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ŌSHIO HEIHACHIRŌ AND HIS REVOLT OF 1837

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Abstract

Although there is an abundance of resource material concerning Ōshio Heihachirō in Japanese, there is very little in English. Thus, this thesis seeks to make available and analyse for English readers some of the rich offerings that exist in Japanese. It sets out to describe the life and times of Ōshio and to analyse the influences that moulded his thought and that ultimately motivated him to take action against the heartless hierarchy and greedy merchants who refused to show any compassion on the desperately poor during the disastrous days of the Tempō Famine (1830-1837).

The later life and death in an abortive uprising in 1837 of Ōshio Heihachirō were a clear commentary on his thought and teaching, namely, the necessity of the unity of knowledge and action. He was a living embodiment of the Wang Yang-ming dictum, "To know and not to act is the same as not knowing at all". His first-hand knowledge of the situation impelled him to action. Ōshio's morality and integrity were sincerely demonstrated in his final act of sacrificing his reputation, and even life itself, for his principles. He was a reformer, not a revolutionary as some historians call him. His motivation was moral, not political. His was the dilemma of being grateful for the favours and status that his family enjoyed through the Tokugawa Shogunate and of being grieved by the corruption and inefficiency exhibited by the Shogunate's representatives, of supporting the system in principle on the one hand and of being exasperated by the intransigence of the system's officials on the other.

With scant planning and preparation, he foolhardily attacked the heartless bureaucrats and wealthy merchants of Ōsaka. This was tantamount to a challenge against the most repressive powers of the autocratic authority of his day, the Shogunate itself. His revolt was fated to fail but it sent ripples in ever-widening circles throughout Japan in the final decades of the Tokugawa period.

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Introduction

Ōshio Heihachirō was an enigma. Even nearly 150 years after his death it is difficult to evaluate him. He was a noted Yōmei¹ scholar in a day when Shushigaku was the officially accepted teaching and the philosophical basis of the Tokugawa shogunate. He was a samurai and thus a member of the ruling class. Ōshio was an able police official who served faithfully and with integrity. Consequently, he was a tool in the government power structure. Yet he dared to lead a revolt which, though at the time was an ignominious failure, doubtless hastened the collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu by emboldening others either to question the system or openly rebel against it.

During his life and immediately after his death, people looked on Ōshio with either censure or praise. Hence, it is not surprising that he is still regarded as anything from a villain to a popular hero and that he is interpreted as anything from a benefactor of the people to a political rebel or an incipient Marxist. Some see him as a social iconoclast (Najita, 1970:156), some like Okamoto Ryōichi see him as the product of his age which was an age of unrest and reform and so they believe that he could naturally be called "a son of reform". (1975:40) Still others, the Bakufu included, see him as a traitor. As a samurai and a member of the ruling establishment, he rose in protest and so, naturally, it was regarded as a political revolt by the authorities.

There has been an abundance of historical research in Japanese concerning Ōshio's revolt. In the pre-war years two classics were produced. Kōda Shigetomo's book, *Ōshio Heihachirō*, was written in 1909 in the process of his compiling *Ōsaka Shishi* and Ishizaki Tōkoku, a so-called disciple of Ōshio's Senshindō, wrote *Ōshio Heihachirōden* in 1920. Post-war research into social and political history has resulted in some scholarly works being published of which Abe Makoto's² *Nōgyō to Tetsugaku no Zenshin -- Ōshio Chūsai ni tsuite* in 1951 and Okamoto Ryōichi's *Ōshio Heihachirō* in 1956 are representative.

¹See the Glossary (Appendix I) for the meanings of Japanese words used throughout this thesis.

²Abe's work was first printed in *Kōbe Daigaku Bungakkai (Kenkyū)*, Sōkangō, 1951.

Kōda Shigetomo's scholarly pre-war book clearly and correctly pointed out that Ōshio mobilised peasants from the surrounding villages, not townspeople, to co-operate in his revolt. Though not wanting to minimise the value of Kōda's "excellent research", Okamoto (1975:2) is somewhat critical that he does not make clear why Heihachirō, a city police official in Ōsaka, did not rely on the townspeople but had such a deep relationship with the peasants. Narabayashi (1970:1) feels that, though numerous books have been written about Ōshio Heihachirō and his revolt, there is still need once more to re-investigate "the inner relationship between Ōshio's thought and the revolt which should have been the result of his thought." This is crucial to our study.

Ōshio was a very able government officer who sincerely wanted to repay the obligation which his family had received generations ago with whatever sacrifice he paid. He was not negative regarding the Shogunate per se, in fact, he was very supportive of it as a system. So we need to ask why he threw his life away in resisting its representatives? Heihachirō was not a political rebel at heart. He was a faithful police officer who worked assiduously and with great integrity for the administration. He was proud of his samurai status and grateful to the Tokugawa family and so had no desire to overthrow the Establishment. Then, why did he raise his revolt?

In the course of this thesis we shall look at the motivation for Ōshio's 1837 rebellion. In the process we will need to discern the influences on his life which led to his implication in such a violent uprising. This will involve us, first, in looking at Ōshio's background to see any formative influences on his life from the point of view of both his heredity and his environment, his personality and his beliefs. What made him what he was? Particularly, it will be necessary for us to take a longer look at Confucianism than may otherwise have been the case, seeing Heihachirō's acceptance of the Yōmei emphasis on the unity of knowledge and action plays such an important role in moulding his thinking. We will need to see how Confucianist and Neo-Confucianist teaching developed, how it influenced the politics and life of the Japanese people, and, more specifically, how the philosophy of Wang Yang-ming came to influence Ōshio so radically.

In order to see the constituent parts of Heihachirō's support for his uprising, it will also be necessary to look at the network of contacts he

established both through his work as an Ōsaka police officer and as teacher of his private school, the Senshindō. Also pertinent to our study will be the philosophy he taught in his lectures and the views he espoused in his publications. We cannot divorce Ōshio the scholar, lecturer and writer from Heihachirō the raiser of the revolt. The ideas he embraced made him what he was. His beliefs made him behave in the manner he did. Nor is it sufficient to see his courageous sacrifice of himself as a form of persuasive reasoning and admonition of his superiors as some suggest.

I believe it is important to investigate the Yōmei teaching which Heihachirō followed in order to find the cause of his revolt, in other words, to see the connection between his thought and his actions. If we do not understand this, we cannot grasp the significance of his life and death. Then, because the combination of economic, social and political factors in his day were influential in bringing Ōshio to his decision to take matters into his own hands, we shall look in some detail at these. We shall particularly look at the Tempō Famine (1831-7) as well as at the peasant riots and urban smashings which increased dramatically because of the distressful conditions at that time. This will naturally lead us to the positive steps towards revolt which Ōshio felt convinced were inescapable. Being cognisant of the conditions, he felt he must act. His anger was aroused by the plight of the poor, hard-working peasants crushed by an unjust system of taxation and distressed by successive years of famine.

We will look at the steps which Ōshio took in raising his rebel army and at the reasons behind the publication of his famous Manifesto as well as commenting, at some length, on its contents seeing it is such a momentous document. Then we shall turn to the reasons for its limited distribution and focus attention on the actual revolt, its progress, participants and failure. Lastly, we will try to assess the historical influence of Ōshio Heihachirō, not only on the economy, society, and government of his own day but also on those events and people that followed, whether immediately or further removed in time.

Heihachirō was an intense person who did not do anything by halves. Whatever he tackled, he did wholeheartedly. In his application to the work of a police officer he cut a clean swath. In scholarship he studied

Wang Yang-ming philosophy so diligently that his friend, the famous poet Rai Sanyō, nicknamed him "Little Yang-ming". He excelled both in letters and in the martial arts, especially mastering the art of lancemanship. Ōshio refused to rest content with a successful official career and later with a "safe" life of scholarship and teaching. He must work out his principles in practice. The steadfast manner and zeal with which he actively acted upon his knowledge caused some to observe that he was even more consistent in his activism than the Master, Wang Yang-ming, himself.

Thus, it was not accidental that towards the end of the Edo period, as the inconsistencies inherent in the Bakufu organisation were revealed, the faithful Shogunate official and noted Yōmei scholar took up arms against the Ōsaka authorities in order to "save the people". Based on my belief that Ōshio Heihachirō was a moral reformer rather than a political revolutionary, I will discuss the motivation behind his uprising. There are many theories concerning his motives for revolt.

First, for many years, and certainly in the pre-war period, the popular view of Ōshio's revolt seemed to be that it was prompted by a temporary hot-blooded reaction to the frustrations he faced in trying to galvanise the bureaucrats and wealthy merchants into action in relief of the famine victims. In other words, it was opportunistic, the result of his righteous indignation.

Secondly, the general post-war feeling is that it was a far more studied revolt. Narabayashi (1970:4) believes that "reading between the lines" of *Senshindō Sakki* one should have expected a revolt for he "smells suspicious of revolt" in Ōshio's writings, and his "anti-shogunate consciousness is symbolised in the revolt". He believes that it was "continuously boiling up" in his publications. We certainly should not minimise the weight of Heihachirō's own words.

Thirdly, the plethora of post-war Marxist historians would certainly like Ōshio to fit neatly into their theories of "class struggle" and "the reorganisation of society" and it must be a source of considerable frustration to them that he defies such analysis.

There is no doubting that Ōshio was hot-headed and that, at times, he exhibited a sudden rush of blood, but his convictions did not eliminate

the possibility of revolt against ineffective government. He accepted the Confucianist teaching, not mentioned by Tokugawa Confucianists, that it was the right of the people to rebel against unjust rulers.

Thus, although there are elements of both the first and second present, I firmly believe that Ōshio's revolt was the inevitable result of his Yōmei belief in the necessary unity of knowledge and action. He knew and so, therefore, he had to act. What he was and what he did were the fruit of what he believed.

Ivan Morris (1975:180) writes that during one of his last conversations with Mishima Yukio, the famous Japanese novelist, the latter spoke of Ōshio Heihachirō as "the fierce type of hero that Westerners would do well to study if they wished to understand the essence of the Japanese spirit, which, as he gently pointed out, was not exclusively represented by the diaries of Heian Court ladies, elegant poetry exchanges, or ritual tea ceremony." This thesis is one Westerner's attempt to take Mishima's advice seriously.

I. *Ōshio's Background*

In this section I want to look at Ōshio's personal and family history, his official position and work as a government police official, the progress of his thought, his teaching through his private academy, his publications, and the conditions of his times, all of which influenced Ōshio the man and his actions.

1. *His Personal History*

i) *His Family and Upbringing*

Little is known of Ōshio's childhood except that he was born on the 22nd January, 1793, and that he said that his parents died when he was seven. His father's name was Ōshio Heihachirō Yoshitaka and his mother was of the Ōnishi clan. There is considerable difference of opinion concerning the age at which he was bereft of his father and mother; whether he was seven when both died, as he said, or six when his father died in 1799 and seven when his mother died in 1800 as given by Mori Ōgai (1940:70) and also in Miyagi's genealogy (1984:510). This latter is confirmed by his father's grave in Jōshōji temple which gives "his death as Kansei 11 (1799), the end of the year of the snake", and by the death register of Renkōji temple which gives "the year of his mother's death as Kansei 12 (1800), the year of the monkey" as recorded by Kōda who claims, "Even if the miswriting of numerals is common, there ought not to be any mistake with the sexagenary cycle". (1972:83)

Subsequently he was cared for briefly and given moral education by his grandfather, Masanojō Narimasu, and then, it seems, by a foster father, Asai Chūrin, a minor bureaucrat in Owari. There are various opinions as to whether he had one or two foster families, for the Shioda family is also sometimes mentioned. Maybe Mishima Yukio is right in asserting that his unsettled childhood accounts for his fierce, tense, hot-tempered nature.¹ Due to uncertainties regarding his upbringing, some believed he had been adopted into the Ōshio family. "But concerning this theory Heihachirō's disciple, Tayuinoshō Senri, strongly denied this saying, 'Mr. Ōshio was born in Ōsaka's Tenma Shikenyashiki. He did not come as a

¹As quoted in Morris, 1975:188.

foster child from elsewhere.'"² Ōshio himself also strenuously denied the story of his adoption and traced his ancestors to a vassal house of the Daimyō Imagawa clan Namiemon of Tōtōmi in Suruga (the present Shizuoka). "After the fall of the Imagawa family, Namiemon served Tokugawa Ieyasu. Following Ieyasu in the attack on the Odawara of Toyotomi Hideyoshi he killed an enemy general before Ieyasu's horse, and was given one of Ieyasu's bows by Ieyasu in person as a reward, and further was given the fief of Tsukamoto village in Itō." (Okamoto, 1975:45) Later he was appointed as a *hatamoto* (vassal) directly under Ieyasu's ninth son, Yoshinao, and, after following him to Owari, changed his family name to Ōshio.

The oldest legitimate child inherited the household and the youngest child departed for Ōsaka where he became a police officer in the city shogunal administrative office. Heihachirō was proud to be the descendant of Namiemon and this pride greatly affected his sense of destiny. According to Ōshio, his ancestors were assigned a post in Ōsaka as servitors of the Tokugawa house, a post which he claimed as his rightful inheritance. There he served with the position of horseguard. "The Ōshio household heads were hereditary constables in Ōsaka and Ōshio Heihachirō served in this bureaucratic position within the shogunate system of governance." (Najita, 1983:126) "Ōshio's father held a hereditary post as police inspector in the Magistrate's office in Ōsaka, and according to the contemporary system of appointments this was the office that would in due course accrue to his eldest son." (Morris, 1975:188)

"Ōshio's respected name was Kōso, his nickname was Shiki, and he was popularly called Heihachirō, but he assumed the name of Renzai and then later, Chūken, which was changed again to Chūsai. His father was Heihachirō Yoshitaka and he was born into a police official's residence in Tenma in what was commonly called Shikenyashiki on January 22, 1793 (Kansei 5)." (Okamoto, 1980:605) *Ōsaka no Chōmei*³ (1977:451) adds, "On the East side of Kawazaki Tōshōgū were the houses of the city shogunate administration police officials. Among them was the residence of Ōshio Heihachirō who was a police official of the Eastern commissioner." His infant name was Bunnosuke but, when he grew up, he took his father's name, Heihachirō.

²Ishizaki Tōkoku, *Ōshio Heihachirōden* as quoted in Okamoto, 1975:45.

³Edited by Ōsaka Chōmei Kenkyūkai.

Japan, at that time, was a closed and seemingly stable, peaceful nation. But the Kansei period (1789-1801) had followed the Tenmei period (1781-9) which had been characterised by severe famines which led to fierce, unprecedented country-wide peasant riots (*ikki*) and urban rice riots (*uchikowashi*). (Lamont, 1983:381) Okamoto claims that "Heihachirō could be said to be, by nature, the son of reform." (1975:40)

ii) *His Youth*

From a young age he was intelligent, astute and carefree. He also had the trait of being extremely hot-tempered. In his youth Ōshio evinced a special fascination with philosophical studies. As a member of the samurai class he also devoted himself to the military arts, excelling particularly in lancemanship, but he had little interest in firearms, perhaps because of their foreign origin.

iii) *His relations*

According to a written judgment of the Bakufu court, Heihachirō only had one nephew, Ōnishi Yogorō, an Eastern group police officer.⁴ At the time of Ōshio's revolt Yogorō was given a special mission by Atobe, the city commissioner, but he was later punished with exile because of cowardly conduct. Then there was an uncle, Miyawaki Shima, commonly known as Gonkurō, who was the younger brother of Ōshio's real father. He joined Ōshio's revolt and, on its failure, committed suicide.

Combining the Ōshio family tombstones in Jōshōji temple and Renkōji temple in Tenma with the statements by Heihachirō's wife, Yū, and by Miyawaki's wife, Rika, it is possible to construct an Ōshio clan genealogy as in Kōda. (1972:143) Several editions of *Ōshio Kenkyū*⁵ contain some interesting details concerning Ōshio's genealogy, family history, his own personal history, the course of the society honouring Ōshio as well as the connection between the Ōshio family and the Jōshōji temple.

⁴According to *Saikyojō* as quoted in Kōda, 1972:144.

⁵Arimitsu Yūitsu, 1. "Ōshioke to Jōshōji", *Ōshio Kenkyū*, No.1, March, 1976, Ōsaka: Ōshio Jiken Kenkyūkai, 1976:2-4.

2. "Ōshio Chūsai no Kakei Ryakuzu to Bohi no Shozai", *Ōshio Kenkyū*, No.16, November, 1983, Ōsaka: Ōshio Jiken Kenkyūkai, 1983:6-18.

iv) *His Marriage*

Heihachirō's wife,⁶ Yū, was the daughter of Daikokuya Waichi, an entertainment establishment in Ōsaka's Sonezaki Shinchi 1 Chōme, her real name being Hiro. Ōshio fell in love with her at first sight and, in 1818, she was received into his residence under the name of the adopted younger sister of Hashimoto Chūbei of Senjakuji village, Higashinari county in Settsu domain. (Sakai, 1975:6-7) Chūbei's adopting her was a tactical ploy as her station was far inferior to that of Heihachirō in Tokugawa society. Even as adopted into a farmer's family, she was still below his samurai status. Such "downward" marriages were generally discouraged in samurai circles and the young man's decision is often cited as an example of his headstrong, iconoclastic nature. It certainly defied the social conventions of the day and it adds to the enigma which was Ōshio Heihachirō for he was inordinately proud of his samurai heritage and status.

v) *His Adopted Son*

Heihachirō "was not blessed with the treasure of children" (Okamoto, 1975:46) and so he had already adopted a child from his head family in Nagoya with the hope of maintaining his boasted lineage but, regrettably, that was not successful. Hence, with dim marriage prospects, in 1829, he adopted as his heir, Kakunosuke, the younger son from the Nishida family who were also related through his mother's side. Kakunosuke was then 16, and Heihachirō was thus able to avoid the grievous prospect of the extinction of his family. Later he arranged a marriage between his only son Kakunosuke and his father-in-law's natural daughter.

2. *The Government Official*

"The Tokugawa political structure was composed of a central directing force, the *Bakufu* or Shogunate, at the apex of the hierarchical pyramid, and a number of local authorities who shared with it the actual government of the land and the people." (Tsukihara, 1966:13) The *Bakufu* claimed the legal authority over the whole country under the fiction that

⁶Yū was probably Heihachirō's common-law wife; historians speak of her variously as his "wife" or "concubine".

the emperor had delegated his power to rule to the Shōgun who was the supreme commander of the entire military class.

i) *Ōsaka*

As birthplace to Heihachirō, Ōsaka at that time was the prosperous centre of a large population of about 400,000. It contained the large central rice market as well as the gold and silver mints to which gold and silver were bought from the provinces under a government monopoly. Seventy percent of the nation's wealth was concentrated in the city. Merchants prospered and had gradually gained control over the feudal lords and the warrior class through money-lending and other commercial deals. Ōsaka was the "merchants' capital" and "the nation's kitchen". (Okamoto, 1975:4,5) It was a place of wealthy retainers and favoured clans. As the greatest commercial city in Japan, it was second only to Edo in importance, and was an area under the direct control of the Shōgun. "Ōsaka is the nation's kitchen...one small matter about the kitchen is that it is the worry of the whole house and the disaster that was born in Ōsaka sent waves through the whole country." (Kōda, 1972:79)

ii) *Police Official*

At the age of 13-14 years (1806) Ōshio was summoned to official duties in Ōsaka and at first he served as an apprentice in the city's East Shogunal administration office. "In his fourteenth year, Heihachirō was placed under the care of Hayashi, the head of the official school in the Seidō, and after a distinguished course of five years there, he received an appointment as instructor in that institution." (Murdoch, 1964(ii):453) In 1812, at the age of nineteen, through pulmonary tuberculosis, he had to withdraw temporarily from his particular duties as a police official in order to recuperate. It was on this account that "maliciously he was nick-named 'green gourd' in reference to his pallid complexion, a result of weak lungs. He frequently suffered from haemorrhages, but managed to surmount his physical handicap by unremitting will-power". (Morris, 1975:188-9)

When he was 23, Heihachirō automatically succeeded to his father's and grandfather's office and emoluments as police-official under the jurisdiction of the municipal commissioner for East Ōsaka. The civil

administration of Ōsaka was divided into East and West groups, each under a commissioner. The two groups were responsible for the city administration in alternate months. This system of discharging one's official duties by shifts, besides having the purpose of stopping the possible occurrences of corruption and dishonest practices of each group, also stimulated a spirit of mutual competition between the two groups. It was born from the plan to increase the effectiveness of their duty. Actually, there was not only competition between East and West, there was also deep-seated antagonism and jealousy between them. By turns they took responsibility for the whole of Ōsaka's three districts, North, South, and Tenma. Each of the two city commissioners was chosen from among *hatamoto* (vassals directly under the Shōgun) and had thirty police officials on horses and fifty subordinate policemen assigned to them. Formally, these were personal appointments limited to one generation, but actually, they were hereditary offices and so they became Shogunal officials resident in Ōsaka. In the Tenma area *yoriki* had a 500 *tsubo* residential lot given them with a stipend of 200 *koku* while *dōshin* had a 200 *tsubo* residential lot and a stipend of 10 *koku* divided among three of them. Compared with the low-ranking samurai of that time, a *yoriki* was a remarkably high-salaried person, particularly when consideration is given to their "side" income. Okamoto (1975:44) gives an illustration of how high an allowance of 200 *koku* was "when you remember that the allowance of Watanabe Kazan who put forth such strenuous efforts in reforming the *han* government as an important vassal of the 1200 *koku* Mikawa Tabara clan of that time was 100 *koku*". Thus, from the salary point of view, a police official seemed to be a rather upper-ranked samurai.

As a police official, Ōshio was responsible for day-to-day judicial and administrative functions in the city and so had great authority in the administration of justice and the conduct of government. It was said that the actual authority in civil administration was in the post of police official. He was for a time a patrol police officer in Jōmachi where he arrested thieves and the disorderly. Although Ōshio's position as a *yoriki* was a fairly lowly one it was important in the actual administration of Ōsaka and it could have been extremely lucrative since traditional perquisites included "gratitude money" (a euphemism for bribes) from the merchants and others who sought their favour. The main responsibilities of the police officials were the three roles of rural regional service, river service, and temple and shrine service in the

various towns in Ōsaka's three districts. In these positions they could expect "gifts" from the guilds and also, at the beginning of the year and on the 1st August on the lunar calendar, from the various towns or blocks in Ōsaka.

As a patrol officer in Yodomachi, whenever Ōshio went on official trips of inspection around the three districts, without fail, in every town he found townsmen sending money and a number of valuables to the police officials. Merchants "tipped" them in order to have charges against them withdrawn, while the government officials also used their authority to scare the people and even publicly demanded that palanquins, lunch, and other things, be provided for them. To his disgust, Heihachirō found bribery and corruption to be accepted facts of life, but these practices grieved Ōshio who could not be bought. From the outset he distinguished himself by his rigid adherence to the rules and refused to be bribed. His honesty and uprightness in the discharge of his duties won him the regard of the people as well as of Takai, the East city commissioner, who was impressed by his zealous, young subordinate. As a result he gave Ōshio full support in his campaign to fight corruption and impose the law. Because of the great authority the police officers wielded and because of their propensity for giving threats and receiving bribes, they were known for their arrogant manner and harsh treatment, and thus were hated by the people. This corrupt behaviour and affluent lifestyle of the Tenma police caused Heihachirō such grief that he wrote, "Learning is achieved in the midst of poverty, but among Tenma's 60 police officers there is not one who understands learning." (Kōsai Hiki:203-4)

Heihachirō served under the East city commissioner for about 24-25 years and, from beginning to end, he devoted himself consistently to his work as a shogunal official. He was often called upon to dispose of difficult issues which he did with utmost despatch and integrity, and so he was extolled as an honest, able, and famous police officer. During that time he laboured industriously with the sword and the pen and especially excelled as a lanceman. From the outset Ōshio made it abundantly clear that he would have nothing to do with the traditional custom of accepting bribes. Such rectitude might have seriously hampered his career except for what Miyagi calls "one chance in a thousand years", (1984:14) namely, the fact that Takai Yamashiro no Kami Sanenori who was appointed as East commissioner in 1820 was immediately impressed by Heihachirō's zeal and

gave him his full patronage and backing in his campaign against corruption. He discerned Ōshio's ability and appointed him to a responsible position. "He also often sought Ōshio's opinion on many things concerning Ōsaka affairs, both public and private." (Yazaki, 1968:263) Thanks to Takai's patronage, Ōshio was soon a scourge of dishonest officials and merchants and was able to climb through the grades. After only a few years he had become famous for his campaign against bribery.

Naturally, this type of reforming zeal did not endear Ōshio to his less principled associates and thus, before long, many of them resented his excessive honesty. But his intelligence, learning, and integrity in performing his duties won him the popular regard and respect of successive city commissioners. Often Ōshio's tactics were unconventional. In one instance he ordered the confiscation of a certain venal official's accumulated wealth and had it distributed among the poor of the city. Already their appalling plight had begun to incite his indignation. This act seems to foreshadow his final great indignation and action.

He studied the lancemanship of the Saburi school from Shibata Kanbei, a police official of Tamatsukuriguchi, and had a considerable reputation as a lanceman, holding the rank of master. It grieved him that neither the *yoriki* nor the *dōshin* under the two Ōsaka city commissioners' administration practised either letters or martial arts. Heihachirō was an accomplished master in both. "As a constable in Ōsaka, Ōshio gained a reputation for his relentless campaign against corruption and crime." (Najita, 1983:126)

iii) *Three Great Achievements*

Ōshio "had a high reputation for three meritorious accomplishments: arresting Christians, impeaching corrupt officials, and exiling Buddhist priests who broke the (Buddhist) commandments." (Yasuda, 1966:283) Between 1820 and 1830, "Ōshio gained wide fame (along with his great skill in lancemanship) for being the most effective police censor (*gimmi yoriki*) in Ōsaka, cleaning out corruption in Buddhist churches, secret religious groups (presumably Christian), and a number of prostitution rings". (Najita, 1970:156)

Ōshio's first great achievement came in April 1827, at the age of 34, when, after painstaking investigation, he uncovered a number of hidden

Catholic believers between Ōsaka and Kyōto and ordered their mass arrest. Papinot (1910:495) notes that "he was remarkable for his skill in discouraging evil doers". He then turned his energies to the most challenging problem of corruption in the municipal administration and in the judicial courts. In 1829 he impeached a number of corrupt officials. One such typical incident occurred when Takai instructed him to settle a certain law-suit which had dragged on for years. On hearing that Ōshio was now in charge of the case, the plaintiff, under cover of darkness, brought him a box of sweets as a gift. In the court hearing the following day, after weighing the evidence, Ōshio decided the case against the plaintiff. At a subsequent meeting with his fellow officials, Ōshio produced the box of sweets and said, "It is because you have such sweet teeth that lawsuits take so long to settle." So saying, he raised the lid and revealed a glittering heap of gold coins. His fellows blushed, but remained silent. Ōshio's ire was also aroused by corruption in the Buddhist establishment. In 1830 he prosecuted quite a large number of delinquent Buddhist priests who had been breaking their vows and, as a result, many of them were defrocked and banished from Ōsaka.

All of these three great feats of Heihachirō were difficult matters in which he devoted all his strength, and as a consequence, he attracted the attention of society. He was proud of these three achievements and often boasted openly of his ability. In fact, in September 1830, on the day of his retirement from public office, he wrote a poem which he later included in a letter to his intimate acquaintance, agricultural scientist Ōkura Nagatsune: "As you know I have no connections with merchants or wealthy people. Among the *yoriki* some, unlike me, have intimate relations with wealthy merchants".⁷ Concerning this poem, Miyagi writes, "Ōshio cites these three incidents in the preface of the work *Shōin Shi* (Poems on Shōin) which he wrote on the day of his resignation and in which he praises himself for his meritorious achievement, but we have no other materials at all except this." (1984:14)

Certainly none among Heihachirō's colleagues could compare with him in uprightness and zeal. Amidst the many temptations in his official duties, unlike his associates, he did not attempt to mix with the affluent townspeople. Even in an age when nobody worried about receiving

⁷Okamoto, 1975:47, as quoted from Hayakawa Kōtarō's *Ōkura Nagatsune*.

bribes, he was very honest and strict, not even accepting small gifts. Many eulogised his uprightness, honesty and integrity. In all his official duties there were no crooked or unfair dealings, no graft or irregularities. His name truly became a "watchword for integrity". (Okamoto, 1975:48) But, as we shall see later, his reputation was acclaimed in Ōsaka not just for his being an able and honest official, but also it was still more greatly esteemed on account of his being the most excellent Yōmei scholar of that period.

Kōda (1972:88-91) mentions many interesting items of anecdotal traditions that have been handed down concerning Ōshio and, though not all can be verified, there are those whose factual accuracy has been established. They all speak of Heihachirō's honesty, sternness, and diligence in his official duties. He was scrupulously honest and rebuked his fellow officials, as well as the city merchants and village headmen, for any suspected dishonesty. When he was on regular patrol duty in Jōmachi there were frequent robberies in the city. He thought that they were possibly the acts of pirates and so he first arrested the boss and, from his mouth, learned the names of dozens of his subordinates who sailed on trading vessels and anchored in the neighbouring waters. He arrested them all.

It is not clear under what circumstance it happened but, while he was out, Harimaya Rihachi of Oikedōri 4 Chōme took him some food. Ōshio returned this to the elder of the town saying that he would not take any action on this occasion but warned that, hereafter, they had better not do such a thing. There had also been a boundary dispute between the Kishiwada and Kishū domains for some years, but, because the Kishū clan was one of the three branches of the Tokugawa family, the previous official in charge had hesitated in making a judgment against them. When the matter was referred to Ōshio, following simple reason, he quickly passed judgment, declaring that Kishū's demands were unreasonable. Heihachirō acted typically, without fear or favour.

It also came to Ōshio's notice that a certain person, under the cover of being an umbrella maker in Tenma, loaned money at high interest rates. Actually he was a very lowly ranked person who did some minor service for *yoriki* and *dōshin* and who consequently used his government connections to scare people into borrowing money at high interest. Ōshio intentionally

borrowed 100 ryō and left it sealed as it was. At the expiry of the dead-line, as quick as a flash, the merchant urgently demanded his money. Ōshio threw down the sealed money with the interest and, as the merchant stooped to pick it up, he brandished his sword and said, "Now I will exchange this money for your neck! Coveting high interest and using the authority of government is a breach of etiquette!" It is said that that person kowtowed a hundred times and apologised profusely for his sin.

3. *His Life's Three Turning Points*

Ōshio accepted the Yōmei concept that the ideal transcended all social and political distinctions. As a result, Najita says, "from this premise he discarded all distinctions based on names as artificial means designed to satisfy selfish emotions and to support oppressive governments".

(1971(i):28) He also rejected distinctions between private and public, internal and external, etcetera, as conceptually divisive and argued that inevitably all actions were public in character. Najita further believes that, "because of this radical denial of the introspective and ascetic principle implicit in Ōyōmei idealism and other intuitive schemes of thought such as Zen, Ōshio's ideas took on political meaning". (ibid:27)

Both Okamoto (1975:48-50) and Miyagi (1984:7-12) trace the development of Ōshio's thought through three crises or turning points as enumerated in 1833 in his "Letter sent to Satō Issai",⁸ a friend, who was at that time head of the *Rinke* private academy. Miyagi suggests that this letter could be called "The ideological autobiography of Ōshio as a Yōmei scholar" (ibid,7) for it explains his reasons for embracing Yōmei learning.

The first turning point in Ōshio's life came at the age of 14-15 when he perused his family genealogy and learned of the meritorious exploit of his ancestor before Ieyasu. He realised that early he would have to carry on his grandfather's office, but he "deeply regretted being engaged as a minor official and was ashamed at being ranked with prison guards and city officials" (ibid., 8) when one of his ancestors had been engaged in distinguished military service for the first Shōgun. His daily contact with criminals and petty officials was galling. All his fellow

⁸This letter and the reply from Satō Issai are translated in Appendix III.

officers thought and spoke about was advancement, tax, and complaints. Days spent in memorising rules and regulations seemed so futile. None of his colleagues shared his passion for learning. "He indignantly determined with great achievement, courage, and integrity to succeed in the intention of his ancestors." (Okamoto, 1975:48) Thus we can imagine why he applied himself with such fierce, youthful enthusiasm to letters and the martial arts, the sword and the pen. Ōshio was filled with melancholy as he compared his present humble position and its petty duties with the dazzling form of his notable ancestor defending his lord. But what chafed Ōshio most were the hereditary barriers of the social system so that whatever noble achievements were accomplished, it was nigh on impossible to break through the barrier and his one ardent ambition in life was to succeed. Heihachirō accepted the teaching of Confucianism because he believed that only by following the teaching of Confucius could the ills of society be cured.

The second turning point in his thought was his aspiration to be a virtuous person. While fulfilling his duties as a police officer, judging and governing people, he studied and pondered the tenets of Confucianism as a means of calming his troubled mind. *The Great Learning*, the model for Confucianist politics, has the quotation: "What Great Learning teaches, is -- to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence." (Legge, 1960:356) A virtuous person is a person who teaches true statesmanship through the achievement of inner morality. In illustrating "illustrious virtue" one ought to carry out politics that "renew the people". Through contact with such Confucianist political ideology, Ōshio's ambition completely changed and he lost any desire to work his way up. He thus extricated himself from the duties of a police official.

As he had patrolled the towns in his official duties he saw bribery and corruption, merchants bribing police officials to have charges against them withdrawn and government officials using their authority to threaten and demand services of the people. After he passed the age of 20, as the result of being more deeply involved in the realities of the actual world, "he reflected that his intentions of great achievement, courage, and integrity were nothing more than youthful ardour and arrogance". (Okamoto, 1975:49) He had largely forsaken reason and become arrogant, but now he intended, through the study of Confucianism, to quieten his heart's inner sickness.

Thus, aiming at being a virtuous person filling the position of the ruling class, being the scholar that he was, Ōshio earnestly gave himself to study. He became dissatisfied with the scholarly emphasis on the mere interpretation of words and on rules and poems. So he separated from the lecture-hall of city Confucianists and avoided Confucianist companions who indulged in exegesis and poetry, and engrossed himself in private study of the hardships and privations of life which could not be exhausted by pen or tongue. However, Heihachirō also found this way of study to be a thorny way. "The trend in learning at that time was limited to exegesis, poems, and essays, and not only did this not cure his inner sickness, on the contrary, it only had a still more harmful influence on him." (ibid.)

The third turning point was his coming in contact with Yōmei learning. While engaged in such personal study as mentioned above, fortuitously, a book called *Shingingo* by Ro Shin-go, a Confucianist of Ming China, had recently been imported from China and fell into his hands. Ōshio sought the origin of Ro Shin-go's learning, and he realised that it corresponded to Yōmei learning, a form of extreme introspective or "intuitive" Confucianism which was based on the universal moral sense which is called *ryōchi* (intuition). Hence, leaving the deception of material things and separating from empty interpretations, poetry, and the practice of the five Confucianist relationships, through *Shingingo*, Ōshio, in his mid-twenties, is thought to have looked within himself. He clearly obeyed the laws of nature which are the substance of the heart, and learned self-control. His goal now was to work practically and to act with intuition.

When he was 27 years old (in 1819), his name Kōso appears for the first time. The change of name from Seikō to Kōso which had its origin in *The Analects of Confucius* is thought to have indicated this last turning point. After Nakae Tōju, Kumazawa Banzan, and Miwa Shissai there was no scholar left in Kansai to lecture on Yōmeigaku. Thus Ōshio was forced to study privately with *Kohon Daigaku* and *Denshuzoku*, the only Yōmei works that Miwa had reprinted, as his companions. At that time, Yōmeigaku had been proscribed as heretical by the Kansei edict of 1790, and so Heihachirō had no teacher to inquire of concerning Yōmei learning.

We can see in Heihachirō's poem to Rai Sanyō:

"The dawn of Spring, the sham Confucianists of Ōsaka doze off to sleep/ The song of the small people who try to fly over the edge of the eaves is in vain/ Even if you sounded the fire alarm while climbing the tall cherry/ At evening also they would not waken",

that his Yōmei convictions had deepened and his attention had been attracted by the moral corruption of his colleagues, the Ōsaka city police officials. Bribery and corruption were rife, "gifts" from citizens being a natural part of the police official's job. Flattery and servility towards superior authority was also common in order to curry favour and gain promotion to influential positions which had many extra emoluments of office. Ōshio frankly condemned such practices of the city police officers. Miyagi quotes a letter addressed to Ogino Shirōsuke in 1832: "Even though they serve their rulers, many think first of their own profit, and if by chance someone did work and care for their ruler, generally, they had self-interest at heart, wondering what kind of reward, what kind of government service, what kind of stipend they would receive. Actually they are not concerned about either their ruler or their country". (1984:12) Miyagi regards such a denunciation by Ōshio as indicating the degeneration of the warrior society under the growth of the commercial economy during the Bunka-Bunsei periods (1804-30).⁹ Ōshio was indignant at the moral ruin of the warrior society and it is possible to think of his "intuitional learning" as arising from this resentment.

⁹The Bunka (1804-18) and Bunsei (1818-1830) periods together are commonly called the Kasei era.