Yoshida Shōin and Shōka Sonjuku
The True Spirit of Education

by

Umihara Tōru
Kyoto University

Translation Series

Center for Research on Japanese Educational History
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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This essay by Professor Umihara Tōru of Kyoto University is the inaugural piece in a translation series edited by the Center for Research on Japanese Educational History at Indiana University. The purpose of the series is to make recent work by outstanding Japanese scholars of the history of Japanese education available in English. We plan to translate journal articles as well as original essays like the contribution by Professor Umihara. Professor Umihara's essay was translated by Charles Andrews, a Ph.D. student in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Indiana University. It was edited and revised by Professor Jurgis Elisonas and Professor Umihara.

Professor Umihara Tōru was born on March 26, 1936 in Yamaguchi prefecture and graduated from the Faculty of Education at Kyoto University in 1961. He became an assistant professor at Ōsaka Joshi Daigaku in 1967 while simultaneously working on his doctorate, which he completed in 1973 under the supervision of Professor Motoyama Yukihiko at Kyoto University. The next year he was appointed to the faculty of Kyoto University and was promoted to the rank of professor in the College of Arts and Science (Kyōyōbu) in 1988.

Among his many influential publications are:

Meiji ishin to kyōiku. Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō, 1972.

Meiji kyōin-shi kenkyū. Mineruva Shobō, 1973.

Taishō kyōin-shi no kenkyū. Mineruva Shobō, 1977.

Gakkō. Tokyo: Kondō Shuppansha, 1979.

Kinsei shijuku no kenkyū. Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1983.

Kyōikugaku. Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō, 1987.

Kinsei no gakkō to kyōiku. Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1988.

Yoshida Shōin to kyōiku. Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō, 1990.

Shōka Sonjuku no hitobito. Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō, 1993.

Shōka Sonjuku no Meiji Ishin. Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō, 1998.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Shōka Sonjuku, a private academy that was active at the very end of the Edo era in the village of Matsumoto, under the castle walls of Hagi in Nagato Province — in what is now Chintō Shinmichi, Hagi City, Yamaguchi Prefecture — enjoys quite a high reputation to the present day. Indeed, it is regarded not just as a representative educational institution of its period but as one of the most successful schools in all of Japanese history. The instructor who ran this academy, Yoshida Shōin, is hailed as a "god of education" and the "Pestalozzi of the Far East."[1] Was that truly the case?

Yoshida Shōin taught at Shōka Sonjuku for about three years and three months, from the Third Month of Ansei 3 (1856) until he was extradited to Edo in the Ansei Purge in 1859.[2] If, however, one excludes the five-month period of his second confinement in Hagi's Noyama prison, where he was reincarcerated at the beginning of 1859, his teaching career at Shōka Sonjuku amounts to a mere two years and ten months. Born on Bunsei 13.8.4 (20 September 1830), Shōin had not yet turned twenty-six when he began teaching at Shōka Sonjuku. A youth still in the midst of his own studies, one whose term as an instructor of military science at the domain school, Meirinkan, had spanned little more than three years, he could hardly be called a veteran teacher.[3] His brief career stands in marked contrast to the fifty-one years of experience of the Edo period's most famous teacher, Hirose Tansō of Hita in Bungo Province.[4] Naturally, compared to the well-articulated educational system seen in

Tansō's private academy, Kangien, Yoshida's methods and techniques appear rather primitive. The thought and the deeds of the patriotic zealot (*shishi*) Shōin, a man who attempted to stow away on an American ship at Shimoda, helped gain Shōka Sonjuku wider celebrity than Kangien. Even more important in that regard was the remarkable number of talents developed at Shōka Sonjuku in less than three years.[5]

Judging by the number of eminent men trained there, Shōka Sonjuku obtained results unparalleled by any of the numerous private academies of the Edo era. Of the ninety-two men who studied at the academy, two became prime ministers, four were appointed cabinet ministers, and four reached the rank of prefectural governor or lieutenant governor. If one adds the twelve diplomats, justices, high-ranking military officers, and technical experts who were given either imperial honor or court rank, the number of major success stories comes to twenty-two. This is an impressive figure, and it becomes even more so if the twenty former students who had died by the time of the Hakodate campaign, the last hurrah of the Tokugawa shogunate,[6] are excluded from the calculation; in that case, the figure amounts to an astonishing 30.6 percent of the surviving seventy-two. No wonder that when speaking of former Shōka Sonjuku students, one immediately conjures up the image of a prime minister or a high-level bureaucrat. If one considers the many talented students who died before the Meiji Restoration — men such as Kusaka Genzui and Takasugi Shinsaku[7] — the number of prominent Shōka Sonjuku alumni rises even higher.

The likes of Itō Hirobumi and Yamagata Aritomo — the most famous products of the school — are controversial figures. The pluses and minuses of the part they took in the formation of the Meiji state are subject to debate.[8] What part, however, did Shōka Sonjuku play in their character development? What did the education they received at that academy mean to them? What, in short, did these and other prominent actors in the revolutionary drama of the Restoration gain from their educational experience there? These questions deserve yet another look.

II. NOYAMA PRISON
THE FIRST STAGE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SHŌKA SONJUKU

After his failed attempt to stow away on the American ship at Shimoda, Yoshida Shōin was initially detained in Edo's Denmachō prison but was later ordered by the shogunal court to be sent back to his native Hagi, "handed over to his father Yurinosuke, and placed under house arrest."[9] He was brought back to Hagi under escort on Kaei 4.10.24 (13 December 1854). Instead of returning him to his home, however, the government of the Chōshū domain, in deference to the shogunate, put him directly in Noyama prison.

The prison consisted of twelve rooms in two buildings lying north and south. (Each room had two tatami mats and a wooden floor the size of another mat; one mat is approximately three feet wide by six feet long.) There were eleven prisoners, including a female. Now and then, haiku and tanka study sessions were held to alleviate the boredom of prison life. These poetic exercises were led by former *terakoya* instructor Yoshimura Zensaku and the haiku expert Kōno Kazuma; Shōin participated under their guidance. Apparently, there were also occasions when the inmates composed poems and evaluated one another's effort without a clearly designated teacher. Soon after entering the jail, Shōin requested a copy of a commentary on *Seiken igen* and began to exchange Chinese poetry with Tominaga Yūrin[10]. Because Yūrin was accomplished at calligraphy, Shōin also received instruction from him. Such was the environment of this "prison school," a study group constituted of inmates with a zeal for learning, centered on Shōin, and generated more or less spontaneously.

The classes given by Shōin began about a half year into his confinement. They did not consist only of his lectures, but sometimes took the form of several teachers taking turns in lecturing from texts (*rinkō*) and students reading individually with a

teacher (*taidoku*). The texts included works such as *Mencius*, the *Classic of Filial Piety*, the "Unofficial History of Japan" (*Nihon gaishi*) by Rai San'yō, and the anthology of classical Chinese poetry *T'ang Sung pa-chia wen.*[11] Shōin did not hold forth in monologue disquisitions; rather, the lessons involved lively debate and took the form of communal study sessions with each member teaching his own particular specialty. For example, when *Tōshisen zekku*[12] was chosen as a text Tominaga became the teacher and Shōin and the others the students. At first the sessions were carried on surreptitiously at night, with each member speaking from his own cell, but later it seems that at times all the inmates had the opportunity to gather in one room for study. This became feasible once the prison guards Fukugawa Sainosuke and then his younger brother Takahashi Tōnoshin became Shōin's students, apparently soon after the lessons began. Because of their status as guards, however, they sat in the hallway outside his cell with their books open and audited the classes.

How is it that this "prison school" came to include both jailers and jailed? Shōin, writing on matters of prison reform in the essay "Fukudō-saku," criticized the policy of isolating prisoners from ordinary society as one that led only to despair and acts of desperation on the part of the inmates. Instead, Shōin wanted to rehabilitate them; he believed that progressive, interpersonal education could make the prisoners into useful members of society. Accordingly, he proposed that offenders be given sentences divided into three-year terms; at the conclusion of each term, all inmates would have the chance of release, depending on the degree to which they had reformed. "If, using superior texts, proper education is provided," a person — no matter how wicked — "will turn over a new leaf and become virtuous."[13] This is perhaps the ultimate assessment of the transformational capacity of education.

Shōin believed that some superior qualities abide in each person. He had unquestioning faith in the potential of all human beings, insisting that "it is wrong to judge the entirety of a person's character on the basis of a single crime."[14] While it is

possible to see here the elitist consciousness of a young man still naive about the ways of the world, this kind of straightforward innocence and serious manner may be called the most distinctive aspect of Shōin the teacher. Surely his subsequent educational activities at Shōka Sonjuku amounted to an actualization of that straightforwardness.

After a year and a month in prison, Shōin returned to his family home, the Sugi house, on Ansei 2.12.15 (22 January 1856).[15] Rather than being acquitted, he had been released ostensibly for medical treatment and convalescence. For this reason he was confined to a single room in the Sugi house and forbidden all contact with the outside world. Shōka Sonjuku, which had been temporarily closed, was in a sense reopened when, soon after his release from prison, Shōin began to lecture on *Mencius* to his father, elder brother, uncle Kubo Gorōzaemon, and other relatives.[16] This was about the Third Month of Ansei 3 (April 1856). For about a year and eight or nine months, Shōin used his narrow cell — the four-and-a-half mat room used for his house arrest — as a classroom, but finally in Ansei 4.11 (at the turn of 1857-1858) a school house consisting of a single eight-mat room was built on the Sugi property. This, too, soon became too small, and four months later three more, smaller rooms were added: a four-and-a-half mat room and two three-mat rooms. This school house still stands today. According to the sometime student Amano Seizaburō, its size — eighteen and a half mats — certainly sufficed to accommodate twenty or thirty pupils.[17]

III. STUDENT-CENTERED EDUCATION WITH UNLIMITED ACCESS

In a one-on-one tutorial setting, the instructor should be able to grasp readily how much a student comprehends and respond to the student's needs flexibly; there is little need for detailed rules regarding student advancement. If a large group of students is to

be taught in one classroom, however, some kind of arrangement for regulating entrance, promotion, and graduation becomes necessary.

The Hagi domain school Meirinkan divided students between the ages of eight and fourteen into three courses with eight different grades in the primary school; a five-course ranked system was used in the college for students aged fifteen and above. There were also detailed regulations governing texts, tests, and evaluation. In Shōka Sonjuku there was no such system. All aspects of school life — entrance, advancement, graduation, terms of study — were free and unregulated. There was only one exception to the rule that there were no rules — the "Regulations of Shōka Sonjuku" (*Shōka Sonjuku kisoku*), thought to have been set down in Ansei 4 (1857). But these were merely common precepts that students were expected to follow, such as, "Obey your parents unfailingly," or "Conduct yourselves in school properly."[18] The governing spirit is fundamentally different from the variety of rules that regulated and fettered students of Hirose Tansō's Kangien.

Why did not Shōin utilize any of the regulations of which he had experience as a former instructor of military science at the Meirinkan? In the case of Shōka Sonjuku, with the number of students small and their hours of study scattered throughout the day (the time of attendance depended on each student), there was originally no need to manage the school through a set of regulations. The greatest reason for their absence, however, was Shōin's aim of establishing human relationships in which students would "become as a family in mutual affection and love."[19] In a classroom infused with an atmosphere of familial harmony, rules for managing students were inherently unnecessary.

The lessons began whenever the students arrived, and the schedule was adjusted to fit the students' circumstances. "Nothing was fixed," Amano Seizaburō was to recall. "The students came before the teacher to receive instruction on their own particular texts in the order they arrived at school."[20] One may cite the example of

Yoshida Eitarō (Toshimaro), who entered the school toward the end of 1856 and attended daily until the summer of the next year. He would appear at the school at a different hour, depending on the day: early morning; 10 in the morning; in the afternoon; at dusk; in the evening; at 10 at night. His house was only twenty or thirty meters away from the school, making it a simple matter for him to show up in the morning, at dusk, and at 10 at night — three times in one day. Yet other students pursued their studies in the same way.[21]

Whenever there was a large audience, as in the case of the lectures on Yamaga Sokō's *Bukyō shōgaku*, begun in Ansei 3.9 (about October 1856), the class meetings were generally held in the afternoon. Even in such cases, however, the schedule was frequently changed to suit the participants' convenience. The lectures on Satō Nobuhiro's *Keizai yōroku* — started in Ansei 4.1(early 1857) with boarding students such as Mashino Tokumin in mind — were scheduled for 10 at night. If no other students were around, the lectures on that text might continue morning and evening.[22] Or if another student showed up at the time scheduled for these lectures, the text might be changed to something else, such as *Nihon gaishi*, according to that student's wish.

Clearly there was nothing like the kind of schedule under which schools normally operate. Indeed, if both students and teacher were in the mood for study, it was not unusual for them to stay up all night, continuing class into the morning. Majima Shunkai recalled that he attended a lecture on *Tsugan* the first evening he came to school and that the lecture dragged on and on; finally, upon hearing the bell announce four in the morning, Shōin and the others decided against going to bed, and Majima joined them at the *kotatsu*, where they wrote Chinese poetry while warming themselves.[23] Then there was Nakatani Shōsuke, who would come to school and not go back until the next morning; it was about him that Shōin wrote in his journal, "Teacher and student continued discussions into the morning," and "We debated heatedly without going to sleep all night."[24] It is said that during daytime classes Shōin

often became drowsy. At such times would lean on his desk, doze off for a while and then, suddenly awakening, resume the lecture. There is nothing extraordinary about this, considering his habit of studying well into the night and often not sleeping at all.

The student-centered lessons had an influence on text selection. "The students all had different texts," remarked Amano Seizaburō, noting that he himself was at the time interested in the *Ming shih* and *Tung-p'o tse*. "But sometimes someone else chose the same book. If by chance that student was present at the same time, we received instruction together."[25] The students were free to select any text, but the teacher, Shōin, made recommendations regarding what ought to be read. So the pupils mostly selected what they wanted to study from the texts recommended by him and created their own schedules, coming and going freely.

When one hears that there was no set schedule, that lessons began naturally whenever someone wanting to study happened by, that students chose their own texts, it all seems extremely haphazard and chaotic, having absolutely no relation to proper pedagogy. This was not necessarily the case. In his own way, Shōin was experimenting with various instructional methods and refinements.

The lecture was the most common type of class. In most schools of this period, lectures were nothing more than literal interpretations of texts. Shōin's style was different, even unique. His hermeneutics were tied to his ideology. Rather than merely give information about a text, he addressed it actively. He engaged topics ranging from the most mundane problems of daily life to weighty political matters, linked them to problems facing contemporary society, and deployed his own values within the context of his discourse.

Group readings involving students of similar abilities were held frequently. When numbers were low, paired readings were conducted. This method involved one student reading while the other listened; the pair worked together to try to figure out portions that they could not read or understand. This procedure was common among

students who showed up to study when no lectures were scheduled. If students happened to have the same text, they studied together. By no means would individual tutorials always be arranged in such cases.

Classes with few members were frequently held outdoors. Sometimes a bookstand would be fastened to the kind of rice-hulling mill that is operated by raising and lowering a pestle over a fulcrum by leg power. Teacher and students would then read together as they worked the mill while standing side by side. While weeding the fields they would talk about study methods or discuss various historical episodes — the very image of education at a tranquil rural school. No doubt there are affinities here with the way Shōin himself experienced learning in his youth — taught by his father Yurinosuke, who had to supplement a meager samurai income with farming. Utilizing students was, moreover, a direct way of contributing to the half samurai, half farmer Sugi household. At the root of Shōin's thinking, however, was undoubtedly his firm belief in the value of labor, that is, in the primacy of production through physical toil. There were those who stressed that he "often recommended exercise" and called him a "physical education" teacher, likening his method to the kind of physical education practiced in modern schools. The likes of Reizen Masajirō, however, were content to polish rice alongside their teacher while studying *Dai Nihon shi.*[26] So it is no doubt more appropriate to say that Shōin took the lessons of the classroom outdoors and expanded them.

Whether or not there was a debating society of the sort that had existed from early on at the domain school Meirinkan is unclear, but something similar can be found everywhere one looks in Shōka Sonjuku. Considering that Shōin is said to have stopped frequently in the midst of a lecture to ask each student's opinion, one can easily imagine that when it came to group reading or tutorials, teacher and students engaged in lively debate. Indeed, enthusiastic disputation was the order of the day, according to Shōin's essay on "Breaking Your Pipe" (i.e., "No Smoking;" *Kiseru o oru no ki*): "One

day I was debating with Tominaga Yūrin and some others about bushidō. Mashino Tokumin, Yoshida Eitarō, Ichinoshin, and Kōzaburō were there. One after the other, they all made comments, and this continued until late in the night when the rapeseed oil for the lamp gave out."[27]

There were also assignments called "inquiries" (*shitsumon*), similar to what we nowadays call a "report," requiring the student to do research on a certain topic and formulate the findings in a written presentation. In most cases students were free to choose their own topics, but sometimes Shōin made specific assignments. In response to the imperial rescript issued in the Third Month of Ansei 5 (1858), mandating serious reconsideration of the issue of the United States-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce,[28] Shōin immediately drew up a position paper entitled "Sonjuku sakumon ichidō" and asked for his students' opinions regarding the stand to be taken by Sonjuku. His "Critique of Takasugi Shinsaku's Opinion" addresses one of the answers submitted.[29] Writing exercises of a different type were necessary in the case of students for whom commuting was an inconvenience. For instance, Saitō Eizō (later known as Sakai Jirō), who lived in Sanmi village, outside the castle town of Hagi, sought and often received instruction through correspondence. This method was utilized by other students as well.

Public or private, any educational institution that has introduced a ranking system requires a method of evaluating its students' qualifications for advancement and graduation. Naturally, various types of examination are implemented at such schools. Typically, the Meirinkan had its "Spring and Autumn" examinations, given in those two seasons of the year. At Shōka Sonjuku, however, there were no evaluations of any kind; therefore, there were no examinations of any kind. This was because Shōin's educational objective — character development — was inherently at odds with the conventional view of academic achievement as the end-all of education.

According to Amano Seizaburō, applicants to Sonjuku were without exception first asked about their objectives: "When first meeting with anyone who desired to become his pupil, Sensei [Shōin] always asked, 'What is the purpose of your studies?' Many, unable to read books, answered that they wished to learn to read well. To these, Sensei responded that it's no good being a scholar, that for humans nothing is so important as action [that is, defining one's goals in life clearly and working steadily to achieve them]. If learning to read well is the sole objective, all one has to do is work at it during free time, and reading ability will in time come naturally [thus there is no reason to go to the trouble of entering a school]."[30] It was not bibliophiles that Shōin sought — men who read many books and acquired a wealth of knowledge without attempting to be of any use in the real world. Rather, Shōin prevailed upon those hoping to enter Sonjuku to be men of practical action and engage in work useful for the reformation of society.

Sonjuku students, however, often studied zealously from early morning until late at night. When one considers that, Shōin's admonition to applicants — his insistence to those who did not think beyond reading lots of books and improving their writing style that those endeavors are trivial and meaningless — may seem to have been contradicted in practice. That he made a point of saying such things should, however, be taken as an indication of his harshly critical attitude toward those intellectuals who dwell in this world but fail to contribute actively to it, instead concentrating on study for study's sake. More than anything else, Shōin disliked those who were solely interested in abstract theorizing and proud of the mere accumulation of knowledge. For him, 'study' meant practical application; it meant being of use to the world. Just as studying swordsmanship theory is inextricably related to improving fencing technique, to 'study' means to go out into the world and find out what sort of socially valuable work one can do. The reason he valued utilitarianism and social activism above all may have to do with his specialization in military science, which considers matters from the

perspective of the life-and-death contest on the battlefield. Shōin was consistent and relentless in his inquiries into the things that humans can and must accomplish. His lectures on *Mencius* were not so much interpretive or critical commentaries as they were a means of commenting on the conditions of contemporary society and discovering — through reading the text and referring to Mencius's own words and deeds — how one ought to live and act. This intellectual orientation was the primary source of his principle of practical action first.

IV. THE PERSONALITY OF THE PEDAGOGUE

In his daily life Shōin the individual — as distinct from his role as teacher — displayed some interest in haiku, tanka, Chinese poetry, and drawing, but he read practically no novelistic literature. Once he was so deeply affected by a jōruri performance of *Chūshingura* that he was moved to tears, but on the whole he had little interest in the performing arts.[31] Though he seems to have allowed himself small amounts of sake, for some reason he loathed tobacco. Toward women he was astonishingly fastidious — or more accurately, fainthearted. In his relationship with his family, especially toward his elder brother Umetarō, he showed a tendency toward overdependence, often behaving like a willful, spoiled child. As a member of adult society he was completely incapable of such things as flattery and showed himself to be inept at social niceties. During his studies in Edo, Shōin was dubbed by a friend the "unworldly sage" (*sennin*). Another friend summed up his character by saying, "Now Shōin is just like a bridegroom on the way to meeting his bride at the altar; for he is always cheerful and radiant, and seems well-contented."[32] Qualities such as purity, radiance, openheartedness — in the real world so rare — are the essential qualities of a superlative teacher, and these are the qualities that define Shōin's character.

From early childhood Shōin had been designated a future teacher of the Meirinkan, and by the age of nine he was a student-teacher of Yamaga military science.[33] Thus it is that for the greater part of his short life — he died before reaching thirty — he lived as a teacher. He had an extreme aversion to the very idea of assuming the airs of a teacher (the manner of one who, though but little educated himself, sets about edifying others), and as much as possible tried to associate with his students as a friend. That aversion notwithstanding, Shōin — perhaps owing to the way he was brought up from a child as a member of the teaching profession — had an urge to instruct others, to tell them how to act, no matter when or where. There was something in him of the habitual moralizer. During his travels to the Northeast of Japan he stopped at a tailor's in the castle town of the Mito domain to have a *hakama* (pleated skirt worn with kimono) made.[34] Outraged when the shop failed to give him back the remnants of material, he tried to teach the master and the clerks that an honest heart is of the utmost importance in business — far be it from him to be angered by whatever financial loss he himself had incurred in the deal. Undaunted by his failed attempt to board the American ship, Shōin passionately discoursed on Japan's current political conditions to his guards from his cell in Shimoda. He continued preaching to his escort all the way to Edo. The model for his later educational activities in Noyama prison, where he taught prisoners and guards alike, was already in evidence.

Shōin did not care that he was in a convict-constable relationship with some of his students — that some of his students were also his jailers, that is, his adversaries. His unique pedagogical method was to begin by accepting both the good and bad in people, accepting them naturally and unconditionally regardless of their position or the environment in which they were placed. Rather than search for shortcomings and faults, he tried to highlight a person's talent and foster that person's potential.

Though it is difficult to imagine from the calm, sage-like Shōin seen in portraits, he was in certain respects an extremely temperamental man, one whose emotions ran

the gamut. Rather than taking a cool, detached attitude toward an event or problem, he was the type of person who expressed his joy or anger unreservedly and unaffectedly. In a word, he was an emotional rather than rational person. The Shōin who was described as "extremely caring and gentle in the treatment of his students"[35] or as someone who "made neither harsh, reckless statements nor flippant comments" and was "self-possessed, adult-like,"[36] was on the other hand a man compelled to bold actions, one who left his domain without permission to travel to the Northeast and flouted the shogunate's law by trying to stow away on the American ship. He was usually gentle and serene, but there was a mercurial element in his personality; once he was angered by some matter, the change in his emotions could be startling. According to Reizen Masajirō, when Shōin was "explaining a passage about a loyal retainer who had sacrificed himself for his lord or a filial child who had done so for his parents, tears would well up in his eyes and his voice would tremble. Once his emotions reached a peak, the tears would overflow, running down and falling onto his text. Seeing this, the pupils would be moved to tears themselves, and all would cry together. If, on the contrary, there was a passage in which a treacherous retainer caused his lord to suffer, Shōin-sensei's eyebrows would bristle, his hair would stand on end, and he would shout furiously in his surfeit of anger. Naturally, the students who heard him were impelled to denounce such treachery violently."[37] This recollection demonstrates how teacher and students, working together intensely on a given topic, would gradually come to a climax of excitement. Such an atmosphere arose precisely because of the passionate nature of the teacher, Shōin, whose character traits — acknowledged no less by himself than by his friends — included a tendency toward lachrymose demonstrativeness.[38]

There may have been those who never witnessed Shōin's face flushed with rage, yet when he was angered his wrath was considerable. One time, a student named Ichinoshin, a merchant's son studying calligraphy, ignored Shōin's repeated orders to

clean up. Shōin exploded, grabbed the brush and paper from Ichinoshin's desk, and flung them out into the yard. This was no ordinary show of exasperation. The mild Shōin, who otherwise almost never raised his voice, could apparently be quite forceful once angered. The evening before his second imprisonment at Noyama was to begin, Shōin charged into the house of the recently truant Yoshida Eitarō, demanding that he come to school for an all-night study session. It is said that Eitarō's younger sister, who was nearby, startled bawling. Evidently, Shōin had pressed his demands in an unusually violent tone and manner.

From the beginning Shōin had an inclination either to praise or to scold individual students thoroughly. Not once was his position ambiguous. To the often-absent Majima Hosen he said, "Among the students of this academy, you possess the most outstanding abilities, and I have great hopes for you. [So why is such a one as you idle in his studies? Come back to school right away!]"[39] By contrast, to the equally truant Shinagawa Yajirō, Shōin said, "If you are not back to school in three days, you will no longer be a part of our group. If we go our separate paths, so be it. My feelings should be clear. [If you do not agree with my policies, then nothing can be done; if you are in accord, come to school right away and resume your studies.]"[40] His skillful use of praise and admonition seems to contain an element of intimidation and may be seen as a kind of bluff or even a shock therapy. But Shōin's true impulse was to accept every part of his students' lives, good and bad; he took them just as they were. He stated his mind frankly about them, and that was it. There was no artifice in his method, no stratagem and no contrivance.

During his second imprisonment at Noyama, Shōin attempted suicide by refusing to eat. (He had become despondent when most of his students opposed his order for direct political action.) It was then that he blasted those who urged restraint until a more suitable time for revolution had come. With his confinement becoming drawn out and the death sentence a possibility, his deteriorated emotional state

probably had an influence as well, but this clear-cut attitude — thought and behavior stripped of embellishment, no effort made to hide the whole gamut of emotions — distinctly illustrates Shōin's human character and personality. Shōin believed that if one engaged another, no matter whom, with the "heart of a young child," in other words with an "unsullied, beautiful, genuine heart,"[41] one would meet with understanding and effect an influence. It was of the utmost importance to him that no matter when or where, one interact with others not only through words but with one's whole being. So it was that Shōin sometimes spoke words of kind praise and at other times words of severe reproof to his students. This "natural man" (*shizenjin*) was completely unskilled in the art of social niceties and lacked politesse. One would not be remiss in saying that the Shōin sitting before his pupils was in fact a child who had grown up with his unsullied, pure heart intact.

In the case of other charismatic teachers with intense personalities, such as Yamazaki Ansai and Ōshio Heihachirō[42] — famous as the strictest teachers of the Edo era — the teacher's own principles and beliefs were apt to come to the fore, making instruction fitted to the students' interests difficult to bring about. Teacher-centered education, force-feeding, was the order of the day. Depending on one's point of view, Shōin too can be classified as that type of teacher. Shōin, however, ignored the institutionalized status system of the Edo era and paid no attention to age differences among students; his teaching was an attempt to transmit the highest educational standard and highest level of thought he himself had attained. This approach was completely different from the pedagogical methods and techniques commonly seen in other schools — from what was commonly considered "education."

Was Shōin's teaching teacher-centered, unilateral, without concern for whether or not the students understood? According to student complaints, "everything he said made our heads numb. [The level of his speech was too high to understand; our heads always hurt.]"[43] But Shōin, who most despised the scholarly type that did nothing but

read books and accumulate knowledge without tying that knowledge to a course of action, endeavored above all to become a man of deeds. So the kind of educational skills commonly expected by parents — such as the ability to read and write well — were never a concern to him.

In this sense, Shōka Sonjuku was the antithesis of systematic educational institutions, such as Meirinkan. In other words, it was a most unschoollike school. It was, moreover, unlike our schools of today, concerned as they are only with raising classroom efficiency. In seeking ways to increase student comprehension, today's educators are preoccupied with discovering and improving techniques that would make lessons proceed smoothly. Schools are run under the slogan "Put the children first," but in the end forget about the children entirely. Shōka Sonjuku stands at the farthest extreme from these modern schools that ignore the children's standpoint. (Modern education operates on the premise that each and every child's needs must be treated with the utmost respect and that classes must be given in such a way that every child understands. Accordingly, educators have been most concerned with developing instructional methods. As a result of their excessive zeal, however, the most important aspect of education — the kind of relationship between teacher and student that brings them together as real human beings who confront one another in the fullness of their individual personalities — is being lost.)

V. THE NON–TEACHING TEACHER AS MODEL

Shōin threw himself body and soul into his interactions with his students. Depending on one's perspective, Shōin's method can be seen as a form of indoctrination, a force-feeding of information and knowledge, but that was not the case. In fact, he did not expect his students to attain any particular academic ability. Put another way, the

teacher himself became a model, influencing those around him through the example of his specific actions. It was a unique approach meant to appeal to the students naturally.

Shōin rigidly rejected the kind of strong-arm, teacher-centered, indoctrinating education that would "bind with a rope those who have strayed from the path of humanity, remaining uneducated, or beat them with a cane to transform them in short order in the teacher's mould." Rather, "by placing students on the path of humanity and righteousness, the moral way of life proper to man, and having them live in such an environment," he hoped to bring it about that "unbeknownst to themselves, they would become aware of the good and forsake the bad, naturally coming to correct their shortcomings and weaknesses." This type of superior education requires extreme patience and much time, he thought. What, then, was the function of the teacher in an educational system in which, seemingly, nothing is taught? Commenting on Mencius's view that "the trouble with people is that with but little learning they are all too eager to be teachers to others," Shōin stated that "the goal of study is that it be useful to oneself." Studying for one's own sake did not, however, mean "wanting to become a teacher." Rather, it led to "finding oneself naturally becoming a teacher." It follows that "one who studies for the sake of imparting knowledge to others will be a sham and cannot become a true, superior instructor." Shōin was pointing to those scholars — all too common in the world — who "study not to better themselves but to accumulate mountains of information and find satisfaction in leading others." That is not true learning; such men are not fit to become teachers. One who aspires to become a genuine teacher must "cultivate the self" with a pure intention — "not by mouthing idealistic things, but by practicing what he preaches."[44] There was no other way, Shōin was convinced. To him, teaching above all required the teacher to be an exemplar, one who displays to his students what he believes to be the correct way to live. In that sense, the teacher does not teach. Rather, he exerts an influence over his pupils: without coercion, through his deeds, he transforms them. That was Shōin's method.

The relationship between Shōin and his students at Shōka Sonjuku from the period just before it closed — when he was confined for a second time at Noyama — until the order came from the shogunate to extradite him to Edo, was a model of Shōin's educational ideals. Almost all of his seniors and friends had come to oppose what he advocated, but Shōin — isolated and without supporters as he was — remained doggedly persistent. Most of his students would only tell him that it was too early, that conditions were unfavorable for political activity. So in the face of the dominant view that "we must observe the political situation calmly from a distance, awaiting the appropriate time for revolution," Shōin determined to make himself the revolution's vanguard. He came to see his own death as an inevitable and necessary demonstration of his will. Rather than doing nothing while waiting for favorable circumstances to arise, Shōin tried to create those circumstances: "If necessary, I will act alone."[45] His death, he believed, would be the spark that would ignite the revolutionary fervor in his students; a second, a third Shōin, a new generation of men of action would then emerge. In his final days he was calm, composed, and fearless in the face of death. He cherished, it is safe to say, the firm conviction that the death of the single anonymous revolutionary would produce a multitude of revolutionaries who would follow. They would go out to every corner of Japan, and upon their appeal to the people of the nation the construction of a new society would begin.

[1] Hirose Yutaka, *Yoshida Shōin no kenkyū* (Shibundō, 1944), p. 1.

[2]The Ansei Purge (1858-1859) was designed to quiet opposition in a shogunal succession dispute and suppress resistance to the conclusion of treaties with foreign powers. The Great Councilor (*Tairō*) Ii Naosuke (1815-1860) had officials dismissed, jailed, and in the case of very vocal critics like Yoshida, executed.

[3]The Chōshū domain school Meirinkan, established in 1718, was one of the oldest *han* schools.

[4]Hirose Tansō (1782-1856) is famous for developing one of the most prominent private academies in the Edo era, Kangien. This school, which specialized in Chinese studies, gained fame as a highly regimented school for commoners.

[5]On Kaei 7.3.27 (24 April 1854) Yoshida and Kaneko Shigenosuke attempted to board one of Perry's ships anchored in Shimoda Bay but failed, being apprehended by shogunal authorities.

[6] The Hakodate or Goryōkaku campaign involved troops loyal to the Tokugawa who had entrenched themselves in the Goryōkaku fortress in Hakodate in late 1868 under the command of Enomoto Takeaki (1836-1908). The forces of the new Imperial Army forced their surrender in May 1869, thus ending the conflict between the new government and pro-Tokugawa forces.

[7] Kusaka Genzui (1840-1864), who was married to Shōin's sister, helped to operate Shōka Sonjuku. He was active in the *sonnō jōi* movement and committed suicide to avoid capture after fighting with Chōshū forces and rival factions in Kyoto. Takasugi Shinsaku (1839-1867), also helped operate Shōka Sonjuku and was a *sonnō jōi* activist. He was versed in military science and led the Chōshū auxiliary army Kiheitai to victory over bakufu forces in 1866, but died of illness the following year.

[8] Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909), born a farmer's son and adopted by the family of a low-ranking samurai, was to become Japan's first prime minister. The principal architect of the Meiji constitution of 11 February 1889 and the cabinet system, he also played a

primary role in diplomatic initiatives throughout his political life. He had just retired as resident-general of Korea when he was assassinated in Harbin by a Korean nationalist. Yamagata Aritomo (1838-1922) showed talent in martial arts and matters military and eventually succeeded Takasugi Shinsaku as the leader of the Kiheitai in final campaigns against the bakufu. After studying Western military systems he established a national conscript army for the Meiji government, organizing it on the Prussian model.

9 "Bakufu saiketsusho utsushi," Yamaguchi ken kyōiku kai, ed., *Yoshida Shōin zenshū* (Yamato Shobō, 1972) *10: 72.* Hereafter all references to *Zenshū* are to this third edition.

10 In *Seiken igen*, the Neo-Confucian scholar Asami Keisai (1652-1711) chose to illustrate his belief in ultimate loyalty to the emperor (*taigi*) through the stories of eight loyal heroes from Chinese history. Tominaga Yūrin (1821-1900), for a time an assistant instructor at Shōka Sonjuku, opened his own school in Aiofutajima Village in 1861.

11 *Mencius*, a book based on the recorded teachings of the Chinese philosopher Mencius (c. 371-305 B.C.), emphasizes the innate goodness of humans and stresses benevolence and righteousness in human and political relations. The *Classic of Filial Piety* is one of the thirteen works (including *Mencius*) classified by tradition as "Classics." *Nihon gaishi*, written by Rai San'yō (1780-1832) and presented to the former shogunal advisor Matsudaira Sadanobu in 1827, was infused with the Neo-Confucian ethic of *taigi meibun* and the concomitant mandate of imperial loyalty. *T'ang Sung pa-chia wen* (*Tōsō hakkabun tokuhon*) was a Ch'ing era (1644-1912) abridged version of the copious work *T'ang Sung pa-ta chia wen ch'ao* (*Tōsō hachidaikabun-shō*) which was compiled by Mao K'un and issued in 1579.

12Though the work to which *Tōshisen zekku* (*T'ang shih hsüan chüeh chü*) refers is uncertain, it was undoubtedly one of many anthologies of classical Chinese poetry from the T'ang era sharing the title *Tōshisen.*

13 *Zenshū*, 2:166.

14 Ibid.

[15] Shōin was the second son of Sugi Yurinosuke, a mid-level samurai, but was adopted by Yurinosuke's brother Yoshida Daisuke when he was five years old so that he could study for succession to the hereditary position of teacher of Yamaga military science.

[16]Shōin's uncle Kubo Gorōzaemon operated this second Shōka Sonjuku sometime during the Kaei period from 1848 to 1853, although the exact dates are unknown. He took the name, which translates as "Matsumoto Village Academy," from the school opened earlier by another of Shōin's uncles, Tamaki Bunnoshin, who ran the school in his home from 1842 to 1848. Shōin began instruction at the school in March of 1856 but because he was still under house arrest the school was officially under Kubo's charge. In July of 1858 Shōin received official permission from the bakufu to undertake educational activities and from that time he was formally in charge of Shōka Sonjuku. In actuality, however, he was the headmaster from March of 1856 until he entered Noyama Prison in December of 1858.

[17] "Watanabe Kōzō mondō roku," *Zenshū*, 10:360. Amano Seizaburō (Watanabe Kōzō) entered Shōka Sonjuku at the age of 15. He later became a member of Takasugi's Kiheitai. After returning from studies of shipbuilding in England (1867-1873) he entered the Ministry of Engineering (Kōbushō). He later established a shipyard in Nagasaki. He died in 1939 in Hagi at the age of 97.

[18]*Zenshū*, 10:292-293.

[19] "Shosei ni shimesu," *Zenshū*, 4:358.

[20]"Watanabe Kōzō mondō roku," *Zenshū*, 10:359.

[21]Yoshida Eitarō's home was next to the Sugi residence. He was one of the first to attend the "house arrest" lectures. He, along with Kusaka, Takasugi, and Irie Sugizō (Kuichi), was known as one of Sonjuku's "four warrior demigods" (*shitennō*).

[22]*Bukyō shōgaku* was written by Yamaga Sokō (1622-1685) in 1656. A short work of ten chapters, it treated the subject of warrior ethics and is an example of Sokō's military philosophy, later to be called Bushidō, the way of the samurai. *Keizai yōroku* was

written by the multi-faceted scholar Satō Nobuhiro (1769-1850) in 1827. It is a fifteen volume work consisting of an introduction (*Sōron*) and a section on "Enterprise establishment" (*Sōgyō hen*) which outlines the necessity of economic reform, followed by *Kaibutsu hen* in which he writes more specifically on certain products and methods of production, etc., and ends with "Wealthy nation" (*Fukoku hen)* in which he calls for government monopolies and regulation of economic activity. Overall, he warned that the root of crises faced by the bakuhan system lay in low productivity and the parasitic nature of the government, and that government held the responsibility for promoting economic activity.

[23]*Tsugan* refers to *Shiji tsugan* (Chinese: *Tzu chih t'ung chien;* English: *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*) completed by the Chinese historical scholar Ssu-ma Kuang in 1084. It is a highly moralistic work tracing the rise and fall of dynasties from the Warring States period (403 BC.) through the Five Dynasties period (960 A.D.) which connects the well-being of a state to the virtue of the ruler. The *kotatsu* is a low table with heat source underneath.

[24] *Zenshū*, 9:480, 482.

[25]"Watanabe Kōzō mondō roku," *Zenshū*, 10:360. The compilation of *Ming shih*, the official history of the Ming dynasty, was begun in 1679 under the K'ang-hsi emperor of the Ch'ing dynasty. *Tung-p'o tse* (*Tōbasaku*)is a selection of the works of the Sung poet, calligrapher, and scholar Su Tung-p'o (Su Shih; 1036-1101) issued by Fujimori Taiga (Kōan; 1799-1862).

[26]"Watanabe Kōzō mondō roku," *Zenshū*, 10:359, 361. Reizen Masajirō (Amano Mitami) was active in *sonnō jōi* movements and also joined the Kiheitai. He later became a judicial officer in the Meiji government. *Dai Nihon shi* ("Great History of Japan") was begun in 1657 at the behest of the Mito daimyo Tokugawa Mitsukuni in an attempt to create a comprehensive history of Japan and to investigate the relationship of ruler and subject. The work had a great influence on the *sonnō jōi* movement.

[27]*Zenshū*, 4:116. Little is known of Ichinoshin and Kōzaburō except that they were two of three village delinquents (*burai shōnen*) to attend the school. Mashino, the son of a doctor, was one of the first Shōka Sonjuku students, entering as a boarder at age 16.

[28]This agreement was negotiated by the first American consul in Japan, Townsend Harris, and is therefore also known as the Harris Treaty. It caused more Japanese ports to be opened to foreign trade, put Japanese tariffs under international control, and provided extraterritorial rights for foreign residents.

[29] "Chōfu no iken o hihyō suru," *Zenshū*, 4:351.

[30]"Watanabe Kōzō danwa daiichi," *Zenshū*, 10:354.

[31]Jōruri refers to narrative chanting to samisen accompaniment. Although several styles emerged in the Edo era, it was most typically performed as the dramatic narrative in puppet theater. *Chūshingura* may refer to any number of plays written to celebrate the loyalty displayed by 47 samurai of Ako domain who had lost their lord Asano Naganori in 1701. Asano was forced to commit suicide after attacking the shogun's chief protocol officer Kira Yoshinaka in the Shogunal palace. The masterless samurai, after purposely living lives of dissolution for nearly two years, gathered at Kira's mansion in early 1703 to achieve satisfaction in their vendetta, killing Kira. Because of the loyalty shown their lord, they were allowed to commit suicide to maintain honor, and were consequently hailed by the people as heroes. This story no doubt became a model for imperial loyalist in the Meiji Restoration movement.

[32] Yamaguchi ken kyoiku ka, ed., *Yoshida Shoin Zenshū* (Iwanami Shoten, 1936), 10:747.This is the first edition of a work that was published in three editions. All other citations in this text are to the third edition.

[33] The Yamaga school of military science was based on the teachings of Yamaga Sokō (1622-1685), who stressed the use of Western firearms and artillery in conjunction with Chinese military strategy.

[34]The trip to Mito and the Northeast was undertaken in the winter of 1851-52. Shōin for the first time broke *han* law by traveling without written permission; when he

returned he requested punishment and was placed under house arrest in Hagi for several months.

[35]"Recollections of Nomura Yasushi (Wasaku)," *Yoshida Shōin no junkoku kyōiku*, 29.

[36]"Watanabe Kōzō danwa daiichi," *Zenshū*, 10:355.

[37]Amana Mitami, "Shōka Sonjuku reiwa," *Zenshū*, 10:348.

[38]The original uses two coined words to describe his character. The first is *kanpeki*, which combines the character for "feeling, emotion" with that for "habit" or "tendency" (*kuse*). Source, "Letter to Irie Sugizō," *Zenshū, 8:230.* The second, *kyūheki*, combines the character for "cry" (*naku*) with *kuse*. Source, "comments of Shōin's friend Ebata Gorō," Hirose Yutaka, *Yoshida Shōin no kenkyū*, 70.

[39]*Zenshū*, 4:160. The above parenthetical remarks are from the original and illustrate Shōin's implied comments.

[40]*Zenshū*, 4:416-417.

[41]"Letter to Irie Sugizō," *Zenshū*, 8:205.

[42]Yamazaki Ansai (1618-1682), a scholar of both Neo-Confucianism and Shintō, ran a private academy in Kyoto which utilized *kōshaku*, a teaching technique that emphasized Yamazaki's lectures over reading. Ōshio Heihachirō (1793-1837), a hereditary police inspector, resigned his position to his son in order to open an academy devoted especially to studies of the Chinese philosopher Wang Yang-ming, who emphasized acting on one's moral convictions; he committed suicide after the failure of a rebellion planned by him and a core group of students.

[43]Letter from Yoshida Eitarō to Yoshida Shōin, *Zenshū* (first edition), 6:70.

[44]"Kōmō yowa," *Zenshū*, 3:175.

[45]"Letter to Nomura Wasaku (Yasushi)," *Zenshū*, 8:319.