Jin Sakai analysis

(made by Parladax)

Requested by Madara_8999

In this analysis, I will discuss the "conclusion" of the Ghost of Tsushima DLC. This analysis will focus on the themes of forgiveness and acceptance in this sequence, along with the numerous symbols of the scene.

Enjoy your reading!

Analysis of the Final Monologue

"Hiding in darkness"

This directly evokes the shadow, a repressed part of Jin from his childhood, his guilt, his fears and his temptation towards violence and lies (The archetype of the ghost).

Iki Island forces Jin Sakai to confront his shadow/ghost; the shadow is not an enemy in itself, but more of what Jin must integrate in order to become whole.

"My father struggles to rise"

This evokes broken authority, an impossible model to achieve.
Jin Sakai built his identity around two contradictory poles.
What he thinks his father would have wanted: the way of the samurai, honor. What he must become in order to survive the war, the ghost, a symbol of transgression.

"Free at last from life"

This evokes death as a liberation, a form of purification through death, not through physical death but the death of illusion.
An annihilation of the old self, Jin Sakai has carried guilt since childhood for having seen his father die, but now Jin is finally letting this traumatic image/vision "die", Jin achieves a form of identity rebirth by reconciling the samurai and ghost within himself.

Normally, seeing visions of deceased father would evoke a form of divine revelation (It belongs to the supernatural), except that for Jin it's the opposite.
For Jin, it's a form of anti-revelation, because it is not an apparition that guides but rather who accuses.
Jin must break free from this vision, why ? In order to discover a form of spiritual truth, where peace does not come from a superior figure like the code of honor or the father, but rather comes from within.

The phrase “Free at last from life” can have a connection with impermanence in Buddhism,and Shinto purification through the separation of the world of the dead from the world of the living, Jin purifies himself by letting the image of his father die, therefore a liberation through death.

The Iki Island DLC evokes what Jin has always tried to avoid, a foundational trauma and the guilt of a child.
It's a brutal return of the repressed.

The phrase "Hiding in darkness" talks about Jin Sakai, who is buried in his own wounds.
“My father struggles to rise” evokes the memory of his father that keeps returning and “Free at last from life” represents the moment when guilt is no longer a driving force.

Jin Sakai psychologically goes from shame to exceeding, and ultimately achieving resilience.

After that, the ghost is finally the choice of Jin Sakai.
Before that, the ghost was a betrayal of the code of honor, a moral compromise, and a form of desperate attempt to save Tsushima.
After Iki Island, Jin Sakai becomes the ghost not because he is running away from his father or anything else, but because he accepts who he is.

This sequence evokes the weight of heritage.

Iki calls into question Jin Sakai's father and shows that honor is not as pure as he was taught.
This sequence evokes Jin Sakai's forgiveness, a forgiveness towards his father but above all a forgiveness towards his former self, the child he once was.
After this scene the "pure samurai" no longer exists, Jin finally forges a unique path, a synthesis instead of a conflict.

This sequence talks about the breaking point in Jin Sakai's personal journey.
His father, honor, guilt, and shame, all of this is laid bare to make way for a crucial revelation: that Jin is a free man, liberated from the code and also from hatred, and that the ghost is no longer a form of inner betrayal but a purely assumed identity.

Theological view

"hiding in darkness" The dark night (by Jean la croix, I promise, this is the only passage with a rather ambiguous allusion to an external work, I needed to make a European connection 😶‍🌫️) is where all points of reference disappear so that the soul can purify itself of its illusions, the soul believes itself to be lost, but paradoxically, this is the path to inner truth.Jin Sakai embodies this idea of the dark night; he is forced to abandon all his bearings, such as his samurai code, his identity, and his honor; Jin went through a phase where he was lost and fallen, but in this darkness he discovers inner truth. By renouncing his illusions, Jin Sakai finds a more authentic inner path, even if it costs him all his points of reference.

The night in the poem of the dark night is more a path of stripping away, not an absence of light.
It's an abandonment of rational reference points, and in Jin Sakai's case the hallucinations/visions on Iki Island complement this; they are not merely simple illusions, but represent an inner descent, a dark night of the soul where Jin Sakai is deprived of his identity,by bringing back his former identity, more precisely his past self.

Iki Island "attacks" Jin Sakai's moral certainties, forcing him to abandon his beliefs and reference points, primarily through his hallucinations/illusions.

Jin Journey into Darkness/Iki Island with his father killer, Tenzo, as his only guide, so not really reliable.
The soul renounces all light (like reason, meaning, free will) to allow itself to be guided, and in the character of Jin, he refuses the light (the way of bushido, honor).
Jin Sakai acts on his own, guided by its inner intuition which is sometimes contradictory, and the game shows this through hallucinations. It's a rather weak link and probably just an allusion, but I still wanted to share it.

The image of the father acts as a kind of karmic veil that keeps Jin Sakai in an illusion of himself; these are the darknesses of ignorance, a reference to Buddhism/Avidyā.

In this sequence, darkness is not just an absence of light, but rather the place where a new/more authentic Jin Sakai is revealed.

"My father struggles to rise"
It evokes Jin Sakai inner conflict, the image of the father, who is an authority figure, that strikes Jin Sakai with guilt,and this highlights a tension between the two ideals/figures that is Jin Sakai.
The samurai who embodies heritage and honor. And the phantom that embodies efficiency, survival, and transgression.
This forms a divine figure of the father and of temptation, where the father becomes a source of guilt instead of guidance.
As in the Bible, where the spiritual crisis arises from a doubt about divine authority.

"My father struggles to Rise" evokes the image of a model that refuses to die.
Jin Sakai is trapped in an inherited image, the image of a perfect samurai, the son who must perpetuate the clan honor and reproduce his father values.

This father is idealized, frozen and constantly trying to get back up(My Father struggles to rise), like a standard he cannot surpass.
Jin Sakai is detached from his father's image.

He stops seeking his father's approval and accesses his true inner identity, more symbolically, this corresponds to transcending an inherited form to discover his own truth.

By clinging to an idealized image of his father, Jin perpetuates suffering which is linked to Buddhism, Jin detaches/lets this attachment die.
The father figure is portrayed as a spiritual obstacle,Jin Sakai lets his father's "ghost" die so that he can be "reborn".

"Free at last from life"
In Buddhism/Anicca, liberation comes through the acceptance of death, that which is perishable/immutable like ego, image and Jin abandoned this idea of pure Samurai, an idea which never really existed, an illusion.

Jin Sakai cannot find peace by imitating/remaining under his father's influence, nor by following the code of honor but by accepting his own duality (ghost-samurai).

Philosophical view

""Hiding in darkness" is the confrontation with the authentic self; Jin is facing what Heidegger called "the cast being," the part of Jin that he did not choose, inherited from past and from trauma, the darkness in this sentence is the truth that Jin Sakai refused to see.
A quick reminder of existentialism:
"Existentialism is a philosophical and literary movement that considers that human beings shape the essence of their lives through their own actions, which are not predetermined by doctrines."

Therefore, in existentialism, Jin Sakai hides behind a false identity and moral codes. Jin was hiding as the ghost, who is just a traumatized child, an angry and ambiguous man. Except that this plunge into "darkness" is a prerequisite for Jin freedom, for being able to break free from the shackles of false identity and the "shadow" of his father that haunts him.

"My Father struggles to rise"
The father no longer represents a moral absolute but a fallible man, which weakens the image of the samurai ideal.
Jin understands that being loyal to this father is not the same as being loyal to the living.

In Stoicism, Epictetus said "What disturbs men is not things themselves, but their opinions and judgments about things."
On Iki Island, Jin Sakai judges his father's death as a mistake he committed, a judgment on himself.By ceasing to judge his past as his own fault, Jin attains stoic ataraxi.
Stoic ataraxia represents Tranquility, the impassivity of a soul that has become master of itself through the wisdom acquired either by either the accurate assessment of the value of things (Stoicism), or through the suspension of judgment (Pyrrhonism and Skepticism).

To return to the final sequence, "Free at last from life," as I've already said,this refers to Buddhism, and more specifically to impermanence and the dissolution of the ego,I'm going to explore this idea a little more.
Jin Sakai's life was conditioned by suffering, karma, and attachment.
An attachment to the code, to the image of its father, and to guilt—all these attachments of Jin's, once dissolved, allow Jin Sakai to access a form of Satori,of spiritual awakening, which is reinforced by the fact that Jin Sakai is in a posture of Zazen,Za means "seated" and zen means "meditation". Zazen is therefore seated meditation and refers to the posture and practice that the Buddha is said to have adopted during his meditations.
Zazen can lead to enlightenment/satori According to Zen Buddhism, even enlightenment cannot be an end in itself. Zazen should be without aim; it helps in self-knowledge and the discovery of true nature, which is linked to Jin Sakai.

Bushido and Jin Sakai

Bushido is based on seven virtues.

justice, courage, kindness, civility, truth, honor, and loyalty
The code of honor is therefore entirely based on these principles, and Jin Sakai on Iki Island faces the opposite of these principles,like a form of anti-bushido

Iki Island is built on the rejection of samurai values because these values have been experienced as violent oppression in the game story.
And I will demonstrate this for each virtue of bushido.

The justice, which in bushido advocates moral justice, is portrayed by Iki as depicting the samurai as invaders, not saviors,Kazumasa Sakai, the father figure of Jin Sakai, embodies a justice imposed by force on Iki Island, which goes against an impartial justice,Jin Sakai confronts the truth that his father figure's justice was not fair to everyone.

The courage of the samurai is a noble and straightforward thing but dying bravely on Iki does not nourish the living. On Iki, courage is replaced by fear and cunning, Jin Sakai knows that living despite fear is braver than death according to a samurai code.

Kindness/goodness for the samurai is synonymous with protecting the weak, while on Iki Island, kindness has turned to mistrust. Jin Sakai earns trust not through his social status but through his actions.

Civility/respect, respect for samurai society, is absent from Iki Island because respect does not exist for those who have massacred; brutality replaces civility.
Jin Sakai does not demand respect due to his rank, but as already stated, he will earn it through his actions.

Truth/sincerity are important in the samurai code of bushido, but Iki Island is built on lies, the eagle (a character, not the animal) who employs drugs, illusions, and mental manipulation This goes against the truth. Jin Sakai confronts the lies about his father, about himself.

Honor is an important thing for a samurai and the base game explore this topic well.On Iki Island, samurai honor is synonymous with massacre, and the name "Sakai" is no exception.
Honor thus becomes a form of shame, and the Sakai name an inherited shame.But Jin Sakai will seek to repair its meaning/honor through his actions.

Samurai loyalty is primarily based on rank, but on Iki, loyalty isn't based on a person's rank/social class, but rather a more human loyalty, compared to loyalty to the code,betraying ideals in order to save people, yet another theme that is also well explored in the base game,Jin Sakai knows that loyalty to the people can require betraying an ideal.

Iki Island is a moral reflection, not a form of enemy; on Tsushima Jin Sakai breaks bushido out of necessity, while on Iki Jin Sakai is forced to break bushido out of understanding.
Jin Sakai accepts the fact that bushido can be violent when it is absolute, just as he accepts that his father was not a "hero," when he detaches himself from the image he had created for himself,Jin Sakai faces this form of anti-bushido.

To put it simply, Iki Island is a form of traumatic rejection of bushido; the island is a materialization of how the code can become violence, a critique of the bushido code without necessarily saying that it is fundamentally bad.

The father figures in traditional Japanese culture are often seen as moral guides and models of wisdom and patience.
In Confucianism, the father is a source of moral order,The son must continue in the father's footsteps.In this context, filial piety (Oyakōkō) is a great virtue.
The father figure embodies discipline, duty, honor, and represents the lineage.This idea is not abstract in Ghost of Tsushima,Jin Sakai father represents this ideal of the samurai.
Bushido, already mentioned, reinforces this idea; in bushido, the father transmits the sword, morality, and the way, and the son defines himself through his ability to

honor this heritage. This is a theme that is explored in the base game,clearly showing an integral connection with bushido and ghost of tsushima.

At the end of the Iki Island DLC, Jin Sakai refuses to continue his father's path, he destroys the 2 ideas mentioned previously.
Jin Sakai understood that perfect authority never existed and that his father's ideal was just a form of myth.The sequence "my father struggles to rise" shows that in a way.
This is a form of desacralization of his father; through this, filial piety becomes incomplete because if the father is imperfect, then the son cannot follow his path,the model of the father to imitate is cracked.
In a sense, this represents a philosophical break with Confucianism, where Jin Sakai knows that he is no longer obliged to follow in his father's footsteps, that he owes him nothing.

One of the principles of bushido rests on the continuity of father-son-honor-clan.So if the father collapses as in the vision, and also symbolically, then the entire chain collapses. Jin Sakai understands that bushido is merely a human construct and which may be unfair or unsuitable.

Jin Sakai's recurring visions/Hallucinations of his father reflect his inner conflict, the fact that Jin cannot let this image die, like a ghost that keeps returning,an ideal that is dead but keeps returning like a moral burden,a representation of an unresolved guilt. Jin Sakai will not be able to save the honor of the past.Jin Sakai's last vision/Hallucinations just before the fight against the eagle shows his ontological death (I really used that word...) his father is no longer a source of meaning,This means for Jin a break and freedom by rejecting a form of sacralization of his father, by rejecting a part of bushido.

In more modern Japanese philosophy like the Nishida who argues that the most profound form of experience is the pure experience.
The Nishida evokes the thought and will of pure experience,an appreciation of the living moment rather than blind fidelity to tradition.

And Jin Sakai embodies that well,Jin chooses to live for those who are alive and not for the ghosts of the past.

Instead of becoming the heir to a tradition and perpetuating it, Jin Sakai prefers to break the tradition for the present moment.
In other words, the father figure in the DLC becomes a figure of broken authority.
And for Jin Sakai, this means freeing himself from the weight of the past, from his old beliefs, from the absolutes of bushido, and from filial piety.
More traditional Japanese philosophy such as bushido and Confucianism required Jin to be a kind of reflection of his father, the island of Iki "teaches" (rather violent teaching tbh) him that he must be his own self.

I wouldn't say it's to the point of being able to represent an idea like Zhunanghiz's zhenren, like the character of Fang Yuan (Reverend Insanity) does, but the character of Jin Sakai can be linked to the idea of “true person”.

In other words, the death of the father in the vision,is a symbol of the birth of Jin Sakai's freedom.

Theme of forgiveness/acceptance

The Iki Island DLC focuses on the theme of forgiveness towards others, the past and of oneself.

Jin Sakai faces multiple forms of guilt on Iki Island.
A personal guilt, Jin Sakai was unable to save his father during the conflicts on Iki Island in the past when he was still a child.
A more historical guilt with the Sakai who massacred the inhabitants of Iki under the command of Kazumasa, Jin's father.
A guilt more rooted in identity, Jin Sakai broke with the samurai code and became a “ghost”, Jin carries the weight of this form of betrayal.

Guilt is used as a central theme in the DLC, and these three forms of guilt create a moral triptych which gradually defuses throughout the story via the theme of forgiveness.

On Iki, Jin Sakai is not welcomed as a hero but as a samurai, which is a bad thing for the inhabitants of Iki. The inhabitants of Iki Island hate the name Sakai even with the passage of time.
Jin Sakai is therefore forced to confront the sin of the father and acknowledge the collective responsibility for the suffering they caused to Iki Island.
As the story unfolds, Jin Sakai comes to understand that his father committed the massacre not out of cruelty but out of loyalty to the code, and this difference between noble intention and tragic outcome,leads Jin Sakai to understand his father's moral ambiguity.

In the final vision before the final fight against the eagle towards the end of the DLC. Jin Sakai says to his father.
"I will never be like you"
"the way you lived was not my choice"
"and your death was not my fault"
It's a lucid forgiveness where Jin Sakai no longer idealizes his father but accepts his part of humanity, that is to say his mistakes, his convictions and his weakness.
Jin Sakai's forgiveness does not erase his father's crimes and mistakes, but it breaks the hatred; Jin Sakai frees himself from his past guilt through forgiveness/acceptance.

The eagle poison drug that brings back visions of his father to Jin Sakai evokes his inner guilt.
Throughout the DLC, Jin is confronted with visions/hallucinations, and the further he progresses, the more he understands that his fear was human/natural and not a sin.
In this final vision/hallucination, Jin Sakai acknowledges that he has nothing to reproach himself for: "and your death was not my fault"

It is self-forgiveness, where Jin Sakai stops fighting against himself, Jin no longer seeks to atone but to live in peace, not at war against his guilt, against his past.
And the gaze towards the sea symbolizes in a way this inner liberation.

Jin sakai also evokes a collective forgiveness between the samurai and the inhabitants of iki.
This is well expressed through the perspective of the character Tenzo, who initially almost refuses Jin Sakai's help because he is a samurai,But in the end, after Jin saved them, Tenzo was grateful (Naruto thing...).
As previously stated, Jin Sakai acts, reconciliation is possible through his actions, not through his words.Jin Sakai,the son of a conqueror,he became the protector of those his father had wounded.

This is a profoundly human forgiveness, something fragile and sincere. As evidenced by the tone of Jin Sakai's conclusion (where he delivers the monologue I quoted at the beginning of the analysis),the music and atmosphere are not those of a victory celebrated as a triumph, but rather of a much calmer atmosphere.

The main game ended with the repudiation of the code and Shimura,The DLC ends with forgiveness/acceptance from his past,of his father.

At the end of the DLC, Jin Sakai confronts the eagle and defeats it. During the fight, in his visions/hallucinations,once again he confronts the death of his father(Kazumasa Sakai).The final monologue in Zazen position shows Jin fully accepting his past.
As previously mentioned, he forgives himself; Jin Sakai is no longer tormented by his guilt of powerlessness in the face of his father's death,Jin Sakai transcends the stage of revenge by forgiving his father's killer, Tenzo.
Inner forgiveness is one of the central themes of Jin Sakai's character,Jin recognizes his fallibility and humanity when, as a child, he is helpless and unable to act against his father's death,Jin Sakai accepts that his guilt was unjustified.His inner forgiveness is well presented by the atmosphere of the scene, sitting in Zazen

position facing the sea, which offers a calm atmosphere, of meditation in a way.His inner forgiveness is his act of self-liberation, transforming his guilt into strength.

Jin Sakai hated himself for his past passivity; by overcoming this hatred, Jin transformed his personal forgiveness into moral maturity.

Through release of hatred and guilt,Jin achieves moral freedom,he reconciles with his past, with himself, by moving from vengeance and guilt to inner peace, a moral freedom.Jin forgives himself after defeating the eagle, after his last vision/hallucinations after that Jin forgives his father's killer, a form of moral maturity and freedom.

Symbolism of Sakura petals

In the sequence of the final monologue after defeating the eagle.Jin Sakai delivers his monologue under a cherry tree.

Mono no aware is a Japanese aesthetic concept that can be translated as "empathy towards things" or "sensitivity to the ephemeral". So it expresses a melancholic sensitivity to the impermanence of things.

Sakura blossoms, with their ephemeral beauty, remind us of the transient nature of existence; they bloom briefly but intensely each spring. It shows the importance of savoring the present moment and accepting the cyclical nature of life, and this resonates with Buddhist culture.

Hanami, which literally means flower viewing, embodies the concept of ephemerality; the cherry blossom lasts only a few days, which reminds us of the fragility and brevity of life. The Japanese see in these flowers a reflection of their own Existence, beautiful but above all transient, this link to impermanence pushes them to fully appreciate each moment and celebrate the beauty of the present.

During the feudal period, the Sakura is a symbol associated with samurai, representing their code of honor and their willingness to sacrifice their life if

necessary, like the petals that fall at the height of their beauty,This persisted into modern times; during World War II, the government used the image of the Sakura to galvanize patriotic sentiment (The cherry blossom is even featured on some military aircraft).

The symbolism of renewal extends even to nature; the blossoming of cherry trees evoke the return of warmer days and the awakening of nature after winter, evoking the eternal cycle of the seasons,and the rebirth of nature, which evokes resilience in the face of life's challenges.

So, in this sequence, cherry blossom petals fall around Jin Sakai, who is himself sitting under a cherry tree.This suggests that life is transient, that suffering/hatred are temporary.
Jin's forgiveness and reconciliation is therefore a precious and fragile thing,something to cherish.
Sakura petals also symbolize the end of a cycle,in Jin's case, it is the end of war, hatred, and guilt,but also the moral rebirth of Jin, who emerges from guilt and chooses his own path.
If we want to go even further in the interpretation, the falling of the Sakura petals can be seen as a metaphor for Jin Sakai's moral liberation, the weight of his past falling away.

As previously mentioned, the calm and serene environment is also given by the presence of Sakura petals, which contrasts with the previous battle scenes.This reinforces Jin Sakai's forgiveness in a way,by adding this harmonious atmosphere.

The cherry blossom during the feudal era was a symbol of the samurai code of honor, a code that Jin Sakai transgresses; it is a symbol of duality within Jin's character, This can be interpreted as an allusion to the Ghost identity, to the duality of Jin Sakai.

The symbolism of the Sakura petals embodies central themes of Jin Sakai's character, such as ephemerality and fragility, renewal (self-actualization in a way),reconciliation,harmony and duality.
The sakura petals represent Jin Sakai's moral rebirth, and forgiveness.

Jin sakai forgiveness towards Tenzo

Jin forgives Tenzo, who killed his father
Jin Sakai chose not to avenge his father with blood, even though he would have every reason to kill him through the logic of the code and traditional revenge.
This expresses maturity and self-control, a mark of progression in Jin's character; he understands that revenge does not repair the past.
Jin once again transgresses the samurai code of honor; this is moral flexibility. Jin doesn't limit himself to a code, he recognizes that honor isn't tied to strict vengeance.
Jin Sakai, by forgiving him, refuses to continue the cycle of hatred by not perpetuating revenge. This contrasts with part of the traditional logic of samurai revenge,by breaking the cycle of violence.

End of analysis, thank you for reading!