

YAMAGA SOKŌ The Way of the Samurai

Chu Hsi than on the Sung school in general, but this did not serve to lessen the author's crime in the eyes of Hoshina, a staunch upholder of the Neo-Confucian synthesis who saw in this attack upon it a potential challenge to Tokugawa authority itself.

After Yamaga went into exile, in the custody of the lord of Akō, his studies and writing turned more toward the Japanese tradition than to the Chinese. He became convinced that Japanese civilization was even more glorious than that of its neighbor, and wrote *The True Facts Concerning the Central Kingdom* (*Chūchō jitsū*) to show that his own country, not China, was the center and zenith of all culture. This claim he based on the fact that Japan was divinely created and ruled over by an imperial line coeval with heaven and earth. The truths which Confucius taught had already been revealed by the divine ancestors of the imperial house and of course were no less true on that account. But the Japanese alone had been true to the highest concept of duty as set forth by Emperor Jimmu and Confucius; they alone had set an example of unwavering loyalty to the dynasty. In China, on the other hand, dynasties had come and gone and Confucian teaching itself had been corrupted almost beyond recognition.

In thus pointing to the emperor as the focus of all loyalties, Yamaga had no intention of undermining the authority of the shogunate. He contended, indeed, that the recognition by Japan's successive military rulers of the imperial sovereignty was proof both of the continuity of imperial rule and the legitimate exercise of power by the shoguns as deputies of the emperors. Loyal service to the shogunate was therefore one more manifestation of that hierarchy of loyalties so uniquely upheld by the Japanese. Also, since Yamaga's teaching had so greatly emphasized the samurai's duty to his own lord, his conception of *bushidō* had direct application for everyone in the existing feudal structure without calling for a change in the status of the emperor himself. Nevertheless much later, as hostility to the shogunate grew, Yamaga's devotion to the imperial house became of increasing significance and enhanced his stature greatly among those who sought to put *bushidō* to the service of the emperor as opposed to the shogun.

The opening passage to *The Way of the Samurai* (*Shidō*), which follows, lays the groundwork for Yamaga's exhaustive discussion of this subject as recorded by his disciples. Reflecting the general Neo-Confucian approach to ethics (compare, for example, Yamazaki Anzai's discussion of the guiding principles of Chu Hsi's own school), it is entitled "Establishing One's Fundamental Aim: Knowledge of One's Own Function." Here Yamaga stresses a correct understanding of one's place and function in a feudal society, and the application to it of Confucian ethics based on personal relationships.

[From *Yamaga Sokō bushidō*, pp. 45-48]

The master once said: The generation of all men and of all things in the universe is accomplished by means of the marvelous interaction of the two forces [yin and yang]. Man is the most highly endowed of all creatures, and all things culminate in man. Generation after generation men have taken their livelihood from tilling the soil, or devised and manufactured tools, or produced profit from mutual trade, so that peoples' needs were satisfied. Thus the occupations of farmer, artisan, and merchant necessarily grew up as complementary to one another. However, the samurai eats food without growing it, uses utensils without manufacturing them, and profits without buying or selling. What is the justification for this? When I reflect today on my pursuit in life [I realize that] I was born into a family whose ancestors for generations have been warriors, and whose pursuit is service at court. The samurai is one who does not cultivate, does not manufacture, and does not engage in trade, but it cannot be that he has no function at all as a samurai. He who satisfied his needs without performing any function at all would more properly be called an idler. Therefore one must devote all one's mind to the detailed examination of one's calling.

Human beings aside, does any creature in the land—bird or animal, lowly fish or insect, or insentient plant or tree—fulfill its nature by being idle? Birds and beasts fly and run to find their own food; fish and insects seek their food as they go about with one another; plants and trees put their roots ever deeper into the earth. None of them has any respite from seeking food, and none neglects for a day or an instant in a year its flying, running, or going about [for food]. All things are thus. Among

men, the farmers, artisans, and merchants also do the same. One who lives his whole life without working should be called a rebel against heaven. Hence we ask ourselves how it can be that the samurai should have no occupation; and it is only then as we inquire into the function of the samurai, that [the nature of] his calling becomes apparent. If one does not apprehend this by himself, one will depend on what others say or [understand] only what is shown in books. Since one will not then truly comprehend it with one's heart, one's purpose will not be firmly grounded. When one's purpose is not firmly grounded, owing to the long engrained bad habits of lethargy and vacillation hidden within, one will be inconstant and shallow. [In this condition] can the purpose of the samurai by any means mature? For this reason one must first establish the basic principle of the samurai. If one follows the suggestion of someone else or leaves matters to the shifting dictates of one's own heart, though one may, for example, achieve what one is about in a given instance, it is difficult for one to accomplish his purpose in any true sense.

If one deeply fixes his attention on what I have said and examines closely one's own function, it will become clear what the business of the samurai is. The business of the samurai consists in reflecting on his own station in life, in discharging loyal service to his master if he has one, in deepening his fidelity in associations with friends, and, with due consideration of his own position, in devoting himself to duty above all. However, in one's own life, one becomes unavoidably involved in obligations between father and child, older and younger brother, and husband and wife. Though these are also the fundamental moral obligations of everyone in the land, the farmers, artisans, and merchants have no leisure from their occupations, and so they cannot constantly act in accordance with them and fully exemplify the Way. The samurai dispenses with the business of the farmer, artisan, and merchant and confines himself to practicing this Way; should there be someone in the three classes of the common people who transgresses against these moral principles, the samurai summarily punishes him and thus upholds proper moral principles in the land. It would not do for the samurai to know the martial and civil virtues without manifesting them. Since this is the case, outwardly he stands in physical readiness for any call to service and inwardly he strives to fulfill the Way of the lord and subject, friend and friend, father and son, older and younger brother, and husband and wife.

Within his heart he keeps to the ways of peace, but without he keeps his weapons ready for use. The three classes of the common people make him their teacher and respect him. By following his teachings, they are enabled to understand what is fundamental and what is secondary.

Herein lies the Way of the samurai, the means by which he earns his clothing, food, and shelter; and by which his heart is put at ease, and he is enabled to pay back at length his obligation to his lord and the kindness of his parents. Were there no such duty, it would be as though one were to steal the kindness of one's parents, greedily devour the income of one's master, and make one's whole life a career of robbery and brigandage. This would be very grievous. Thus I say that one must first study in detail the duties of one's own station in life. Those who have no such understanding should immediately join one of the three classes of the common people; some should make their living by cultivating the fields, some should pass their lives as artisans, and some should devote themselves to buying and selling. Then the retribution of heaven will be light. But if perchance one should wish public service and desire to remain a samurai, he should sustain his life by performing menial functions, he should accept a small income, he should limit his obligation to his master, and he should do easy tasks [such as] gate-keeping and night-watch duty. This then is [the samurai's] calling. The man who takes or seeks the pay of a samurai and is covetous of salary without in the slightest degree comprehending his function must feel shame in his heart. Therefore I say that that which the samurai should take as his fundamental aim is to know his own function.

Short Preface to *The Essence of Confucianism*

In this preface to the *Seikyō yōroku* [lit. "The Essential Teachings of the Sages"] Yamaga's pupils explain the risks involved in publishing his work and the reasons why Yamaga nevertheless insisted on going ahead with it.

[From *Yamaga Sokō shū*, VI, 167-68]

The Sages lived far in the past and their precise teachings have gradually sunk into oblivion. The scholars of the Han, T'ang, Sung, and Ming dynasties have misled the world, piling confusion upon confusion. And if this has been true in China, how much the more has it been true in Japan. Our teacher has made his appearance in this country when it is already

2,000 years since the time of the Sages. He has held high the way of the Duke of Chou and Confucius, and been the first to set forth their essential teachings. Whatever the problem—of the individual, of the family, the state, or the world—and whether it has concerned the arts of peace or the arts of war, his teaching has never failed to solve it and deal with it effectively. Truly the presence of such a teacher among us is a sign of the beneficial influences which emanate from our good government.

In order to keep his teaching in book form for posterity, but not knowing whether the general public would be allowed to share in its benefits, we, his disciples, made a collection of his sayings and then made this request of our master: "These writings should be kept secret and sacred to us; they should not be spread abroad among men. Your criticisms of Confucian scholarship in the Han, T'ang, Sung, and Ming dynasties run contrary to the prevailing view among scholars. Some readers might complain to the authorities about it."

The master answered, "Ah, you young men should know better. The Way is the Way of all the world; it cannot be kept to oneself. Instead, it should be made to permeate the whole world and to be practiced in all ages. If this book can help even a single man to stand on his own convictions, that will be a contribution to the moral uplift of our times. The noble man must sometimes give his life in the fulfillment of Humanity. Why should my writings be kept secret?"

"Moreover, to talk about the Way and mislead people concerning it is the greatest crime in the world. The textual commentators of the Han and T'ang, the metaphysicians of the Sung and Ming, who were so clever of speech and full of talk, wanted to clear up the confusion but only ended by making it worse. The Sages were left sitting in filth and mud—a dreadful spectacle!"

"The Sages' scriptures are self-evident to all the world; there is no need for lengthy comment. And I, deficient in scholarship and no master of letters—how could I aspire to write a new commentary on these sacred texts, or engage in controversy with other scholars over them? And yet unless this is done, the filth and defilement of these other scholars cannot be cleansed away and the texts restored to their original purity.

"I am mindful of future generations and aware of my own shortcomings. Once my sayings are out in public, all the world will publicize them, condemn them, and criticize them. Should these reports, accusa-

tions, and criticisms contribute to the correction of my mistakes, it will be a great blessing to the Way. They say, 'A pig of a barbarian invites ridicule, the boastful ass is apt to fall on his own knee.' The weakness of us all lies in seeing only our own side and not seeing that of others—in the lack of openmindedness.

"Let me state again that I look up to the Duke of Chou and Confucius for guidance, but not to the Confucianists of the Han, T'ang, Sung, or Ming. What I aim to master is the teaching of the Sages, not the aberrant views of deviationists; in my work I occupy myself with everyday affairs, not with things fanciful and transcendental. In the pursuit of knowledge I want to be thoroughgoing; in action I want to leave no stone unturned. Even so, I am afraid that I am quick in speech but slow in action. The Way of the Sages is not one person's private possession. That which can be practiced by one individual, but not by all the world, is not the Way. My sole aim is to reveal it to the world and await the judgment of true gentlemen in the future."

We, his disciples, respectfully carrying out his wishes, have taken steps to print and publish this work. As for his basic discourses on the relationships between the lord and retainer, parent and child, husband and wife, older and younger brothers, and between friends, as well as concerning personal moral cultivation and the teachings of the Sages, readers are referred to the Master's *Classified Discourses (Gorui)*.

The Sage as the Moral Man

In this passage from Yamaga's *Takkyō dōmon* his view of Confucianism as essentially an ethical teaching is revealed in his conception of the sage, who possesses no supernatural powers or transcendent wisdom but simply fulfills the moral nature common to all men.

[From *Yamaga Sokō shū*, VI, 240-42]

In order to know what the real master of the Way is like, you should first have a very clear understanding of what the sage is like. The sage, according to the prevailing notion among conventional scholars, is one who has a mien of moral superiority—a distinctive personality, remarkably conspicuous in a crowd of men. His inner excellence being so eloquent of itself, the fact that he is no ordinary man is sensed immediately. Endowed as he is with supernatural and superhuman qualities,

his speech and conduct are anything but human. Amidst whatever sensations of sound or sight, his emotions remain unmoved just as if he were a dead tree or burnt ashes. To him personal gain and a fat salary are more fleeting attractions than a snowflake on a red-hot stove. And in scholarship, he is versed in almost everything. Therefore, when entrusted with the government of the land, he will sweep away in an instant evils that have festered and bred for years; sweet dewdrops will gather on earth, while [such lucky omens as] giraffes and phoenixes will be constant visitors; all the people will follow the Way, practicing humanity and righteousness. Just one interview with the sage, and a man of plain mediocrity will shine with intelligence; overnight he will become unselfish and pure in body and mind—or so it is thought.

Now this indicates a lack of real knowledge concerning the sages. Upon studying the utterances, the actions, and the political ordinances of the Duke of Chou and Confucius we find that they were not at all like this. The sage represents only the best of humankind and is not a bit different from other men. He is fully accomplished in those things which make a man a Man, is well-informed of things and affairs, and is not perplexed by them at all. As to his personality and character, he is warm, amicable, humble, frugal, and self-sacrificing. Toward the ruler he is a model of decorum; to parents he is filially pious in a wholesome measure. In liberal arts he can express himself well when writing; in military affairs he is preparedness itself, being warm-hearted but not hot-headed, commanding respect without being violent, working hard when at work but relaxing fully when at rest. He takes what is due to him, gives to others what is due them, is generous when liberality is called for, and sparing when to be sparing is in order. His sayings and actions are hard to characterize in simple terms. Those who do not know him well call him unselfish at the sight of his charity; but take him for a miser when he is sparing. They think him flattering when he is merely being polite, and consider him arrogant when he is not flattering. Their judgments fail because they are ignorant of what the sage is really like.

The sage is fully aware of Heaven's will, so he seeks that which ought to be sought, he plans for that which ought to be planned for, saves when it is proper to save, and is not concerned over personal success or failure. Contented with his own lot, he never deviates from the course of duty. Managing things well in the sphere which it is his responsibility

to administer, he never lets his plans or proposals overreach his own position. If questioned concerning the formalities to be observed in a given matter, he explains them in terms of basic principles. If questioned concerning the highest principles of duty to the state, he does not neglect their detailed application.

As to his everyday living, in clothing, in housing, utensils, and implements, he will spend when the expense is justified; he will be simple when simplicity is in order. Sometimes he will strive for the utmost in beauty, going to the limit of his resources, and at other times he will not so strain his resources. Thus, in all that he does, there is nothing strikingly different from what others do. If you get close to him, and try to live up to his teachings, you will undergo a change for the better day-by-day. If you do not live up to his teachings, he will not constrain you to adopt his ways. Only when an opportunity is presented for him to serve mankind and the world will he exert himself to the utmost.

From *An Autobiography in Exile*

In *An Autobiography in Exile* (*Haiho zampitsu*), the last of Yamaga's important works, he traces his own intellectual development from Neo-Confucianism through Taoism and Buddhism to his "rediscovery" of the authentic traditions of Confucianism and Shinto.

[From *Yamaga Sokō bunshū*, pp. 481-88]

I am taking this occasion to write down some of my views about learning. For a long time I have been fond of the study of foreign books. Though I am not acquainted with those writings which have reached this country only in recent years, still I have gone through all the books received from China a decade or more ago. I feel, therefore, that with things Chinese at least I am quite well acquainted.

I once thought that Japan was small and thus inferior in every way to China—that "only in China could a sage arise." This was not my idea alone; scholars of every age have thought so and devoted themselves to the study of Chinese. Only recently have I become aware of the serious errors in this view. We have "believed too much in what we heard and not enough in what our own eyes could see; we have ignored what is near at hand in our search for the distant." Truly this is without doubt the chronic weakness of our scholars. This point I tried to make clear in

my *True Facts Concerning the Central Kingdom* (*Chūchō Jijitsu*). The following is a short summary of what I said there:

In Japan the one true imperial line, legitimate descendants of the Sun Goddess, has ruled from the divine ages down to the present time without the interruption of a single generation. The Fujiwara too, loyal vassals and supporters of the Throne, have survived, with men of every generation serving as premier or minister. Such unbroken succession has no doubt been due to the inability of rebels and traitors to succeed in treachery and intrigue; but has not this in turn been due to the wide prevalence in Japan of the cardinal virtues of humanity and righteousness?

From the divine ages on for seventeen generations there have been on the throne sovereigns of supreme virtue, supported by wise and eminent ministers, who have upheld the way of heaven-and-earth, who have set up the court administration and control over the provinces, who have laid down formal regulations for the four classes of people regarding the necessities of life—clothing, food, and dwelling, as well as the proper procedures for initiations, marriages, funerals, and festivals—so that in all these things the mean was achieved; and who have pointed out the respective paths of ruler and ruled, setting an example for all ages so that the people were at ease and the country at peace. Is not all this a manifestation of their heavenly virtues of supreme intelligence and holy wisdom?

No less deserving of mention is Japan's pursuit of the way of martial valor. The three kingdoms of Han¹ were conquered and made to bring tribute to the court. Korea was subjugated and its royal castle made to surrender.² Japanese military headquarters was established on foreign soil and Japanese military prestige was supreme over the four seas from the earliest times down to the present day. Our valor in war inspired fear in foreigners. As for invasion from abroad, foreigners never conquered us or even occupied or forced cession of our land. In fact, in the making of armor for man and horse, in the making and use of sword and spear, and again in military science, strategy and tactics, no other

¹ Three kingdoms of Han: means Korea. The name derives from three early kingdoms in South Korea known to Japanese as Ma-han, Mu-han, and Shin-han. The conquest of Korea referred to here is that of the Empress Jingō (r. c. 362-380). At the time of this invasion the three Kingdoms of Korea were Silla, Koguryō, and Paekche.
² Refers to the invasion of Korea by Hideyoshi in 1592.

country can equal us. Within the four seas, then, are we not supreme in military valor?

Wisdom, humanity, and valor are the three cardinal virtues of a sage. When even one of these three is lacking, a man falls short of being a sage. When we compare China and Japan with these virtues as criteria, we see that Japan greatly excels China in each of them and undoubtedly merits the name of Middle Kingdom far more than does China. This is no mere fancy of mine but a just estimate made by the world.

Prince Shōtoku was the only one throughout our history who did not esteem China too highly. He was aware of the fact that it was enough for Japan to be Japan. But the records were destroyed by fire at the time of the Iruka incident³ and all of his writings have been lost to later times.

Many paths to learning have existed in the past and present. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism each has its own basic principle. In my own case from boyhood to manhood I devoted myself to study of the Ch'eng-Chu system, and consequently my writings in those days were generally in accord with the Ch'eng-Chu system. Then in middle age I became interested in Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu and accepted as basic such mystical concepts as emptiness and nothingness. At the same time I developed a particular esteem also for Buddhism and visited the eminent masters of the five Zen monasteries, including even the Abbot Ingen, because of my eagerness to pursue the path to enlightenment.

While I was engaged in the study of the Ch'eng-Chu system, perhaps owing to my own ineptitude, I was too much given to the practice of sustained reverence and silent sitting and found myself becoming too taciturn and grave. In comparison with the Ch'eng-Chu system, however, the approach of Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Zen proved far more full of life and freedom. The identification of human mental activity with the mystic activity of nature produced deep insight. From that point on I followed the impulse of my own nature; all was spontaneous. Heaven and earth might fail but as to the eternal and unchanging principle remaining in itself active and untrammelled, there would be no doubt.

³ Iruka incident: in 645 Nakatomi Kamatari and Prince Naka-No-Ōe (later Tenchi Tennō) brought about the death of Soga no Iruka and his father, Soga no Umako, in a struggle over the imperial succession. Before his death Umako is said to have burned most of the historical records compiled by his father Soga no Umako and Shōtoku Taishi in A.D. 620—probably the first histories written in Japan.

Nevertheless, when it came to everyday matters, there was still much that I did not comprehend. Thinking that this might again be due to my own ineptitude, I pursued this method all the more assiduously in the hope that I might improve. It might be, I thought, that daily affairs are of such slight importance that it is as well to let them take their own course. Still we find ourselves bound by the five obligations of human relationship and are so much involved in everyday affairs that we cannot go on thus—we are held in their grip. If we should make our abode under the trees or upon some rock in lonely solitude, scorning worldly honor and fame, we might be able to attain to an inexpressible state of unselfish purity and mystical freedom. But when it comes to the affairs of the world, of the state, and of the four classes of the people, needless to say we should be able to accomplish nothing in that manner. Even in minor matters, we should have less comprehension of things than the uneducated man in the street.

Some say that if the perfection of virtue (*jin*) could be fully realized in one's mind, all the things of this world and all the affairs of men would be taken care of; others say that if the compassion of Buddha were made the basic principle, all would work out for good in the three existences—past, present and future. All these ideas, however, serve only to keep learning apart from the real world. Whatever others may think, I myself cannot believe otherwise or accept that kind of learning as satisfactory. I have consulted both Confucianists and Buddhists on this question, made inquiry of persons reputed to be of eminent virtue, and carefully observed their methods and actions, only to find that they are not in accord with the real world. Their teaching goes one way and life another.

Shinto is the way of our own country but the early records of it are lost: what we know is fragmentary and incomplete. From it we might have obtained the guiding truths concerning the affairs of men and of the state, but after the Iruka incident the old records ceased to exist. I began to wonder about those studies and proceeded to read more widely and to ponder on what earlier scholars had left behind them; but on many points my doubts were not clarified. I thought that this might be due to misunderstanding on my part but for many years those doubts still remained unresolved. Then, early in the Kambun era [1661-1672], it occurred to me that my failure to comprehend might be due to the fact that I had been reading the scholars of the Han, T'ang, Sung, and

Ming. By going directly to the writings of the Duke of Chou and Confucius, and taking them as my model, the guiding lines of thought and study could be correctly ascertained. After that I ceased to make use of later writings, but day and night applied myself to the works of the sages. Then for the first time I understood clearly the guiding teachings of the sages and their underlying principle became firmly fixed in my mind.

When you try to cut paper straight without a ruler to guide your hand, try as you will, you cannot get it accurate. Even if you should manage to do it well yourself, you could not expect others to do so. But with the use of a ruler even a child can cut along the guiding line. Even though one person may be considerably less skilled than another, he can almost always follow the guiding line. In the system of the sages, likewise, if one acquires by careful reading a sort of guiding rule, one can understand the way of the sages in all things according to the degree of one's individual scholarship.

Now to learn the guiding principles of the sages neither language nor scholarship is needed, because [the thing is so simple that] if I am told about it today, I can understand what I am to do today. Neither the "moral training" nor the "sustained reverence" nor the "silent sitting" [of the Neo-Confucianists] is required. Even if one goes through strict discipline of both speech and act and carries in memory almost all the sayings of the sages, it is clear that these are merely digressive pursuits and do not follow the guiding principle of the sages. I can tell at once, when someone even so much as utters a word or a phrase, whether he understands the guiding principle of the sages, simply because I measure him by the use of my guiding rule. Even when it comes to things out of reach of sight and hearing, with this approach one can understand in at least five or seven cases out of ten; whereas those who pursue conventional or digressive studies may be unable to understand in even three cases out of ten. Of this I am certain. This is the reason why men of wide scholarship often become the laughingstock of the less educated. One cannot shape a bullet without a cast; one cannot cut paper without a ruler. Those who try labor in vain and struggle long and painfully to no avail. The more they pursue their studies, the more they become involved in ignorance.

Among the paths to learning there is one which exalts personal virtue

and cultivates benevolence through the intensive practice of moral training and silent sitting. There is another which involves personal cultivation, the guidance of others, and maintaining of peace and order in the world, and the winning of honor and fame. There is also that which arises from a love of books and stresses the writing of poetry or prose. Into these three classes scholars may be divided, each having his own attitude or approach.

As far as I can observe, however, it is difficult in our times for men to attain the degree of righteousness which prevailed in the days of the Yellow Emperor and the sage-kings Yao and Shun, such that rule by virtue alone was sufficient through its beneficent influence to keep the country under control without a word of command being given, or to make peace reign supreme within the four seas without any action from above, or to enable cultivation of the arts of peace so as to win without coercion the willing submission of any enemy. Even though we should take them as our model, no good result would come of it. Scholars who advocate such a course are lofty in their aims, but in the end they turn their backs upon the world and retire in solitude to commune only with the birds and the beasts. On the other hand, the love of books and the pursuit of writing are merely scholarly diversions; they are not matters of everyday concern. Writing is a corollary of learning and I do not cast any aspersions upon it. The writing of poetry and prose is something that should not be neglected "if one has spare time for them."⁴

To me, therefore, the guiding path to the teaching of the Sages is that which involves personal cultivation, the guidance of others, the maintaining of peace and order in the world, and the winning of honor and fame. I come from a samurai family and have the five obligations of human relationship which attach to my person and station. My own thought and conduct, as well as my five obligations in relations with others, are what I as a samurai must give first attention to. In addition, however, there are both major and minor matters to which the samurai must give his attention. In minor matters, such as dress, food, dwelling, and all implements and their uses, he must live up to the best samurai traditions of good form. This is particularly true in connection with training in the arts of war and with the manufacture and use of armor and horse trappings. Among major matters there are the maintenance of

⁴ Paraphrasing *Anadeit*, I, 6.

peace and order in the world; rites and festivals; the control of feudal states and districts; mountains and forests, seas and rivers, farms and rice fields, temples and shrines; and the disposition of suits and appeals among the four classes of people. In addition, there is military command and organization, strategy in war and tactics in battle, the quartering and provisioning of troops, and the building of fortifications—all those preparations for war which are the daily concern of generals and officers.

No matter how much training he undergoes, if the studies pursued by a samurai do not enable him to get results in all these fields, then they serve no useful purpose and fail to follow the guiding principle of the sages' teaching. For this reason thought and study will have to be given to these matters, and some research done into the records of history and of court procedure. Thus there will be less time for meditation, silent contemplation and quiet sitting. I do not mean, however, that we must have an exhaustive knowledge of all these numberless things. As I have pointed out elsewhere, we need only have a good understanding of the guide-rule provided by the sages' teaching and use it as a measure and standard. Then, whatever we see or hear can be comprehended in its true light. No matter what task presents itself, it may be clearly understood in terms of these aforementioned categories, and therefore no matter what befalls, we need not falter—we are on safe ground. Truly we find ourselves "with mind open and body free."⁵

If one follows this approach to learning, intelligence will renew itself, and virtue will of itself be heightened; humanity will be deepened and courage strengthened. Finally, one will attain to a state of mind in which success and fame are of no account, in which unselfishness and self-forgetfulness will be the rule. Thus one starts out with the idea of success and honor, but comes to the stage in which success and honor have no meaning and one simply goes on fulfilling the way by which man becomes truly man. The Book of Filial Piety says: "Cultivate yourself and follow the way; fame will be the natural outcome of filial piety."

ITÔ JINSAI'S DEVOTION TO CONFUCIUS

The tendency to break with Neo-Confucianism and return to the classical sources of Confucian teaching was given added impetus by a

⁵ *Great Learning*, VI, 4.

very different type of Japanese from Yamaga Sokō, the gentle but persuasive Itō Jinsai (1627-1705). Where Yamaga stands for the basic Confucian virtues as exemplified in the true samurai, Itō, the son of a Kyoto merchant, represents the best in Confucian scholarship and dedication to humanistic ideals. What they had in common was a staunch independence of mind, which Itō demonstrated not only in his thinking but also by making study and teaching a profession in itself and refusing all offers of lucrative employment from powerful feudal lords. In this respect he followed the example of Confucius himself, who was probably the first to establish teaching as an independent profession in ancient China rather than as an official function. Itō himself enjoyed great success as a teacher, attracting students in even larger numbers than Yamaga. The private school which he set up with the able assistance of his son, Tōgai, was devoted to the study of the original classics, known as the "Kōgi-dō," or roughly, "School for Study of the Ancient Meaning." Here the *Analekts* of Confucius and the book of Mencius were the basic texts. In subjecting them to the most careful and critical scrutiny, however, Itō was less concerned with the niceties of conventional scholarship than with discerning the underlying truths of Confucius' teaching. The measure of his exclusive devotion to the latter is reflected not only in the superlative terms in which he described Confucius as the "supreme sage of the universe," but also in the fact that he did not hesitate to attack even the Great Learning as spurious, though the Neo-Confucianists had elevated it to a position of the first importance as a Confucian classic.

Itō also took issue with the Neo-Confucianists on metaphysical grounds, rejecting Chu Hsi's dualism of principle (*li*) and material force (*ki*) in favor of a monism which denied any standing to *li* as a first principle. It was *ki*, conceived as the vital force, which underlay all three realms of existence—heaven, earth, and mankind. It contrast to Chu Hsi's more static view of the universe in terms of ultimate and immutable law, Itō saw it as dynamic in character. The universe is the progression of the life force, and the only reality in life, death being nothing but the absence of life and purely negative. By conserving and developing the life force within him, man achieves the fullness of manhood in the virtue of humanity (*jin*), which for Itō means "love"—love as expressed in the four great virtues of loyalty, good faith, reverence and forgiveness.

In contrast to Yamaga Sokō, whose studies and thinking turned in the direction of Shinto later in life, Itō consistently devoted himself to the

rediscovery of Confucianism in its original Chinese sources, and there is in him little of the nationalistic type of thinking which increasingly characterized Japanese Confucianism in the later Tokugawa Period. Like Arai Hakuseki he represents the concern for universal human values which remained a significant, though less widely appreciated, aspect of Confucian thought into modern times. At the same time, Itō's rediscovery and systematic exposition of the classics partake of much the same character as earlier Neo-Confucian writing: that is, they present the "original" teaching of Confucius in new terms which reflect to some extent the metaphysical temper of the Sung School, as well as the reaffirmation of life and love found in so much of Japanese thought in this period, be it Confucian (as in Kaibara and Itō) or Neo-Shintoist.

ITŌ TŌGAI

The Devolution of Confucianism

Itō Jinsai was not a prolific writer; indeed, his teachings were not committed to writing until late in life and only published after his death. In this respect Itō's son, Tōgai (1670-1736), rendered his school a great service by editing his father's works and adding many more of his own to amplify their point of view. In this preface to *Changes in Confucian Teaching, Past and Present* (*Kōkon gahusen*), Tōgai explains how Confucianism was radically altered by the metaphysical interpretations of Han and Sung scholars, and why it is necessary to return to the original teachings of Confucius.

[From Inoue, *Rinri shen*, V, 216-17]

The change from the Way of the Sages in the Three Dynasties to the Confucian teaching of today has been a gradual one and not something that happened overnight. There was one great change during the Han dynasty and a second during the Sung dynasty. Quietly and surreptitiously the teaching has been altered or done away with throughout ten centuries or more, with the result that present-day teaching is no longer identical with early Confucianism.

The rise and decline of good government from the age of the sages T'ang and Yü to the Chou dynasty can be understood through the examination of history. Prior to the Duke of Chou, those who occupied the throne introduced rites and festivals, arms and punishments; they also established fiefs and farms, shrines and schools, so that all the people

would be brought under beneficent moral and cultural influences. Government was in accord with the Way, and political rule was exercised through moral virtue; the self-cultivation of the ruler was the means by which the country was governed. After the Duke of Chou, sages were unable to occupy the throne. Privately, therefore, they gathered together with men of accomplished virtue and sterling character for study in their own homes. They said that the Way of the early kings was perfect in every respect, either for general practice or for individual application. Therefore they formulated it in writing according to various topics and subtopics, which would help them to cultivate themselves and also to teach all the people. They did not accomplish what [the able ministers] I, Fu, Chou, and Chao had done [in earlier times], it is true, but inasmuch as they deemed everyday human relations to be their proper concern, considered the achievement of social order and the security of the people to be their supreme task, and wanted all the people of the world to follow the same way, there was no deviation whatever [from the ancient Way]. The four virtues of humanity, righteousness, decorum, and wisdom they held to be the greatest and most important in life. More than this they did not say.

The decline of the Chou was followed by the Warring States period. Rites and music were allowed to deteriorate and were then abandoned. Warfare raged day after day. Steady decline led to the rise of the ruthless Ch'in, who burned the classics and had Confucian scholars killed. The Way of the early kings vanished from the earth completely.

With the rise of the Han dynasty the Books of Odes and History came into a certain vogue, and Confucian scholarship was favorably regarded. Still at that time the government adopted its own political system and its own regulations, while the surviving documents of the early kings were relegated to learned men dealing with the past. Thereupon the Confucianists of that day made the transmission of this heritage the private and exclusive business of their own schools. Thus the conduct of government and the teaching of the Way took separate paths.

In addition, the interpretation of portents in terms of the five elements theory became fashionable. Everything in heaven and earth was reckoned in fives. In this way the virtue of faith was joined to the four virtues of humanity, righteousness, decorum, and wisdom, to make up the five norms corresponding to the five elements. Some looked upon them as part

of man's inherent nature which is not subject to increase and decrease, like the five organs hanging inside the body or the four limbs growing outside. Earlier it had been on the basis of actualities that the teaching concerning the four virtues had been formulated; now these virtues were taken as fixed and unchanging things within us. Thus the first great change took place in the ancient teaching. Thereafter Confucian scholarship was turned into the study of textual commentaries, the mastery of literary style, and the art of making rhetorical allusions. Thus the Way of the Sages was left in darkness and obscurity for more than a thousand years.

Nevertheless, even though their theories were superficial, still because of the [Han Confucianists'] proximity in time to the ancients, the essential truth concerning the Way and virtue, as well as of human nature and the Mandate of Heaven, survived from the ancient tradition. In no time, however, the teachings of Gautama Buddha and Lao Tzu threw the world into a commotion. Not only were their rituals enthralling, but also their doctrines concerning "consciousness of the mind" and "seeing one's own nature" were so lofty and dazzling that scholars and officials, upon hearing of them, eagerly followed after such teachings. So enthusiastic and enslaved were some that they considered Gautama Buddha and Lao Tzu to have surpassed Yao and Shun and advanced beyond Confucius. This was worse still than merely separating the conduct of government from the teaching of the Way!

In the Sung dynasty true Confucianists appeared to champion the Way of the Sages and denounce heretics. The profundity of their scholarship and the thoroughness of their research went far beyond that of the Han and Tang Confucianists. Nevertheless, they considered man's true nature to be principle in its disembodied and unmanifested state, and believed that the eradication of physical desires was the method for attaining sagehood. As for the various works and undertakings of life, the Sung Neo-Confucianists did not go so far as to declare them nonessential or diversionary, but did in effect regard them as less than ideal pursuits. They insisted that man's true nature must be sought in an original unformed and undetermined state. So humanity, righteousness, decorum, and wisdom could not be seen or heard any more than sound within a bell or fire within a stone [before they are struck]. Names they were, but not real things. Thus Confucianism underwent a second change.

Since then, because [Neo-Confucianism] has been accepted in the schools for so long and become so completely systematized, entwining and entangling everything, patching here and thatching there, its bonds could not be broken. While there has been some leeway in interpretation within the system, yet in the final analysis no one has been able to break outside its confines. Restricting themselves to the commentaries and interpretations of the Sung and Ming dynasties, scholars have tried to evaluate and criticize them without ever attempting to trace out the history of the past two thousand years or more in order to find out for themselves the source of these ideas. Unhesitatingly they accept present-day teaching as the teaching of the Three Dynasties of old. They do not realize that it has endured so many vicissitudes and changes that they could hardly be dealt with in a few words.

My father's belief in returning to the ancient source [of Confucianism] was not the blithe expression of a momentary personal fancy. He had been under the spell of the [Neo-Confucian] philosophy of "human nature and principle" for years. At first he was a reverent and wholehearted follower of this teaching, but then as he got further into it found himself involved in controversial questions requiring further research. A few doubtful points he studied from all angles, analyzing and classifying, comparing and contrasting them until at long last he became aware of the fact that present-day Confucianism was no longer the Way of the Three Dynasties.

The Neo-Confucianist's Erroneous View of Human Nature

These extracts from Itō Tōgai's *Critique of the Doctrine of Returning to One's Original Nature* (*Fukusei-ben*) argue that the Neo-Confucian philosophy of human nature is essentially Buddhist or Taoist in character and antithetical to the original ethical doctrines of Confucius.

[From Inoue, *Rinri shen*, V, 210-11]

The teaching of the sages was not limited to a single method, but all of the methods used were intended without a single exception to achieve full development through cumulative achievement. . . . The teachings of Buddha and Lao Tzu have been expressed in different ways but all have been based without exception on the theory of returning to the original state of nature. Lao Tzu, for instance, wants to dispense with humanity and righteousness, and put an end to rites and music, in order

to return to so-called "vacuity." As for the Buddhists, they also want to extinguish human desires, dispel illusions, transcend transmigration, and through realization of what they call Enlightenment (Bodhi) or Suchness (Tathatā) attain to the Buddhahood. Here the return to Nirvāṇa and return to Suchness are being emphasized.

The Way as understood among Confucianists of later times has emphasized living according to moral standards and social norms; rites and music, justice and administration are taken seriously, and, of course, Buddhism and Taoism are considered by them inadequate to serve as the Way. In practice, however, these later Confucianists have also tried to eradicate physical desire and modify man's physical nature in order to return to the original state. As to what they consider the Way, they differ; but as to their methods, there is no difference at all.

Nevertheless, all living things have some root or basis for their existence, from which by tiny increments they attain full size or by imperceptible degrees manifest their full brilliance. There is not a single instance in which mere return to the original state has led to fulfillment or completion. Only such fixed things as a clean mirror or still water may return to their original state by getting rid of dirt and dust. But active, living things develop gradually; not only is this true of running water and sprouting plants, but of all human undertakings as well; and not merely of all human undertakings, but also of human progress in the Way and even the sage's achievement of virtue.

Confucius at fifteen had dedicated himself to study, but only at seventy was he able to say, "I follow my heart's desire without trespassing the rules of conduct." The Sage's gifts were of course extraordinary, but only with advancing age did his virtues shine more and more resplendently and his knowledge reach such a state that he knew what no other man did. If he had only had to return to the original state of nature, the excellence of non-trespassing the rules of conduct, which he achieved at seventy, should have been attained in his boyhood or infancy. With his proverbial genius both in knowledge and in conduct, what could possibly have prevented him from achieving that state of non-trespassing the rules of conduct until the age of seventy?

Consequently one can see that even the Sage's virtue attained its fullness only by dint of steady cultivation. All of the great men and heroes in history, who have set an example for all time either by the attainment

Selections from Ito Jinsai (1627-1705), Rongo kogi (The Original
Meaning of the [Confucian] Analects)

[Analects:] "The eastern and northern barbarians who possess rulers are [very much] unlike the Middle Kingdom [China] which lacks one.

[Ito Jinsai's gloss:] Confucius was extremely attentive to the slightest change in customs of the times.... What a tremendous change he notes here! Although the states of China are supposedly that area of the world where ritual and righteousness exist, he says that China does not measure up to the barbarians. That is why he wrote the Spring and Autumn Annals.... In it, he called "barbarian" any Chinese lord who adopted alien rituals, and he treated as part of the "Middle Kingdom" any alien who advanced to adopt the rituals of the Middle Kingdom. Confucius praised the good as good, and hated the evil as evil. How can this distinction [of civilized and barbarian] be [arbitrarily] applied to Chinese and barbarian peoples? (p. 32)

[Analects:] The Master wanted to settle amongst the nine barbarian tribes of the east. Someone said, "But could you put up with their uncouth ways?" The Master said, "A gentleman once settled there, so what uncouthness can there be?"

[Ito Jinsai's gloss:] Confucius once said, "The barbarians with their ruler are [very much] unlike the Middle Kingdom which lacks one." From this we can see that he long held the nine barbarian tribes close to his heart. The present passage and the lament he uttered in the "put to sea on a raft" passage [quoted and analyzed below] are identical in meaning.

No matter where under Heaven or where on earth [they may live], all men are equally men. Even a barbarian, if he but possesses ritual and righteousness, is a part of the Middle Kingdom. Even a Chinese, should he lack ritual and righteousness, cannot escape being barbarian. Shun was born an eastern barbarian and King Wen of Chou was born a western barbarian, but their being aliens made no difference [to their becoming sages]. Though the countries of the nine barbarian tribes [which include Japan] are far away, none lies outside the universe. their inhabitants possess the ordinary nature of all other men. Indeed, their simplicity is always that of faithfulness, while [Middle Kingdom] Civilization is often that of falsity. No wonder Confucius "wanted to settle amongst" them. (pp. 137-138)

[Analects:] The Master said, "The Way is not being carried out; I shall put to sea on a raft. The one who would follow me will surely be Yu."

[Ito Jinsai's gloss:] This passage means the same as the "The Master wanted to settle amongst the nine barbarian tribes of the east" passage [quoted and analyzed above].

It surely represents Confucius's long-cherished aspiration. [In China] at that time, rulers were foolish and ministers acted haughtily, so Confucius had no place to go [to implement his ideals]. Hence he wished "to put to sea on a raft" and morally transform island barbarians so that their customs would be those of [Middle Kingdom] ritual and righteousness. Here we see the Sage's heart, which seeks to transform morally the entire world.... Emperor Jimmu's first year of rule upon founding our nation corresponds to the seventeenth year of the Chou emperor King Hui's reign [660 B.C.]. But here in Japan the statuses of sovereign and minister have been strictly upheld down to the present day. We revere our sovereigns as though they were Heaven, and we honor them as though they were divinities. Truly, in this respect China is not our equal. (p.138)

12 [Analects:] Tzu-kung said, "I do not suppose Kuan Chung [7th-century B.C. minister in state of Ch'i who ruled by force and would later be considered the father of "Legalism" in China] was a benevolent man. Not only did he not die for Prince Chiu, but he lived to help Duke Huan of Ch'i [r. 685-643 B.C.], who had the Prince killed." The Master said, "Kuan Chung helped Duke Huan to become the leader of the feudal lords and to rectify all under Heaven. To this day, the common people still enjoy the benefit of his acts. Had it not been for Kuan Chung, we might well be wearing our hair down and folding our robes to the left...."

[Ito Jinsai's gloss:] The benefit received [by Confucius and his people] was that they did not become barbarian; the righteous meaning of distinctions between ruler and minister, and father and son remained intact.... In the Warring States period [403-221 B.C.], the common people's suffering was extreme: Only because of Kuan Chung could they nonetheless remain "people of Middle Kingdom Civilization." If not for Kuan Chung, they would have become "a barbarian people...." (p. 212)

ARAI HAKUSEKI

A Critical Approach to Japanese History

In this letter to Sakuma Dōgan, Arai Hakuseki discusses his aims as a historian, his dissatisfaction with the Mito historians' uncritical acceptance of traditional accounts, and the need for objective research. He also reflects upon his public career and its aftermath.

[From *Arai Hakuseki zenshū*, V, 517-20]

You are very kind to inquire about my writings. . . . As to *The Understanding of Ancient History* (*Koshi-tsū*), it has little appeal for ordinary men; but it is likely to startle people and arouse suspicion. It is a modern interpretation of the Divine Age. Only one copy of it was made, and that was taken to Kaga. *The Manual of Government Precedents* (*Keisei-tenrei*) is a compilation which can be kept anywhere without any trouble arising over it. I will have the pages counted very soon; if I remember correctly, it consists of twelve volumes. The collected *Policies and Acts of Government* (*Hōsaku*) was written partly for my own amusement; its loss would not be serious. As I had finished most of what concerned my own self, I started last year to deal with debatable points in our national history under the title *Problems of History* (*Shigi*), putting it in the form of questions and answers. Early last winter I was able in three chapters to discuss the accounts in the *Nihongi*'s two chapters on the Age of the Gods, as well as the *Kujihongi* and *Kojiki*, insofar as they corroborated or conflicted with one another. Minor problems are left out and only major issues discussed. Of the three volumes, one is a general review of *Kujihongi*, *Kojiki*, and *Nihongi*, together with the six national chronicles; and in the other two volumes problems of the Divine Age are treated. My hope is that they will clarify the position I took when I wrote *The Understanding of Ancient History* (*Koshi-tsū*). . . . After the Age of the Gods was finished, I moved on to the reign of the emperors. Because of illness, however, I will need more time to finish it. If I survive the illness and become strong enough to resume work, I am hoping to finish the parts covered in the *Nihongi*, though the present state of my health does not warrant such optimism.

I have been expecting that the history of our country being undertaken at Mito would correct errors in the national chronicles, but through

contact with the staff of the Mito Historical Commission, I have found that all ancient events are to be left as described in the *Nihongi*, *Shoku Nihongi*, and other chronicles. If that is the case, the true history of Japan, as far as I can see and prejudiced as I may be in that, will be left unwritten.

Japanese sources on this period are scarce, it is true, but in the Chinese histories, starting with the *History of the Latter Han Dynasty*, there are accounts dealing with our country and much accurate information is given. This is regarded, however, as so much hearsay and prevarication coming from foreign sources, and is passed-over without any scrutiny or study. Then again, the three Hân States of Korea were overseas domains of our country for four hundred years, and their records often confirm or supplement our information, but they are similarly disregarded. Thus the Mito historians rely on the *Chronicles*, nothing but the *Chronicles*; and so the history of our country is turning into an account of dreams told in a dream. This old man's *Problems of History*, even if he only succeeds in completing the discussion to the end of the *Nihongi*, will serve as a reliable record of the facts. Its completion, however, is simply up to the will of Heaven. When young, I may have conceived a plan, but lacked the ability to execute it; in middle age, official responsibilities left me no time; and in old age, when I have had the leisure for it, my mind has lost its vigor and everything is running against my expectations.

Concerning Chinese history and Confucianism there are almost too many books to be studied. In Japan, however, there are no books that give a critical examination of historical facts and serve a practical purpose in government. So wretched has been the state of historical writing that I was roused to do something about it, but the circumstances are such as to preclude any hope of success. Something might be accomplished if other scholars were invited to join hands in the project, but in my old age I am not inclined to do this. Last year it so happened that Mito sent me a message encouraging me to launch this undertaking, but in my reply I discouraged them, adding that it would do no good to them and no good to myself. . . .

Men customarily wish to be known for their scholarship and good reputation, but since my reputation for scholarship reached China, Korea, the Ryukyus, and even Holland, visitors from those countries occasionally

asked how I was faring, and their interest in me was one cause of my misfortunes. In view of my advanced age, I have had to consider how my children and grandchildren might suffer from this. Now for seven or eight years I have tried to stay out of the limelight, and I am told that my critics are decreasing in number. For these reasons I am extremely reluctant to let my writings appear in public. Frankly, I am entrusting myself to the judgment of men a century or two after my death.

A Superstition Concerning Era Names

In East Asian countries great significance was attached to the choice of the names by which periods of imperial rule were identified, since these era names were regarded as "signs of the times." Hayashi Hakō, minister of education by hereditary succession, cited Chinese authorities of the Ming dynasty in his successful attempt to have the Chinese character meaning "correct" or "true" declared taboo in era names, on the ground that it had brought bad luck to previous rulers who used it. This passage from Arai Hakuseki's autobiography argues in the name of Confucian rationalism against such a superstitious interpretation.

[From *Arai Hakuseki zenshū*, III, 127-30]

It is true that Chinese of the Ming dynasty have asserted, in connection with the choice of era names, that inasmuch as misfortune has been the lot of those eras which have had the ideograph *shō* [meaning "correct," "true"] in their designations, this ideograph should be debarred from use. Indeed, the same argument appears in works other than those cited by Nobuatsu (Hakō). Nevertheless this does not represent the thinking of a true gentleman.¹ Whether a state rises or falls, whether a ruler enjoys long life or suffers untimely death, depends either upon the will of Heaven or on the actions of men. Fortune or misfortune does not come from the use of particular words in an era name. . . .

An era name does not differ from the designation for a month. . . . If the use of the ideograph *shō* in an era name augurs ill, its use in a month name must likewise augur ill. But from the days of the ancient sages to our own time, the first month of the year has always been known as the *shō* month. Confucius, speaking of the "four beginnings" in his *Spring and Autumn Annals*, refers to the *shō* month as the beginning of the year. If the ideograph *shō* is indeed an unlucky word, there has

¹ That is, a man with a sense of moral responsibility, who does not resort to superstition in explaining his failures and misfortunes.

never been an auspicious year, for every year of every dynasty since Confucius' time has started with a *shō* month. This should be obvious enough to all, but if anyone considers my argument to be trifling I should still like to be told why the ideograph *shō* is unlucky in era names and not so in month names. . . .

Ever since the adoption of era names in our country the events of era after era, if examined closely, may be seen to include both lucky and unlucky events, and no matter what the character used in era names, each has endured misfortunes. The reason is that for both China and Japan era names have been changed with the appearance of heavenly signs or earthly calamities, such as floods, droughts, and epidemics. Thus, none of the ideographs which have been adopted in era names has been entirely free of unfortunate associations. If names brought misfortune, it would be best to return to the ancient custom of using none. But even in remote antiquity when era names were not used either in China or Japan, states rose and fell and rulers enjoyed long life or suffered untimely death era after era. Further, I have met with men from Italy, Holland, and other lands who say that only two or three countries use era names, and that the rest do not, speaking rather in terms of so many thousands and hundreds of years since the creation of the world. Yet, few countries in Europe in the past twenty years have escaped upheavals caused by the death of rulers and struggles for succession. Last winter and this spring, they said, many have been killed in war. How do you account for such disasters? Even if era names are not used, decline and destruction are inevitable when heaven so decrees or men fail to conduct themselves properly.

On the Regulation of Shipping and Trade at Nagasaki

In his autobiography *Oritaku shibanoki* Arai gives the following account of the measures which he recommended for the strict control of shipping and cargoes at Nagasaki, in order to eliminate bootlegging and the steady drain of gold and silver from Japan. Here his restrictive policy is typical of the traditional Sino-Confucian concern for economic control at the expense of economic expansion.

[From *Arai Hakuseki zenshū*, III, 166-68]

During the spring of this year, in the second month, the opinions of the Port Commissioner and other local officials of Nagasaki were sought

powers and broad knowledge of cultural history which he displayed at a time when the historical sense was almost wholly lacking in the study of religion.

TOMINAGA NAKAMOTO

Testament of an Old Man

Having provoked great hostility from the established religions because of his unorthodox views, Tominaga found it prudent to represent this brief work as expressing the opinions of an anonymous old man rather than himself. It nevertheless provides a convenient summary of his own philosophy and his critique of established teachings.

[From *Nihon jurin sōsho*, VI, *Okina no fumi*, pp. 1-14]

This writing is the work of a certain Old Man, and was lent to me by a friend. In spite of the fact that this is a degenerate age, the author appears to be a wise old man. Departing from the three teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shinto, he advocates what he calls the Way of Truth. Truly, it seemed to me that if one conducted oneself in accordance with what the Old Man said, one would make no mistakes in life. And having thus subscribed to his teaching, I asked my friend what the Old Man's name was, only to be told that he did not know and there was no way of finding out. The Old Man must have been like those personages in ancient times who chose to live in obscurity that they might be free to say what they thought. Wishing to preserve this as my own family teaching and also to pass it on to others, I have copied it all down from beginning to end.

Gemmon 3 [1738]: 11th Month, Ban no Nakamoto.

1. In the world today there are three religions: Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shinto. Some think they represent the three different countries, India, China and Japan; while others consider them essentially one, or else dispute with one another over the truth or falsity of each. However, the way which may be called the Way of all ways is different from these, and what each of these three teachings calls the Way is not in accord with the Way of Truth. The reason is that Buddhism is the Way of India, and Confucianism is the Way of China. Because they are

peculiar to these countries, they are not the Way of Japan. Shinto is the Way of Japan, but because of the difference in time, it is not the Way for the present generation. Some may think that the Way is always the Way despite differences in nationality and differences in time; but the Way is called the Way because of its practicality, and a Way which is not practical is not the true Way. Thus, the Way as taught by the three teachings mentioned above is not a Way practicable in present-day Japan.

VI. What is the Way of Truth, then, that will be practicable in present-day Japan? It is simply this: Be normal in everything you do. Consider today's work of primary importance. Keep your mind upright. Comport yourself properly. Be careful in speech. Be respectful in manner and bearing. Care for and honor your parents.

(The Old Man's footnote refers to the [Buddhist Sūtra] *Rokkōhai-kyō*, where the five human relationships are specially dealt with. Confucianists also consider these relationships important and the Shinto decrees likewise mention these five things. Therefore just as these three things are indispensable to the Three Teachings, so are they to the Way of Truth.)

If you have a master, serve him well. If you have children, educate them well. If you have retainers, manage them well. If you have an elder brother, show him every respect; if you have a younger brother, show him every sympathy. Toward old people, be thoughtful; toward young people, be loving. Do not forget your ancestors. Be mindful of preserving harmony in your household. When associating with men, be completely sincere. Do not indulge in evil pleasures. Revere those who are superior, while not despising the ignorant. What you would not have done to yourself, do not do to others. Be not harsh; be not rash. Be not obstinate or stubborn. Be not demanding or impatient. Even when you are angry, do not go too far. When you are happy, be so within bounds. You may take pleasure in life, but do not indulge in sensuality. Be not lost in sorrow; whether you have enough or not, accept your lot as good fortune and be content with it. Things which you ought not to take, even if they seem insignificant, do not take; when you ought to give, do not hesitate to do so even if it means giving up all, even your country. As to the quality of your food and clothing, let it conform to your station in life and avoid extravagance. Do not be stingy, do not steal, do not lie. Do not lose yourself in lust, be temperate in drinking. Do not kill anything that does

no harm to mankind. Be careful in the nourishment of your body; do not eat bad things; do not eat too much.

(The Old Man has a footnote saying: In the [Buddhist] Yoga Shāstra cases of untimely death are listed under nine types such as: 1) too much eating; 2) untimely eating; 3) eating again before food has digested; and so forth. The *Analekts* too say that one should not eat in the wrong proportions or at the wrong time, or in excessive amounts. They all have insight into the Way of Truth.)

In your free time study the arts of self-improvement; try to be better informed.

(The Old Man's footnote says: The *Analekts* has it that when one has energy to spare, one should study the polite arts. The [Buddhist] *Vinaya* also says that to understand order and gradation, history should be studied. Also the young bhikshus are permitted to study arithmetic. These too are in accord with the Way of Truth.)

To write with present-day script, to use present-day vernacular, to eat present-day food, to dress in present-day clothes, to use present-day utensils, to live in present-day houses, to follow present-day regulations, to mix with present-day people, to do nothing bad, to do all good things—that is the Way of Truth. That is the Way which is practicable in present-day Japan.

(All of these things are already mentioned in Confucian and Buddhist writings, and do not need to be made a special point of. But the Old Man is presenting these ideas as if they were something new of his own, so as to induce people to discard all that is useless and go straight to the Way of Truth. His aim is truly praiseworthy.)

VIII. That it is difficult to invent any system of teaching which can do without the Way of Truth can be surmised from the fact that Buddha preached the Five Commandments and Ten Virtues; called greed, anger, and folly the Three Poisons; and declared filial piety to parents and loyal service to teachers to be one of the Three Blessings. "Not to do anything bad, but to do everything good and keep one's motive pure, is the essence of all the Buddha's teaching," it is said.

Confucius also talked about filial piety, brotherliness, loyalty, and tolerance. He taught fidelity and reverent devotion; Wisdom, Humanity, and Valor he called the Three Cardinal Virtues. Restraint of anger,

stifling of passion, correction of mistakes and conversion to goodness were also emphasized. "The superior man is always poised in action, while the inferior man is ill at ease," he said.

Shinto people also taught cleanliness, simplicity and honesty.

These are all in accord with the Way of Truth, well expressed and to the point, each resembling the other. As long as the followers of the Three Teachings abide by their respective beliefs, without bias or prejudice, not giving themselves over to the strange and exotic, but living in the society of men to the end of their lives—then they are also following the Way of Truth.

(In the foregoing the Old Man has expressed his main ideas. He does not mean to discard the Three Teachings in their entirety. He simply wants every one to act upon the Way of Truth.)

At this point, however, the Old Man has his own theory. Generally speaking it has been the rule that all those who have started teaching what they call the Way as handed down from ancient times, have inevitably appealed to the authority of a Founder, while at the same time trying to go further than any predecessor has gone. Posterity, however, has been ignorant of this fact and it has resulted in great confusion.

Tominaga proceeds to explain how the teaching of the Buddha and the various schools of Buddhism successively appealed to some earlier authority, while at the same time either reacting against or attempting to surpass their immediate predecessors. These teachings, instead of representing a pure and untouched revelation from the past, were actually the product of a considerable development in human hands. The same pattern of evolution is indicated for the Confucian tradition. Finally he takes up Shinto.

XII. As to Shinto, it is what certain medieval Japanese dressed up as ancient traditions of the Divine Ages and called the Way of Japan in an attempt to outdo Confucianism and Buddhism. In the time of Ābhāsvara in India, for instance, or of P'an Ku in China,¹ there were no such definite teachings as Buddhism and Confucianism. What later came to be known as Buddhism and Confucianism were wholly purposeful and conscious creations of men in later times. In exactly the same way there could be no such thing as Shinto in the Divine Ages. The first Shinto taught was the syncretism known as Dual Shinto, which was a combina-

¹ The first beings to appear in these countries.

tion of Confucianism and Buddhism arbitrarily put together to suit the occasion. Then followed the Shinto called *Honjaku Engi* which regarded Shinto deities as Japanese manifestations of Indian Gods and Buddhas. This was an attempt on the part of Buddhists envious over the rise in popularity of Shinto, who taught Shinto outwardly but inwardly wanted to capture it for Buddhism. Then came another form of Shinto known as *Yui-itau Sôgen* [the One and Only Original Source]. It was an attempt to transcend Confucianism and Buddhism, and to proclaim Shinto as pure and unique. All three of these made their appearance in medieval times.³ A new type of Shinto that has recently appeared is known as *Ôdô Shintô*, the Shinto of the Sovereign Way. It teaches that Shinto has no particular way of its own, and that the Way of the Sovereign is the Way of the Gods. There is also a form of Shinto which professes Shinto outwardly but inwardly identifies it with Confucianism.⁴ None of these things existed in Divine Antiquity; they have simply arisen from the struggle of each one to get ahead of the other. But ignorant people of the world, not realizing this, believe one of these to be the True Way, identify themselves as partisans of this teaching or that, and start violent controversies. It is at once pitiful and ridiculous, to this Old Man's way of thinking.

XV. The vice of Confucianism is rhetoric. Rhetoric is what we call oratory. China is a country which greatly delights in this. In the teaching of the Way and in the education of men, if one lacks proficiency in speech, he will find no one to believe in or follow him. For example, take the word Rites (*rit*). It originally signified simply the ceremonies on the four great occasions in life: coming of age, marriage, mourning, and religious festivals. But as you know they talk now of what is the Rite of a man as the son of his father, what is the Rite of a man as the subject of his sovereign; they speak of it in connection with human relationships, they speak of it in regard to seeing, hearing, speaking, and acting. They also assert that Rites owes its inception to the division of heaven and earth, and embraces the whole universe. Take another example, that of music (*gakû*). The character *gakû* originally meant to be entertained by the music of bell and drum. But then they began to

³ Concerning the foregoing types of Shinto, see Chapter XIII.

⁴ The *Shin'ka Shintô* of Yamazaki Ansai.

say that music was not necessarily confined to bell and drum. Music, they said, was the harmony of heaven and earth. You can see the way they talk. Take again the character for "sage" which originally signified a man of intelligence. They have gradually stretched it to the point where a sage is the highest type of humanity, even capable of working miracles. Thus we know that when Confucius talked of humanity, Tseng Tzu of humanity and righteousness, Tzu Ssu of sincerity, Mencius of the Four Beginnings and the goodness of human nature, Hsün Tzu of the badness of human nature, the *Book of Filial Piety* of filial piety, and the *Great Learning* about [what the superior man] loves and hates, the *Book of Changes* about heaven and earth—all of these are just ways of presenting the plainest and simplest things in life with an oratorical flourish in order to arouse interest and make people follow them. Chinese rhetoric is like Indian magic, and neither of them is particularly needed in Japan.

(The Old Man speaks here of the "plainest and simplest things in life," but he also knew full well that the Way transcends all else, and that some things are extremely difficult to explain and transmit. So you must not be misled by what he says or fail to grasp his true meaning.)

XVI. The vice of Shinto is secrecy, divine secrets, secret and private transmission, such that everything is kept under the veil of secrecy. Hiding things leads to lying and theft. Magic and oratory are interesting to see or to listen to—they thus have some merit. But this vice of Shinto is of the lowest sort. In olden times people were simple, and so secrecy may have served certain educational purposes, but the world today is a corrupt world in which many people are addicted to lying and stealing, and it is a deplorable thing for Shinto teachers to act in such a way as to protect and preserve these evils. Even in such lowly things as the Nô drama and the Tea Ceremony, we find them all imitating Shinto, devising methods of secret transmission and authentication and attaching a fixed price to the transmission of these "secrets" for selfish gain and benefit. It is truly lamentable. If you ask the reason why they devise such practices, their answer is that their students are immature and untried, and must not be granted too ready an access to their teachings. It sounds plausible, but any teaching which is kept secret and difficult of access, and then is imparted for a price, cannot be considered in accord with the Way of Truth.