



A Plan for Tasks at Hand: Aizawa Seishisai's "Jimusaku"

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A Plan for Tasks at Hand

Aizawa Seishisai's *Jimusaku*

DONALD KEENE

AIZAWA SEISHISAI 会沢正志斎 (1782–1863), a Confucian scholar of the Mito 水戸 domain, is widely known for his advocacy of views encapsulated in the slogan of the 1850s and 1860s “Revere the Emperor, Repel the Barbarians” (*sonnō jōi* 尊王攘夷). His long essay *Shinron* 新論 (New Theses), submitted in 1825 to Tokugawa Narinobu 徳川斉脩, the eighth Mito daimyo, presented an account of the course of Japanese history from the founding of the nation by the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, whom Aizawa credited with having established the fundamental elements (*kokutai* 国体) of the Japanese polity.¹ Amaterasu had conveyed to her descendants, the emperors, the two essential features of human conduct, loyalty to the ruler and filial piety towards parents. She otherwise benefited the populace by providing them with food (notably rice) to allay hunger and by teaching them to weave clothing that would keep them warm.

Despite this unparalleled foundation, from antiquity on the polity had experienced several periods of upheaval and decline and at present faced another impending crisis. One reason for this situation was the subversive effects of foreign doctrines such as Buddhism and Christianity, which led astray the populace, gullible and easily seduced by the allure of what was new and exotic. In addition, indulgence in luxuries had sapped the financial resources of the nation and the military class, while long-term peace and the consequences of people having grown accustomed to an easy life had undermined military readiness. In these circumstances, Aizawa warned in *Shinron*, the growing interest the Western barbarians, notably the Russians, showed in Japan posed an imminent threat. Countering it required improving military readiness and constant vigilance against

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¹ *Shinron* has been translated into English by Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, who also provides an extended analysis of Aizawa's thought. I owe much in this introduction to Wakabayashi's study; see Wakabayashi 1986. No one translation of the term *kokutai* will work in every context. Wakabayashi translates *kokutai* as used by Aizawa as “the essence of a nation,” or “what is essential to make a people into a nation” (p. 13). *Sources of Japanese Tradition* translates it as “national substance” (see vol. 2, pp. 622–23). For modern contexts, “national polity” is frequently used.

attempted incursions and the dangers posed by insidious foreign doctrines. A further essential step was to shore up the spiritual foundations of the nation by restoring the unity of governance and ritual established under the early emperors. Reverence for the emperor by the entire nation, headed by the shogun and bakufu, would have the chain effect of encouraging loyalty and service to superiors throughout the social order, from top to bottom. It thereby would help consolidate the foundations of the bakufu-domain system of rule as well as provide a bulwark against infiltration from without.

In the years after Aizawa wrote *Shinron*, the ideal of *sonnō jōi* became firmly linked to the Mito school of Confucianism, and the combined term was enshrined in *Kōdōkanki* 弘道館記, the statement of the principles of the domain school formulated in 1838 under the name of the ninth daimyo, Nariaki 斉昭.² At the order of Narinobu, *Shinron* had initially circulated only in manuscript form. Appearing subsequently in several movable-type woodblock editions that did not disclose the name of the author, it finally was published openly under Aizawa's name in 1857. Many of those, inside and outside the domain, who took part in the *sonnō jōi* movement following Perry's arrival in 1853 drew inspiration from it as they criticized the bakufu for yielding to the demands of the Western powers and opposed with both words and action the opening of the country. Ironically, however, in the very period when *Shinron* and other Mito writings were fueling the *sonnō jōi* movement, Aizawa himself took a major step away from the notion of *jōi* as interpreted and applied by the activists. In 1862 he wrote the brief essay *Jimusaku* 時務策 (A Plan for Tasks at Hand), translated below, in which he warned against trying to implement a policy of physical expulsion and advocated instead following through on the decision to open the country.

What lay behind this seemingly radical shift? *Sonnō jōi* proponents at the time attributed it to senility (Aizawa was then eighty years old), and indeed the broader perspective that came from a life marked by sharp turns in political fortune may have had something to do with it. Closely linked to Nariaki and the reform group within the domain, Aizawa had risen from relatively obscure origins to the position of head professor at the Kōdōkan and had also been granted a substantial rank and stipend. When, however, bakufu suspicions over various of Nariaki's policies resulted in 1844 in the daimyo being forced into retirement, Aizawa, too, suffered a reversal of circumstances, and he spent the years from 1846 to 1849 in virtual imprisonment. The challenges presented by Perry's arrival led the bakufu leaders of the day to restore Nariaki to favor, and in 1853, Aizawa, then seventy-one years old, resumed his position at the Kōdōkan. But increasingly polarized politics within both the bakufu and domain soon brought another reverse. Nariaki was again ordered into retirement in 1858 for opposing the decision of the leading bakufu official Ii Naosuke 井伊直弼 to proceed with

² For a discussion of the founding of the Kōdōkan, which actually opened in 1841, and other aspects of the reform program pursued under Nariaki, see Koschmann 1987.

signing the Treaty of Commerce and Friendship with the United States despite having failed to secure imperial agreement. Activists responded by obtaining a highly irregular edict from the court addressed directly to Mito. Issued in the eighth month of 1858, the edict criticized Ii's signing of the treaty and autocratic action against his opponents and called upon the bakufu to reform its procedures, consult with Mito and other leading domains, and resist the arrogant demands of the barbarians. A separate addendum commanded Mito to distribute the edict to the other domains.³ Bakufu officials, who had received a copy of the edict and the command to Mito, immediately forbade the domain to distribute the edict and, in retaliation against those held to be responsible, began the harsh crack-down known from the era name as the "Ansei purge." The bakufu also brought pressure on the court to issue a second order commanding the edict's return, and once the order had been secured at the end of 1859, instructed Mito to hand the edict over at once to the bakufu.

These events and their aftermath resulted in a further splintering of positions within the domain that would culminate eventually in bloody factional strife.⁴ Many associated with the reform faction initially favored carrying out the first order to distribute the imperial edict, and to rally support for the measures it specified and forestall any attempt to return it, *sonjō* advocates set up a series of large-scale blockades on the road between Mito and Edo. Some among them turned eventually to direct violence, assassinating Ii in the third month of 1860 and attacking other bakufu officials in early 1862.⁵

Aizawa, on the other hand, from the beginning took a much more cautious stance. The irregular form of the edict, directed to Mito rather than the bakufu, abrogated the proper hierarchical order. Acting on it, Aizawa held, would only further worsen relations between the bakufu and domain, perhaps irretrievably. He also criticized the edict's content as dangerously shortsighted. Given the military strength of the Western powers, complete rejection of the demands of the barbarians and their physical expulsion was no longer a realistic option. Should pursuit of such a goal fracture the unity between the court and bakufu, and the barbarians take advantage of this state of affairs, the result might well be the destruction of both the imperial nation (*tenchō* 天朝) and the *kokutai*. Aizawa reiterated these points on several occasions in the months after Mito received the edict, and after the bakufu succeeded in getting the court to order its return, he proposed a compromise solution whereby the domain would return the edict directly to the court instead of simply handing it over to the bakufu. The moderate elements within the reform faction came to side with Aizawa on this point,

³ The edict is known, from the name of the year in the sexagenary cycle, as the "secret Bogo edict" (*Bogo no mitchoku* 戊午の密勅). For a detailed description of the events summarized here, see *Mito-shi shi*, vol. 2.4, pp. 962–1163. A more succinct account may be found in *Kokushi dai-jiten*, vol. 12, pp. 711–12. See also Koschmann 1987, pp. 139–43.

⁴ For a vivid picture of the impact of the tangled factional struggles on domain life, see Yamakawa 1992.

⁵ For the complexities of court-bakufu relations in 1862, see Totman 1980a, pp. 3–64.

but the proposal only deepened the rift between him and the more extreme *sonjō* elements, who remained adamantly opposed to its implementation.⁶

Focused on the reasons why physical expulsion was no longer a realistic policy option, *Jimusaku* is a further elaboration of the position Aizawa developed within the polarized context of domain and national politics in the latter part of the 1850s and the early 1860s. Yet we probably should not attribute the evolution of views evident in it simply to a more measured outlook that came with age and experience. Despite the complaints of the activists whose fervent commitment to *sonnō jōi* had been reinforced by the assertions advanced in *Shinron*, the stance Aizawa took in *Jimusaku* was not totally at odds with his earlier arguments. He had always called for adaptation to change and the needs of the time together with firm adherence to core principles. His reference in *Jimusaku* to the necessity to guard against the softness and inattention to danger that was an inevitable by-product of peace echoed earlier arguments as did his recommendation that this could be accomplished by adopting a policy of “enriching the country and building a strong military” (*fukoku kyōhei* 富国強兵). Such underlying continuities perhaps helped facilitate acceptance of the necessity to open the country.

But the shifts involved were also enormous. Aizawa began *Kōkofuken* 江湖負喧 (A Humble Report from Afar), written in 1848, twenty-three years after *Shinron* and twelve years before *Jimusaku*, with a declaration of the need to distinguish between eternal verities, which could not be changed, and areas where flexibility was essential. At that point, however, he listed adherence to a policy of seclusion in the former category together with preservation of the “fundamental principles of the state” (*kenkoku no daitai* 建国ノ大体). He presented the seclusion policy as something that, originating in the wisdom of the founder of the Tokugawa bakufu, Ieyasu, had been confirmed and fully implemented under the third shogun, Iemitsu. Writing in the aftermath of the Opium War and with a new sense that England was as formidable a potential enemy as Russia, he warned against the dangers presented by trade relations as well as the barbarian religion.⁷ In *Jimusaku*, by contrast, Aizawa moved the policy of seclusion into the area where flexibility was required. He no longer traced a total break in relations with foreign countries to Ieyasu, but instead emphasized that such a policy had been adopted under Iemitsu. Although it had been a wise policy for the time, it no longer fit the current changed circumstances, and since it was not part of the immutable order established by the founder, might appropriately be modified. Most striking is Aizawa’s changed evaluation of the problems presented by Christianity. Whereas in his earlier writings he had always been pessimistic about the capability of the populace to withstand the blandishments of the barbarian religion, he now argued that since the people were already “aware, without having to be reminded, of the falsity of the false religion,” it would be easier than in the 1630s to enforce the prohibitions against it.

⁶ *Mito-shi shi*, vol. 2.4, pp. 1020–26, 1041–42; *Mito-han shiryō*, vol. 2, pp. 260, 467–68, 477–79, 528–35.

⁷ *Kōkofuken*, pp. 441–49.

It is difficult to believe that Aizawa was completely sincere in this reevaluation of the spiritual firmness of the populace, although he likely continued to look to the promotion of the unity of ritual and governance to inculcate a correct orientation and thus provide a safeguard against the threat of Christianity. What presumably led him to subordinate his fear of Christianity was his concern about a more immediate threat: that pursuit of *jōi* would lead to destruction of the imperial nation and the *kokutai*. In shifting for such reasons from a *jōi* to a *kaikoku* position, Aizawa prefigured in a number of significant ways the similar leap made after the fall of the bakufu by many *sonnō jōi* activists, including the leaders of the new Meiji government.⁸ They, too, would call for combining “opening the country” with the adoption of policies of “enriching the country and building a strong military” and “the unity of ritual and governance.” Yet, they also went where Aizawa would not. Embedded in the Mito attempt to fuse reverence for the emperor with respect for the bakufu was an inherent contradiction. The fratricidal split of the Mito *sonnō jōi* faction resulted in part from the growing difficulty of holding together the two positions. The activists who, inspired in considerable measure by Aizawa’s earlier writings, pushed through the Restoration, resolved the dilemma by jettisoning respect for the bakufu. Aizawa, however, remained to the end committed to the unity of both positions. For him, preservation of the imperial nation and the *kokutai* meant preservation of the bakufu and the place of the domain within the Tokugawa order as well as the centrality of the imperial line. As much as anything else, it was perhaps the hope of preventing an irreparable fissure between the bakufu and the court that underlay his turn to advocacy of the necessity of opening the country.



The following translation is based on the text included in *Mitogaku* 水戸学, volume 53 of *Nihon shisō taikei*, edited by Imai Usaburō 今井宇三郎, Seya Yoshihiko 瀬谷義彦, and Bitō Masahide 尾藤正英, pp. 362–67.

⁸ Conrad Totman has written an excellent article on this subject; see Totman 1980b.

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AIZAWA SEISHISAI

TRANSLATED BY DONALD KEENE

THE STRICT law in effect in our country that forbids persons from foreign countries to visit our own is obviously of the highest importance to national defense, but events have recently occurred that make it unavoidable to take a more far-sighted view of the changes between past and present. In Tōshōgū's 東照宮 day, he in his wisdom saw the grave spiritual danger to our people in the false teachings from the West.⁹ Determined to wipe out every last believer, he promulgated an edict prohibiting the false religion. This was still not sufficient to extirpate this religion, but after the uprising of the Kan'ei era [1624–1643],¹⁰ the government totally broke off relations with foreign countries. This decree was of the utmost severity, and it has remained a strict policy of the government to this day. However, in recent years foreign barbarians have again and again come to request relations with us. The bakufu surely was not unaware of the danger involved in establishing such relations, but it must have decided, in view of the present situation, to adopt an expedient.¹¹ In governing the country it is essential to take into account prevailing conditions.

In Tōshōgū's day the strength of our country was at its peak, and other countries were not yet so powerful. Followers of the false religion may have beguiled others, but they had not yet reached the extreme of insurrection. For this reason, he did not totally prohibit relations with foreign countries, and Japan continued to have relations with some. With the uprising of the Shimabara 島原 bandits, however, it became clear how serious a danger it was to permit foreigners to come and spy on our country. New edicts of greater severity, added to Tōshōgū's, completely severed relations with all foreign countries. This was a measure suited to the time, one in keeping with the principle of adjusting to changed circumstances.

⁹ Tōshōgū is Tokugawa Ieyasu, who in 1612 issued an edict banning Christianity. In the following year another order banished Catholic priests from Japan.

¹⁰ A reference to the uprising of Christian converts at Shimabara 島原 in the fourteenth year of Kan'ei (1637).

¹¹ A reference to the treaties signed by the bakufu with the United States and other countries in 1854, followed by the further concessions made by the bakufu in 1857.

In recent years, however, foreign countries have become extremely powerful, and they have formed an alliance that all have joined. This is similar to what happened in the Spring and Autumn era when the hegemon Duke Huan 桓 of Qi 齊 and Duke Wen 文 of Jin 晉 in turn organized the feudal lords into an alliance under their leadership.¹² If any among the lords refused to join the alliance, they were attacked by the assembled forces of the others. The result was that those who refused to join the alliance were unable to stand alone and preserve their states for a single day. The prevailing tendency among foreign countries today is similar. If we do not enter into friendly relations with foreign countries, we will make them all our enemies, and it will be difficult to stand alone against them. The situation is quite unlike that of the Kan'ei era. We now have no choice but to enter into friendly relations with foreign countries.

Once friendly relations are established, however, and there is no immediate menace from abroad, our people may become indolent and our military strength wane, inviting the contempt of other countries. If that should happen, there is no telling what they may willfully demand. But if the policy of *fukoku kyōhei* is practiced and we polish our fighting spirit, keeping ourselves ready and determined to destroy the foreigners quickly if ever they break the peace, we need not fear their empty threats. The country will not fall into a debilitated state and will be capable of responding to any untoward event.

To be sure, if we enter into friendly relations with the foreigners, there is a danger that this will make it easy for the heathen religion to infiltrate the country. [But the situation is different from what it was in the Kan'ei era.] In the Kan'ei era the poison of the heathen religion had been seeping for a long time into people's hearts, and it had spread rampantly throughout the country, making it difficult to suppress. At present, people throughout the country are aware, without having to be reminded, of the falsity of the false religion. This makes it easier to prohibit this religion than it was in the Kan'ei era. The heathen religion is not yet rampant. We must nip it in the bud and keep it from growing; this is a most urgent necessity. This has long been my opinion, but I shall not indulge in discussing it here.¹³

Our hot-blooded young men assert that if they take on powerful enemy forces, they will, by crushing them, display to the whole world the bravery of the Divine Realm; but the art of war teaches us that unless one knows the enemy and knows oneself, victory is not possible. The firearms now employed by foreign countries have become increasingly effective in recent years, and victory and defeat are determined by the effectiveness with which weapons are used, regardless whether at close quarters or at a distance. This is the first reason why we cannot be sure of victory, no matter how brave our men may be.

¹² Dukes Huan and Wen were among the so-called "five hegemon" who, as the Zhou dynasty continued to decline, attempted to stabilize the political situation by organizing the feudal lords under their own leadership.

¹³ Apart from works such as *Shinron*, Aizawa wrote a number of specifically anti-Christian tracts, including two dating from the early 1850s.

The bravery of the men of the Divine Realm is not open to question, but peace has lasted a long time, and valiant warriors are fewer than in the past. By and large our forces are also weaker physically. Accustomed as they are to delicious food and warm clothes, they cannot endure cold, heat, wind, or rain, and they have not learned how to perform on the battlefield. Their commanding officers for the most part are elegantly dressed, pampered gentlemen who have inherited their posts and know nothing about warfare. Those who discuss tactics cling to abstract formulas from the remote past and are ignorant of practical application. If they were suddenly summoned to the battlefield, it would be like people from a mountain village trying to steer a ship.¹⁴ When things do not go smoothly, they will simply fold their arms in futility, too distracted to take suitable action. It is all very well to dismiss the foreigners as ignorant barbarians, but they have been tested in the actual combat of hundreds of battles; they have been trained in the art of using soldiers; their firearms are accurate and can stop an enemy hundreds of paces away. Unless we have resourceful stratagems to deal with them, this is a second reason why we cannot be certain of victory, no matter how brave we may be.

What the sage emperor accords the greatest importance is the lives of the people. I humbly venture to presume that he would find it intolerable should the lives of the people be threatened because of an outburst of anger, without consideration of the uncertainty of victory and without thought of the hardships a war would bring the people. That some hot-tempered young men, moved by their private indignation seek, though they are his subjects, to intimidate the emperor and trick him into taking the path of inhumanity—should not these men shrink in their hearts from such deception?¹⁵ What if war should break out and a series of disasters follow with no solution? Victory or defeat in war are, after all, unpredictable, and history contains not a few instances of defeats in such circumstances. If by some chance, the leaders of our forces make mistakes and we are defeated, at such a time, even if they are not evil men like Qin Gui 秦檜,¹⁶ our leaders, dismayed by this temporary defeat, may sue for peace. This would be tantamount to asking to surrender. In such cases, it is the custom in the West for

¹⁴ In other words, they have no firsthand knowledge of tactics and weapons, just as people who live in the mountains know nothing about ships.

¹⁵ Presumably Aizawa refers here to the heightened *sonnō jōi* activism centered on Kyoto in the early 1860s. In the intercalary eighth month of 1862, the same period in which he composed *Jimusaku*, he wrote a letter to a fellow adherent of the moderate wing of the Mito reform faction in which he made a number of the same points. Noting that the bakufu had had no choice but to enter into friendly relations with the foreign powers, he continued, “If in these circumstances, it comes to happen that Kyoto breaks off friendly relations, the foreign countries will take Kyoto as their enemy, and Kyoto will receive the brunt of their enmity. The court nobility seem not to recognize this situation, heedlessly crying *jōi, jōi*.” *Mito-han shiryō*, vol. 3, p. 211.

¹⁶ Chief minister of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 of the Southern Song, Qin Gui (1090–1155), believing that further warfare with the Jin (Jurchen) would lead to disaster, sought peace with this non-Chinese tribe. In 1141 he secretly put to death Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103–1141), a loyal general who had sought to drive the Jin from the northern half of the country. Yue Fei came to be worshipped as a god, but Qin Gui was despised as a treacherous minister.

the victor to demand compensation for the expenses of the war. It may be impossible for our country to pay the sum demanded. If this should happen, it would first of all create a blemish on the name of "Empire" (*teikoku* 帝国), long respectfully accorded the Divine Realm by all countries;¹⁷ this would be an unspeakable disgrace to our *kokutai*. It is just as they say: "If a man takes no thought about what is distant, he will find sorrow near at hand."¹⁸ Should we not give due consideration to this danger?

A certain person says, "Even if we suffer a setback because of the blunder of some military leader, this would not constitute a life-and-death matter for the country. We definitely should not make peace."

I reply, "The responsibility for deciding the fate of the country rests with those above. We who stand below may discuss the rights and wrongs of a situation, but we cannot have the final say in the course of action to be taken. My point is that if those above happen to sue for peace following a defeat, the consequences may well be unfortunate. They should therefore consider carefully the possible consequences before they take up arms. I do not mean that they should sue for peace if they suffer a defeat."

Another asserts, "It will disgrace the Divine Realm if we contravene the established statutes of our country and take up friendly relations with foreigners. We must uphold our laws to the death. In the Bun'ei and Kōan eras,¹⁹ we beheaded the Mongol envoys. The entire country, moved by desperate resolve, together extirpated the enemy. A man like Yue Fei of the Song, vowing to slaughter the Jin barbarians and avenge his country's shame, made up his mind to fight.²⁰ The entire populace, following these examples of righteous action, should renounce life and invite death. We haven't the leisure to worry over the lives of the people."

I reply, "The edict of the Kan'ei era completely breaking off relations with foreign countries was a good law for the age, but it did not originate with the court nor was it promulgated by Tōshōgū. It was promulgated in response to the particular circumstances of the Kan'ei era. It might be supposed that this law is immutable, not subject to change for generations to come, but it is inevitable at times, when the general situation in the whole world has completely changed, that a law be relaxed or strengthened; surely this cannot be said to be unqualifiedly a mistake. If, in the attempt to preserve one law rigidly, we refuse to take into consideration the survival or downfall of the country, or to think about other factors, this certainly will be a lopsided judgment.

"In the Bun'ei era the Mongols simply came to attack us, exulting in their strength. This was not a deep-seated crisis; it sufficed to deal them one crushing blow. During the Song, the Jin barbarians wanted to annex the entire Song lands.

¹⁷ The editors of NST 53 suggest that Aizawa refers here to the use of the term *teikoku* in the Japanese translations made by bakufu officials of various documents from foreign countries, beginning with the letter delivered by Commodore Perry in 1853.

¹⁸ *Analects* 15:11. Legge 1966, p. 225.

¹⁹ A reference to the two Mongol attacks on Japan, in 1274 and 1281.

²⁰ See note 16.

If the Song had been unable to stop this southward invasion, the entire Song territory would have been lost and the country would have perished. Summoning up desperate strength, the Song smote the arrogant barbarians and, teaching them never to attempt to invade again, avenged the disgrace of their country. They enabled the nation to escape the scourge of the barbarians, and they also fulfilled their duty to preserve the lives of the people.

“The tendency at present is for all countries abroad to enter into friendly relations, and if the Divine Realm alone elects to stand aloof and refuses to have relations with foreign countries, the attacks of the armed forces of all will be concentrated on it alone. This will surely be more than our country can endure. It is hard to call enlightened a policy that does not take into account the tendency of the times, gives no thought to laws and institutions prior to Kan’ei, and does not attempt to consider what changes occurred thereafter.

“The hotheads insist that when moral principles are involved, one must act on them, regardless what effect this may have on the fate of the nation. But the realm is the realm of all; it does not belong to any individual.²¹ One cannot say of a man that he behaves like a loyal subject if he acts as though the country were private property that he can toss lightly away. How much truer this is of our country, ruled by a sovereign who is the descendant of an unbroken line of emperors since the Great Goddess Amaterasu; none of the ten thousand countries is the equal of ours. That is why the importance of the nation is incomparable, not to be discussed on the same level as that of other countries. How can one be free to act as he pleases, saying rashly that it does not matter what effect this may have on the fate of the nation?

“To be sure, in the interest of the great principles there must sometimes be sacrifices, and on occasion this may require setting aside the lives of the people. In the present world, if we were faced with the necessity to fight, it would of course be proper to fight, but, as I have said above, this is not a time to opt casually for war. It is the height of inhumanity to insist on fighting when there is no need to fight and people are killed as a result. There can be no greater joy for the nation than for all who live within the four seas to enjoy the blessings of peace and for the people to be able to make their way in the world with peace of mind. Then what makes these hotheads seek so blithely to create an incident and to cause the people to suffer the flames of war? Below, the masses of the people now live at peace, and above, the councilors of the bakufu have made the great decision to carry out a policy of *fukoku kyōhei*, which has changed the outlook of the nation. I humbly pray that from this day forth ours will be a land of wealth and strength, and that the martial glory of the Divine Realm will shine abroad.

“Although I come from the backwoods of the east,²² I offer in my heart reverence to our sage emperor, who dwells in the highest realm of the empyrean,

²¹ A widely quoted statement attributed to the founders of the Zhou dynasty by the Chinese military classic *Liutao* 六韜 and also quoted in the apocryphal “Testament of Ieyasu” (*Tōshōgū goyūikun* 東照宮御遺訓).

²² A humble reference to his belonging to the Mito domain which was east of Edo.

with the prayer that because he possesses the illustrious virtue of treasuring human life, he will discern without fail what is benevolent and what inhumane, thereby preserving the people from the flames of war and enabling them to enter into the realm of humaneness and longevity.”

I have heard a report that some of the young hotheads plan to move His Majesty to Osaka. Osaka is situated on tidal land, and this means it would be possible for foreign barbarians to stage a direct attack on the temporary palace. This would be extremely dangerous. I am sure the nobles and high-ranking officials will not go along with an ill-conceived plan so inept and reckless, but I mention it here as something I have heard.

What I have written above does not necessarily mean that I believe we must not refuse to enter into relations with foreign countries. If after we have carefully examined the situation in the different countries, a time comes when it appears we should refuse relations with them, we should do so. Moreover, I am not saying that we should never go to war. As Sonzi 孫子 wrote, it is proper to go to war if calculations beforehand, based on knowledge of factors relating to both this side and the other, indicate the chances are great this side will win. If the chances are not good, one should not go to war indiscriminately.²³ Confucius said, “I would not have him to act with me, who will unarmed attack a tiger, or cross a river without a boat, dying without regret. My associate must be the man who proceeds to action full of solicitude, who is fond of adjusting his plans, and then carries them into execution.”²⁴ Indeed, with respect to every enterprise, one should first ascertain the difficulties before one acts. It is truly dangerous to act recklessly and without any plan when confronting a tiger or a river, and in major matters, it may result in disaster for the country.

²³ An allusion to a passage in the “Shiji” 始計 (Initial Estimations) section of Sonzi’s *Bingfa* 兵法 (Art of War). See the more literal translation in Sawyer 1994, p. 42.

²⁴ Analects 7:10:3. Translation from Legge 1966, p. 82.

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