, however, I put on a nun's robe as a joke. Owing to this good deed, I was reborn as a nun in the time of the Buddha Kāśyapa. My problems did not end then, however. Because of my noble birth and good looks, I became proud and conceited, and consequently I broke the precepts, falling into hell, where I was severely punished. After having redeemed myself and been born in the human world once more, I was finally able to meet the Buddha Śākyamuni and reenter nunhood. As a result I was able to realize Arhathood and become endowed with the six powers for saving sentient beings.⁴⁷

Thus, "in the past an irreligious prostitute laughingly put on nun's clothing as a joke. Although she broke the precepts by that action that belittled the Law, because of the merit she gained from having worn nun's clothing, she was able to encounter the Law in only two generations."⁴⁸ Likewise, says Dōgen, though a monk breaks the ten grave prohibitions, he is still superior to a layman who observes the five lay precepts. According to him, Zen in particular cannot be judged by ordinary standards: "Even if a Zen monastery is under the influence of degenerate Buddhism, it is like a fragrant flower garden. Monasteries of other sects can never be its equal."⁴⁹

How did monks and nuns respond to internal purification and external rules aimed at them? Let us first examine the question of male intercourse

⁴⁶ Kamens 1988: 242.

⁴⁷ *Shōbōgenzō* "Shukke kudoku," in Yokoi 1976: 70–71.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 74, 75.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

with women (*nyobon*), which triggered the repression against the Pure Land school. We have cited above a criticism of the attitude of Hōnen's disciples. In response to this criticism is the *Shichikojō seimon*, a 1204 request in seven points by Hōnen, which amounts to an internal critique of the movement. In its paragraph four, for instance, we find the following: "In the Nenbutsu school, we must silence those who say that there is no practice of the Precepts, and who advocate only love, alcohol, and meat eating, and who tell to those who chose Amida's fundamental vow that they should not fear to commit evil."⁵⁰

Certain nenbutsu adepts seem to have asserted the meaninglessness of monastic discipline, and tolerated sexual relationships. It is against them that Hōnen insisted on the importance of the precepts, arguing, for instance, that the Pure Land patriarch Shandao never looked at women. Hōnen summed up his argument in seven points, saying that those who transgress them are not his disciples but supporters of Māra. He then obtained the signatures of 108 disciples and sent the document to the high priest of Tendai. Among these signatures, one finds the names of Jūren and Anraku, who as we have seen would be later condemned to death for allegedly breaking their vow of chastity with palace women. Hōnen had already responded to a similar charge from Kōfukuji, but his response had not been judged sufficient.⁵¹

Among the nine points of a petition addressed to the throne by the Kōfukuji monks in 1205, the eighth deals with the depravity of Pure Land monks—their indulging in games like go and sugoroku (a light offense according to the *Fanwang jing*), along with sex, eating meat, and drinking alcohol. Although sugoroku, a kind of betting, was condemned from very early on, the game of go seems to have been fairly popular among monks. Despite their virtuous indignation, however, the entertainment of Kōfukuji monks was probably not limited to innocent go playing. Indeed, the authors of the petition feel obliged to perform their autocritique in a postscript: "Although we do not receive [the precepts] according to truth, and do not observe [these precepts] according to the teaching, we fear this, and deplore it." But the authors of the petition remain adamant in their denunciation of laxity, affirming that "one cannot obtain rebirth [in the Pure Land] through fornicating and eating meat." They claim to part on that point with nenbutsu adepts, who "make transgression their principle."

Although the Kōfukuji monks were not satisfied with the imperial edict issued in response to their petition, they subsequently concentrated their criticisms on Hōnen's disciples rather than on Hōnen himself. Neverthe-

⁵⁰ See *Hōnen shōnin zenshū*, 788.

⁵¹ See *Kamakura ibun* 3: 1586. Even before this charge from Kōfukuji, there had been others, as can be seen in the *Hōnen shōnin gyōjō ezu* (ch. 31).

less, Hōnen was exiled in 1207 to Sado Island, while some of his disciples were more severely punished—by castration or death.⁵² As noted above, Jien, the Tendai *zasu*, reports in his *Gukanshō* the execution of Anraku and Jūren. A disciple of Shinran, Kawada no Yuien, in a document annexed to the *Tannishō*, mentions two other victims. The same version of the facts is presented by Rennyō, but neither source mentions castration.⁵³ The *Hyakurenshō* records the punishment of a nenbutsu adept for adultery. It also reports that nenbutsu monks were banished from Kamakura and their temples destroyed after they were charged with eating meat and having sexual relations with women.⁵⁴

The Buddhist clergy tried to improve its image by insisting on the ideal of chastity. In the *Hokekyō kenki*, for instance, we find the case of the priest Jōshō of Saga, who, although he never had sex, happened once to touch a woman's body with a finger, and repented by burning this finger, the cause of the sin, which he then offered to the Three Jewels.⁵⁵ Another attempt to deal with the image problem of the clergy was to imply that apparently immoral behavior was only a façade, a way for the sage to “mingle with the dust.” Even when a monk behaves in a dissolute way (some will say, especially when he does so), he may turn out to be a thaumaturge. The case of the Chinese monk Jigong, studied above, is already typical in this respect.⁵⁶ In Japan, we could mention the case of Priest Eijitsu of Jinmyōji. Eijitsu once went down to Kyushu, where he became very rich by managing secular affairs such as cultivating fields, making an abundant profit in rice and sake. Sometimes he ate fish and fowl and at other times he equipped himself with a bow and arrow. The governor of Higo province slandered him and confiscated his property, saying, “Eijitsu is a precept-violating priest. No one should associate with him.” Some time later the governor's wife became fatally ill. When medicinal treatment did not work, the governor agreed to invite Eijitsu to recite the *Lotus Sūtra*. When Eijitsu finally accepted and began his recitation, the wife was rapidly cured, and the governor apologized as a result.⁵⁷ Another significant case is that of the Shingon priest Ningai:

Long ago, there was a man in the southern capital called the Venerable Ninkai, a priest of the Yamashina-dera. For learning, there was not a priest in the temple equal to him. Now he was suddenly seized by a religious fervour and wished to leave the temple, but the Abbot at the time, the Assistant High Priest

⁵² See *Kojiruien*, Hōritsubu 1: 91–92.

⁵³ See *Shinshū shōkyō zensho* 2:794 and 3:737, in *Shūi kōtoku den* 7.

⁵⁴ *Hyakurenshō*, s.v. 1234 (bunreki 1/7/2), and 1239 (En'ō 1/4/13), in *Shintei zōho kokushi taikai*; quoted in Ishida 1995: 111.

⁵⁵ See Dykstra 1983: 67.

⁵⁶ John Kieschnick has studied a number of similar cases. See Kieschnick 1995: 88–119.

⁵⁷ See Dykstra 1983: 89.

Kōshō, was very loath to allow him to leave. In desperation, he entered into a marriage with the daughter of a man in the village to the west of the temple, and his regular visits naturally gave rise to gossip. In order to publicize the affair, he would stand behind his wife at the gate of the house with his arms round her neck, a sight which utterly disgusted and saddened people passing by. His purpose was to convince everyone that he had become a libertine. Yet all the while he lived with his wife, he was never once intimate with her.⁵⁸

Despite his behavior, Ningai was regarded as a saint and was said to have been reborn in the Pure Land. In the *Uji shūi monogatari*, his case follows that of Sōō, as reflecting the standard of the ascetic monk. We know that the image of Sōō underwent some changes, due to his alleged affair with Empress Somedono. The same is true with that of Ningai, whom we have seen described as a meat eater. Despite his chaste relation with his wife, he was also said to have fathered a son, Jōson (1012–1074), who became his “true disciple.”⁵⁹

THE DEMONIC PRIEST

As we saw above, the disturbance provoked by Hōnen’s Pure Land teaching was reduced to a matter of antinomianism, which led to the sexual scandal in which two of his disciples were directly involved. Jien, who reports the incident in his *Gukanshō*, sees it as an instance of demonic possession:

According to my understanding of this phenomenon there are two types of demons: the deceptive (*junma*) and the antagonistic (*gyakuma*). Deceptive demons were responsible for such pathetic teaching as Hōnen’s. At a time when “the one Teaching of Amitābha” will really increase divine grace, people will certainly have their sins and troubles removed and enter paradise. But before that time comes, and while the Shingon and “eliminate-illusion” (*shikan*) teachings of Tendai are still destined to prosper, no one will be able to achieve salvation by following the teachings of deceptive demons. Pathetic things happen when people think they can!”⁶⁰

Jien implies that “deceptive” demons (*junma*, literally, demons who “submit”) are not nearly as dangerous as “antagonistic” demons

⁵⁸ See Mills 1970: 431–32

⁵⁹ See *Kojidan* 3: 71, Koten bunko 60, 279. The story adds that Jōson’s mother (who is not described here as Ningai’s wife), trying to get rid of the child, made him drink mercury. The only result was that the child became genitally deformed, which is why, we are told, Jōson “never committed an impure act in his entire life.”

⁶⁰ Brown and Ishida 1979: 173. Jien also discusses the “power and nature of vengeful souls,” *ibid.*, 220–21.

(*gyakuma*). He reports how, on one occasion around 1196, the vengeful spirit of Go-Shirakawa was believed to have possessed the wife of a man named Tachibana Kanenaka. Eventually, husband and wife were declared insane and sent into exile because “she really has not been possessed.”⁶¹ A few years later, in 1206, a similar incident occurred: the spirit of Go-Shirakawa was said to have possessed the wife of the priest Nakakuni and to have asked that a shrine be built in his honor. Jien declared that this was not a true possession but merely a demonic trick (that is, one caused by “deceptive demons”).⁶² He manifests here his elitist bias against popular mediums and, more generally, against marginal social categories.⁶³ He argued, however, that the possessed woman and her husband should not be too severely punished if they had no wrong intent.

This line of thinking leads our discussion to another type of monks that have a bad press. They are sometimes confused with bawdy monks because they fall in love with women. But whether they actually break their vows or not, they are perceived as dangerous because of their magical powers, and they are liable to become angry ghosts because of frustrated love. Significantly, a temple was later built in the memory of the two disciples of Hōnen who had been executed, and this was probably not simply a matter of rehabilitating them for the sake of justice but was rather to appease their vengeful spirits. In most cases, the accounts regarding these demonic priests is another form of anticlericalism or sectarian criticism. Another case in point, mentioned in the *Uji shūi monogatari*, is that of Sōō (832–918), a renowned ascetic, who was called to court to exorcise Empress Somedono. Because of his unusual appearance, Sōō was told to perform his incantations outside the mansion:

His voice made the Empress’s attendants feel that their hair was standing on end, as if he were an apparition of Fudō himself. Presently, the Empress, wrapped in a couple of crimson robes, came tumbling out through the blinds like a ball, and was dumped down on the verandah in front of Sōō. Her attendants were most upset, and cried, “This is very unseemly. You must take Her

⁶¹ Brown and Ishida 1979: 169.

⁶² On this occasion, Jien told the emperor: “If Nakakuni and his wife have said what was in their own hearts without being at all possessed by foxes and badgers, they should of course be punished, even with exile.” But, he argues, there are also cases of real possession: “That is, some have developed the sickness of possession. But since punishment should not be meted out from above simply because a person is ill, we should place Nakakuni and his wife in isolation and pay no attention to what they say. Then the fox or badger will soon remove itself without a sound” (*ibid.*, 170).

⁶³ Jien writes: “In reflecting about these developments, I have the feeling that I see crazy people—shamans (*miko*), mediums (*kōnagi*), dancers (*mai*), and comic actors (*sarugō*), as well as coppersmiths and the like, all low-ranking people who served near the deceased Retired Emperor—exerting their influence over this woman [for their own selfish purposes]. The state is now going to ruin!” (*ibid.*).

Majesty inside and go in with her yourself.” “How can a beggarly person like me go into her presence?” said Sōō, and he refused to go inside. He was annoyed at not having been invited in from the first, and so had raised her four or five feet in the air and deposited her on the verandah. In despair the attendants produced some screens, which they stood round the Empress to conceal her, while the inner gate was locked and the place cleared of people. But the Empress was still very much exposed to view. Four or five times Sōō let her drop, and he intoned spells to hurl her inside, so that eventually she was flung back into the room again. Then Sōō took his departure. Though they asked him to wait, he refused to listen, and complaining that his back ached from standing for such a long time, he went off.⁶⁴

After this drastic treatment, the empress was no longer possessed. Sōō was rewarded with a high clerical position, but he declined it. At first glance, the story is that of a saintly if somewhat arrogant priest. The man who, we are told, “wore no cloth which had been sewed by a woman,” seems to be the perfect ascetic.⁶⁵

Despite such a positive account, however, the opening section of the tale raises negative expectations in the reader. We learn that Sōō, as a result of his strenuous asceticism under a waterfall, was once transported to the Tuṣita heaven. In the end, however, because he was unable to recite the *Lotus Sūtra*, he could not enter Maitreya’s Inner Palace.⁶⁶ Thus he turns out to be a flawed ascetic. It should not come as much of a surprise to discover that in some variants Sōō falls in love with the empress. The point is that, because of this impossible love, the priest will after death become a malevolent spirit (*onryō*) who returns to the world of the living to possess the object of his lingering desire. There is a feeling of circularity in this story, because the empress was possessed in the first place by the spirit of another powerful priest, Shinzei (alias Kakinomoto no Ki), who was taking revenge for his own unrequited love.⁶⁷

As a result of vengefulness, Buddhist monks and practitioners of Shugendō often turned (or were turned) into *onryō*. Sometimes the cause of their resentment was a desire for revenge owing to political circumstances (as in the case of political figures such as Sugawara Michizane or Emperor Go-Daigo). The *Gukanshō* mentions several instances.⁶⁸ Sometimes, as in the above examples, love turned into hatred. These cases were well known, as we can see from the words of Emperor Go-

⁶⁴ See *Uji shūi monogatari*, translated by Mills 1970: 429–30.

⁶⁵ See *Tendai Nanzan Mudōji konryū oshōden*, quoted in Ishida 1995: 43.

⁶⁶ See *Hokekyō kenki*, translated by Dykstra 1983: 35–36.

⁶⁷ See Tanaka 1992: 85–131.

⁶⁸ See Brown and Ishida 1979: 70, 87, 124, 220.

Fukakusa to Lady Nijō, after she has told him of her affair with the Ninnaji priest Shōjo Hōshinnō, whom she refers to in her diary as “Ariake no tsuki”: “None of this bodes well for the future, for events from the past teach us that passion respects neither rank nor station. For example, the spirit of the high priest Kakinomoto pursued Empress Somedono relentlessly, and it was beyond the power of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to prevent her from yielding to his malevolent spirit. The holy man of the Shiga Temple was also smitten by passion, but he was luckily returned to the true way by the sympathy of the lady he loved.”⁶⁹

Later, Go-Fukakusa returns to this point:

After thinking about the subject at great length, I have concluded that there is nothing sinful in the relationships between men and women inasmuch as they are usually caused by bonds from former lives and thus defy our resistance. Numerous examples from the past illustrate what I mean, as in the case of the ascetic known as Jōzō and the girl from Michinokuni. To escape from the bond, Jōzō even attempted to kill her, but without success, and finally he yielded to his passion.⁷⁰ In another case, the holy man of Shiga Temple was attracted by the Empress Somedono. Unable to endure such passion, he turned into a blue ghost.⁷¹

Go-Fukakusa had some reasons to be concerned about the effects of Ariake’s passion for Lady Nijō. Feeling terminally ill, Ariake tells her that he has begun copying five Mahāyana sūtras, in each chapter of which he inserted a phrase from one of her letters, with the plea that they might be united in this world: “The sūtras are copied now but not dedicated. I shall dedicate them after we have been reborn together. If I store the more than two hundred chapters in the treasure hall of the dragon king, I will certainly be reborn to this life, and then I shall dedicate them to the Buddha. To accomplish this I plan to take the sūtras with me after death

⁶⁹ See Brazell 1973: 123.

⁷⁰ The same story is told about Tankei, a disciple of Ennin. Tankei is said to have had an affair during his stay in a house where through his prayers he had exorcised the illness of Chūjinkō (Fujiwara Yoshifusa), but we do not have the details. However, the story has a sequel. Tankei had in the past received a dream oracle from Fudō Myōō telling what would happen—namely, that he would find in a certain place a girl whom he would marry. He goes to the place, finds a ten-year old girl, kills her (or so he thinks) and runs away, believing he has thus proven the oracle wrong. But when, much later, he makes love with a woman, he finds that she has a scar on her neck. When he asks her about it, she tells him that when she was young she was once attacked and wounded by someone, but was later cared for and healed. Tankei then understands that his karma, predicted by Fudō, has been realized, and confesses everything. They eventually become husband and wife, after Tankei has returned to lay life and become an official in order to avoid transgression. See *Konjaku monogatari shū* 31: 3, quoted in Ishida 1995: 60.

⁷¹ Brazell 1973: 131.

by having them added to the fuel of my funeral pyre.”⁷² Ariake died soon after, in 1282, at the age of 36.

Go-Shirakawa seems to have been duly concerned with demonic beings such as *onryō*, *oni*, and *tengu* (tradition has it that he himself became an *onryō*). In one recension of the *Heike monogatari*, we find the following passage, in which he receives a revelation from the god of Sumiyoshi:

The Retired Emperor [Go-Shirakawa] asked: “Regarding the wise men who have become *tengu* [mountain spirits] in the country of Japan, how many are there?” The Daimyōjin [of Sumiyoshi] replied: “Because good priests all become *tengu*, it is impossible to give their number. Priests of great wisdom become great *tengu*, those of small wisdom become small *tengu*. Even among ignorant priests, there is a great deal of arrogance. Thus all fall into the realm of beasts and are stretched out; the horse and cow demons are none other than these. In our land, in the not distant past, there was a renowned sage named the abbot Kakinomoto [i.e., Shinzei], a *hijiri* [ascetic] of miraculous powers. Because of his great arrogance, he has become the number one great *tengu* of Japan. He is known as Tarōbō of Atago Mountain.”⁷³

As David Bialock points out, demonology functions here both as means for criticizing the retired emperor and as an apologetic for the behavior of the unruly monks. The fact that the “evil monks” (*akusō*) of medieval Japan often added the words *tengu* and *oni* to their name also suggests that the “demonology was widespread enough to become a contested discourse, with the *akusō* deliberately attempting to co-opt, to their own advantage, its capacity to inspire fear.”⁷⁴

The Political Context

Clearly, despite its apparent similarity across places and times, anticlerical discourse obeys complex motivations, responding to different historical and political situations. It has a globalizing effect, transforming specific historical cases into as many local manifestations of a persistent tendency, reflecting the evil nature of the monks. Although specific accusations against depraved monks should always be contextualized, this would take us too far afield. We will therefore examine two well-known cases, those of Dōkyō and of Shinzei.

The story of the affair between Empress Shōtoku and Dōkyō is reported as follows in the *Gukanshō*:

⁷² Ibid., 147.

⁷³ See *Heike monogatari*, Enkyōbon jō, “Hōō no go-kanjō no koto” (The Matter of the Retired Emperor’s Water Consecration Ritual), 223–26, in Bialock 1997: 488.

⁷⁴ Bialock 1997: 489; quoting Arai, *Chūsei akutō no kenkyū*. See also ibid., 388.

During her second reign [764–770], Kōken was called Empress Shōtoku. Having fallen in love with Dōkyō, a Buddhist priest, she committed such iniquities as promoting him to the position of Priest Emperor (*bōō*) in 766 and placing other priests in secular positions of state. . . . This Empress was no ordinary person. A story is told of her vow with Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara at the Saidai Temple. The things she did were gossiped about, but they were not thought of as precedents. Her actions really should be understood as the actions of a Buddhist incarnation (*gongen*).⁷⁵

In the *Gukanshō* version, Empress Shōtoku is almost exonerated. This is not always the case, however. The central element in the scandal related to Shōtoku has to do with her love for Dōkyō, the monk with a huge penis. The story of this unseemingly couple first appears in the *Nihon ryōiki*, in a section entitled “On the Appearance of Good and Evil Omens Which Were Later Followed by Their Results.” When Shōtoku returned to the throne after expelling the crown prince and murdering all her opponents, anticlerical “children’s songs” spread among the people: “It is said that before good and evil events occur they are preceded by some forms of songs which spread throughout the countryside. Thereupon, all the people under heaven hear them and sing them to communicate the message.”⁷⁶ Some of these songs contained obvious allusions to Dōkyō:

Don’t be contemptuous of monks because of their robes.
For under their skirts are hung garters and hammers.
When the hammers erect themselves,
The monks turn out to be awesome lords.⁷⁷

Look straight at the root of the tree,
And you will find the most venerable master
Standing satiated and fat.⁷⁸

The author of the *Nihon ryōiki*, Kyōkai, is very critical of Empress Shōtoku, whom he calls deprecatingly Empress Abe. In case the allusion to “garters and hammers” in the song would not be clear enough, he explains: “In the reign of Empress Abe, in the beginning of the second year of the snake, the first year of the Tenpyō jingo era, Dharma Master Dōkyō of the Yuge family had intercourse with the empress on the same pillow, hearing the affairs of state and ruling over the country together.

⁷⁵ Brown and Ishida 1979: 33–34.

⁷⁶ Nakamura 1973: 276.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 278.

The above songs were a prediction of his relations with the empress and his control over state affairs.”⁷⁹

In the *Nihongi ryaku*'s biography of Fujiwara Momokawa, we find the following story, taken up at the beginning of the *Kojidan*: Shōtoku, being ill, calls Dōkyō to cure her, but he fails. A nun appears with a remedy (oil to lubricate Shōtoku's sex), but Momokawa sends her away, and soon afterward Shōtoku dies. The same story appears in the *Mizu kagami*. According to the *Kojidan*, the “various things” (*zōmono*) recommended by Dōkyō that caused Shōtoku's death were mountain potatoes (*yama no imo*). Shōtoku, unsatisfied with Dōkyō's penis, is said to have made a dildo with one of these potatoes, which broke and obstructed her vagina. In this version and later, the center of gravity of the story shifts from Dōkyō to Shōtoku. In the biography of Momokawa, it is Dōkyō who recommends the “various things,” but in the *Kojidan*, it is Shōtoku herself who takes the initiative. In the first text, Dōkyō is presented as an evil man, whose ambition causes the death of the empress. In the second text, he does not even appear, and the disaster is attributed to the wrongful desires of a lustful empress. For reasons that need further exploration, the critique has shifted from the monk to the empress.⁸⁰

Let us now turn to the possession of the Samedono empress by the “evil priest” Shinzei. The various recensions of the story show a gradual development, from a purely political grudge to a relentless amorous passion. The political context of Shinzei's grudge is clearly described at the beginning of the *Soga monogatari*, in the section entitled “The Succession Struggle between Koretaka and Korehito.” We are told that Emperor Montoku had two sons, Koretaka and Korehito. Unable to choose his successor, he resorted to a divinatory contest, decreeing that the throne should be passed on to the one whose side excelled in horse racing and wrestling. To assist him during this ominous contest, each prince had his protector-monk. The rituals on Koretaka's behalf were performed by the Shingon priest Shinzei, abbot of Tōji, whereas those on behalf of Korehito were performed by the Tendai priest Eryō, a resident of Enryakuji. When Eryō heard that Korehito's side had lost the first four of the ten horse races, he decided to adopt drastic measures:

He turned a portrait of Daiitoku upside down and brought out a three-foot clay statue of a cow and placed it down facing north. When the clay cow changed directions, turning to the west, Eryō placed it southward. It changed directions again, turning to the east, whereupon he placed it westward. Next, he prayed with great intensity, the effect of which was to put him in a frenzy.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 277–78.

⁸⁰ Tanaka 1992: 31.

While in this state, he smashed his skull with a sharp-pointed vajra. He took some brains, mixed them with poppy seeds and burned them in the hearth, from which a black smoke arose. When he again rubbed the rosary, the clay cow made noises wildly. The image of Daiitoku in the portrait raised its sharp sword and swung it about, whereupon Eryō felt relieved for he then realized that his wishes had been fulfilled.⁸¹

As a result, Korehito became the crown prince, the future Emperor Seiwa, while his elder brother Koretaka cloistered himself at the foot of Mount Hiei. As to Koretaka's exorcist and the unlucky rival of Eryō, Shinzei, the *Soga monogatari* simply says that he died of disappointment. With the development of the story, however, this disappointment turned into a desire for posthumous revenge on Emperor Seiwa (that is, Korehito), a revenge that struck at one of the weak points in Seiwa's lineage. Shinzei, the priest who could not smash his own skull, now becomes a tengu, who possesses the empress. Somedono's only mistake was apparently to be the mother of Emperor Seiwa, and through her, it was the latter who was aimed at. Toward the beginning of the thirteenth century, the story takes a quite different turn. In the *Hōmotsu shū*, for instance, the possession of Somedono is reinterpreted as an effect of Shinzei's "love" for her. Strange love indeed.⁸² The nine-fascicle recension (*kyūsatsu-bon*) of the *Hōmotsu shū* still mentions, as if in passing, the episode of the succession struggle. In later versions, the conflict of succession is no longer mentioned, and only the fateful love of Shinzei for Somedono is described. According to Tanaka, although the focus of scholarship has been the figure of Shinzei, the latter is a mere stooge: given the earlier rivalry for the throne and the resentment it created, there had to be someone, no matter who, who could possess Somedono.⁸³ And this possession has heavy sexual connotations; it is akin to a rape—and the story of Shinzei's disappointed love sounds like a rationalization. In sum, the "love" of Shinzei is only one of the aspects of his revenge, the rape of Somedono. And he rapes her not only because she is a woman but because she can cause great damage to the imperial lineage. Tanaka Takako points out the essential role of the imperial consort in the transmission of the blood lineage. But Somedono is defiled by her possession. This is all the more serious because her son, Seiwa Tennō, is the origin of an important aristocratic lineage, the Seiwa Genji.

⁸¹ Cf. *Soga monogatari*, in Cogan 1987: 4–6.

⁸² In the *Bishamondōbon Kokinshū chū*, a commentary on the *Kokinshū*, the love affair between Shinzei and the Somedono empress is clearly described. Shinzei is exiled for his love for her, expressed in his poems, and he is reborn as a blue-black demon to meet his love again. Quoted in Tanaka 1992: 112.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 111, 117.

According to the *Hōmotsu shū*, the cause of Shinzei's fall was not adultery but the crime of *lèse-majesté*, more precisely the fact of having brought discredit on the imperial lineage and by the same token on Korehito's (Emperor Seiwa's) legitimacy. Although Korehito was born long before the scandal broke out, the stain on Empress Somedono's reputation reached back into the past, before Korehito's birth, leading people to wonder if he was really the son of Emperor Montoku. Although the story of Somedono's possession has apparently little or no factual reality, another scandal, more real, involved her own daughter, Fujiwara Takaiko (Empress Nijō), and the Dharma master Zen'yū of Tōkōji. The rumor had it that Empress Nijō also had sexual relations with Zen'yū's master, Yūsen; and, before entering the palace, with the poet Narihira. According to the *Fusō ryakki*, in 896, the empress was degraded from her rank, whereas Zen'yū was exiled in Izu.⁸⁴ Her son, Emperor Yōjō, was also made destitute.

Because of their frailty and of their crucial importance for the perpetuation of the imperial lineage, imperial consorts were particularly at risk, and prone to suffer from the desire of revenge of disgruntled priests. Another case in point is that of Raigō, whose rituals were credited with the birth of Emperor Shirakawa's son. After his untimely request for the building of an ordination platform at Miidera was refused, Raigō became an onryō who caused the death of the crown prince, and later attacked not only the imperial consorts but Emperor Horikawa (Shirakawa's heir) himself.⁸⁵ However, unlike Shinzei, he never resorted to sexual attacks.

Priests like Shinzei often belonged to the category of the "protector-monks" (*gojisō*), who protected the emperor and his family through their rituals. These monks had ready access to the palace, and this sometimes gave rise to temptations and scandals—leading to their untimely death and their becoming vengeful spirits. Jien, who distinguished two types of "possessing spirits" in his *Gukanshō*, and who attributed the cause of the scandal of Hōnen's disciples to one of these spirits, was himself protector-monk.

According to the *Taiheiki*, the Tantric master Yixing was exiled to the land of Kara after being accused of making advances to the imperial concubine Yang Guifei.⁸⁶ This is clearly an anachronism, since Yixing

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁸⁵ The story appears in various sources, including the *Heike monogatari* and the *Gukanshō*.

⁸⁶ See the *Heike monogatari* in McCullough 1988: 61–62: "Might it be that even a Buddha incarnate cannot escape unforeseen calamities? In Great Tang, there was once a prayer-monk to Emperor Xuanzong, a certain Holy Teacher Yixing, who was accused of making advances to the imperial consort Yang Guifei. Past or present, great country or small, gossip is a vicious thing. Although there was no evidence to support the charge,

died before the affair between Xuanzong and Yang Guifei, but the episode reveals the Japanese perception of the protector-monks. We have mentioned earlier the case of Dōkyō, who, although not technically a gojisō (the institution became important only in the Insei period), owed his sudden rise to his talent as a healer-monk (*kanbyō zenji*). The institution of the gojisō may be partly responsible for the bad reputation of monks in medieval Japan. These monks not only had free access to the palace but they also lived in a kind of symbiotic relation with the imperial family. The perpetuation of the dynasty depended on them, as the birth of a male heir was believed to depend on their esoteric rituals. Thus they protected the future emperor from before his birth to his enthronement. Through their magic rituals, they took control of the imperial consort's body. Some of these rituals were quite intimate, for instance a ritual in which bezoar ("ox yellow") was used to rub the genital parts of the pregnant woman at time of childbirth.⁸⁷ Male gynecologists have always had a bad reputation, and all the more so when power is at stake. The double-edged nature of the protector-monk institution is well summed up in a later text, "The Boor," an apology for "male love" that projects all the blame on women:

And the reason that temples exclude women is precisely because they're so fascinating! They arouse deep passion in men's hearts so a scripture says "Priests must not go near the imperial court even briefly. If they do they will surely be soiled with sexual desire." If a monk from Mt. Kōya or Miidera could feel the tender graces of an elegant lady sixteen years of age with a face like a rose mallow clothed like a rain-moistened pear blossom—well then he'd be unable to continue his studies! No matter how resolute the monk! He'd be in danger—and might even demand to return to lay life! That's why Buddha issued his commandment.

The scriptural quotation about the temptations awaiting priests at court seems to imply a reference to the relation between the hermit of Shiga Temple and Empress Somedono. At the same time, we are told that the hermit of Shiga fell in love of his own will.⁸⁸

Amorous passion does not always lead to an evil rebirth. Sometimes a monk is saved by the purity of his voice, which predestines him to recite the *Lotus Sūtra* or some powerful incantations. We have mentioned

suspicion alone caused Yixing to be banished to the land of Kara." Chinese sources tell us that Xuanzong remained very close to Yixing and was grieved by his premature death. See Faure 1997b: 79–80.

⁸⁷ See Strickmann 1993: 73–74; and Tanaka 1992: 125–31.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Leupp 1995: 211.

above the case of Jōzō (891–964), a Hieizan priest renowned as master of *shōmyō* (liturgical chant). Once he was called by a beautiful young woman to perform an exorcism. When Jōzō recited his incantations, the malignant spirit appeared and the illness ceased. Or perhaps it was merely displaced, because Jōzō fell in love with the girl. When the rumor spread, Jōzō took refuge in Kurama to try to forget the young woman, but in the end he could not help himself and returned to see her.⁸⁹

Another famous case is that of Dōmyō (d.u.), a Tendai monk famous as a reciter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, who is said to have had an affair with the poetess Izumi no Shikibu.⁹⁰ In the *Hokekyō kenki*, after Dōmyō's death, a friend sees him in a dream and is told that in spite of all his transgressions, owing to the power of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Dōmyō was able to avoid the evil destinies and was reborn on a beautiful lotus pond, where he could atone for his past offences before being reborn in the Tuṣita heaven.⁹¹ The political context of the amorous passions of Jōzō and Dōmyō need not concern us here, as it seems in both cases to have been overshadowed by the positive image of these two figures as specialists of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Let us mention one last case (because its tragi-comic nature contrasts with the dark atmosphere of the above cases): that of the bishop Saikōbō of the Kurama Temple, on the northern outskirts of Kyoto. Saikōbō was a revered sixty-seven-year-old ascetic and “a trickster of surpassing cleverness,” who convinced a naive couple to give him their only daughter.⁹² His transgressive behavior is also reflected in that of his disciples, described as “a band of shameless young priests who regularly caught fish in the Kibune river, or caught pheasants and other mountain fowl to skin and eat.”⁹³ Saikōbō is severely punished in the end, but not before having been made a fool of: while being carried to the Kurama temple, the girl is discovered by a young official, the Chief Advisor, and replaced by a cow, which creates havoc in the temple: “The cow . . . went right on leaping and bucking. Finally the bishop succeeded in catching hold of its tail. ‘Although you may not care for me, I have you by the hair. So I have created a bond of love that will endure into the next life, although this be all that binds us in the present one.’ Saying this, he tried to embrace the

⁸⁹ See the *Konjaku monogatari shū* 30, NKBT 26: 218. The same story in a simpler form is found in the *Yamato monogatari* 62, NKBT 9: 259–60. See Ishida 1995: 57.

⁹⁰ See *Uji shūi monogatari*, translated by Mills 1970: 135–36.

⁹¹ See *Hokekyō kenki*, translated by Dykstra 1983: 110.

⁹² See Kavanagh 1996.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 235.

cow. The cow kicked the bishop flat on his back and shook the room with its leaping and bucking.”⁹⁴ Saikōbō then thinks that the girl must have been transformed into a cow because of her vile temper, and prays for her salvation. “But now he had fallen prey to carnal desires and was unable to restore the cow to its original form.” Eventually, the owner of the cow appears and takes it back, leaving Saikōbō dumbfounded and mortified. Saikōbō is finally, literally, struck by lightning, and joins the hordes of demons. His vengeful spirit will, however, be placated when it is worshiped as a guardian deity of Kurama. Furthermore, the character of Saikōbō is partly redeemed when the Chief Advisor donates land to Kuramadera: “Thus the dissolute Saikōbō proved to have laid the foundation for the mountain’s flourishing state. It was said that the temple’s prosperity was all the doing of the most compassionate Tamonten working through an earthly medium.”⁹⁵ Retrospectively, Saikōbō’s desire is merely an *upāya* (means) of the god Bishamon (alias Tamonten) to bring happiness to his *mōshigo* (heaven-sent child), the daughter of Saemon no jō, and prosperity to the country (through the happy marriage of the girl and the Chief Advisor), and, last but not least, to Bishamon’s own temple, Kuramadera. The desire of the eminent priest Saikōbō, who until then had been perfectly pure, was caught up in this network, and duly relativized as part of a larger plot leading to ultimate goodness. In many of these medieval Buddhist tales, the wrongdoing of the evil characters does not prevent them from being deified at the end as ancillary deities (*kenzokushin*).

THE JURIDICAL BACKGROUND

An edict of 1873 declares that “from now on, monks can eat meat freely, take wives, use animal hair, etc.” A similar edict for nuns was promulgated the following year. These two edicts were preceded by several others in 1871, which deplored the corruption of the clergy. According to Ishida Mizumaro, the fact that the government decided to promote Shintō as the official religion meant that it chose to leave monks to their degeneration.⁹⁶ Knowing the anti-Buddhist atmosphere of the time, however, one could argue rather that the government chose this measure in order to further discredit Buddhism. This situation was the result of a long juridical evolution that I shall outline, taking my cues from Ishida.

The main point is that the inner rule of the Japanese saṅgha was supplemented by the external rule of the Code for Monks and Nuns

⁹⁴ Ibid., 236.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 243.

⁹⁶ Ishida 1995: 212.

(*Sōniryō*). This state legislation was fundamentally ambivalent. It tended to “differentiate the saṅgha,” and thus seemed to emphasize its otherness. This essential difference was important: to constitute a source of legitimacy and spiritual protection to political power, monks must be authentic symbols of the Buddha, removed from the secular world. Monastic difference could also be disturbing, however, hence the repeated governmental attempts to curb the saṅgha, to reduce its singularity. Time and again, anticlerical measures were aimed at sending certain categories of monks and nuns back to secular life. To survive, the saṅgha had to become more transparent, obedient to secular values. During the medieval period, various monastic institutions like that of the *monzeki* priest-prince reasserted the values of the clan and lineage, so that the borders between lay and clerical society became blurred. A reaction took place during the Tokugawa period, with the governmental attempt to reinforce specific castes, to emphasize social division, and to prevent social mobility. This evolution led to the consolidation of a rigid schema in which all castes were in principle integrated, unified into one hierarchical system: let the monks be monks, and strictly follow the rule. This ideal system had, of course, very little to do with the reality of social practices.

The Reformation of the Vinaya

We recall how, after Saichō, a new ordination system based on the bodhisattva precepts of the *Bonmōkyō* (Ch. *Fanwang jing*), was established on Mount Hiei, coinciding with the traditional ordination system brought by the Chinese monk Jianzhen (Ganjin), centered on Nara and Tōdaiji. This new form of ordination, however, was to have the unexpected results of lowering the age limit for ordination and allowing nuns into the saṅgha.⁹⁷ After Ganjin, the observance of the precepts soon declined, and ordinations became purely pro forma. An effort at reviving the Dharmaguptaka precepts was made by Jitsuhan (d. 1144).⁹⁸ In Nara as in the “Northern capital” and on Mount Hiei, however, knowledge about Vinaya remained superficial until the reform that took place at the beginning of the thirteenth century. This reform was accomplished by Jōkei (1155–1213), Kōben (1173–1232), Kakujō (1194–1249), and Eizon (1201–1290) in Nara; and by Shunjō (1166–1227) in Kyoto. In Tendai too, the bodhisattva ordinations experienced a revival with Yuiken (1284–1378) and Kōshū (1276–1350), the author of the *Keiran shūyōshū*.

The reformed Vinaya was, however, more compromising than Ganjin’s

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹⁸ *Genko shakusho*, in *DNBZ* 101: 291c.

system. In his *Kairitsu saikō ganmon*, for instance, Jōkei, while insisting that ordination requires the presence of ten regular priests, admits exceptions in which ordination can take place with only one or two priests.⁹⁹ Jōkei wanted to replace the pro forma ordination that prevailed at the time with an orthodox one but, like his predecessors before the coming of Ganjin, he confronted the problem of finding ten authentic masters well versed in the Vinaya. To solve this problem, it was necessary to bring monks from the mainland or to send Japanese monks abroad.

One of the first Japanese monks to go to China during the Kamakura period was Shunjō, the founder of the Northern Capital Vinaya (Hokkei Ritsu). Shunjō was ordained at nineteen in Dazaifu (Kyushu), then studied Tendai and Shingon.¹⁰⁰ After the death of his master, he went to Nara and Kyoto and studied the Vinaya of the Great and Lesser Vehicles. He left for China in 1199, studying there for over ten years before returning in 1211. In 1217 he entered Sennyūji, where he began to teach the Vinaya commentaries of Daoxuan from a Tiantai viewpoint.¹⁰¹ The rule set forth by Shunjō for Sennyūji was also influenced by Chan.

Meanwhile, in Nara, the Southern school experienced a first renewal with Jōkei and his disciples, Kainyo and Kakushin. But the scholarly study of Vinaya was not necessarily tied to practice, as shown in the *Shasekishū* section entitled “The gap between study and practice among Vinaya adepts.” The disciples of Jōkei continued to keep young boys (*chigo*) and to break the vegetarian taboo. The true revival of Vinaya in Nara had to wait Kainyo’s successors Kakujō and Eizon.

At Saidaiji, Eizon’s main disciple was Ninshō, who became active in Kantō (at Kōsenji in Hitachi). On the occasion of a visit from his master in 1262, he is said to have conferred the bodhisattva precepts on several thousand people.¹⁰² Whatever the truth of this, the revival of the Ritsu with Eizon and Ninshō was spectacular. These massive ordinations, often motivated in the case of lay people by the belief in the magical efficacy of the precepts, did not necessarily translate into ethical behavior. According to Mujū’s *Zōtanshū*, “Hardly fifty years have passed since Ritsu monks and Zen monks have become many in the world. . . . Ritsu monks are particularly numerous; however, rare are those who are in accordance with the Dharma, many are those who are dissolute, or so I have heard.”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ DNBZ 105: 13c.

¹⁰⁰ See Ishida 1972: 411c.

¹⁰¹ See *Ritsuon sōbōden*, in DNBZ 105: 228c.

¹⁰² See Ishida 1995: 92.

¹⁰³ *Zōtanshū*, 1973: 248.

The dominant trend, the so-called Vinaya of the Southern Capital, was derived from Eizon's teaching at Saidaiji, and it eventually absorbed that of the Northern capital (based on Shunjō's interpretation). The bodhi-sattva precepts were conferred on all kinds of people, even prostitutes.¹⁰⁴ In some cases, their reception was laden with restrictions. An interesting case is that of Retired Emperor Kameyama and his consorts, who received in 1276 the ten strict precepts, except the one against sex. Furthermore, it was decided that, although he should avoid sexual relations with his consorts, he could still have sex with other women or with boys.¹⁰⁵ The ordination according to Eizon could therefore turn into casuistry to take imperial resistances into account.

The progressive changes in Ritsu monasteries soon became obvious. Thus in 1212, in Kaijūzanji, a temple restored by Jōkei, the age for the ordination was raised from 16 to 20 in an attempt to return to Nanzan Vinaya.¹⁰⁶ In the rule of Shōmyōji in Arima, declared by Shinkai in 1283, the Vinaya observance became even stricter—a rare case.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, in the *Keidoin kishiki* set forth in 1292 by Kakushin, the strict observance of the ten major precepts of the *Bonmōkyō* was affirmed, along with a prohibition against lodging men, children, or women overnight.¹⁰⁸ The restriction of women's entry reappeared in many temple rules. In this troubled period, however, these internal rules were often transgressed due to external circumstances. Similar changes took place in Zen monasteries, for instance at Tōfukuji, where Enni Ben'en decreed a new set of rules.

In the Pure Land school too, the accusations of immoral behavior leveled at Hōnen's and Shinran's disciples—many of whom, following Shinran's examples, were married—led to a reform attempt. In 1285, a seventeen-article rule for nenbutsu practitioners was issued by Zen'en. It prohibited adultery and emphasized in particular that male and female followers were not allowed to sit together during the nenbutsu. It also prohibited drinking alcohol and gambling.¹⁰⁹ There were also individual initiatives, like the "pledge letter" of the *shuto* (priests) of Senjuji in Bizen in 1262, which is a promise not to lodge women.¹¹⁰ Likewise, the vow

¹⁰⁴ See *Kongō busshi Eizon kanjin gakushō shiki*, s.v. 1285 (Kōan 8/8/13); and *Saidaiji Eizon denki shūsei*, 61, quoted in Ishida 1995: 112.

¹⁰⁵ Ishida 1995: 112.

¹⁰⁶ See the *kishōmon* (written pledge) of Jōkei for Kaijūzanji in 1212, the prohibition for Anryūōji in 1223, and the last instructions of Ryōhen for Chisokuin of Tōdaiji in 1251, all in Ishida 1995.

¹⁰⁷ See *Kamakura ibun* 10: 388, 20: 138a.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 23: 229; quoted in Ishida 1995: 117.

¹⁰⁹ See *Shinshū shiryō shūsei* 1: 1009, in Ishida 1995: 121. The same interdictions are found in the rules of Jōkōji (d.u.), *ibid.*, 983c.

¹¹⁰ *Kamakura ibun* 12: 204.

(*ganmon*) of the *shami* (novice) Son'e in 1286, in thirteen articles, is a resolution to suppress any desire toward women.¹¹¹ Further reforms took place during the Muromachi period, initiated by monks of Tōshōdaiji, Tōdaiji, and Saidaiji in Nara, and by heirs of Shunjō at Sennyūji in Kyoto, but none of them had a lasting impact. After the Ōnin civil war, another attempt was made to revive Vinaya in every school, but the main impact was to come from the state.

The Evolution of State Legislation

After the Taika governmental reform of 645, monastic control was entrusted to a system of ten masters, and a series of codes appeared.¹¹² Only a few articles of the *Sōniryō* (Regulations for Monks and Nuns) of the Taihō era (701) dealt, in fact, with sexual matters. The first article lists the four *pārājikā* of the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, but merely holds that sexual offense can cause temporary exclusion and can be amended through confession. Articles 11 and 12 forbid women to spend the night in a monastery, or men to do so in a nunnery, and declare that they will be punished appropriately if they break that rule.¹¹³ The code also forbids drinking alcohol and eating meat and the five stringent (supposedly aphrodisiac) aliments for monks. It seems in this respect to have been influenced more by the *Bonmōkyō* than by the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya. Significantly, the three rules against alcohol, meat, and the five aphrodisiacs were grouped as the “three precepts” (*sankai*). The strict interdiction against eating meat, while at first glance unrelated to sex, was indeed perceived as a precaution against “carnal” desire.

In 780, after the “Dōkyō incident,” an imperial edict pointed out that the acts of monks are not different from those of lay people, and required that the entire clergy perform a self-examination. This, however, did not have much effect, as can be seen from several subsequent edicts that deplored the laxity of the Buddhist clergy. Too often, the major motivation to become a monk was to avoid taxes and corvées, and it had very little to do with renunciation. This type of monk was usually self-ordained and continued to live a rather secular life. Thus, the *Sōniryō* had some reason to be concerned with the issue of “self-ordination” and to insist that this practice had to be stopped. However, this was by no means easy, because

¹¹¹ Ibid., 21: 101b. For other examples of self-imposed discipline, see Ishida 1995: 127.

¹¹² On regulations for monks and nuns in pre medieval Japan, see Hori 1975, 2: 262–81.

¹¹³ Thus, for one to four nights, ten days of punishment; for more than five nights, thirty days; for more than ten nights, one hundred days. See Ishida 1995: 10. This article recalls the fourth of the ninety *prāyaścittika* rules, concerning staying under the same roof with a woman, or the fourth of the 178 equivalent rules in the Vinaya of the nuns—offenses requiring confession.

self-ordination had been until then commonly admitted in Japan. Even after the establishment of an official ordination system, or rather because of it, such practice continued and contributed to make this system inefficient.¹¹⁴

At any rate, the authorities—clerical as well as secular—do not seem to have taken their role very seriously, if we are to believe an edict of 812, which reproaches the clergy for its tolerance toward monastic laxity. The same year, as if to manifest their lack of trust toward monastic jurisdiction, the government severely punished two monks who had committed an offense. But these bursts of legality, limited to extreme cases, were unable to control the general laxity. Thus in 825 several Nara monks were exiled from Tōtōmi province for adultery. But punishment for adultery seems to have become increasingly rare, provoked only by extraordinary circumstances. We hear, for instance, that in 896 the Dharma master Zen'yu was exiled to Izu for allegedly having had an affair with an imperial consort, who was demoted from her rank. Some were concerned with this state of things, and petitioned the throne about it. In 914, an address to the throne by Miyoshi Kiyoyuki describes the degeneration of Buddhism.¹¹⁵

The Vinaya renewal at the beginning of the thirteenth century took place in the context of a major sociopolitical change, the rise of warrior rule. Although the monastic rule did not change, the *Sōniryō* established secular laws regulating the behavior of monks and nuns. The *Jōei shiki-moku*, issued in 1232 (Jōei 1), constituted the first element of the penal system established by the Kamakura Bakufu. Among its fifty-one articles, only one (article 34) deals explicitly with illicit sex: punishment for adultery or sexual relations in public (“at crossroads”). It states that “in the case of Dharma masters, the crime must be punished according to circumstances.”¹¹⁶ What is new in this code is that the activities of monks and nuns, and more precisely their misdeeds, which in the past had been tolerated, are now seen as falling into the domain of secular jurisdiction. Even so, the law seems remarkably tolerant. Thus article 34 concerning adultery gives the example of a priest who, upon encountering a woman at a crossroad at night, attempts to rape her. Alerted by the cries of the woman, people catch the priest, tie him up, and take him to the police station. After questioning the protagonists, the policemen, while recognizing the aggression, eventually acquit the priest. Ironically, they call the people brigands for having captured the priest, and put the woman in jail because, by walking alone at night, she has provoked

¹¹⁴ Ishida 1995: 40.

¹¹⁵ *Honchō monzui* 2, in *Kokushi taikai* 29b: 44, 52.

¹¹⁶ *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū* 1, 20, 1, quoted in Ishida 1995: 95.

evil.¹¹⁷ We can readily see that there is no intention here to find fault with the monk. In a typical instance of blaming the victim, it is the woman who is judged responsible for the desire she provoked in the monk, and therefore for causing her own misadventure. In a similar circumstance involving a layman and a woman, the man would probably have been found guilty of attempted rape or assault. There is no record indicating what would have happened in the case of a nun being raped. Two standards are applied here, depending on the gender and the lay or clerical status of the person. Ishida argues that the monk was probably turned over to monastic jurisdiction and thus the decision was left to the saṅgha—but nothing in the text seems to confirm this interpretation. Significantly, the code hardly mentions—and then only in an annexed section—the question of clerical responsibility. The reasoning behind the application of secular laws to monks and nuns is not entirely clear. The level of harm needed for secular jurisdiction to intervene varies drastically over time. It seems that the threshold for intervention was more easily crossed when the misdeed was perceived to affect society at large rather than individuals.

Soon the Bakufu became conscious of the insufficiency of the *Jōei shikimoku*, and it gradually added “annex laws,” the last of which, dated 1235, aims at nenbutsu adepts, who were said to transgress monastic rules and live a dissolute life (eating meat, drinking alcohol, having sex with women).¹¹⁸ Thus, referring to the specific “case of the nenbutsu practitioner”—a man who allegedly “ate fish and fowl and invited women, associated with evil people, and self-indulgently enjoyed wine and banquets”—one article ordered the destruction of the culprit’s house and his eviction from Kamakura.¹¹⁹

A similar criticism regarding Pure Land adepts is found in the *Azuma kagami*.¹²⁰ Even after the exile of Hōnen and his disciples, this article 75 can be said to foreshadow the interdiction of exclusive nenbutsu in the Gennin and Karoku eras. In the annex law 386, too, nenbutsu adepts are mentioned, as well as their aggressive behavior regarding women.¹²¹ The change of language shows that they were suspected of sexual relationships—encouraged by the promiscuity of nenbutsu assemblies. They were certainly not alone in drinking alcohol nor eating meat and fish, as we can see in these “annex laws,” in the section on “New

¹¹⁷ See *Gosei hai shikimoku chū*, in *Zoku zoku gunsho ruijū* 7: 224a; quoted in Ishida 1995: 26.

¹¹⁸ See *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū* 1: 96.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Azuma kagami*, s.v. 1235. See *Kokushi taikei* 33: 162.

¹²¹ *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū* 1: 272.

Rules of Kantō” (*Kantō shinsei jōjō*, 1261), and in the annex law 377 on the interdiction of nonvegetarian banquets in monasteries.¹²²

The *Kuge shinsei* (1263) provides a rule for monasteries quite different from the previous ones.¹²³ Under the rubric “Kenmitsu monks in all temples and mountains must observe the law of the precepts,” it is said: “Nowadays, [monks] often like to drink and eat, and furthermore, they collect wives and concubines, failing to observe integrally the four strict rules (*pārājikā*) and to respect the ten precepts. Not only do they muddle the ultimate truth, but they transgress the fundamental laws of the state.” However, the evolution is such that, faced with monastic laxity, the secular jurisprudence too increased its degree of tolerance toward the monks. Despite variations, the tendency seems to have been a general one.¹²⁴

Prohibitions for specific temples were also issued, like the one pronounced by Hōjō Sadatoki for Engakuji in 1294, prohibiting access to all women—except for certain periods.¹²⁵ Around the same time, in 1285, an edict of emperor Go-Uda reminds monks that they cannot “become husbands.”¹²⁶ Attitudes have therefore changed regarding tolerance for married or sexually active monks. In the *Kenmu shikimoku* of 1336 there is no attempt to control the actions of monks. At the end of the Muromachi period, regional laws appear that basically repeat the previous law that prohibited women from entering temples.

The *Kōshū hattō no jidai*, a series of laws proclaimed by Takeda Shingen in 1547, approaches the question from a more pragmatic angle. Rather than forbidding monks to marry, a method that had proved its inefficacy, it tries to sever the ties monks have with the donors who support them: “One must not give offerings to monks who have wives and children. Those who go against the spirit of this law, masters and donors, will not escape prosecution. However, if [these monks] repent their past offences, and abandon their wives, they will not be punished.”¹²⁷ In keeping with this pragmatic approach, Takeda Shingen also allowed Nichiren monks to marry under the supervision of a magistrate, to whom they had to pay an annual tribute.¹²⁸

¹²² *Ibid.*, 210. Note in the text of that law the presence of children at these banquets—which evokes the pederasty of monks. The expression “to replace meat with fish” might be a veiled allusion to heterosexual and homosexual practices—because if the point was only to prohibit meat eating, the mention of children would be superfluous. See Ishida 1995: 98–99.

¹²³ *Kuge shinsei*, in *Zoku zoku gunsho ruijū* 7: 182c.

¹²⁴ Ishida 1995: 27.

¹²⁵ *Kamakura ibun* 24: 108c–109a.

¹²⁶ See *Kamakura ibun* 21: 6, quoted in Ishida 1995: 100.

¹²⁷ *Chūsei hōsei shiryō shū* 3, 198, quoted in Ishida 1995: 102.

¹²⁸ Ishida 1995: 102.

By contrast, the laws promulgated by the emperor continued to hold monks to a higher standard. Thus, in 1285 an imperial edict aimed at lay people states that a woman cannot take a monk as husband.¹²⁹ In the *Meihō jōjō kanroku* (1267), the question of the recognition of such illegal marriages is discussed in light of juridical precedents. The texts are in conflict, since the *Ryōgige* declares that these marriages must be recognized, whereas the *Sōniryō* argues to the contrary. This leads to the following dialogue:

Question: “When a monk or nun takes a spouse and has children, and they already have private property, if the monk or nun dies, how should one dispose of it?” Answer: “The fact that a monk or nun marries and has private property is in transgression of Vinaya and [also] violates the Codes. If this question arises while he or she is still alive, it must be dealt with according to existing laws. However, if the monk or nun is already dead, although it is contrary to the law, the wife and children must be taken into account. Thus, the property must be given to them.”¹³⁰

The commentary (*gige*) clearly considers the marriage of monks to be illegal, since such an act is contrary to both Buddhist law and secular jurisdiction. However, it also takes it as an established fact, and chooses to focus on the practical matter of succession rights.

In the Edo period, rules promulgated by the Bakufu, the *hattō* or ordinances, came to complement the inner reforms of the clergy. Several *hattō*, like the *Kantō Jōdoshū hattō*, strictly forbade the admission of women in monasteries—except in the case of pilgrimages—as well as promiscuity between men and women during rituals like the *jūya-e* (Ten Nights Assembly). Prostitutes were also banned from plying their trade in front of temples.¹³¹ In the *hattō* for Saidaiji, likewise, nuns were forbidden to remain alone with a monk or to enter a temple in the evening. Even in Jōdo temples, where women and eating meat had traditionally been tolerated, admission became restricted. However, despite the general tendency, all these rules were not systematically unified or enforced. Thus in 1742 the *Gyoteisho hakkō jō*, the basic juridical text of the Edo Bakufu issued under the shōgun Yoshimune, lists according to monastic status various punishments for adulterous monks, from exile on an island (in the case of an abbot) to exhibition in a pillory (*sarashi*), imprisonment, or crucifixion.¹³² Other punishments include exclusion from the monastery, removal from the registers, solitary confinement, and so on. These kinds of edicts and punishments appear in many documents.

¹²⁹ See *ibid.*, 103.

¹³⁰ *Kokushi taikei* 22: 99, quoted in Ishida 1995: 103–104.

¹³¹ Ishida 1995: 154.

¹³² See text in *Kujikata gyoteisho*, quoted in Ishida 1995: 155.

The Edo period is thus marked by a radical change in the penal system. Although the *corpus delicti* (sexual offense) and the way to prevent it (prohibition of women from temples) remain practically the same, the rigor of the punishments and the systematic nature of their application are quite different from the earlier period. The margin of tolerance that surrounded monastic offense has disappeared. What was considered a misdemeanor (except in some cases where imperial lineage was at stake) has become a criminal offense, falling entirely into the domain of secular jurisdiction, and subject to harsh (often capital) punishment. The radicalization of the penal system might also reflect the consciousness of the extent to which monastic society had been pervaded by secular values.

NYOBON

Whereas the Bakufu law remained adamant in its denunciation of married monks, affirming that “the unrepentant priest who violates the [Buddhist] precepts shall be punished [according to the seriousness of his crime] by either death or banishment,” the Meiji government found it convenient to allow marriage as the best way to undermine the remaining prestige of monks. In 1872, an order issued by the Ministry of State declared: “Priests may do as they wish regarding the eating of meat, marriage, and the cutting of their hair. Moreover, they need not be concerned about the propriety of wearing commoners’ clothing while not performing official duties.”¹³³

Illicit Sex

We recall that ritual sex had become licit in at least one line of Buddhism, the Vajrayāna. This type of sex, it is true, was not precisely the kind of hedonistic exercise favored by Western imagination—but neither should it be too much idealized, as is often the case.¹³⁴ In other forms of Buddhism, sex remained theoretically prohibited, object of the cardinal *pārājikā* rule. Nevertheless, the *Fanwang jing* and other Mahāyāna texts allowed a more flexible redefinition of what constitutes an offense, arguing that the “essence” of the precepts, once obtained, could never be lost.

Although the ritual conception of sacred sex as a *coincidentia oppositorum* found its way into Japanese Buddhism, the monastic conception of sexuality in Japan, as reflected for instance in the use of the term

¹³³ See Order #1339, fourth month of 1872 (Meiji 5), quoted in Ketelaar 1990: 6.

¹³⁴ See for instance Shaw 1994. According to Tibetan Buddhists themselves (for instance, Drukpa Kunle), the ritual union with a “secret mother,” although controlled in theory by meditation, did sometimes degenerate. See Stein 1972: 115.

nyobon (literally “assaulting” or “forcing” women, although it came to lose some of its violent connotations), remained basically androcentric and inegalitarian. Although nuns were often suspected of similar behavior, the term *nyobon* does not have a gynocentric equivalent. In this respect, Indian Vinaya was more egalitarian, insofar as it mentions cases of nuns raping a monk. Although typically a male offense, committing *nyobon* was seen (and in a sense partly justified) as the unavoidable male reaction to temptation from women. Consequently the first (and often the only) measure taken to prevent it was to deny women access to monasteries. Promiscuity could never be entirely avoided, however, particularly in famous pilgrimage centers.¹³⁵ The popular perception of what could happen during periods of incubation (*komori*) is described in a story of the *Zōtanshū* (1306), in which an aged monk whispers to a young woman and her wet nurse as they doze off during their vigil, telling them to follow his instructions. He wants the woman to be his. The story recalls the Chinese topos of the “monastery of debauchery.” In the same anticlerical vein, one could probably argue that it explains why the sterile women who practiced incubation retreats in such cultic centers would often have “auspicious dreams” in which a male figure (usually perceived as a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Kannon) appeared to them and granted them a child (*mōshigo*).

What seems reasonably certain is that sexual relationships and marriage became increasingly common for Japanese monks.¹³⁶ Already in the Heian period many monks were married. One of the first cases recorded is that of an anonymous monk who, after being married, was ordained on Hieizan and spent ten years at Miidera. Eventually he returned to his province of Bizen, and resumed living with his wife.¹³⁷ According to the *Kōfukiji bettō jidai*, the *bettō* (administrator) of Kōfukuji, the former *daisōjō* (high priest) Gaen in 1218 recommended his own daughter to be the consort of Emperor Go-Toba.¹³⁸ In 1101, in a text requiring judgment from the *mandokoro* (chancellery), we find mention of a Dharma master Tokuman, a former resident of this temple, who ran away from his wife.¹³⁹ In 1146 a monk of Enmyōin, a branch temple (*matsuji*) of Hosshōji, was involved in a lawsuit with his wife’s brothers.¹⁴⁰ According the *Konjaku monogatari shū*, the wife of the *bettō* of Kokuryūji in Inaba province ran away with another man. We

¹³⁵ On this question, see Amino 1993: 77–94.

¹³⁶ See Ishida 1995, and Tsuji 1944–1955, 6: 330–34.

¹³⁷ See the *Honchō bokke kenki*, *Nihon shisō taikai* 7: 130, quoted in Ishida 1995: 45.

¹³⁸ See DNBZ 124: 30c, quoted *ibid.*, 46.

¹³⁹ *Heian ibun* 4: 1402 a–c.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6: 2184a.

also learn from the same source that the bettō of Daianji was married to a nun, and they had a beautiful daughter.

Sometimes, these stories are apologetic. In his diary, Fujiwara no Munetada notes what a monk of Miidera named Keizen told him about the Hōjōji priest Ryūson and the *ajari* (teacher) Jōsen: “For many years, Ryūson has transgressed the precepts and, with the help of his wife and children, has directed Hōjōji.”¹⁴¹ Likewise, Jōsen “transgressed the precepts, having wife and children, and lived in the capital.”¹⁴² Munetada indicates that the two men were adepts of nenbutsu and were certain of their rebirth in Pure Land. According to the *Shūi ojōden* by Miyoshi Tameyasu (1049–1139), the monk Jungen of Anrakuji in Chinzei was a lazy man who, after the death of his wife, married his own daughter. When his disciples reproached him for this, he answered that ancient priests had various attitudes: some of them married their sister, others their daughter. Furthermore, since Japan is an outlying country, there is no need to regulate one’s behavior. In the same work, we find a monk from Higo who practiced austerities and “contemplation of the principle,” and who, past the age of fifty, took a wife. Tameyasu also compiled, as supplement to the *Shūi ojōden*, the *Goshūi ojōden*. In this work he mentions the case of a monk from Enryakuji, Ryūsen (1057–1117), who at first practiced meditation, then went to the capital, took a wife, and dedicated himself to the nenbutsu—which he recited 130,000 times a day.¹⁴³ However, in the *Sō Myōtatsu soshō chūki*, we find several stories about monks who have fallen into hell for abusing the generosity of donors, taking a wife, and transgressing the Vinaya.¹⁴⁴

The author of the *Hōmotsushū*, Taira Yasuyori (1157–1195), summarizing the question of adulterous monks, says that the situation is well known, and mentions the cases of the Dharma master Jōzō who made his own son his disciple; of the retired emperor Kazan who “fell [to the rank of] a wet-nurse’s son”; of the *sōjō* (high priest) of Izumi who had an affair with the Higashi sanjōin empress; of the Vinaya master Meitatsu, who had incestuous relations with his mother; and of the Dharma master Jungen who married his own daughter. He is referring, of course, to stories as he knows them through tales (*setsuwa*), and the historicity of the events described remains problematic.

According to the *Chōshūki* by Minamoto no Morofusa, three “Dharma masters” had slept with ladies-in-waiting of the empress. Despite their protestations of innocence, the three women were sent

¹⁴¹ See the *Chūyūki*, s.v. 1120/2/11, quoted in Ishida 1995: 47.

¹⁴² Zōho shiryō taiei 13 204a–c.

¹⁴³ *Goshūi ojōden*, in *Nihon shisō taiei* 7: 668c.

¹⁴⁴ See *Zoku zoku gunsho ruijū* 16: 306a; quoted in Ishida 1995: 50.

away.¹⁴⁵ The *Hyakurenshō* reports the imprisonment in 1175 of the monk Ensai after the murder of an official named Tametsuna.¹⁴⁶ The trial revealed that Tametsuna had an affair with a young woman. But this woman also slept with her brother-in-law, a man named Taira no Moritaka. To make things worse, after the death of her father, Ensai became her protector and he started sleeping with her, as well. Eventually, two of these three men sharing the same woman, Ensai and Moritaka, joined forces to kill the third, Tametsuna. It was Moritaka who committed the murder, however, and was therefore condemned, whereas Ensai, who as a priest was supposed to be exempt from adultery, escaped punishment.¹⁴⁷

We have already mentioned Shinran's dream of Kannon at Rokkakudō, a famous Kannon temple. Kannon's oracular verse was recorded by the young Shinran.¹⁴⁸ The verse is also quoted, without reference to Shinran, in the *Kakuzenshō*.¹⁴⁹ Hirata Atsutane uses Shinran's dream as proof of Buddhist decadence, and criticizes the poem itself: "Can Kannon . . . be as unlettered as this?"¹⁵⁰ We recall that a "jade woman" also appeared in the dreams of Jien. But whereas in Jien's case this figure symbolized the prosperity of the imperial lineage, in Shinran's case she legitimized the sexuality and marriage of monks. The verse given by the Bodhisattva Kannon to Shinran became the ideological justification of the Shinshū domestic community, and the source of a monastic blood lineage.¹⁵¹

Shinran's dream was the result of a ninety-five-day period of incubation at Rokkakudō. Ritual incubation (*sanrō*) was frequent in Kannon temples, where men and women slept in the same place.¹⁵² As noted earlier, there was a lot of promiscuity during these vigils, and they were therefore forbidden by an edict of Go-Uda: "During the worship in front of the treasures and during the night vigil (*tsūya*), men and women must not stay together."¹⁵³ Amino Yoshihiko wonders whether, until the Kamakura period, the place of incubation was not a place of sexual li-

¹⁴⁵ *Chōshūki*, s.v. 1111, in *Zōho shiryō taisei* 6: 32c.

¹⁴⁶ *Kokushi taikēi* 11: 91–92.

¹⁴⁷ Ishida 1995: 64.

¹⁴⁸ Not surprisingly, this poem has embarrassed Shinshū scholars, who have preferred to see it as apocryphal. It was believed to have been copied by Shinbutsu, the founder of the Takada branch. But in 1959 an "autograph" copy was discovered in the Sennyūji collection.

¹⁴⁹ See *Kakuzenshō*, quoted in Tanaka 1989: 95.

¹⁵⁰ See Ketelaar 1990: 35, who inadvertently attributes the dream to Hōnen.

¹⁵¹ See Endō 1992.

¹⁵² See *Ishiyamadera engi emaki*, quoted in Amino 1993: 86.

¹⁵³ *Iwashimizu monjo* 1: 9, quoted *ibid.*

cense.¹⁵⁴ In liminal places like the Buddha Hall, the usual constraints no longer obtained, possibly leading to free sex. In the *Nihon ryōiki* and similar works, one often finds grizzly tales of divine punishment for this kind of profanation. We are told, for instance, of the immediate retribution that befell a licentious scripture copier on a rainy day: “The temple was cramped by those who took shelter from the shower, and the copier and the [female devotees] were sitting in the same place. Then the scripture copier, driven by lust, crouched behind one of the girls, lifted her skirt, and had intercourse with her. As his penis entered her vagina, they died together embracing each other.” And, as if to warn female devotees, the text adds that “the girl died foaming at the mouth.”¹⁵⁵ In the *Konjaku monogatari shū*, a monk who was reciting the *Lotus Sūtra* is punished for having sex with a maidservant, and dies.¹⁵⁶

We also have the case of the “letter of grief” sent in 1268 by the *shuto* (monks) of Jissōji in Suruga (a Tendai temple that later became Nichiren), complaining that the abbot ate fish and fowl and killed silkworms. During monthly ceremonies, the rules against eating meat and admitting women were constantly transgressed. Again, in the Fudō-dō constructed by Hōjō Masatoki, banquets including women were organized, causing grief to monks.

A particular type of documentary source called *rakusho* is made of anonymous complaints against monks and nuns. One example, dated 1463, criticizes the “impure” deeds of a Tōji priest, Jūzō. Another such document, the “Tōji rakusho” (dated 1504), complains about a monk who sleeps with a woman and about whom, even after the denunciation, nothing has been done.¹⁵⁷ The *rakusho* may take the form of a letter from a monk.¹⁵⁸ Letters dated between 1487 and 1532 complain that nothing has been done to put an end to the relations between a monk named Chōsō and a nun, mother of a child named Gorō.¹⁵⁹

In the *Kanmon gyōki* by the imperial prince Sadafusa, one also finds many stories of adulterous monks. For instance, in 1418, a monk from Narutaki is killed because of an affair he had.¹⁶⁰ In 1427, a lady-in-waiting of the shōgun is investigated and discovered to have had sexual relations with monks and practitioners, who are beheaded as a result.

¹⁵⁴ Amino 1994.

¹⁵⁵ See Nakamura 1973: 245–46. The same text, however, mentions the lustful love of a man for the goddess Kichijōten, who responds with extraordinary signs. See *ibid.*, 178.

¹⁵⁶ See *Konjaku monogatari shū* 14: 26.

¹⁵⁷ *Nihon shisō taiki* 22: 349a.

¹⁵⁸ See *Tōji Hyakugō komonjo* 115, in *Kojiruien*, Shūkyōbu 2, 28: 694.

¹⁵⁹ *Tōji rakusho*, *ibid.*: 349a–c, quoted in Ishida 1995.

¹⁶⁰ *Zoku gunsho ruijū*, hoi 3, quoted in Ishida 1995: 133.

The severity of the punishment here, as in the case of Hōnen's disciples, seems to have less to do with the sexual transgression in itself than with the fact that it casts a shadow on the shōgunal lineage.¹⁶¹

According to the *Oshoki saikyō chō* (1671), a man named Shūzen who practiced at Zenkōji had sex with a nun and was denounced by her disciple. He was taken to Edo and crucified in Asakusa.¹⁶² Another case is that of a Jōdo monk of Teramachi in Kyoto, who seduced the daughter of a parishioner and ran away with her to Sakai, where he passed himself off as a doctor. Later, when he was recognized, he was brought back to Kyoto and interrogated. Because he now had long hair, he was asked whether he had returned to lay status, which would have provided him extenuating circumstances. He denied having become a layman, arguing that he had taken the girl away to protect her from her stepfather. However, when it was established that he had had sexual relations with her, he was condemned and executed in 1671.¹⁶³

The *Getsudō kenmonshū* (1718) mentions the exclusion of all women, nuns and others, from Kyoto monasteries, because “from the headquarters to the branch temples there have been cases of promiscuity (*ofure*).” In Kyoto, according to the *Shiojiri shūi*, the Honkokuji was investigated, and several women were found hidden there.¹⁶⁴ Nichiren monks in particular were accused of seducing young girls, because they had closer relationships with their parishioners. For the same year, the *Getsudō Kenmonshū* mentions the arrest and crucifixion (*haritsuke*) of the Shingon monk Hōshakubō for having sexual relations. The punishment was extreme, perhaps because the offense was judged extreme, too.¹⁶⁵ In the *Kyōhō tsūgan* (Penetrating Mirror of the Kyōhō Era), a strange case is reported, in relation to Honnōji. In 1720, the corpse of a twelve-year-old acolyte was found in a field. The parents and the temple tried at first to cover up the affair. But the inquiry took a new turn when a search of the temple revealed the existence of hidden rooms, where priests' wives lived.

¹⁶¹ See *Manzai Jungō nikki*, s.v. Ōei 34/6/24 (1427), in *Zoku gunsho ruijū*, hoi 1, quoted in Ishida 1995: 133.

¹⁶² See *Kojiruien*, Hōritsubu 2: 971.

¹⁶³ Ishida 1995: 158

¹⁶⁴ See *Nihon zuihitsu taisei* 3, 18: 213; see Ishida, 1995: 159. According to other accounts, young girls called Myō (an abbreviation for myōhō, the Wonderful Law of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the scripture of the Nichiren sect—but also a character whose two components could be read as “young woman”) were found at Honkokuji and other Kyoto temples. The case is also mentioned in Hirata Atsutane's anti-Buddhist work, *Shutsujō shōgo*. See Tsuji 1945–1955, 10: 467. Tsuji also quotes the *Getsudō kenmonshū*, s.v. 1718, according to which, after inquiry of some Kyoto temples, all women (including nuns) were expelled from them.

¹⁶⁵ See *Kojiruien*, Hōritsubu 3:118–19.

The woman whom the priest kept cloistered was disguised as a novice (*wakashu*). It was apparently to prevent the novice from speaking that he had been killed. Eventually the monks were sent into exile and the temple closed. The motive of the murder was not established.¹⁶⁶

After the *Gyoteisho hyakko jō* (1738), crucifixion becomes the standard punishment for adulterous monks. In the *Kajōruiten*, for instance, a magistrate of Echizen, addressing the issue of “transgressing monks,” requests various punishments including crucifixion.¹⁶⁷ One such monk is Jōnyo, a disciple of Tannyo at Nishi Honganji, who became the sect leader and committed many offenses—such as hunting, womanizing, and criminal activities. Eventually his ten disciples were sent into exile, and he ended his life in reclusion, while his name was removed from the list of the sect leaders.¹⁶⁸ Again in 1797, according to the *Ruisetsu hiroku*, a monk named Ryōhen was condemned to exile on an island. But as there was no island in this domain, he received a life sentence in prison, whereas the nun who was his accomplice was jailed for one month.¹⁶⁹ The growing frequency of relegations *in insulam* calls to mind Tacitus, “plenum exiliis mare”: the seas were covered with people exiled and relegated to islands.

According to the *Wagakoromo*, because in past years Buddhist priests’ wives (*bonsai*, lit. “brahmanic wives”) had become numerous in temples, a severe prohibition was proclaimed in 1788; as a result, the abbot of Sōninji was jailed.¹⁷⁰ In 1791, according to the *Kiki no mani mani*, the abbot of Anrakuji was exiled to an island for adultery.¹⁷¹ In 1796, several monks were exiled, others put on the pillory (*sarashi*) for three days at Nihonbashi for “not conforming to the Dharma” (that is, for committing *nyobon*).¹⁷² In the summer of 1796, after a police raid, more than seventy monks were caught returning from Yoshiwara and other red-light districts. They were bound and displayed for three days at the Nihonbashi crossroad, their offense written above them, before being banished.¹⁷³ It was the first time that so many people were put on the pillory together; usually there were only one or two. The text gives their full names and sectarian affiliation. Practically all sects of Japanese Buddhism are represented, but the largest number of monks come from the Jōdo (26)

¹⁶⁶ See Ishida 1995: 160–61.

¹⁶⁷ *Kojiruien*, Hōritsubu 2: 2–3.

¹⁶⁸ Ishida 1995: 167.

¹⁶⁹ See *Kojiruien*, Hōritsubu 3: 271.

¹⁷⁰ See *Wagakoromo* 1b: 242, s.v. Kansei 1, quoted in Ishida 1995: 170.

¹⁷¹ See *Mikan zuihitsu* 6: 74, in Ishida 1995: 174.

¹⁷² See *Tenmeiki mon*, in *Kojiruien*, Hōritsubu 2: 277b, quoted *ibid.* 171.

¹⁷³ See *Hōreki genrai shū*, *Zoku zuihitsu taisei*, *bekkan* 6: 126.

and Nichiren sects (15).¹⁷⁴ Similar raids took place in the Kyoto-Osaka area in 1830 and again in Edo in 1851.¹⁷⁵

In 1803, according to the *Ichiwa ichigon*, the Nichiren monk Nichidō of Enmyōin was executed for having sexual relations with several women, one of whom he had impregnated and convinced to have an abortion. Nichidō was not the only person implicated; several women went to jail, and another man was put to the pillory.¹⁷⁶ This affair was the talk of the town and appears in several sources, for instance in the *Kyōwa kuchō* by the poet Kobayashi Issa, who was living at the time in Edo. Issa also tells how, in 1804, the monk Kyōdō of Engakuji in Kamakura was pilloried at Nihonbashi.¹⁷⁷

In 1813, according to the *Bunka hibitsu*, the wife of a carpenter had an affair with a monk of her neighborhood temple (*dannadera*). When the wife of another parishioner was buried in the temple, the monk exhumed her corpse, took it to the carpenter's house, and set fire to the house. He then took his lover with him and hid her in the temple. During the seven-day funerary ritual, the carpenter went with his child to the temple. At one point, hearing her child cry, the mother could not resist and came out of hiding to console him. The child told his father that he has seen his mother, and the lovers were eventually arrested and punished.¹⁷⁸

In 1824, four Nichiren monks of Myōhonji were pilloried at Nihonbashi. Two years later, several other Nichiren monks were arrested, including the abbot of Hōjōji in Osaka, on the charge of seducing women through their prayers and incantations and causing them to be possessed by foxes, in order to steal from them and rape them.¹⁷⁹ We recall that an edict to control monks was issued in 1829. This created a great tumult among monks. According to the police, they could not arrest all of the offending monks because of the latter's great number. In Osaka, only six temples were found innocent of such violations.¹⁸⁰ At Zentsūji, women were allegedly raped and stolen from. At Isshinji too, many offenses were supposedly committed, said to be even worse than taking "brahmanic wives," while the abbesses of nunneries were often found to be the mothers of several children.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁴ Ishida 1995: 171.

¹⁷⁵ See Tsuji 1944–1955 (reed. 1984), 4: 96–101; quoted in Ketelaar 1990: 232.

¹⁷⁶ Ishida 1995: 173

¹⁷⁷ See *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 58: 489. Significantly, Issa makes a reference to the story of the Samedono empress and her alleged passion for (and possession by) the priest Shinzei. He says: "To love sex is in human nature, those who do not like it are rarer than the *kakurin* [a mythical animal]."

¹⁷⁸ See *Mikan zuibitsu* 4: 277a, in Ishida 1995: 175.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁸⁰ See *Ukiyo no arisama*, in *Seikatsu shiryō shūsei* 11: 62, quoted *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

Significantly, this grave situation was blamed on the deleterious influence of Ōshio Heihachirō (1793–1837), whose rebellion had just been crushed. About thirty temples were investigated in Osaka, and their abbot were arrested on grounds of “eating meat and having a wife.” The same thing happened in Kyoto, at monasteries such as Chion-in, Honganji, Kurodani, Nanzenji, Myōshinji, and Tōfukuji. As a result, many monks were sent into exile, and one of the abbots of Chion-in was put on the pillory at the Sanjō bridge.¹⁸² The event repeated itself in 1836 and 1839.¹⁸³ In 1836, too, a scandal took place at Kannōji, one of the great temples of Edo. The abbot was arrested and the temple destroyed. In the same year, another scandal struck at a Nichiren temple, Hokkekyōji, in the village of Nakayama in Shimotsuke. The same source mentions that a Jōdo monk, Chidō, was put on the pillory, then expelled from Edo for having sexual relations with the daughter of a parishioner. In the same year, more than two hundred monks of the Hokke sect were investigated and received various punishments. In 1842, after a severe investigation in Osaka, many cases of adultery were revealed. The Nichiren sect was forbidden, in particular in the domains of the Mito clan, and its temples were given to the Jōdo sect. All this was supposedly because an imperial favorite, an illegitimate child born at Kannōji, had used her influence to build temples and organize orgies in them.

Cases of monks visiting the red-light districts of Edo, passing themselves off as doctors, are regularly reported. For instance, in 1739, a monk of Banryūji in Asakusa was exiled to an island after provoking a scandal in a brothel.¹⁸⁴ In 1721, a monk named Chōen was put on the pillory for three days after a failed “double suicide” with a prostitute. The same source speaks of monks executed (*gokumon*, “[having one’s head exposed at the] prison gate”) in 1729 after one of them had sexual relations with the daughter of a villager in the village of Kurihara in Bushū. The worst criminals were dragged through the city before being executed.¹⁸⁵

Married Monks

Married monks, now a characteristic feature of Japanese Buddhism, are also found in various other places such as Tibet, Korea, and Southeast Asia. Nuns, however, remain celibate. In Tibetan Buddhism, some monks of non-reformed schools married, whereas others chose celibacy, which

¹⁸² Ibid., 179.

¹⁸³ See *Ukiyo no arisama*, quoted in *ibid.*, 180.

¹⁸⁴ See *Gyoteisho hyakkōjō*, quoted *ibid.*, 184.

¹⁸⁵ In Edo, the places of punishment were Kozukahara in Asakusa and Suzukemori in Shinagawa.

became the rule for reformed schools. As in Korea, the mingling of married and unmarried monks was never easy.¹⁸⁶ A particular case is that of the Sakya princes, who were married and had families but were also the highest dignitaries of the Sakyapa school. Their palaces, built not far from the Great Temple founded in the thirteenth century, were for all practical purposes (except one) organized like monasteries. Many village priests were also married. Thus Marpa, in the eleventh century, had as his principal spouse Dakmemba but also had, according to tradition, eight secondary spouses, who were his partners in Tantric rituals. Druggpa Kunle (1455–1529), who had been married against his will and who was known for his transgressive attitude, was nevertheless very critical of monasteries in which married monks “held up as a flag their monastic robe and prepared offerings only for their wife and children, without thinking of the Buddha’s disappointment.” Even in celibate orders there were some failures. Thus the great Gelugpa (lit. “Virtuous”) master Sangye Gyatso (1653–1705), regent of the fifth Dalai Lama, had several mistresses and a number of children, and was succeeded by one of his sons.¹⁸⁷ In Cambodia, too, the celibate Theravāda tradition of the Dhammayutika, founded in 1829, coexisted with the older tradition of the Mahānikāy. The latter, influenced by Tantrism, were perhaps derived from the Arī cult of Burma, whose adepts were known to drink alcohol and not to respect the rule of chastity.¹⁸⁸

For early Japan, we have no indication in the *Sōniryō* that such conditions existed, and we remain in the realm of suppositions. However, we find a little later in the *Nihon ryōiki* a monk who has a wife and a daughter at the time of Emperor Genmei (r. 707–715).¹⁸⁹ At this early stage, the tendency to interpret marriage as nyobon and to condemn it as an offense was apparently not yet widespread. There was also a category of practitioners called *shami* or *nyūdō* (novices), who were usually self-ordained and often married.¹⁹⁰ Despite this fact, they were perceived as holy men.¹⁹¹ But soon, with the appearance of rules to restrict private

¹⁸⁶ On Korean married monks, see Buswell 1992.

¹⁸⁷ See Chayet 1993: 201–9.

¹⁸⁸ See François Bizot, *Le figuier à cinq branches: Recherches sur le bouddhisme Khmer* (Paris: Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1976), 1–44.

¹⁸⁹ See *Nihon ryōiki* 70: 327.

¹⁹⁰ The term appears in the *Shoku Nihongi*, under the dates 756 and 777. In the *Nihon ryōiki*, one finds several references to “self-ordained novices” (*jido shami*)—most of whom seem to have a wife. These shami usually received the ten precepts.

¹⁹¹ Thus, in the *Nihon ojō gokuraku ki*, in the notice of Shōnyo (781–867), there is mention of one of his shami named Kyōshin, who announces his own rebirth in Pure Land, as well as Shōnyo’s. Kyōshin was a poor married shami, and after his death his corpse was eaten by dogs, but the village people respect him and call him Amida-maru, because he recited the nenbutsu day and night. He also appears in the *Konjaku monogatari shū* 15: 26.

ordinations and the marriage of monks, first outside Buddhism with the enactment of the *Sōniryō*, then within, references to these figures diminish. After mentioning one such case, the author of the *Genkō shakusho* comments: “Among the lay people of this country, although they cut their hair, those who do not observe the entirety of *brahmacārya* [chastity] and who take wives are called *shami*, despite the fact that they are laymen.”¹⁹² We also find fully ordained monks (*bhikṣu*, Jap. *biku*) taking wives. According to his own testimony, Kyōkai himself, the author of the *Nihon ryōiki*, was one of them:

Ah! What a shame! Born in this world, I know no way to make a living. Because of karmic causation I am bound by the net of lust, enveloped in cravings, combining death and life, running in all directions, and burning my body alive. Remaining in the secular life, I have no means to support my family and am without food, salt, clothes, or firewood. My mind is never at rest, worrying about the things I need. As I am hungry and freezing in the daytime, so at night I am hungry and freezing. For in my previous lives I did not practice almsgiving. How mean my heart is! How low my deeds are!¹⁹³

Kyōkai was probably a self-ordained monk at the time, but he was correctly ordained later, before residing at Yakushiji and obtaining a monastic rank. The *Nihon ryōiki* gives other examples of married monks. Kyōkai seems divided between his criticism of monks who like sex and his respect for saints who live an apparently worldly life, like Kanki (d. 782).¹⁹⁴ The argument in favor of a monk having a family is laid out in the *Shasekishū*'s anecdote of “The monk who had children”:

A monk's having children is not without precedent. The monk Kumārāyana of India was transporting to China the sandalwood image of the Buddha made by King Udyāna, the original of the Śākyamuni at Seiryōji in Saga. Then the king of Kucha joined Kumārāyana to his daughter in marriage, and from that union Kumārājiva was born. Kumārājiva went to China and had four children: Shō, Chō, Yū and Ei [that is, Zhu Daosheng, Sengzhao, Daorong and Sengrui]. They collaborated with him in translating the *Lotus Sūtra*. Although there were instances of such behavior among the sages in antiquity, they were men of such parts that their children were also wise and distinguished. But today, when the father is foolish, how can a son amount to anything?¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² *Genkō shakusho*, DNBZ 101: 341a.

¹⁹³ See Nakamura 1973: 279–80.

¹⁹⁴ See also the cases of Myōichi, a Tōdaiji monk (d. 798) and Jibō of Gangōji (d. 819), in *Genkō shakusho* 2, who are the object of Kokan Shiren's praise. DNBZ 101: 163; Ishida 1995: 38.

¹⁹⁵ Morrell 1985: 143–44.

Here the distinction between disciples and children is all but forgotten, and the metaphorical expression of lineage found in the Chinese texts is taken quite literally, transforming famous Chinese monks into an Indian missionary's sons. Mujū, however, feels that the rationale for a monk's begetting children is often lacking in Japan, where "worthless monks are also called 'bald householders' (*kafuro koji*), and 'thieves wearing surplices' (*kesa wo kitaru zoku*)."¹⁹⁶

Mujū also tells the story of a paralyzed monk who encouraged marriage for one's care in old age: "Get yourself a wife right away! . . . I feel that if I had a wife and children I might not have come to such a bitter pass. Now, when you are just the right youthful age, get together with someone."¹⁹⁷ But Mujū links this story with that of a monk whose young wife tried to kill him after falling in love with a young ascetic. And he comments: "When we consider such an incident as this, it is hard to follow the advice of the monk with paralysis. We should weigh the options carefully."¹⁹⁸ As usual, he concludes with a malicious tale:

A monk of Shinano province had three children, each by a different woman. When the mother of the first child brought it to him, the monk had doubts since he had been very circumspect in his affair with her. So he named the child "Unexpected" (*Omoiyoazu*). Since the mother of the second child used to visit him secretly from time to time in his quarters, there was little doubt that the child was his. So he called it "Probably" (*Samoaruran*). He had maintained the third woman in a house, so there was no doubt that he had fathered her child. He called it "Unquestionably" (*Shisainashi*).¹⁹⁹

In the *Zōtanshū* by the same author, we find the story of a Ritsu nun who has a child with a Zen monk. Mujū jokes: to which sect does this child belong? To the Ritsu sect if he looks like his mother; to the Zen sect (*Darumashū*) if he looks like his father. But someone argues that, because giving birth is hard for the mother, the child belongs to the Nanzan school (that is, Ritsu; pun on *nanzan*, difficult childbirth). Mujū continues: because he is the child of a saint, he will certainly be someone respectable. One of his interlocutors objects: if the child looks like his father, an adulterer, how can he be respectable? Mujū then points out the paradox: if this is so, only the child of a saint who never sinned during his whole life, resembling his father, would be respectable.²⁰⁰

The most visible examples of married priests are the retired emperors. This status presupposed their reception of the ten precepts or of the

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

²⁰⁰ Ishida 1995: 138.

bodhisattva precepts, but it seems often to have excluded the rule about sex. According to the *Fusō ryakki*, Retired Emperor Uda became a monk in 899 under the name Kongōkaku (Adamantine Awakening), after receiving the ten precepts from the Shingon priest Yakushin. Later on he was ordained at Tōdaiji, and in 904 he also received the bodhisattva precepts on Hieizan from Zōmyō. It is said in the *Nihon kiryaku*, however: “The tenth prince Gamyō was made an imperial prince (*shinnō*). Actually, he was one of the princes born after the ordination of the Retired Emperor [Uda].”²⁰¹ However, “He was made a child of the present emperor (that is, Daigo).” Interestingly, the name of Gamyō Shinnō, who died in 932 at the age of ten, appears twice in the *Honchō kōin shōun-roku*, where he is first listed as a younger brother of Emperor Daigo, then as one of his ten sons, adopted after the ordination of Emperor Uda.²⁰²

Retired Emperor Kazan was ordained at nineteen under the religious name Nyūkaku. Soon after that he received the title of *hōkō* (Dharma Emperor), and was ordained again on Hieizan. His ordination had perhaps been a little premature, and he was soon involved in sexual scandals.²⁰³ He had four sons, two of whom became imperial princes (*shinnō*), while the two others became Buddhist prelates. Because they were all born after his ordination, the matter had to remain secret. Emperor Shirakawa abdicated at forty-four after the death of his wife and became Retired Emperor in 1096.²⁰⁴ The *Kojidan* reports, however, that he had a secret affair with Empress Taikenmon’in, the wife of his grandson, Emperor Toba.²⁰⁵

There are many examples of men who had wives and children prior to being ordained as monks, and who continued to live with their families afterward, or of monks who married after ordination.²⁰⁶ Married monks appear in testaments, when they bequeath land to their family: see, for instance, the will of Kakusen in 1202, and of Genshin in 1208.²⁰⁷ There are also examples of *shindei*, “true disciples” (in other words, sons), like the Vinaya master Shinkai, “true disciple” of the priest Shūzen. Apparently, the Ninnaji tradition was to transmit the temple to one’s own son.²⁰⁸

²⁰¹ See *Nihon kiryaku*, s.v. 921/12/17 (Enki 21); in *Kokushi taikei* 11: 24.

²⁰² *Gunsho ruijū* 3: 424–26; Ishida 1995: 54.

²⁰³ See *Heike monogatari*, in *Kokushi taikei* 75: 156.

²⁰⁴ See *Hyakurenshō* 5, in *Kokushi taikei* 11: 43.

²⁰⁵ See *Kojidan* 2: 55, *Koten bunko* 60: 168; quoted in Ishida 1995: 55. Shōshi, who received the name Taikenmon’in when she took the tonsure in 1124, was the adopted daughter of Shirakawa, and the daughter of the Senior Counselor Kan’in Kanezane.

²⁰⁶ Ishida 1995: 128.

²⁰⁷ See *Kamakura ibun* 1: 58, 369.

²⁰⁸ In *Ninnaji sho inke ki*, quoted in Ishida 1995: 130.

This transmission from master to disciple, which is at the same time a blood transmission, is characteristic of Japanese Buddhism. In the *Kichi no ki*'s entry for 1185 there is mention of the priest Chōken, a famous preacher, who had wife and child.²⁰⁹ His elder son was Shōkaku, himself an excellent preacher. In the *Hōnen Shōnin gyōjō ezu*, it is said: "The 'Dharma seal' (*hōin*) [priest] Shōkaku of Aki was the grandson of the *nyūdō* [lay priest] shōnagon Tsūken, and the 'true disciple' of the *hōin daisōzu* [head priest] Chōken." In the *Enkō Daishi gyōjō yokusan*, the term "true disciple" is glossed as follows: "When one takes one's true son, born from one's own flesh and bones, as a disciple, one speaks of a 'true disciple.' In this biography, there are many such cases." "The son of Shōkaku was Ryūjō, that of Ryūjō Kenjitsu, that of Kenjitsu Kenki. At court, they were loved for the beauty of their talents. . . . At that time, all preachers took a wife, so I have heard."²¹⁰

In the *Genshō shakusho*, too, there is mention of the Dharma master Chōken and his lineage: "At the end of his life, he did not respect the Vinaya, and gave birth to several children. His heir was the elder son, Shōkaku . . . Shōkaku gave birth to Ryūjō, Ryūjō to Kenjitsu, Kenjitsu to Kenki. . . . The court appreciated these preachers, and their lineage flourished more and more."²¹¹ Thus, in the oral tradition of Tendai, one sees the emergence of a system of succession based on the transmission from master to disciple and from father to son, and this is the characteristic of this oral transmission of the *kechimyaku* (transmission chart, lit. "blood lineage").

As we will see, monastic *paideia* often meant pedophilia in the Japanese Buddhist context. One may even wonder whether the tolerance for priests marrying women was not to a certain extent a compromise in order to reduce pederasty and other types of semi-clandestine loves such as those described by Ihara Saikaku. One of the most famous cases of a monk taking a wife is that of Shinran. However, marriage was legally forbidden for monks until Meiji, although monks often entertained female servants or concubines.

An interesting case, found in the *Hosshinshū*, is that of a monk living at the foot of Mount Kōya with many disciples. He calls one of them and says that he is thinking of taking a wife to prevent the loneliness of old age. The disciple finds him a woman of about forty, and all goes well for six years, unbeknownst to anyone. But one morning, the woman comes in tears and tells the disciple (who has replaced his master as abbot) that the old monk has died the night before. When he asks her details about their

²⁰⁹ See *Kichi no ki*, s.v. 1185, in *Zōho shiryō taisei* 30: 145c.

²¹⁰ *Hōnen shōnin gyōjō ezu*, in *Jōdo zenshū* 16: 281a–c.

²¹¹ *Genkō shakusho*, *DNBZ* 101: 488a.

life, she speaks of a life of chastity dedicated to nenbutsu. Marriage, for this old monk, had been a pretext to live as a recluse and practice nenbutsu in secret.²¹²

The question of married monks is related to the importance of hereditary succession in Japanese society, particularly in early Japan, where Buddhist temples were clan temples (*ujidera*). As early as the *Engishiki* (10th century), we find mention of monks who transmit the *bettō* office (*bettō-shiki*) from generation to generation. This type of transmission was apparently recognized legally. It is a transmission not only within the same clan but from father to son or between brothers. Heredity was the principle of succession not only for *bettō* offices, but also in *ujidera* such as Hōryūji, Kōfukuji, and Tōdaiji.

The author of the *Shasekishū* complains: “In this Latter Age when the Dharma has decayed, it becomes rarer each year to hear of a priest who does not take a wife. The retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa said, ‘Those who hide it are the priests, those who don’t do it Buddhas.’ . . . These days there are few priests who even bother to hide it; rarer still are those Buddhas who don’t do it.”²¹³

As is well known, the Ōtani Mieidō, the grave site of Shinran, was transmitted through the lineage of descendents. At Honganji too, only the descendents of Shinran become *monshū* (head of the school). The same hereditary succession prevailed at Kōyasan, at Hakusan (after the thirteenth century), and at Kinpusen, after the eleventh century. “Monastic houses,” like houses in the profane world, have a succession from father to son, from brother to brother, between members of a same lineage, or between disciples, and take the form of a succession of blood lineage—that is, they constitute a fictitious lineage.

The cases of succession from a monk to his wife or to his children, as they are found in donation letters and contracts after the twelfth century, are too many to be listed. Their number is higher than that of successions from master to disciple. At the peripheries of great monasteries, monks had their private property, their private house; the wife lived there and administered this property, and this is where the children’s education took place. By contrast with the *sato no bō*, dwellings of the monks at the foot of the mountain, their pied-à-terre in the capital, during ceremonies ordered by the nobles at the palace or in the “vow temples,” were something like branch offices in the capital. For instance, near Hosshōji, which was the vow temple of the retired emperor Shirakawa, were inns named Shirakawa-bō for the monks of Hieizan, Miidera, Kōyasan, Ninnaji, Kō-

²¹² See *Hosshinshū* 1.2, quoted in Ishida 1995: 68.

²¹³ Quoted in Kawai 1992: 173.

fukuji, Yakushiji, or Hōryūji. Women stayed there, and we know that these houses were intimately related with the profane sphere. It is probably no coincidence that these places are today populated with “love hotels.” These monastic inns had yet another function: they were used by women of the nobility as places for childbirth.

The development of the Japanese saṅgha in the medieval period was achieved through an inclusion of the “house” [J. *ie*] of the patriarchal system. The ordination of a new monk, far from being—as Confucians had argued (and as the expression “leaving the family” implied)—an abandonment of his familial duties, was in fact perceived as a warranty of familial prosperity and better rebirth for his relatives. This conception was probably not specific to Japan, but here, in the background of the monk there is always a number of dependents. The monk became the representative of his village, often maintaining very close ties with it. The saṅgha takes responsibility not only for the family (parents), but also for the lineage.²¹⁴

Kyōkai, the author of the *Nihon ryōiki*, became an important monk at Yakushiji but continued to live a profane life, supporting wife and children in his native village in Kii province. In his work he speaks of a series of calamities that have fallen on him and his family. It is clear that even after becoming a monk of Yakushiji he was still deeply concerned with secular life. In the *Nihon ryōiki* many privately ordained and married monks appear, and they hardly differ from Kyōkai even though marriage and private property were forbidden in the Codes. Many stories of married monks are also found in the *Hokekyō kenki* and the *Konjaku monogatari shū*.

A particular class of married priests were the *rokubu* (abbreviation of *rokujūrokubu*, pilgrims who offer copies of the *Lotus Sūtra* in the sixty-six shrines). By the Tokugawa their practice had declined, as well as their reputation. As one witness describes them in 1813: “From their pilgrim’s basket they take out fish and meat, and when they don’t have enough they go buy some at the fish seller. They eat this at the three meals. . . . Furthermore, they bring with them their wife, whom they call ‘my sister.’ This is a deplorable situation, impossible to describe. It is horrifying!”²¹⁵

Apart from Shinshū, a school famous for its antinomian tendency, married priests were particularly common among Shugendō adepts, whose ancestor, En no Gyōja, was described as a lay practitioner (En no Ubasoku, “En the *upāsaka* [layman]”).²¹⁶ On their part, Shinshū scholars tried to respond to their critics. In the *Shinshū ryūgi mondō* we

²¹⁴ For similar examples, see Ishida 1995.

²¹⁵ Rotermund 1983: 176.

²¹⁶ On monks taking a wife, see Hori 1953.

find a series of refutations in twelve points; for instance: 6. to forbid the love of women and to like the love of men is like avoiding fire to die by drowning instead; and 9. married and meat-eating monks have existed since the time of the Buddha, as the scriptures clearly show.²¹⁷

The *Chaten mondō* points out that in the *Dazhidulun* various bodhisattvas have wives. The same was true of Fu Dashi in the *Hufa lun*, Yuanjue in the *Avatamsaka sūtra*, of Nāgārjuna and Kuiji, Shōtoku Taishi, and a whole list of famous Indian, Chinese, and Japanese monks. The *Nikushoku saitai ben* provides a similar list, including priests like Jōzō, Shōken, and Dōmyō, and gives several contemporary cases of “temples with priests’ wives”—for instance Gion shrine and Kiyomizu temple in Kyoto, or Chūsonji in Hiraizumi.²¹⁸

Yamaori Tetsuo discusses the emergence in Jōdo Shinshū of a “blood lineage” (*kechimiyaku*) that is no longer a metaphor for the Dharma lineage (*hōmyaku*), but an orthodox hereditary lineage. Kakunyo’s *Kudenshō* was an attempt to show that the “blood lineage” of Shinshū was transmitted from Shinran to Nyoshin (the grandson of Shinran, through his disavowed son Zenran) and the nun Kakushin (a half-sister of Zenran). Thus, whereas Nyoshin was Shinran’s grandson through a male line, Kakunyo was his great-grandson through a female line (Shinran—Kakushin—Kakue—Kakunyo). The Honganji community, centered on Kakunyo and Rennyo, became the keeper of the Ōtani mausoleum and of Shinran’s grave. The *kechimiyaku* had become a biological reality. Rennyo is said to have had thirteen sons and fourteen daughters from three women, and these blood ties played an important role in the establishment of his power.²¹⁹

ORDER OR FREEDOM

What do we learn from this rather tedious series of “facts”? And what are the assumptions in this collection of documentary “evidence”? First, the evidence in question is not as obvious as we have been led to believe. There is a certain naïveté in taking these facts at face value, as if these data, and a fortiori their listing, were not constructed. Historians are “hunting” for facts, not simply “gathering” them. And the most neutral-looking document is already a narrative, with all the problems attendant to narrativity. In some of the last examples mentioned, it is easy to see that Buddhist monks and their temples were framed as opponents by

²¹⁷ See *Shinshū taikei* 59, quoted *ibid.*, 368–669.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 369–70.

²¹⁹ Yamaori 1973: 327–44.

political forces, and that sexual offenses were a ready-made pretext to curb them.

One of the underlying assumptions of the discourse on Buddhism has been that discipline equals a certain moral purity that is the very essence of Buddhism, whereas antinomianism, even if it has some philosophical legitimacy, breeds laxity and decadence. The construction of the two series, discipline within the monastery and the penal system outside, however, has revealed their convergence (and parallelism—contrary to classic geometry), their deep complicity: they share the same language and perhaps the same goals. This was explicitly formulated during the medieval period, with the notion of the interdependence of Buddhist Law and secular law. This interdependence is not quite an equivalence: Buddhist Law remains subservient to secular law. When monastic discipline is strong, secular law does not intervene—unless, of course, the social or political interests it seeks to protect are at stake. When it loses ground, however, secular law attempts to make up for this deficiency. The fact that we are dealing with a society in which the legislative power is not independent, and therefore plays a political role, alerts us to the ideological and political functions of monastic discipline, as well. It is indeed disciplinarian, in the Foucauldian sense of *Discipline and Punish*. It is an ideological discourse that does not aim primarily, if at all, at individual deliverance. It does not even aim only at the survival of the monastic institution itself, but is always enrolled in the service of political power.

Consequently, the schema of Buddhist degeneration, promoted by governmental authorities and by some Buddhist reformers (whether they are sincere or not does not really matter), must be seen for what it is: a political device, a propaganda effort, aimed at maintaining the power of a ruling caste over society, privileging obedient groups, and scapegoating others—not only some Buddhist temples but also groups like the outcasts (*hinin*) and the “artisans” (*shokunin*), all those belonging to the spheres which, according to Amino, were qualified by the terms *muen* (“without ties”), *kugai* (“public”), or *raku* (“blissful”).²²⁰ The Buddhist ideal of individual freedom resurfaced in front of these forces whose goal was to “discipline and punish,” and the Buddhist clergy was also one of them. Like European popular culture in the classic age (according to Bakhtin and Foucault), this Japanese and Buddhist world of *muen* was crumbling with the advent (and advances) of the Tokugawa age, and enclaves of freedom tended to disappear. This process, according to Amino, was a slow one, an erosion that had already begun in the medieval period. Even if at times, for instance during the Kenmu Restoration of Emperor Go-Daigo, the central power attempted to channel the energy of these mar-

²²⁰ See Amino 1978.

ginal groups, it was always a temporary measure. We should not, for all that, idealize the freedom of these marginals, as Amino and other historians tend to do. Teleological schemas, whether of progress or of decline, have little to tell us.

Buddhism was “domesticated” (also in the sense that it became a familial affair): this “domestication,” by first making Buddhists more homologous as a group with civil society, had a paradoxical effect. It made a better instrument of social control, coterminous with family and society; but it also blurred the traditional hierarchy, opening the Buddhist institution to a multiplicity of private interests and diminishing its discipline. To further domesticate Buddhism and transform it into a state apparatus, it had to be, in turn, paradoxically stripped of its domestic features and severed from all relations with legal or illegal forms of sexuality. If beheading means castration, as Freud argues, the beheading of monks during the Tokugawa period was an eminent symbol for the castration of Buddhism that was taking place.

Interestingly, the two schools most often attacked by the Bakufu seem to have been the Jōdo Shinshū and Nichiren schools. There were at least three other schools in the Muromachi period that had a strong liminal quality about them, however, namely, the Zen, Ritsu, and Ji schools. Despite their very different doctrinal backgrounds, priests belonging to these three schools played an important role in the performance of funerary rituals, and this brought them closer to the margins—margins between life and death, but also the margins of society, where the hinin, other funerary specialists, lived. Amino has argued that the importance of Zen and Ritsu priests was due to their muen quality, a quality recognized by the shōgunate itself, which used them as mediators. Zen monks in particular, because as “public individuals” (*kugaisha*) they were said to have “neither enemies nor allies,” often served as emissaries between fighting daimyōs during the Muromachi and Sengoku periods. However, with the “Tokugawa peace,” when the control of the daimyō over individuals became stricter just as the muen places began to shrink, the “free” activity of these monks became increasingly difficult.²²¹

By virtue of their muen quality, some temples also served as sanctuaries. A case in point is the *enkiridera*, a refuge for women who were searching for a divorce, which could be obtained after three years of service as a nun. The number of these nunneries was drastically reduced during the Edo period.²²² *Enkiri* is a synonym of muen: in both cases the

²²¹ Ibid., 79–80.

²²² Two of these, Tōkeiji and Mantokuji, were protected by the Tokugawa. Tōkeiji was a branch temple of Engakuji, directed by women of the Kitsuregawa clan. Mantokuji was a Jishū temple, branch temple of the Jōjōkōji in Fujizawa. See *ibid.*, 24. On the institution of the *enkiridera*, see Takagi 1992.

emphasis is on cutting all social relationships.²²³ The term *muen* can refer to someone who has “no relations” (and therefore no family ties). But for monks, who had left the family, the fact of living in a *muen* area came to mean just the opposite: a departure from the “ties” of discipline, and a release into a kind of *communitas*. This community was not only the familial community of the *sato no bō*, monastic villages on the edges of great monasteries. The *monzen*, agglomerations that developed in front of the temple’s gates, were strange places indeed. For some people at least, the “cutting” of social ties was not voluntary: in these *muen* places were found all those who had been rejected by society: prostitutes, gamblers, *kawaramono* (outcasts), actors, *hinin*. The other side of this ghettoization was a certain freedom, for instance from fiscal and juridical pursuits. Women were numerous and played an important social role in these places.²²⁴ Probably because of their *muen* nature, their perceived closeness to the otherworldly, they were associated with Zen and Ritsu monks in the *Kenmu shikimoku*. Because they lived in such places, Zen and Ritsu monks fell into the category of the *geinōmin* (“artists,” in the broad sense of marginals), together with *yamabushi* ascetics, masters of “linked verse” (*renga*) or tea ceremony, artisans of all kinds, and so on.²²⁵

In the Kamakura period, Eizon and Ninshō of Saidaiji worked on behalf of the *hinin*, whom they considered to be “incarnations of the Bodhisattva Monju.” The same is true for the Ritsu school of the Northern capital, where Sennyūji specialized in funerals and social activities closely connected to the *hinin*. Likewise, *Jishū* monks, although they had no fixed temples or cemeteries, followed warriors on the battleground, gave the Buddhist extreme unction and disposed of the corpses.²²⁶

Zen monasteries became, on the other hand, a kind of inn for travelers. In the thirteenth century, however, violent criticisms were leveled at these Zen, Ritsu, and Ji priests, criticisms that verge on discrimination. And these criticisms were usually expressed in sexual terms. For instance, the

²²³ The term *muen* also has a Buddhist origin: it means, for instance, “unconditioned,” like compassion. But this term, already widely used long before *kugai* and *raku*, takes on the connotations of “*en*,” dark connotations deriving from its association with poverty, *hinin*, hunger. See Amino 1978: 128. Compared to *kugai* and *raku*, the affirmation of a positive ideal does not seem very obvious in the case of *muen*. But these Buddhist terms, emerging from popular life to designate an ideal of peace, freedom, and equality, reveal to what extent Buddhism had become popular. This ideal disappears quickly, however, when one enters the Edo period; *ibid.*, 129.

²²⁴ See, for instance, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the quarrel over the inheritance of the nun Myōen, between her daughter and her daughter-in-law, in relation to shops, stores, and land (in *Gion shūgyō nikki*); *ibid.*, 202.

²²⁵ See the comments of Jien, mentioned above, in Brown and Ishida 1979: 170.

²²⁶ See Amino 1978: 157–58.

Tengu zōshi, in its denunciation of Ji and Zen monks, argues that the former, when they recite the *nenbutsu*, become restless like monkeys or horses and do not even hide their pudenda, while the latter no longer even shave their head; they wear hats, forget *zazen* (meditation practice), and wander on the roads like madmen, uttering crazy words. Likewise, the *Nomori no kagami* attacks Ippen's disciples, whom he labels "bandits of the kingdom, vermin of the eight sects." The *Chiribukuro* even uses the expression *eta* (outcasts) with regard to them.²²⁷

Not everyone shared this opinion, however. On the contrary, monks such as Eizon even received imperial favors. With him and his disciples, the Ritsu sect spread throughout Japan, with the protection of the shōgunate. The same thing happened to Zen with the emperors Hanazono and Go-Daigo. We recall that Monkan, Go-Daigo's favorite, was initially a Ritsu monk of Saidaiji. Even the Bakufu of Muromachi, which, in its code of Kenmu (*Kenmu shiki*), criticized Ritsu and Zen monks, in practice protected their monasteries and judged them to be important.²²⁸ Although attempts to "discriminate" against the *hinin* were not entirely successful and the world of the *muen* retained in the fourteenth century its vitality and its power of opposition, it became progressively organized and repressed by the rulers.²²⁹ The reorganization of the Buddhist church at the beginning of the Tokugawa rule, and the severe condemnations of some of its members for sexual crimes (actually, misdemeanors in the worst cases), are the two faces of this new moral order.

There was a deep ambivalence in these sects—or a fault line running through them. On the one hand Ritsu monks such as Eizon were close to the *hinin*, and were themselves often *muen* individuals; on the other hand, they obtained imperial favors and contributed to "reforming" not only monasteries but society as well—to the profit of central power. More than the "marginal" nature of the Zen monks, it is precisely their ties with the court and the shōgun that brought criticism such as that of the *Nomori no kagami*. The shōgunate was actively trying to absorb and systematize the energy of the *muen*, through the mediation of the Ritsu and Zen monks who, on the pretext of their *muen* status, became closer to the center of power.²³⁰ The Ritsu monks of Saidaiji, by establishing close ties with the Bakufu, built branch temples which they turned into "temples of the imperial vow" at the terminus of the great roads. Conversely, the Hōjō, rulers of Eastern Japan, used Ritsu monks to extend their rule to the west. In the same way, Go-Daigo attempted to organize *muen* Ritsu monks like Monkan to consolidate his power. Likewise,

²²⁷ Amino 1993: 159–60.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 162.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

the activity of Zen monks developed thanks to their ties with the Hōjō, the Southern court, and the Muromachi Bakufu. The opposition between the positive tendency to protect these activities, and the negative tendency to repress them, constitutes one axis of the political history from Nanbokuchō to Muromachi.²³¹ This trend, however, merely reflects (and to some extent contributes to) broader societal changes. In the Kamakura period, the yamabushi, Zen monks, and nenbutsu monks had not yet lost their sacred nature, and the basara (unconventional) style of the *irui igyō* people was still considered a positive quality. But after Muromachi, marginality and difference became increasingly negative, and the term *irui igyō* acquired very pejorative connotations. On the one hand, yamabushi and Zen monks became increasingly perceived as vulgar, and lost much of their prestige; on the other, social discrimination against marginals became stronger. In the Edo period, these “weird people” lost their “silver lining,” their stronghold on the people’s imagination.²³²

The words *irui igyō*, usually used together but also sometimes separately, were first applied to spirits or demons, but they came to refer to people, as well. Between Kamakura and Nanbokuchō, the expression does not imply social discrimination, but rather a certain fear. It appears frequently, for instance in the *Taiheiki*, without any apparent negative meaning. Later on, in the *Tengu zōshi* for instance, the *irui igyō* people are compared to the *tengu*, and the term now has a clearly pejorative connotation. The “dancing nenbutsu” (*odori nenbutsu*) of Ippen, the Ikkōshū, and the freak Zen masters (*hōge no zenji*) “who let their hair hang, wear hats, forget the meditation mat, and roam on the roads,” are severely criticized in the *Tengu zōshi* and in the *Nomori no kagami*. Ippen has become the “leader of the Tengu” (*tengu no chōrō*), and we are told of a nun collecting his urine to use as medicine.²³³ Thus, the *Tengu zōshi* describes the *irui* with a strong sense of discrimination. In 1344, the monks of Mount Hiei also accused the nenbutsu followers and Zen monks (in particular Musō Soseki) of belonging to the category of the *irui igyō*. In 1368, wanting to defeat Nanzenji, they also accused the Chinese Zen monks of being “Chinese *irui*,” allies of the Mongols.”²³⁴

The *Yūzū nenbutsu engi emaki* represents all the *irui igyō* together. Although it is not a polemical text, the very gesture of gathering these people already points toward exclusion. Even monks like Ikkyū, who had

²³¹ Ibid., 174–75.

²³² See Hermann Ooms, “Status in Tokugawa Revisited” (unpublished paper).

²³³ This practice, reflecting the belief in the thaumaturgic powers of the holy monk’s body, is well attested in the Edo period, for example in the case of the nenbutsu ascetic Tokuhon (on which see Bouchy 1983).

²³⁴ See *Yasaka jinja monjo* 1939–1940, quoted in Amino 1993: 137.

been themselves labeled *irui*, now used the term as an insult against their enemies (like Ikkyū's co-disciple Yōsō). Soon courtesans and prostitutes would also be included into that category. Thus, the social discrimination of the Edo period is no longer limited to eta and hinin, but includes all these *irui igyō*. The tendency had already become stronger in the Muro-machi period, and in this sense Nanbokuchō constitutes a turning point. Amino has pointed out that, after Nanbokuchō, the sacred hinin and prostitutes became despised outcasts, which no longer had a privileged access to the emperor, the buddhas, and the kamis. In the Edo period, such discrimination was systematized, and the groups in question were relocated in *buraku* (settlements) and red-light districts.

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Despite all attempts to curb the monks however,—repeated interdictions and drastic punishments like pillory, banishment, crucifixion, and beheading—their transgressive behavior persisted. How can we explain this resilience? Whereas Ishida has focused on the legalistic aspect of the problem, examining the fluctuations of monastic discipline in relation to the mundane ambitions and political involvement of the monks, Hori Ichirō has pointed to a broader variety of social and cultural factors. The sexual elements in Japanese Buddhism are related to the “shamanistic” nature of monks and nuns, the latent presence of sexual magic in shamanism, and the social demand for ritual experts like the yamabushi and Zen priests. The question of married monks and the transformation of monastic lineage into blood lineage are aspects of the larger question of the house and family in medieval Japan. The importance of domestic values explains, for instance, the emergence of *sōbō*, or monastic households, on the margins of the *kekka* (sacred area). As a result of this, the transmission of *ujigami* (clan) shrines, and that of the lineages of all kinds of religious specialists, were without exception blood-line transmissions. Likewise, the priests of the *ujidera* (clan temple) affiliated to these shrines were always members of the clan, and their lineage tended to become hereditary. The same is true for the priests of the Buddhist temples (*jingūji* or *bettōji*) placed in these shrines. Finally, the involvement of monks in secular matters is a response to the expectations of society and the state regarding them, and a consequence of the privileges accorded to them in return for their magical expertise.²³⁵

We have examined “hard realities,” in contrast (and yet in resonance) with anticlerical discourse. Actually, even in the case of “documentary” evidence, we are still dealing with texts that are in various respects nor-

²³⁵ Hori 1953: 374–75.

mative or polemical. If we can easily discern the (not so) hidden agenda of anticlerical critique, in a more subtle fashion the vision of a decadent Buddhism—whether in Qing China or in Tokugawa Japan—is essentially the work of modern reformers (Buddhist or anti-Buddhist), who use the previous period as a foil. From this statement, we may either deduce that early modern Buddhism was not as degenerate as we were told, or that it was at least not more morally corrupt than the Buddhism of earlier periods—or than most other religions, for that matter.

Thus, the degeneration of Buddhist monasteries during the Tokugawa might have been somewhat exaggerated. A good part of Tsuji's evidence is provided by anti-Buddhist tracts and by the accounts of Christian missionaries.²³⁶ Even though it may have some basis in fact, his account of a degenerate Tokugawa Buddhism, which became the accepted opinion among Japanese historians, is too close to the official interpretation of the puritan Meiji ideologues—intent on offering Buddhism as a scapegoat—not to raise a few questions.

It is also based on an uncritical acceptance of the Tokugawa records, full of punishments: it is not that monks in that period were more immoral but that their behavior, which had previously been accepted, was now criminalized and severely punished. This is the result of several factors: a general growth of intolerance in society at large and in the Bakufu (after the Christian rebellion); and the political expediency of using politically recalcitrant monks and monasteries as scapegoats.

The criticism leveled at Jishū monks and “mad” Zen monks in texts like the *Nomori no kagami* and the *Tengu zōshi* must be taken with a grain of salt. We have here a conflation of sectarian attempts (by other Buddhist schools, for instance Hieizan monks attacking the Darumashū, or denouncing Hōnen's disciples), and a growing impatience on the part of political leaders with these representatives of a free, “unruly,” muen subculture. As Amino has shown, the Sengoku and Edo periods marked the end, or at least the domestication, of these “free spirits.” The Zen and Ritsu sects were themselves divided. Even as they themselves expressed this spirit of freedom, and benefited from it, when they came under attack they were quick to find scapegoats within their own ranks (as when Yōsai and Dōgen criticized the Darumashū), and eventually used their aura of freedom (muen) to get closer to the center of power (the emperor, at the time of Go-Daigo; and the Bakufu).

We should therefore be careful, and not hasten to accept the criticism of Zen monks vis-à-vis their own sect's moral degeneration as a proof that this was truly the case. This apparent auto-criticism remains a criticism of others (like Ikkyū vs. Yōsō), and in this sense it does not differ

²³⁶ See Tsuji 1944–1955, 10: 404.

fundamentally from the anti-Buddhist (Confucian, Christian) criticism of Buddhism.

Likewise, the juridical evidence presented by Ishida needs to be examined more closely. Although its terseness stands in sharp contrast with a manifestly rhetorical or literary document (lending itself to a hermeneutic of suspicion), an imperial or shōgunal decree is anything but ideologically transparent. Many historians have accepted the view that Buddhist monasteries, because they became a refuge for all kinds of outlaws and produced warrior-monks, were morally decadent and politically corrupt. This view rests on a notion of Buddhism as a pure and otherworldly teaching, uncontaminated by the ways of the world. Such a Buddhism probably never existed or, if it did, it probably went out of existence very quickly and could never have become the social movement called by this name. Furthermore, we must realize that this view of monasteries as so many “cours des miracles” or dens of thieves is very elitist, representing the ideology of “law and order.” In this legalistic utopia, freedom would have no room.

The same movement that brought Buddhism back in line in the Edo period (after destroying its pockets of resistance—Hieizan, Honganji, and so on), while accusing it of moral decadence, no longer able to tolerate the freedom that had been until then accepted, and even encouraged—this same movement turned hinin and other marginals into eta, victims of social discrimination, and drastically lowered the status of women, locking wives and daughters at home, while it turned courtesans into whores and locked them up in red-light districts (not surprisingly, the famous red-light districts in Kyoto and Edo were a strategy of Hideyoshi). We have here something very similar to the “great enclosure” described by Foucault. Anticlerical discourse is part and parcel of this ideology.

This is not to deny that there was corruption within Buddhism or that there were monks for whom the ideal of purity was merely rhetorical, and others for whom the cause of “freedom” was only a pretext for selfishness and corruption. But purity and corruption, as always, can be found on both sides of the fence, with the partisans of a strict rule and with the representatives of the antinomian spirit.

We have therefore to revise our conception of Buddhist monasteries as places of decadence. It is true only from the standpoint of the rulers, who cannot impose their power to the monks. The “outlaw” nature of some monasteries was only the other side of their freedom, which made them places of asylum. This freedom would be lost in the Edo period. However, it is because they were so free that they could elaborate their own culture, which was in many respects a counter-culture.

This aspect of Buddhism, as a utopia “without ties” (*muen*) with the

profane world, counterbalances the repressive tendencies (such as sexism) of an institution at the same time pervaded by patriarchal ideology. However, just as we cannot locate sexism exclusively in Buddhism (which only reflects larger societal trends), we cannot attribute to Buddhism all the merit of this libertarian spirit. It is because Japanese society in its entirety tolerated these enclaves of freedom that temples were authorized to assume the function of asylums. Whether Japanese Buddhism was politically correct or not, it was never autonomous, even in its freedoms.