

tions unanswered, which, as events brought nearer the final crisis in foreign relations, were to be resolved in an unexpected manner. Thus for some of the Mito leaders, themselves prominent members of the Tokugawa family and desirous of strengthening its position rather than abandoning it, the expression "Revere the Emperor" represented a call to national unity, and not what it later became to proponents of the imperial restoration: a call for surrender to the emperor of functions long performed by the shogunate. Similarly, the cry "Repel the Barbarian," which at first gave vent to a xenophobic rejection of all intercourse with the West, was in a few years sufficiently moderated to allow for "opening the country" as the only practicable way of building up Japan's strength against the West. In the rapid evolution of Japanese thinking about these questions, Sakuma Shōzan and his disciple Yoshida Shōin stood as important links between the old order and the new.

SAKUMA SHŌZAN: EASTERN ETHICS AND WESTERN SCIENCE

A samurai from mountainous Shinano Province, Sakuma Shōzan (Zōzan, 1811–1864) completed his Confucian classical studies in Edo under Satō Issai (see chap. 34), a noted scholar and literary stylist who taught under the aegis of the official Hayashi school but was also influenced by the intuitionist philosophy of Wang Yangming. Shōzan's own writings, and those of his disciple Yoshida Shōin, betray this influence in their emphasis on the inseparability of knowledge and action. Shōzan nonetheless felt that his master had gone too far in the direction of subjectivism, to the neglect of Zhu Xi's objective "investigation of things." That he subsequently became interested in Western science and technology, however, was not a purely logical development of this early concern for Zhu Xi's "investigation of things." He devoted himself mainly to teaching classical studies until suddenly thrust into a situation requiring much more practical knowledge than he possessed. In 1841 his lord, Sanada Yukitsura, who had considerable influence in shogunate circles by reason of both his family connections and his personal talents, was appointed to its highest council of advisers and put in charge of Japan's coastal defenses. As a trusted counselor of his lord, Shōzan found himself confronting the most difficult and fateful question of the day: how to deal with the threat of Western naval power in Japanese waters.

Despite being a believer in "revering the emperor and repelling the barbarian," Shōzan was not blinded by this antiforeignism to the realities of the situation but immediately began studying Western gunnery as it was taught by two Japanese pioneers in this field: Takashima Shūhan and Egawa Tan'an. The eight-point program that Shōzan subsequently submitted to Lord Sanada as the

basis for the shogunate's policy reveals both his firm adherence to the seclusion policy and his espousal of technical developments from the West:

1. Fortifications must be erected at all strategic points on the coast and equipped with adequate artillery.
2. The export of copper through the Dutch must be suspended, and the metal used for casting thousands of guns be distributed to all points.
3. Large merchant ships must be built so as to prevent the loss of rice through the wreck of small coastal vessels, which are all that the exclusion edicts allow.
4. Maritime trade must be supervised by capable officials.
5. Warships of foreign style must be constructed, and a force of trained naval officers be assembled.
6. Schools must be established throughout the country, and modern education provided, so that "even the most stupid men and women may understand loyalty, piety, and chastity."
7. Rewards and punishments must be made clear, and government must be conducted benevolently but firmly, so as to strengthen the popular mind.
8. A system of selecting and employing men of ability in official posts must be established.¹³

While noting Shōzan's bold advocacy of Western military methods, we must not regard his references to Confucian virtues and precepts as mere lip service to tradition. The emphasis in articles 6 and 8 on the need for universal schooling and meritocratic recruitment had been articles of Neo-Confucian reform since the Song period and were echoed frequently by Japanese scholars. Their advocacy in the late Tokugawa period produced an increasing restlessness and resistance to the feudal system of inherited aristocratic position. For Shōzan, at this critical stage, such reforms were urgently needed, since support for such a stupendous national undertaking as he called for could be guaranteed only by intensifying the moral indoctrination of the people and improving the quality of government so as to ensure popular backing.

Shōzan's proposals met with strong opposition, however, and when his lord was finally forced to relinquish his high place in the shogunate councils, Shōzan found himself free to devote his full energies to Western studies. This involved learning Dutch, in order to have direct access to sources of knowledge made available only through the Dutch trading mission at Deshima. For in-

13. As summarized in Sansom, *The Western World and Japan*, p. 254.

stance, by following an encyclopedia translated from Dutch, he experimented in making glass and refining certain chemicals. By 1848, he had become proficient enough to cast cannon and make small arms. These activities, and the steps he also took to improve animal husbandry in his native region, were supported by Lord Sanada to develop and strengthen his own fief of Matsushiro. They also served to make Shōzan more widely known as a leader in adopting Western methods.

Meanwhile, through his lord and others high in the Tokugawa government, Shōzan continued to press for building up land fortifications and a Western-type navy. Unsuccessful in this, he still had the satisfaction of seeing his hopes for a modern navy carried forward by one of his disciples, Katsu Awa (or Kaishū [Sea Vessel]), who later studied naval science and construction in the United States and, as the first minister of the navy in the Meiji regime, became known as "the father of the Japanese navy."

Another disciple of Shōzan during these years was the aforementioned Yoshida Shōin, who met a far different fate in his attempt earlier to go abroad for study. With the encouragement of his teacher, Shōin had tried to stow away on one of Matthew Perry's ships in 1854, only to be turned over to the shogunal authorities and imprisoned for violating the seclusion laws. Shōzan himself would probably have been punished far more severely for his part in this "crime" had not influential persons interceded to reverse the death penalty for both him and his disciple. After less than a year in jail, each was released in the custody of his home domain for domiciliary confinement.

Undeterred and irrepressible, Shōzan continued to take an active part in the debate on political and military questions. His prison diary ended with the following statement, echoing a famous utterance by Confucius:

At twenty I realized I had a part to play in the life of my state.

At thirty I realized I had a part to play in the life of the entire nation.

At forty I realized I had a part to play in the life of the entire world.¹⁴

In this sequential development, Shōzan speaks as if one stage naturally evolved from the other, his horizons gradually extending outward like the *Great Learning's* sequence of maturing from self to family to state to the world at large. He thought in this way not because the Neo-Confucian "investigation of things" necessarily led him to the kind of technical learning developed in the West—actually something forced on him by the advance of Western power—but because of his Neo-Confucian conviction that nothing lay beyond the scope of "the unity of principle and its diverse particularizations." In other words, Western technology and scientific principles could be only a particularized

expression of underlying universal principles inherent in the Way. Neo-Confucian scholarly learning was limited in its own bookish way and did not exhaust all possible manifestations of principle.

Up to this time, Shōzan's advocacy of Western methods still did not imply that Japan itself should be opened to the West. In 1858, however, the signing of a commercial treaty with the United States ended the shogunate's seclusion policy. Accepting this state of affairs, Shōzan eventually became known as an active proponent of the new policy of "opening the country" (*kaikoku-ron*), to which the Tokugawa were now unavoidably committed. Meanwhile, opposition to the shogunate and to intercourse with the West centered increasingly on the emperor in Kyoto, and Shōzan, fearing the effects of this cleavage on Japan's capacity to resist Western encroachment, devoted his efforts to bridging the gulf between the two courts. In the early 1860s, a compromise party appeared in both Edo and Kyoto, calling for collaboration between the shogunate and the imperial court under the slogan "Union of Civil and Military [Government]" (*kōbu gattai*). The aim of this movement was, on the one hand, to uphold the policy of "opening the country" and, on the other, to grant a greater voice in government to the imperial court and its supporters among the so-called outer daimyo. In the interests of such a compromise, Shōzan offered his services as an emissary from the shogunate to the Kyoto court, convinced that he could persuade the emperor of the necessity of "opening the country." It was on this mission to Kyoto that Shōzan was murdered by assassins from the southwestern fief of Chōshū, who were bitterly opposed to the Tokugawa and any move toward reconciliation.

Besides being identified with the policy of "opening the country" to the West and the movement for "Union of Civil and Military Government," Shōzan's name is remembered especially in connection with a slogan he made famous: "Eastern ethics and Western science" (*tōyō no dōtoku, seiyō no gakugei*). In these few words, Shōzan summed up his belief in the need to defend Japan and preserve its "Eastern" (mainly Confucian) ethical heritage while adopting the new technical knowledge of the West. No doubt, in so acclaiming the respective virtues of East and West, Shōzan failed to anticipate many of the frictions that might develop between them and the difficulty of preserving traditional values in the midst of the technological revolution that lay ahead. Nevertheless, his simple formula was more than just a facile cosmopolitan gesture or the hasty contrivance of a desperate man, hoping, in the face of overwhelming Western superiority, to salvage something from the wreckage of his own civilization. It satisfied at least two of the basic conditions for Japan's survival in the modern world: the need for developing military power sufficient to hold off the West while preserving the unity of national purpose and action that, under the circumstances, could spring only from common and well-established traditions. Thus the formula proved workable enough to serve a whole generation of leaders during the Meiji Restoration and to provide the

14. *Analects* 2:4.

basis for a modernization program of unparalleled magnitude in the late nineteenth century. What is noteworthy in this is not that the pursuit of these two aims brought them into continual conflict but that Japan's leaders and its people, adhering as much to received values as they were guided by the vision of a modernized nation, managed to limit these contradictions and conflicts sufficiently so as not to disrupt the whole enterprise.

Shōzan was not the only man of this era in world history to discover such an answer to the predicament of Asians suddenly confronted with the power and expanding energy of the West. In China, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, essentially the same solution was advanced under similar slogans, most prominently as "Chinese learning to provide the [moral] basis, Western learning to provide the [technical] means" (*Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*).¹⁵ This is not the place to compare these two movements that encouraged the adoption of Western technology (especially the production of modern arms) while professing to uphold traditional moral teachings. Still we cannot fail to observe that the attempt made in China was far less successful in promoting rapid modernization than it was in Japan. Whatever the reasons for this, it is significant that in neither case do we find the claims to tradition so incompatible with the requirements of modernization that the one could be advanced only at the direct expense of the other. In China, although it is true that the weight of certain customs and traditions impeded reform, there is no evidence that the marked lag in modernization was linked to uncompromising resistance to it from native traditions in thought and conduct. On the contrary, Confucians exhibited a range of responses to the Western challenge similar in many ways to those of the Japanese. If the Japanese, however, were able to make more rapid strides toward Westernization, it was because, far from abandoning traditional values, they were successful in giving new meaning to them in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Reformulating their own past heritage, they extended in some ways its life among the people, employing for this purpose the very techniques of modern mass education and communication adopted from the West. For leaders such as these, who made a place in the modern world for the Land of the Rising Sun, there was probably no more striking example of this new claim to national virtue than Shōzan's pupil Yoshida Shōin.

15. See de Bary and Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, chaps. 28 and 30. Wei Yuan (1794-1856) is probably the first exponent of this point of view in China. In *Reflections on My Errors* (*Seiken-roku*), Shōzan mentions having read a work of Wei's on China's defense policies in 1850/1851 and asserts that each of them had arrived at the same general conclusion independently. Sakuma's memorial on Japanese maritime defense was drawn up in the winter of 1842/1843, and Wei completed his *Record of Imperial Military Exploits of the Manchu Dynasty* (*Shengwu-ji*) in the summer of 1842.

REFLECTIONS ON MY ERRORS

(SEIKEN-ROKU)

Reflections on My Errors seems to be a record of Sakuma Shōzan's reflections while in prison, although it was not actually written until after he was released. Ostensibly a piece of self-examination, the book is in fact a vigorous self-defense, dealing in turn with his fundamental Confucian beliefs, the need for pursuing Western studies, and the justification for his political activities. Because of his outspoken criticism of the existing regime, it was not published until after Shōzan's death and the fall of the shogunate.

In the summer of Kaei 7, the fourth month [May 1854], I, Taisei, because of an incident, went down into prison. During my seven months of imprisonment I pondered my errors, and as a result, there were things that I should have liked to say concerning them. However, brush and inkstone were forbidden in the prison, and I was therefore unable to keep a manuscript. Over that long period, then, I forgot much. Now that I have come out, I shall record what I remember, deposit the record in a cloth box, and bequeath it to my descendants. As for publicizing what I have to say, I dare do no such thing. [p. 239]

2. Take, for example, a man who is grieved by the illness of his lord or his father and who is seeking medicine to cure it. If he is fortunate enough to secure the medicine and is certain that it will be efficacious, then, certainly, without questioning either its cost or the quality of its name, he will beg his lord or father to take it. Should the latter refuse on the grounds that he dislikes the name, does the younger man make various schemes to give the medicine secretly, or does he simply sit by and wait for his master to die? There is no question about it: the feeling of genuine sincerity and heartfelt grief on the part of the subject or son makes it absolutely impossible for him to sit idly and watch his master's anguish; consequently, even if he knows that he will later have to face his master's anger, he cannot help but give the medicine secretly. [p. 239]

16. Although my family branch was poor, I grew up with plenty to eat and with warm clothing to wear. I never underwent the tempering of cold and hardship. I was therefore always afraid that in the event of a national emergency I would have difficulty bearing the attendant difficulties in everyday living, such as privations in food and drink. However, last summer, when the American ships suddenly arrived, and Edo was put on strict guard, I managed military affairs in the mansion belonging to my *han*, and although I got no sleep for seven days and nights, my spirits grew higher and higher. This year, I was condemned and sent to prison. For several weeks I have eaten meager food, licked salt, and received the same treatment as men under heavy punishment. However, I have kept calm and have managed to become content with my lot. Moreover, my spirit is active, and my body is healthy. To have tried myself

somewhat on these two points is of no small profit. My ordeal can thus be called a heavenly blessing. [p. 242]

20. The noble man has five pleasures, but wealth and rank are not among them. That his house understands decorum and rightness and remains free from family rifts—this is one pleasure. That exercising care in giving to and taking from others, he provides for himself honestly, free, internally, from shame before his wife and children, and externally, from disgrace before the public—this is the second pleasure. That he expounds and glorifies the learning of the sages, knows in his heart the great Way, and in all situations contents himself with his duty, in adversity as well as in prosperity—this is the third pleasure. That he is born after the opening of the vistas of science by the Westerners and can therefore understand principles not known to the sages and wise men of old—this is the fourth pleasure. That he employs the ethics of the East and the scientific technique of the West, neglecting neither the spiritual nor material aspects of life, combining subjective and objective and thus bringing benefit to the people and serving the nation—this is the fifth pleasure. [p. 244]

27. All learning is cumulative. It is not something that one comes to realize in a morning or an evening. Effective maritime defense is in itself a great field of study. Since no one has yet thoroughly studied its fundamentals, it is not easy to learn rapidly its essential points. Probably this fact explains why even if you take hold of a man's ear and explain these essential points to him, he does not understand. [pp. 245-46]

30. Of the men who now hold posts as commanders of the army, those who are not dukes or princes or men of noble rank are members of wealthy families. As such, they find their daily pleasure in drinking wine, singing, and dancing; and they are ignorant of military strategy and discipline. Should a national emergency arise, there is no one who could command the respect of the warriors and halt the enemy's attack. This is the great sorrow of our times. For this reason, I have wished to follow in substance the Western principles of armament and, by banding together loyal, valorous, strong men of old, established families not in the military class—men of whom one would be equal to ten ordinary men—to form a voluntary group that would be made to have as its sole aim that of guarding the nation and protecting the people. Anyone wishing to join the society would be tested and his merits examined; and if he did not shrink from hardship, he would then be permitted to join. Men of talent in military strategy, planning, and administration would be advanced to positions of leadership, and then if the day should come when the country must be defended, this group could be gathered together and organized into an army to await official commands. It is to be hoped that they could drive the enemy away and perform greater service than those who now form the military class. [pp. 246-47]

35. Mathematics is the basis for all learning. In the Western world after this science was discovered, military tactics advanced greatly, far outstripping that of former times. This development accords with the statement that "one ad-

vanced from basic studies to higher learning." In Sunzi's *Art of War*, the statement about "estimation, determination of quantity, calculation, judgment, and victory" refers to mathematics. However, since Sunzi's time, neither we nor the Chinese have ceased to read, study, and memorize his teachings, and our art of war remains exactly as it was then. It consequently cannot be compared with that of the West. There is no reason for this other than that we have not devoted ourselves to basic studies. At the present time, if we wish really to complete our military preparations, we must develop this branch of study. [p. 248]

40. What do the so-called Confucian scholars of today actually do? Do they clearly and tacitly understand the way in which the gods and sages established this nation, or the way in which Yao, Shun, and the divine emperors of the three dynasties governed? Do they, after having learned the rites and music, punishment and administration, the classics and governmental system, go on to discuss and learn the elements of the art of war, of military discipline, of the principles of machinery? Do they make exhaustive studies of conditions in foreign countries? Of effective defense methods? Of strategy in setting up strongholds, defense barriers, and reinforcements? Of the knowledge of computation, gravitation, geometry, and mathematics? If they do, I have not heard of it! Therefore I ask, What do the so-called scholars of today actually do? [p. 249]

42. Learning, the possession of which is of no assistance and the lack of which is of no harm, is useless learning. Useful learning, on the other hand, is as indispensable to the meeting of human needs as is the production of the light hemp-woven garment of summer and the heavy outer clothing of winter. [pp. 249-50]

44. We say that this nation has an abundance of gold, rice, and millet. However, our territory is not large, and after the country's internal needs have been met, there is hardly any surplus of the materials produced here. Such things as the need for coastal defense arise from without. To install several hundred defense barriers, to construct several hundred large warships, and to cast several thousand large artillery pieces call for vast expenditures. Again, all these things are not permanent: every ten or twenty years they must be repaired, reconstructed, or improved. Externally, we will need funds to carry on relations with foreign countries and, internally, [to cover] the expense of necessary food supplies for our own country. Where can the money for these sorts of things be obtained? If a family in financial distress receives many guests and frequently prepares feasts for them, its resources will be dissipated to the point that it no longer can continue to carry on these activities. How does the present position of the nation differ from the plight of this poor family? With what tactics can such a situation be overcome? Those who sincerely wish to conduct the affairs of state well must make careful plans in advance. [p. 250]

46. At the time when my former lord assumed office in the government, and later, when he took charge of coastal defense, the English barbarians were invading the Qing empire, and news of the war was sensational. I, greatly la-

menting the events of the day, submitted a plan in a memorial. That was, actually, in Tenpō 13, the eleventh month [December 1842–January 1843]. Later I saw the *Shengwu-ji* of the Chinese writer Wei Yuan [1784–1856].¹⁶ Wei had also written out of sorrow over recent events. The preface to the book was composed in the seventh month of the same year [August–September 1842]; and although Wei thus wrote only four months before I submitted my memorial, the two of us, without having had any previous consultation, were often in complete agreement. Ah! Wei and I were born in different places and did not even know each other's name. Isn't it interesting that we both wrote lamenting the times during the same year and that our views were in accord without our having met? We really must be called comrades from separate lands. However, Wei says that from ancient times until the present, China has had a naval defense but has had no naval warfare; therefore as the method of defense against attacks from the sea, it should strengthen fortified towns and clear fields in order to be able to push back the landing invaders. I, on the other hand, wish to promote to the full the teaching of techniques for using armored warships and to form a plan of attack whereby an enemy could be intercepted and destroyed, in order that the death sentence may be given to the plunderers before they have reached the country's shores. That is the only point of difference between Wei and me. [p. 251]

47. In order to master the barbarians, there is nothing so effective as to ascertain in the beginning the conditions among them. To do this, there is no better first step than to be familiar with barbarian tongues. Thus, learning a barbarian language is not only a step toward knowing the barbarians but also the groundwork for mastering them. When the various nations on one pretext or another began sending ships frequently to the territory around Sagami and Awa, I thought it genuinely difficult to find out facts about them. As a result, I felt the desire to compile a lexicon in several volumes, translating other languages into Japanese, in order to teach the tongues of the various European countries. Also, since we have long had trade relations with Holland and since many of us already know how to read the books used in that country, I wished to publish the Dutch section first. Before this, the government had ordered to the effect that all books to be published must be officially inspected. Therefore, in the winter of Kaei 2 [1849–1850], I came to Edo, submitted my manuscript, and requested permission to publish it. The affair dragged on for a year, and I was ultimately unable to obtain permission. During the time I was in the capital,

16. Wei Yuan was a scholar and an associate of the commissioner Lin Zexu, whose attempt to suppress the opium trade at Canton led to the war with the British. Wei's book *Shengwu-ji* was finished just after the Treaty of Nanjing was signed, ending the Opium War. See de Bary and Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, pp. 207–9.

I first secured Wei's book and read it. He also wished to set up schools in his country primarily to translate foreign documents and to promote a clear understanding of conditions among the enemy nations, in order to further the cause of mastering the enemies. In this, too, his opinion concurred with mine. I do not know, however, whether or not his country has put his words into effect. [pp. 251–52]

48. The main requirement for maritime defense are guns and warships, but the more important item is guns. Wei included an article on guns in his *Haiguo tuzhi* [*sic*].¹⁷ It is for the most part inaccurate and unfounded; it is like the doings of a child at play. No one can learn the essentials of a subject without engaging personally in the study of it. That a man of Wei's talent should fail to understand this is unfortunate. I deeply pity Wei that in the world of today, he, ignorant of artillery, should have unwittingly perpetrated these errors and foisted these mistakes on later generations. [p. 252]

49. Last summer the American barbarians arrived in the Bay of Uraga with four warships, bearing their president's message. Their deportment and manner of expression were exceedingly arrogant, and the resulting insult to our national dignity was not small. Those who heard could only gnash their teeth. A certain person on guard in Uraga suffered this insult in silence, and having been ultimately unable to do anything about it, after the barbarians had retired, he drew his knife and slashed to bits a portrait of their leader, which they had left as a gift. Thus, he gave vent to his rage. In former times Cao Wei of Song, having been demoted, was serving as an official in Shensi, and when he heard of the character of Zhao Yuanhao, he had a person skillful in drawing paint Zhao's image. Cao looked at this portrait and knew from its manly appearance that Zhao would doubtless make trouble on the border in the future. Therefore Wei wished to take steps toward preparing the border in advance and toward collecting together and examining men of ability. Afterward, everything turned out as he had predicted. Thus, by looking at the portrait of his enemy, he could see his enemy's abilities and thereby aid himself with his own preparations. It can only be regretted that the Japanese guard did not think of this. Instead of using the portrait, he tore it up. In both cases it was a barbarian; in both cases it was a portrait. But one man, lacking the portrait, sought to obtain it, while the other, having it, destroyed it. Their depth of knowledge and farsightedness in planning were vastly different. [pp. 252–53]

52. Formerly, with one or two friends, I took a trip to Kamakura; at length, we sailed over the sea past Arasaki to Jōgashima; we lodged at Misaki, continued

17. The correct title is *Haiguo tuzhi* (*Illustrated Gazetteer of the Maritime Countries*, 1841), compiled by Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan. See de Bary and Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, pp. 209–12.

on past Matsuwa, and stopped over at Miyata. Then, having stayed a time at Uruga, we went up to Sarujima, viewed Kanazawa, went out to Honmoku, and returned to Edó. In the course of this trip I stopped at about ten places where barricades had been set up in preparation against an invasion from the sea. However, the arrangement of them made no sense, and none of them could be depended on as a defense fortification. Upon discovering this, I unconsciously looked up to Heaven and sighed deeply; I struck my chest and wept for a long time. Edo is the throat of the nation, and while Futtsu, as its lip, may be called a natural barrier, the mouth opening into the sea is still broad. From the outset, it would be difficult without warships and naval troops to halt an enemy transgression or attack. Now, without any real effort, these foolish walls and mock parapets have been thrown up high above the surface of the sea, only to display to the foreign nations our lack of planning. If during these times the nations to east and west sent ships to pay us a visit, how could they take us seriously? There is no point in criticizing the mediocrity of the lower officials. But what is to be done if even those who ride on golden saddles with ornate saddle cloths, who wear brocade and feast on meat, and who call themselves high class, fail to recognize the great plan for the nation but instead use up the country's wealth on this useless construction work? If barbarian ships arrived in force, how could we either defend against them or defeat them? After my trip, I felt the urge to write a petition discussing the things that should and should not be done in maritime defense, with the hope that I might be of assistance in this time of emergency. I completed my manuscript and requested my former lord for permission to submit it. He refused, and I gave up my plan. This was in the early summer of Kaei 3 [1850]. Four years later, as I had predicted, the affair of the American barbarians arose. At the time my former lord stopped my memorial, he was probably acting out of the fear that I might be punished for impertinence. His benevolence in protecting me was truly great. If he were in the world today and were informed that I have been imprisoned, his grief would be profound! [pp. 257–58]

[*Seiken-roku*, in *NST*, vol. 55, pp. 239–60; trans. adapted from Terry, "Sakuma Shōzan," pp. 58–86]

YOKOI SHŌNAN: OPENING THE COUNTRY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Yokoi Shōnan (1809–1869) illustrates, perhaps even more strikingly than Sakuma Shōzan does, the transition from a committed Confucianism to a wider world of intellectual engagement. From Kumamoto, Shōnan at an early age established himself as a scholar of exceptional brilliance and versatility in his home domain and then in Edo. Early on, he had been among the xenophobes calling for Japan to "repel the barbarians." But like Shōzan, his reading of Wei

Yuan,¹⁸ the Chinese Confucian statecraft thinker who responded to the disaster of the Opium War, was a wake-up call.

Now he realized, as Wei had, that there was no way of "repelling the barbarian" without opening up to the West. Latter-day scholarship was inadequate—too much lost in metaphysical speculation, quiet contemplation, bookishness, or belles lettres—to deal with the realities of the threat from the West. Indeed, the more Shōnan studied the West, the more he became convinced that it embodied in many ways the humane values and activism of the early sage-kings Yao, Shun, and Yu, who were directly engaged in meeting the needs of the people rather than in lofty theorizing or in bookish scholarship. The latter vices had alienated both leaders and people from their natural (*shizen*) recognition of and response to the historical changes that had come about through the natural course of Heaven-and-earth (*tenchi no kiun*).

From this new standpoint, Shōnan could view a general like George Washington as more closely resembling the sages who served the common good than the decadent rulers of China who were limited by a narrow vision and corrupted by a self-centered, effete complacency. Even the Confucian value of public discussion, or discourse concerning the common good (*kōgi*), he came to believe, was better served by the political institutions of the United States and England.

By thus invoking the higher authority of the sages in favor of a universal standard transcending immediately received tradition, Shōnan engaged in a kind of Confucian revisionism similar to that of the Ancient Learning thinkers of the seventeenth century (especially Yamaga Sokō and Ogyū Sorai), who likewise emphasized the practical, social applications of early Confucianism. Even Zhu Xi had returned to the ancient sources of Confucianism in this way, so Shōnan was only learning and doing in his own time what Zhu had done in his. If one could call this reinventing tradition, then Confucianism itself was a tradition of continual reinvention in contemporary terms.

The same impulse to "restore the ancient order," however, had earlier inspired Song Neo-Confucian reformers to reject the anodyne, and amoral, influence of Buddhism in order to press for radical political change. Thus it is significant that at this time, Shōnan also was impressed by the strong moral stance and social teachings of Christianity, which he contrasted to Buddhist emptiness and antinomianism.

When Shōnan's views attracted the attention of Mito scholars and Matsudaira Shungaku (lord of the Fukui domain in Echizen), both Tokugawa related, he became associated with the movement to bring the shogunate and the imperial court together (*kōbu-gattai*) in a common cause and strategy for dealing with the West. Later, however, after imperialist forces succeeded with

18. See de Bary and Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, pp. 184, 206.