

英文 留魂録

吉田松陰 著 中川武夫 訳

NOTE ON SOUL LEFT BEHIND

by

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Preface

The present note entitled “Note on the Soul left behind” Shoin Yoshida’s (1830-1959) testamentary letter, left behind by himself. This note is directed to a particular group of people, who are his pupils studying at 松下村塾(Shokasonjyuku) ,where Shoin is the director of this private school.

The writing of this note is finished in the evening on the day before his execution by the Tokugawa Shogunate. Shoin calls his pupils colleagues, and he talks and discusses with them equally.

This note may be considered as his final lecture to his pupils, stimulating them to realize his ambition that reveres the Emperor and expels barbarians. Shoin appeals his ambition to his pupils with friendship one after another. “Burning teacher”, Shoin’s temperature is governing the mood of this note with a peculiar tone in the every nook and corner.

The most impressive part in this note is Chapter 8: Shoin, facing to his death, begins with the following sentences, “ At the moment, I can still maintain a peaceful mind, though I am in the face of death, for I am thinking about the cycle of four seasons”. Then, Shin explains that anyone has also four seasons. One who dies at ten years old has naturally four seasons. Similarly, for one who dies at twenty years old, and at thirty years old, there are four seasons. This is exactly same, for one who dies at fifty years old and one hundred years old. This is because even if one dies at any age she or he bears seeds. This is the finest part of the note in which shoin’s writing attains highly matured skill, and this notion on life and death may be a dying message affecting over our hearts even living in the present age. This note is secretly circulated among the pupils who try to succeed Shoin’s ambition, and becomes their Bible.

About half of Shoin’s pupils have survived until Meiji era, but the rest die in the middle of completing their ambition. This is a remarkable evidence for the fact that the influence by an eminent leader is extraordinarily strong and outstanding.

This note consist of only 5,000 words in Japanese, but it emits an eternal light. This means Shoin’s four seasons at thirty years old bear numeral fine seeds. It is hoped that people living in the violent shaking 21st century read this remarkable note with appreciation.

September 18, in Hakusan

Takeo Nakagawa

Even if my body is crumble into decay in the wild field of 武蔵野 (Musashino) , I will still keep the soul of Japan.

October 25, 1859

吉田 松陰 (Shoin Yoshida)

1. I have been thinking of various things since last year and my thought itself has experienced changes in many times. Among many persons, you all may know that the person who I really aim to become is 貫高¹⁾(Kanko) in 趙(Cho) or 屈平²⁾(Kutsupei) in 楚(so). This is the reason why 入江杉蔵³⁾ (Sugizo Irie) had presented me the following farewell poem: “ Although there are many gentlemen in 燕(enn) and 趙(cho), 貫高(Kanko) is the number one among them, and in 荆(kei) and 楚(so) the only man was 屈平(Kutsupei) who was worried about the future of their country, China”.

However, I had been thinking about the word ‘sincerity’, after I got the order to send me to Edo. Then, 杉蔵(Sugizo) incidentally showed me the word ‘death’ that time, and had urged me to prepare for death. However, I had not tried to think of my death, but getting a piece of plain wood cotton cloth, I had written the following phrase by 孟子⁴⁾(Mencius) “There is nothing that don’t move by sincerity” on it. I had brought the towel, on which the cotton cloth was sewn, to Edo, and put it on the wall of my room in the supreme court of the Shougunate. This is because I tried to express my will to improve our country. .

Reviewing the change of the political situations during last year, it is quite regretful that the communication between the Imperial Court and the Shougunate was not good, so that both parties could not reply each other in all sincerity. I have got an ambition, for I have believed if the magistrates of the Shougunate understand my sincerity trying to penetrate the hard wall with a whole heart, they must understand my opinions , whatever I am tiny man. However, as a proverb says “ even if small insects once they form a group, they will cover whole of a mountain”, the officials had ignored my opinions, so that I have spent the time until now in vein. This is caused by the lack of my virtue, I cannot blame and think ill of anyone.

1) 貫高(Kanko) is a prime minister in 趙(Cho), China.

2) 屈平(Kutsupei) is a patriotic poet in the turbulent age in 楚(so), China.

3) 入江杉蔵 (Sugizo Irie) is a pupil of 吉田 松陰(Shoin Yoshida).

4) 孟子(Mencius) is a Chinese philosopher, and the author of Mencius.

2. On July 9, 1859, I got the first call from the supreme court. The three magistrates appeared there, and they asked me the following two points. The first one is whether I had met with 梅田源次郎¹⁾ (Genjiro Umeda) when he visited to Choshu-clan, and if so

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