

## 21 Teachings of Lord Naoshige

We know how old our clan is by looking at the tall trees in our domain, and it is well known how deeply Saga people feel attached to their lords. Not a few stories have been told about them, and several records have also been left, but they are not always credible after such a long time has passed. Regrettably, they have also been rewritten arbitrarily. In big cities such as Edo and Osaka there are abundant libraries, which may be referred to and relied upon as a general rule. But in rural districts like ours there are few sources of written information, and the number of people truly interested in studying them is also limited. In fact there exists an important document by Imagawa Ryoshun, a judicial officer dispatched by the government. But most people in our domain are not interested in reading such things. Since they are unwilling to read even letters sent to them, they know little about the clan's culture.

The 21 teachings of Lord Naoshige, founder of our clan, give us basic instructions expressed in a simple manner. It could be said to be a treasure for us, because they impress us ordinary men with his wisdom and compassion. Unless we develop in our daily words and deeds, how in the world can we enjoy the benefits of society? When you read his teachings intently, while referring to those of great leaders of the past, you will come to understand the righteous way which we should follow.

I know that my poor ability does not entitle me to annotate his teachings, but let me try, because there are few men today who can explain them. I hope that in future our people will become interested in our culture and begin studying it. May my dream be realized some day! I start this work in tears, in a room of my cottage.

May, 1692      Ishida Ittei

\* Imagawa Ryoshun was dispatched to Saga in 1372 in his mid-forties.

**“Wisdom is the flower of prudence. In many cases flowers bloom but bear no fruit.”**

The rise and fall of the clan depends on the lord's determination. As the lord declares, so the people follow. The lord's idea of administration spreads quite swiftly among his men. When public morals are corrupted on account of a foolish lord, they must be reformed, but it is impossible for commoners to do this. It is up to the senior retainers and counselors, who ought to admonish the lord so that he will acknowledge his misdeeds and change his ways.

The lord is in charge of governing his domain for the people's security and peace. A

lord who dedicates himself to such governance should be called a wise leader. His high-ranking retainers are required to devote themselves completely to their duty, taking orders from the lord. When they neglect their duty and follow their own selfish pleasure, all the people become egoistic, interested only in their own welfare. It is as if the flowers came into full bloom but the tree bore no fruit. The famous poet Kino Tsurayuki already described it in his writings in the 10th century.

Cleverness means to be quick-witted, while wisdom is the ability to know what is right, good, and true. Man is blessed with wisdom, which he ought not to use for his own selfish satisfaction. Natural wisdom is like the root, and wisdom acquired later is like its flower. We are required to do our best for the tree to bear good fruit.

If prominent people use their wisdom to satisfy their own selfish purposes, we cannot expect the tree to bear good fruit, though it may have pretty flowers. When such selfish leaders abound, it shows that they have fallen a victim to selfish desires.

Remember what Confucius said. "Some people are like a young plant which is infertile and does not produce buds. Others are like a seedling which produces buds but does not bear fruit." [Annotated by Ishida Ittei]

A sensible person is worth respect. He behaves gracefully, speaks politely, has refined manners, and is sensitive to the feelings of others, and token to please them. Such a person can be compared to a flower which is beautiful and fragrant.

Where does such merit come from? It arises from wisdom, the ability to distinguish good from bad. Cleverness deriving from goodness is direct and fruitful, while that deriving from malicious feelings is crooked and vain. The latter may look enticing but is merely an abortive flower. Lord Naoshige says there are many people like that.

Confucius said in one of his books. "If a seedling does not come into bloom, it will be criticized." The noted Hayashi said. "If a man only boasts and does not put it into practice, he will incur the enmity of others." [Annotated by Onda Ikkin]

\* Onda Ikkin annotated the 21 teachings much later than Ishida Ittei. He was born in 1696 and died in 1789. Ishida Ittei died in 1693 aged 65.

**"It is not easy to master arts. If not supported by prudence, they are likely to cause trouble"**

It is true that the clan is supported by men of arts. Those who are born clever quickly become proficient in arts, and boast of their skills. Pride betokens an evil spirit,

and the proud soon fall on account of their boastfulness. It also hinders the governance of the clan, according to Lord Naoshige.

A man of discretion is well aware of his own defects, so he does not show off his ability, and instead keeps it from view. But in an emergency he never fails to make use of it.

A man who makes a living from his skill is not a *samurai* but a man of skill alone. A *samurai* should make himself useful to the lord by his spirit, not by his skill. According to Confucius, you should follow the path of righteousness and arm yourself with compassion, the utmost virtue. Then you may take pleasure from your art. If you make use of your skill to satisfy your selfish desire, you will never fail to meet with misfortune. As the proverb goes, everything will be understood with a mere hint. [ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

Manners, musical performance, shooting, horse riding, calligraphy, and arithmetic are called the six important arts. A *samurai* is required to be polite in greeting and accepting guests, eating at table, serving meals to guests, and speaking at celebrations and funerals. Musical performance comprises singing and dancing. Playing instruments like the *shamisen* or bamboo flute, and singing traditional songs are out of the question. These are just for passing the time, and should not be regarded as arts. Shooting refers to arrows and guns. Spearing and swordsmanship may be included in it. Horse riding is also one of the arts. Calligraphy is what you learn in lessons from a teacher. Arithmetic refers to accounting.

It is true that you are required to learn these, but it is impossible to do so alone. To acquire proficiency in them, you must learn them together with your friends. But as you study and train with your classmates, you might look down at them for their slow progress, envy them for their quick improvement, feel embarrassed of your own slow achievements, and resent and blame your friends. Other mental hardships might await you, depending on your character.

Be careful, or you will suffer on account of your skills and end up destroying yourself. We have seen many such people. As the old saying goes, if you keep overlooking minor points, you will inevitably suffer from great misfortune. We have to be careful of this. [ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“The lord should understand his men well in ruling his domain, and will not then make any serious mistake.”**

The voice of the people is nothing but that of Heaven. If the lord neglects it and

sticks to his own way, the people will turn away from him and an evil situation is sure to come about. There are many people in the world, each of whom has different features and his own mind. And each of them is armed with his own judgment, granted by Heaven.

If the lord takes account of this in ruling his men, he will know how to govern them. For their part, his men will come to follow their lord obediently. When the lord's philosophy goes along with his men's stated opinion, ideal relations will be seen among the lord and his attendants, father and son, husband and wife, brothers and friends. When the lord employs such way of thinking in his government, righteousness will surely be widespread. This is called the way of compassion.

[ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

In this teaching Lord Naoshige shows us what is required from the lord. It is not easy for the lord to understand the feelings of the people. Unless the lord considers public opinion well, he will fail in government. For the lord, all the territory and the people are in his domain. So it is his duty to govern his people so that they will not starve but live in peace, without exception. A mother suckles her baby son when she feels he might be hungry, clothes him against the cold, lifts him up and cuddles him in her hands after letting him lie for long hours, and returns him to the cot after dandling him on her knees. Thus he will grow and develop well, without becoming fretful.

The mother's way of raising her son has been compared to the lord's compassion toward his men. When the lord thinks of his men with compassion and sincerity to govern his domain, he will be able to achieve good government, though he cannot meet all the wishes of his men. It is the same with taking care of your housemaid. Let me quote an old poem.

*"Hurt yourself, and you will know how the other feels. Put yourself in your sweetheart's place, and you will know the pain she feels."*

[ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**"Public opinion should be taken as the standard of judgment. There is a time when the leader must rise above so-called rules and regulations."**

Public opinion is the mirror which reflects the majority's feelings. There is a proverb which goes, "The law can put reason under its control, but reason cannot put the law under its control." Modern people have no idea of the difference between the law and reason. You can spark a flint by striking it, to light a fire, and this is law. The spark

lies inside the rock, and this is reason.

In rural districts, when there is fair ruling, you can regard it as ruling without the law. Those who are in charge of government are not partial or biased towards particular persons. It is an ideal way of looking into right or wrong. However, a society tends to deteriorate with the employment of laws.

Matters should be judged on their own merits in order to guide the people with compassion. If those who are in charge of ruling people use regulations alone, they will be punished by Heaven, which is public sentiment. Sometimes it is necessary to administer the people by rising above conventional rules and regulations. This is nothing but compassionate judgment, which will be actually good for the lord. Prince Shotoku, a great leader at the end of the 6th century, said that a leader sometimes has to employ methods beyond conventional law to rule his men.

[ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

The conventional rules are known to all the people as the ones to follow. If you act against them, you will inevitably be punished by Heaven. But it is also true that you cannot always stick to conventional rules alone. There are times when you should employ means suited to the occasion. The wisest and most gifted will sometimes make mistakes, while the ordinary person may form a good judgment according to his capacity. We should bear in mind that there is a means beyond the law.

[ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“Listen to the voice of the people. Gold can be discovered deep in the ground.”**

When you pass judgment on a commoner after listening to his appeal, you do so to make him understand his error and do some soul-searching about his misconduct. The official in charge of the hearing must do his best so that the accused will not be punished.

Any preconception is likely to make you biased against the accused, so take care to get rid of your preconceptions.

When a man of low rank makes a lawsuit against one of high rank, the latter is to blame in most cases. And a man who appeals to the court through personal contacts is usually in the wrong. When a lawsuit is made by a man in poverty against a rich man, the former's case is usually the more reasonable.

A man of low rank is apt to be talked into conceding, so you must be careful to listen to what he argues and make a fair judgment, trying to filter out impurities. Lord Nao-

shige compares it to discovering gold in the ground. When men of high rank seek justice, their compassion never fails to filter into the hearts of those of low rank, reducing the number of lawsuits.

Prince Shotoku said, "Nowadays most judges seem to listen to litigants with the intention of lining their own pockets. They will favor a litigant after accepting his bribe. The wealthier you are, the more advantage you will have in the court. It is like throwing a rock into a pond. It makes great ripples. On the other hand, when a poor suitor appeals to the judge, it is like throwing water on a rock. It has little effect. The poor litigant must be quite at a loss how to approach the judge. In such a situation people will simply not obey the authorities." [Annotated by Ishida Ittei]

The low-ranking man usually finds it difficult to have his appeal be understood well. So you should listen to his appeal attentively. His case might be logical and make sense, even if he did not form his words with refined expression. What he says might be as noble as the wise man's utterance. Never look down at him.

[Annotated by Onda Ikkin]

**"Pray for the repose of your ancestors, and you descendants will flourish."**

Ancestors can be compared to the root of a tree, and their offspring its branches. If you do not take good care of the root, the tree will not grow to be leafy enough. Modern scholars of Confucianism preach that man comes to nothing with his death. When a man of warped nature hears this, he thinks that the scholars are quite right. He may pray for the repose of his ancestors just perfunctorily, but he does not know the names of any before his grandparents. Since such a perverse man does not pray to them with all his heart, his descendants will surely be forgotten in the future. Descendants should respect their ancestors rather than spending money on ceremonies and the like.

Confucius said, "Your ancestors remain for you to cultivate virtue in memory of them. They are not to be seen or heard, but they should prevail among all their descendants. You cannot overlook them." [Annotated by Ishida Ittei]

We inherit our way of thinking from our ancestors' spirit, and our physique from their bodily form. So we must offer sincere prayers for them. Then we will be blessed by them, and able to escape disasters, too.

Ancestors are like the root of a tree, and descendants like its branches and leaves. If you neglect to nurture the root, the tree will not flourish. So descendants are re-

quired to pray for the repose of their ancestors. Even if you hire a psychic medium at great expense, and offer prayers for false ancestors, and pay the priest a lot of money to read the sutra, that does not mean you are praying for the repose of your ancestors. It may have some effect, however. All that descendants have to do is to follow their ancestors' teachings. [ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“The deeds of your ancestors can be understood in various ways.”**

If you change your attitude decisively, the effect can be recognized as clearly as if you looked in the mirror. If you utterly depend on meritorious ancestors in the way you live, their goodness will come to nothing after all. But if you remember your ancestors' misdeeds and devote yourself to following the right track, you can bring good fortune to your family.

If you idle away your life, harbor evil thoughts, and think of nothing good, because you have ancestors who performed great exploits, that is equal to living a wicked life. Fortune and misfortune can change places depending on the descendants' response. So do your best not to have your ancestor consigned to hell.

[ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

When someone performs a good deed, he will be praised with the words: “Look! He is a descendant of so and so!” If his ancestor has done something bad, the descendant's exploit may erase the ancestor's defect. On the other hand, if some person acts disgracefully, he will be spoken ill of, thus: “Look! He has done such a bad thing, though he has such a great ancestor!” He disgraces his family name and his family will come to nothing in the end.

Thus everyone has to do his best not to disgrace his family name, by living with respect for his ancestors and being discreet in word and deed. Always remember what Lord Naoshige said. [ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“The dust of your heart can be swept away by prayer. Do not perplex others with ambiguous belief. Worship is like a fence to protect your garden with.”**

When you understand your spirit belongs to the gods, you are at the cardinal point of a life of faith. After understanding that you are self-centered, you turn to divine compassion for salvation, which is the start of faith.

Modern men seem to think that a superficial prayer is enough to have themselves

saved by the gods, and they have become lazy in their duties. Some people even say that there no gods or Buddha, and do not worship them.

You need to understand that faith wipes the dust from your mind. If you stick to your own idea, you may trick others out of their faith. Then you would be to blame for breaking the will of the god. If you think it best not to disappoint the wishes of others and follow the mass of men, some people will ignore worship or prayer as meaningless.

Offering prayer to the gods is like making a rough-woven fence to protect the flowers you planted. You collect seeds, plant them in the garden, and build a fence round it. To follow the teachings of Confucius, Buddha, and the gods is a similar thing to that.

Man belongs to the gods and divinity exists in your heart. So do not betray the divinity in your spirit. Divine compassion will be brought about by your honesty, and divine support will follow your pious prayer. Is this not the gods' intention?

[ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

What is faith? It is to sincerely follow the teachings of the gods and Buddha and those of the wise in past ages. It should not be called faith only to worship the god at the shrine every day, to count the beads of a rosary in saying your prayers, or to bow your head low at a shrine or temple. When you feel grateful to them and understand how great their blessings are, and keep praying to them, you can be called a man of faith. Then your mental dust and wicked thoughts will be swept away as if by a broom.

There are people who hurt the feelings of others, deny their reasoning, make unreasonable demands of those under them, neglect the words of others, and offend them. Such people do so because they are dishonest and have not wiped out their wicked thoughts.

You usually offer a prayer to the gods when you are unfortunate, asking for salvation. If you are usually dishonest and do not have a sense of duty to others, how in the world can you expect divine salvation, however earnestly you pray to them by hiring a monk or a maiden in a shrine? You are like the flowers not guarded by a fence or without support in a downpour.

I quite agree with Ittei when he says we should understand that man belongs to the gods and should not betray the divinity of your spirit. This is the truth of faith. But if you are uncertain about it and do not follow divine compassion, you may be said to be far from faith. Modern men seem to think that superficial prayer is enough to obtain salvation from the gods, and they become lazy in their duties. Some people have no faith because they think that there are no gods or Buddha. When you perplex the



heart of others, you are to blame for breaking the hearts of the gods. And you also stray from the way of faith when you seek to convert the belief of others. For this reason, sweeping wicked thoughts from your mind should be called faith.

[ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“Do not be impatient to achieve success in life. Climb the ladder step by step.”**

You are a product of Heaven, not of yourself. When you understand you belong to Heaven, you will hear the call of the divine. To follow the god’s voice is nothing but climbing the ladder in life, says Lord Naoshige. If you have not heard the heavenly voice, you can follow the lord’s precept instead. You are usually promoted according to your development in faith and ability. If you are promoted too early through good luck, be careful. Remember that you may perish at any time. When you are promoted little by little due to your own efforts, those around you will appreciate it and you can expect to become an important pillar of the clan in future. An ancient Chinese philosopher said, “The Emperor will promote a man who is wise and capable.”

[ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

Every man has a role to play. The lord’s responsibility is to love all his people, support the *samurai*, and keep the clan in peace. A *samurai*’s role is to perform his duty diligently and be faithful to the lord. The role of parents is to raise their children with love. That of children’s is to be filial to their parents, not to go astray from the right way, and not to disgrace the name of their ancestors. What is the role of husband and wife? They must be obedient and keep their family well. The role of brothers is to respect and be friendly to each other. The role of friends is to be faithful, and the younger must honor their elders. You should learn how to keep these roles by the teachings of men of wisdom.

Lord Naoshige says everyone should follow his way according to his position in life, and that he should go up the social ladder step by step, not by leaps. Otherwise you will not be able to realize your role to the full, as if a wandering traveler would lose his life before arriving home. Be sure to perform your duty at every stage of your life as well as you can. According to the Book of the Golden Mean by an ancient Chinese philosopher, you should work a hundred times as hard as others. You should try to do everything a hundred times as well as others. [ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“A serious mistake in youth may be irrevocable. Take care not to be abandoned as**

hopeless.”

You disgrace the name of your ancestors when you hesitate at a critical moment. The moment you are born, you might as well have offered your life to the lord, because your duty in life is nothing but to repay his compassion. If you come across an opportunity to die for the lord in youth, you can seize it as an honor and a pleasure. But if you grow old and are not blessed with an opportunity to throw away your life for him, you should be ashamed.

Our life is temporary, and it is not very difficult to live discreetly so that you are not given up as hopeless by those around you.

Confucius said, “Be ambitious and compassionate. Follow the righteous way. Sacrifice yourself for the cause of righteousness.” [Annotated by Ishida Ittei]

No annotation is needed about this. Young men are likely to make themselves conspicuous in actions and words. The priest Kenko also mentioned it in his book of essays. If you are given up as hopeless in youth, it is impossible to wipe away your disgrace as long as you live. You should bear this in mind.

[Annotated by Onda Ikkin]

**“A man who blames others harshly for their defects digs his own grave.”**

Some people want to succeed in life and denounce others harshly for their wickedness, while taking themselves to be good. But they are utterly wrong.

When they criticize others for irrational behavior alone, they will find no one worthy of praise, and the world will be full of wicked people. Such a cold-hearted man will lose the support of those around him, before he is punished by Heaven, because he lacks compassion. [Annotated by Ishida Ittei]

It is a basic standard of a clan to punish for wrongdoing and to reward for good. It happens sometimes that even those whose contribution is not great are rewarded and those whose deeds are dubious are overlooked. Therefore, it should be left to the magistrate to punish others for their crimes or wrongdoings. Only he is endowed with such benevolence.

Most common people are stupid, though they may be honest at heart. So they are unreasonable in their words and deeds. It is necessary to make allowances for their immaturity in consideration of their honesty. But if you blame them for every mis-

conduct simply because it is irrational, they will feel embarrassed and fear you for your repeated denunciation, and come to dislike you.

If someone in a leading position is disliked by the commoners, he cannot but be isolated from them. He cannot expect to accomplish anything useful. The same applies to getting along with your relatives and friends. In such a way, you will put yourself at odds with them and lose reputation.

Those who cannot resist pronouncing on whether something is right or wrong are harsh in their temperament and feared by their comrades and neighbors. According to the chronicles of our clan, Lord Naoshige was usually mild and refined, though he was very bold and courageous in action. He is said to have taken pains over his appearance, also. Cho-shi-ho, a Chinese hero, is said to have looked like a lady, though he was a very bold-hearted man. This proverb by Lord Naoshige is one which should be particularly borne in mind. [ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“Be well prepared for a critical situation, so as not to lose your composure.”**

You hesitate in a critical situation, because you fear losing your life. You get upset and panic. It is a complete life-long disgrace for you. You get disgraced because you have not been well prepared for such a situation. Is that not regrettable?

Remember that your own life is not your own. How can you possibly get upset, if you have shaken off your worry? If you usually do your best not to behave out of selfish desire, you will be able to keep your presence of mind in a situation of great consequence. At such a time you have only to disregard your life. So-shi, a Chinese philosopher, said that a man who does not lose his presence of mind is man of virtue.

[ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

In a critical situation you cannot perform your duty if you are too prudent. Unless you train yourself day in and day out, you cannot accomplish great things in emergency.

[ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“Prepare in every way before others do.”**

When you are not spiritually awakened, it is as if you were groping in the darkness. You cannot hit the target, however hard you may try. But if you have attained enlightenment, you will not miss the mark. So try to become fully awakened. Lay the groundwork in advance in everything. It is said that we should make our plans for the

day in the morning, for the year in spring, and for our life in our youth.

Regrettably enough, most people are too lazy to make preparations ahead, and make a fuss when they run into a difficult situation. As a result they fail in the attempt. So you must make preparations in advance, while you give up your place to others. Everything comes to him who waits. According to a Chinese book of philosophy, some people do not know that there is a beginning and an end in everything.

[ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

No annotation is needed. Lord Naoshige teaches us that it is important always to be on guard in everything. He shows this to us because he has learned it by experience.

[ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“Always be patient.”**

Patience belongs to humans, not to beasts. A man who cannot endure hardships is not entitled to be called a human being. Everyone must devote himself to the clan, which is his role as a *samurai*.

According to the oracle, we are possessions of the god. But if we think we are our own person, we will become impatient and not only perish ourselves but disgrace our ancestors. Remember that Heaven and the gods will stand by us as long as we are patient. Take care not to be willful in public. [ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

It goes without saying that patience is very important in this world. Our ancestors and men of wisdom have taught us its importance generation after generation. We should bear this in mind. [ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“A written theory is not always perfect.”**

It happens that written words cannot fully convey what is meant by the writer. It is also very difficult to make another fully understand what you mean by talking to him. Perhaps you will not be able to understand fully what is written in the four Chinese classics and the five Chinese Sutras, if you just read only the words and do not think more about what they really mean.

A man of logic is apt to make the mistake of thinking that anything is good as long as it is logical. It is also worthwhile to remember Lord Naoshige's teaching: “A man who blames others harshly for their defects will dig his own grave.”

According to Prince Sho-toku, you will be mistaken in judgment when you take unfamiliar books of politics at face value. Whatever seemingly excellent ideas may appear in the books of Confucianism, the leader should not employ them as long as they are not suited for ruling his own clan. The leader is required to climb all the way up to the seat of ideal government by constant learning from men of wisdom. A leader who is not blessed with a good teacher should know that he will fall into error in governing his domain. That is why Lord Naoshige does not like a man who takes everything at face value. Remember his saying, otherwise most of learned men will ruin themselves. How sharp Lord Naoshige was in his insight! [Annotated by Ishida Ittei]

A man is foolish who takes at face value anything written in books and puts it into practice. We must learn how deep Lord Naoshige's teaching is, by reading other books. [Annotated by Onda Ikkin]

**"You can never tell whether a prophecy will hit or miss. If you take action simply by lots, you will make a mistake."**

Lots and oracles can be a kind of guideline for your conduct, so we should not make light of them. But there are thoughtless people in the world. Their behavior is similar to casting a lot to decide whether to go out in the dark night. What profit will it bring, even if you express your reverence for Heaven when you run out of luck? It is like crying for Heavenly help after committing an error. When you get into a pinch, you should do your best in order to get through your difficult situation with resolution, not relying on casting a lot.

In your daily life you might cast lots for what you cannot solve by yourself. When something is decided by discussion, casting lots is out of the question. Confucius says this, too. For when to cast lots and how to understand the result, you had better ask someone else. [Annotated by Ishida Ittei]

Fate is recognized after it has befallen you. Before then it is unknowable. But even when something seems very hard to achieve, it does happen that you can accomplish it as you wish, if you do it at the risk of your life. In this case Heaven blesses a man in his destiny.

Nothing is impossible for a man blessed with good luck. He can be successful whether in danger or in a serious situation. But for a luckless man the attempt achieves nothing, even if it is easy or seems reasonable. Whenever he tries something,

his attempt is frustrated and he cannot accomplish what he wishes.

Since fortune is support from Heaven, you cannot be blessed with it simply because you pray for it earnestly. This applies to a man of morals, too. However moral he may be, he will not be able to achieve his aim, if he is not blessed by Heaven.

Men of wisdom dare to swim with the current by judging the situation, and succeed in their attempts even if the omens indicate misfortune. But the other people will fail in their efforts, even if the omens indicate good luck. They will become the laughingstock of the people. In this way, the omens do not always bring about good results, and Lord Naoshige warns us not to expect too much of the casting lots.

Then is the lottery completely unreliable? No it is not. When you are at a loss which to choose from the two plausible ways, it is good to submit to the god's intention by burning shell or casting lots. If you pray as earnestly as you can, Heaven will show you which one to choose. For example, when there are two routes you can follow, decide which way to go by lot. But when there is something you must choose from two, and if you think one of them is righteous, you must choose that one, without casting lots. You do not have to give the slightest consideration to the other.

So a man of wisdom does not depend on the lottery, but follows his own way, trusting himself to Fate. It is children and women who naively believe in the lottery. Men should not do so. Someone said that when a man does his best by employing means suited to the occasion, the lottery has no part to play. A prominent leader will rather make use of the lottery to his advantage. Anyone who blindly believes in casting lots is as foolish as one who attempts things by taking everything at face value.

[ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“If you are indecisive, you will not succeed in most cases.”**

If you hesitate too much and do not go ahead resolutely, you will not be able to bring about a good result. Too much is as bad as too little in anything. But with regard to avoiding hesitation, that is something for which you can never have too much determination. With anything else, you should make little of it. A delay due to fear or doubt is brought about by sticking to your selfish desire. Remember, such a feeling is totally wrong. [ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

From everyday behavior like tea-drinking, having a meal, going about, and domestic routines, to government by the Imperial Court and clans, and military campaigns, in most cases dawdling over your job fails to bring about good results, though they may be

sometimes achieved successfully through patience. [ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“Be careful not to play right into the hands of your enemy. When you are determined to fight for the sake of justice, victory will follow.”**

When you fight for your own selfish desires, you will be punished by Heaven, because Heaven does not approve of selfishness. When you rise in revolt against the enemy for the sake of the whole nation, you do so for a good reason, so you will not play into the hands of your enemy. The enemy rises up due to egoistic ambition, while we do not. If you do not forget this, you can avoid falling into the enemy trap. You will be able to win a victory if you prepare an escape for your enemy. If you are impatient to achieve exploits, you will be caught in the snare laid out by the enemy.

[ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

This saying arises from Lord Naoshige's own experience, so it is very persuasive, not being an empty theory written at the desk. We should accept his idea. It is very clearly expressed, and no annotation is needed. [ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“A headlong rush is for the battlefield, not for daily life.”**

Determination to defeat the enemy is always needed for a *samurai*. If you waver in combat, you cannot defeat the enemy. A *samurai* must rush into the front in case of emergency. But in peacetime do not be so hasty, or you will perish. In daily life you should be well-mannered and should control your boldness.

[ Annotated by Ishida Ittei ]

The code of *samurai* is realized by rushing into the battle without vacillation. If you deliberate before rising up, your action will be delayed. But if you are rough-mannered in peacetime, you will end in bad luck. As Ittei taught, a *samurai* must employ good manners, while retaining his inner boldness. [ Annotated by Onda Ikkin ]

**“I do not respect those who are reluctant to lose their life, whether they are the lord or his men.”**

A *samurai* should be prepared to lose his life by regarding it as nothing at all. He ought to regard it as shameful to wish to survive. Do not forget that your life is not

yours. It belongs to Heaven. If you give it up by leaving it to Heaven, you do not have to worry about it. The moment you give it up decisively, it will be a great load off your mind. Then you will reach a state of your mind where you can enjoy your life. Lord Naoshige respects such a person.

When the lord is not selfish, his domain remains stable. If the *samurai* are unselfish, they can make themselves useful to the lord and clan. [Annotated by Ishida Ittei]

To lose one's life is very serious. If a man is prepared to lose his life for the sake of loyalty and filial piety, he will think it nothing to do so in action, and he will remain loyal. But if he hesitates to give up his life, Lord Naoshige says, he will despise such a man. Men of resolution will be respected for their virtue as long as our clan exists.

[Annotated by Onda Ikkin]

**“Remember that people at the lower levels of society suffer most.”**

This phrase shows that the higher orders should think of and understand their men well. Lord Naoshige admonishes himself and at the same time warns that all his men should be compassionate toward people at the lower levels of society. His teaching is like the voice of Heaven, is it not? Heaven divides people into superiors and subordinates. Men at higher levels should use their wisdom, not their limbs. On the other hand, the common people should labor with their limbs, and not use their brain.

The lord thinks of all his men and understands how much they are suffering, when they feel thankful to their lord. As a result the domain is well governed. The lord is as it were the clan's parent. According to a Chinese poem, a lord of virtue will remember his men as long as he lives. [Annotated by Ishida Ittei]

This is what is taught by the father of our clan. We can see how he is compassionate toward his men. Knowing that people at the lower levels are suffering most, he governs his people as their lord. He is really the father of the clan, is he not?

[Annotated by Onda Ikkin]

#### **A supplementary note by Onda Ikkin**

According to the writings of To-un, a man's character is greatly formed by his parents' teaching and his friends, though it is also influenced by nature to some extent. Unless you study in youth, you will repent it too late in old age. The same applies to arts like



martial art and calligraphy.

Lord Naoshige was born in the Warring States period of our country and was not able to find any time to study. So it was a matter of course that he did not become learned in anything. However, he has given us these lessons. He has left us his teachings about the times, human character, social customs, and other things so clearly. Is it not wonderful indeed?

How valuable his teachings are and how virtuous his character! Considering these features, we can say that he was a really great man, like a saint. A saint is said to be able to master everything without learning. Lord Naoshige was really such a person. It would be impossible for ordinary men to attain his level.

He was also careful over his appearance, and manicured his nails morning and evening, which he continued till he became old. Regarding his sayings, he did not talk idly. Gentle-minded, he lived a really moral life, which was unusual for most people. His teachings were passed on by Fujishima Sho-eki, who attended the lord for as long as 40 years.

He killed many people after giving them a chance to escape. He also killed many enemy *samurai* in action, but was never wounded himself. He was very compassionate toward his men and commoners, and saved many convicts from execution. Chifu Taro-zaemon wrote in his note that Naoshige was a lord of great prominence, so I need add nothing further.

\* To-un, an important retainer of Lord Naoshige, died in 1638.