

# Chapter 10

## Saints as Sinners: ANDŌ Shōeki's Back-to-Nature Critiques of the Saints, Confucian and Otherwise

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### 10.1 Introduction

As recently as just after the Second World War, a handful of scholars in Tokugawa intellectual history still maintained that the name of ANDŌ Shōeki 安藤昌益 (1703–1762) was the product of some academic hoax. Proof of the existence of this author was, however, eventually ascertained. He is believed to have been born in 1703 (Genroku 元禄 16), in a place located on the outskirts of Ōdate City 大館, Niida 二井田, in the midst of an area called the Hinai 比内. This area, referred to as the rice-basket of northern Japan, stretches along the Yoneshiro river 米代川, roughly speaking halfway between the cities of Akita 秋田 and Aomori 青森. After coming of age, Shōeki, probably with the recommendation of the local Zen temple in Niida, moved to a (yet unknown) Zen temple in Kyoto in order to become a monk. After receiving his certificate of enlightenment, for some unknown reason, Shōeki abandoned monkhood, severed his ties with Buddhism and took up medical studies under the direction of AJIOKA Sanpaku 味岡三伯, one of the most famous physicians of his day.

Once recognized as a physician, Shōeki did not stay a long time in Kyōto. In fact, the only reliable documents on Shōeki date back to 1744 when he was 41 years of age. These documents relate that Shōeki was engaged as a domain physician (*han'i* 藩医), a rather valuable position, by the local lord of Hachinohe 八戸. *The Annals of the Hachinohe Fief* 八戸藩丁日記延享元年延享二年 (ASK 1982–1987: 16B, 396–397) states that ANDŌ Shōeki healed some archers and declined a reward from his lord. He began to participate in the local intellectual life and wrote some Japanese style poems (*waka* 和歌) during poetry sessions, but soon refrained from these mundane activities in order to concentrate on his own school, the “Adepts of the Celestial Principle of Authenticity” (*Tenshin Keikai* 転真敬会), for which we

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have no documents. In the Spring of 1758, Shōeki left not only Hachinohe but also his wife and three children for his supposed homeland, Niida 井田, in order to take charge of his family line after the death of his elder brother, Magojumu 孫左衛門 who was childless. Shōeki died from illness 4 years later, in the autumn of 1762, and his grave was discovered by a local historian in 1978, in the cemetery of the Onsenji 温泉, a Sōtō 曹洞 temple to which the Andō family was affiliated. This is the extent of reliable information about Shōeki's life; the rest unfortunately pertains of the domain of conjecture.

The only book Shōeki published is *The Way of the Operations or Activities of the Principle of Spontaneity* (*Shizenshin'eidō* 自然眞営道), in three volumes (ASK 1982: 21, 297–580). However, Shōeki's magnum opus work was his unpublished manuscript (稿本) of the *Shizenshin'eidō* 自然眞営道, in 101 volumes (hereafter, the *Greater Shizenshin'eidō*), of which all except 16 (ASK 1982: 17–19) were “kept safe” in the Tokyo Imperial University library before being completely destroyed by a fire resulting from the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923. A long report, the *Kasumishoku shuki* 掠職手記, written in 1765 (ASK 1982: 101–154), relates that 2 years after Shōeki's death, his disciples were persecuted and banned from Niida by the local Shintō priests after the disciples erected a stele on which they had written: “Dedicated to Master ANDŌ Shōeki, Deity (*kami*) of the Peasants” 守農太神確竜堂良中先生. It seems that his main disciple, KAMIYAMA Senkaku 神山仙確, was forced to flee and handed the *Greater Shizenshin'eidō* over to several people. Among these people was a physician from Nikkō 日光, Tanaka Shinzai 田中眞齋 (1789–?), who in the first half of the nineteenth century wrote a compendium of Shōeki's treatises focusing on medicine known as the *Shinzai Manpitsu* 眞齋謾筆 (ASK 1982: 15).

According to Shōeki's son and disciple, ANDŌ Shūhaku, more than in the Odate 大館 region, Shōeki's thought was apparently much better regarded along the roads leading to Tokyo, especially in Senjū 千住, a town located on the northern edge of Edo and the first station on the road leading to the Tōhoku 東北 region. In short, we are now certain that Shōeki did have a number of disciples and was far from the “forgotten thinker” described by E. H. Norman (1950).

In 1885, TANAKA Shinzai's 田中眞齋 descendants sold the *Greater Shizenshin'eidō* to a local bookseller who in turn sold it to another at Hongō 本郷, in front of Tokyo Imperial University. KANO Kōkichi 狩野亨吉 (1865–1942) purchased the books in 1899. Kano was a well-known figure in those times, who resigned from his prestigious position of dean of the Faculty of Letters at Kyoto Imperial University in order to concentrate on his hobby, collecting old books. At first glance, Kano's reaction upon reading the *Shizenshin'eidō* was unequivocal: in Kano's view the books were the writings of a madman (*kyōjin no sho* 狂人の書). Eight years later, however, Kano reopened the books and did not hesitate to state in an article entitled: “We Have a Great Thinker” (*Dai shisōka ari* 大思想家あり). He added, “ANDŌ Shōeki is the greatest thinker ever born in our land 吾が日本の国土が生むた最大思想家にして; even at the level of the universal history of thought, he is a very special figure” 世界史相思上にも特筆すべき人物 (Kano 1908: 3). During those 8 years between his purchase of Shōeki's works and his article about Shōeki, Kano had gradually

moved towards socialism and then anarchism, political stances which of course made him consider Shōeki's works in a totally different light. It should be noted that the 15 volumes of the *Greater Shinzenshin'eidō* which escaped destruction by fire during the Great Kantō Earthquake were in the hands of WATANABE Daitō 渡辺大濤 (1879–1958), a disciple of Kano who reinforced Kano's views about Shōeki and his works. Watanabe also contributed largely to the introduction of Shōeki's thought to socialist-oriented thinkers of the Taishō 大正 (1912–1926) and early Shōwa eras 昭和 (1926–1989), and among them only (Watanabe 1939).

The decisive start for studies of Shōeki's thought occurred after WWII with Herbert Norman's (1909–1957) famous work: *ANDŌ Shoeki and the Anatomy of Japanese Feudalism* (Norman 1949), published in the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*. Norman's study truly shocked the Japanese intellectual world, amazed as it was by the fact that a Canadian had discovered such an important intellectual who had been ignored for centuries by the Japanese themselves. The Japanese translation of Norman's work appeared just 2 months after the English version, under the provocative title: *A Forgotten Thinker (Wasurerareta shisōka 忘れられた思想家)*. In fact, Norman had been searching in Tokugawa thought for the voice of an advocate representing the needs of the people, e.g. the peasants, against feudal power. Norman was convinced that such a voice could not be found among the well-known big names of the intellectual world of the times, such as OGYŪ Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1724) and others. Therefore he decided that such a thinker had to have been a non-academic fellow, living among the peasants.

Without a doubt, Norman's works brought the impetus for a revival of studies on ANDŌ Shōeki. At the same time, however, they were definitely responsible for giving these studies their main direction: a non-academic one, focusing on a so-called harsh criticism of the feudal regime, supposedly pioneering the socialist thinking of the next century. This trend became even more acute, with the founding of the Association for the Study of ANDŌ Shōeki 安藤昌益研究会, which produced important studies of Shōeki's writings, culminating in the *Complete Works of ANDŌ Shōeki (ANDŌ Shōeki zenshū 安藤昌益全集)*. This Association was headed by TERAŌ Gorō 寺尾五郎 (1921–1999), a Maoist thinker who celebrated ANDŌ Shōeki as “the philosopher of the oppressed, the poet of the productive classes, the genius of the peasants” (ASK 1982: I, 16). Terao once dared declare:

If Marx and Engels, at the time they wrote the Manifest of the Communist Party, had not yet discovered the existence of the pristine communitarian society, Shōeki, around the 1750s, was convinced of it, and had put it at the very root of his system of thought, preceding both Marx and Engels by a hundred years. At the level of universal history, ANDŌ Shōeki is the forerunner of communism (ASK 1982: I, 16).

YASUNAGA Toshinobu later redirected interpretations of Shōeki, casting him as an ecological thinker as is attested by the title of the English translation of his book, *ANDŌ Shōeki, an Ecological philosopher of the XVIIIth Century* (Yasunaga 1992). Perhaps many in Japan had come to realize that the former approach, i.e., the Marxist or Maoist one, was not on the right track. Certainly the main trend in Japan recently has been toward considering Shōeki chiefly as a pioneer of ecologist

thought in Japan, and possibly in the whole world. In this, the interpretive focus has been on the intimate relationship between Shōeki's thought and the soil, which refers not only to the earth, which he enjoins us to cultivate, but also to his native land, that of the nativist thinkers among whom Shōeki must be included. Thus, we can perhaps interpret this recent trend as a hidden attempt to rehabilitate the last *Kokugaku* 国学派 current by stressing some of the main positions of Shōeki's as integral parts of today's intellectually fashionable ecologist thought. In any case, the important thing to remember is that such interpretations of Shōeki as a social-oriented, ecologist-oriented thinker, even as a feminist thinker, have become and remain the predominant ones in Japan.

It should be clear that the history of the studies on ANDŌ Shōeki's thought coincides almost totally with the history of the process of appropriation of his ideas. The question that might then arise is what, inside Shōeki's system of thought itself, can explain this take-over or appropriation process? What leads to such a treatment of his thought? Of course, at first glance, many studies have addressed his harsh criticisms of the society in which he lived. And it is a fact that an entire fourth of the 101 volumes of the *Greater Shinzenshin'eidō* are devoted to such criticism.

However, two things need to be kept in mind. First, Shōeki was not the only one to utter so harsh criticisms. Many other thinkers, even those who later supported the shogunate, such as OGYŪ Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1724), engaged in a very deep denunciation of their society, yet without expressing insults on every page as Shōeki did. Second, Shōeki's condemnations remain at a theoretical level: although there are, here and there, some allusions towards the present state of the Tokugawa society, Shōeki never actually describes such a society. Moreover, never are the present rulers of his time held accountable for the sad situation Shōeki saw around him everyday, such as the famines in the Hachinohe fief. Even the samurai warriors who were then ruling Japan are just considered as the avatars or the followers of the ancient Saints and the Buddha, and are thus lacking, in Shōeki's view, any direct initiative or full responsibility. For the famines which were plaguing the Tōhoku area are not explained as the direct result of the shogunal policy, but rather as the result of the action of an evil generative force – *ki* 氣 – infecting the heaven and then descending back to earth to infect the crops. And why is it that the peasants are emitting such an evil generative force? Because, according to Shōeki, people have abandoned their pristine spontaneous way of living (*shizen no yo* 自然の世) in favor of a world of law (*hōsei* 法世), instituting distinctions and differences (*nibetsu* 二別) between people, between high and low, ruler and ruled, with the former “stealing the realm” – *tenka o nusumu* 天下を盗む – and the latter being oppressed by the former.

Consequently, all the troubles of the present times are not ascribed – as anyone would be logically inclined to do – to the actual rulers of Japan, but to a great number of people whose common attribute was that they thought. Thus, every school of thought, philosophical and otherwise, of every epoch became the target of Shōeki's vituperations. Moreover, when we trace the ultimate causes responsible for all the illnesses in the society in which Shōeki lived to those who initiated the decline of humanity with their invention of culture, then, according to Shōeki, we are confronted with a small number of people, or rather quasi-mythical figures, namely,

the ancient sage kings (*sennō* 先王), or the Saints – (*shengren seijin* 聖人) – as they will be called hereafter\*. The first volume of Shōeki's *Tōdō shinden* 統道眞傳 is expressly and entirely devoted to “mending the errors of the Saints” (*seishitsu o tadasu* 糾聖失) (ASK 1982: XX, 4–155). It consists of a general critic of the teaching of the Saints. Moreover, three volumes of the Greater *Shinzenshin*'*eidō*, called “Confucian Writings” (*Jusho* 儒書) (ASK 1982: XVII, 459–574; ASK 1982: XVIII, 3–234), are also devoted to a general critique of the Confucian tradition and its Saints. For instance, concerning those Saints, Shōeki is curiously grateful to Zengzi 曾子 for having explained that they stole the way of heaven (天道ヲ盗ンテ), robbed the labor of ordinary people (衆人ノ直耕ヲ掠メ取り), instituted their tricky learning of the egoistic law (私法ノ學術ヲ制シテ), installed themselves by force on the top of others (押サエテ以テ上ニ立チ); greedily ate the products of others without working themselves (不耕食ニシ賣リ), dressed up with plenty of luxurious ornaments and lived in an extravagant way” (衣テ榮耀ヲ為ス明ラカニ見ワレタ) (ASK 1982: XVIII, 201).

It must be emphasized, however, that the word *Jusho* 儒書 did not refer only to what Westerners today call the Confucian tradition of learning; it signifies the whole tradition of the Chinese Classics and their Japanese commentators, Daoist writings included, or any other writing which does not belong to the Buddhist sphere of teaching. It is noteworthy that, on the one hand, this category of “Confucianism” was created for and by the Western world, and on the other hand, as NOGUCHI Takehiko 野口武彦 (Noguchi 1993: 7–102) and others have shown, that what we or what the Japanese today call *bungaku* 文学 is not the same thing as what people in the Edo period meant by this word. During the early Edo period, intellectuals were often reluctant to label themselves as Confucian, Daoist, Nativist (*Kokugakusha* 国学者) or even Buddhist: those labels mainly came from the middle of the Meiji period and were primarily popularized by INOUE Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944) who, himself most influenced by Western philosophy, was eager to reproduce in the Japanese intellectual world of the Edo period some distinctions which might be similar to those he observed in Europe. Edo thinkers, moreover, did not appreciate each other according to such a supposed general trend of their writings: in many instances, that did not really count for them as these writings were in fact sponsored compositions for some lord. As we know, HAYASHI Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657), often misleadingly celebrated for having propagated the so-called neo-Confucian thought in Japan, was in fact much more interested in putting his own Shintō forward. What seemed far more important to many of them was rather to compose poems, and especially Chinese-mannered poems – *Kanshi* 漢詩. Even in the case of ANDŌ Shōeki, in addition of the works cited above, what remains from him in other people's documents and what he was praised for were two poems he wrote for the closing ceremony of a series of lectures he gave at the Tenshōji 天聖寺 in Hachinohe, poems which were recorded (but not the lectures themselves) by the priest of that temple in a booklet called the *Shibun monjoki* 詩文聞書記 (Yasunaga and Yamada 1986: 24–25). For all these reasons, it is best to understand Shōeki's criticisms as addressing the tradition of the Saints since such an approach allows one to grasp something much more concrete than when dealing with the Confucianist tradition in general.

In the *Tōdō shinden* 統道真伝, Shōeki focuses his attacks on a list of 11 Saints, “chronologically” ranging from Fuxi 伏羲 to Confucius 孔丘, a list which was very common in his day (ASK 1982: XX, 14). These are, first, eight personalities quoted from a list more or less fixed by the so-called Confucian tradition: Yao 堯 (J: Gyō), Shun 舜 (Shun), Yü 禹 (U), Tang 湯 (Tō), Wen 文 (Bun), Wu 武 (Bu), the Duke of Zhou 周公 (Shūkō), and Kongzi 孔子 (Kōshi), or Confucius. As was common practice, Shōeki added a list of three: Fuxi 伏羲 (Fukki), Shennong 神農 (Shinnō), and Huangdi 黃帝 (Kōtei), who from the Han became revered by the Daoist sects. That makes 11: “Fuxi, Shennong, Huangdi, Emperor Yao, Emperor Shun, Emperor Yü, King Tang, King Wen, King Wu, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius: they are revered as Saints by the Chinese for they were the first to teach things and their knowledge as well as their conduct was perfect. Among the immense population of China, these Saints only numbered eleven.” (ASK 1982: XVII, 478).

For what does Shōeki reproach the Saints? In the *Tōdō shinden* (統道真伝) chapter, “A Discussion of How the Saints Have Robbed Nature throughout the Ages” (*Yoyo no seijin mina shizen o nusumu no ron* 世世ノ聖人皆自然ヲ盜ムノ論), Shōeki reviews the Saints and presents a list of their main offenses. Shōeki first characterizes Fuxi by stating: “The one who made trouble for the entire natural world was Fuxi. He was responsible for having instigated the unceasing wars which plagued the world for a myriad of generations” (一般ノ自然ノ世, 伏羲之レヲ乱シ, 万々ノ后世ニ兵乱ノ絶エザルハ伏羲ニ始マル所ナリ) (ASK 1982: XX, 60). Why is that so? According to Shōeki, it was because Fuxi had invented the trigrams, and he did so as a part of a stratagem to deceive the ordinary people (*shū o taburakasu hakarigoto tame ni eki o tsukutta* 衆ヲ誑カス計為ニ易ヲ作ツタ). The trigrams are simply falsifications. Following the patterns of the trigrams, Fuxi then devised the characters. These characters are false too, according to Shōeki, because they base themselves upon a prior process of falsification, namely the invention of the trigrams. Fuxi is also accused of having concocted the “three-yin-three-yang theory” (三陰三陽) which supposedly breaks the natural unity of the five elements by dividing in two the element fire. From Shennong on, people forgot how to live in the spontaneous order of things. Shōeki maintains that the very fact that Shennong had no recourse other than to taste all of the plants in order to establish the art of medicine proves that “he did not know the spontaneous course of the *qi* throughout all things” (自然ノ氣行ヲ知ル者ニ非ズ) (ASK 1982: XX, 62).

Shōeki chiefly reprimands Huangdi for his wars, but he also disapproves of the cosmological theories of the *Lingshu* 靈樞 and the *Suwen* 素問 (ASK 1982: XX, 63). According to Shōeki, both treatises were composed later, on the basis of the *Book of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經). The sage emperor Yao was the fourth to commit such offenses: that was too much for heaven to bear, so it became angry and reacted by flooding the land for nine years. Shōeki explains this phenomenon by a logic derived from the idea of the mandate of heaven 天命, alluded to in Japan as “the earth being affected by the ire of heaven” *tenhen ji'i* 転変地異. Because of Yao’s offenses, people were sheltered in the woods but could no longer till the soil. That caused famines. The lamentations of the people reached heaven and set trouble on

its own course. Heaven then reacted by sending more rain, people become more distressed, and so on. Consequently, in Shōeki's view, to consider Yao's reign as peaceful is a complete lie. By giving his two daughters to Shun, Yao also violated the natural spontaneous law of monogamy and initiated the habits of polygamy and incest. On more theoretical grounds, Shōeki reprimands Yao for "having established distinctions leading to a false dual knowledge" (分別知の失り) which "does not conform to the spontaneous order of the things" (ASK 1982: XX, 68). Shōeki also rejects the distinction between "the mind of man" (*jīnshin* 人心) and "the mind of the way" (*dōshin* 道心), a distinction regarded by ZHU Xi as the beginning of "the transmission of the way" *tōdō no den* 統道の伝 in its globality). In Shōeki's view, the mind of man and the mind of the way are "the two manifestations of but one spirit" (人心 道心にして一心) (ASK 1982: XX, 69).

Then came the sage emperor Shun who continued, in Shōeki's view, the devastating activity of his predecessors. First, he did not have to receive the realm from Yao: by doing so, he reasserted the duality among things between a donor and a receiver. Besides, the 9 years of flooding which plagued the realm were caused by the common fault of the one who gives and the one who receives. Also very serious: "Shun dug out gold and silver from the mountains and put them on the market at a great scale: that caused great harm for future generations and became the root for all the world to be misled into desire and violence (乱世ノ太本ナリ). All the ills of the world have but one cause, namely gold and silver" (万悪根, 只此ノ一ツ金銀ニ有リ) (ASK 1982: XX, 72). Shun also invented the 13-stringed koto: but according to Shōeki, "music does not soften our manners (楽音ハ人情和グル者ニ非ズ), but rather it dissolves our character, invites us to laziness and to the desire to maintain our dominant position, thus fostering violence" (ASK 1982: XX, 73). By inventing the board game go (*weiqi* 囲碁) for his dull son to learn *yin*, *yang*, and the course of the four seasons, Shun in fact taught him to speculate in terms of winners and losers, thus reinforcing notions about the differences between things of the universe. This is the source of all sorts of gambling games that have generated jealousy, violence and crime again and again (ASK 1982: XX, 73). Finally, Shun was wrong to punish Yu's father by death because he allegedly had been unconcerned with the floods. In fact, according to Shōeki, the ones to be held accountable for the appearance of the floods were Yao and Shun! (ASK 1982: XX, 74).

The sage emperor Yu is blamed for having established nine countries and appointed a governor for each one; he also continued casting metal and putting coins on the market. Hence, this judgment from Shōeki: "He could not be an honest man but just a dangerously insane fellow." The first of the sage kings, Tang the Victorious, followed their path and also came to be blamed for his famous inscription on his bath that read: "Renew yourself fully, renew yourself each day and never stop renewing yourself" (Couvreur 1972: 6) (ASK 1982: XX, 76). King Wen, ironically, was just a "little thief" because he only seized the two-thirds of the realm (see *Lunyu*, 4/20). He is also blamed for having ousted the inhumane Zhou 紂 merely for the sake of later giving the power to King Wu, the founder of the Zhou 周 dynasty" (ASK 1982: XX, 77). King Wu did not do anything good either: he just

had to take over the throne after the Great Duke Hope (Taigong wang 太公望) did all the work. Moreover, King Wu fostered the forbidden pleasures, jeopardizing royal authority and instigating trouble in the realm” (ASK 1982: XX, 79).

The Duke of Zhou 周公, who was King Wu’s younger brother, failed to blame King Wen for having ousted Zhou. But his main fault was having followed Fuxi’s taste for intellectual activities. Thus he composed his own diagram and also the *Book of Odes* 詩經. Shōeki devotes three pages to lambasting him, often resorting to insults such as, “One must be a fool to praise homosexuality, and that is the case with the Duke of Zhou,” or “He is just insane, out of his mind” (ASK 1982: XX, 80). As for the *Book of Odes*, Shōeki’s conclusion leaves little doubt: “It is entirely composed of insanities dictated by egoism, there is not a single passage in it conforming to the natural order of things: all the lines follow the path of stealing the spontaneous way” (ASK 1982: XX, 82). It is not surprising that in Shōeki’s view, the Duke of Zhou, together with King Wen and King Wu, share responsibility for the emergence of the sad era of the Warring Kingdoms (ASK 1982: XX, 80).

Then came the last but not the least of all these malefactors of mankind, the sage Confucius. Shōeki devotes 15 pages to castigating the man himself and the works traditionally ascribed to him. According to Shōeki, Confucius had in mind the same aim and resorted to the same strategy as his predecessors: “Bestowed at birth with an arrogant and partial knowledge, he was revered by the princes, and because he had the secret desire to become king and do the same things as the preceding Saints, he explained their message...” (ASK 1982: XX, 83). His originality was in accordance with the scale of his teachings: by traveling the length and width of China and composing so many books, not only did he succeed in teaching the errors of the Saints, he also made everyone revere those errors. Thanks to Confucius, everyone “learned the way of stealing established by the earlier Saints” (ASK 1982: XX, 84).

Shōeki considers and then duly condemns the writings attributed to Confucius: the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經 *Ekikyō*), Shōeki calls a “black beast;” regarding the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記 *Raiki*), he states, “All ritual codes are the self-absorbed contrivances of the Saints (諸法ノ礼義ハ聖人私法ノ作事ナリ); for that reason, it is not enough to say they do not deserve to be revered, they must be annihilated” (故ニ諸法ハ敬スルニ足ラズ破無スベキナリ) (ASK 1982: XX, 84). Shōeki declares that the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋 *Shunjū*) “are just words” (言ノミニシテ). *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸 *Chūyō*) (ASK 1982: XX, 86) and, of course, the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語 *Rongō*) are also targets of Shōeki’s anger. Shōeki summarizes his criticisms by stating, “Everything Confucius said during his entire life expresses his own egoistic laws” (孔丘一生謂フ所、皆孔丘ノ私法ナリ) (ASK 1982: XX, 90). To be fair, it must be added that in too many instances Shōeki’s critique is so radical that we may question his seriousness; for example, he dismisses the *Guanzong mingyi* (關宗明義) chapter of the *Book of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經 *Kōkyō*) because it only refers to our genetic parents and fails to make us revere our true parents, namely the rice and the other cereals (父母ハ乃チ米穀ナリ) (ASK 1982: XX, 97).

Why did the Saints commit such crimes? The answer is found in Shōeki’s theory of the three-directional circulation of the generative force (*tsūō gyakki* 通横逆気). By reference to this theory, Shōeki explains the development of all life. Human

beings were generated first, directly, and in a straightforward manner (通), from a *ki* descending from the heavenly *shin* 真. This is why humans are spontaneously straight-minded, have their heads oriented towards the sky, and their feet on earth. The direction of this *ki* curves then, becoming lateral (横), to generate the animals. When the *ki* curves up 90° and takes an ascending course, returning to the *shin*, it produces an inverted (逆) *ki* which generates the plants. That explains why the plants have their roots, equivalent to their heads, in the earth and their feet facing the sky.

This theory is not unique to Shōeki. It is apparent in embryonic form in the *Jizhong Zhou* 汲塚周書 chapter of the *Wenzhuanjie* 文傳解, a collection of ordinances of the Zhou dynasty (mostly written during the Spring and Autumn period) and in other documents from ancient China. It was only with the Song philosophers, however, that the idea actually began to take shape. SHAO Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077) introduced the notion of trajectory (*zong heng ni* 縱橫逆 direct, lateral, and inverted) (Noguchi 1971: 390–391). CHEN Chun 陳淳 (Beixi 北溪), one of ZHU Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) last disciples, conceptualized the theory in terms of *zheng heng xia* 正橫下 (straight, lateral, and downward). Several Japanese thinkers later took up the same idea. Among the most famous were the Shintō thinker YOSHIKAWA Koretaru 吉川惟足 (1615–1694), with his notion of *rei-ō-gyaku* 靈橫逆. According to Koretaru, “Humans are the souls of all beings. Beings proceed from a slanting, oblique *ki*. That is why beasts live in a horizontal position. Plants grow the other way round” (Noguchi 1971: 391). BITŌ Jishū 尾藤二州 (1746–1814) and MIURA Baien 三浦梅園 (1723–1789) in his main work, *Abstruse Words* (Gengo 玄語), mention the theory too. However, according to NOGUCHI Takehiko, apart from Shōeki, the only thinkers to have made some valuable description of this particular course of the *ki* were HAYASHI Razan 林羅山 and KAIBARA Ekiken 貝原益軒 (1630–1714). In his *Santokushō* 三徳抄, Razan molds this primarily Daoist notion into a Confucian discourse by stating,

Living beings of the entire universe ... differ according to their *ki* (凡テ天地ノ間ニ生ルル者其気ニ不同アルユエニ). There are plants, beasts, and humans (草木アリ、禽獸アリ、人倫アリ). Plants come up the other way around; their roots are their heads and their branches are their limbs (草木ハサカサマニ生レテ、根ヲカシラトシ、枝ヲ末トス). Beasts are born sideways and move laterally (禽獸ハヨコサマニ生レテ、横ニ走リアルクナリ). Humans, because they receive the correct *ki*, make theirs the *ki* of the universe (人ハ正気ヲウケタルユヘニ天地ノ気ヲソノ気トシ). (Noguchi 1971: 390)

In his work, *On the Principles of Beings* (*Butsuri o ronzu* 物理ヲ論ズ), KAIBARA Ekiken, known for his more positivistic mind, established a link with his theory of knowledge:

If we examine the problem at its origin, we find that humans are born normally (人ハ順ニ生ジ), plants come up the other way around (草気ハ倒ニ生ジ) and beasts live sideways (禽獸ハ横ニ生ズ). That is why plants have no knowledge at all (故ニ草気ハ知ル事無シ), beasts have an imperfect knowledge (禽獸ハ知テ全カラズ) and as for humans, there is nothing of which they are ignorant (人ハ則チ知ラザル事無シ). (Kaibara 1709: 45)

Nevertheless, this theory played a very limited part among these authors. They mention it simply in order to advocate a specific argument about the superiority of human beings. Shōeki alone seems to have developed and systematized it to the point of making it an essential part of his doctrine.

Needless to say, in the realm of life, every being must enjoy a particular balance of these three kinds of *ki* so that one does not jeopardize the predominance of another. Humans are governed by the downward directed *ki*, animals by the lateral one, and plants by the upward inversed one. Otherwise, they become ill. Shōeki's understanding of medicine is thus based on this theory:

Men, who were born through a downward action, become ill when they receive, from outside or from within, the lateral *ki* (通気ノ人ハ、外内ニ横気ヲ受タルトキ、病ヲ為ス). Likewise the four species of animals, which depend on the lateral *ki*, become ill when they receive the malicious influence of the upward one (横気ノ四類ハ逆気ノ邪ヲ受タルトキハ、病ヲ為ス). Plants, which depend on the upward *ki*, become ill too when they receive the malicious influences of the downward and lateral *ki* (逆気ノ草木ハ通横ノ邪ヲ受タルトキハ、病ヲ為スナリ). (ASK 1982: XVII, 71)

In fact, there is a hierarchy of values among these three kinds of *ki*: “The downward straight *ki* is that of good sense (通気ハ賢ナリ); the lateral *ki* is that of silliness (横気ハ愚ハリ) and the upward *ki* is the one of vice and perversity (逆気ハ邪念ナリ)” (ASK 1982: XXI, 272).

As for the Saints and Buddha:

Man is governed by the direct *ki*, but when he is ill, he is governed by the lateral one/he lies down. Sickness is a state of disarray (病ハ迷ナリ). When we are in such a state, we cannot stop speaking (迷フ則ハ数言ス) ... Then appeared the Saints and the Buddha who, instead of working, were just teaching theories and making a living off their speeches (聖釈出テテ不耕・教説ノミヲ為シロヲ利ス). But they were not speaking to other people, they were delivering monologues about their own problems. In other words, they were simply sick people in a delirious state (乃チ病者ノ譫語ナリ). (ASK 1982: XX, 139)

According to Shōeki, the Saints were basically sick persons: not completely humans, but rather like monsters. They received at birth an overabundance of lateral *ki*, which accounted for what Shōeki called their advancing *ki* (or their *yang*). Such a *ki* aggregated in the upper part of the body, swelling their heads (which is why all they were able to do was think) and distorting their bodies to the point that they in fact belonged more to the animal realm than to the human.

That is why Shōeki insists on the physical deformities the Chinese tradition used to ascribe to them: the Saints' actions are fully comprehensible if we consider them as beasts rather than as humans. Therefore, it was because the dragon-horse (龍馬) regarded Fuxi as a fellow animal that he gave him the trigrams. Shennong “was bestowed from birth with a horn protruding from his forehead (額ニ角有リ), because of an advancing *ki* aggregated to the side” (ASK 1982: XX, 60). Huangdi's skull was abnormally flat, insists Shōeki (ASK 1982: XX, 63), and Yao had “an abnormal figure, with large ears, a large face and flat eyes” (ASK 1982: XX, 65). Moreover, the fact that a phoenix reacted to him proved that Yao and birds were of the same ilk (ASK 1982: XX, 70). Through a similar line of reasoning, Yu and the turtle from which he received the diagrams were both of the same ilk as the *mushi* 虫 (ASK 1982: XX, 74). Even Confucius himself was some kind of beast: combining an event related at the end of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and a passage from the *Analects*, Shōeki ascribes to Confucius' animal nature his reaction of great

despair when he saw that hunters who had caught a *qilin* 麒麟 did not know what it was (ASK 1982: XX, 86).

Shōeki summarizes his analyses by stating,

The Saints... had their viscera placed higher than usual, and also at an angle. That is why they impressed normal people with their tall size, their large, thick heads and their partial and arrogant knowledge. For that reason the masters of China and India perverted Japan and made her a sad land of beasts (漢土・天竺ヨリ日本ヲ迷ハス、暗晦ノ畜国ト爲ス). (ASK 1982: XX, 15)

Thus, Shōeki is now able to accommodate the entire history of thought in a large bird-cage:

Some imitated the magpie and so you have the Cheng brothers' teaching; some then imitated the lark's twittering and so you have ZHU Xi's teaching; afterwards, some imitated the troglodyte's twittering: that produced OGYŪ Sorai's teaching. Finally, some imitated the quail's twittering: you obtained the Tang, Song and Ming poetry (ASK 1982: XIX, 26).

According to Shōeki, when the *ki* curves on a biased and then a horizontal course, it induces a loss of energy; that explains why animals cannot stand up, but rather crawl or slide; they are wicked (their mind is bent, because they don't have a straight relationship with the authenticity of things, *shin* 真) and devour each other. That is precisely the way the Saints behave. In Shōeki's view, Saints have basically "a partial knowledge." They do not participate on a full scale with the spontaneous authenticity, the *shizen shin* 自然真, and their being does not fully coincide with the Whole. That explains why they are animated with desire or lust: they are always longing for something: "Desire is lateral *ki*; lateral *ki* is polluted and perverse (欲心ハ横気ナリ。横気ハ汚邪ノ気ナリ)" (ASK 1982: XVII, 70). Therefore, this term "lateral" (横) denotes a way of being: the way of biasing, of putting oneself off to the side, of introducing a gap between reality and oneself, and thus, of keeping one's true being to oneself, referred to by Rousseau as the *paraître*, "the showing," "the displaying." That is why the Saints, Shōeki explains, are always preoccupied with adorning themselves, and putting on the most luxurious clothing. And just as beasts who wander in all directions in order to find a mate, the Saints and their followers wander throughout the streets of the town in order to find an occasional partner, and again just as beasts, kill each other in order to keep for themselves what they found, or in order to steal what another stole for himself. In the realm of thought, this biasing activity manifests itself as a prejudicing one: the Saints established an artificial scission into the spontaneous oneness of things and introduced a way of seeing things as separate or differentiated (*nibetsu* 二別), as high and low (*jōge* 上下), good and evil (*zen'aku* 善悪), etc.

Shōeki summarizes the main faults of the Saints with the expression, "the five violations or perversions and the ten errors" (*gogyaku jūshitsu* 五逆十失). He devotes a special chapter at the end of the first volume of the *Tōdō shinden* (統道真伝) to explaining what these five violations and ten errors consist of. The term *gyaku* is significant: the Saints inversed the spontaneous order of things by "forcing" it (*ōshite* 推して) in the same way we force a lock, breaking its mechanism. The term *gogyaku* (Sk.: *pañcānantarya*) in Buddhism, refers to "the five rebellious acts or

deadly sins that lead to immediate damnation: patricide, matricide, killing an *arhat*, shedding the blood of a Buddha, and destroying the harmony of the Buddhist fraternity” (Soothill and Hodous 1962: 128), the first of these sins being the lightest. Its use by Shōeki therefore conveys a very strong emotional charge.

The first violation consists of “acting against the spontaneous order of things with which everyone identifies (萬萬人ニシテ一人ノ自然ニ逆シテ) by forcing one’s way and by asserting oneself in order to become king (推シテ私ヲ以テ王ト為ル).” The second violation consists of “acting against the perfect way of cultivating the direct relationship which generated all the universe and without taking any part in it, rather greedily devouring what the others produced (転定・萬物ノ生生スル直耕ノ眞道ニ逆シテ、耕サスシテ、衆人ノ直耕ヲ貪リ食フ).” The third violation is to institute the five social relationships (五倫) to make oneself the prince, to install ministers, and then, ignoring those same five relationships, to steal the treasures produced by the strenuous populace and indulge in a luxurious way of living” (五倫ノ法ヲ立テ、己レ君ト為リ、臣ヲ附ケ、五倫ノ上ニ立チ、衆人直耕ノ財宝ヲ貪リ取り榮華ヲ為ス). The fourth violation consists of “one man taking several women to let oneself go to debauchery and debase oneself to the level of beasts” (己一男ニ多女ヲ附ケ、放(ホシイママ)ニ淫乱シ、己ト禽獸ノ業ヲ為ス。是レ四逆ナリ) (ASK 1982: XX, 151). The fifth and final violation is described as follows:

Metal lies inside the rock; its *ki* makes the cover of heaven (金ハ石中ニ在リ、氣ヲ以テ転外ヲ包ミ); it strengthens men’s and animals’ skin and is the basic constituent of bones... Going against those inalienable resources which were spontaneously generated to extract metal from the hills (自然ノ具ハリニ逆シテ、山中ヨリ金ヲ堀リ取り), cast it to make money, and put it into circulation everywhere in the world, was the first step in instilling desire into the pure hearts of originally good people and causing them to later sink into greed (之レヨリ無欲・清心ノ自然・正道ノ衆ヲシテ始メテ欲心ヲ発セシメ利欲ニ迷ワシム).

Shōeki’s “ten errors” (*jūshitsu* 十失) parallel the Buddhist notion of “ten major sins” (*jū’aku* or *shie* 十惡) which are: killing, stealing, adultery, lying, double-tongue, coarse language, filthy language, covetousness, anger, perverted views” (Soothill and Hodous 1962: 50). Shōeki’s “ten errors” merit brief mention. The first consists of making musical instruments (music leads to laziness and cupidity); the second involves playing chess and gambling in general; the third involves sacrificing of living beings (showing the way to meat consumption); the fourth, creating domains with administrators (administrative functions lead to laziness); the fifth, formation of a class of civil servants (*shi* 士); the sixth, institution of punishments against the people; the seventh, the institution of the class of craftsmen (they build luxurious residences and costly furniture); the eighth, establishment of trade and commerce (tradesmen always rely on lies and flattery); the ninth is the institution of weavers who spend their time making unnecessary clothing and adornments for the ruling class and their families; and the tenth, revering and installing at the top of the society those who are well-versed in literature or who display rhetorical skills and who thus contemptuously consider normal people as inferior and stupid (ASK 1982: XX, 152).

Such a rejection of culture and all its artifacts in favor of a pristine natural state of spontaneity reminds us of course of another rejection found in the Daoist discourse

and might tempt us to include Shōeki among the Daoist oriented thinkers. Shōeki's discourse is reminiscent of some famous passages of the *Zhuangzi*, especially chapter 9:

Those were the times of perfect virtue ... You could find no path or way in the mountains, no boat or bridge on the waters; beings multiplied and lived at the same spot where they were born ... How could you distinguish a gentleman from the populace? All were equally ignorant and used to live according to their own virtues. Devoid of any artificial desire, they were as simple as raw silk and coarse wood [...]

Then came the Saints. People began to make a great deal of effort in order to practice benevolence and strove toward their duties. Uncertainty loomed under the sky. Music weakened mankind and rites separated people, that explains why discord arose under the sky. (*Zhuangzi yinde* 1986: 23)

Another passage from the *Zhuangzi*, chapter 16, directly attacks the Saints and might have been a perfect motto for Shōeki:

Then came the decadence. Sui Ren 燧人 and Fuxi 伏羲 wanted to act upon people and things. Instead of maintaining the perfect unity, all they could obtain from people was that they got along well. Decadence expanded further on. Shennong 神農 and Huangdi 黃帝 wanted to act upon people. They just got peace. Decadence deepened. Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 wanted to act upon people. They instituted a civil service and wanted to educate the people. Purity and simplicity disappeared. People abandoned the *dao* in favor of the good; proper conduct took precedence over virtue and so did the individual spirit over our natural essence .... Everybody was thrown into disarray and violence without any possibility of regaining one's nature and one's feelings and rejoining one's primordial indistinctiveness (*Zhuangzi yinde* 1986: 41).

But even if Shōeki shares the same spirit as Zhuangzi, the fact is that Shōeki devotes a great number of pages to fighting Daoist treatises. His invectives against the Daoist thinkers are almost as harsh as his vituperations against the Saints. Consider Shōeki's criticisms of Zhuangzi: "Because he misunderstood what the fundamentals of the way are, namely the cultivation of one's spontaneous way of living (*shizen* 自然), it becomes obvious that everything he said in his writings were absurdities. What a pity!" (ASK 1982: XX, 105) In short, concludes our author, "He [Zhuangzi] and those who stole the way are of the same ilk" (故二道盜ミノ同類ナリ) (ASK 1982: XX, 106).

Shōeki's writings may be considered as one odd example of what had become Confucianism in Edo Japan. As mentioned earlier, Confucianism is a term that had a very broad meaning in Tokugawa Japan. In fact, it was almost equated with the learning of the Classics. In this sense, one way to gain a better understanding of such thought might be to consider what kind of learning or what kind of 'Confucianism' was prevalent, not only during Shōeki's lifetime, but at the very place he was living, namely within the Odate 大館 region where he was probably born and where he died, and also in the Hachinohe 八戸 region where he spent the most active part of his existence. The term *jugaku* 儒学 which we translate as "Confucianism," perhaps did not have the same meaning in the Tōhoku 東北 area as in the intellectual circles of Edo, and likewise, could also have been used in a still different sense in the Kansai area.

In this regard, it should be noted that in the Tōhoku during Shōeki's day, the term *jugaku* broadly corresponded to what we call 'neo-Confucianism' or rather a certain

accommodation of Neo-Confucianism in Japan called *Shushigaku* 朱子学. As MIYAKE Masahiko's research on the *Shibunmonjoki* 詩文聞書記 seem to suggest (Noda and Miyake 1991: 532–553), these studies are far from being finished and are hindered by a lack of documents. The type of Confucianism which constituted the breeding ground of ANDŌ Shōeki's thought (and also to some degree, what he intended to fight), was in fact a kind of thought which considered as a prerequisite for the unity of Confucianism and Buddhism. This was quite natural considering that Shōeki's most active period stretched some 40 years before the implementation in Edo of the Ban on Heterodoxy (寛政異学の禁), and that even after HAYASHI Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657) and FUJIWARA Seika 藤原惺窩 (1561–1619), the teachings of neo-Confucianism did not become the sole property of the Razan family (as their descendants succeeded in making many believe) but rather remained part of the legacy of Zen Buddhism at the Gozan 五山 monasteries (Ooms 1984: 27–61). It was precisely that school of Buddhism which was predominant in the Odate area. As previously stated, Shōeki's grave itself is situated in the precincts of a Zen temple, the Onsenji 温泉寺.

Given this fact, even if he engaged in a severe criticism of the theoretical contents of *Shushigaku*, Shōeki came from a breeding ground, namely that *Shushigaku*, whose main foe was the *kogaku* 古学, the so-called School of Ancient Learning, and especially its main master, the only Japanese thinker who had the honor to dwell inside his bird-cage: OGYŪ Sorai, who, moreover, was the only Japanese thinker ever quoted (and several times) by him. That is why instead of speaking of a so-called denunciation of Confucianism – too vague a term in this context- when treating Shōeki's relations with “tradition,” it is preferable to focus on his denunciation of the Saints, or even better, his denunciation of the absolutization of the Saints such as undertaken by OGYŪ Sorai. Much has been said about OGYŪ Sorai since MARUYAMA Masao's *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan* (Maruyama 1952), which gave rise to numerous other studies. This study does not address the debate as to whether Sorai's position is a revolutionary one which introduced the very possibility of a historical – and thus modern – consciousness in the midst of the Edo period. Instead, it will limit itself to a brief summary of some basic facts concerning the relationship between Sorai and Shōeki.

According to Sorai, the way consists in the actualization of norms or moral values. These norms, contrary to what *Shushigaku* taught, are not naturally inscribed in the order of the universe (*shizen* 自然) and preexisting the appearance of mankind, nor are they, as in the Mencian tradition of thought, constitutive of man in his pristine nature (*xing* 性). They were rather invented by this small group of people formed by the Saints or the sage-kings whose main accomplishment was not to invent marriage or agriculture, but rather to have orchestrated the essentially political undertaking of having inaugurated a new dynasty, a new political order. Sorai, in the *Bendō* 弁道, repeats several times almost in the same terms in what becomes almost a leitmotiv: “The way of the ancient kings (the Saints) was accomplished by the ancient kings themselves; it is not the spontaneous way the universe operates” (先王之道, 先王所造也。非天地自然之道也) (Yoshikawa et al. 1973: 201).

As noted earlier, Shōeki anchors his thought in a deep naturalistic background: he just cannot conceive of the possibility of anything operating in any other way than this “spontaneous way of the universe.” Therefore, his understanding of the word *shizen* 自然 is here of vital importance. It is well known that what Shōeki advocates, “the spontaneous way of the universe,” is one of the cardinal notions – if not the most important one – in Oriental thought. It expresses the way things happen by themselves, without any external intervention, the very opposite of what which relies on human intervention (*zuowei* 作為 *sakui*). In this sense, it greatly resembles the Greek notion of *physis* (Joly 1996: 456–470; Naddaf 1991: 456–470).

This idea is not only a Daoist one. It later became a very important notion in all other currents of Chinese philosophy. For instance, Confucian rites can be conceived as tools provided to man by heaven in order that he might be able to fulfill his own vocation, namely reaching his own authenticity, his state of *ziran* 自然, or natural spontaneity, through the mediation of the accomplishment of morality. Eventually, the Chinese notion of *ziran* came to refer to the state of things as they were at the origin, then the meaning of the ‘nature’ of things. The notion *tiandi ziran* 天地自然 alluded to the universe in its pure spontaneity and especially, in the neo-Confucian current, to the general and innate order of the universe (*ziran zhi li* 自然之理). OGYŪ Sorai, in the above quotation, took *ziran/shizen* in this latter meaning. In Buddhism also, *ziran*, often read in Japanese Buddhist contexts as *jinen* instead of *shizen*, played a very important part, not only in Chan Buddhism (Zen), but also in the Pure Land teachings. From the time of Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263) on, this term described the way of being at the moment of rebirth inside Amida’s Paradise.

Let us add that this identification with *ziran* is not only to be understood in a cognitive or a moral mode (as in Confucianism), but also in an aesthetic mode. In fact, these three stances appear as only one for the sage who immerses himself in *shanshui* 山水, in the landscape of mountains and rivers, and who is sure to come very near the *dao* by experiencing a state referred to by the word *ziran*. It is noteworthy that this is not a pure contemplative attitude: the sage and the landscape are interacting, each helping the other to be as it should be, making it perfect, namely: *ziran*. This total communion is mainly to be revealed through the practice of painting during which the artist, deeply feeling the spontaneous character of all things, fulfills his own nature and at the same time allows the natural world to fulfill its own. Thus the artist does not represent the world, but re-creates it, in the same way that Shōeki recreates the world by writing the *Greater Shizenshin’eidō*, supporting and perfecting the mutual relationship between heaven, earth and man. Thus, Shōeki’s message seems to be a very classical one: let us obey the way things happen in their absolute spontaneity. While interpreting his thought in such a way is not at all irrelevant, Shōeki’s deepest concern goes beyond such a simple interpretation. In this regard, let us consider more closely how Shōeki defines *shizen*.

First, and this could place Shōeki among the Nativist current, he is not fully satisfied with the classical Sino-Japanese reading of *shizen*: he constantly uses pronunciations borrowed from the Japanese vernacular, usually *onozukara suru* 自ずからする or *mizukara suru* 自らする, which mean “what is” or “what acts by itself.” At the same time, Shōeki reads the same word *shizen* as *hitori suru* 自り然ル. *Hitori*

for *ji* or *shi* is a very interesting and unusual reading. *Hitori* means “one,” “alone,” “oneself but here,” in the sense that this ‘self’ is a self-sufficient being. In his so-called dictionary 字書卷 Shōeki assigns this sense of “self-sufficient being” to the character *ji* 自 and to its Japanese reading as *mizukara* in a very curious manner:

The character *ji* 自 is a representation of the character *mi* 身, meaning the body, inside of which the four members are retracted inside the body of the character in order not to extend beyond it. And so we get a shape where the upper part represents the head and the lower part the rounded shape taken by the body when the four limbs are all huddled up or curled up inside it. In this way is conveyed the idea of concentrating one’s whole power – *chikara* 力 inside one’s body (*mi*), without using the extended strength from the limbs. That is why *mi-chikara* 身力 is nowadays expressed by the character *ji* 自 (of *shizen*). Later *mi-chikara* 身力 was phonetically transformed into *mizukara* 自 (ASK 1982: II, 149).

As the reader suspects, everything in this so-called etymology is false. The character *ji* originally was a representation of the nose. Shōeki is nevertheless very serious: the idea he wants to insist on is that of self-sufficiency, and moreover, of totality. *Shizen* or *hitori suru* expresses the way the *shin* 真, the principle of life, accomplishes its process of generation of all beings: alone, “without master nor pupil, without being subject to any increasing or decreasing” as Shōeki often repeats. Thus, *shizen* refers to the way of being of a totality, or to the fact that the way of truly being – *shizenshin* 自然真 – is to be or to act as a totality: the totality of the cosmos which corresponds to the course of the *shin* 真, at the image of which is the totality of the village, and then the totality of the lineage, organized around the rigid system of the *kamado* 竈. It is a very strange world indeed, the one that Shōeki presents in volume 25 of the *Greater Shizenshin’eidō*: people don’t talk while working, the only words uttered are for praising the sight of a boiling-pot which is itself a living micro-cosmos with all five elements (五行) interacting within it. There is no exchange, no communication at all: everyone is self-sufficient (ASK 1982: XIX, 140–141). Cosmos, village, lineage: all of these unities are autarkical, perfectly closed worlds corresponding to a world that is the exact opposite of the one OGYŪ Sorai postulated.

No wonder the outcome of such a stance is the proclamation of a vitalism: “The universe, the stars, mankind, all beings, all minds, all that happens and all our deeds are but the same thing, namely rice” (自然ト転定ト同自ナリ・転定・日月・人倫・万物・万心・万事・万行ハ是レニ米ナリ) (ASK 1982: XXI, 293–294). Thus the exclamations in front of the pot are simply expressions of joy from those who took part in the great work of nurturing the universe by their labor in the fields: they can now see the fruit of their hardship returning to feed them. Therefore, one’s duty is to directly engage in that breeding of the universe, and the word Shōeki chose to convey such a message is *chokkō* 直耕, which has often been interpreted as “direct cultivation,” but the meaning of which is actually far wider; it must rather be understood as being in direct touch with the universe, in a straightforward relation with it, without any intermediary, any mediation, without curving, bending. Such a relationship is conceived as the only right one.

Thus, according to Shōeki, *shizen* not only has the meaning that things happen naturally and spontaneously, but also that this spontaneous way of happening is the right one and the only possible one: *ziran* always has a laudatory sense. *Shizen* equates what is with what should be. Even from the ancient Chinese tradition, a tradition that Shōeki reappropriates for himself, *shizen* refers to the way the *dao* acts. So, *shizen* is a kind of ultimate notion, e.g. a notion beyond which we cannot go further, because it can only refer to what is inside or short of it, and then can only serve to put a closure to every discourse. Thus, the (mainly?) ideological use of this word: this is the notion that can be invoked to justify anything by its sole authority. Because it is the notion that refers to what goes without saying, it is almost never discussed in and of itself. We do not usually discuss obvious things that go without saying. This study holds that is what Shōeki implicitly understood. He perhaps assumed – or realized? – that relying on *shizen* empowered him to be right in every instance and allowed him to avoid the risk of having to argue with others, especially those of the Sorai school.

If Shōeki felt the need for reasserting these obvious things, was it because what was obvious before, no longer appeared to be so in his time? If Shōeki's discourse seems to attempt to reestablish a totally naturalistic one, is it because, at Shōeki's time, such a discourse was beginning to become outdated? If we consider Shōeki's purpose as an attempt to justify what had already become unjustifiable, then his only possibility of fulfilling such a task was to center his discourse on the word *shizen* because that is the word which creates the largest consensus possible, playing the role of our concept of absolute or universal, which is never discussed in itself, in short, because it sounds like a "magic word," the function of which is to close every discourse by signifying: "let's stop discussing it!"

On the other hand, Shōeki's discourse cannot but be harmed by the limitations imposed by the notion of *shizen* itself. Because it can only refer to what is inside and never to something external, anything can just be or not be *shizen*. As this notion circumscribes a totality, a discourse centered on *shizen* cannot but describe the world as it is: namely spontaneous and perfect. It cannot therefore explain the appearance of changes: changes can only be considered as non-existent and that is why they are defined as illusions. Events that seem not to conform to the natural order of things, such as the bad governments of the Saints and the disorders or the famines of Shōeki's epoch, can but be proclaimed as unreal, as artifices 作為, the very existence of which appears to be an ontological scandal for Shōeki.

Thus, Shōeki's political thought can only long for a sudden – and, of course, impossible – return to the situation prior to the scandal of the appearance of the Saints: the fact that he bases his discourse on *shizen* actually prevents him from propounding a set of realistic actions on the world, because such actions would inevitably fall into some type of artifice. His discourse is compelled to be a tautological one, describing and recreating the world along its own process, and at the same time a moralistic – and thus a very boring one! He is reiterating in a somewhat wearisome manner the same criticism and the same lessons on every page. As a totality can speak only about itself, Shōeki's discourse often appears as nothing else than an immense tautology!

One final remark. Having installed artifice in this world does not in and of itself account for the harshness of Shōeki's criticism. The fact that he had to resort to such vituperations might be evidence that for him the matter was not purely an intellectual one. Shōeki's discourse may indeed be easily considered Nativist insofar as it displays themes that would become the common ground of the *Kokugakusha* a few years later: a xenophobia especially directed towards China and her Saints; an affirmation of the unique and sacred character of the Japanese; a leniency toward Shintō; a deep interest toward phonology; and above all, the emphasis on *shizen*.

But if Shōeki's discourse can be situated at the crossroads of the adventures of Confucianism in the Edo period, I think it is due above all to its deepest concern with the problem of the origins and of their relationship with authority. And here, this paper holds, Shōeki's condemnation of the Saints is totally relevant. The Saints are not the origin, for the world existed before them (in a good manner for Shōeki and in a bad one for Sorai). This simple fact that they are not the true origin is just enough for Shōeki to dismiss them. According to him, the origin lies in the spontaneous way of living (*shizen no yo* 自然の世). Shōeki referred to what existed prior to the Saints in order to identify an authority – that of the origin – to dismiss theirs. On the other hand, Sorai denies any authority to the origin. For him, the origin does not count in itself. What counts is the fact there actually existed sage-kings, or Saints. According to Sorai, before the appearance of the Saints, the world indeed existed, but it was as if it did not exist: the world pre-existing the appearance of the first of the Saints – a world without anyone playing the role of a sage – simply following its spontaneous course, namely, the world of *shizen*, was to him of no interest at all. That is why Sorai shifted the source of authority from the natural world to the Saints: they must be revered because they invented the norms, each one recreating his own. Such a pre-modernist discourse seemed absolutely unbearable to Shōeki who understood that the Saints' achievements undermined every source of authority. In other words, culture is always a form of subversive activity. In this regard, Shōeki's thought can but appear as a deeply conservative one.

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