

Andō Shōeki's Agrarian Utopianism:  
An East Asian Philosophical Contextualization  
東亞哲學脈絡中安藤昌益的農業烏托邦思想

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**關鍵詞：**安藤昌益、墨子、莊子、孟子、諾曼、丸山真男、德川日本

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## Abstract

This paper seeks to interpret the often enigmatic ideas of Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益 (1703-1762) in relation to an interpretive field broader than that of Japanese traditions. Simply put, this paper attempts to contextualize Shōeki's thinking within East Asian philosophical contexts. The paper suggests that three classical Chinese philosophical texts are exceptionally pertinent for understanding the theoretical foundations of Shōeki's ideas. These texts also shed light on why Shōeki's thought achieved some cultural broadcast, greater or lesser, in his day and thereafter. The three texts, fairly well known throughout Japanese history among the educated elite, are: 1). a Daoist classic, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (J: *Sōshi*), especially its "Yangist" and "primitivists" writings; 2). the masterwork of the Mohist tradition, the *Mozi* 墨子 (J: *Bokushi*); and 3). an important Confucian text, the *Mencius* 孟子 (C: *Mengzi* J: *Mōshi*).

## 摘要

本文尋求詮釋安藤昌益（1703-1762）經常令人感覺難以理解的思想與較日本傳統更為寬廣的詮釋領域之間的關係。簡言之，本文試圖將安藤昌益的思想置於東亞哲學的脈絡中。本文提出三本對瞭解安藤昌益思想的理論基礎格外適切的中國哲學經典著作。這些著作也揭示安藤昌益的思想何以能於其所在時期及其後，多少發揮一些文化傳播的作用。這三本著作在日本歷史上於精英知識分子之間相當知名：1.道家經典《莊子》，尤其是其中與「楊朱」和「原始主義」相關的內容；2.墨子傳承的名著《墨子》；以及3.儒家重要著作《孟子》。

## Introduction

Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益 (1703-1762) is among the most enigmatic philosophers of Tokugawa (1600-1868) Japan. Extremely little is known about his life. His thought had scant following during his life, and then for nearly two centuries thereafter it was virtually unknown. Since being "discovered" in the early-twentieth century, Shōeki's writings gained increasing attention, but interpreters have typically read them too much in light of their own times rather than with sensitivity for their historical and philosophical contexts. Shōeki's denunciation of almost every major tradition of thinking in East Asian history—Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, military strategy, and Shintō—has left many interpreters clueless regarding whence, exactly, Shōeki's ideas came and where precisely they sought to take us. What Shōeki unequivocally advocates, "direct tilling of the soil" (*chokkō* 直耕), precluded any efforts to popularize his thinking in the ideological marketplace of mid-Tokugawa Japan where samurai, merchants, and perhaps artisans were among the prime consumers of new ideas. Shōeki's outspoken contempt for people—whether rulers, emperors, philosophers, religious teachers, merchants, or artisans—who consumed without engaging directly and authentically in plowing fields, planting seeds, and cultivating food won him few friends among potential patrons. His distrust of writing, which he deemed a tool of oppression, and his attempts to use if not establish for all a new symbolic system of writing has been admired by some, no doubt, but more typically has simply made his thinking seem unnecessarily esoteric and profoundly removed from ordinary understandings.

Yet more than any idiosyncratic or inherently obscure aspect of his thought, Shōeki remains an enigma largely due to the interpretive parameters brought to bear on his thinking, especially by Western scholars. Rather egregiously, Shōeki's interpreters frequently assume that Japanese contexts are sufficient for fathoming

his philosophy. When that approach yields few insights, the conclusion too often has been that Shōeki was an eccentric thinker, and at worst, an inscrutable paradox quickly to be put aside. We are reminded how few followers Shōeki had, implying that unpopular thinkers can be safely disregarded upon death. In the West, even after Shōeki's "discovery," his thought was promptly bracketed out if not forgotten, by appeal to the insignificance, perhaps even irrelevance of his ideas, regardless of how interesting, amusing, or provocative. This tendency has been compounded by the reluctance of Western intellectual and philosophical historians of Japan to think beyond the old categories—the Zhu Xi School, the Wang Yangming School, Ancient Learning, Kokugaku, Mito, plus a few random idiosyncracics (Shōeki might be placed in this group)—that bound conceptualizations of Tokugawa thought to continual replay mode throughout the twentieth century. Shōeki never fit nicely into these niches, making him for many if not all interpreters, an anomaly if not a nobody.

Among Japanese scholars and intellectuals, however, this has hardly been the case: nearly one hundred book-length studies of Shōeki's thought have appeared, reflecting a fascination with his provocative if historically marginal ideas. In part Shōeki's rejection of Confucianism and all "isms" seems more appealing today than ever, largely due to the postwar reaction against all forms of thought that contributed to the pro-imperial, pro-military ideologies of the 1930s and early 1940s. Equally fascinating is Shōeki's readiness to convey his ideas with fables, with birds, beasts, fish and insects conversing—again in a Zhuangzi-like manner—about the world of humanity and all its problems. Moreover, as the excesses of modernity—pollution, noise, and gaudy materialism—prompt countercurrents, Shōeki's rejection of Tokugawa "modernity," if such a thing might be posited, seems all the more thoughtful. Even more so in the tragic aftermath of the 2011 Tōhoku tsunami-nuclear disaster, Shōeki's utopian return-to-nature philosophy has its appeal.

This paper seeks to render Shōeki's ideas less enigmatic historically, within the context of Tokugawa intellectual history as well as that of contemporary Japan by examining them in relation to an interpretive field grander than that of Japanese traditions. Simply put, this paper attempts to contextualize Shōeki's thinking within East Asian philosophical contexts. The paper suggests that three classical Chinese philosophical texts are exceptionally pertinent for understanding the theoretical foundations of Shōeki's ideas. These texts also shed light on why Shōeki's thought achieved some cultural broadcast, greater or lesser, in his day and thereafter. The three texts, fairly well known throughout Japanese history among the educated elite, are: 1). a Daoist classic, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (J: *Sōshi*), especially its "Yangist" and "primitivists" writings; 2). the masterwork of the Mohist tradition, the *Mozi* 墨子 (J: *Bokushi*); and 3). an important Confucian text, the *Mencius* 孟子 (C: *Mengzi* J: *Mōshi*). The paper suggests that many of the most conspicuous and readily comprehensible components of Shōeki's philosophy such as his scathing critique of rulers and more generally, those who don't till the fields or produce by their own labors the essentials of daily life and sustenance, can be easily seen as early-modern Japanese reiterations of the basics of "the Yangist" and "primitivists" positions expounded positively in selected chapters of the *Zhuangzi* and reviewed rather critically in the *Mencius*. The paper claims that despite Shōeki's frequent indictments of *Zhuangzi* the thinker for this and that shortcoming, that Shōeki's thinking on political, social, and economic issues, and most especially his "agrarianism," resonate conspicuously with—if they do not derive from—the *Zhuangzi*. Considered in this light, as much as anything Shōeki can be understood as a mid-Tokugawa advocate of a particular strain of Daoist thought, "Daoist primitivism." To an extent, Shōeki's thought also echoes ideas in the *Mozi*, especially that work's utilitarian disuse for specialized, perhaps expensive forms of cultural expression such as ritual ceremonies and music. *Mozi*'s distaste for rites and music reflected his rejection of things that consumed the resources of the realm without providing for the best interests of the population at large. In Shōeki, a similar line of culturally Spartan

thinking appears. Given that Mozi was one of the few Chinese philosophers to overtly and unequivocally reject rites and music, Shōeki's ties to Mozi's thought are most likely not coincidental.

Shōeki's thought received so little attention in Tokugawa Japan perhaps because many scholars realized that Mencius had earlier considered the ideas of an agricultural utopian thinker, Xu Xing 許行 (C.372-C.289 BCE), and offered a solid rebuttable of them. Curiously Shōeki does not attempt to rebut Mencius by arguing that direct involvement in production of food and a host of goods for daily life is feasible so much as he simply emphasizes over and over again the natural authenticity of food production for humanity as consumers, and the concomitant criminality of consuming without cultivating. Although naïve, Shōeki's arguments do convey a certain visceral power over which logic, reason, and practicality, regardless of how realistic, are challenged to match.

### **Shōeki's Life and the Legacy of His Interpreters**

Little is known about Shōeki's life. He was born in 1703 the village of Niida 二井田 (present day Akita 秋田 prefecture), in the extreme northeastern part of Honshū 本州. The second son of a farming family, Shōeki studied Buddhist teachings as a young man. He eventually traveled to Kyoto for much the same reason, only to develop doubts about the religion. Shōeki then turned to the study of Chinese medicine and Chinese learning generally, including Confucianism. Along the way he married and began a family. By the 1740s Shōeki was practicing medicine in Hachinohe 八戸, in Mutsu 陸奥 domain (modern Aomori prefecture), in northeastern Japan not far from Niida, his hometown. While in Hachinohe, Shōeki developed philosophical ideas that were eventually recorded and preserved by his disciples. Around 1760, at age 60, Shōeki returned to Niida where he passed away in 1762.

His masterwork, *The Way of the Five Processes and Unitary Generative Force Advancing and Retreating* (*Shizen shin'eidō* 自然真營道), although published in 1753, never achieved wide circulation or even much notice, critical or otherwise, during the Tokugawa period. However, some of his disciples preserved the 101-kan manuscript and so it remained extant well into the modern period. Then a copy of the manuscript ended up, somehow, into an old bookstore. In 1899, book collector and Tokyo Imperial University scholar, Kanō Kōkichi 狩野亨吉 (1865-1942), acquired the manuscript. Kanō recognized the *Shizen shin'eidō* as a significant text, but due to the increasing conservatism of the late-Meiji and its relative intolerance of sharp, politically oriented criticism, Kanō was not eager to initiate a major study of Shōeki's thought. After all, Shōeki's text characterizes all rulers as "stealing from the way" (*tōdō* 盜道), and philosophers of all stripes—Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist—to have been big thieves as well. The only thing Shōeki praised was "direct tilling of the soil" (*chokkō* 直耕). While his advocacy of farming might have had its appeal to some, his omnibus denunciation of rulers as robbers could have easily been considered treasonous given the Meiji constitution's characterization of the emperor as sacred and inviolable (天皇ハ神聖ニシテ侵スヘカラス). Taishō 大正 (1912-1926) liberalism notwithstanding, scholarship on Shōeki's writings would not likely have been well-received by many other than agrarian utopians and anarchists.

Yoshino Sakuzō 吉野作造 (1878-1933), a political scientist at Tokyo Imperial University and advocate of *minponshugi* 民本主義, or the principle of the primacy of the people, was among the few admirers. In 1923, Yoshino helped the Tōdai Library procure the manuscripts from Kanō. However, with the exception of 15 volumes then out on loan, Shōeki's manuscript was soon destroyed along with much of the Tōdai Library following the Great Kantō Earthquake of the same year. Kanō later found woodblock editions of the *Shizen shin'eidō* and Shōeki's *True Account of the Transmission of the Way* (*Tōdō*

*shinden* 統道真傳) in other old bookstores and acquired them.<sup>1</sup> While these texts were the basis for the *Complete Works of Andō Shōeki* (*Andō Shōeki zenshū* 安藤昌益全集), that 21-volume compilation was only published fifty years later, between 1982-1987, as edited by the Andō Shōeki Research Society (Andō Shōeki kenkyūkai 安藤昌益研究會).<sup>2</sup> That compilation was very much a part of the postwar, post E. H. Norman Japanese boom in Shōeki studies.

In a 1928 publication, Kanō described Shōeki in terms that more reflected Japan's conservative drift than any sensitive reading of Shōeki's thought. Kanō noted how people like Shōeki were childish in advocating anarchism-nihilism (*museifu kyomu shugi* 無政府虛無主義). Kanō also suggested Shōeki wanted samurai to return to direct tilling of the soil because he "disliked war" and "rejected class struggle (*kaikyū tōsō* 階級鬥爭)." Kanō added that the old regime Shōeki longed for was agricultural, but emphasized that "the new Japan" (*Shin Nihon* 新日本) was one that had manifested *bushido* as its highest spiritual flower (*seika* 精華), making its honor shine in all nations even as all humanity sought to imitate it.<sup>3</sup> Two years later, in 1930, another work appeared: Watanabe Daitō's 渡邊大濤 (1879-1958) *Andō Shōeki to Shizen shineidō* 安藤昌益と自然真營道, published by Mokuseisha shoin 木星社書院. Yet Watanabe's understanding of Shōeki was similarly tinted by his times. Watanabe cast Shōeki as a critic of capitalism who advocated the "primacy of farmers" (*nōmin daiichi shugi* 農民第一主義) along with "emperor-worship" (*tennō sukei* 天皇崇敬). Miyake Masahiko sees Kanō and Watanabe as interpreters echoing nationalistic currents that arose after WWI, seeking to preempt Marxist calls for class warfare

1 Yasunaga Toshinobu, *Ando Shōeki: Social and Ecological Philosopher in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (New York: Weatherhill, 1992), pp. 3-5. Naramoto Tatsuya 奈良本辰也, *Tōdō shinden* 統道真傳 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966-1967), early on provided a *kakikudashi* 書き下し, or Japanese transcription of the *kanbun* 漢文 "Sino-Japanese" text, into Japanese.

2 Published in Tokyo by the Nōsangyoson bunka kyōkai 農山漁村文化協會.

3 Quoted from Miyake Masahiko 三宅正彦, "Andō Shōeki," in Nakamura Yukihiko 中村幸彦 (ed.), *Andō Shōeki / Tominaga Nakamoto / Miura Baien / Ishida Baigan / Ninomiya Sontoku / Kaiho Seiryō shū* 安藤昌益・富永仲基・三浦梅園・石田梅岩・二宮尊徳・海保青陵集, *Nihon no shisō* 日本思想, Vol. 18 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō 筑摩書房, 1971), pp. 16-17.



by advocating absolute imperial authority and the elimination of all intermediaries who blocked direct relations between emperor and the people. Targeting agrarian elements, these nationalistic movements often referred to "agrarianism" (*nōhon shugi* 農本主義), emphasized the importance of agrarian elements in the polity and absolute imperial authority as the means to eliminate all intermediaries, and this in the name of realizing a kind of equality that transcended all class distinctions in the identity of the people with their all-powerful emperor. Influenced by such thinking, Kanō and Watanabe interpreted Shōeki accordingly, making his ideas resonate with the ideological currents of the day.<sup>4</sup>

E. H. Norman's lengthy essay, "Andō Shōeki and the Anatomy of Japanese Feudalism," published in the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* in December 1949 brought the text into a somewhat more favorable interpretive light. Once again, however, intellectual currents of the time influenced interpretations: Norman introduced Shōeki in an effort to show that there were local foundations for the realization of democracy in postwar Japan. Although he was part of the postwar Occupation, Norman insisted that "democracy and social democracy in Japan could not be realized by authoritative fiat from above and that sympathetic identifications with history were crucial."<sup>5</sup> In Shōeki, Norman thought he had found "impressive evidence" of "a philosophy vindicating resistance to unbridled authority and oppression."<sup>6</sup> Ironically, however, Norman's essay on Shōeki received little attention in the 1950s, and even less in the 1960s. Instead, Western scholars of Japan "dismissed [Norman's study] as an exoteric exercise in intellectual history, the portrait of a rather queer and

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4 Miyake Masahiko 三宅正彦, "Andō Shōeki," in Nakamura Yukihiro 中村幸彦 (ed.), *Andō Shōeki / Tominaga Nakamoto / Miura Baien / Ishida Baigan / Ninomiya Sontoku / Kaiho Seiryō shū* 安藤昌益・富永仲基・三浦梅園・石田梅岩・二宮尊徳・海保青陵集, p. 18.

5 Tetsuo Najita テツオ・ナジタ, "Andō Shōeki—The 'Forgotten Thinker' in Japanese History," in Masao Miyoshi 三好將夫 and Harry D. Harootunian (eds.), *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 64.

6 E. H. Norman, "Andō Shōeki and the Anatomy of Japanese Feudalism," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Third Series, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Asiatic Society of Japan, 1949), p. 1.

querulous man."<sup>7</sup> Most Western surveys of Japanese thought continued to omit mention of Shōeki.<sup>8</sup> Publication of John Dower's *Origins of the Modern Japanese State: Selected Writings of E. H. Norman* in 1975, brought Norman and Shōeki into the limelight in the West. By that time, Norman's suicide in 1957, following charges that he was a Communist sympathizer and perhaps even a Soviet spy, made his earlier study of Shōeki all the more poignant.<sup>9</sup> Dower's introductory essay powerfully contextualized Norman's interpretations of Shōeki in relation to Norman's pro-democratic thinking: Dower reported that Norman's collaborator, Ōkubo Genji, "confided [...] that one of his [Norman's] objectives was to turn Japanese intellectuals away from their fixation upon the importation of American-style democracy and remind them that their own tradition provided a basis for populism, iconoclasm and 'liberalism.'" According to Dower, Norman "was very consistent in his philosophy of history: true progress toward freedom must develop from indigenous roots."<sup>10</sup> However moving Dower's study might have been, it served more as a work relevant to Norman's place in Japanese intellectual history than as a new exposition of Shōeki's thought considered on its own terms.

The year before Dower's work appeared, publication of Maruyama Masao's 丸山真男 (1914-1996) *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, in

7 John W. Dower, *Origins of the Modern Japanese State: Selected Writings of E. H. Norman* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), pp. 67-68.

8 For example, Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene (eds.), *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Volume 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), includes no mention of Shōeki. The second edition of *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Volume 2: 1600-2000* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 416-424, does include a brief section on Shōeki, but curiously situates him in the chapter, "Eighteenth-Century Rationalism." More recently, Shōeki has received positive attention from high places: Tetsuo Najita, "Presidential Address: Reflections on Modernity and Modernization," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 52, 4 (Nov., 1993), p. 849. DOI: 10.2307/2059341.

9 A Soviet scholar, Г.А.Б. Radul-Zatulovskii authored a Russian language study of Shōeki, *Ando Sēeki, filosof, materialist XVIII veka* (Moskva: Izd-vo vostochnoi lit-ry, 1961), interpreting Shōeki as a materialist philosopher. While Shōeki does emphasize a "unitary generative force" (*ikki* 一氣), Radul-Zatulovskii's agenda is Marxist and so represents yet another reading of Shōeki in terms other than his own.

10 John W. Dower, *Origins of the Modern Japanese State: Selected Writings of E. H. Norman*, pp. 67-68.

English translation gave attention to Shōeki as part of its quasi-Hegelian (or at least Hegel-like) analyses of the supposed dissolution of the Zhu Xi mode of continuative mode of thinking. Maruyama's work had been published in Japan as a monograph in 1952 under the title, *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū* 日本政治思想史研究 (literally, Studies of the History of Japanese Political Thought). The essays composing the book first appeared between 1940 and 1944 in *Kokka gakkai zasshi* 國家學會雜誌, well before Norman's study. The two men knew each other and their shared perspectives on Shōeki's thought reflected a friendship that began as a result of their common interest in Shōeki.<sup>11</sup> Maruyama deserves credit for integrating Shōeki into a comprehensive account of Tokugawa intellectual history, but like Norman he cast the Tokugawa period as feudal, and more egregiously, suggested that Zhu Xi's thought was static and unchanging, except insofar as it was ultimately dissolved and undone in Japanese history by successive waves of opponents including Shōeki. As later acknowledged, Maruyama's interpretive mistakes were many. Not a few could be explained, he hinted, as veiled expressions of his opposition to the dominant nationalistic ideology of the 1940s. That aside, since 1970, Japanese publications on Shōeki have appeared on a nearly annual basis, reflecting the more liberal intellectual climate of contemporary Japan and the seminal textual and interpretive foundations provided by Kanō, Watanabe, Norman, and Maruyama.

Alluding to the Japanese title of Norman's study of Shōeki as translated into Japanese, *Wasurareta shisōka* 忘られた思想家, Tetsuo Najita observes that Shōeki's remains "a forgotten thinker in Japanese history."<sup>12</sup> Intellectual histories of Tokugawa Japan, despite Maruyama's contributions toward incorporating Shōeki into the narrative of ideas, have simply not found a place for Shōeki; this includes Harootunian's *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political*

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11 Maruyama Masao 丸山真男, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, trans. by Mikiso Hane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 249-264.

12 Tetsuo Najita, "Andō Shōeki—The 'Forgotten Thinker' in Japanese History," in Masao Miyoshi and Harry D. Harootunian (eds.), *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 221.

*Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan*, and his later, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism*, as well as Najita's *Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan*.<sup>13</sup> Robert Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* mentions Shōeki, but only to dismiss him as an obscure figure who might as well be forgotten. Bellah states:

E. Herbert Norman, who combed the Tokugawa Period in an effort to find anyone who expounded a democratic-liberal political ideology, was almost forced to give up the attempt when he discovered Andō Shōeki, who did make a rather sweeping attack on the feudal system and its ideological base. But this man was not a merchant, he was an isolated thinker, without influence, whose works were not even published.<sup>14</sup>

Yasunaga Toshinobu 安永壽延 (1929-1995), one of Shōeki's more sympathetic interpreters, describes Shōeki as:

[...] far from a "mutant" in the stream of the evolution of Japanese thought. He has been shown, rather, to be well within the tradition of Asian thought and the variation of that tradition which is Japanese thought. [...] Ando Shoeki is testimony to the richness and variety of the intellectual history of Asia. Specifically, his philosophy is the product of the encounter of Buddhism and traditional Chinese medical theory; in a

13 H. D. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988); Tetsuo Najita, *Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan: The Kaitokudō Merchant Academy of Osaka* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

14 Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* (London: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 184-185.

large sense, it was born from the vortex of a great variety of other streams of classical Asian thought."<sup>15</sup>

Quite positively and no doubt alluding to developments in Japanese scholarship rather than Western, Yasunaga adds that Shōeki is "no longer a 'forgotten thinker'; nor is he entirely unknowable or unknown."<sup>16</sup> Yasunaga's study is undoubtedly the grandest contribution to English-language Shōeki scholarship and it valuably points to a new interpretive angle, that of Shōeki as a "ecological philosopher." Unfortunately, however, Yasunaga's lengthy introduction does not develop that line of thinking, but instead is largely devoted to developing a narrative about Shōeki's life and thought, despite scant evidence available. Seeing Shōeki in terms of ecology is yet another interpretation reflecting the times than Shōeki's own thinking. Still, Yasunaga is not alone in this: at least one Japanese publication casts Shōeki in similar terms.<sup>17</sup>

The last major work to appear in a Western language, Jacques Joly's *Le naturel selon Andō Shōeki: Un type de discours sur la nature et la spontanéité par un maître-confucéen de l'époque Tokugawa: Andō Shōeki (1703-1762)*, examines Shōeki's understanding of nature (*shizen* 自然), which Joly considers "the starting point and the completion of Shōeki's thought."<sup>18</sup> While Joly's book

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15 Yasunaga Toshinobu, *Ando Shoeki: Social and Ecological Philosopher of Eighteenth Century Japan* (New York: Weatherhill, 1992), pp. 7-8.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 7. This writer disagrees with W. J. Boot on the question of whether Shōeki has been rightfully forgotten. In a review of Yasunaga's book, *Andō Shōeki*, Boot states, "What Shōeki wrote is impassioned, interesting, and sometimes fun to read, but not important, for the simple reason that Shōeki had few disciples, and never founded a school; in his last years he created some commotion in his native village, but that subsided after his death [...]. And then he vanished from the scene, to make a reappearance in a second-hand bookshop only in 1899." W. J. Boot, "Review of Toshinobu Yasunaga, *Andō Shōeki: Social and Ecological Philosopher of Eighteenth-Century Japan*," *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 21, 2 (Winter, 1995), p. 221. DOI: 10.2307/133109.

17 Nishimura Shunichi 西村俊一, *Nihon ekorojizumu no keifu: Andō Shōeki kara Eto Tekirei made* 日本エコロジズムの系譜：安藤昌益から江渡狄嶺まで (Tokyo: Nōsan gyoson bunka kyōkai 農山漁村文化協会, 1992).

18 Jacques Joly, *Le naturel selon Andō Shōeki: Un type de discours sur la nature et la spontanéité par un maître-confucéen de l'époque Tokugawa, Andō Shōeki (1703-1762)* (Paris: Editions Maisonneuve & Larose, 1996), p. 2.

is exceptionally objective and meticulously scholarly, it too offers interpretations that reflect national interests and so on, this time, one by a Frenchman about another. Joly's final chapter examines Shōeki and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). While certainly valid as a work of comparative philosophy, one cannot help but question how far removed it is from Norman's earlier approach. What might be said, for example, if an American scholar ended a meticulous work on Shōeki with a comparative study of his thought and that of Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826).

Space does not allow a fuller survey of publications from the last three decades addressing Shōeki. One of the most noteworthy, however, is Minamoto Ryōen's 源了圓 study of Japanese practical learning thought, *The Lineage of Practical Learning Thought* (*Jitsugaku shisō no keifu* 實學思想の系譜). Significant here is that it situates Shōeki's thinking within the main currents of Japanese thought rather than as a fascinating curiosity in relative isolation. Minamoto recognizes the many well-known dimensions of Shōeki's learning: his rejection of "feudal ideologies" (*hōkenteki ideorogii* 封建的イデオロギー); his denial of value judgments about above and below; his view of men and women as one body; and his interests in the Dutch. Most importantly, however, Minamoto offers a vision of Shōeki as a thinker whose often unique perspectives contributed to practical approaches to the problems of his day.<sup>19</sup> Considered in that respect, Shōeki was not an ivory tower intellectual so much as a concerned reform-minded thinker who hoped to transform his world through the power of his ideas and his example.<sup>20</sup>

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19 Minamoto Ryōen 源了圓, *Jitsugaku shisō no keifu* 實學思想の系譜 (Tokyo: Kodansha 講談社, 1986), pp. 121-132.

20 Also see Watanabe Hiroshi, "Anti-Urban Utopianism: The Thought of Andō Shōeki," in *A History of Japanese Political Thought, 1600-1901*, trans. by David Noble (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2012), pp. 197-215. With his chapter on Shōeki as one of the important thinkers of the Tokugawa, Watanabe's study of Tokugawa and Meiji intellectual history adds credibility and momentum to the notion that Shōeki's thinking be included in any basic narrative of modern Japanese intellectual history.

## Shōeki's Masterwork: The Shizen shin'eidō

Earlier this paper gave as a translation of *Shizen shin'eidō* 自然真營道, *The Way of the Five Processes and Unitary Generative Force Advancing and Retreating*, but did not explain why on earth Shōeki might have understood the title in that way. Simply put, Shōeki, in the title and throughout his philosophical writings either redefined words with new written forms or by attributing to established written forms, entirely new nuances. In some cases Shōeki simply coined new phrases. While using written words in this way can be viewed variously, one conceptual framework that Shōeki was certainly familiar with was that of the *Analects* 13.3 teaching about the rectification of terms (C: *zheng ming* 正名 J: *seimei*). By effecting what he construed as the right usage of language, Shōeki contributed, arguably, to the right governing of the realm. Without such a rectification, misuse of language could result in disorder and anarchy. Shōeki never claims to be following Confucius in defining and redefining terms, but he clearly suggests that without some major overhaul of language such as he proposes, that the world will be in extreme disorder. If language is reformed as he proposes, he suggests that an age of peace, order, and living truth will result.

In the opening lines of volume one, Shōeki explains the meaning of the title, *Shizen shin'eidō*, with the following remarks:

The first character, *shi* 自, refers "five" (C: *wu* 五 J: *go*). The second character, *zen* 然, refers to "processes" (C: *xing* 行 J: *gyō*). More precisely, read as a compound, *shizen* is an honorific name for the "five processes" (*gogyō* 五行). What is here called "five" is not the numeral "five." More correctly "five" refers to the ceaseless processes of "advancing and retreating" (*shintai* 進退). "One," "three," "seven," and "nine" refer to the processes of advancing within the five processes of advancing and retreating. "Two," "four," "six," and "eight" refer to the

processes of retreating within the five processes of advancing and retreating. Accordingly, "one," "two," "three," and "four," refer to the processes of advancing and retreating in the midst of advancing, while "six," "seven," "eight," and "nine" refer to the processes of advancing and retreating in the midst of retreating. "Ten" refers to what is not fathomed (*fusoku* 不測), to things that have names (C: *ming* 名 J: *mei*), but no form (*katachi nashi* 形無し). "Five" alone is in the midst of the numbers, standing as their master (*shu* 主). It alone never changes (轉ずること無し). Therefore, "five" is the [point of] truth and authenticity with things that change (*tenchū no shin nari* 轉中の真なり).

Because "five" is truth and authenticity, it is never mixed, nor can it be departed from recklessly. Therefore it naturally advances and retreats well. Accordingly, "five" is the central truth (*chūshin* 中真), and advancing and retreating are the "motions" (*kan* 感) of the truth. What moves is the cause of truth. Because of motion, this gives rise to generative force (C: *qi* 氣 J: *ki*). Due to generative force becoming full, advancing and retreating occurs. For this reason, there is no place that the fullness of generative force does not penetrate as it advances and retreats. This [pervasive activity of generative force] refers to the way (C: *dao* 道 J: *dō*). Therefore the way is the name of the unitary generative force (C: *yi qi* 一氣 J: *ikki*) advancing and retreating with the true and authentic spontaneous feelings of the five processes.

For this reason, "true and authentic" (*shin* 真) and "the way" (*dō* 道) refer to the "five processes." In the morning the sun rises and in the evening, the moon descends. In the morning, people arise and in the evening they sleep, as the unitary generative force advances and retreats. With this in mind, the "true and authentic" of "five centered" does not



refer to the [relative] truth that is part of what can be trusted and what is fake (信偽の信に非ず), but instead to the spontaneous truthing (*hitori shin ni shite* 自真にして) that is entirely "five" and entirely "centered" (*chū* 中).

The word *zen* 然 refers to the self-doing (*hitori suru* 自ら然る) of the five [processes]. Accordingly, the five [processes] upon spontaneously-feeling (*hitori kanjite* 自感じて), engage active processes. For that reason when there is doing, there are active processes; when active processes occur, there is doing. Therefore, active processes engage in spontaneously doing (*gyō wa zen nari* 行は然なり). Because the five spontaneously act upon things and do things, the five processes consist of spontaneous self-doing (*gogyō wa hitori suru nari* 五行は自ら然るなり). When the five processes spontaneously experience feelings, there is advancing and retreating and there is generative force. The advancing and retreating of unitary generative force is the work of truth (*shin no itonomi nari* 真の営みなり).<sup>21</sup>

In this way Shōeki's masterwork opens by defining a philosophical vocabulary that for all of its originality still recalls various iterations of Neo-Confucian metaphysics, especially those affirmed by advocates of the centrality of generative force (C: *qi* 氣 J: *ki*) as opposed to principle (C: *li* 理 J: *ri*). *Shizen*, rather than referring to nature, signifies the spontaneous activities of the five processes; *shin'ei* refers to the true and authentic work which is the advancing and retreating of the unitary generative force; the way is the name of the unitary generative force (C: *yi qi* 一氣 J: *ikki*) advancing and retreating with the true and authentic spontaneous feelings of the five processes. Thus Shōeki's title is

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21 Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益, *Shizen shin'eidō* 自然真營道, in Bitō Masahide 尾藤正英 and Shimazaki Takao 島崎隆夫 (eds.), *Andō Shōeki/Satō Nobuhiro* 安藤昌益・佐藤信淵, *Nihon shisō taikēi* Vol. 45 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten 岩波書店, 1977), pp. 19-20 (292).

translated here as *The Way of the Five Processes and Unitary Generative Force Advancing and Retreating*.

Much as with a more standard example, "heaven and earth," typically written as *tenchi* 天地, but which Shōeki writes as 轉定, Shōeki attempts a reinvention of writing and philosophical meaning in an effort to bypass the oppressive nature of written words as traditionally received. According to Shōeki, written words (*moji* 文字) began with the trigrams of the *Book of Changes*, but remain simply the arbitrary personal fabrications (*shisaku* 私作) of those who wrote books as a means of elevating themselves and teaching those below them so that they could establish their own personal laws (*shihō* 私法). In doing so, they "don't till the soil" (*fukō* 不耕), but "eat greedily" (*donshoku* 貪食). For that reason, Shōeki claims, they were "stealing from the way of heaven, which is the way of honest, direct cultivation of the soil (*chokkō no tendō o nusumi* 直耕の轉道を盗み). Yet they cast such thievery and disorder (*tōran* 盜亂) as governing the world-below-heaven. Thenceforth the world of robbery and disorder was established for eternity. Shōeki concludes that "writing and learning (*moji gakumon* 文字學問) are utensils (*kigu* 器具) used for thieving the way of heaven." Such people, Shōeki suggests, "don't understand that the true way is endowed with the hearth (*romen* 爐面). Therefore Shōeki declares that those who employ the written word and book learning (*moji shogaku* 文字書學) are "great enemies" (*taiteki* 大敵) of the true way.<sup>22</sup>

Shōeki next explains why he uses writing to convey his thoughts, suggesting that in order to purge the errors of the authors of old texts that he too must use written words. Casting his work in a utopian light, Shōeki suggests that by purging the roots of thievery and disorder in the words of old books that he seeks to contribute to the realization of an eternal, limitless age wherein there are no

22 Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益, "Great Preface" (*Daijo* 大序), in Nakamura Yukihiro 中村幸彦 (ed.), *Andō Shōeki / Tominaga Nakamoto / Miura Baien / Ishida Baigan / Ninomiya Sontoku / Kaiho Seiryō shū* 安藤昌益・富永仲基・三浦梅園・石田梅岩・二宮尊徳・海保青陵集, pp. 83-84.

thieves, no disorder and instead, only peace, tranquility, and living truth (*eiei mugen ni mutō muran anpei kasshin no yo* 永々無限に無盜無亂安平活真の世). In order to purge errors, Shōeki admits, he plans to use errors. After purging all errors, Shōeki claims, his writings will be useless (*muyō* 無用). Shōeki adds that literary compositions (*bun* 文) are like bowls in that once people have savored the beverages that bowls contain, the bowls themselves become useless. Similarly once people have gotten their meanings (*i o eru* 意を得る), literary compositions become useless. They have nothing more than temporary, provisional value (*kari ni mochiyuru* 假に用ゆる). In the end, however, those who are fond of literary compositions are in effect extremely confused and deranged people who are simply fond of stealing from the way.<sup>23</sup>

Shōeki's motives for language reform might recall the *Analects'* advocacy of rectifying language for the sake of realizing a well-governed world, but his thoughts about the ultimate value of words also resonate with much found in the *Zhuangzi*. In "External Things" (*Wai wu* 外物), the *Zhuangzi* explains,

The fish trap (筌) exists because of the fish; once you've gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare (蹄) exists because of the rabbit; once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words (言) exist because of meaning (意); once you've gotten the meaning (得意), you can forget the words (忘言). Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?<sup>24</sup>

The *Zhuangzi* allows that words are important: "Words are not just wind" (夫言非吹也).<sup>25</sup> But they are no more important than the message they seek to communicate. Once their meaning has been gotten—and here Shōeki and

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23 Andō Shōeki, "Great Preface," pp. 85-91.

24 Zhuangzi 莊子, *The Complete Works of the Chuang Tzu*, trans. by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 302.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Zhuangzi use virtually the same words (意を得る and 得意)—they can be forgotten. They are, to liken them to a Buddhist notion, comparable to *upaya*, or "expedient means." The latter are resorts that while perhaps false, nevertheless can lead to a positive, liberative result.

The *Zhuangzi* also questions the value of books purporting to convey the words of the sages, declaring that they can never fully capture what they seek to express. For that reason, Zhuangzi suggests that although the world might value them (世雖貴之), he does not find them worth valuing (我猶不足貴也).<sup>26</sup> The text even suggests that books recording the words of the sages include nothing more than "the dregs of the men of old" (古人之糟魄).<sup>27</sup> Condemning doctrinal use of words, the *Zhuangzi* states that creating names for things like the Confucians and Mohists do is nothing but evil (*xiong* 凶 *kyō*). Ultimately, however, the *Zhuangzi* extols the use of "goblet words" (*zhi yan* 卮言 *shigen*), or words that are "no-words" (*wu yan* 無言 *mugen*).<sup>28</sup> These "goblet words" are not used in Shōeki's writings because the latter have a definite sense of what is right and true as opposed to what is false and wrong. Goblet words, however, do not convey such a partisan perspective, but instead seek to harmonize, according to the *Zhuangzi*, all points of view in light of the heavenly equalizer (天均),<sup>29</sup> a metaphor for the *dao*.

Both the *Analects* and *Zhuangzi*, ironically enough, perhaps impacted Shōeki's thinking, but one thing is clear: in his concomitant readiness to denounce those who do not cultivate the soil as thieves guilty of crimes against the way, Shōeki's agrarianism draws from a line of thought in the *Zhuangzi*, that of the Yangist-Primitivist philosophy. Shōeki's analysis of rulers throughout East Asian history, particularly the great sage rulers of Chinese antiquity—including Yao, Shun, Yu, Kings Wen and Wu, the Duke of Zhou and a host of others—

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26 Ibid., p. 152.

27 Ibid., p. 272.

28 Ibid., pp. 303-304.

29 Ibid., p. 41.

asserts that they were simply thieving the way in setting themselves above others, consuming grain without engaging in agricultural work themselves. This is one of the most frequently repeated themes in Shōeki's writings and one that E. H. Norman found attractive in his early studies of Shōeki. Yet when asked whether presenting such analyses amounted to "slandering the sages," Shōeki replied that Laozi 老子 had done something similar in the *Daodejing* (道德經), chapter 18, where that text suggests, "When the great way declined, there were discussions of humaneness and righteousness" (大道廢, 有仁義). Laozi might have been influential as well, but the *Zhuangzi* made the far bolder assertions so clearly echoed throughout Shōeki's writings. In the writings of Yangists and Primitivist, the *Zhuangzi* declares, for example, that the sages were great thieves. In its chapter, "Robber Zhi," the *Zhuangzi* portrays the infamous robber lecturing Confucius on who the real thieves of human history had been. Shortly after Confucius arrives, Robber Zhi asks one of his associates to tell Confucius the following:

Well isn't this that deceitful Kong Qiu [Confucius] from the state of Lu! [...] You make up words, spin tales, dishing up crazy praise for kings Wen and Wu. Wearing a cap that looks like the branch of a tree and a waist-belt made from the hide of a dead ox, with great verbosity you spout off erroneous explanations. You eat without ever plowing (*bu geng er shi* 不耕而食), clothe yourself without ever weaving (*bu zhi er yi* 不織而衣). Smacking your lips and drumming your tongue, you fabricate notions of "right" or "wrong," confusing the rulers below heaven, keeping the scholars below heaven from returning to the foundations of things, absurdly fabricating notions of "filial piety" and "brotherliness," hoping for good fortune with feudal masters or the wealthy and

respected! Your crimes (*zui* 罪) are extremely serious. Go home this moment! Otherwise I will add your liver to dinner this evening.<sup>30</sup>

This passage portrays Robber Zhi charging Confucius with eating without plowing, and wearing clothes that he has not woven. The first charge, eating without cultivating, is the same one that Shōeki makes against any number of rulers, sages, and authority figures. The charge appears in the *Zhuangzi* just once, but the logic of it is repeated in the "Robber Zhi" chapter as well as in other chapters identified as part of the Yangists or Primitivists writings.

Another example of the *Zhuangzi's* biting critique comes again from Robber Zhi as he lectures Confucius:

In the age of Shennong, the people lay down peaceful and easy, and woke up wide-eyed and blank. They knew their mothers but not their fathers, and lived side by side with the elk and the deer. They plowed for food, wove their clothing, and had no thought in their hearts of harming one another. This was perfect virtue at its height.

But the Yellow Emperor could not attain such virtue. [...] Tang banished his sovereign, King Wu murdered his sovereign Zhou. From this point on, the strong dominated the weak and the many abused the few. Since the time of Tang and Wu, all rulers have been followers of these rebellious men. Now you cultivate the way of Wen and Wu. [...] There is no worse robber in the world than you. Why is it that all-below-heaven do not call you Robber Qiu if they call me Robber Zhi?<sup>31</sup>

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30 Hong Ye 洪業 (ed.), *Zhuangzi yinde* [A Concordance to Chuang Tzu] 莊子引得, Harvard Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement no. 20 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 80.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

After noting how Laozi criticized the sages, Shōeki added that Zhuangzi, in the "Outer Chapters" (外篇), had "called the sages thieves." The "Robber Zhi" chapter is part of the "Miscellaneous Chapters" (雜篇), but Shōeki is correct that in several of the "Outer Chapters" the *Zhuangzi* suggests that with the appearance of sages and rulers, the world degenerated, implying that the time before was an age of peace and innocence. While these themes are evident in the Outer Chapters and Miscellaneous Chapters, they are not nearly as much so in the "Inner Chapters" (內篇) of the *Zhuangzi*, leading many scholars to see them as the product of a writer or writers who had a different philosophical take on things. The opening chapters of the Outer Chapters, according to A. C. Graham's analysis of the *Zhuangzi*, were produced by a thinker identifiable as the primitivist, "an extremist who despises the whole of moral and aesthetic culture. The primitivist, according to Graham, wants to revert to the simplest mode of life, undisturbed by the temptations of luxury and sophistication, intellectual abstraction, above all by Confucian and Mohist moralism." Graham notes that the primitivist associates a kind of cosmic power with the virtue of ordinary people to "feed and clothe themselves."<sup>32</sup> Thus "Horses' Hoofs" (馬蹄), one of the opening chapters of the Outer Chapters, includes the following verse extolling weaving clothes and cultivating one's own food.

By weaving their clothes (織而衣) and cultivating their food (耕而食)

This is called sharing in virtue (是謂同德)

In oneness and without partisanship (一而不黨)

The name for it is the heaven [conferred] liberation (命曰天放).<sup>33</sup>

32 Zhuangzi, *Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzu*, trans. by A. C. Graham (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 197-199. Before Graham, a similar analysis of the *Zhuangzi* appeared, in Japanese, with Fukunaga Mitsuji 福永光司, *Sōshi gaihen 莊子：外篇*, Chūgoku kotensen, Vol. 8 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1966), pp. 3-16. Questions regarding the various layers of authorship in the *Zhuangzi* have circulated among Chinese and East Asian scholars for over a millennium.

33 Hong Ye (ed.), *Zhuangzi yinde*, p. 23.

Graham associates the primitivist writings with a somewhat obscure group called "the School of the Tillers" (*Nongjia* 農家), one extolling a "primitive utopia" wherein "everyone is required to support himself by his own labor, and in which the ruler ploughs side by side with his people and does not raise taxes, issue decrees, punish or go to war, and government, [...] has no apparent function except to foster agriculture and keep the prices of grain constant." Graham relates that the only known spokesperson for *Nongjia* was Xuxing, a 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. leader of a small community of farmers and craftsmen who professed the doctrine of Shennong which, "required the ruler to plough with his own hands, and talked about keeping prices constant." Graham adds that while the primitivist writings are mostly in the first chapters of the Outer Chapters, some appear in the "Robber Zhi" chapter as well.<sup>34</sup>

According to Graham's analysis of authorship of the *Zhuangzi*, the "Robber Zhi" chapter belongs to the Yangist miscellany, a section of the text expounding Yangism, a philosophy that caters to those who prefer the simple pleasures of private life to the dangerous vicissitudes of office. Yet Graham otherwise notes that references in passing to Robber Zhi are found in the Primitivist chapters,<sup>35</sup> suggesting that in the case of Robber Zhi that there might be some overlap of the Primitivist and the Yangist perspectives. In "Robber Zhi," the opening passage extolls "cultivating one's own food and weaving one's own clothes," and moreover condemns Confucius as one who "eats without cultivating food, is clothed but does not weave." Clearly there are thematic continuities between the "Robber Zhi" chapter and Shōeki's *Shizen shin'eidō* relating to the importance of tilling one's own food and weaving one's own clothes, and the wrongheadedness of eating without tilling and wearing clothes that one has not woven. Doing the latter, according to Robber Zhi, makes one a thief; in Shōeki's words, doing so amounts to "thieving the way of heaven." There are, however, also significant

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34 *Zhuangzi, Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzu*, trans. by A. C. Graham, pp. 198-199.

35 *Ibid.*



differences: the *Zhuangzi's* Primitivist and Yangist writings praise Shennong as the good ruler of antiquity who taught people to cultivate food and weave clothing. Shōeki does not endorse this, claiming instead that those activities were part of the natural way of the cosmos, ones that did not require a teacher for them to be understood by humanity. Additionally, Shōeki turns the *Zhuangzi's* critique of Confucius against Zhuangzi himself, noting that he too thieved the way of heaven by eating without tilling and wearing clothing that he had not woven. In doing so, Shōeki suggests that Zhuangzi did not live up to his own rather elementary ideals. That aside, the similarities between the *Zhuangzi's* Primitivist-Yangist texts, especially the "Robber Zhi" chapter, and Shōeki's very pro-agrarian philosophy suggest that the latter might well be viewed, within an East Asian context, as a Japanese expression of Primitivist-Yangist views extolling direct involvement in cultivating food, weaving clothes, and living a life as devoted to self-sufficiency as possible. Doing so, in Shōeki's view, is the natural way of the cosmic processes of change.

### **Mozi's Critiques of Ritual and Music**

One aspect of Shōeki's philosophy has more conspicuous roots in another ancient Chinese philosophical text, that of the *Mozi* 墨子. Shōeki condemns a number of things, including music, tobacco, scholarly learning, poetry, dance, Noh drama, the tea ceremony, *go*, backgammon, gambling, drinking, womanizing, the shamisen, Buddhist teachings, even decorative buckets, ornamental gardens, and fancy furnishings. In doing so, Shōeki emphasizes that these keep people from cultivating food that they eat and weaving clothes that they wear. In this respect, Shōeki very much sounds like the *Mozi* with its more limited condemnation of rites and music as wasteful activities that don't promote the overall welfare of humanity. The *Mozi* did not insist that rulers till the fields and weave garments, but he did argue that commodities should be kept simple and in

line with their purpose. Thus, the purpose of clothing is to keep the body warm and sheltered. Clothes need do no more than that, meaning that weavers should not cultivate fashion and flourish in clothing styles apart from those related to the basic functions of clothes. In this way, resources will not be wasted. Consequently, the state will grow and prosper. Thus the *Mozi* appealed to the example of the ancient sage kings who tried to keep things simple in suggesting that the work of artisans and craftspeople be limited to what is necessary for the people to be satisfied, without concern for items causing additional expense. But rather than engage in the activities of tilling and weaving themselves, the *Mozi's* rulers decree that things be kept basic so that the resources of the realm are not wasted. Similarly, funerals were to be limited in terms of the shrouds allowed to wrap the corpse and caskets used to bury the dead. The thinking again was that the resources of the realm not be wasted. For that reason, the *Mozi* declared that activities that do not profit the people should be forbidden by sage kings (不加民利者, 聖王弗爲). In condemning music and dance, the *Mozi* does note how some dancers and musicians, while insisting on being well fed and clothed, do not contribute to cultivating food or weaving clothes, but instead "feed off of other people's [labor]" (食乎人). Repeatedly the *Mozi* analyzes the pleasures of dance and music in terms of what is required to keep performers in good shape, and the distractions that dance and music prompt in relation to people at large, keeping them from rising early and retiring at night after a productive day of tilling or weaving. Therefore, the *Mozi* states that the ruler should declare music wrong (爲樂非也).

The *Mozi's* emphasis on cultivating food and weaving clothing, if not for oneself, then by enough people to provide for the best interests and benefits of all, is akin to that of Shōeki, but the crucial difference is that the *Mozi* never ventures to condemn rulers as thieves of the way in quite the terms that the *Zhuangzi* and Shōeki do. Granted, the *Mozi* does criticize Confucian scholars in two of its chapters, "Against Confucians" (非儒), where Confucians are cast as so indolent that they refuse to work, forcing them to beg for grain during much of

the year. When the harvest is in, the Confucians begin presiding over funeral ceremonies, gaining thereby enough food to keep them well fed for months. But in all cases, Confucians are depicted as relying on the wealth and produce of others in order to survive. While Confucius and Confucians are portrayed as hypocrites, indolent, misguided and misleading individuals, the *Mozi* never takes the bold step of condemning them for thieving the way, nor does it seek to do away with all who are learned. Rather, the *Mozi* suggests that if those with learning, the literate (士), are not preserved, then the state will be ruined (不存其士, 則亡國矣). Nor does it assert that the ancient sage kings whom Confucians typically extoll were guilty of thieving the way because they did not till the fields and weave their own clothing. Instead, the *Mozi* argues that humanity cannot do without standards and laws (不可以無法儀) if it is to be successful with anything. Furthermore, some of the very ancient sages—Yu 禹, Tang 湯, Wen 文, and Wu 武—whom Shōeki took pains to condemn for thieving the way, the *Mozi* praises for loving and benefiting the people (愛人利人). If Shōeki was familiar with the *Mozi*, it is not readily apparent in his writings where references to many scholarly affiliations are made, but virtually none to the *Mozi*.

### **Evaluating Shōeki's Agrarianism: Mencius' Critique of Primitivism**

Considered from a Confucian perspective, Shōeki's thought is an iconoclastic primitivistic expression of themes earlier developed in the *Zhuangzi*, especially the "Robber Zhi" chapter. Curiously, while Shōeki's thought resonated with that of Robber Zhi, it seems to have been formulated with little awareness of the *Mencius*' (C: *Mengzi* 孟子 J: *Mōshi*) analyses of the nature of work, the division of labor, and the responsibilities of rulers and those ruled. This is especially odd given that the *Mencius*' thinking on these matters developed in response to what can be considered yet another expression of Primitivist

thinking, this time not by a fictitious character haranguing Confucius, but rather from a presumably historical representative of ancient Chinese Primitivism. Needless to say, Mencius cannot be construed as addressing Shōeki, but insofar as Mencius was certainly confronting the line of thinking that emphasized growing one's own food and weaving one's own garments, i.e., the Primitivist line, and that the latter is so clearly echoed in Shōeki's writings, Mencius' critique of Primitivism serves equally as a critique of Shōeki's agrarianism. Consideration of Mencius' thinking on this count, therefore, is in order.

The *Mencius* (3A/4) relates that a man from Chu 楚 named Xu Xing 許行, who claimed to be a follower of the teachings of the "Divine Farmer" (C: Shennong 神農 J: Shinnō), traveled to the state of Teng 滕, having heard that Duke Wen practiced humane government (仁政) there. Later another man, Chen Xiang 陳相, told Mencius about Xu Xing. Reportedly, Xu Xing said that Duke Wen was a good man, but maintained grain storehouses (有倉廩府庫) which "burdened his people" (厲民) for the sake of enhancing his own standing. According to Xu Xing, wise men should work the fields along with the common people and eat with them (賢者與民並耕而食). Rulers should cook their own meals in addition to governing (饗飧而治). For these reasons, Xu Xing questioned whether Duke Wen was truly a wise ruler.<sup>36</sup>

Chen Xiang relayed this to Mencius with approval. Mencius then asked if Xu Xing sowed his fields and ate what he harvested. Chen Xiang replied that he did. Next Mencius asked if Xu Xing made the clothes that he wore. Chen Xiang replied that he did not. Instead, he wore woolen clothes. Mencius asked about Xu Xing's hat and whether Xu Xing made it. Cheng Xiang replied that he traded grain for it. When Mencius asked why Xu Xing did not make his own clothing

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36 *Mencius* 3A/4; *Mengzi yinde* [A Concordance to Meng Tzu] 孟子引得, Harvard-Yenching Institute, Sinological Index Series (Beiping: Yanjing daxue, 1941), pp. 19-20. For a gender-based reading of this passage in Mencius, see Joanne D. Birdwhistell, "Against Shen Nong's Agrarian Masculinity," *Mencius and Masculinities: Dynamics of Power, Morality, and Maternal Thinking* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 39-50.

and headwear, Chen Xiang replied that doing so would take time away from farming and Xu Xing's ability to harvest a good crop. Mencius then asked about the pots, pans, and ploughs that Xu Xing used. Chen Xiang replied that he traded grain for them. Mencius followed up, somewhat sarcastically, asking if Xu Xing's devotion to tilling the soil oppressed the potters who make pots he uses, or the artisans who make the ploughs he works with. And vice versa, Mencius asked whether potters and artisans oppress farmers in trading their wares for grain. Chen Xiang denied as much and ultimately admits that one person cannot do everything.

Mencius then asks if governing the realm is a profession that might easily be combined with tilling the soil. He continues by reasoning that there is "the work of great men" (大人之事) and "the work of small people" (小人之事). Therefore, Mencius adds, it has been said, "Some toil with their minds (或勞心), while others toil with their physical strength (或勞力). Those who work with their minds govern humanity (勞心者治人), while those who toil with physical strength are governed by them (勞力者治於人). Those governed by others feed them (治於人者食人), while those who govern others are fed by those they govern (治人者食於人). This, according to Mencius, is the right principle that pervades all below heaven (天下之通義也).<sup>37</sup>

Mencius questions whether a diversified economy can be sustained if everyone, including those ruling, is expected to till the fields, cook their meals, and do whatever work their lives demand. He makes his point by way of Xu Xing, the advocate of self-sufficiency, noting that Xu Xing does not do all that he requires. If Shōeki factors this critique into his agrarian equation, he does so only insofar as he allows that some people might devote themselves to gathering wood, for example, while others, depending on where they live and the resources nearby, might engage in other activities. Shōeki thus states:

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37 *Mencius* 3A/4, p. 20.

The duties of the men of the plains consist of producing the ten grains in abundance; the duties of the men of the mountain villages consist of gathering firewood to supply the flat lands; the duties of the men of the sea-coasts consist of fishing to supply the flat lands. The firewood, the ten grains, and the many fishes are all exchanged. People in the mountain villages can consume firewood, cereals, and fish, and build houses. People on the sea-coasts can also build houses, eat cereals, and fish. The same is true of the people in the plains. There is neither surplus in the plains, nor shortages in the mountain villages and the sea-coasts. There is neither affluence here nor poverty there. There is no distinction between high and low in any place. [...] There is no one above, there is no exploitation of those below for luxury and greed. There is no one below so there is no flattery and deception of those above. Hence there is neither malice nor quarrels, and no rebellious armies. Sincere there is no one above, no one makes laws to punish those below. Since there is no one below, there is no one to violate the laws of those above and be punished by them [...]. Since there are no selfish teachings about the five constant virtues, the five relationships, and the four classes, there are no distinctions between the sages and the foolish. There are no samurai who criticize the misconduct of the common people and strike them on their heads [...]. The world is a unity [...] Heaven and earth create and man cultivates the soil. [...] This is the state of things in the world of nature.<sup>38</sup>

Shōeki's thought went through various iterations, some implying that there would be no rulers, others suggesting that there might be rulers, but rulers whose engagement in community labor was so complete that it would appear that there was no ruler at all. With the above passage, the sanctity of tilling the soil, so often cited as the litmus test for one's authentic existence, is qualified with

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38 Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益, "Shizen no yo ron 自然の世論," *Shizen shin'eidō 自然真營道*, Vol. 25, quoted from Maruyama Masao, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, p. 261.

recognition that for certain people living in one area, by the seashore, for example, there is no sense in pontificating about tilling the soil and growing one's own grain. Similarly, for those residing on rugged mountainous terrain, tilling the fields is not a realistic option. Whether on the basis of reading the *Mencius* or not, Shōeki in his most realistic, practical moments, realized that there would need to be a division of labor and something of an exchange-based economy. Once this line has been crossed, however, one can't help but wonder where it would end. After all, Shōeki was a physician. While he might have tilled the soil, it is doubtful that he would have turned away patients who needed medical attention to go weed his fields. Shōeki must have understood "direct tilling" (*chokkō* 直耕), not in a literal sense, but in a manner that engaged all in work that could be shared, to one degree or another, by all. If so, then his philosophical system stands as one emphasizing the need for mutual respect and recognition of the integrity, as living creatures in productive process, of all together, without arrogance or condescension.♦

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