

Motoori Norinaga's View of Life and Death

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I

Should anyone ask me
About the Japanese spirit,
It is the wild cherry blossoms
Blooming in the morning sun.

Shikishima no
Yamato gokoro o hito towaba
Asahi ni niou
Yamazakurabana¹⁾

This is the best known of thousands of *waka* poems composed by Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), the greatest leader of the *koku-gaku* (national studies) movement in Tokugawa Japan. Among the Japanese people even those who have little knowledge of Norinaga's ideas would be somewhat familiar with this poem. But, at the same time, no other of Norinaga's poems has been so extremely misinterpreted as this. Perhaps the most recent and rather shocking example is given by the former Japanese sergeant Yokoi, who was found to have survived alone in the caves of Guam for twenty-eight years. In a meeting with reporters just after he appeared, Mr. Yokoi said something as follows: "We Japanese have been repeatedly taught that we must fall like cherry blossoms with the Japanese spirit in mind. (*Yamato gokoro de hana to chire.*) I am sorry I could not serve the Emperor to my satisfaction, and I am ashamed of having survived my comrades in arms,

but I will come back to Japan so as to tell the Japanese people about the battle and my experiences on Guam."²⁾

It is quite obvious that Yokoi's belief and words are closely associated with Norinaga's poem on *sakura* and *yamato gokoro*. What Yokoi says, however, is tremendously far away from Norinaga's real intention. Norinaga certainly believed wholeheartedly that Japan is the supreme country in the world which gave birth to the divine ancestress Amaterasu Ōmikami and which should be ruled by the emperor as her son, generation after generation.³⁾ It is also true that this idea was utilized by the militaristic authorities and their ideological spokesmen. But a careful study of Norinaga's thought would readily make one realize that Norinaga is the last person to insist that the Japanese people should be willing to die for the sake of the country or the emperor. Rather, there are few thinkers in Japanese intellectual history who expressed the wish to enjoy life or long life in this world more explicitly than Norinaga. It is quite significant, though regrettable, that the very poem for which Norinaga has been most widely known has become a serious source for misunderstanding of his ideas.

In this essay I would like to discuss how Norinaga conceived of the problem of life and death and with what attitude he tried to face his own inevitable death, in the hope of contributing to a better understanding of the belief and psychology deeply involved in his poem on cherry blossoms and the Japanese spirit.

II

As I have indicated in my book *Motoori Norinaga*, Norinaga's view of death is primarily based on his faith in the ancient Japanese tradition as recorded in the *Kojiki* (Record of ancient matters). For him the *Kojiki* was the divine source of meaning in terms of which all things and events, including man's life and death, could and should be understood.

According to Norinaga, all people, noble or base, good or wicked,

are destined to go to *yomi no kuni* or the nether-world without exception. The world of *yomi*, as it is found in the ancient tradition, is not like hell or paradise, but simply the dark, foul nether-world where the dead go to live. It is not associated with the notion of reward and retribution. In Norinaga's words, "even a good man will not be reborn in a good place." He argues, "This statement may certainly sound very blunt and unreasonable, but it is derived from the true tradition held since the age of kami and is based on a mysterious principle, so that man should not reason about it with his limited ordinary intelligence."⁵⁴ Confucian and Buddhist writings, according to Norinaga, explain the reason for man's life and death in many attractive ways, but these are mere human fabrications and are not real.

Norinaga thus refused to attach a moral or saving meaning to death. He simply believed in what the ancient Japanese tradition says, no matter how absurd it may sound. He saw the inscrutable will of the divine as going beyond or against human intelligence. This was Norinaga's basic religious attitude, which we may characterize as "absolute faith."

We should notice, however, that this faith as such was not the kind of faith which would rescue Norinaga from the grief of death and give him a sense of security (*anjin, anshin*). He even said with some paradoxical implications, "My sense of security consists in the lack of a sense of security."⁵⁵ However sincerely he believes that death is caused by a mysterious principle, the fact remains that death is the most sorrowful event of all, about which man can do nothing but lament. Even Izanagi no Ōkami, the great deity of procreation, "wept in grief like a little child when the goddess Izanami passed away, and followed her even to the land of *yomi*, longing for her."⁵⁶ For Norinaga, death was simply the entrance to the dark filthy nether-world of *yomi*, in which he could not expect any delightful life, enlightenment or salvation. Value and meanings for man lay only in this world, not in the

other world. What Norinaga really aspired to was, then, life in this world and its extension as long as possible. He expresses this wish in quite a few poems, which include the following:

We, with our temporal body,
 Cannot live with this life again.
 What could we do on earth
 So that we might go without dying?

We can do nothing, indeed;
 With our mortality
 We are destined to leave
 This world against our wish.

How dirty and disgusting
 The polluted land of *yomi*!
 How anxious we are to stay
 In this world for ever and ever!⁷⁾

As I have argued in my book, this belief and psychology of Norinaga finds a most vivid expression in his last will, which he wrote in the summer of 1800, a year before his death. Although there are many interesting points involved in this will,⁸⁾ I will only pick up here his rather unusual concern for his grave so as further to approach his view of death.

In his will Norinaga requests that besides a grave to be raised in the customary Buddhist way in his family temple, another grave should be erected on the hill of Yamamuro a few miles to the south of his town, Matsuzaka. Yamamuro is a very quiet place surrounded by beautiful scenery. Norinaga desired to be buried near the top of the hill and bought himself a desirable piece of land for his burial-place in the same year that he drew up his will. Norinaga's requests as to his grave at Yamamuro were quite detailed and elaborate. He asked to be buried, not cremated, in spite of the traditional Buddhist custom. He required that on the gravestone just his ordinary name "Motoori Norinaga" should be

carved, not such things as his posthumous Buddhist name and the date of his death. The most significant of all was, however, his request about a cherry tree to be planted on the mound in his burial-place. Although he did not want expensive materials for all other parts of his grave, he did wish to have the very best wild cherry tree planted, and added the request that it should be replaced by a new one if it dies later on. And just after he chose this burial plot at Yamamuro he composed the following poems:

I have fixed at Yamamuro
 My dwelling place for a thousand years;
 Spring after spring will I enjoy here
 Cherry blossoms, unknown to the wind.

From now on I will not deplore
 My fleeting, transient existence,
 For I have obtained here
 My dwelling place for a thousand generations.⁹⁷

III

Here the question arises how in Norinaga's thinking the mythical land of *yomi* and the actual place of *Yamamuro* are related to each other. How could Norinaga be consistent in saying that all the dead must go to *yomi* and, at the same time, that Yamamuro is to be "my dwelling place for a thousand generations"? Does this apparent contradiction indicate a significant change of Norinaga's thought in his last years? This is one of the problems which have been mostly overlooked and so far unsolved. My analysis of his will in the book *Motoori* does not deal with this point either.

Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843), the most influential disciple of Norinaga, was the first person to raise this problem. In his *Tama no mihashira* ("True pillar of the soul", written in 1811), Atsutane argues that Norinaga was wrong in insisting that the souls of the dead are supposed to go to *yomi*. According to Atsutane, Norinaga

was too much occupied with his manifold work to have a chance to revise this wrong idea explicitly. But he seems to have realized in his later years that the soul of the deceased is to stay in his grave or the place where he has beforehand decided to dwell. This is why Norinaga prepared his own special grave on the hill of Yamamuro and composed those two poems above cited. Therefore it is quite definite, for Atsutane, that Norinaga's soul resides at the hill of Yamamuro. How could it be possible that Norinaga, with all his pure heart like "wild cherry blossoms blooming in the morning sun," should go to that foul world of *yomi*?¹⁰⁾ (For Atsutane's view of death and afterlife in more details, see "Post-script I" of this paper.)

Atsutane thus interpreted the Yomi-Yamamuro problem in terms of a change of Norinaga's notion of death. On the basis of this understanding, Atsutane decided early that after death his soul should go to serve his master Norinaga at Yamamuro.¹¹⁾ On the left of Norinaga's grave at Yamamuro is a smaller stone monument for Atsutane, which was erected sometime after his death. It stands just like a loyal disciple following his teacher, and on its front surface is a poem carved, which says: "No matter where my corpse may be buried, my soul would surely come to my old master."

This feeling of Atsutane is quite understandable and his notion of death and afterlife is also meaningful in itself. The problem still remains, however, whether Atsutane's interpretation is right or not from the standpoint of Norinaga himself. In my judgment Atsutane was not necessarily true to Norinaga in this point, as well as in many other respects, despite his conviction that he was most loyal to his master. It seems that Norinaga did not change to the last his idea of the dead going to *yomi*. Considering Norinaga's deep faith in the ancient Japanese tradition, it would be least probable that he abandoned without difficulty his belief in *yomi*. Moreover, it should be noticed that Norinaga composed the following poems in

his last year (1801), namely, the year after he drew up his will and chose his burial-place at Yamamuro:

However wearisome this world is,
 Why should we abandon it?
 We would never feel like doing so,
 If we think of the world of *yomi*.

It is foolish, indeed,
 To aspire after the Buddha's land,
 Without knowing that after death
 Everbody is destined for *yomi*.¹²⁾

IV

How then were *yomi* and Yamamuro mutually related within the thought and psychology of Norinaga?

Reading through his major writings, particularly his life work *Kojiki den* (A commentary on the *Kojiki*), I have found that a most significant key to solve this riddle lies in his rather peculiar notion of the soul. According to Norinaga, "an ordinary man as well possesses his own soul (*tama*) as kami do. It is supposed to go to the world of *yomi* after his death, but it could remain in this world, blessing or doing harm to the living people, just as kami do."¹³⁾

"Now," Norinaga asks himself, "how does the soul which has gone to the world of *yomi* remain in this world as well?" To this he answers by comparing the remaining soul to light. He says, "It is like light radiated from the fire as the source of light; even after the fire has been moved to another place, the light reaches and illuminates the place where the fire was originally burning." If the force of the fire is continuously strong enough, the light can remain to illuminate the original place. For Norinaga the same thing holds true with the soul. "To what extent the soul of a man can remain in this world after his death depends upon whether

his status is noble or mean, and also upon whether his heart (*kokoro*) is wise or foolish, strong or weak." For instance, some souls are gone from the world right after death, but some other souls, including those of kami in particular, continue to be remarkably active in this world hundreds of years or even a thousand years after death.¹⁴⁹

Norinaga saw a most significant example of the soul remaining in this world in the case of Yamato Takeru no mikoto, a brave, yet tragic hero of ancient Japan, whose story is among the most beautiful and well-known narratives in the *Kojiki*. When Takeru received the command of his father-emperor to subdue hostile people in the eastern regions, he visited the grand shrine of Ise, where his aunt gave him a sacred sword later called Kusanagi no tsurugi (the sword of grass mowing), which is one of the three divine symbols of imperial sovereignty. This sword saved Takeru from a plain-fire he encountered on his way of expedition. But later, when he went to Mount Ibuki to capture another enemy, he left the sword in the residence of Miyazuhime, whom he had married during his trip. On the way Takeru was taken ill, and finally when his illness became most critical, he sang the following poem, thinking eagerly about the sword:

Next to the maiden's
 Sleeping-place
 I left
 The sabre, the sword ---
 Alas, that sword!¹⁵⁰

(Otome no
 Tokonobe ni
 Waga okishi
 Tsurugi no tachi
 Sono tachi haya!)

Immediately after he had sung this poem, he died.

In *Kojiki den*, commenting on this passage, Norinaga says with deep sympathy: "He [Yamato Takeru] sang this poem with the deep thought of that sacred sword. This poem tells us that even when he was dying he never forgot the sword and kept persistently thinking about it from the depth of his heart; we learn also from this poem that the soul of this prince remains on the sword for eternity. It is indeed an extremely moving, impressive poem." Then Norinaga goes further to say: "You should keep in mind that the soul of the prince stays on the sword forever, and should never make light of the shrine of Atsuta [in which the sword of Kusanagi is enshrined]." ¹⁶⁾

V

Norinaga loved the whole story of Yamato Takeru, and his last poem in particular. It is very probable that Norinaga kept it in mind when he designed his own grave at Yamamuro. For Norinaga, man's soul could remain in this world, especially when his heart was filled with a burning concern for something in this world, just like the sacred sword for Takeru. I would like to argue here that a meaningful parallel could be found between Takeru's sword and Norinaga's cherry blossom. In other words it may be said that the cherry blossom was for Norinaga a psychological equivalent to the sacred sword for Yamato Takeru.

Perhaps, very few persons have loved and kept thinking of the cherry blossom more deeply than Norinaga. Not only did he love it, he even "identified" himself with the flower. In his sixty-first Norinaga painted his self-portrait, on which he wrote the poem I quoted in the very beginning of this essay, that is, the poem on cherry blossoms and the Japanese spirit. When he was forty-four he had painted another self-portrait. This was also accompanied by a poem on cherry blossoms:

More deeply than by Korean and Chinese
Flowers, splendid as they are,

I am attracted by the hue and fragrance

Of cherry blossom, which never makes me weary.

And then he adds the words: "This is the poem which I, Norinaga, composed, at the time when I painted this self-portrait, in spring in the forty-fourth year of my age, to portray my heart, which is not reflected in the mirror."¹⁷⁾

Moreover, Norinaga composed a large number of poems on cherry blossoms during his lifetime. Particularly in the year before his death, the year when he wrote his will and planned his grave, he created over three hundred poems exclusively on cherry blossoms. He says in his epilogue to these poems something like this: "I composed these poems on autumn nights before going to sleep, as the images of cherry blossoms came successively to my mind." Let us pick a few examples:

I wish I could continue to see

Cherry blossoms for thousands of generations,

Without the blossoms falling

And without dying myself.

How could I live long

And appreciate cherry blossoms,

As far as they bloom

As ever spring after spring.

I wonder why some people

Would die without hesitation,

Despite living in the world

With such a fragrant blossom blooming.

Whatever other people may think

I for one intend to see

Cherry blossoms without ever dying

For thousands of generations.

Bloom, you cherry blossoms,

Perpetually and everlastingly!
 And, I keep living as well
 To see you for ever and ever.¹⁹

It is very clear from these poems that Norinaga's loving concern for cherry blossoms, which seems rather unusually intense, is closely connected with his fervent aspiration for long life in this world. He wished, or even "intended," to stay forever in this world to see cherry blossoms, which as well he wished to be everlasting without falling. Indeed, the cherry blossom was even more than the object of his love. Perhaps, at the depth of his heart, Norinaga saw his own image or identity in the cherry blossom.

The meaning of the cherry tree by Norinaga's grave on the hill of Yamamuro could be understood better in terms of this rather mystical level of his consciousness. Norinaga wished the tree to be especially beautiful and also eternally alive. It was the symbol of his personal identity to be maintained in this world, or, we should rather say, the symbol of his "soul" as he understood it, which, overcoming the power of *yomi*, would remain active in this world to see "for a thousand years" "the wild cherry blossoms blooming in the morning sun."

Postscript I: A contrast between Norinaga and Atsutane.

I would like to add a few remarks to point out a significant contrast between Norinaga and Atsutane in respect of the present subject.

As I discussed above, Hirata Atsutane criticized Norinaga for his belief that all the dead go to *yomi*, the land of pollution. According to Atsutane, the world for the souls to live should not be confused with *yomi*. It is the "concealed and mysterious" world (*yūmei*), which is quite different from the *yomi* world as Norinaga described it. When a man dies, his corpse becomes extremely foul, and it certainly belongs to *yomi*. But it does not prove that the soul is to go to *yomi*. For Atsutane the world of the souls of the dead

is everywhere *within* this world, but is just concealed and invisible. This normal world can be seen from the concealed world of the souls, whereas the latter cannot be seen from the visible world. After death, a man's soul goes to this invisible mysterious world, but it is still within this world, not the world of *yomi*. The invisible world has food, clothing, and residences of various kinds, just like those of this world. Further, according to Atsutane, the soul usually resides in the area of his grave, and this is a fact attested by countless accounts, in Chinese and Japanese sources of both ancient and modern times, that human souls showed their miraculous signs in the vicinity of graves.¹⁹⁾

This is a brief outline of Atsutane's view of death and afterlife, on the basis of which he insisted that Norinaga's soul dwells at his graveyard at Yamamuro. Incidentally it is interesting, and even rather strange, that Atsutane never refers to the deep meaning of the cherry tree by Norinaga's grave although he often mentions the grave itself.

As compared with Norinaga, Atsutane was more philosophical, speculative, and relatively lacking in such tension between rational thinking and irrational beliefs as Norinaga realized. Instead of the single-minded trust on the ancient Japanese tradition, Atsutane tended to rely on all the sources available to him, not just ancient Japanese, but Chinese and modern, in order to support his own theory. What was most important for Atsutane seems to be some guarantee that the afterlife is *not* to be like the filthy nether world of *yomi* in which Norinaga believed. Atsutane eagerly wished for a certain better and righteous other world, in which all the deeds in the present world should be properly rewarded. Perhaps, Atsutane's idea of the other world, the "concealed and mysterious" world, was deeply related to his life experiences which were bitter, quite frustrating, and at least much more unhappy than Norinaga's.

As I discussed in my book *Motoori Norinaga*, Norinaga was born

and brought up as the eldest beloved son of a merchant family at Matsuzaka. He was even treated as a "kami-sent child," namely, a child who was believed to be given by a kami in response to the parents' prayer. The relationship between young Norinaga and his mother was particularly intimate. Following Erik H. Erikson, we may say that Norinaga's early experience was so satisfactory as to establish a firm sense of "basic trust." In his youth and through his later years as well, Norinaga could lead a relatively calm, stable and satisfactory life. It is rather amazing that he finished his great lifework *Kojiki den* (A commentary on the *Kojiki*) just a few years before his death, after over thirty years of continuous work. He also wrote many other important essays in his last years. When he drew up his last will and designed his own graves, he had almost completed the work which a man could possibly expect to do in his life. In this sense Norinaga was quite happy and never frustrated.²⁰⁾

In contrast to Norinaga, Atsutane was very unfortunate and frustrated almost throughout his life. He was born as the fourth son of a rather poor samurai family and underwent no gratifying family experiences in his childhood and adolescence. Later in his reminiscence, he says, "Under what a fate was I brought forth? From the very beginning of my life, I was not raised by my parents alone. I was given in charge of many other people such as a wet-nurse and adoptive parents, and I underwent bitter experiences until after twenty years of age."²¹⁾ According to an episode, Atsutane, unlike Norinaga, was not cared for by his mother, but rather mistreated by his adoptive mother. To use Erikson's term again, we might say that Atsutane perhaps developed a considerable amount of "mistrust" at this early stage.

Atsutane left his home at the age of twenty for Edo. Norinaga also left his home, in his case, for Kyoto when he was twenty-one years old. Although both Norinaga and Atsutane did apparently the same thing, that is, "leaving home around the age of twenty,"

the contrast between them is striking in this respect as well as in their early family experience. While Norinaga was financially supported and also warmly encouraged by his mother, Atsutane dared to rush out of his home and cut off the tie with his parents and friends as well as *han* authorities. He left his native town in silence without saying farewell to any of them. In Edo, too, he had to suffer terrible poverty. It is said that he worked at times as a kind of porter, at other times as a fireman, still at other times as a servant-cook, until he was adopted by the Hirata family in his twenty-fifth year.²²⁾

Further, Atsutane's state of mind in his last years was considerably different from Norinaga's. Norinaga, though consciously hanging on to his life, seems to have had a sense of satisfaction and integrity at the depth of his heart. In contrast, again, Atsutane, with all his numerous writings and hundreds of disciples around him, was not heartily gratified with what he had done and what he was even in his last year. When his illness became quite critical in 1843 (his sixty-eighth year), he composed a poem, which turned out to be his last poem, as follows:

Without seeing anything completed,
Which I have intended to do for kami,
Alas! I am going to leave
This world regretfully today!²³⁾

I think that this contrast between Norinaga and Atsutane in their life history is quite meaningful for understanding their respective systems of thought, including their views of life and death.

Postscript II: On the meanings of the "Japanese spirit."

In connection with Norinaga's view of life and death, I have some more reflections to offer on the issue of the "Japanese spirit" (*yamato damashii* or *yamato gokoro*).

The term "Japanese spirit" is an explicit expression or assertion

of Japan's national identity. But this term has been used in various contexts and not with the same meaning at all. We could see from its usage at a particular age a significant aspect of the Japanese self-image or self-conception at that period. The dominant tendency in modern times, at least up to 1945, was to identify the Japanese spirit with the mental attitude characterized by manly preparedness for death for the sake of the country and the emperor. It was symbolized by cherry blossoms falling while they are still in full bloom. But this understanding is only a phase of the notion of the Japanese spirit, although it is admittedly an outstanding one. I have not done thorough research on this subject yet, but I would like to pick up a few examples from the Japanese intellectual history so as to put Norinaga's idea of the Japanese spirit in a somewhat broader comparative perspective.

As far as I know, the oldest source in which we find the word *yamato damashii* is *Genji monogatari* (The tale of Genji), which was written in early eleventh century. In the volume of "The Maiden" (*Otome*) the hero, Hikaru Genji, speaks about the advantage of learning for one's career. In Arthur Waley's translation, he says:

I have noticed that children of good families, assured of such titles and emoluments as they desire, and used to receive the homage of the world however little they do to deserve it, see no advantage in fatiguing themselves by arduous and exacting studies. Having then in due time been raised to offices, - - - they are helped out of all their difficulties by a set of time servers (who are all the while laughing at them behind their backs), and they soon imagine themselves to be the most accomplished statesmen on earth. But however influential such a one may be, the death of some relative or a change in the government may easily work his undoing, and he will soon discover with surprise how poor an opinion of him the world really has. It is *then* that he feels the disadvantages of the

desultory education which I have described. For the truth is, that without a solid foundation of book-learning this "Japanese spirit" of which one hears so much is not of any great use in the world.²⁴

The last sentence of the above quotation, which contains the key term "Japanese spirit" may be translated more literally as follows: "It is indeed on the basis of academic talent that the Japanese spirit (*yamato damashii*) would be of greater use in the world."

According to usual commentaries on *Genji*, this "Japanese spirit" means *sesai*, or literally "worldly talent," as against *kansai* or "Chinese academic talent." In this context, while the latter is associated with "fatiguing oneself by arduous and exacting studies," the Japanese spirit is associated with worldly-wise behavior and prudence in human relationship. It should be noted here that the Chinese "book-learning" is regarded and even recommended as "a solid foundation" (or basis, *moto*) on which the Japanese spirit becomes more useful and valuable. Although the Japanese spirit is contrasted with the Chinese talent, it is not necessarily highly estimated nor advocated as superior to the Chinese talent.

When we see the next source, *Konjaku monogatari* (A collection of present and old stories) compiled in the twelfth century, however, we find that the Japanese spirit is given a more positive meaning, whereas the Chinese learning or talent is somehow devaluated. A good example is the story of a man of great learning named Yoshizumi. He had an unparalleled academic talent, for which he was regarded as ranking with the wise men in ancient times. One night, it happened that a group of robbers intruded into his house, and Yoshizumi hid himself and was safe. But when the robbers were going out of the gate of his house, carrying a lot of Yoshizumi's properties, he suddenly jumped out, ran after the robbers, and looked at their faces, saying, "I have now seen each of your faces! I will report to the police soon after the day breaks!" Hearing these words, the robbers came back to capture him and

killed him before they ran away. Commenting on this story, the compiler of *Konjaku monogatari* says, "Yoshizumi was quite distinguished for his learning talent, but he was lacking in the Japanese spirit (*yamato damashii*) whatsoever; therefore, he shouted such childish, imprudent words and in consequence he was killed. Everybody hearing of this story said the same thing and despised Yoshizumi."²⁵⁾

This passage gives expression to a notion of the "Japanese spirit," somewhat different from that which is implied in the above quoted passage from *Genji*. Here in *Konjaku* the Chinese learning talent is regarded as something rigid, stiff, and formal, while the Japanese spirit is conceived to be more flexible, more discreet and more appropriate for the life in the world. And this type of distinction between the Japanese spirit and the Chinese talent or learning (*wakon kansai*) became a traditional way of thinking among the Japanese throughout history. We may be reminded in this connection that later when Western learning came into Japan, the catchword which typified the Japanese response to it was "Japanese spirit and Western learning talent" (*wakon yōsai*).

It is in the Tokugawa period (1603-1867), however, that the concept of the Japanese spirit was given more concrete meanings and positively advocated as a key-word for Japanese cultural identity. Especially in the Confucian Shinto school called *Suigō Shinto*, the "Japanese spirit" came to be a moralistic notion. One of the Suigō Shintoists wrote something like this: "If a man lives up to the reason in all aspects of his life, for example, worshipping the divine and respecting the emperor, being kind to the people and keeping from damaging things, then he would not fail to maintain his own Japanese spirit even in the midst of a degenerate age."²⁶⁾

These moralistic implications of the Japanese spirit were further developed by Hirata Atsutane and his disciples. Atsutane supported Kamo no Mabuchi's view of the ancient Japanese people as characterized by prowess and manliness. Atsutane saw the essence of

the Japanese spirit in this brave, manly attitude with which man should serve the emperor and the country. Ōkuni Takamasa (1792-1871), a most influential disciple of Atsutane, wrote a book titled *Yamato gokoro*, in which he argued that the Japanese spirit consists in loyalty to the emperor.²⁷⁾

The same emphasis on the value of loyalty as the essence of the Japanese spirit is found in the thought of Yoshida Shōin (1830-1859), an enthusiastic leader of the royalist movement toward the end of the Tokugawa period. In his last will, which he wrote in the two days just before his execution in 1859, Shōin begins with his most famous waka poem as follows:

Even if my body goes to decay
 In the field of Musashi,
 I would eagerly wish
 To make my Japanese spirit remain.²⁸⁾

So far I have shown several examples of the contexts in which the term "the Japanese spirit" was used. If we look at Norinaga's notion of the Japanese spirit against this historical background, its significance would be more explicit. Norinaga also talked about the Japanese spirit as something opposite to the Chinese talent or, to use his own word, "the Chinese spirit" (*kara gokoro*). But he put emphasis not upon its worldly-wise or moralistic aspects but upon its emotional and aesthetic dimension, which is associated with feminine qualities, rather than masculine, of man.²⁹⁾

In one of his essays he praises Keichū, a forerunner of the *kokugaku* movement, for his deep understanding of a poem composed by Ariwara no Narihira on his deathbed. The poem reads as follows:

Although I have heard it is the way
 For the mortal necessarily to go in the end,
 Alas! I have never realized
 I have to go the way today or so.

Commenting on this poem Keichū says, "This is a good poem which expresses the real heart of man. The people in later periods, even when they are dying, tend to make self-composed poems in which they try to show that they have become enlightened and have no anxiety about death. This attitude is not true to human feeling. Narihira expressed his lifelong sincerity in his last poem, whereas the people in later ages express their lifelong falsehood in their poems on their deathbed." Norinaga argues, "This comment, though it was made by a Buddhist monk, is very praiseworthy. Only a man of the Japanese spirit (*yamato damashii*) could speak these words even if he is a monk. Those Shintoists and scholars on poetry who are imbued with the Chinese spirit would never speak like this. The monk Keichū teaches sincerity to the people in the world, whereas the Shintoists and the scholars on poetry teach falsehood."³⁰

For Norinaga the Japanese spirit was closely connected with *mono no aware* or man's emotional and aesthetic experience over against experience primarily based on will or reasoning. According to him, the *mono no aware* experience is deeply rooted in the reality of the human heart, or human nature itself, which is essentially feminine rather than masculine. He says, "In general, the real heart of a human being is effeminate and weak like a woman or a child. 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."³¹ For Norinaga, masculine qualities such as resolution, formality, strength, and manliness are only superficial and secondary to the real heart of a human being, while feminine qualities like emotion, tenderness, effeminacy etc. are true and essential to human nature.

It is clear then that when Norinaga composed the poem on the Japanese spirit and cherry blossoms he never meant to describe the "manful" preparedness for falling or dying as the essence of the Japa-

nese spirit symbolized by cherry blossoms. He gave expression to the pure beauty and *mono no aware* quality of the cherry blossom as well as of the Japanese spirit, which would appeal to the deep level of the human heart. But as this poem became well-known among the people, it soon came to be interpreted in a more masculine and moralistic context, although some feminine and emotional implications remained as an undertone. This "misunderstanding" itself was indicative of a significant stream in the Japanese intellectual history, and yet it was unfortunate for Norinaga and also for a deeper dimension of the Japanese spirit which he most explicitly represented.

Notes

- 1) *Isonokami kō* (A collection of Norinaga's waka poems), in a new edition of *Motoori Norinaga zenshū* (Collected works of Motoori Norinaga), ed. Ōkubo Tadashi, vol. XV, p. 462. The English translation of this poem is quoted from Shigeru Matsumoto, *Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801)*, Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 169. Incidentally, "Yamazakura kána" in this book is a misprint of "Yamazakurabana."
- 2) *The New York Times* (on January 31, 1972) reports that Mr. Yokoi said, "I would just like to tell the Emperor that I continued to live for the sake of the Emperor and believing in the Emperor and *Yamato-damashii*," with a reporter's comment that "*Yamato-damashii* is the old traditional Japanese warrior spirit."
- 3) *Naobi no mitama* (The rectifying spirit), in *Motoori Norinaga zenshū*, ed. Motoori Seizō, hereafter *MNZ*, vol. I, p. 52.
- 4) *Tamakushige* (The jeweled comb box), *MNZ*, vol. VI, p. 10; also cf. *Tōmon roku* (A record of questions and answers exchanged between Norinaga and his disciples), *MNZ*, vol. VI pp. 127-128. The English translation of this passage is from Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
- 5) *Tōmon roku*, *MNZ*, vol. VI, p. 127.
- 6) *Tamakushige*, *MNZ*, vol. VI, p. 11. The English translation, Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
- 7) *Tamaboko hyakushu* (One hundred waka poems on the Way), *MNZ*, vol. X, p. 114. The English translation, Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
- 8) For details, see Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-176; also "Motoori Norinaga no yūgon ni tsuite" (On the last will of Motoori Norinaga), *Shūkyō kenkyū* (Journal of Religious Studies), No. 193, December 1967.
- 9) *Suzunoya shū* (A collection of Norinaga's waka poems), *MNZ*, vol. IX p. 721. The English translation, Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

- 10) *Hirata Atsutane zenshū* (Collected works of Hirata Atsutane), ed. Muromatsu Iwao, hereafter HAZ, vol. II, p. 91.
- 11) *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- 12) *Isonokami kō*, in *Motoori Norinaga zenshū*, ed. Ōkubo Tadashi, vol. XV, p. 506.
- 13) *MNZ*, vol. III, pp. 1593—4.
- 14) *Ibid.*, p. 1594.
- 15) *Kojiki*, tr. Donald L. Philippi, University of Tokyo Press, 1968, p. 249.
- 16) *MNZ*, vol. III, pp. 1483—4.
- 17) *Motoori zenshū shukan* (The appendix to the collected works of the Motoori), ed. Motoori Seizō, ill. 15. The English translation, Matsu-moto, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
- 18) *Makura no yama* (The pillow mountain), *MNZ*, pp. 753—762.
- 19) *Tama no mihashira*, HAZ, vol. II, pp. 82—83. Cf. also Ryusaku Tsunoda et. al. eds., *Sources of the Japanese Tradition*, Columbia Univ. Press, 1958, pp. 549—551.
- 20) Cf. Matsumoto, *op. cit.* ch. 1.
- 21) *Senkyō ibun* (Strange stories about a fairyland), HAZ, vol. III, p. 41.
- 22) Cf. Watanabe Kinzō, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū* (A study on Hirata Atsutane), Tokyo, 1942, p. 19.
- 23) *Ibukinoya kashū* (A collection of Atsutane's waka poems), HAZ, vol. II, ch. 12, p. 15.
- 24) Arthur Waley (tr.), *The Tale of Genji*, N. Y.: Modern Library, 1960, p. 402.
- 25) *Konjaku monogatari*, vol. XXIX, ch. 20, in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (A collection of Japanese classic literature), Tokyo: Iwanami, vol. XXVI, p. 172.
- 26) Wakabayashi Kyōsai, *Shintō taii* (An outline of Shinto), quoted in Muraoka Tsunetsugu, *Kokuminsei no kenkyū* (A study of the national character), Tokyo, 1962, p. 16.
- 27) Cf. Ōkuni Takamasa *zenshū* (Collected works of Ōkuni Takamasa), ed. Nomura Denshirō, Tokyo, 1938, vol. III, pp. 1—97.
- 28) Yoshida Shōin, *Ryūkon roku* (The record of my remaining soul), in *Yoshida Shōin zenshū* (Collected works of Yoshida Shōin), ed. Yamaguchi-ken kyōiku-kai (The association for education in the Yamaguchi prefecture), Tokyo, 1939, vol. VII, p. 319.
- 29) For a detailed discussion of the feminine principle or value over against the masculine, see Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, pp. 49—53 and 180—193.
- 30) *Tamahatsuma* (A collection of Norinaga's essays), *MNZ*, vol. VIII, pp. 147—8.
- 31) *Shibun yōryō* (The essence of *The Tale of Genji*), *MNZ*, vol. X, p. 305. For English translation, Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

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本居宣長の生死観

<抄>

松 本 滋

「志き嶋のやまところを人とは、朝日ににほふ山さく花」この歌は、本居宣長（1730～1801）の数ある歌の中で最もよく知られた歌である。しかし、これほど誤解されてきた歌も少ないであろう。それは、美しい盛りのうちに散ってゆく桜のごとき日本魂のいさぎよさ、散り際の見事さを謳い上げたもののように、しばしば解されている。しかしそれはこの歌にこめられた宣長の真意ではなかった。むしろ、この世の生をこよなく愛しむ宣長の心情に深くつながった歌であった。

宣長は古事記等に記された日本の古伝への深い信仰の立場から、人は死ねば皆暗く汚い予美国へ行かねばならぬと信じた。死後に極楽や天国のような世界を思い描くのは虚妄に他ならぬ。死は人間にとってただ泣き悲しむよりほかない厳しい現実と、宣長は受けとめていた。

しかるに他方、宣長は死去の前年、松坂の郊外にある山室山の妙楽寺境内に自分の墓所を定め、遺言書の中に事細かな指示を記した上、「山むろにちとせの春の宿しめて風にしられぬ花をこそ見め」「今よりははかなき身とはなけかしよ千代のすみかをもとめえつれば」と詠んだ。宣長の心の中において、予美国と山室山とは一体どう関わっているのであろうか。平田篤胤はこれを宣長晩年における思想（死後観）の変化によるものと解した。しかし、宣長は自己の予美説の否定の上に山室の墓所を設定した訳ではない。

筆者は今迄殆んど顧みられなかったこの問題を、宣長自身の靈魂観、および桜に対する彼の異常なまでの愛着ぶりに照らして解明してみた。宣長によれば、人の魂は予美国に往っても、同時に此世にも残り留りうる。それは持ち去られた火の光が元の所になお及ぶようなものである。その程度

は様々だが、此世に強く心惹かれるものがあり、それを切に思い続けるならば、魂は此世に永く留り残る。宣長はそのよい例を倭建命と草那芸劔の関係に見た。それはまた、宣長自身と桜との関りにも移して見ることができよう。桜に対する宣長の思いは並々ならぬものがあった。「うせぬともあかぬ心をとゝめおきてなき世の春も花をこそ見め」その他の歌に、それは生き生きと表わされている。山室山の墓に今なお生き続ける山桜の樹は、そうした宣長の心の留る拠所であり、彼の此世における生の象徴であった。

(なお、“Postscript I”においては、宣長と篤胤との対比をさらに分析し、二人の死生観がそれぞれの生活史と密接に関っていることを指摘した。また、“Postscript II”では、「やまと魂」「やまと心」という言葉が古来用いられてきた意味脈絡を示し、宣長のいう「やまとこゝろ」がもつ意義を、より明確ならしめようところみた。)