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From Marxism to Religion

Thought Crimes and Forced Conversions in Imperial Japan

This article examines the role of prison chaplains in the forced conversion (*tenkō*) of political prisoners in imperial Japan in the wake of the repressive Peace Preservation Law of 1925. The records of the Shin Buddhist prison chaplaincy indicate that chaplains understood *tenkō* as a religious problem. Shin chaplains contributed to public order by converting politically disruptive and criminalized beliefs (that is, commitments to Marxism) into socially acceptable religious aspirations contained in an apolitical private realm. Correctional bureaucrats and Shin chaplains sought to discourage political activism by supplanting it with introspection, and they understood this turn as an effect of religion. The success of *tenkō* programs was taken as evidence of religions' capacity to contribute to the public good. The article concludes that the most enduring legacy of the *tenkō* program was the development of Japan's modern probation system for adult offenders initiated by the passage of the Thought Criminals Protection and Surveillance Law of 1936.

KEYWORDS: prison chaplaincy—religion and state—thought crimes—*tenkō*—Shin Buddhism—Peace Preservation Law

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In 1925, the passage of the Peace Preservation Law (Chian iji hō 治安維持法) strengthened the state security apparatus in an effort to stamp out a new kind of ideological crime. The criminal code allowed for the classification of Marxists, leftists, some members of new religions, and a variety of other political enemies as "thought criminals" (*shisō han* 思想犯).[1] In the wake of these reforms, civil service prison chaplains (virtually all of whom were Buddhist priests affiliated with Jōdo Shinshū, hereafter Shin) became intimately involved in the ideological conversion (*tenkō* 転向) of political prisoners. The term *tenkō* (literally "a change in direction") refers to a wave of conversions from the left to the imperialist right that occurred chiefly between 1933 and 1945. *Tenkō* has also been interpreted as a broader cultural turn that took place at the time as many Japanese intellectuals and much of public discourse shifted rightward.

The most comprehensive study of the forced ideological conversions is a three-volume set titled *Tenkō* published between 1959 and 1962 by Tsurumi Shunsuke 鶴見俊輔 (1922–2015) and the Science of Thought Research Group (Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai 思想の科学研究会). Tsurumi offers a relatively loose definition of *tenkō*: "A change in thought that occurs due to compulsion by authority" (SKK 1: 6). The Science of Thought Research Group's aim was to understand the connection between the private experience of ideological conversion and the structural conditions (legal, social, ethical) that led to the change. They held *tenkō* to be both a generalizable phenomenon (with analogues in Maoist China, Stalinist Russia, and Orwell's dystopian novel *1984*) and a product of Japan's particular historical conditions (as a recently developed country harboring both imported liberal thought and a feudal emperor system). In English, Patricia Steinhoff published a detailed sociological study of *tenkō* as a method for handling the problem of social integration, and Max Ward has more recently analyzed the forced conversion of thought criminals as a representative form of ideological control in imperial Japan (Steinhoff 1991; Ward 2019).

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1. The English phrase "thought crime" entered the lexicon through George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984* (first published in 1949; see Orwell 2017), but the Japanese equivalent predates Orwell. In Japan, thought crime was not a matter of fiction, it was an administrative category authorized by the 1925 Peace Preservation Law. The term "thought crime" does not appear in the text of the law, but government officials started using it soon after the law was passed.

My purpose here is to reconsider the relationship between *tenkō* and religion in imperial Japan. Forced conversion programs relied on Shin Buddhist prison chaplains (*kyōkaishi* 教誨師, literally "doctrinal admonition instructors") to administer the reeducation of political prisoners. These chaplains understood *tenkō* as a change of heart (*kaishin* 改心), a matter of religious conversion. One directional metaphor for *tenkō* highlights the political shift from left to right, and this is certainly accurate. However, a different directional metaphor more accurately accounts for the intellectual shift detailed in the administrative records of the chaplaincy and the *tenkō* statements they elicited from prisoners. *Tenkō* was to turn inwards, away from political engagement in the public sphere and towards the private realm of family, home life, and religious experience. Correctional bureaucrats and Shin chaplains sought to discourage political activism by supplanting it with introspection. I show here that they understood this turn as an effect of religion. Moreover, the work of *tenkō* was never complete. After reformed thought criminals were paroled, they were subjected to continuous monitoring to ensure the "purity" of their conversions. Shin Buddhist prison chaplains coordinated with the correctional system and civic institutions (including religions) to build a network of ideological surveillance: a modern probation system reliant upon volunteer labor. In effect, the persecution of thought criminals produced a facsimile of the Tokugawa period temple certification system (*terauke seido* 寺請制度) wherein religious institutions were harnessed for the purposes of monitoring the population to prevent the spread of dangerous thought.[2] Shin chaplains contributed to the maintenance of order by converting politically disruptive (criminalized) beliefs into socially acceptable religious aspirations contained to an apolitical private realm. *Tenkō* programs were one face of religious work for the public benefit in imperial Japan.

Religious Work for the Public Benefit in Imperial Japan

Japanese prison chaplaincy began with volunteer prison proselytizers in the 1870s. By the time the state adopted the prison chaplaincy as part of the civil service in 1903, Shin Buddhist priests occupied the majority of prison chaplaincy posts. At that time, rather than permitting religious competition in the correctional system (or allowing religious freedom for the incarcerated), the state opted to grant the Shin sects a monopoly over the institution of prison chaplaincy, which remained in effect until the postwar period.[3] In what follows, I situate the

2. Hur (2007, 26–28) argues that the Tokugawa period temple certification system functioned in part as a mechanism of population surveillance. Some component of this traditional role was updated when the state moved to harness religions to suppress thought criminals after 1925.

3. The key event precipitating the government's decision to hand a monopoly to the Shin Buddhists was a conflict between Shin Buddhist and Protestant Christian chaplains known as

development of *tenkō* programs in relation to Shin Buddhism in imperial Japan, highlighting institutional and discursive trends. I emphasize that the work of chaplains inside prisons was connected to religious work for the public benefit in broader society.[4] At the level of national policy, the imperial government relied on religions to work with the state to facilitate governance through public-private partnerships.

The expectations for religious groups changed with the times. In the wake of the Russian Revolution and the First World War, Japan entered a period of economic instability. During the Taishō era (1912–1925), labor movements achieved broad support among the public, and socialism and other imported liberal ideas began to have an impact on popular thought. The Great Kanto earthquake of 1923 was followed by a wave of public disturbances, and the government responded to the unrest by issuing the Promulgation on Promoting the National Spirit (Kokumin Seishin Sakkō ni kan Suru Mikotonori 国民精神作興に関する詔).[5] This promulgation signaled the beginning of a campaign to mobilize thought (*shisō dōin* 思想動員), a strategy to influence popular consciousness led by the Ministry of Culture (Monbushō 文部省) and the Home Ministry (Naimushō 内務省). The goal of the campaign was to combat the "worsening of thought" (*shisō no akka* 思想の悪化)—that is, the spread of communism, socialism, and other forms of liberal thought—with "positive intellectual guidance" (*shisō zendō* 思想善導). The promulgation emphasizes the need for citizens to cultivate traditional values seen as rooted in the national polity (*kokutai* 国体). These include the virtues of loyalty, diligence, and thrift, all values required of a working population facing austerity in light of an economic downturn.

One year after the promulgation was issued, leaders from Buddhist, Shinto, and Christian sects were summoned to the prime minister's residence where they were asked to participate in the drive to support the national spirit (Akazawa 1985, 109).[6] Prefectures throughout Japan saw the creation of social welfare organizations (*shakai jigyō dantai* 社会事業団体) and moral suasion groups

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the Sugamo Prison Chaplain Incident of 1898. For a period account from the Shin perspective, see Andō (1898); Yoshida (1991).

4. For Honganji's account of its military chaplaincy, see Honganji Shiryō Kenkyūsho (1969, 365–70); Ogawara (2010, 162–77); Anderson (1956, 169–71).

5. The full text of this document is available on the website of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. See the Monbukagakushō 文部科学省, 1923. http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/others/detail/1317939.htm (accessed 22 July 2019).

6. The original source cited in Akazawa (1985, 109) is a report from *Chūgai Nippō* 中外日報, 22 February 1924. Akazawa (1985) is a classic study of religion-state relations in the early twentieth century, and this work provides a detailed analysis of the connections between government policy and civic groups devoted to moral suasion and the promotion of a conservative brand of self-cultivation thinking (*shūyō shisō* 修養思想). I follow Garon (1997, 7) in translating *kyōka* 教化 as "moral suasion."

(*kyōka dantai* 教化団体).[7] These civic groups coordinated with prefectural bureaucrats to provide both poverty relief work and intellectual guidance. In general, practical efforts at relieving the suffering of the poor were intertwined with the promotion of the conservative ideology of the family state united under the emperor (NAKANISHI 2004, 9–15).[8]

The civic groups that flourished in the 1920s shared a common politics. They adopted a stance on social problems premised on turning away from the pursuit of the kinds of systematic relief that would require changes to the social structure. They emphasized instead the importance of personal virtues like kindness (*shinsetsu* 親切) and love (*aijō* 愛情) as methods of relieving the suffering brought on by economic hardship (AKAZAWA 1985, 32).[9] Coordinating with the state's moral suasion campaign, many religious groups promoted meliorist doctrines, teaching that the solution to social problems was for individuals to engage in self cultivation (*shūyō* 修養). Religions were expected to work for the public benefit by encouraging private virtues, and this work was seen as a contribution to the ideological struggle against leftist and reformist tendencies.

As the number of moral suasion groups and social welfare organizations increased, prison chaplains became the link between prisons and the outside world. They coordinated with the network of civic groups to facilitate the social reintegration of offenders. The Japanese probation system (*hogo jigyō* 保護事業) traces its origins to ad hoc work done by prison chaplains in the 1890s. At that time, chaplains were responsible for helping wardens with decisions about early release and with strategies for promoting social reintegration (KKHN 1: 100–101).[10] Some dedicated prison chaplains operated halfway houses (*kankain* 感化院), in some cases out of their own homes or temples.

7. For an overview of these groups, see AKAZAWA (1985, 17–26). For a comprehensive list of moral suasion groups that flourished during the 1920s, see the *Zenkoku kyōka rengōkai meikan*. For a comprehensive overview of the social welfare organizations of the time, see the *Zenkoku shakai jigyō meikan*.

8. NAKANISHI (2004) offers a history of Buddhist social work, tracing a trajectory from early "moral suasion and relief work" (*kanka kyūsai jigyō* 感化救済事業) in the Meiji period to "social work" (*shakai jigyō* 社会事業) by the Taishō era. Nakanishi emphasizes that social welfare work and moral suasion campaigns were intertwined and also notes that some Buddhist social welfare activists like Kujō Takeko 九條武子 (1887–1928), a member of the Nishi Honganji branch of the Ōtani family, were committed to promoting respect for the individual. Kujō insisted that religion must not be reduced to a strategy of governance. This position could be interpreted as a thinly veiled critique of the direction taken by both state and sect leadership.

9. AKAZAWA (1985) introduces the specific examples of virtues cited here in reference to the leader of a women's group and also cites a wealth of data to show that civic groups in the 1920s emphasized self cultivation as opposed to political change as the strategy for obtaining a better life.

10. Chaplains themselves were tasked with laying the groundwork for inmates to be released. They were responsible for investigating an inmate's family situation, and, after release, they would visit the parolee and family once a month or so offering counseling, encouragement, and

By the first decade of the twentieth century, prison chaplains were involved in nonprofit probation groups (*hogo kai* 保護会).[11] General amnesties marking the death of Emperor Meiji (1912) and the enthronement of the Taishō emperor (1915) granted early release for nearly seventy thousand parolees. To handle this influx, in 1914, Count Mitsui Hachirōjirō 三井八郎次郎 (1849–1919) donated ¥750,000 to establish the Hoseikai Foundation (Zaidanhōjin Hoseikai 財団法人輔成会) to oversee the developing network of civic groups working in the probation field. By 1917, there were more than seven hundred and fifty probation groups active in Japan, and many of them had connections to religious organizations (KKHN 1: 308–13).

Until 1936, the government employed not a single probation officer. The nascent probation system was run entirely by private nonprofit groups. Prison chaplains worked as liaisons between prisons and the outside network of nonprofits to arrange parolee placements. It was only after "thought crime" became a high profile issue in the correctional field that the Japanese probation system was centralized and the office of probation officer established. Thus, the success of *tenkō* programs catalyzed the development of the probation system.

Shin Modernism: Spiritual Seekers and Repentance Narratives

While chaplains were working to build a volunteer probation system, a form of religious individualism was taking root among the Shin clergy. The ideal of the individual as a "religious seeker" became enormously influential in Shin Buddhist discourse.[12] This trend in popular religious thought created space for an

exhorting parolees to do good. The revised criminal code (1907) and penal code (1908) provided the first legal recognition of the role prison chaplains were playing in probation programs. Under these changes, probation programs received some degree of funding from prison budgets. For an overview of the history of the Japanese probation system, see KKHN 1: 294–330.

11. In 1908, the first probation works conference was held, and forty-six probation groups were represented by seventy-three individuals. More than half of those in attendance were prison chaplains. Around that time, there were between twelve and thirteen thousand individuals being paroled each year. The number of parolees accelerated with the amnesty following the death of Emperor Meiji, when over 24,900 individuals were paroled. Another 43,700 were released for the enthronement of the Taishō emperor in 1915. To prepare for the amnesty, the Prison Society (Kangoku Kyōkai 監獄協会) established a central probation committee in 1913 (KKHN 1: 308–13).

12. The Taishō era saw a boom in interest in religious figures as biographies of Shinran and Christ presented them as relatable human beings grappling with the kinds of personal and existential dramas depicted in popular novels of the day. A well known example is Kurata Hyakuzō's 倉田百三 (1891–1943) humanizing depiction of Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263) in *Shukke to sono deshi* 出家とその弟子 *(*A Priest and His Disciples), discussed in AMA (2016). See also ŌSAWA (2016) for a discussion of the various interpretations of Shinran among Kiyozawa Manshi's followers. In general, modernist religious literature contributed to strong interest in personal narratives of religious experience and conversion. There was also a burgeoning of interest in the *Tannishō* 歎異抄, a thirteenth-century record of Shinran's statements that became central to Shin identity and proselytization in the modern period. On modernist interpretations of the *Tannishō*, see KOYASU (2014).

existential perspective (*jitsuzon no tachiba* 実存の立場) that became essential to the administration of reform programs for thought criminals (KKHN 2: 147).[13]

No figure better represents the trend towards religious individualism in prewar Shin Buddhism than the Ōtani cleric Chikazumi Jōkan 近角常観 (1870–1941). Chikazumi was a popular writer and lecturer who enjoyed wide readership in Shin circles from the first decade of the twentieth century. He was a graduate of the prestigious University of Tokyo, and he is known today for financing, building, and managing the Seekers' Hall (Kyūdō Kaikan 求道会館) near the university campus from 1915 (WASHINGTON 2013). He was at the center of the intellectual and social circles of Shin Buddhism in the metropolis.[14] Chikazumi also served as a prison chaplain (KKHN 1: 149).[15] Perhaps because of a shared milieu, two of Chikazumi's favored concepts became mainstays of chaplaincy discourse from the 1920s. The first of these is the notion of an inner psychological transformation brought about by repentance (*zange* 懺悔). Chikazumi's *Zangeroku* offers psychologized interpretations of this classical trope, wherein the traditional Buddhist notion of repentance is combined with a Shin modernist account of interiority to highlight personal struggles of spiritual transformation. In this sense, Chikazumi wrote that "religion is experience" (*jikken* 実験) (*Zangeroku*, 2–3).[16] In the same vein, Chikazumi popularized a neologism for the individual "religious seeker" (*kyūdōsha* 求道者, literally "one seeking the path"; IWATA 2014, 59–68.) These terms are a pair: the initial step of repentance is the mark of one who seeks the path and thus the beginning of a

13. The language of existentialism is of course anachronistic. Nonetheless, I follow the official history of the Shin prison chaplaincy in referring to the chaplain's approach to the thought criminals as existentialism (*jutsuzonshugi* 実存主義). The reasons are discussed below. For the invocation of existentialism in relation to thought crime, see KKHN 2: 147.

14. Chikazumi Jōkan has only become a topic of scholarship relatively recently. Though he had been largely forgotten, pioneering studies by IWATA (2014) and ŌMI (2014) have demonstrated that Chikazumi was a major player in the intellectual and cultural circles of Shin Buddhism in early twentieth century Tokyo. For a detailed review of these two monographs in English, see SCHROEDER (2016).

15. In writing to an audience of chaplains, Chikazumi emphasized that a prison chaplain must constantly engage in critical self-reflection (*jisei* 自省), the idea being that a chaplain must cultivate a personality (*jinkaku* 人格) capable of encouraging inmates to reform. The emphasis on the chaplains' (religious) personality (in addition to his worldly qualifications or *shikaku* 資格) was a common theme in chaplains' journals by the 1920s. The implication is that a chaplain should be a mature person, capable of supporting the growth of inmates, who were seen as immature (KKHN 1: 149). The term *jinkaku* was central to Chikazumi's broader project (ŌMI 2014, 118–46).

16. It bears noting that the topic of repentance was important in Taishō-era religious literature beyond the realm of Shin Buddhism. Nishida Tenkō 西田天香 (1872–1968), founder of Ittōen 一燈園, published *Zange no seikatsu* describing conversion through repentance. The book became a bestseller.

religious awakening. These ideas contributed to the formation of modern Shin conversion (repentance) narratives.

The official history of the prison chaplaincy introduces Chikazumi primarily to report the circumstances of his resignation. He was the first high profile chaplain to refuse to participate in an execution, saying he "could not be a willing party to the murder of a reformed man" (KKHN 1: 196).[17] Chikazumi's emphasis on the value of the individual was likely a basis for his crisis of conscience. Although Chikazumi broke ranks, the concept of repentance and the idea of the individual as a spiritual seeker circulated widely in the civil service prison chaplaincy. The popularity of these ideas in Shin circles primed chaplains to receive incarcerated thought criminals as religious seekers.

Marxism, Law, and Religion

Marxist thought and translations of Bolshevist texts began circulating widely in Japanese in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Riding the wave of liberalism that took off during the Taishō era, the Japanese Communist Party was first formed in 1922 as a branch of Communist International and with a membership base drawn primarily from intellectuals and university students. After an initial suppression leading to their dissolution, the second incarnation of the party formed in 1925. The party was still dominated by intellectuals, but they aspired to incorporate more laborers into their ranks and to draw in members of the socialist left (STEINHOFF 1991, 63–83).

As a response to the rise in "dangerous thought," the Peace Preservation Law passed in 1925 just prior to the act granting full manhood suffrage. The state permitted the democratic process (for men) only after preventing the possibility of leftist parties like the communists from coming to power through the vote. The Peace Preservation Law made it a crime punishable by up to ten years incarceration for any person to advocate or organize for the purposes of changing the national polity (*kokutai* 国体) or political system (*seitai* 政体) or for the aim of rejecting the private property system (OKUDAIRA 1973, 51). The law authorized the special higher police (Tokubetsu Kōtō Keisatsu 特別高等警察), a political police agency founded in 1900, to target ideological enemies of the government (OGINO 1984, 58–63). This agency conducted two mass arrests targeting commu-

17. Aside from this one-line reference to Chikazumi's resignation from the prison chaplaincy in the official history (KKHN), I have not been able to find any other documentation for this fact. It is possible that Chikazumi may have quietly resigned without making a public statement and that knowledge of this incident was passed down by word of mouth among the chaplaincy before eventually finding its way into the official history prepared by and for the Shin prison chaplains. I have consulted with Shigeta Shinji (a specialist on chaplaincy) and, through Shigeta, with Iwata Fumiaki (author of an authoritative biography of Chikazumi), but I have not been able to find any other evidence regarding Chikazumi's resignation to date.

nists on 15 March 1928 and 16 April 1929, rounding up 8,368 persons, with 964 of them eventually charged as "thought criminals" under the Peace Preservation Law. Arrests continued over the following years as more and more individuals (leftists, independents, and members of new religions) were charged either as thought criminals or for *lèse-majesté* (see TABLE 1).

The special higher police continued the campaign against thought criminals until 1945, and this political suppression has been the subject of considerable scholarship (GARON 1986; HOSTON 1983; KOJIMA 2008; MITCHELL 1976; ODANAKA 1982; OGINO 1984; 1993; OKUDAIRA 1973; STEINHOFF 1991; WARD 2019). For my present purpose, the most important fact is that from 1925, for the first time in the history of the Japanese prison system, a huge influx of middle class, highly educated, and politically engaged youths faced imprisonment. Rather than simply forcing these youths to serve the full decade called for by the Peace Preservation Law, the prosecutor's offices and the correctional system opted to press them to renounce their forbidden beliefs, to convert (*tenkō*) into loyal subjects of the emperor in exchange for parole.

TABLE 1. Arrests of thought criminals under the Peace Preservation Law. Source: This chart is based on a government document dated 30 April 1943. Not all of those arrested were charged. The original is reproduced in OKUDAIRA (1973, 646).

YEAR	LEFTISTS	INDEPENDENT	RELIGIOUS GROUPS	TOTAL
1928 (Shōwa 3)	3,426	0	0	3,426
1929 (Shōwa 4)	4,942	0	0	4,942
1930 (Shōwa 5)	6,124	0	0	6,124
1931 (Shōwa 6)	10,422	0	0	10,422
1932 (Shōwa 7)	13,938	0	0	13,938
1933 (Shōwa 8)	14,623	0	0	14,623
1934 (Shōwa 9)	3,994	0	0	3,994
1935 (Shōwa 10)	1,718	0	67	1,785
1936 (Shōwa 11)	1,207	0	860	2,067
1937 (Shōwa 12)	1,292	7	13	1,313(sic)
1938 (Shōwa 13)	789	0	193	982
1939 (Shōwa 14)	389	8	325	722
1940 (Shōwa 15)	713	71	33	817
1941 (Shōwa 16)	849	256	107	1,212
1942 (Shōwa 17)	332	203	163	698

Buddhist, Christian, and Shinto groups were eager to support the government campaign against Marxists. The Conference of Japanese Religions to Commemorate the Enthronement of the Shōwa Emperor (Gotaiten Kinen Nihon Shūkyō Taikai 御大典記念日本宗教大会) was held on 5–6 June 1928, and more than eleven hundred persons attended, including scholars and members of civic groups affiliated with the three major religions. The conference culminated in a joint statement of shared goals, one of which was the extermination of Marxism, a threat to the *kokutai* (SBK 6: 445).[18] The appearance of a common enemy of all religions appears to have provided an impetus for interreligious cooperation.

Religions had reason to be wary of the Marxists. Government persecution of thought criminals happened to coincide with high profile public debates between Marxists and religionists that took place between 1930 and 1934 (AKAZAWA 1985, 169–235; KONDŌ 2015, 54–86).[19] A series of articles introduced the debate in the *Chūgai Nippō* journal under the title *Marukishizumu to shūkyō* (Marxism and Religion) (SBK 8). These initial debates offered a wide range of perspectives. The philosopher Miki Kiyoshi 三木 清 (1897–1945), for example, thought the essence of religion could be found in the universal hope for happiness. He regarded religion not as a repressive mechanism of ideological control, but as "an ally of the weak, the poor, and the oppressed" proletariat (SBK 8: 21). Others were more critical. Journalist, social critic, and future Diet member Kamichika Ichiko 神近市子 (1888–1981) offered withering criticism of religions' work in the government's thought mobilization campaign. She writes: "Religious workers themselves are to blame for making religion into the slave and tool of the ruling class because they cheerfully participate in the government's campaign of moral suasion" (SBK 8: 205). Kamichika maintained that the Japanese proletariat toil away in conditions akin to slavery while the wealth produced through their labor is stolen from them. Religions should be helping to awaken the workers to the material conditions of their exploitation, but in the case of Japan:

> Whenever religions become involved in political activity, they end up working for the ruling classes, using their traditional powers of proselytization to preserve the vested interests of the rulers. They help to make the proletariat powerless and non-resistant; this is precisely why we call religion an opiate.
>
> (SBK 8: 206–207)

She reserves particularly harsh criticism for Shin Buddhism, claiming that the Shin sects became the wealthiest by appealing to the masses only then to turn against the people by serving in suppressive (anti-leftist) campaigns of moral suasion. She concludes that the proletariat should hate nothing more than Shin

18. On the significance of this conference, see also AKAZAWA (1985, 35–36).

19. For historical overviews of debates about religion and Marxism and the anti-religion movement, see AKAZAWA (1985, 169–235); KONDŌ (2015, 54–86).

preachers and prison chaplains exhorting them to work hard in the factories and prison workshops of their exploitation (SBK 8: 212).

Following these debates, two organized secularist movements (Han shūkyō tōsō dōmei kai 反宗教闘争同盟会, later known as Nihon sentōteki mushinronsha dōmei 日本戦闘的無神論者同盟, and the Han shūkyō undō 反宗教運動) rose to prominence by proclaiming that traditional religious institutions were "the opium of the masses." The former published its own polemic in *Han shūkyō tōsō no hata no shita ni* (Under the Flag of the Anti-Religion Struggle) with a declared aim of freeing laborers and farmers from the ideological fetters of religion so that they may join the revolutionary struggle (SBK 7: foreword). On 23 May 1931, the Anti-Religion Struggle Conference held a meeting in Ueno, and the press reported that the attendees amounted to more than twelve hundred people inside the auditorium with fifteen hundred more outside (AKAZAWA 1985, 190). This high profile event brought police scrutiny upon the secularist movements, and by 1934 they were suppressed into nonexistence. Nonetheless, the importation of Marxist critiques of religion to Japan engendered a strong backlash among religious thinkers, many of whom regarded the rise in secularism as a threat to both religion and society.[20] As the conflict between religion and Marxist movements played out in the press, the police and the correctional system wrestled with the problem of thought crime.

Administering Tenkō: From Marxism to Religion

The Ministry of Justice held a conference for correctional workers in October of 1931 to establish methods for eliciting *tenkō* from the growing number of incarcerated thought criminals. The record of this conference indicates that the correctional field approached *tenkō* primarily as a problem of religion. They hoped that thought criminals would "grow up"—that is, that they would turn their critical attention inwards and devote themselves to "self-cultivation" rather than social change. The Minister of Justice Watanabe Chifuyu 渡邊千冬 (1876–1940) informed the audience of correctional officers that the problem with thought criminals is fundamentally a matter of personality development. These "inexperienced youths" have fallen prey to "reformist thought," and so they do not realize that "each country has its own particular national circumstances." He proposed

20. For a representative work by scholars and religionists criticizing the anti-religion movement, see *Han shūkyō undō hihan*. On reactions to the anti-religion movement, see AKAZAWA (1985, 190–97). There is reason to believe that a range of religious leftists were inspired by Marxist thought: the Social Christianity Movement (known by the English acronym SCM, also known as the Student Christian Movement) and the Buddhist Youth League (Shin Bukkyō Shōnen Dōmei 新仏教少年同盟) were two leftist religious movements that tried to blend socialist thought with religion, aiming for reform within their own traditions. For two recent studies that take up the Japanese Buddhist left, see CURLEY (2017) and SHIELDS (2017).

that the correctional strategy would be to encourage thought criminals to engage in critical self reflection (*hansei* 反省) so that they might "comprehend the intellectual life of their ancestors and awaken to the soul of our country." The head of the corrections office followed, instructing his audience that the primary responsibility for reeducation would lie with the prison chaplaincy (KKHN 1: 166–67).

The conference produced basic principles to guide chaplains in their efforts to elicit *tenkō* from incarcerated thought criminals. It was determined that the leftist thought criminals were motivated by a sense of social justice (*seigi shin* 正義心), and that this motivation in itself is to be recognized as valid and not scorned. The problem is rather the young idealists' lack of knowledge (*ninshiki busoku* 認識不足). The strategy for *tenkō* in essence relied on educating thought criminals to turn away from public issues and to focus on private troubles:

> *Tenkō* is to shift perspective away from social evils (*shakai aku* 社会悪) to the understanding that these are a product of human evil (*ningen aku* 人間悪). Fanning the flames of class consciousness will result only in struggle for the sake of struggle. It destroys the peace and abandons the purity of its own motivations. (KKHN 1: 170)

The strategy for the forced conversion of political prisoners relied on religion—Shin Buddhism specifically—as a means to defuse potentially disruptive political activism by turning it into reflective introspection about the moral failings of the self. The ideal of self-cultivation was promoted as a substitute for political engagement. The invocation of "human evil" over and against "social evil" borrows the language of universality to imply that the social order is natural and therefore just. Injustices in society are not products of social policy or political decisions. They are rooted in a corrupt human nature. For the people in charge of administering forced conversions, *tenkō* was understood to be a matter of substituting an introspective exercise in theodicy for criticism of the economic and political hierarchy.

To bring about this change, prison chaplains conducted both group sessions and individual counseling sessions.[21] In group sessions, thought criminals were taken to the prison chapel where they were made to clasp hands before images of Amida Buddha and listen to the chaplains' dharma talks. In individual sessions, chaplains would talk with inmates about their intellectual journey and encourage them to consider the impact of their actions upon their families and their community. In addition to private counseling, chaplains also assigned readings to inmates. For this purpose, the Honganji sect donated books to prisons

21. In a classic article about prison chaplains and *tenkō,* TONOHIRA (1977) argues that the prison system adopted a stick and carrot approach to the thought criminals. The special higher police and corrections officers employed torture (the stick), and the chaplains, who expressed concern for the inmates' spiritual well-being, offered the carrot.

throughout Japan. Assigned readings were arranged according to a list of prescribed topics covering areas like the Japanese spirit (works by Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 [1889–1960] and Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 [1855–1954]), religion (specifically Buddhist works by Kaneko Daiei 金子大栄 [1881–1976], Shimaji Daitō 島地大等 [1875–1927], Tomomatsu Entai 友松円諦 [1895–1973], Chikazumi Jōkan), self cultivation, anti-Marxist economics, and *tenkō* statements written by former Marxists (for example, Ono Yōichi's *Kyōsantō o dassuru made*) (KKHN 1: 173).[22] During their time in solitary confinement (they were separated from each other), thought criminals were made to read from this limited selection of works over and over again to internalize the content.

As these programs became routinized, chaplains developed their own understanding of the thought criminals, borrowing Chikazumi Jōkan's term to refer to them as misguided "religious seekers." An unnamed university professor provided them with ammunition for their cause by promoting the idea that the activities of the thought criminals were actually motivated by their confused religiosity (*shūkyōshin* 宗教心). He argued that these youths saw the contradictions in the world of social affairs as cause for indignation. At heart, they were wrestling with existential doubts, and out of naiveté they became convinced that Marxism was a path to resolve injustices. The professor said that "the question of how best to live is precisely the problem of religion. It is the seed of religiosity, and it leads the heart to seek the path (*kyūdōshin* 求道心)." He envisioned a solution:

> Introduce them to the world of religion so that they may shift their concerns from social evil to the evil of the self and see the true nature of humanity. Through faith (*shinkō* 信仰), we can make them establish a new view of life, one that may become the basis for correctional rehabilitation (*kōsei* 更生).
>
> (KKHN 1: 176)[23]

The professor and his audience shared an understanding that the inward turn—to shift attention from social relations to the "true nature of humanity"—was a step towards maturity and deeper insight into the world. Faith was imagined as a source of knowledge and virtue. The reflexive turn was seen as the basis for a thought criminal's correctional rehabilitation.[24] On the one hand, rehabilitation

22. Ono Yōichi was the pen name of former thought criminal and later probation officer Kobayashi Morito 小林杜人, discussed below.

23. Unfortunately, KKHN does not identify the speaker or the source of the quotation. It appears to be from a lecture directed to chaplains. I have not been able to identify the unnamed professor.

24. Lest the *tenkō* program be misinterpreted as irrelevant to the postwar prison chaplaincy, I note here that the official postwar history of the chaplaincy (a product of the Cold War era) reports this professor's theory that Marxists are merely religiously misguided with untempered approval: "It is not possible to lead people to develop a [moral] personality without cultivating religiosity. From its origins, the creed of the prison chaplaincy has always held that the fundamental goal is to awaken religious faith" (KKHN 1: 176).

meant to be reformed into a conservative citizen: loyal to the emperor and supportive of the government. On the other hand, the political shift was premised on the idea that chaplains could, through religious instruction, make thought criminals direct their focus internally to the private realm, "the evil of the self," and "the world of religion."

The prison chaplaincy and the professor appear to have shared the assumption that social criticism and self criticism were somehow mutually exclusive activities. This apparent oversight is in fact consistent with the Shin sects' prevailing understanding of the public-private division based on the principle of two levels of law (*shinzoku nitai* 真俗二諦).[25] This ideal was encoded in the 1886 Honganji sect charter and influenced the politics of both major sects of Honganji through the imperial period. In the language of the 1886 charter, the two levels of law should be complementary (*nitai sōshi* 二諦相資) (Hirano and Honda 2011, 74–80).[26] The principle of complementarity holds that the sovereign dominates the political sphere while religion (Buddhism) promotes morality in the private realm of the heart, thereby contributing to social harmony. In line with this social mission, Shin prison chaplains were responsible for harmonizing the private beliefs of thought criminals with the public good as defined by the political authorities. Chaplains were responsible for turning the politically engaged youth away from social issues and towards private ones. The administrators of the *tenkō* program premised the project on an understanding of religion as a force for social harmony—a mechanism for mitigating against crime, quelling dissent, and upholding the status quo.

Tenkō Statements: Anxiety, Repentance, Conversion, Purification

In the 1930s, the adoption of the *tenkō* method for dealing with thought crime initiated a sea change in chaplaincy discourse and practice. Suddenly, chaplains had on their hands a wave of highly literate people, many straight out of college. Chaplains required these thought criminals to write their own detailed *tenkō* statements. The *tenkō* statements that chaplains preferred (the ones they circulated among the inmates and wrote about in their vocational journals) fit the mold of repentance narratives.

The highest profile *tenkō* was a joint statement issued in 1933 by Communist Party leaders Sano Manabu 佐野 学 (1892–1953) and Nabeyama Sadachika 鍋山貞親 (1901–1979) while they were serving life sentences. In this statement,

25. The topic of *shinzoku nitai* was a major feature of Shin discourse in the imperial period. For an overview of this fraught concept, see Hirata (2001); Kangakuryō (2008); Itō (1927); Yamazaki (1996).

26. The political significance of this charter and the key phrase *nitai sōshi* are discussed in Kondō (2013, 16).

both Sano and Nabeyama renounced the Communist Party and globalism, affirmed Japanese cultural uniqueness (symbolized by the imperial institution), declared support for the Japanese military, and committed themselves to a form of "national socialism" (*ikkoku shakai shugi* 一国社会主義) (*Kyōdōhikokudōshi ni tsuguru sho*).[27] This statement was reprinted in the press and circulated to all incarcerated thought criminals. It opened the floodgates for mass *tenkō*, and by the end of July 1933 (little over a month after the Sano-Nabeyama statement was released), 548 other inmates had agreed to *tenkō*, and the number rose steadily over the following years. In Steinhoff's assessment, by 1935, the Communist movement had been totally destroyed and with it the opposition to the mounting war effort (STEINHOFF 1991, 6).

In the infamous *tenkō* statement, Sano and Nabeyama avoid discussing religious issues directly. Their initial statement is focused on the realm of politics and declares their shift from the communist left to the nationalist right. However, in a subsequent essay written in Kosuge Prison in April 1942, Sano describes the subsequent development of his thinking, presenting the type of religious conversion that chaplains saw as the ideal *tenkō*. Under the direction of prison chaplains, Sano spent years "purifying his heart" by rereading Chinese and Japanese classics and Buddhist and Shinto texts. He frames his more refined *tenkō* as an act of repentance:

> I realized that the basis for everything has to arise from repentance (*zange*) for the original evil karma of humanity. Only through repentance can one abandon the false pretense of knowledge to be purified through one's own tears. I awakened to the fact that a new start is only possible by returning to the border of the absolute life force in which good and evil are undifferentiated. I realized that repentance was a necessity and that it requires the intervention of a higher power. I knew I had to abandon the arrogant self-love eating away at my own heart because it is the root of all human evil. By humbling myself, I could be reborn as a pure Japanese. I was overjoyed to have achieved my own reform.
>
> (KKHN 1: 176).

This conversion statement from the former intellectual leader of the Japanese Communist Party corresponds to conventions established in Chikazumi Jōkan's *Zangeroku*. Sano presents himself as a misguided religious seeker who struggled to find himself. After an arduous journey, he realized the error of his ways and the truth of Shin Buddhist doctrine. He implies that he matured, abandoning the false pretence of knowledge and humbling himself. The key step in this process is presented as a turn away from politics, which was still the focus of the initial *tenkō* statement of 1933, towards the internal realm of subjective religious experience (a

27. Sano's prison diary is also of interest. It includes his account of "purifying his heart" by reading the Japanese classics (including the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*) (*Gokuchū koten ni yorite kokoro o arahu*).

more subtle and purified level of conversion). He realized that "the arrogant self-love eating away at my own heart... is the root of all human evil." He invokes the intervention of a higher power. Before he reached this point of surrender, he was tortured, locked in a cell, malnourished, socially isolated, and subjected to years of reprogramming. Through repentance, he relinquished rationalism, humanism, and universalism to arrive at a total and "pure" ethnocentrism.

From 1931 on, *tenkō* became a frequent topic in the chaplaincy journal *Kyōkai kenkyū* 教誨研究 (*Kyōkai to hogo* 教誨と保護 after 1939), which ran essays with titles like: "The Case of One Thought Criminal's *Tenkō*" (June 1931), "Mahayana Buddhism and the Logic of *Tenkō*"(September 1933), "The *Tenkō*-diary of A Chinese Communist Party Member" (January 1937), "The *Tannisho* of a *Tenkōsha*" (February 1941), and "*Tenkō* and its Purification" (September 1942).[28] Throughout this literature, the constant refrain is that thought criminals are religious seekers and, in the words of one chaplain, that "repentance is the absolute condition for *tenkō*" (KKHN 2: 156.) A 1933 essay entitled "From Communism to Religion" by chaplain Futaba Hōshun 二場宝俊 (d.u.) presents a general schematic for the process of *tenkō.* He describes it as a religious conversion that can arise only after a period of intense anxiety (*hanmon* 煩悶) (KKHN 2: 150–55). Futaba cites one political conversion testimonial from an inmate who describes losing faith in Marxism and falling into loneliness and despair after reading Sano and Nabeyama's statement. The chaplain writes that because most inmates are young, educated truth-seekers, when their faith in Marxism collapses, they will seek another truth to replace it. It is at this point they become repentant and receptive to the Buddhist teaching. In much of the discourse, the process of conversion is described in the language of purification.

One of the most important sources for understanding *tenkō* is *Tenkōsha no shuki* (The Diaries of Tenkōsha). With the help of prison chaplain Fujii Eshō 藤井恵照 (1878–1952), head of the Prison Chaplaincy Training and Research Institute in Tokyo, and reformed former thought criminal Kobayashi Morito 小林杜人 (1902–1984), the Daidōsha 大道社 publishing house compiled this collection of ten conversion statements for circulation among inmates. The anonymous preface asserts that "life without religion is corrupt." It claims that there are two types of *tenkō*: horizontal and vertical. The text maintains that horizontal conversion

28. The sheer volume of chaplaincy publications from the early twentieth century makes a systematic assessment difficult. *Kyōkai kenkyū*/*Kyōkai to hogo* alone amounts to more than ten thousand pages. However, taken as a whole, the boom in chaplaincy publications indicates that, by the 1920s, there was an established tradition within Shin circles and correctional circles of thinking about crime as a religious problem. This is consistent with the fact that the dominant, educative model of punishment (*kyōka*) relies on the assumption that crime is primarily a problem of the individual heart. On the history of chaplains' journals, see KKHN 1: 143–47. On the history of the Chaplaincy Research and Training Institute at Tsukiji Honganji in Tokyo, see KKHN 1: 103–104.

is merely a superficial change in political orientation. Far better is the vertical *tenkō*—a fundamental change grounded in the experience of religious conversion. According to this schematic, Sano Manabu's *tenkō* made progress from the political conversion of 1933 towards the religious conversion of 1942. The preface presents the *tenkō* diaries as "accounts of religious experiences" (*shūkyō taiken ki* 宗教体験記) (*Tenkōsha no shuki*, 1–3).

One of the most moving stories in the collection is that of Kojima Yuki 古島ゆき (d.u.), a woman from Akita Prefecture who became involved in the student movement while studying in Tokyo (*Daihi no mite ni sugaru made*). Kojima's family traced its ancestry to the samurai class, but her father died young and her family fell into poverty. Despite this, she enjoyed a happy childhood and close relationships with her mother and brother. She excelled in her studies and was able to travel to Tokyo to pursue her education. Initially, her aspiration in life was to become a "good wife and wise mother" (*ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母), the ideal promoted in public education for women. However, while studying at a women's college, she developed an interest in socialism and then Marxism by reading newspapers and novels.

She recalled being particularly moved by a story about a young mother with a baby who sank into poverty after the death of her husband, a reflection of her own childhood circumstances. In the story, the destitute woman is forced to turn to a life of petty crime in order to feed her starving child. The story inspired Kojima to think of the limitations to the "good wife and wise mother" paradigm that had been the basis of her education. Kojima became convinced that the goal of becoming a good wife and wise mother was beyond reach for many people who were struggling to get enough "bread" to eat each day. In her own words, she realized: "Up until that point, I had been thinking only of myself. I hadn't been thinking about society at all" (*Daihi no mite ni sugaru made*, 51).

She began studying the translated works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Rosa Luxemburg. Her interest in activism deepened, and she developed political ambitions: "By myself, I would have little power, but if I joined my own strength to a powerful organization, [then] I would become powerful too, and I would be able to accomplish great things" (*Daihi no mite ni sugaru made*, 52). Within a short time, she became a full member of the Communist Party. She threw herself into the movement, devoting day and night to political work: "My whole existence was entirely for the party" (*Daihi no mite ni sugaru made*, 56).

In the crackdowns enacted under the Peace Preservation Law, Kojima was arrested by the special higher police and locked in a cell at Ichigaya Prison. She describes in detail how she collapsed under interrogation, spilling party secrets despite her resolve: "It turned out I was just a weak woman after all" (*Daihi no mite ni sugaru made*, 58). At first, she was wracked by feelings of guilt for "betraying the party." However, after some days in a dank cell wearing filthy clothes, a

package from her mother arrived. She opened it to find clean clothes. Without thinking, she cried out, "Oh, mother!" She was overcome by the sense that by pursuing her career in politics, she had abandoned her family. Her feelings of guilt began to focus increasingly on the relationship with her mother, whose letters became her only lifeline to the outside world.

In time, the chaplain came to her offering the teaching of Amida Buddha. He provided reading materials and instruction in the doctrine of the Shin sect. In her own words, Kojima arrived at a new understanding:

> I came to know the enormous unlimited love of Amida Buddha through the love that moved my heart, the love of my mother. I came to see the figure of the Buddha through my mother's love.... Isn't that what absolute, eternal love is? The mercy of the Buddha (*hotoke no jihi* 仏の慈悲) is the love of a mother made complete and universal. (*Daihi no mite ni sugaru made*, 68)

Just as she had done with Marxist literature before, Kojima read Buddhist works extensively, including the *Tannishō* and the writings of Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903). She felt she was finally able to achieve a degree of calm, finding in the Buddhist teaching "a quiet world of peace." This inner quietude was accompanied by a political reorientation:

> My concerns about bread [for the poor] were completely resolved. I read [Kiyozawa] and felt that fighting over material goods is utter foolishness. I finally understood: no matter how poor a person is, if they live meekly and peacefully, there can be no difficulties. (*Daihi no mite ni sugaru made*, 72)

Kojima Yuki was released from Ichigaya Prison sometime before 1934, and she resolved to live quietly as an "ordinary woman," with no more involvement in politics. The treatment she received in prison turned her away from engagement in the public sphere. Her aspirations for power and political greatness destroyed, she retreated into herself and into the private realm of the home, symbolized by the maternal image. This reorientation entailed denying the reality of the material problem that inspired her initial interest in politics. Living meekly and peacefully is not a solution to the problem of starving children, but she no longer recognized this problem as something that she might have the power to change. Chaplains circulated Kojima's story to prisoners to motivate other thought criminals to repent and convert. Her tale is representative of the *tenkō* program. The correctional system relied on a combination of social isolation and religious instruction as a strategy for replacing political activism with personal soteriological aspirations.

The discourse on repentance was embedded in the correctional system and applied ubiquitously. In all cases of *tenkō*, inmates had to convince chaplains of the sincerity of their conversion. The imprisoned Buddhist leftist writer

Hayashida Shigeo 林田茂雄 (1907–1991) refused to *tenkō*, and he looked at political conversions with cynicism: "If you could win favor with the chaplain, you would get better treatment in prison, and you might even get an early release. More than anything else, *tenkō* was a matter of securing worldly benefits (*genze riyaku* 現世利益)" (HAYASHIDA 2013, 124–25). Nonetheless, prison chaplains themselves discussed the necessity of undergoing their own religious struggle in order to be able to tackle thought criminals. Even one of the prominent prosecutors responsible for thought criminals, Osabe Kingo 長部謹吾 (1901–1991), thought it was necessary to confront the political indiscretions of his youth. He ended a 450-page report on thought crime by confessing to having once been a leftist individualist himself: "This report is a record of my repentance (*zangeroku*)" (SKK 1: 19).[29] In 1963, the former thought prosecutor was rewarded for his efforts with an appointment to the Supreme Court.

The 1936 Thought Criminals Protection and Surveillance Law

In many cases, signing a statement of *tenkō* was sufficient to earn parole. The number of parolees increased dramatically with the wave of *tenkō* that followed the Sano-Nabeyama statement of 1933. By 1942, the number of "converts" (*tenkōsha* 転向者) out on parole and under surveillance was 2,888 (2,701 of these were male) (SKK 1: 18).

The success of the *tenkō* program led to the centralization of Japan's probation system with the passage of the 1936 Thought Criminals Protection and Surveillance Law (Shisō Han Hogo Kansatsu Hō 思想犯保護観察法) (OKUDAIRA 1973, 268–76).[30] This law expanded a system for monitoring juvenile offenders that had been in place since 1923 by providing for the protective custody of adults. It established a central probation department in the Ministry of Law and opened twenty-two probation offices (*hogokansatsusho* 保護観察所) throughout Japan to coordinate with local civic groups, temples, shrines, churches, hospitals, and other appropriate authorities to build a network of supervision intended to prevent paroled thought criminals from "reoffending."

The law created a new class of civil servants by appointing thirty-eight full-time probation officers (*hogoshi* 保護司). Twenty-three of these probation officers were drawn directly from the prison chaplaincy, and all of them had experience working with thought criminals (KKHN 1: 323). The new probation department harnessed the Hoseikai Foundation and its existing network of probation groups, thus inheriting an enormous workforce of volunteer probation

29. For biographical information about Osabe Kingo, see SKK 3: 467.

30. The bill was not without its opponents. A member of the Diet spoke out against it by referring to the harms of excessive surveillance as seen in the case of the fictional Jean Valjean from Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* (OKUDAIRA 1973, 276).

officers.[31] One of the most important civic groups specializing in the reintegration of thought criminals was the Teikoku Kōshinkai 帝国更新会, under the leadership of chaplain Fujii Eshō and former thought criminal Kobayashi Morito (*Tenkōsha no shisō to seikatsu*; Kobayashi 1987).

By 1941, there were 971 probation districts and over thirty-five thousand volunteer probation officers. As the number of volunteers dwarfed the number of *tenkōsha*, their work expanded to include the monitoring of all parolees (not just thought criminals) (KKHN 1: 327). The increasingly robust probation system relied on private sector volunteers to conduct home visits with parolees and to provide neighborhood surveillance, and it also maintained a network of nonprofits including halfway houses (many run by religious organizations). Perhaps the most lasting impact the *tenkō* program had on the correctional field came about because the persecution of thought criminals provided the impetus for creating a national probation system for all adult offenders.

There is no exact statistic for how many of the volunteer probation officers were clergy. Nonetheless, Shin Buddhists played a formative role in building the Japanese probation system. The initial volunteer work was done by Shin Buddhist prison chaplains beginning in the 1890s. Shin chaplains organized many of the earliest "probation groups," and they remained responsible for coordinating with this network of civic groups to arrange placements for parolees until the postwar period.[32] Shin prison chaplains not only stood between sects and the state, public, and private realms; they became the gateway between the prison and outside society. Inmates were funneled through chaplains from state custody into private custody (with governmental oversight).

Conclusions

The 1936 Thought Criminals Protection and Surveillance Law harnessed temples and other religious and civic institutions into a network of surveillance. The link between private groups and the state's probation offices effectively reproduced some of the population monitoring functions last seen under the Tokugawa temple certification system. In both cases, the political authorities turned to

31. Hoseikai published its own pamphlets on thought crime and the 1936 law for distribution to its members: *Shisōhan no hogo o chūshin toshite* in 1935 and *Shisōhan hogo kansatsu hō taii* in 1936. Shōtokukai 昭徳会 was another civic group working on the probation of thought criminals, and they too produced a journal to commemorate the one year anniversary of the Thought Crimes Protection and Surveillance Law, *Shōtokukaiho, tokushū, shisōhan hogo kansatsu hō jisshi isshūnen kinen*, in 1937.

32. In arranging parole placements, it was preferable to place women in the family home (if possible) while men were frequently sent to the custody of Buddhist or Shinto civic groups and halfway houses. There is also evidence that the probation office preferred to keep paroled couples together on the rationale that married life was conducive to solidifying *tenkō* (SKK 1: 20).

religious authorities for help maintaining the social order primarily due to a perceived ideological threat posed by imported ideas. In the Tokugawa period temples were a firewall against Christianity, and in the 1920s chaplains/volunteer probation officers became bulwarks against Marxism. In both cases, once established the networks of surveillance proved to have a range of utilities for maintaining rule. The temple certification system allowed the Shogun to conduct a census; the connection between nonprofit probation groups and state-run probation offices provided a means to prevent all forms of recidivism (not just thought crimes).

One key difference lies in the fact that by the twentieth century, Shin prison chaplains were influenced by religious individualism and modernist religious literature. They became deeply invested in the inner workings of inmate psychology. They hoped to document and examine inmate's inner experiences of repentance and religious transformation as evidence for the truth of doctrinal claims. On the other hand, the essential continuity is that in both the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, many Shin Buddhist priests regarded it as their sacred duty to contribute to social order by harmonizing private interests with the public good. *Tenkō* statements like that of Sano Manabu and Kojima Yuki imply that the turn towards religion was a turn away from politics. Attention was directed to the interior of the self and away from social structure. In the vocational journals of the chaplaincy and the *tenkō* statements they elicited from prisoners, it is not simply that religion is depoliticized. Rather, religion is imagined as a mechanism for depoliticizing dissidents by redirecting their hopes for a better society towards private, soteriological goals, thereby neutralizing opposition to the authorities.

Did prison chaplains understand their involvement in *tenkō* campaigns as somehow qualitatively different to their work with ordinary offenders? In an essay published in the *Kangoku kyōkai zasshi* 監獄協会 (Prison Society Journal) in 1918—before the *tenkō* campaigns—influential chaplain Kariya Tetsukō 刈屋哲公 (1874–1960) offers a clear statement of an idea implicit in much chaplaincy discourse. He writes that nonreligious attitudes or the wrong set of religious beliefs contribute to criminal conduct (KKHN 2: 81–82).[33] This foundation paved the way for chaplains to become involved in the persecution of (predominantly Marxist, atheist) "thought criminals" without necessitating any major adjustments to chaplaincy theory. And what about after the war? I asked a senior chaplain, whose father, great grandfather, and mentor had all served before him, for his impression of what the war generation of chaplains thought when they looked back on the work with thought criminals. He emphasized continuity:

33. For a biography of Kariya, see KKHN 2: 81–88.

> The old-timers seemed to think it was totally normal. The whole country was moving in that direction, and they thought that they were doing their part to protect their communities and their families. They thought of what they were doing as a contribution to the public good. Times have changed now, but to them it was just normal.
>
> (Interview with a Shin prison chaplain on 19 April 2015)

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