2

Mono no Aware

Youthful Years in Kyoto and Matsuzaka

Soon after Norinaga arrived in Kyoto, he became a disciple of Hori Keizan, a Confucian scholar there. Norinaga was twenty-one years old. This was the starting point for his new life and career. He was now supposed to concentrate on the study of medicine and Chinese classics, instead of working in business. He was now able to read as many books as he wanted without restraint or hesitation.

Significantly enough, soon after his arrival in Kyoto, Norinaga changed his family name Ozu to Motoori.[1] Ozu was the surname used for several generations by his ancestors while they were engaged in commerce, whereas the name Motoori was associated with a samurai family. In *Ie no mukashi monogatari,* Norinaga identified Motoori Takehide as "the ancestor of our family" and described in considerable detail what he was and what he did, on the basis of a few old documents about his family lineage.[2]

Motoori Takehide was "a brave and strong warrior" of Ise, who together with his elder brother served a feudal lord named Gamō Ujisato in the latter part of the sixteenth century, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi was rising to power. In 1590, when Ujisato, under orders from Hideyoshi, moved from Ise to Ōshū (the northeastern part of Honshu), Takehide accompanied him. In 1591 there was a severe battle there, in which Takehide was killed after taking a distinguished part in the fighting. Takehide's wife, who was pregnant at the time, returned to Ise with a couple of her husband's followers. For some reason she did not go to the home of Takehide's elder brother, but stayed with a cotton-goods merchant named Aburaya Gen'emon at the Ozu village of Ise and brought forth a son there. Later, this son moved to Matsuzaka together with Gen'emon, who adopted the surname of Ozu. The son married the eldest daughter of Gen'emon, and set up a

branch family of Ozu, calling himself Ozu Shichiemon Dōin. Norinaga came from this family.

When Norinaga changed his name, he must have had this family history in mind. The change of name, therefore, seems to have represented a process in his search for identity: it was the symbolic expression of his break with the traditional occupation of his family — a radical break, carried out against parental expectations and despite his own respect for his ancestors; and, at the same time, it showed that he had found a significant object of identification among his ancestors, by tracing back his family lineage for over one hundred and fifty years.

Norinaga stayed in Kyoto for more than five years. He learned traditional Chinese medicine under Hori Genkō (1686–1754) and, after Genkō's death, under Takekawa Kōjun (1725–1780). In Hori Keizan's school he studied a number of Chinese texts. Keizan belonged to the neo-Confucian school, but he was also familiar with the *kogaku* (ancient studies) and had friendly relations with its greatest leader, Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728). His thought as a whole was rather closer to Sorai's than to Chu Hsi's. Moreover, Keizan had a considerable knowledge of Japanese literature and waka poetry, which contributed to Norinaga's increasing interest in these subjects.[3]

It seems that Norinaga was also influenced in his youth by Ogyū Sorai, partly through Hori Keizan and partly through his own reading of Sorai's books. In *Motoori Norinaga zuihitsu* (Essays by Motoori Norinaga), mostly written during his stay in Kyoto, there are notes on some passages from Sorai's works, especially those concerning poetry and Shinto, although Norinaga has no comment of his own upon them.[4]

Besides the studies of medicine and Chinese — mainly Confucian — classics, Norinaga read by himself a large number of the literary works of ancient and medieval Japan. In five years in Kyoto he bought more than forty books and copied at least fifteen, according to his record. Almost all these books were either Japanese literary works, especially of the Heian period, or collections of waka poems, or commentaries on these works.[5] Norinaga also composed many waka poems himself. A collection of his poems contains over two thousand poems composed during the years in Kyoto.[6]

In the course of his studies in this line Norinaga read several works

by Keichū, and felt that his "eyes were opened." Norinaga found that Keichū, basing his studies on ancient texts, tried to interpret the original meanings of old waka poems, ignoring later distorted commentaries. He wrote, "It is Keichū who discovered the true significance of the way of waka poetry." [7] His ideas on waka poetry first crystallized in his maiden work, *Ashiwake obune* (A small boat punting through the reed brake), which was written toward the end of his stay in Kyoto.

Norinaga was not entirely occupied in reading books. He often enjoyed himself with his friends in various kinds of recreation, of which he writes in his diary vividly and in some detail. During these five years he went home only once — in 1756 to attend the memorial services on the seventeenth anniversary of his father's death. This fact, among others, would indicate that his life in Kyoto was quite gratifying and happy.[8]

On returning home to Matsuzaka in the fall of 1757, Norinaga soon set himself up as a physician. In fact, he had entered this profession in 1755, when he changed his hair style as well as his first name, and also began to wear *jittoku* (a special garment with sleeves) and *wakizashi* (a small sword), all of which indicated the status of physician at that time.[9] This readiness was perhaps caused by a desire to put his mother at ease as soon as possible. But it is also to be understood in terms of his attitude toward medicine as an occupation. As we saw in Chapter 1, being a physician did not necessarily correspond to Norinaga's ideal self-image, but he attached importance to the occupation, as a means of averting the downfall of the household and the resultant disgrace to his parents and ancestors. This attitude was in accordance with his mother's deep concern about the continuity of the family.

It would be interesting in this respect to compare Norinaga with Itō Jinsai, a great Confucian scholar of the *kogaku* school around the same period. Jinsai, who was born into a declining merchant family, also suffered a serious identity problem in his youth. He wrote,

> When I was fifteen or sixteen years old, I liked learning and intended to study the Way of the Sages. My relatives and friends told me that I had better study medicine, since it was difficult to live by Confucian studies. But I would not listen to them. Some of them still kept admonishing or even scolding me. As my parents grew old, as my family became poor, and as things went wrong, they accused me of neglecting the duties of life . . . Those who loved me deeply blamed me severely . . . But I loved learn-

> ing so much and maintained my intention so firmly, that I was able to become what I am now.[10]

It is apparent that Norinaga's attitude was much milder and more flexible than the resolute and rather rigid one adopted by Jinsai.

Norinaga was not satisfied merely with his conscientious work as a physician to earn the livelihood of the family. He remained deeply concerned with Japanese literature and especially waka poetry. A few months after he came home, he joined a waka poem club associated with the Reishōji temple in Matsuzaka and before long took leadership in the club, young as he was. In the summer of that year (1758), he also started his lectures on *Genji monogatari* (The tale of Genji). Since the first audience consisted mainly of the members of the waka poem club, his lectures were probably begun at the request of some members of the club who appreciated his knowledge and intelligence. Later, a number of the members became Norinaga's earliest disciples.[11]

In 1759, Norinaga gave lectures on *Ise monogatari* (The tale of Ise), as well as *Genji,* and in 1760, lectures on *Tosa nikki* (The Tosa diary), *Makura no sōshi* (The pillow book), and *Hyakunin isshu kaikanshō* (A commentary on *Hyakunin isshu* or the one hundred poems by one hundred poets). Lectures on *Man'yōshū* (Myriad leaves, the oldest collection of Japanese poems) began in 1761 and continued throughout the following years together with lectures on *Genji.* Throughout his life, Norinaga regarded these two classics, together with the *Kojiki* (Record of ancient matters), as especially important and often lectured on them.

Thus at about the age of thirty Norinaga was engaged both in medicine and in lecturing on Japanese literature. It is said that whenever he was called to a patient in the middle of a lecture, he would at once stop, visit his patient, and resume the lecture on his return.[12] According to another story, Norinaga was seen at times to go to the quiet woods nearby called Yoiho no mori, carrying a medicine chest, and to spend some time there; and people in the neighborhood often talked of "Doctor Shun'an [Norinaga] going to Yoiho no mori."[13] It is possible that he did not have many patients at first, but it would seem that he needed these undisturbed hours, for it was a time when important ideas were growing within his mind.

Meanwhile, he married Murata Mika in 1760, at the age of thirty, but the marriage ended in divorce after only a few months. Then, in 1762, he married Kusabuka Tami. Norinaga's mother gave her her

own name, "Katsu," as her new first name on the day of the wedding.[14] Norinaga does not say why he divorced his first wife, Mika. Since it was a period when marriage was generally regarded as a matter for the family rather than for the individual, it is possible that Mika was divorced because she could not harmonize with Norinaga's family, particularly with his mother, although we cannot say this definitely. A point which seems relevant here is that Mika came from a rather well-to-do merchant family, while Tami was the daughter of a physician serving the Tōdō, the Lord of Tsu. Considering Norinaga's profession, this difference may perhaps be meaningful. In any case, a few months after Norinaga's second marriage, his mother was tonsured at the Zenkōji temple in Nagano; this seems symbolically to represent her satisfaction with the marriage.

The year 1763 was a fruitful and memorable year for Norinaga. His first son Kenzō (later called Haruniwa) was born, and two important works were completed within the year. One is *Shibun yōryō* (The essence of *The tale of Genji*), in which he criticizes former interpretations of *Genji monogatari* and proposes the famous conception of *mono no aware* as the essence of the novel. The other is *Isonokami sasamegoto* (My personal view of poetry), in which he discusses the nature and history of Japanese poetry on the basis of the notion of *mono no aware*. The basic ideas in these writings are seen to have already germinated in *Ashiwake obune,* but they are presented in a clearer and more persuasive form in the two later works, which can be regarded as the decisive representation of his thought in youth.

Another important event in the same year was his encounter with Kamo no Mabuchi, who was to be his master in *kokugaku*. Norinaga, at the age of thirty-three, saw Mabuchi for the first time at an inn in Matsuzaka on the evening of the twenty-fifth of the fifth month.[15] This episode is known as "the evening in Matsuzaka," and has had a symbolic meaning for many Japanese interested in *kokugaku*. It was actually just after Norinaga returned to Matsuzaka that he came to know the name of Mabuchi. In his essay "Ono ga monomanabi no arishi yō" (How I pursued my studies), he says:

> Around the time when I returned home, someone who had come up from Edo showed me a book called *Kanji kō* (A study of poetic epithets), which he said had just been published. This was my first acquaintance with the name of the Master of Agatai [Mabuchi]. At the first reading I found everything he said in the

> book quite startling and so alien and strange that I could not accept it. But thinking that there must be some significance in the book, I read it again and now discovered some few points which I felt were true. Then, once again, I reread it, and found more points on which I could agree, so that I came to believe what is said in the book, and in the end fully appreciated the truth of the author's view of ancient words and meanings.[16]

Thus, Norinaga was gradually attracted by Mabuchi, and strengthened his intention to study ancient Japanese literature, which had already been growing in Kyoto. He wished more and more eagerly to see Mabuchi, to receive his personal instruction. So he was very pleased when he heard that Mabuchi was staying at an inn in Matsuzaka. The evening in Matsuzaka was the only occasion on which the two men met, but it was to be a turning point in Norinaga's life and thought.

Norinaga and Confucianism

By the end of his adolescence, Norinaga had apparently learned something of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shinto, but none of these was influential enough to provide him with a "central perspective and direction." In the second stage of his life, he experienced a more self-conscious and more critical encounter with these various religious traditions, through which his basic thought was gradually formed. Confucianism was the most powerful system of thought he met at that time.

In Kyoto Norinaga studied Chinese writings quite extensively. According to his diary,[17] he read at least the following books in Hori Keizan's class or in a voluntary reading group: *The Five Confucian Classics; Shih-chi* (Historical records by Ssu-ma Ch'ien); *Chin-shu* (History of the Chin dynasty); *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* (Contemporary records of new discourses); *Meng-ch'iu* (A collection of the stories of the ancients for boys' reading); *Tso-chuan* (A commentary on *Ch'un-ch'iu*); *Ch'ien Han-shu* (History of the former Han dynasty); *Chuang-tzu; Hsün-tzu; Nan-shih* (History of the southern dynasties); *Lieh-tzu;* and *Wen-hsüan* (Literary selections).

Although he does not give any comment on these texts, it is obvious that he acquired considerable knowledge of Chinese history and Confucian thought through this reading. How, then, did he see Con-

fucianism, and what attitude did he take toward it? A clue to this problem is found in a letter written in Kyoto at about the age of twenty-six. It is addressed to a classmate of his, Shimizu Kichitarō, who was about ten years younger than Norinaga, yet quite brilliant, and deeply interested in Confucianism.[18] Norinaga was very friendly with him; it was usually with Shimizu and a few other friends that Norinaga read Chinese texts or enjoyed his leisure time. But in their views on Confucianism and Confucian studies, Norinaga and Shimizu never agreed with each other. This letter is a reply to one from Shimizu, in which Shimizu had probably criticized Norinaga's preference of waka poetry to Confucian studies. Norinaga writes:

> You have censured me for my love of waka poetry. But, as for me, I have been thinking that your love of Confucianism is to be criticized. What is called Confucianism is the Way of the Sages, and the Way of the Sages is the way of ruling a country, pacifying the whole world under heaven, and keeping people content. It is by no means a matter of private existence and personal enjoyment. Hence, when one has no country to rule and no people to gratify, of what use is the Way of the Sages? Such a matter as personal cultivation is a mere trifle, for which one need not rely upon the Way [of the Sages]. It is indeed to this case that Confucius' simile of an ox-cleaver should be applied.[19]

There is little doubt that Norinaga owes this definition of Confucianism largely to Ogyū Sorai. Sorai's thought became influential during the critical transition between the Genroku and the Kyōho eras, and by the time of Norinaga it overshadowed even the official Chu Hsi school. A detailed discussion of the differences between these two Confucian systems is beyond the scope of this book,[20] but it is important for our purposes to distinguish at least some of the important characteristics of the two systems.

According to the Chu Hsi school, the Way is identified with *li* (principle), the metaphysical principle naturally immanent in all things in the universe. Each thing has its own *li,* and the various *li* of all things in the universe, brought into one whole, constitute *t'ai chi* (the ultimate principle), which is sometimes called *t'ien li* (the heavenly principle). Man derives his nature from *li, or* ultimately from *t'ien li,* and therefore his original nature is good. But it is usually obscured by "human desires," which result from the excess of man's feelings, de-

rived from *ch'i* (ether). Hence, man should extinguish human desires and purify his original nature, so that he may unify himself with *li* in the cosmos and be a sage. Enlightenment or sagehood is attained through personal moral cultivation, particularly by *chih-chih* (extension of knowledge) and *ko-wu* (investigation of things). This personal cultivation is the essential prerequisite for the fulfillment of all political and social values — such as ordering the family, ruling the country, and pacifying the whole world.[21]

In distinction to this, Ogyū Sorai clearly defines the Way as "the Way of the Sages" or "the Way of the early sage kings," and characterizes it primarily in political terms, that is, as "the way of pacifying the world under heaven." According to him, the Way is not the natural way of heaven and earth, but something which the early kings themselves created by exerting their mental capacities to the utmost. Certainly, "the basis for pacifying the whole world is personal cultivation," but personal cultivation is "useless without knowing the way to rule a country." It is quite contrary to the original Way of the early kings and of Confucius to deprecate the importance of political affairs and to attach all importance to personal virtue.[22]

As for methodology, while the Chu Hsi school shows a preference for the Four Books, especially *The Mean* and *The Great Learning*, Sorai emphasizes the primary importance of the Six Classics, of which the Four Books are merely personal interpretations. He argues that the ancient Way of the sage kings degenerated into the "Confucianist" school with the appearance of Tzu-ssu, Mencius, and Hsün-tzu, and further degenerated with Chu Hsi.

It is clear from what has been discussed that Norinaga's view of Confucianism agrees with Sorai's interpretation. In fact, we have evidence that during his stay in Kyoto Norinaga read at least ten books by Sorai, which include *Bendō* (Distinguishing the Way), *Bemmei* (Distinguishing the name), *Rongo chō* (A commentary on the *Analects* of Confucius), and *Sorai sensei tōmonjo* (A record of questions and answers by Master Sorai).[23] In another place in the same letter, Norinaga says: "Tzu-ssu, Mencius, the Ch'eng brothers, and Chu Hsi all claimed that their own way was the Way of the early kings and Confucius. In this they were arrogant . . . They were excellent only in their disputes and never did good to the world in practice. They have merely misled people and disturbed the peace."[24] This argument, too, is obviously similar to Sorai's in *Bendō*.

It is very important, however, to note that the conclusion that Norinaga has drawn from his view of Confucianism is quite different from that of Sorai. According to Sorai, although the Way of the early kings and Confucius is in essence the way of ruling a country and the world and, as such, is primarily relevant to rulers, yet each subject can and should participate in the process of political rule by developing his own characteristic quality and serving in his own occupation, so that "all the people in the world should be officials to help the ruler to be the father and mother of the people."[25] As against this view, Norinaga could not see a meaning in the Way of the early sage kings for himself, observing, "When one has no country to rule and no people to gratify, of what use is the Way of the Sages?" He further argues in the same letter:

> Confucius lived in a period not too far distant from that of Kings Wen and Wu and the Duke of Chou — in the period in which the *rei gaku kei sei* (rites, music, law enforcement, and political administration) of the early sage kings had not been totally abandoned, and its influence persisted. Nevertheless, the Way of the early kings was not observed. Confucius in his old age found it impossible to make the Way obtain, and finally edited the Six Classics so that they might be handed down to posterity. How difficult it is! Even Confucius, who possessed such high virtues and lived so soon after the age of the early kings, was not able to get the world to practice the Way.[26]

For Sorai, Confucius was one of the sages who contributed to the establishment of the Way. "The Way of Confucius is the Way of the early kings" and Confucius simply "failed to achieve the position of authority," which the early kings had possessed. This does not affect the fact that the Way was created by the sages "so that all men in later ages should act in accordance with it."[27] For Norinaga, however, Confucius was a man who endeavored, but failed, to enforce the practice of the Way. And this failure had serious implications, for Confucius was a person who had very high virtues and lived in relatively orderly times. From this standpoint, Norinaga posed a question to his young Confucian friend, Shimizu, "Is it not hard to attempt what Confucius could not perform? How is it possible to save your study of the Way of the Sages from being the mere 'art of killing a dragon' [impractical art]?"[28] We should not take this question as a mere

disputatious challenge but rather as a problem which Norinaga himself had confronted in his search for meaning. This is confirmed by his own words in a later part of the letter:

> What meaning do you see in your study of the Way of the Sages? I myself loved learning from childhood, and more and more so, as I grew up. Then I took up the Six Classics and read them. After many years, I achieved almost perfect understanding of their purport. How magnificent the Way is! On a larger scale, it is the way to pacify the whole world under heaven; on a smaller scale, it is the way to rule a country. But I am a *shōjin* [a small man]; even if I should thoroughly understand the Way, where could I put it into practice? [29]

Norinaga did not find in Confucianism, or the Way of the Sages, a source of personal meaning and identity. Rather, he defined himself as *shōjin* or "a small man," for whom the Way of the Sages, though magnificent in itself, was quite remote and impractical. In his eyes, even Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai, who criticized the Chu Hsi school and tried to return to Confucius or further back to the early kings, were little different from the "arrogant" Confucinanists who, since Tzu-ssu and Mencius, had "claimed that their own way was the Way of the early kings and Confucius."

But it is very interesting and important that Norinaga, while disapproving of Confucianism, yet felt deep sympathy for, and "identified" himself with, Confucius as a person — or, to be more exact, Confucius as Norinaga understood him. In the letter to Shimizu, just after the above-quoted sentences, Norinaga refers to an interesting story in the *Analects*. The story goes as follows:

> Once when Tzu-lu, Tsêng Hsi, Jan Ch'iu and Kung-hsi Hua were seated in attendance upon the Master, he said, you consider me as a somewhat older man than yourselves. Forget for a moment that I am so. At present you are out of office and feel that your merits are not recognized. Now supposing someone were to recognize your merits, what employment would you choose? Tzu-lu promptly and confidently replied, Give me a country of a thousand war-chariots, hemmed in by powerful enemies, or even invaded by hostile armies, with drought and famine to boot; in the space of three years I could endow the people with courage and teach them in what direction right conduct lies.

> Our Master smiled at him. What about you, Ch'iu? he said. Ch'iu replied saying, Give me a domain of sixty to seventy or say fifty to sixty (leagues), and in the space of three years I could bring it about that the common people should lack for nothing. But as to rites and music, I should have to leave them to a real gentleman.
>
> What about you, Ch'ih? (Kung-hsi Hua) answered saying, I do not say I could do this; but I should like at any rate to be trained for it. In ceremonies at the Ancestral Temple or at a conference or general gathering of the feudal princes I should like, clad in the Straight Gown and Emblematic Cap, to play the part of junior assistant.
>
> Tien, what about you? The notes of the zithern he was softly fingering died away; he put it down, rose and replied saying, I fear my words will not be so well chosen as those of the other three. The Master said, What harm is there in that? All that matters is that each should name his desire.
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> Tsêng Hsi Tien said, Toward the end of spring, with the dress of the season all complete, along with five or six newly capped young men and six or seven boys, to go and bathe in the river I, enjoy the breezes at the Rain Altars, and then return home singing. The Master heaved a deep sigh and said, I am with Tien.[30]

Having this story in mind, Norinaga says: "Tien is a disciple of Confucius. And his enjoyment is not in the Way of the early kings, but in bathing in the river I and going home singing. Confucius' heart, too, lies in the latter, not in the former." [31] Norinaga thus sees in Confucius not a solemn moralist occupied with the Way of the early kings, but a humane living person who enjoys a simple, yet joyous and peaceful life.

The significance of this understanding of Confucius will be clearer when it is compared with interpretations of the same passage by leading Confucian scholars. For instance, Chu Hsi comments on the passage as follows:

> Tsêng Hsi Tien's learning has reached the level on which he can realize that when all human desires have been extinguished, *t'ien li* or the heavenly principle permeates everywhere without any defects. Therefore, his attitude and conduct are composed. And

> also when he talks about his desire, he conforms to the position in which he finds himself, and has no wants beyond his enjoyment of daily ordinary matters. He does not intend from the beginning to do good to others selflessly, but he has an utterly serene mind in perfect harmony with all things in heaven and earth. The mystery of the harmony in which each thing in the universe possesses its own place, is implicitly connoted in his words. Over against this, the other three disciples are worried about minor aspects of the matter and hence their spirits are not equal [to Tien's]. Thus, Confucius heaved a deep sigh and agreed with Tien.[32]

Itō Jinsai explains why Confucius agrees with Tien from another standpoint. He says: "Tien deeply disliked the disturbances of the late Chou dynasty and yearned after the peace and order of ancient times. Hence, in his words was reflected such a spirit as had been possessed by the people under the reign of Yao and Shun, who enjoyed sufficient food and a pleasant life and could fulfill themselves. Therefore, Confucius said with a deep sigh, I am with Tien. Confucius himself had the wish to see the prosperous reign of the ancient sage kings restored." [33]

Ogyū Sorai criticizes Chu Hsi's interpretation as colored by his own philosophy, and Jinsai's view as Taoistic. According to Sorai, Tien's answer is a periphrasis, which Confucianists in the later ages failed to understand. Sorai insists that T'ien's real intention lies in "the rule by rites and music." "Tien is waiting for a wise king to arise; when the time comes, he will appear in the world to put the Way into practice there and produce rites and music to cultivate the people of the world." However, continues Sorai, Tien did not say this explicitly, but simply by talking about the present situation he hinted at his real implication, which he knew Confucius would understand.[34]

Despite all the differences between these Confucian views, they have one thing in common. That is, each of the Confucian scholars tries to interpret the story so that it fits into his own Confucian framework as rationally as possible. In contrast with this, Norinaga takes the story at its face value, rather naively, without seeking some metaphyhical or moral implication. For Confucians, Confucius, as a

great sage, had to be consistent, and hence the varying, and sometimes even contradictory, depictions of Confucius in the *Analects* had to be explained. The chapter under discussion was one of the most controversial ones, especially for those scholars who emphasized the political aspect of Confucianism. But Confucian frameworks did not bother Norinaga at all. He was directly attracted by Confucius, not primarily as a sage, but as a person whom he imagined taking pleasure in going with youths and boys to a river on a late spring day, bathing there, and returning home singing. For Norinaga, Confucius agreed with Tien, not because Tien's answer expressed the enlightened state of mind in which human desires have been extinguished, nor because his words connoted longing for the ancient golden age, nor because he implied that he was awaiting the advent of a wise ruler, but just because Confucius loved such a simple, peaceful life. And with this understanding, Norinaga sharply distinguished between Confucius and Confucianism or the Way of the Sages; this view of Confucius remained essentially unchanged throughout Norinaga's life.[35]

Of course, I am not arguing that Norinaga understood Confucius better than Confucian scholars. Even today, there are still many unsolved problems about the *Analects* and the life of Confucius.[36] The important point here is that Norinaga "identifies" himself with Confucius as he sees him. In other words, we can see Norinaga himself in the picture he has drawn of Confucius — a picture of a person whose real enjoyment is not in toilsome practicing of the Way of the Sages, but in "bathing in a river and going home singing." In the letter to Shimizu, Norinaga goes on to say, "I love waka poetry. This is my nature and my propensity . . . Although you censure me for my love of it, this is simply because you do not know its pleasure." And he concludes the letter with the words: "You are occupied with the [Confucian] teachings and worried about your reputation, so that you afflict your own spirit and waste your energy. What is the use of it?" [37]

All in all, we may detect in this attitude a distinctive concern for the personal, natural and emotional, rather than the formal, rational, and volitional. We shall soon see that this concern represents the basic feature of Norinaga's thought, which was before long to crystallize around the ideas of *mono no aware* and, later, of the "Ancient Way."

The Concept of Mono no Aware

Mono no aware is the key concept representing the essence of Norinaga's thought as formed in the second phase of his life. At the same time as he was studying Confucian texts, he was also developing this important idea through his private study of ancient Japanese literature, particularly of *Genji monogatari. Mono no aware* is important not simply as an aesthetic concept basic to his theory of literature, but also as a central idea in his view of human nature. Although the last and finest presentation of the concept is given in his *Genji monogatari tama no ogushi* (The small jeweled comb, a study of *The tale of Genji*), written in his old age, we can already see it germinating in his first essay, *Ashiwake obune* around 1757, and it finds almost complete expression in *Shibun yōryō* and *Isonokami sasamegoto,* both written in 1763 at the age of thirty-three.

Mono no aware is a subtle term, which is very difficult to render into another language. It consists of three words: *mono* ("thing" in a broad sense), *no* (a possessive particle), and *aware* (usually translated as "sadness" or "pity"). As is often the case, however, a literal translation, such as "sadness of things," not only fails to convey its real meaning, but is also misleading. Our problem here is what Norinaga means by it. Because the term refers to a rather subtle notion, Norinaga's exposition itself is not very systematic. But here I will try to approach its meaning and implication by distinguishing three aspects: the basic meaning of *mono no aware;* the significance of *mono no aware* for literature; *mono no aware* and human nature. And on each of these, I would like to let Norinaga speak for himself as far as possible.

According to Norinaga, the key word is *aware,* to which *mono* is added to supply a somewhat broader connotation, as in *monogatari* (story), *monomi* (sight-seeing), *monomōde* (visit to shrines), and so forth.[38] In *Isonokami sasamegoto,* he expounds the word *aware,* on the basis of his philological studies, as follows: "*Aware* is in essence an expression for deep feeling in the heart. In later periods, this word has been used to refer merely to a sad feeling, but that is only one facet of the term . . . *Aware* was originally an exclamation, expressing any heartfelt sentiment. It belonged to the same category as *ana* and *aya* [both exclamations]." Then, after quoting a number of poems in illustration, he says: "Although people usually conceive

aware as simply meaning sadness, this is not quite right. Rather, any deep emotion, whether happy, amused, joyous, sad, or yearning, can be referred to as *aware*. Hence we see many instances in which *aware* denotes something interesting or amusing." [39]

Norinaga does not fail to mention the historical change in usage, which, he holds, was based on subtle human psychology. "Among the various things that move a man's heart, something amusing or cheerful will move it rather lightly, whereas something sad or something yearned for stirs the heart especially deeply. So these latter feelings have been particularly identified with *aware,* so that *aware* is now commonly understood simply as sadness. This can be compared to the term *hana,* which denotes all kinds of flowers and yet is also used to refer particularly to cherry blossom as against plum and other kinds." [40]

Thus, according to Norinaga, *aware* is above all a word of exclamation or a word for expressing any of the deep emotions that man experiences in regard to things or events. Norinaga also stresses the spontaneous and irresistible nature of such emotion or *aware*. He says in *Shibun yōryō*: "The things by which man is deeply moved are diverse, some being good and others being evil, but man's heart itself is so spontaneously and irresistibly moved that it is beyond his control and can be moved even by evil things. However much a man tries not to be stirred by something which he regards as evil, his heart is naturally and irresistibly moved." [41]

It should be noticed that Norinaga has a special psychological insight into the nature of man's emotional orientation toward such exterior objects. That is, Norinaga sees that the object in such a context can have no neutral connotation when it involves some moving or affecting significance for the subject. According to Norinaga, "for the subject to be affected" is not separable from "for the object to be affecting." He calls this significance of the object *mono no kokoro* (the heart of the thing) or *koto no kokoro* (the heart of the event). For Norinaga, "to be aware of the heart of a thing" (*mono no kokoro o shiru*) is identical with "to be sensitive to *mono no aware*" (*mono no aware o shiru*). In his own words:

> For instance, if a man, viewing beautiful cherry-blossoms in full bloom, appreciates them as beautiful, he is aware of *mono no kokoro* or the heart of the thing [the moving significance of

> the cherry blossoms]. Being aware of the beauty of the blossoms, he is moved by it. That is, he is sensitive to *mono no aware.* In contrast, if a man, whatever beautiful flowers he sees, does not feel them to be beautiful, he is not aware of *mono no kokoro.* Such a man is never moved by the beauty of the flowers. That is to say, he is not sensitive to *mono no aware.*

Norinaga gives another instance as follows:

> When a man, seeing some other person deeply grieving for some serious trouble, sympathizes in the grief, he does so because he knows that the event is distressing. That is, he is aware of *koto no kokoro* or the heart of the event [the affecting significance of the sad event]. Being aware of the heart of the event to be grieved for, he feels sympathy for that grief within his own heart, so that he is emotionally moved. This is *mono no aware* . . . On the other hand, a man who is not sensitive to *mono no aware* and so not aware of the heart of the sad event, has no sympathy for the other's grief, however acutely he perceives it, so that his heart is not moved at all.[42]

Thus we can see that *mono no aware* experience involves some intuitive and aesthetic understanding of the "heart" of an object, which implies a certain sympathy for or even empathy toward the object. In short, *mono no aware* as Norinaga conceives it may be understood as man's emotional and aesthetic experience on being aware of the stimulating or affecting significance of the object with which he is involved.

Next, let us examine the implications of *mono no aware* in relation to literature. According to Norinaga, the purpose of literature is to express what man feels deeply in his heart, that is to say, to give expression to his *mono no aware* experience, and nothing else. Already in *Ashiwake obune,* Norinaga, in answer to the question whether poetry should be of political utility, had replied: "No. The essence of poetry is not to assist government, nor even to cultivate oneself. It is simply to express what one feels in one's heart. Some poems may be helpful to government or to moral instruction, but others can have a harmful effect upon a country or on private life. It depends on the poem; each is composed according to the author's heart." [43]

In *Shibun yōryō,* discussing the essential significance of *Genji monogatari,* Norinaga more decidedly remarks: "This novel sets out

exclusively to describe *mono no aware* in many guises and to make the reader conscious of it. The reader in turn should be concerned only with feeling *mono no aware* in the novel. And this is also the essence of the poetic art. There is no significance in novels and poems apart from *mono no aware.*" [44]

The importance of this view is best understood within the sociocultural context in which it was proposed. In medieval Japan there was a common notion, based on Buddhist teaching, that the author of *Genji monogatari,* Murasaki Shikibu, went to hell for writing such a lewd novel and corrupting so many people.[45] Confucians in the early Edo period, too, usually disapproved of the novel as lustful. On the other hand, some critics did try to rescue *Genji monogatari* from this stigma by propounding the view that, although it was superficially erotic, it had actually been written to uphold moral principles or *kanzen chōaku* (encouraging good and castigating evil).[46] This problem did not concern *Genji monogatari* alone; literature in general was subject to moralistic or political interpretations under the influence of Confucian and Buddhist thought.

It is true that since the Genroku era there had been a new tendency to separate literature from morality and polity, a trend represented by Keichū and Ogyū Sorai among others. Sorai, for instance, argued against the Chu Hsi school, saying, "It is quite wrong to regard poetry as a means for encouraging good and castigating evil." Keichū, too, insisted that "Poetry is to express what arises in one's heart." [47] These people were in this sense precursors of Norinaga. But they were not completely free of their Confucian or Buddhist background. It was Norinaga, with his idea of *mono no aware,* who most decisively insisted upon the intrinsic value of literature independent of moral or political interests.

In *Shibun yōryō* Norinaga criticizes the previous commentaries on *Genji monogatari,* saying: "The traditional commentaries, following the moralistic discussion in Confucian and Buddhist books, tend to wrench the novel into the shape of a piece of moral instruction. They comment on what the novel speaks of as good, as if it were evil, and explain passages of the novel as lessons to various ends. They have thus often misled readers and missed the author's real intention." Norinaga even says that such distorted interpretations are "devils," harmful to the novel. According to him, the value standard implied in *Genji*

monogatari, and in all literature, is *mono no aware.* The concepts of "good" and "bad," as applied to literature, derive from whether or not a work is in harmony with the deepest feelings of man. They are essentially different from the concepts of "good and evil" in Confucian or Buddhist teachings. "These teachings," says Norinaga, "are in essence meant to encourage good, to suppress evil in human nature, and to lead evil to good. Consequently, they often strictly admonish man against evil and, in so doing, tend to be contrary to human nature." In contrast, literature is not concerned with "good and evil" in the Confucian or Buddhist sense, but simply with *mono no aware.*[48]

Norinaga refers to the hero of *Genji monogatari,* Hikaru Genji, for an illustration of his point. Genji is described as leading a life full of love affairs and adulteries with many women, including even an empress; this empress eventually had a child by Genji, who was taken to be the emperor's son and even succeeded him. Despite all these "evil" acts, Norinaga argues, "Prince Genji lived his whole life in peace and comfort, with overflowing prosperity, to such an extent that he received the honorific title of father of the emperor. And not only could he do anything he desired, but his children also flourished. Who, seeing this, would make up his mind to refrain from sensuality?" For Norinaga it is therefore clear that the meaning of the novel does not lie in moral instruction. Murasaki Shikibu described Genji most beautifully, "by concentrating upon him all the desirable qualities conceivable," simply because she intended to make readers feel *mono no aware* as deeply as possible.[49]

Why, then, are *Genji monogatari* and some other famous novels filled with so many descriptions of love affairs and sensual activities? Are they meant to induce people to indulge in sensual pleasure contrary to the dictates of morality? To this question, Norinaga answers as follows: love, more than any other emotion, moves human hearts deeply, and it is therefore an especially rich source for the *mono no aware* experience. An illicit love involves a particularly strong emotion of *mono no aware,* since it has to be suppressed or kept secret from others. The novel describes many love affairs, including illicit ones, not in order to induce sensuality but simply to give expression to the *mono no aware* deeply involved in love and sensuality. Norinaga likens one who appreciates the *mono no aware* involved in illicit love

affairs, to the man who "stores muddy water in order to plant a lotus and appreciate lotus flowers." This man, says Norinaga, "does not admire muddy water, but because he loves the excellent beauty of the lotus flowers, he is little concerned with the impurity of muddy water." [50]

In *Isonokami sasamegoto,* Norinaga's discussion goes more deeply into the problem of the psychological origin of literature and, particularly, of poetry. According to him, "The composition of poems is an act which man performs when he cannot bear the overflowing emotions of *mono no aware* . . . That is, when he is irresistibly and deeply moved, it is extremely difficult for him to keep his emotions confined within his heart. As a result he naturally gives expression in words to the overflowing emotions. These words, spontaneously coming out of the *mono no aware* experience, tend to be pronounced lengthened and rhymed. This is poetry." Norinaga also says: "When man is most deeply moved, he is not satisfied with composing poems in solitude, but wants to have others listen to them so as to solace himself. If they appreciate the poems and have sympathy for him, he feels his heart exceedingly relieved. This is also quite natural." [51]

In these remarks, we can see Norinaga trying to explain what can be called the "expressive" motivations of man as distinguished from "instrumental" motivations.[52] Norinaga seems to be aware that expression of deep feelings or *mono no aware* is in itself of inevitable human interest apart from its utility in other respects. This point is more obvious when he says: "Generally speaking, man, by nature, cannot keep from talking to others about what he has deeply felt, no matter whether it is something uncommon, terrifying, or amusing. Certainly, neither he himself nor others will profit from such talk, yet it is natural that man cannot help expressing himself. The same thing holds true with poetry." [53] Here there is a clear differentiation of primarily "expressive" motivations or values from primarily "instrumental" motivations or values. And this distinction underlay Norinaga's insistence that the essence of literature consists not in moral or political instrumentality but simply in expression of *mono no aware.*

This does not mean, however, that Norinaga denied or disregarded the proper significance of morality and polity. He also admitted that literature could be useful for some other ends. But he was radically opposed to the invasion of moral or political values into the proper

realm of literature. This position is most clearly expressed in the conclusion of *Shibun yōryō*, in which he compares that invasion to a man who uses beautiful cherry trees for firewood:

> Because firewood is necessary to daily life, I do not hate it as evil. However, I detest a man who uses as firewood trees which should not be put to that purpose. As there are many other trees suitable for firewood, he surely has enough firewood available, without cutting down cherry trees. His act is contrary to the will of the man who planted the cherry trees so that people should see cherry blossoms. Is it not an inconsiderate act to cut them down for firewood? The proper way to deal with cherry trees is simply perpetual appreciation of the *mono no aware* of the flowers.[54]

Norinaga's view of the essence of literature is basically related to his understanding of human nature — the third and most critical aspect of his concept of *mono no aware*. According to Norinaga, the *mono no aware* experience of man is in essence based upon the reality of the human heart, or human nature itself, which he sees as essentially feminine rather than masculine. He says in *Shibun yōryō*: "In general, the real heart of a human being is effeminate and weak like a woman or a child. To be manly, resolute, and wise is a mere superficial appearance. As far as the depth of man's real heart is concerned, the wisest men do not differ from a woman or a child. The difference between them lies merely in that the former conceal the real heart for shame, whereas the latter do not." [55]

This notion of the human heart or human nature as feminine was already present in, and even basic to, Norinaga's thought in *Ashiwake obune*. It is particularly evident in his vivid description of the differences between father and mother in their attitudes to the death of a beloved child. Norinaga writes:

> Although father and mother must grieve equally for their child, the father appears to be little affected, whereas the mother is overwhelmed with grief and weeps distractedly. Why is there this difference? It is because the mother cannot restrain her real heart and simply expresses it as it is, while the father, lest people should think him effeminate, restrains himself from shedding a single tear, and by rigid self-control so conceals his great grief that he keeps up the appearance of manful resignation to

> fate. In my view, the mother's reaction appears frantic and even indecent, but this represents the reality of the human heart. The father, on the other hand, is apparently manly, resolute, and composed, but this does not represent his real heart. If he were really so from his heart, he would be like the trees and stones.

Norinaga further argues that even the bravery of warriors was only an aspect of superficial virility, veiling the real human heart. He says:

> For instance, it is customary that a loyal samurai warrior on the battlefield should be willing to sacrifice his life manfully for the sake of his lord and his country. But when he is dying, does he not feel yearning toward the wife and children he left at home? Does he not wish to see his old parents once again? Can even a man rough as a devil avoid feeling sad, when he is dying? These feelings in the last moments are natural human feelings, shared by thousands and millions of people, without distinction between sages and ordinary men.[56]

Thus, according to Norinaga, differences between men and women, between warriors and nonwarriors, and even between sages and ordinary men, are only superficial in view of the fact that the real depth of the human heart is all "effeminate and weak." *Mono no aware* is the experience which is deeply rooted in, and derives from, these feminine depths of human nature. And literature expresses these depths in terms of *mono no aware.*

It is interesting in this connection to look at Norinaga's view of Chinese and Japanese poetry. To some extent he agrees with the many people who say that Chinese poems are "manly," corresponding to the square Chinese characters, whereas Japanese poems, which are composed in the less angular and more fluid letters of the Japanese syllabic script (*kana*), are "womanly." But while many Japanese have tended to regard Chinese poetry as more representative of high intellect and more appropriate for men than Japanese poetry, Norinaga insists that the "manliness" of Chinese poetry is simply a historical development, under the influence of the Chinese and particularly Confucian tendency to stress morality and formality. Poetry, whether Chinese or Japanese, was originally meant to express the real human heart, and is naturally "tender, like words uttered by a woman or a child." For example, the three hundred poems contained in the *Shih-ching*

(Book of odes), though composed in Chinese characters, are quite as expressive of the feminine human heart as Japanese poems are. And it is because of this, Norinaga goes on, that Confucius edited the *Shih-ching* as one of the Six Confucian Classics. But later generations have forgotten the original meaning of poetry and tend to display superficial attitudes, which look wise, moralistic, and manly, yet are not true to the depths of human nature. This is a tendency "contrary not only to the essence of poetry but also to the heart of Confucius." [57]

Norinaga, in this connection, refers to a passage from the *Shih-chi,* which reads: "When Ch'i-tzu [a wise minister who had served the Yin dynasty] visited Chou and passed the site of the Yin dynasty capital, he was deeply moved at seeing the palace destroyed and millet growing there instead. He lamented over it and wanted to weep. But he refrained from weeping, because he considered that a womanlike act. Then he composed the 'poem of wheat.' " Norinaga comments on this passage:

> Even Ch'i-tzu felt like weeping when he was deeply conscious of *mono no aware.* Although he was so wise as to consider weeping to be a womanly act, yet this attitude was only superficial, and the wish to weep in a tender and effeminate manner represents his real heart . . .
>
> The depth of the human heart is always tender and this is unavoidable human nature. Therefore, however wisely a man usually talks and behaves, he cannot suppress the effeminate emotions which necessarily arise when he experiences something very sorrowful, and thus he often feels bewildered . . .
>
> Ch'i-tzu tried to bear the grief and keep up appearances . . . , but, all the more because of this attempt, he felt his emotion overflowing and unbearable, so that he composed a poem, in which he found an outlet for his sadness. Hence, the poem could not but be effeminate, for if he composed a manful poem for appearance's sake, how could he find release from his tearful grief? [58]

Thus, for Norinaga, poetry, whether Chinese or Japanese, should be effeminate in essence because the real human heart which poetry must express is tender, weak, and effeminate in nature. Japanese poems, being "womanly," are more in accordance with the essence of poetry than the "manly" Chinese poems of later periods. The *mono no aware* experience, based on the feminine reality of human nature, finds its

proper expression not so much in moralistic and manly poems as in emotional and womanish poems.

Norinaga's emphasis upon feminine qualities as against the masculine is thus noteworthy. The first two aspects of *mono no aware* are in harmony with this last point. We have seen that *mono no aware* is man's emotional, aesthetic, and intuitive experience rather than experience primarily based on will or reasoning. Also, the *mono no aware* experience is more associated with man's "expressive" motivations and orientations than with his "instrumental" ones. It seems that in every point *mono no aware* involves a feminine, rather than masculine, tone.[59]

The significance of Norinaga's idea of *mono no aware* will be more evident, when it is considered in its sociocultural and historical setting. The period was one in which women were generally regarded as inferior to men, not only in social status but also in natural qualities. There was a common saying at that time that a woman should obey her parents in childhood, her husband in adulthood, and her children in her old age.[60] Marriage was a matter for the family, arranged mainly to ensure the continuity of the family lineage, and a wife was always expected to submit selflessly to her husband and his parents. When she was childless, it was often an excuse for her husband to take a concubine or to divorce her, although the adoption of a son or daughter was more common. Confucianism was the most influential ideological system to support the established family and social order and its values. A Confucian teaching well known at that time rationalizes the customary notion of man's superiority to women in metaphysical terms, saying that "a man is *yang* and noble, and a woman is *yin* and base, just as heaven is *yang* and noble, and the earth is *yin* and low." [61] Kaibara Ekken (1630–1714), like many other Confucian scholars, insisted that "women are by nature weak, irresolute, lacking intelligence, and mostly wicked; they cannot follow the right way." [62] In this social and cultural situation, love between a man and a woman was not normally approved as natural, but was rather to be avoided or kept secret. As a strict Confucian moral principle insists, "boys and girls are not supposed to be seated together after the age of seven." [63] It was no wonder in that period that love novels like *Genji monogatari* were criticized as immoral, or interpreted in rather distorted ways.

It was against this sociocultural background that Norinaga proposed the idea of *mono no aware*. He emphatically affirmed the value of

feminine qualities like emotion, tenderness, weakness, effeminacy, and so on, which were generally looked down upon as mean, and inferior to masculine qualities like resolution, formality, strength, and manliness. He not only affirmed femininity against masculinity, but, purifying it in terms of the symbol *mono no aware,* exalted it as true and essential to human nature, relegating masculinity to the status of something superficial and secondary.

On Being an "Ordinary Man"

How, then, was Norinaga's idea of *mono no aware* formed? Norinaga worked out this idea through his studies of early Japanese literature, especially *Genji monogatari.* He also had some important precursors among the representatives of a new intellectual and literary movement that had grown up since the Genroku era. Above all, Keichū was the person who opened Norinaga's eyes to ancient Japanese texts and taught him how to appreciate poems and novels freed from later distortions of their meaning. Ogyū Sorai and Hori Keizan also made a certain contribution to the formation of his thought. The idea of *mono no aware* may also, as some scholars have argued, be related to Norinaga's merchant background or to his untrammeled student life in Kyoto.[64]

Besides all these indubitably significant facts, however, it seems that an important point has been overlooked, that is, the internal relationship of his idea of *mono no aware* to his personal spiritual life. I would argue that, although Norinaga learned much from his predecessors and contemporaries and reflected to some extent the sociocultural conditions around him, yet it was through the process of his inner search for meaning and identity that he arrived at the idea of *mono no aware,* integrating various external influences insofar as they mattered in his search. For instance, although the main subject of his study in Kyoto, along with medicine, was "the Way of the Sages," Norinaga found himself in the realm of literature. Although Confucianism was the most powerful of the diverse cultural and intellectual influences to which he was subjected, he had established a decided inclination toward the emotional and "feminine" rather than the moralistic and "manly." And despite his mercantile background, Norinaga's image of himself as a merchant was a negative one, as his change of family name indicates. All this, I would stress, was a deliber-

ate choice made in the process of his search for identity. In my view, *mono no aware,* like the important ideas of many other great thinkers, was not a mere abstract idea figured out on paper, but was deeply rooted in, and symbolically represented, the identity that Norinaga had established for himself by the end of the second phase of his life. In order, therefore, to trace the process by which his theory of *mono no aware* was formed, we must examine the way in which his identity was built up at this stage and so penetrate the personal motivation of his thought.

It seems that among the various identity-forming influences in the transition from the first to the second stage of Norinaga's life, his concern for Pure Land Buddhism played a most important part in fashioning the idea of *mono no aware.*

We have seen Norinaga put Buddhism side by side with Confucianism as representatives of morality as distinct from literature. In actuality, however, Norinaga's view of Buddhism was more complex. In the first place, Norinaga was fully conscious of the otherworldliness of Buddhism, which he conceived as rather hostile to *mono no aware.* He says in *Shibun yōryō*:

> The Way of the Buddha is a way which cannot be practiced by one who is tender-hearted and sensitive to *mono no aware.* Therefore, a monk pursues the way by cultivating insensitivity to *mono no aware.* First of all, he has to leave his home, abandoning his beloved parents, brothers, wife, and children. This is a matter which is exceedingly trying to the human heart, but he must do it resolutely to follow the Way of the Buddha. If he is sensitive to *mono no aware* at that moment, he cannot become a monk. Also, a monk has to change his appearance, forsake his property and wealth, retire to a forest, abstain from fish and meat, and keep from entertainments. All these are also insupportable to the human heart, but he must undergo them to walk in the Way of the Buddha. He cannot do so if he is sensitive to *mono no aware.* Furthermore, a monk is supposed to advise and guide people to the Way of the Buddha so that they will be rid of life and death, and transmigration. Here again, he cannot guide people if he is sensitive to *mono no aware.* He must be insensitive to *mono no aware* and urge them wholeheartedly in order to lead them to salvation.[65]

Historically speaking, it was this distinctively otherworldly concern of Buddhism that radically conflicted with the essentially worldly orientation of Confucianism and caused frequent heated disputes between them in China as well as in Japan.[66] Interestingly enough, however, Norinaga saw that with all the differences between the Way of the Buddha and the Way of the Sages, they had one thing in common: they were essentially in disharmony with, or hostile to, the natural human feelings involved in *mono no aware.*

Yet, as Norinaga distinguished Confucius from Confucianism, so he differentiated between the Buddha as the founder of Buddhism and Buddhism itself. According to him, both Buddhism and Confucianism were originated by persons who were sensitive to *mono no aware.* Buddhism, he says, "originated with the Buddha, who, deeply sensitive to *mono no aware,* felt pity for men tied up by the affections of the world and unable to escape from life and death." Therefore, "Although the Way of the Buddha is a way to abandon *mono no aware,* it often reveals *mono no aware.* For example, one who views this world as fickle and floating, or is sorrowing for the death of a certain [beloved] person, disguises himself in a black [Buddhist] robe despite being in the prime of life, and purifies his mind in a life by hills and streams, apart from the world. There are many other cases like this, which involve a deep experience of *mono no aware.*" [67] According to Norinaga, this is the reason that *Genji monogatari* contains many references to Buddhism. As we have seen, Norinaga felt that the novel was written not to give people Buddhist or Confucian instruction but merely to express *mono no aware.* The author, Murasaki Shikibu, describes Buddhist practices and beliefs in the novel, simply because Buddhist practices and beliefs involve something which deeply moves the heart, and it has become customary for people to feel *mono no aware* in them.

In short, for Norinaga the Way of the Buddha is apparently opposed to natural feeling in many respects, but at bottom, as the founder himself represented it, it involves some psychological affinity with *mono no aware,* through which it has attracted and affected many people. Norinaga's view of Buddhism, however, is not confined to this. He further penetrates the problem of the innermost heart of a monk. This leads us to the most significant aspect of his view of Buddhism, which is connected with his Pure Land orientation.

In *Ashiwake obune,* Norinaga, in answer to the question whether a

monk may compose a love poem, says: "Poetry is a medium by which man gives expression to what he feels in his heart, no matter whether it is good or evil. Therefore, if [a monk] expresses in a poem the lust lingering in his heart, what is wrong with it? If the poem is good, why is it not to be praised? We should appreciate the excellence of the poem, no matter whether it was composed by a monk or a layman . . . Why should we have this unreasonable opinion that a monk may not compose a love poem?" Following this, he goes on to argue further:

> [The people with such an opinion] seem to believe that a monk is like the Buddha or a Bodhisattva in his heart, for they severely reprehend whatever trivial lust he reveals, as a grave evil, while to laymen they are indulgent. Indeed, lust is what the Buddha warned against most sternly, and it is what ties man to transmigration and illusion most decisively; so a monk should avoid it scrupulously. However, a monk is not different from a layman in nature, and he is also a *bombu* [an ordinary man] in origin, just as a layman is. Hence, there cannot be any difference in human feelings between a monk and a layman.[68]

Here we must pay special attention to Norinaga's statement that "a monk is also a *bombu*." It is clear that Norinaga understood the otherworldly orientation of Buddhism, but he insists that human nature itself remains the same even after one has forsaken the world to enter a monastery or to retire to a forest. A monk is by no means the Buddha or a Bodhisattva; he is an "ordinary man" (*bombu*) after all. How can he avoid feeling sexual desire at times? The same view is stated in *Isonokami sasamegoto*:

> A monk who has forsaken the world and entered an order should abide strictly by the teachings of the order and may not conduct himself in any way licentiously. But this holds true only for his outward behavior, which he is forced to control. His human feelings do not differ from those of a layman simply because he is a monk. Since he is not an incarnation of the Buddha or a Bodhisattva, we cannot expect him to have purified himself to the bottom of his heart and eliminated mundane defilement before he attains enlightenment. Hence, it is no wonder that sexual desire still lingers in his heart. This is as it should be, and it

> is nothing shameful or blameworthy. He may possibly commit transgressions which he should not do, but this is what ordinarily occurs to man insofar as he is a *bombu,* and even a monk cannot avoid it.[69]

Hardly any scholars have so far noticed the significance of the word *bombu* in this context. *Bombu* (Skt. *pṛthag-jana*) was originally a Buddhist term, meaning a person who has not extinguished mundane passions and has not achieved enlightenment. It was contrasted with *shōnin* or *shōja* (Skt. *ārya*), which means a sage who has attained a certain level of enlightenment. However, it was in the Pure Land tradition, particularly with Shan-tao (613–681) in China, that this term began to involve a special significance. Shan-tao, in his commentary on *Amitāyur-dhyāna sūtra,* expressed a clear-cut conception of the self as a dull "ordinary man," together with a deep insight into human evil, and preached that ordinary men, who are tied down to evil and to life and death, can be saved through recitations of the name of Amida (Skt. Amitābha) Buddha in reliance upon the merit of his "original vow." [70] Shan-tao's thought and faith were inherited and further developed by Hōnen and Shinran, the most important Pure Land Buddhists in Japan. Shinran, following Shan-tao and Hōnen, defined *bombu* as "our own existence, which is filled with ignorance and mundane passions and occupied with greed, anger, and envy and which, as such, lasts until the last moment of our death without disappearing or diminishing." [71] It goes without saying that Shinran's well-known words, "If even a good man can be reborn in the Pure Land, how much more so a wicked man," [72] are based on his deep conviction of being a sinful *bombu,* as well as his absolute trust in Amida Buddha.

There is no evidence to show that Norinaga read Shinran's works. But there is almost no doubt that he uses the term *bombu* in the context of the Pure Land tradition. When he says, "A monk is not different from a layman in nature, and he is also a *bombu,*" or "It is no wonder that sexual desire still lingers in his heart," we cannot help remembering the sincere cry of many Pure Land Buddhists.[73] And, even more important, Norinaga identifies himself with *bombu* rather than the Buddha or a Bodhisattva, just as he identifies himself with *shōjin* (a small man) rather than a sage in the Confucian sense. Just as he has sympathy for Confucius, not as a great sage, but as a

humble person who enjoys a simple life, so he feels sympathy for a monk as a *bombu* who suffers from the conflict between Buddhist teachings and his natural human desires. In Norinaga's mind, *shōjin* and *bombu,* though different from each other in the sources, are almost equivalent in their meaning. In the following quotation from *Ashiwake obune* Norinaga says much the same thing in a Confucian context:

> Indeed, man should refrain from illicit love affairs. This is a moral instruction of the sages, which is contained in the [Confucian] scriptures and which is quite familiar to people. Even a fool naturally knows it . . . Generally speaking, everybody is aware of what is good and what is evil and should not be done. Above all, even a child knows that adultery with some other person's wife is evil. But man, with all his comprehension of the evil of illicit love, often cannot control his overwhelming passions . . . Since all men are not sages, it is impossible to expect them not to do or think what is evil . . . Sage persons certainly would not be captivated by women other than their own wives, but how is this possible for average people? [74]

Although Norinaga was aware of the magnificence of the Way of the Sages in moral and political affairs, he personally conceived of himself as a *shōjin,* for whom the Way is out of reach and impractical. In the same way, although Norinaga was conscious of the significance of the Way of the Buddha with its otherworldly concern, yet he himself found his own identity as a *bombu,* unable to follow the Way of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas as such. I would argue that Norinaga's theory of *mono no aware* is to be understood on the basis of this distinctive identity. A most characteristic feature of the theory lies in its emphatic affirmation of the tender, weak, and effeminate, in place of the resolute, wise, and manly. In other words, Norinaga championed something that at his time and in his society was generally regarded as low, mean, and inferior. Quite striking here is the structural similarity between Norinaga's personal identification with the dull *bombu* and *shōjin* rather than with the enlightened sages and the strong affirmation in his *mono no aware* thought of what is weak and disdained rather than what is strong and respected. We may, therefore, almost certainly conclude that Norinaga's idea of *mono no aware* is in essence closely related to the *bombu-shōjin* identity which had been formed within his personality, probably by the mid-twenties.

Now, what were the most significant factors in his formation of this identity? It seems already evident from what has been said that his Pure Land orientation was exceedingly important in this respect. It can be traced back to his adolescence, or even to his childhood, as we saw in Chapter 1. We should remember in this connection the poems Norinaga composed on Pure Land salvation at the age of eighteen. For further illustration, I would like to add here some more poems which he composed at the age of twenty-one, a few months before going to Kyoto.

Living in this degenerated age,
  Which is beyond man's own power,
Who could do without trust,
  The trust in Amida Buddha?

But for the name of Amida Buddha,
  Guiding us to his land in the west,
We should be going astray for ever,
  Through the six kinds of existence.

It is a great joy, indeed,
  To hear the name of Amida Buddha,
Owing to which all the sins ever committed,
  Should be nullified fully to the root.[75]

Clearly, from these poems as well as those quoted in Chapter 1, Norinaga has grasped the essential point of Pure Land teachings, that is, the polarity between man as a sinful being and Amida Buddha as the all-forgiving savior. In the typical Pure Land belief, deep trust in Amida is only made possible by a keen conviction of man's wickedness, and the conviction of human wickedness is in turn intensified by man's consciousness of Amida's presence. This polarity is certainly not an ultimate one, because the infinite compassion of Amida Buddha is to forgive and subsume all human beings with all their sins. But the belief still remains that man is a small and weak creature before the all-embracing Buddha. Considering how deeply Norinaga committed himself to Pure Land Buddhism, particularly in his adolescence, his conception of himself as "a small ordinary man" must be at least partially, and certainly vitally, based upon his Pure Land orientation. And in this point I would see a significant identity

element which is deeply involved in the formation of the *mono no aware* concept.

Besides his concern for Pure Land Buddhism, we may notice Norinaga's relationship with his mother as another important factor. I have discussed in detail the emotional tie that existed between Norinaga and his mother from his infancy. Even in that critical event of his adolescence his mother forgave his defection. Norinaga met from her, not anger, nor disinheritance, but an understanding acceptance and, perhaps, what might be called a "quiet suffering." As I have suggested, Norinaga must have felt some degree of guilt toward his mother, yet her loving considerateness for him seems to have been so deep as to alleviate the suffering of his spiritual crisis. In this close mother-son relationship there seems to be a psychological basis for Norinaga's distinctive concern for the emotional and the womanly. The sensitivity to emotional significance, through which Norinaga grasped *mono no aware* as the essence of literature, was by no means unrelated to the fact that he grew up in a family in which the mother was particularly important and his affective relationship with her very significant.

Moreover, it should be observed that the mother in general not only represents femininity and emotionality in the family, relative to the father, but also tends to be identified by her children with a benevolent superior being, who supplies them with food and material care, and to whom they belong. Norinaga respected his mother wholeheartedly throughout his life, and he was particularly grateful for her considerate care for his future, which was typified by her decision to make him a physician instead of a merchant. In spite of what he had done, he was allowed by his kind and tolerant mother to return to her bosom, as it were, and start out again from there. Interestingly enough, this relationship to his mother may be, in psychological structure, parallel to the relationship of man to Amida Buddha in Pure Land belief. In the latter, a sinful man, through being saved and subsumed by the compassion of Amida, can be reborn in the Pure Land, and in the former, Norinaga, as a guilty son forgiven and embraced by the love of his mother, could make a fresh start. I should not wish to take this parallel too far, yet I would like to suggest here that Norinaga's intense identification with his mother since his childhood must have involved a certain self-image relative to the mother — most probably that of a small helpless son before the benevolent mother — and that this self-conception, together with his basic emotional tie with the mother,

seems to have been somehow related to the formation of his early identity and thought.

With the above arguments, of course, I do not mean to say that the *mono no aware* idea simply resulted from Norinaga's Pure Land piety and his family experiences. The actual process of the formation of the idea must have involved more complicated and various factors, socio-cultural as well as personal. What I have attempted here is to indicate the psychological and motivational dimension of the thought of *mono no aware,* which has been mostly overlooked, yet is crucial to a full understanding of Norinaga.

Natural Shinto

The idea of *mono no aware,* when Norinaga first developed it, was fresh and original, not only as a theory of literature, but also as a view of human nature. The image of man which Norinaga affirmed in the works we have been discussing, represented a radical antithesis to the dominant Confucian notion of man, which emphasized self-cultivation by means of the rigorous control of human desires and natural feelings. It was indeed representative of a new image of man, which, since the seventeenth century, had come to be shared by more and more people seeking freedom from the fetters of feudalism.

It is noteworthy, however, that in the *mono no aware* idea there is a lack of any reference point beyond man and human nature. I have argued that the notion of man in terms of *mono no aware* is rooted in Norinaga's personal identity as *bombu-shōjin* and also perhaps in his self-image in relation to his mother. Yet, it is important that for the man of *mono no aware* there is no equivalent of Amida or the mother-image, relative to which he is small and weak and to which he is ultimately to belong. He is valued for his very weakness. In using the concept of *mono no aware* to interpret literature, the lack of a superior reference point is useful as a means of avoiding distorted interpretations of literature. But in dealing with the problem of man in general, the idea of *mono no aware* has certain limitations.

Apparently Norinaga himself was conscious of this, for at the time that he developed the idea of *mono no aware,* he was also concerned with some "Way" or ultimate principle. He criticized his Confucian classmate in a letter, saying, "How is it possible to save your study of the Way of Sages from being the mere 'art of killing a dragon'?" How-

ever, Norinaga at this stage of life did not disparage the Way of the Sages itself. Similarly, although he identified himself with a *bombu*, for whom the Way of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas is too hard and lofty, he never disesteemed the Way of the Buddha as such. These Ways simply could not be his own ultimate reference point.

Nevertheless, Norinaga nowhere claims that *mono no aware* represents the "Way" in any sense. *Mono no aware*, as Norinaga conceives it, is more associated with "private" or personal human life and enjoyment than with "public" or social affairs, and is not in competition with the various Ways that deal with moral principles. In brief, its essential locus is literature, not politics and morality. And this limitation of *mono no aware* is closely related to its lack of any reference point beyond human nature. If all natural human feelings are affirmed, how can the order of human society be maintained? Norinaga certainly argues that the purpose of literature is not to teach people to behave only in accordance with their feelings but to express these deep feelings. Yet, the problem remains how to control the natural feelings so that social order will be preserved. The man of *mono no aware* lacks a definite system of moral principles to guide him.

This is, indeed, a crux which led Norinaga beyond *mono no aware* to the "Ancient Way" in the next phase of his life. However, the search for some meaningful source of value was going on even when he was in his twenties, and significantly enough, it was made in the area of Shinto, another identity element for the young Norinaga. As we saw in Chapter 1, his interest in Shinto can be traced back to his teens, when he was beginning to read books on Shinto and had a special veneration for the grand shrine of Ise. He was further inspired by Keichū while he was studying in Kyoto. Norinaga tried to apply Keichū's philological method of interpreting old poems to the study of ancient Japanese texts, and as a result he found that "all the previous expositions of ancient Japan made by the so-called Shintoists are quite wrong." [76]

The list of the books he bought or copied in Kyoto indicates that he obtained copies of the *Nihongi* (The chronicle of Japan) in 1754, the *Kojiki* and the *Kujiki* (The record of old matters) in 1756. These books stand out in the list because most of the books listed are on waka poetry or Heian novels. Norinaga was also given another copy of the *Nihongi* by Hori Keizan in 1756.[77]

Although Norinaga's ideas on Shinto were not very articulate in this phase, there are at least three points to be noticed. The first is his notion of *shizen no shintō* or "natural Shinto." In *Ashiwake obune*, in answer to the question whether waka poetry represents the "principal Way" (*taidō*) of Japan as compared with the Way of the Sages and other Ways, he says: "No. What is called the principal Way is something as follows: Confucians hold the Way of the Sages to be the principal Way; Buddhists believe the Way of the Buddha to be the principal Way; for Taoists, it is conformity to nature. They respectively regard their own way as the principal Way. As for our country, its principal Way is *shizen no shintō* or natural Shinto." [78]

According to Norinaga, the "way of waka poetry," which consists in the expression of human feelings, is part of natural Shinto and not itself a Way to compete with the Way of the Sages and other Ways. What is, then, the natural Shinto that he thinks comparable to the other various "principal Ways"? He says, in one place, "Natural Shinto is the Way which has existed since the beginning of heaven and earth and the age of kami. It differs from so-called Shinto as present-day Shintoists speak of it." [79] A more informative clue to this notion is another letter of his to Shimizu, written shortly after the one previously mentioned. He says:

> In my last letter, I wrote that one does not have to rely upon the Way of the Sages for such a matter as personal cultivation. Against this, you have retorted that without propriety (*li*) and righteousness (*i*) man would be like an animal. Do you mean that man can escape from being an animal only after he has read the books of the sages and clearly understood the Way? How circuitous! I do not know whether this is true or not in other countries, but as far as our divine country is concerned, it is never the case. In ancient times, both the lord and the people [of our country] dedicated themselves to natural Shinto, in accordance with which they were moral without personal cultivation and the land was at peace without government. Propriety and righteousness existed naturally; there was no need to depend upon the Way of the Sages. Later, however, in medieval times, customs gradually changed and the people became deceitful; disloyal subjects disordered the land and corrupted morals. Then it became necessary

> to rule the land and to maintain morals by borrowing the Way of the Sages from an alien country. This was an unavoidable matter.[80]

We see clearly here an affirmation of the ancient, natural, and simple state of things, in which, Norinaga believes, people are by nature good and moral without any enforcement, and the land is kept peaceful without any coercion. This state of things, which, according to Norinaga, was the reality in ancient Japan and is at least potentially possible today, he calls natural Shinto. It is obvious that this argument is particularly opposed to the views of the *kogaku* school of Confucianism, as represented by Ogyū Sorai and Dazai Shundai, which was influential at the time. The *kogaku* view insisted that it was only through the sages, who created and established moral principles, that men become moral and good so that they can distinguish themselves from animals.[81] Norinaga's contrasting view was that the "fact" of being good and moral preceded the "principle" of goodness and morality; innocence is prior to, and even better than, the restraints of ethics. Certainly, "the Way of the Sages can supplement natural Shinto in some respects," but no more than this.[82]

Norinaga also clearly differentiated natural Shinto from Shinto as customarily treated. This should be understood within the context of the Shinto tradition, which is characterized by a strong syncretistic tendency. Especially in Norinaga's time, a Confucian Shinto school, Suiga Shinto, was flourishing, and he had a Suiga-affiliated scholar among his relatives, although the extent of his contact with the latter is not certain.[83] We shall see in the following chapters how Norinaga criticized Suiga Shinto on the basis of his Ancient Way thought, but here it should be noticed that his orientation toward the ancient Shinto, purified of later syncretistic Shinto traditions, was already germinating during his stay in Kyoto, despite the prevalence of Confucian Shinto at the time.

The second significant point in Norinaga's early ideas about Shinto is his respect for inscrutable wonder and mystery. Together with his emphasis upon naturalness, this was to be one of the most important characteristics of his later thought, but we can see it already growing in his twenties. He says in *Ashiwake obune:* "To regard wonders as false and improbable is the very narrow view corrupt Confucianists assume when they are at a loss. As a proverb says, summer insects can-

not talk about ice. Inscrutable mystery is beyond the conjectures of an ordinary man (*bombu*) . . . It is said that Confucius never talked of prodigies, feats of strength, disorders, or spirits. It is even more inane to discuss the mystery of the deities of our country in ordinary terms." [84] Similar words are found in his second letter to Shimizu. In these remarks, we should notice Norinaga's awareness of something beyond, and greater than, man as *bombu.* It may be said that this awareness points to a different dimension of experience and orientation than that of *mono no aware.*

This concern of Norinaga for "inscrutable mystery" finds more explicit expression in the last chapter of *Isonokami sasamegoto,* which was probably written in 1763 or a little later. Because this chapter contains many passages which remind us of the discussion in *Naobi no mitama* (The rectifying spirit), his first main essay on the Ancient Way, I would see it as a transition between the second and the third phases of his life. Here it is sufficient to quote a passage which refers to the inscrutability of the mind of the kami: "The mind of the kami, whether it is good or evil, is inscrutable to human minds. All things in the universe are due to the mind of the kami and belong to the act of the kami; therefore, there are many things in the world which are contradictory to man's expectations and quite inconsistent with the principles presupposed in Chinese books." [85]

The third point to be noticed is Norinaga's veneration of Amaterasu ōmikami, which continued from his early years. It was not yet explicitly expressed on the ideological level, but it was maintained quite significantly during the second stage of his life. According to his diary, when Norinaga went home from Kyoto to attend the memorial services for his father in 1756, he did not forget to visit the grand shrine of Ise. Also, when he finally returned home from Kyoto in 1757, the first thing he did besides starting work as a physician, was to visit the shrine.[86]

Norinaga also refers to Amaterasu, though briefly, in the above-mentioned letter to Shimizu: "Fortunately I was born in the divine country; I rely on the gracious spirit of Ōhirume no muchi [Amaterasu ōmikami] and follow natural Shinto." [87] It is significant in this connection that, before establishing the idea of *mono no aware,* he found an etymological origin of the word *aware* in the mythical story of *ame no iwayado* (the heavenly rock dwellings).[88] In his short unfinished essay *Aware ben* (On *aware*), written in 1758, he quotes the following

from the *Kujiki:* "When Amaterasu ōmikami came out of the heavenly rock dwelling, heaven and earth were naturally illuminated and brightened. Thereupon, heaven cleared up for the first time, and [people] said, *'Ahare,'* which means *ame haru* (heaven has cleared up)." Norinaga comments on this, saying that this *ahare* (*aware*) refers to the joy which many kami experienced at the moment when Amaterasu came out of the retreat and illuminated the darkened heaven and earth: the joyful feeling of *ame haru!* Of course Norinaga examines many other cases in which the term *aware* is used in ancient texts. But it is interesting that he pays special attention to the *ame no iwayado* incident, in which the distinctive divine quality of Amaterasu ōmikami is most symbolically and vividly described.[89]

Norinaga's respect for Amaterasu was soon to be associated with the notion of the "divine country." The latter is already found in his *Ashiwake obune* as well as in his letter to Shimizu,[90] but it is not explicitly connected with Amaterasu there, although this relationship is suggested. In *Isonokami sasamegoto* we see clearly for the first time the idea that "Japan is the land of Amaterasu ōmikami." [91] This, again, is to be understood as representative of the transition from the second to the third stage of Norinaga's life, because this idea is expressed in complete form in *Naobi no mitama.*

Comparing Norinaga's thought on Shinto in this period with his theory of *mono no aware,* we may conclude that although it is basically in harmony with the latter, for example, in the emphasis on naturalness, it yet indicates Norinaga's search for a subsuming or ultimate reference point beyond human nature, which the *mono no aware* idea lacks. Schematically speaking, we may say that Norinaga's identity or self-image as *bombu-shōjin* on the one hand affirms itself in terms of *mono no aware,* and on the other searches for some more comprehensive and ultimate being or source of value. However, his search in this direction was not fulfilled in the second stage of his life. At that time it was directed rather to the realm of "private existence and personal enjoyment" (*shiyū jiraku*), and the main symbol of his thought in this phase was *mono no aware.* This is probably why his natural Shinto, in essence, did not positively reject other religious traditions. The following rather ambiguous, yet pregnant, words in a letter written to one of his friends in 1757, should be understood in this context: "I personally like, believe, and enjoy the words of the Buddha. Not only that, but I like, believe, and enjoy the words of

Confucius, Mo-tzu, Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu, and also the hundred philosophers. Furthermore, among the hundreds of kinds of art, poetry, dancing, walks, also mountains, rivers, trees, animals, insects, fish, wind, clouds, rain, snow, the sun, the moon, and the stars — there is nothing in the universe which it is inappropriate to like, believe, and enjoy. All things in heaven and earth are instruments for my appreciation and enjoyment." [92]

Norinaga's identity and thought in his youth was thus centered in *mono no aware,* and this characteristic was to remain basic throughout his life. Even after he met Mabuchi, who insisted on the values of *masurao buri* (manliness) as he found it in ancient Japan, Norinaga never changed his basic position on the value of femininity. But as he became more and more involved in problems beyond "private existence and personal enjoyment," he had to develop his identity and thought beyond *mono no aware.*