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Tominaga Nakamoto, 1715–46

A TOKUGAWA ICONOCLAST

by KATŌ SHŪICHI

❧INTRODUCTION

AS REGARDS ideology, the Tokugawa Period can be divided into two periods—before and after the mid-Eighteenth Century. During the first, Confucianism, adopted by the regime as the official ideology, continued to prevail without being seriously challenged. It is true that Buddhism was still powerful, but much less as the framework of intellectual activities than as a social institution useful for administrative purposes. Shintoism, often integrated into Buddhism before the Tokugawa Period, was now interpreted in Confucian terms, first by Hayashi Razan (1583–1657), then by many other Confucian scholars, and was finally systematized into the *Suika-shintō* of Yamazaki Ansai (1618–82) whose vocabulary was totally Confucian.¹ The closing of the country to foreign trade and travel in the seventeenth century was successful in excluding any important influence of Western ideas on Japanese thought. During the second period, however, Confucianism was no longer the sole ideology to dominate the intellectual scene. As early as in the second half of the Eighteenth Century, the two other schools of thought began to claim their own rights: the Shintoism of Motoori Norinaga² (1730–1801) became independent of, and militantly opposed to, Confucianism; Western ideas, through the writings of Hiraga Gennai (1728?–79) and others, began to penetrate into Japanese minds, not yet deeply enough to topple the whole edifice but at least to shake the cosmology of Confucian tradition.³

In the course of the first one hundred and fifty years of the Tokugawa Period, Confucianism by itself evolved, first conforming to the Sung Twelfth Century Neo-Confucianism of Chu Hsi, then developing moral or political doctrines less universal and less metaphysical, and finally arriving at a more or less positivistic approach to history and society. The vocabulary of Chu Hsi, notably such conceptions as *li* and *ch'i*, became an important part of the language of Tokugawa scholars; but his system as a whole underwent all sorts of modifications, soon after it had been copied by Hayashi Razan and recognized by the régime as the basis of education. It was in the second half of the Seventeenth Century, for example, that Itō

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¹ 林羅山、垂加神道、山崎闇斎. Bampa Masatomu 万波正朋, *Nihon jukyō ron* 日本儒教論 (Confucianism in Japan), Mikasa shobō 三笠書房, Tokyo,

1939.

² 本居宣長

³ 平賀源内 Takahashi Shin'ichi 高橋慎一, *Yōgaku ron* 洋学論 (On the Western Learnings), Mikasa shobō, Tokyo, 1939.

MN: XXII, 1-2 M

Jinsai⁴ (1627–1705) began to regard Confucianism as a mere discipline of ethical self-improvement, largely based on Mencius, rejecting almost totally the theories of the Sung Confucianists. If the evolution of Japanese Buddhism after the Thirteenth Century can be explained as a long process of secularization, the evolution of Confucianism during the first half of the Tokugawa Period may be considered as the process of “de-metaphysization” of the adopted neo-Confucian system.

There is no doubt that Ogyū Sorai⁵ (1666–1728) played the most important role in promoting this process. Sorai discarded all later additions to the original Confucianism, which he interpreted as a set of political ideals and social institutions. Although he shared with Itō Jinsai his emphasis on the ancient Confucianism, he showed great originality in taking an objective approach, philological and historical, to the documents of ancient China, and in making a sharp distinction between matters of politics and of individual ethics which most Chinese as well as Japanese Confucianists tended to consider as one.⁶ It was Sorai indeed who largely liberated Tokugawa scholarship from what may be called neo-Confucian scholasticism. By writing his own “Discourse on Method” he did not wholly reject Confucianism but made all Confucian schools in history relative to, and therefore open to criticism by, the absolute authority of the pre-Confucian “Ancient Kings” version of the “God as logical necessity.” With his combination of erudition, lucid prose and political conservatism one can detect in Sorai a certain Cartesian flavour.

After Ogyū Sorai, the first half of the Eighteenth Century produced two other original thinkers: Andō Shōeki (1707–?) and Tominaga Nakamoto⁷ (1715–46). Andō Shōeki was the most radical and most outspoken critic of Tokugawa hierarchical society, demanding absolute equality among the people, preaching the ideal of what he called the Way of Nature.⁸ Tominaga Nakamoto was politically not articulate, but intellectually the most iconoclastic of all the Tokugawa scholars, criticizing in a devastating way—and no criticism could be more damaging than his lucid explanation of the methods of his opponents—all three ideologies of the time: Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. It is astonishing that in the Tokugawa Confucian world, Tominaga Nakamoto, probably without any contact with Western ideas, could manage to anticipate the possibility of, and even to develop to some degree, a new science which no one else had ever envisaged until our very recent times: a strictly empirical science to explain the succession of different ideas in the past as a historical development along a number of general lines which are in turn considered as defined by immanent laws in the development of ideas, historical evolution of the language and environmental features of the culture in question.

⁴ 伊藤仁斎

⁵ 荻生徂徠

⁶ Maruyama Masao 丸山真男, *Nihon seiji shisō shi kenkyū* 日本政治思想史研究 (Study of the History of Political Thought in Japan), Tokyo daigaku shuppan kai 東京大学出版会, Tokyo, 3rd

edition, 1954, especially Chapter 1, Section 3, “Sorai gaku no tokushitsu” 徂徠学の特質.

⁷ 安藤昌益、富永仲基

⁸ See E. H. Norman, *Andō Shōeki and the Anatomy of Japanese Feudalism*, Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, Tokyo, 1949.

If Andō Shōeki's egalitarianism reminds us, for example, of Montesquieu, then Tominaga Nakamoto's rationalism may suggest a comparison with Voltaire, whose implacable *esprit critique* culminated in his militant anticlericalism. The *ancien régime* in France had to be attacked first in its beliefs, then in the principles of its social system: first by Voltaire, then by Montesquieu. Tominaga Nakamoto did not go so far as to apply his devastating criticism to the structure of Tokugawa society itself, which Andō Shōeki did; but he criticized all beliefs of his time, without making an exception (as Shōeki did of Shintoism) and in a more sophisticated and decisive way than Shōeki. Shōeki advanced his own system of beliefs against those held by the régime, thus analysing the ideologies in traditional terms of right or wrong, true or false, whereas Nakamoto intended to destroy once and for all, at least theoretically, any claim to ultimate Truth by any system of beliefs, and insisted that all ideologies were relative to their historical and cultural backgrounds. Nakamoto might have become another Voltaire had he lived much longer and had Eighteenth Century Japan not been isolated from the outside world and on the eve of its revolution. In fact he died too young even to bring his ideas to fruition; he lived in a too isolated, and perhaps too stable, society to be engaged like his French contemporary in personal feuds, attacking old values, defending new ideas, if necessary, writing his own "Philosophical Letters" in exile.

Most of the writings of Andō Shōeki and Tominaga Nakamoto were not widely circulated during the Tokugawa Period: a large part of Shōeki's works were not published at all; some of Nakamoto's were lost after publication or perhaps destroyed. They were almost buried by the conspiracy of silence of their contemporaries, not despite, but because of, the originality of their thoughts in a society under military dictatorship. The fact is indeed that they were, together with Sorai and Arai Hakuseki (1567-1725) before them and Norinaga and Miura Baien⁹ (1723-89) after them, not only the most original thinkers of Tokugawa Japan, but also the most lucid and most consistent of all.

Much has been said about the arts and literature of the *chōnin* or town-merchants in Tokugawa Japan; not enough perhaps about their scholarly achievements. If the Genroku era (1688-1704) is to be remembered as the time of the flourishing *chōnin* arts and literature, then the Kyōhō era (1716-36) marks the beginning of the age in which the *chōnin* participated increasingly in the scholarly world, attending schools, producing a number of scholars, doctors and other professionals, and eventually elaborating their own style of learning often different from that of the ruling warrior class. It was around 1720 that Nishikawa Joken¹⁰ (1648-1724) noted: "Monopolizing the money power which really counts in this expensive world, the *chōnin*, once ranked as the lowest of the four social classes, has recently become so powerful as to be invited sometimes even by the highest personalities, thus appearing superior to the farmers whose status was originally the second highest. Due to one hundred years of peace, a *chōnin* family background has now become common to most Confucian scholars, doctors, teachers of poetry or tea ceremony, and other artists."

⁹ 新井白石、三浦梅園

¹⁰ 西川如見

In fact, during the Eighteenth Century, from *chōnin* families appeared Motoori Norinaga and his school of *Kokugaku* (National Learning) opposing Confucian or Buddhist Learning, and also those scholars of the so-called *Rangaku* (Dutch Learning) keen to assimilate Western sciences, such as Nishikawa Joken in astronomy, Aoki Atsubumi (1668–1769) in agronomy, Inō Tadataka¹¹ (1745–1818) in land survey. Against this background, Tominaga Nakamoto, *enfant terrible* of a merchant family in Osaka in the first half of the Eighteenth Century, can be considered as one of the most important landmarks in the history of *chōnin* culture in general. He represents, and not by accident, the first articulate expression of the *chōnin* spirit in an elaborated intellectual formal attempt to undermine at its very root the ideology of the ruling warrior class, namely Confucianism, partly in alliance with Buddhism, partly in fusion with Shintoism.

● TOMINAGA NAKAMOTO, HIS LIFE

TOMINAGA Nakamoto was born in 1715 to a *chōnin* family in Osaka, lived as a young scholar during the reign of the Shōgun Yoshimune¹² (1716–45), and died in 1746 of a long illness.

His father, Tominaga Kichizaemon (?–1739), known also under the pen-name of Hōshun, owned an Osaka soya sauce business called Dōmyōji-ya.¹³ Hōshun had two sons from his first marriage: Kisai (1708–56) who later succeeded to his father's business, and Chōjirō¹⁴ who died very early; from his second marriage with Yasumura Saki (1692–1762), first Nakamoto (called also by his pen-name Kensai), then Rankō (1717–67) who was adopted later by the Araki family, and Tōka (1726–91), and also two daughters who died very early, and a third who later married a man connected with the Fukuchi-in Temple in Nara.¹⁵

At the time of Tominaga Nakamoto, Osaka was a prosperous city, with a population of about 350,000 in 1703.¹⁶ Its splendour much impressed the Korean Mission in 1719 on their way to Edo.¹⁷ “As the greatest commercial city of the country, Osaka was handling rice, lumber and other products from the mountainous regions, from the Western provinces as well as from the Northwest and the North; agricultural commercial products such as cotton and oil-seeds from the Kyoto region and the provinces of the Inland Sea. The city was important also as a centre of production through its non-mechanized industries of great variety, such as oil-pressing, refinery of copper, production of *sake*, ship-building, fabrication of

¹¹ 国学、蘭学、青木敦書、伊能忠敬

¹² 将軍吉宗

¹³ 富永吉左衛門、芳春、道明寺屋

¹⁴ 穀斎、長次郎

¹⁵ 安村佐幾、謙斎、蘭草、荒木、東華、福地院。

The family background of Tominaga Nakamoto is discussed in detail in Ishihama Juntarō 石浜純太郎, *Tominaga Nakamoto* 富永仲基, Sōgensha 創元社, Tokyo, 1940.

¹⁶ Nakai Nobukatsu 中井信勝, “Kinsei toshi no

hattatsu” 近世都市の発達 (The Development of Modern Cities) in *Nihon rekishi* 日本歴史 (Japanese History), *Kinsei* 近世 3, Iwanami 岩波, Tokyo, 1964, pp. 30–100.

¹⁷ The account of their voyage to Japan, called “Kaiyū roku” 海游録, is quoted by Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰, *Kinsei Nihon kokumin shi* 近世日本國民史 (The National History of Modern Japan), XXI, *Toshimune jidai* 吉宗時代, Jiji tsūshin 時事通信, Tokyo, 1964, pp. 96–122.

furniture and utensils."¹⁸ As for soya sauce, which was the major seasoning for practically all Japanese food, Osaka in 1726 accounted for most of the supply which the city of Edo imported for its nearly one million population (1724).¹⁹ With a well known soya business in Osaka, the Tominaga family must have been one of the wealthy *chōnin*.

The increasing wealth of Osaka in the Eighteenth Century resulted not only in the flourishing of theaters, gay quarters, and the literary entertainment of *haikai* and short stories, but also in the *chōnin*'s serious concern with education and scholarly works.²⁰ Around 1719, the Korean Mission mentioned above noted with special emphasis an extraordinary activity of publications in Osaka, saying that even many Korean classics were available in the book markets.²¹ Having achieved wealth, material luxury and sometimes even a sense of power towards the Government, the successful Osaka merchant families were beginning to acquire, in their second or third generation, the high culture of the ruling class which had hitherto been beyond their reach. In the case of the family of Tominaga, Hōshun was much interested in Confucian learning as well as in his business, so that he became one of the most faithful disciples of Miyake Sekian²² (1663-1730), the famed scholar also from a merchant family in Kyoto, who was at that time privately teaching in Osaka. When Sekian's private school was destroyed by a fire in 1724, Hōshun and four other merchants²³ worked together to build a new school, and Hōshun offered a part of his land. The school was inaugurated by Sekian's lecture late in 1724 and was called *Kaitoku-dō*²⁴ or Pavilion of Virtues.

On the other hand, the Shōgun Yoshimune, soon after he had come to power, began to put into practice a series of policies of his own, known as the "Kyōhō Reform."²⁵ First, by abolishing the private advisors to the Shōgun, he strengthened the power of the Council of Elders (*rōjū*) in political decisions, thereby developing a more bureaucratic, rather than personal, leadership.²⁶ Second, in order to cope with the financial crisis of the Shogunate, he called for economic austerity in administration as well as in the life of the people, at the same time trying to increase the revenue of the government through a higher rice tax, opening of new lands for cultivation, and development of manufactures in different provinces.²⁷

¹⁸ Abe Makoto 阿部真琴 and Sakai Hajime 酒井一, "Hōkensei no dōyō" 封建制の動搖 (The Upheaval of Feudalism), in *Nihon rekishi, Kinsei 4*, Iwanami, Tokyo, 1964, pp. 1-50.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助, *Nihon bunka shi* 日本文化史, VI, *Edo jidai* 江戸時代 3, Shunjū sha 春秋社, Tokyo, 1960, pp. 72-77.

²¹ See footnote 17.

²² 三宅石庵

²³ Dōmyōjiya Kichizaemon (Tominaga Hōshun), Mitsuboshiya Takeuemon 三星屋武右衛門 (Nakamura Ryōsai 中村良斎), Bizen'ya Kichibei 備前屋吉兵衛 (Yoshida Kakyū 吉田可久), Kōnoike Mata-shirō 鴻池又四郎 (Yamanaka Sōko 山中宗古) and

Funabashiya Shirōemon 舟橋屋四郎右衛門. Here the first combination (name of the firm or shop and given names of the person) was normally in use for commercial purposes; the second combination (family name followed by pen-name) was used mainly for literary or scholarly activities.

²⁴ 懷德堂

²⁵ The Kyōhō Era covers the years 1716-36.

²⁶ Ōishi Shinzaburō 大石慎三郎, "Kyōhō kaihaku" 享保改革 in *Nihon rekishi, Kinsei 3*, Iwanami, Tokyo, 1963, pp. 265-310.

²⁷ Details on the economic policies of Yoshimune are given in G. B. Sansom, *A History of Japan*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1963, pp. 155-168.

Third, with a view to redressing the moral decline, he encouraged education in the Confucian style,²⁸ without neglecting, however, the importance of learning Western technology. In 1718 he opened for the general public the lectures at the Shōheizaka²⁹ Government School hitherto reserved only for samurai families in the administration; in 1719 he invited to Edo Nishikawa Joken, known for his knowledge of Western astronomy and geography; in 1720, he lifted the ban on Western books in Chinese translation except those concerning Christianity; in 1722, he circulated *Rokuyu-engi taii*, a simplified version of Chinese edicts on morals (issued in 1652) prepared by Muro Kyūsō (1658–1738), Confucianist advisor to Yoshimune; in 1723, he subsidized the private school of Sugeno Kenzan (1652–1719). *Kaibo-dō*,³⁰ in Edo. In 1725, Yoshimune indicated to one of the men around him his readiness to support a new Confucian school in the region of Kyoto and Osaka as the counterpart of the *Kaibo-dō* in Edo. Miwa Shūsai³¹ (1669–1744) who was consulted on this matter was one of the Confucianists much influenced by the doctrines of Wang Yang-ming, and suggested that the Shōgun might support the *Kaitoku-dō* of Miyake Sekian, whose interpretation of Confucianism was also much in the line of Wang Yang-ming, without definitely rejecting the doctrine of Chu Hsi. The *Kaitoku-dō* was made a semi-governmental school in 1725 through the concerted efforts of Miwa Shūsai in Edo and Nakai Shūan³² (1693–1758), the best known disciple of Sekian in Osaka. Here converged the two long lines of Yoshimune's educational policies and the rising interests in learning of the wealthy Osaka *chōnin*, resulting in the emergence of the *Kaitoku-dō* as a powerful institution destined to be one of the ideological strongholds of the régime.

As for the Tominaga family, it was not only Hōshun himself who was involved in the *Kaitoku-dō*: his first son, Kisai, who succeeded his father in the soya business, continued to support the school; Nakamoto and his two younger brothers, Rankō and Tōka, were undoubtedly initiated into Confucian learning through this school, although they were later associated closely with Tanaka Dōkō³³ (1668–1742), a good friend of Ogyū Sorai's, who settled down in 1724 in Ikeda near Osaka. Rankō, who is said to have learnt mainly from Dōkō, composed poems in Chinese style and was apparently always on good terms with his brother Nakamoto. It is probable that Nakamoto joined the circle of Tanaka Dōkō sometime before 1735, the year of publication of the first anthology of that circle, which included some of Nakamoto's poems. It may be reasonable then to imagine that Nakamoto was in his early days well acquainted in detail with the theories of Sorai either through Dōkō, or through Sorai's high prestige generally.

It is not known when Nakamoto wrote his first important work, *Setsubei* (Discussions on Errors) of which we know the basic ideas only through the author's summary given

²⁸ This aspect of Yoshimune's policy is common to all "reforms" during the Tokugawa Period, as is pointed out by R. P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965, pp. 12-13.

²⁹ 昌平坂

³⁰ 六諭衍義大意、室鳩巢、菅野兼山、会輔堂

³¹ 三輪執斎

³² 中井甕庵

³³ 田中桐江

in his later work, *Okina no fumi*³⁴ (Writings of an Old Man). The copies of *Setsubei* were lost, or perhaps destroyed, and a few of his contemporaries who mentioned the title of the book had apparently never read it. According to one story, Nakamoto was ostracized by Sekian from the *Kaitoku-dō* when he criticized Confucianism in *Setsubei*.³⁵ If this is true, the book must have been finished before the death of Sekian in 1730, namely before the author was fifteen. But the story may not be true, and it might not have been Sekian who clashed with Nakamoto on the matter of *Setsubei*. Nevertheless it is only too probable that a young student's devastating criticism of the Confucian authorities would cause a serious scandal in a school of moral education absolutely devoted to the sacrosanct Confucian sages, on the eve of, or immediately after, its sponsorship by the Government. The Government might have overlooked the manuscript of an unknown student; the leadership of *Kaitoku-dō* would certainly not. How could a *chōnin* school assure the support of a samurai Government, without conforming more perfectly than samurai themselves to their values? The people of the *Kaitoku-dō* must have been aware that their most brilliant student was taking exactly the opposite direction, and thereby jeopardizing the future of the school.

According to his brother Tōka, Tominaga Nakamoto was upright, quiet, but impatient in character;³⁶ he suffered much from sickness, as is indicated in his poems around 1735; he was involved in troubles with the people of *Kaitoku-dō*, at least after the *Setsubei* affair; he probably had some difficulties also in getting along with Kisai, the eldest of the family after Hōshun. After the death of his father in 1739, Nakamoto left the house of Kisai together with his mother, two younger brothers and sister and settled down somewhere in Osaka, giving private lessons and writing books. Before this event, *Okina no fumi* had been published in 1738; then *Shutsujō kōgo*³⁷ (Words after Enlightenment) in 1744. As we shall see, the former was concerned with Confucianism, Buddhism and Shintoism altogether, the latter exclusively with Buddhism in detail. Although the former was scarcely mentioned by other scholars during the Tokugawa Period, the latter provoked considerable repercussions among Buddhist monks as well as among some Shintoist scholars.

Besides these three books: *Setsubei*, *Okina no fumi* and *Shutsujō kōgo*, Tōka mentions other works of his brother which were all lost: *Shoshi kai* (Commentaries to the Pre-Ch' in Philosophers), *Chōgo* (Long Reflections), *Tango* (Short Remarks), *Sōgaku shinzen* (The Essence of Sung Confucianism), and some discussions on the *Shang-shu*, *The Great Learning* and *The Analects*.³⁸ Moreover Ishihama Juntarō adds to the list: *Gakuritsu kō* (Treatise on Musical Scales), *Sanki* (Three Measurements), and *Kensai ikō* (Posthumous Papers of Kensai), recently edited by Yoshida Toshio.³⁹ *Gakuritsu kō* of which a manuscript is preserved is summarized by Ishihama Juntarō in his book; it is a rather technical discussion on the different musical scales in ancient China and Japan;⁴⁰ *Sanki*, lost and known only through the references to it in *Gakuritsu kō*, was

³⁴ 説蔽、翁の文

³⁵ Ishihama, *Tominaga Nakamoto*, p. 25.

³⁶ Tōka *bikyū* 東華秘笈 quoted by Ishihama, *Tominaga Nakamoto*, pp. 38-39.

³⁷ 出定後語

³⁸ 諸子解、長語、短語、宋學真詮.

³⁹ 樂律考、三器、謙齋遺稿、吉田銳雄

⁴⁰ Ishihama, *Tominaga Nakamoto*, pp. 134-140.

apparently a historical study of the ancient methods of measurement of weight, length and volume; *Kensai ikō* is in substance a collection of poems.

About the personal life of Nakamoto after 1739, practically nothing is known, except that he wrote books and was probably living in Osaka, with his long sickness getting worse. He died at the age of thirty-one. One writer speculates that he perhaps was married and may have had a daughter, but there is no reliable evidence.⁴¹

Where and how did Nakamoto acquire his wide knowledge of Buddhism which so impressed, for example, Motoori Norinaga?⁴² There is an interesting story that Nakamoto once left his father's house in order to work on the texts of the Ōbaku Collection of Sutras at the request of the Government.⁴³ This would plausibly explain his acquaintance with Buddhist texts in a systematic way, but the story is not confirmed. All we can say is that the Buddhism of his time was preparing the ground for the future scientific study of the texts: the Tenkai⁴⁴ Collection of Sutras had been published during the years 1637-48; Ōbaku Collection (Japanese edition of a Ming Collection of Sutras with special notations for Japanese readers) was published during the years 1669-81; the systematic study of the Sanskrit texts, started by Jōgon (1639-1702), was to be developed further by Onkō⁴⁵ (1718-1804) who was three years younger than Nakamoto and also born in Osaka. Nakamoto might have heard about the works of Onkō from his home town, and perhaps found some suggestions for his own learning in this greatest of Buddhologists, if not of priests, in Tokugawa Japan. But this is of course mere speculation.

As for Shintoism, there is no evidence of his personal contact with Shintoist priests or scholars. It would not be surprising, however, for anyone of Nakamoto's intellectual calibre, once he was well acquainted with Confucianism and Buddhism, to be able to handle easily, as he did in *Okina no fumi*, Shintoist doctrines which after all owe much to Confucian or Buddhist theories.

Nothing, either of his writings or of the facts of his life, indicates that Tominaga Nakamoto had been familiar with any Western idea of importance. In the first half of the Eighteenth Century, Japanese interests in Western knowledge were, generally speaking, limited to technical matters, such as medicine, agronomy, astronomy and calendar, geography and land survey. The impact of such knowledge on the traditional system of ideas was to be felt only in the second half of the century, as in the case of the natural philosophy of Miura Baien, who was only twenty-three when Nakamoto died. Andō Shōeki, of course, was exceptional in this respect, being interested in the Dutch political system, and even trying to get out of the country to see Western societies with his own eyes. But the works of Shōeki were not known practically to any of his contemporaries; it is most unlikely

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴² "Shutsujō kōgo to iu fumi" 出定後語といふ文, in "Tamakatsuma 王勝間, VIII," in *Zōbo Motoori Norinaga zenshū* 増補本居宣長全集, Yoshikawa kōbunkan 吉川弘文館, Tokyo, 1926, VIII.

⁴³ 黄檗 Quoted by Ishihama, *Tominaga Nakamoto*, p. 29.

⁴⁴ 天海

⁴⁵ 淨嚴、欽光

that Nakamoto even knew Shōeki's name. Tominaga Nakamoto was a phenomenon produced in Confucian Japan, almost totally isolated, physically and ideologically, from the rest of the world.

☞ TOMINAGA NAKAMOTO, HIS IDEAS

THE problem for Tominaga Nakamoto was how to come to terms with the different theories of Confucianism, Buddhism and Shintoism. His answer was a detached study of their historical development. He made a sharp distinction between his own views and those of the traditional Confucianists, Buddhists or Shintoists, saying that it is in vain, even ridiculous, either to try to integrate different theories into the one system as the Sung Confucianists did, or to claim the absolute authority for any of the doctrines, each actually representing only one stage of the history. For example, on Buddhism he said: "Since the death of Buddha there has been no generally accepted doctrine, no book of authority to rely on; everything has been arbitrarily modified and thus transferred to posterity. It is only natural that there is no unity at all between the doctrines expounded in all different sutras. None of them can we trust and follow." (*Shutsujō kōgo*, Chapter II).⁴⁶ Some Buddhists tried, however, to explain the existence of different sutras and doctrines, saying that the same word of Buddha sounded differently to different ears, or that Buddha himself changed his teachings five times in his life, or that the people interpreted the same teachings in different ways according to their different "dispositions." "All these explanations are serious misunderstandings and distortions of the truth." (*Okina no fumi*, Chapter X).⁴⁷ The truth can be revealed, according to Tominaga Nakamoto, through his own historical approach.

In his approach to the history of ideas, he elaborated a universal method, applicable to any system of ideas, based on three major conceptions: first, and most important, the process of *kajō*; secondly, the function of language, relative to the speaker, his time and the linguistic possibilities; thirdly, national characteristics, called *kuse*⁴⁸ or habits of nations. The word *kajō* literally means "to put something on another" and implies here an attempt of one thinker by producing a new theory, to go beyond or to surpass his predecessors. The conception of *kajō* is concerned with, so to speak, the internal logic which governs the evolution of ideas; the theory of language with the vehicle of carrying ideas; the national characteristics with the historical, social and cultural background of ideological systems.

The *kajō* theory explains, for example, the different Confucian views on man's nature as the results of a somewhat logical, and incidentally historical, development of ideas. Given the theory of Shi-Tzu that man's nature has some good and some bad, the next theory must

⁴⁶ The text of *Shutsujō kōgo* used here is the one edited by Saegusa Hiroto 三枝博音, included in *Nihon tetsugaku shisō zensho* 日本哲学思想全書, *Bukkyō ben* 仏教篇, Heibonsha 平凡社, Tokyo, 1956, pp. 263-337.

⁴⁷ The text of *Okina no fumi* used here, and for

the translation below, is the one published in *Nihon jurin sōsho* 日本儒林叢書, *Kaisetsu bu* 解説部, II, Tōyō tosho kankōkai 東洋圖書刊行会, Tokyo, 1929.

⁴⁸ 加上、くせ

be, as Kao-Tzu actually maintained, that it is neither good nor bad; then, Mencius' doctrine, claiming also something new, advances the argument that man's nature is basically good, which in turn is to be superseded by the new argument of Hsun-Tzu that it is basically bad. Here all views are equally judged on their own merits at different stages of the history of Confucian thought. None of them is considered as absolutely right or wrong; none of them is sacrosanct. Even for Confucius no exception should be made: his views should be understood in the historical context of the pre-Ch'in philosophers, as a reaction to the preceding ideas of the Five Nobles, and as a predecessor of, therefore superseded by, the later theory of Mo-ti. Hence one of the conclusions of *Okina no fumi* is: "The Sung Confucianists failed to recognize this and regarded all different theories as convergent. Recently Jinsai argued that only Mencius continued the important line from Confucius and all other teachings were wrong; Sorai claimed that the Way of Confucius went straight back to the Way of the Ancient Kings and that Tzu-ssu and Mencius and others were not in accord with that Way. They were all wrong, misunderstanding the facts" (Chapter XI).

Before, and long after, Tominaga Nakamoto, no one ever tried to approach Confucianism in such a detached way, except perhaps Ogyū Sorai who, on the basis of his detailed knowledge of the ancient documents, analyzed and mercilessly criticized the later Confucianists, especially the Sung Confucianists and their opponents, such as Wang Yang-ming and Itō Jinsai, alike.

Sorai was objective in attitude, historical in method, excluding any moral judgement from his interpretations of the texts, emphasizing the importance of the particularity of each period of the history in terms of ideas and institutions. The theory of *kajō* may have been inspired by such a method as Sorai's especially since Nakamoto was most probably familiar with Sorai's theories through Tanaka Dōkō. The difference between these two thinkers was that Sorai's method did not prevent him from claiming, perhaps in more determined way than anybody else, the absolute authority of the Way of the Ancient Kings as preached by Confucius; while Nakamoto's theory of *kajō*, much more universal in application than Sorai's, did not admit any exceptions, even that of the Ancient Kings or of Confucius himself. Sorai arrived at a rational approach to the Confucian schools, not despite, but because of, his attribution of a transcendent character to the Confucian "truth." Tominaga Nakamoto, whether he was actually influenced by Sorai or not, developed to the extreme the rational approach to the Confucian ideas, inevitably depriving Confucianism of any claim to absolute value or truth. Sorai was a super-Confucianist, who criticized Confucianists; Nakamoto was a student of the history of ideas, who subscribed to no ideology at all.

It was in *Shutsujō kōgo*, and also in *Okina no fumi* (Chapter X) in a more concise way, that Tominaga Nakamoto tackled the jungle of Buddhist texts, tracing the process of *kajō* in the pre-Buddhist philosophies as well as in the Buddhist theories: from the "emptiness of things" theory to the "limitless knowledge" then to the "neither thing nor knowledge" or "conception of non-existence," finally to the "neither conception nor non-conception;"

or from the "emptiness of things" of the Hinayāna to the "emptiness" of the Mahāprajñā-pāramitā, which in turn was followed by the "Not emptiness but being-as-such" of the Lotus sutra and others, and so on. It was of course impossible for Tominaga Nakamoto to establish exactly the chronological order of the Buddhist texts, because he was relying exclusively on the Collection of Sutras which had been translated into Chinese without respect to Indian chronology. All that he did, in spite of his limited knowledge about the chronology, was to try to explain the relations between the mutually contradictory sutras from a detached historical point of view; it was the only such attempt before the works of modern Buddhologists.

In Japanese Buddhism there had been two entirely different approaches to the sutras. In the first approach, called *kyōsō-banjaku* developed by the *Tendai School* through the Heian Period, all the sutras were analyzed and classified in terms of their form and theoretical content, so that the most authentic one, called *saishō*⁴⁹ or the best, was finally established. The conception of authenticity here has nothing to do with the subjective belief or personal concern of salvation, but with the supposed core of the Buddha's teachings. This is theoretically an objective approach. In practice, however, the different sects established different sutras as the best, on the basis of which each sect developed its own doctrine. Hence arose a great variety of dogmas, each claiming to the objective truth, and many debates, bitter and irreconcilable, between the opposing sects. In contrast with the first approach, the second, called the method of *sentaku*⁵⁰ or choice, was absolutely subjective: out of all the sutras one had to be chosen as the most suitable, or the most necessary, for the salvation of the soul of the believer. The choice of the sutra here had no reference to Buddha's teachings in his lifetime, nor to the degree of intellectual sophistication of theories, nor to anything else which transcends the subjectivity of religious belief. This attitude had been taken first by Hōnen (1133-1212), then developed by Shinran⁵¹ (1173-1262), leading to what may be called the Buddhist Reformation in the first half of the Thirteenth Century.

Tominaga Nakamoto's historical method of *kajō* is the third approach to Buddhism, fundamentally different from the previous two, either of *kyōsō-banjaku* or of *sentaku*. Not committing himself to Buddhism, Nakamoto tried to interpret Buddhist doctrines, not from outside, but from inside, in order to liberate the study of the diversity of the sutras from traditional sectionalism and the fanatical subjectivism of personal belief.

The theory of *kajō* was to be applied to Shintoism too, as we can see in *Okina no fumi* (Chapter XII) not necessarily with the same fruitful results as in the case of Confucianism or Buddhism. In fact Shintoism is not an autonomous system of ideas; its theories, largely taken from Buddhism or Confucianism, were conditioned by external circumstances rather than by internal development of ideas; the clear-cut line of the *kajō* process could not be traced as clearly as in the case of autonomous ideological systems. Nevertheless it may be interest-

⁴⁹ 教相判釈、天台宗、最勝

⁵⁰ 選択

⁵¹ 法然、親鸞

ing to note here the fact that the author did not hesitate to apply exactly the same method of study to Shintoism as to Confucianism or Buddhism, making no discrimination whatsoever between the indigenous Japanese religion and the originally alien ideologies. In the Eighteenth Century, even Andō Shōeki was less devastating towards Shintoism than towards Buddhism and Confucianism, let alone Norinaga, who welcomed Nakamoto's iconoclastic writings on Buddhism, without allowing them to touch at all his own sanctuary of the "ancient time of gods."

One entire chapter (xi) of *Shutsujō kōgo* is devoted to linguistic problems involved in the study of the Buddhist texts: "About the words, three things should be generally considered: speaker, time and different types of senses. It is my way of learning to interpret all expressions in relation to those three things." According to *Shutsujō kōgo*, in the first place, different speakers or authors use different words or expressions to indicate the same thing, as different sutras designate the ultimate goal of Buddhism by many different words, such as Buddhahood, dharmatā, prajñā, etc.; the word should be interpreted in relation to the speaker's intellectual position. In the second place, the pronunciation of the same word changes in the course of history, as is indicated by the different transcriptions of the same Sanskrit word by different translators such as Kumārājīva and Hsüan-tsang; thus the word is relative to the time in which it is used. In the third place, there are five different types of senses: the word may be used in a figurative sense in an exaggerated way (the *chō* or extended sense); or in the narrow sense which is the original sense (the *ben* or one-sided sense); or in a wide sense (the *han* or general sense); or it may be loaded with a new sense evoked by the original one (the *ki* or collided; the *ten* or transformed sense); or the word originally used in a bad sense may be used in a good sense (the *han* or contrary sense):⁵²

⁵² This is my interpretation of the five types of the sense of the words; it is different from Ishihama Juntarō's (*Tominaga Nakamoto*). The difference of opinion is mainly due to the two facts: first Nakamoto himself gives no definition of each type, but only some examples; second, he mentions in Chapter xi the five types, enumerating *chō* 張, *ben* 偏, *han* 泛 (general), *ki* 磯, *han* 反 (contrary), but talks about the *ten* 転 or transformed sense as one of those types in Chapter xxv. Ishihama Juntarō assumes that the original sense of the word (*ben*) was not to be included in the five types, and that the transformed sense (*ten*) was omitted by error in Chapter xi, concluding that the five types were *chō*, *han* (general), *ki*, *han* (contrary) and *ten* instead of *ben*. This interpretation seems not quite plausible for two reasons: first, it assumes an error in the text without evidence; second, the difference between the two senses of *ki* and *ten* is not really distinct, judging by the examples given in the text. The better solution may be, in my opinion,

to think that the *ki* in Chapter xi and the *ten* in Chapter xxv mean the same, granting Tominaga Nakamoto the possibility of occasionally using synonyms. If this interpretation is correct, then the original sense (*ben*) should be included in the total of five types, which contradicts no statement given in *Shutsujō kōgo*. Moreover the *ben* sense of the word had been emphasized, for example, also by Chu Hsi (Yü-shan Chiang-i 玉山講義, 1194) in contrast with the general sense which Chu Hsi called the *sen* 專 sense. Chu Hsi said in effect that benevolence in the narrow sense (*ben* sense) is one of the four virtues together with righteousness, propriety and knowledge, while benevolence in the wide sense (*sen* sense) is the Virtue which includes all the four. The two different senses of *ben* and *sen* here are very clear, and, I suppose, almost equal to Nakamoto's *ben* and *han* (general). I see no reason why the *ben* sense should be excluded from any general theory about the meaning of the words.

Here again the influence of Ogyū Sorai is very probable. Sorai emphasized the importance of the ancient institutions, which he sometimes called "things," sometimes "facts," as given in the Confucian Six Books. Hence "the vocation of Confucianists is to preserve those Books. . .;"⁵³ the method of learning is "to examine things through written documents and see the particularities of things."⁵⁴ Thus the philological study of the early Confucian texts was of primary importance in Sorai's system, which might have inspired Nakamoto's theory of words. However Nakamoto did not emphasize "my way of learning" without reason, in discussing the "three things" which condition the words. In fact he went further than Sorai, if not in application, at least in conception, of a new philological method, having such a lucid insight into the possibility of classification of all derived senses of the word as well as into the possibility of systematic study of the relationship between the language on the one hand, and history and society on the other. Tominaga Nakamoto, indeed, had an insight into the possibility, not only of a systematic study of linguistics, but also of a kind of cultural anthropology, based on his conception of national characteristics, which he called *kuse* or habits, or tendency. He did not analyse the national character itself (Chinese, Indian or Japanese) but he did try to relate it to the religious or ideological system originated by each nation. "The tendency peculiar to Buddhism is magic, which is now called sorcery. Indian people like it." (*Okina no fumi*, Chapter xiv). "The tendency peculiar to Confucianism is rhetoric. Rhetoric is what we now call oratory. In preaching a Way, or in guiding people, if you are not skilled in oratory, no one in China would believe and follow." (*Ibid.*, Chapter xv). Thus the national character which likes magic or rhetoric is related to the tendency peculiar to Buddhism or Confucianism respectively. As for Shintoism, *Okina no fumi* was most devastating: "The tendency peculiar to Shintoism is secrecy, such as divine secrets or secret arts for private transmission, in other words, keeping things in secrecy. Secrecy tends to lead to cheating and stealing. Magic and rhetoric, interesting to see and agreeable to hear, are somehow to be tolerated, but this secrecy is of the lowest kind." No Japanese before, and long after Tominaga Nakamoto, has ever described the Japanese national character with such a merciless detachment. It is true that there were some admirers of China in the Tokugawa Period, and some admirers of Western countries after Meiji, who were often bitter about the backwardness of Japanese society vis-a-vis those advanced countries. But Tominaga Nakamoto did not need to idealize any foreign country in order to see the weakness of his own.

The conclusion of his three critiques of Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism is summed up by Nakamoto himself in *Okina no fumi*: "In any event, Buddhism is the Way of India, Confucianism is the Way of China, and since they are of other countries, they are not the Way of Japan. Shintoism is the Way of Japan, but since it is of other times it cannot be the Way of the present-day world." (Chapter 1). Then what is his own Way?

⁵³ "Kutsu Keizan ni kotauru sho" 答屈景山書, kyo, 1929.

Appendix to "gakusoku" 學則, in *Nihon jurin sō-sho*, *Romben bu* 論辨部, Tōyō tosho kankōkai, To-

⁵⁴ "Gakusoku," Chapter IV, *ibid.*

In other words, what values did Tominaga Nakamoto subscribe to? A passage in *Shutsujō kōgo* answers this question: "It is the law of Nature that you should practice the good and not be bad; because it is natural to do the good and unnatural to do the bad. You do not need in this respect the teachings of Buddhism or Confucianism." (Chapter XIV) Also in a chapter in *Okina no fumi*: "We should simply strive in all matters for what is ordinary; should be of upright heart and right conduct, in our everyday activities; . . . If you have a master, you must be devoted to him. If you have children, you must teach them well. If you have retainers, you must govern them well. If you have a husband, you must follow him well, . . ." And it is said to be important "to live in present-day houses, to follow present-day customs, to respect present-day rules." (Chapter VI)

This is of course nothing new in Tokugawa Japan: Ishida Baigan (1685-1744), for example, might have said the same, or Kaibara Ekken⁵⁵ (1630-1714), or any popularizer of Confucian ethics of this time. Here lies the striking contrast between Andō Shōeki and Tominaga Nakamoto.

In the case of Andō Shōeki, the radical criticism of the leading ideological systems of the time led to a revolutionary utopianism and a determined opposition to the régime, while in the case of Tominaga Nakamoto it led to the acceptance of social institutions and a conformism to the conventional ethical values. Why this difference? Certainly not because Nakamoto was less radical than Shōeki in criticism of the ideological background of the society. As a matter of fact, Nakamoto was more rational and more consistent in his attitude, more systematic and more sophisticated in his method than Shōeki, being determined to destroy all the pretensions of Buddhist, Confucian or Shintoist doctrines. The important difference seems to lie in the fact that Nakamoto rejected all dogma to go back to common sense, subscribing to no absolute value whatsoever, while Shōeki criticized the established dogmas to replace them by his own, preaching his absolute ideal: the Way of Nature.⁵⁶ Nakamoto considered it useless to ask metaphysical questions such as whether the human nature is good or bad, or whether the world is ultimately Being

⁵⁵ 石田梅巖、貝原益軒

⁵⁶ "...There is only one Way in the universe, which on the one hand creates everything between Heaven and Earth, and on the other hand causes the five cereals to grow in response to the cultivating masses of people." (*Shizen shin'ei dō* 自然真営道, VI, translated by E. H. Norman, *Andō Shōeki*) and his "World of Nature" is an utopia of a classless society: "There is no ruler who exploits the ruled. There is neither luxury nor greed. Since there is no upper class, neither is there a lower class. No one flatters his superiors with fair words and thus no one entertains malice against others. . ." (*Shizen shin'ei dō*, I, translated by E. H. Norman, *Andō Shōeki*). Thus the Way of Nature of Andō

Shōeki was to a great degree of a dogmatic character, based on a sort of metaphysical cosmology.

Tominaga Nakamoto also used the word "nature," but it did not mean anything metaphysical or transcendent, as in the case of Andō Shōeki. When he wrote: "It is the law of nature (*temnen shizen no ri* 天然自然の理) that you should practice the good and not the bad," he did not mean by the word "law" (*ri*, or *li* 理 in Chinese) anything like Chu Hsi's Principle, nor by the word "nature" anything like Mencius' human nature, but he simply stressed a sort of common sense, to oppose what is bizarre or strange, and to accept what is ordinary, plain and practical.

or Nothingness. He sounded almost like a logical positivist, when he pointed out: "Without phenomenal things, nothingness is unthinkable; without nothingness, phenomenal things do not appear. The mountains, rivers and buildings are all phenomena in the nothingness, but in so far as you do not see those things you cannot say that those things do not really exist. Then you may call the world either existent or non-existent, as you like. The result is the same." (*Shutsujō kōgo*, Chapter XVIII) For Andō Shōeki, what is wrong is not the metaphysical questions, but the traditional answers to them: the true answer should be based on his conception of the Nature which was metaphysical, dogmatic and absolute.

If it is true that any régime has its own value-system based on certain dogmas, then it is understandable that an iconoclastic common-sense which repudiated *all* dogmas did not lead to any alternative system of values, let alone an alternative regime. Tominaga Nakamoto had to accept the existing values as given, refraining from any criticism of the social institutions of the regime. This was not the case with Andō Shōeki who was convinced of his own dogma, on the basis of which he could dream of alternative values which required, in turn, an alternative society, utopia. It was not a rational Voltaire, but a dogmatic Rousseau, who anticipated a democratic institution in writing a draft for the Corsican Constitution. It was indeed, as Max Weber pointed out, not the rationalism of the humanists, but the fanatical Reformation, which promoted the far-reaching transformation of the Sixteenth Century European society. The question remains, why Tominaga Nakamoto did not subscribe to any absolute value, conforming to the existing order, and why Andō Shōeki committed himself to a certain ideal, opposing the regime in the most radical way known to feudal Japan. At least a part of the answer may be this: Nakamoto lived in the society of the town-merchants in Osaka, who enjoyed largely the material prosperity of the mid-Eighteenth Century, while Shōeki is supposed to have been living among the farmers in the north part of the Japanese main island, where the misery of the farmers often resulted in open revolts under the regime of Yoshimune. Nakamoto must have been inclined to accept the status quo of the basic structure of society; Shōeki must have seen the urgent need of a change, because, for the people with whom he identified himself, the order was evil.

Tominaga Nakamoto's influence on other scholars has been very limited, for obvious reasons, under the military dictatorship of the Tokugawa regime. His book *Setsubei* was lost, as we have already mentioned; *Okina no fumi* survived, but was ignored by the scholarly world. A certain Tamiya Nakanobu (?-?) mentioned in his collected papers, *Tōyūshi* (published in Osaka in 1803)⁵⁷ the existence of a book called *Okina no fumi*, but he did not know even the name of the author, and had apparently no idea of the major points made in it. It was *Shutsujō kōgo* alone which produced some repercussions in the intellectual

⁵⁷ 田宮仲宣、東牖子. Included in *Nihon zuibitsu* | 1928, X, 84-177.
taisei 日本隨筆大成, Yoshikawa kōbunkan, Tokyo, |

world: first, such a criticism of Buddhism evoked certain reactions among Buddhist priests; second, it supplied a formidable arm to the arsenal of the school of National Learning, (Hirata Atsutane⁵⁸ (1776-1842) admitted that he himself owed to it much of his knowledge about Buddhism). And throughout the Tokugawa Period, no one has ever understood, and appreciated, *Shutsujō kōgo* better than Motoori Norinaga, who wrote:

“Recently in Osaka there lived a person called Tominaga Nakamoto, who published during the Enkyo era a book on Buddhism, titled *Shutsujō kōgo*, supporting his detailed arguments by a wide reference to the sutras and Buddhist treatises. This book opened my eyes to many things. Judging by his style of *kambun*, I think this man must have studied extensively the Confucian classics. Although he was not a monk, his command of the Buddhist texts seems to have been superior to most of the monks known as scholars of the various Buddhist sects. This is an admirable achievement, indeed. Later a monk called Musō published a book called *Hi-shutsujō*,⁵⁹ and tried to refute *Shutsujō kōgo* because he could not bear the idea that Buddhism could be dealt with in such simple terms. But what he did was only to shout all kinds of abuses, without really disproving even a single passage of the book in question. It is obvious that this monk, renowned for his knowledge on phonology, did not know much about Buddhist texts. I feel, however, that this book could not be easily disproved even by a monk who has thoroughly studied Buddhism.”⁶⁰

This is all Norinaga said. But even in such short remarks he did not fail to make important points: that no one else has ever analysed Buddhist doctrines in detail, as Tominaga Nakamoto did, without subscribing to Buddhist beliefs, and that the arguments advanced in *Shutsujō kōgo* were solid enough not to be easily disproved by anybody.

Tominaga Nakamoto had no disciple of eminence; no successor in that sense. Yet one cannot help thinking of some heritage of his ideas, when one sees the case of Yamakata Bantō⁶¹ (1746-1821) who was born in the year of Nakamoto's death. Bantō also lived in Osaka as a *chōnin*; studied in *Kaitokudō*, no longer with Nakai Shūan, but with his two sons; he wrote a book which was not published in his lifetime, criticizing Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism; he was extremely radical in his atheistic view of the world, and yet accepted the most conventional values of the Chu Hsi School in ethics as well as in politics. However the contrast between these two thinkers may be more significant than the similarity: Nakamoto lived in the first half of the Eighteenth Century, Bantō in the second. Nakamoto had practically no contact with any Western knowledge; Bantō discarded the traditional cosmology of the Shintoist, Buddhist, or Confucian classics on the basis of his knowledge of Western astronomy, finally to reach a sort of materialism in his twelve volumes of *Tume no shiro*.⁶² And this was a contrast not only between Naka-

⁵⁸ 平田篤胤

⁵⁹ 無相、非出定

⁶⁰ Motoori Norinaga, “Tamakatsuma.”

⁶¹ 山片蟠桃

⁶² 夢の城

moto and Bantō, but also between all rational minds of the first and the second half of the Eighteenth Century.

After long neglect, the re-discovery of Tominaga Nakamoto in the Meiji era was largely due to Naitō Konan⁶³ (1866-1934), known as one of the founders of modern Sinology in Japan. Nakamoto's methodology was later discussed by some authors such as Tsuchida Kyōson⁶⁴ and Saegusa Hiroto. His life was studied extensively by Ishihama Juntarō. But most of the historians have thus far never sufficiently emphasized the importance of Tominaga Nakamoto as a thinker of Tokugawa Japan; the intellectual public at large have never been really aware of the scope of the main ideas of this young philosopher.

⁶³ 内藤湖南

⁶⁴ 土田杏村