

The Source of Western Unity and Strength

As a Confucian, Aizawa believed that the moral unity of the people in support of the ruler, not coercive means, was the basis of true governance, and he saw the strength of the West as deriving more from its underlying Christian values than from its more apparent military might. Christianity, then, was the real threat from the West, and to counter it, Aizawa tried to rally Japan's religious and moral unity, advancing what became a new, synthetic national ideology, corresponding in many ways to the new nationalisms of Europe and America.

The Western barbarians have independent and mutually contending states, but they all follow the same God. When there is something to be gained by it, they get together in order to achieve their aims and share the benefits. . . .

As for the Western barbarians who have dominated the seas for nearly three centuries: Do they surpass others in intelligence and bravery? Does their benevolence and mercy overflow their own borders? Are their social institutions and administration of justice perfect in every detail? Or do they have supernatural powers enabling them to accomplish what other men cannot? Not so at all. All they have is Christianity to fall back on in the prosecution of their schemes. . . . When these barbarians plan to subdue a country not their own, they start by opening commerce and watch for a sign of weakness. If an opportunity is presented, they will preach their alien religion to captivate the people's hearts. Once the people's allegiance has been shifted, they can be manipulated, and nothing can be done to stop it. The people will be only too glad to die for the sake of the alien God. They have the courage to give battle; they offer all they own in adoration of the God and devote their resources to the cause of insurrection.⁸ . . .

[Takasu, *Shinron kōwa*, pp. 198, 215; RT, WTdB]

THE OPENING OF JAPAN FROM WITHIN

In the atmosphere of impending crisis that pervaded Japan in the mid-nineteenth century, the Mito slogan "Revere the Emperor, Repel the Barbarian" proved to be remarkably effective in rallying nationalistic sentiment around a single center: the imperial house. Yet the very simplicity and generality of this appeal rendered it susceptible to conflicting interpretations and left many questions 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"

8. Reference to the uprising of Christians at Shimabara, near Nagasaki, in 1637/1638.

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. 75), 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.⁹

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 instance, 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 Westerntype navy. Unsuccessful in this, he still had the satisfaction of seeing his hopes for

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

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. * 1854 10月 1日

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.¹⁰

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

10. *Analects* 2:4.

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 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 basis for a modernization program of unparalleled magnitude in the late nineteenth century.

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.