

# The Sakai Incident

The loyal, patriotic samurais lived in an age of upheavals, when the tide had changed from the policy of national isolation to that of opening the country in the beginning of the Meiji Restoration.

Being faithful, therefore, they were buffeted by the ever-changing political situation and died tragic deaths at the Myōkokuji Temple.



Le Monde Illustré, 1868

# The Myōkokuji Temple

## The Sakai Incident

Concerning the Sakai Incident, the novel *The Sakai Incident* published by Mori Ōgai<sup>①</sup> in 1914 is well known and has been acknowledged as a story based on historical facts.

However, Ōoka Shōhei<sup>②</sup>, a prominent author of the 1960's, published his personal opinion on historical facts and historical novels in various literary magazines, which led to his having heated disputes with classical Japanese scholars. He published a series of articles titled *Sakaikō Jōi Shimatsu*, which indicated that there was a distortion of facts in the material which Ōgai had established as authority, as Ōgai had apparently invented several historical facts. But Ōoka passed away in 1988 before he could accomplish his goal, and his unfinished work was published by Chūōkōron-sha in the following year.

A glance over the present *History of the Myōkokuji Temple* clearly shows that the paragraph about the Sakai Incident was influenced by Ōgai's novel. How the historical facts had been over one hundred years ago should be verified with the available data, using the tracing back method. This brochure offers the visitors to the Myōkokuji Temple an explanation of the Sakai Incident in its historical background, based on Ōgai's posthumous work *Sakaikō Jōi Shimatsu* and other sources.

Since the beginning of 19th century, several whaling vessels or warships from Occidental countries, including Russia or the British Empire, had often entered Japanese territorial waters claiming provisions of drinking water and firewood under the Tokugawa Shogunate policy of seclusion which had lasted for about two hundred years. Some of them insisted on having trade relationships. Concerned about the then current context, the Shogunate took countermeasures issuing **The Order for the Repelling of Foreign Ships** in 1825, and forbade all foreign ships, except those from Holland, China and Korea, from entering Japanese ports. However, news that the Qing Dynasty in China had suffered an utter defeat in the First Opium War against the British Empire in 1842 had promptly reached the Shogunate. The Shogunate was anxious because the conditions around Japan had completely changed, therefore, it had to revoke the aforementioned edict and ordered that foreign ships should be provided with food, water and firewood. The opinions of the Shogunate officials then were split into two main trends: the principle of opening of Japan to the West and the principle of excluding Westerners. Therefore, Japan's diplomatic policy with the Western powers kept fluctuating between hard-line and moderate measures. The Shogunate was pressured to make a firm decision on the path Japan should follow faced with the looming threat posed by the armed force of the great powers.

Ten years later, an event occurred which awakened the people from a long and peaceful slumber and would draw near the end of seclusion, namely the arrival of Commodore Matthew C. Perry in 1853. Prior to that, the Western intervention, especially from the British Empire and France, had put pressure on the Shogunate for the opening of Japan. Eventually, two treaties were signed between Japan and the United States. One was **The Convention of Kanagawa** signed with Matthew Perry in 1854: Shimoda and Hakodate were opened to foreign trade. The other,

① a Japanese physician, translator, novelist and poet.(1862-1922)

② a Japanese novelist, literary critic, and translator of French literature.(1909-1988)

(following the defeat of the Qing Dynasty in the Second Opium War in 1857 against the allied forces of the British Empire and France) was **The United States-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce**, which the opening faction **Ii Naosuke**<sup>③</sup> signed with Townsend Harris in 1858, without the sanction of **Emperor Kōmei**<sup>④</sup>. According to the latter treaty five more ports (Edo, Yokohama, Kobe, Niigata and Hakodate) were forced to open to the Western trade. Subsequently, similar treaties called **The Ansei Treaties** were concluded with the Netherlands, Russia, the British Empire and France within the year. Those treaties were the so-called **Unequal Treaties**, because, for instance, foreign citizens were qualified to live in settlements and to trade at will in those ports. Moreover, extraterritorial rights were sanctioned. The conclusion of such treaties without the Emperor's assent and the curtailment of Japanese sovereignty provoked the exclusionists' antipathy. Ii carried out **the Ansei Purge** which had ruthlessly suppressed over one hundred discontent elements until he was assassinated in the following year, but the result was an extreme loss of the Shogunate's prestige. Thereupon, against the Shogunate's efforts to improve the relations with the foreign countries, the xenophobic Emperor Kōmei issued **The Order to Expel Barbarians** in 1862. That manifestation of outright exclusionism would trigger xenophobic reactions of the utmost violence against Westerners in the final days of the Tokugawa regime. Immediately, in compliance with the order, the Chōshū clan engaged in warfare at Shimonoseki with the joint naval forces from Great Britain, France, the Netherlands and the United States of America. The Satsuma clan waged the Anglo-Satsuma War against Great Britain at Kagoshima Bay, with the Namamugi Incident as a trigger. But both wars resulted in thorough defeat, and with that as a turning point, the Satsuma and Chōshū clans made a U-turn on their principles and joined the open country faction. Thus, in the midst of the ever ascending pressure from the Western Powers and threat of their military forces, the conflicts between the Imperial Court and the Shogunate or the movements of several feudal clans got complicated and a new era would begin for Japan.

In the beginning of the Meiji Restoration, the Battle of Toba-Fushimi, which can be viewed as an early stage of the Boshin War (1868-1869), broke out between the pro-imperial forces and the Tokugawa Shogunate forces on January 3, 1868. It lasted for four days, and finally ended with a decisive defeat for the Shogunate forces. After Shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu fled aboard the *Kaiyō-Maru* and withdrew to Edo, Osaka and its environs descended into chaos. Therefore, the new government assigned the Satsuma clan to maintain security in Osaka; the Nagato clan in Hyogo, and the Tosa clan in Sakai. With the death of Emperor Kōmei, the Meiji Emperor ascended to throne, and the Imperial Court changed its foreign policy from the exclusionism of several months before, and proclaimed an edict concerning the opening of Japan. In the field of administration, a new governmental organization was instituted, diplomatic negotiations being entrusted to two high-rank functionaries, Higashikuze Michitomi and Date Munenari.

Under an agreement which the new government concluded with some foreign countries regarding the opening of business transactions in Osaka, Sakai was also provided as an area where Westerners were free to go where they pleased. But that regulation was not known to all the Tosa clansmen. Besides, the Kobe

③a high-ranking official feudal lord of the Shogunate (1815-1860)

④a xenophobic emperor whose sentiments culminated with his imperial command "Order to Expel Barbarians" (1831-1867)

Incident<sup>⑤</sup> which occurred on January 11, 1868, was concluded with the sentence of seppuku (harakiri) for the artillery leader Taki Zenzaburō, a Bizen clansman, on February 9. Despite the fact that Date Munenori had repeatedly asked for a commutation of the death sentence up to the moment of execution (taking into account that no Westerner had died), Taki had to perform seppuku at the Eifukuji Temple in the presence of some foreign ministers, including the British Minister Harry Parkes (well known for the cunning he had displayed in the Opium War.) Hiki Tatewaki, the lord of the Bizen clan, was let off with confinement to his residence. The fact is that no Westerner had died in this incident, two French sailors being just wounded. However, the new government yielded to the intimidatory demands of the Western powers and forced full responsibility on Taki, which led to the utter discontentment of some samurais of the exclusionist party, who thought the government's actions were a sample of weak-kneed diplomacy.

Seppuku itself was a voluntary or punitive suicidal act of a samurai who assumed responsibility for his own actions, not a mere beheading of criminals. Hence, it had solemnly been ritualized and glorified with the exaltation of Bushidō. Still more, by the time of the Genroku Akō Incident<sup>⑥</sup>, seppuku had become a mere formality: the kaishaku-nin (assistant) decapitated the condemned samurai with a long sword as soon as he had plunged the tantō (dagger) into his abdomen. Nevertheless, in Taki's case, the original procedure was followed and he was decapitated after he had cut his belly crosswise, in order to give a warning and display a samurai's courage to the Westerners involved in the Kobe Incident. His mortal remains were buried at the Eifukuji temple, and it is said that his son's stipend was increased by five hundred koku<sup>⑦</sup>. Harry Parkes, who had observed the execution, held the opinion that it was useless for the prevention of bloody incidents to make the criminal who had attacked foreigners receive such an honorable treatment.

In those days Kobe and Osaka were open ports and the England corvette *Ocean*, the French corvette *Dupleix* and the *Vénus* stayed off Tempōzan in order to conduct a survey of the Osaka Bay. At the same time, at the news of a coming Imperial audience with the ministers of some nations, two garrisons with nearly seventy samurais led by Minoura Inokichi and Nishimura Saheiji had been deployed to guard the Sakai Port and other borders, under the supervision of Sugi Kiheita. On February 15, 1868, the captain of the *Vénus* and the French consul tried to return to their ship from Osaka via Sakai by land, accompanied by three Uwajima clansmen and an interpreter. As they walked down along the Kishū Highway, when they reached the Yamato Bridge, they were interrogated by the guards of the Tosa clan. The superintendent Sugi, who had assumed that Sakai was not included in the free walk area for Westerners, refused to let them enter Sakai without an official notice, and ordered them back. The French side protested, but the only thing they could do was to unwillingly go back the way they had come. In the meantime, the *Dupleix* had dropped anchor at some distance off the Sakai port to meet them. Soon after, a launch with fifteen sailors, guided by a survey

⑤Two French sailors and an American did not make way for a procession of Bizen samurais. This was an unprecedented (and definitely unexpected) occurrence for the guard of the Bizen clan, which made the artillery leader Taki order his men to fire as a warning. As a result, the Allied Forces occupied the center of Kobe.

⑥The forty-seven rōnins, masterless samurais, avenged their lord's death in 1703.

⑦a koku equals about one hundred and eighty liters of rice

boat with a crew of eight people, reached the shore and two sailors took off wandering on the breakwater to scout around the cannon strongholds. But there appeared a dozen or so of Tosa guards armed with swords, who tried to question, then to capture the French sailors, but the two started running toward the launch. Just then, between twenty and thirty guards came out of Asahi-jaya (a pleasure quarter nearby), and started shooting in salvo, aiming at them and at the launch. In the end, some minutes' shooting left a death toll of eleven, including the drowned sailors, plus five injured on the French side, but not a single casualty was recorded within the Tosa clan.

On February 16, the consul general of France, Léon Loche demanded the delivery of the seven French bodies left on the scene within the day. Their remains were courteously placed in coffins, carried to their corvette, then buried in the cemetery for Westerners in Kobe. Yamashinomiya Akira Shin'nō proceeded to the *Vénus* to make an official apology the same day. On February 19, Loche still strongly protested to the new Meiji government and pressed five articles of claim for damages: the execution of the two officers and all those involved in the killing at the scene of the incident, in the presence of official observers from the both countries, a compensation of \$ 150,000 for the bereaved families, an official apology from government representatives and the lord of the Tosa clan, and the prohibition of the Tosa samurais from passing through and staying in the open port area. Following the counsel of several foreign diplomatic corps, in response to the particulars of the Kobe Incident, the Government submitted to the demands, then under the name of International Law, ordered the Tosa clan to identify the party who had fired. The Tosa clansmen were dismissed from its position in Sakai and withdrew to the clan residence in Osaka. The twenty-nine samurais who had claimed to have been involved in the incident drew lots at the Tosa Shrine nearby; thus, twenty warriors were chosen to commit seppuku, being raised to the status of samurai.<sup>⑧</sup>

On February 23, the execution of the twenty Tosa samurais was carried out in front of observers from both countries in the precincts of the Myōkokuji Temple, which stood near the scene of the incident. The execution was supposed to take place at the incident scene according to the French demands, however, in conformity with Japanese tradition which stated that seppuku should be performed at the clan residence or at a temple, not open to public, it was hastily decided to be carried out there. White curtains were hung up in front of the Main Hall. The captain of the *Dupleix*, Bergasse Du Petit Thouars, as ambassador plenipotentiary and twenty military escorts, the representatives of Japan, Godai Tomoatsu, the secretary of foreign issues, a chief counselor of the Tosa clan and the delegates of the Aki and Higo clans, took their designated places.



In accordance with the protocol applied in the Kobe Incident, the execution was conducted in the formal way of seppuku, and began at around four in the evening. The twenty samurais wearing white kimonos which had been a gift from the lord of the Tosa clan were waiting for their turn. The first condemned samurai, Minoura Inokichi, showed up with his kaishaku-nin and seated himself on the

<sup>⑧</sup>Seppuku was allowed only for higher rank samurais, in the case of lower ranks, decapitation was applied. The rest of the warriors, except Minoura and Nishimura, belonged to the lowest rank of samurais, so their ranks needed to be raised.

tatami-mat covered with a white cloth. He bared the upper half of his body, took the tantō which had been set on the white wooden stand before him, stabbed himself deeply in the left-side of the abdomen, and then he drew it to the right-side. He thrust at his pit of the stomach then drew downward. Until his entrails were forced out, he groaned but kept sitting up straight and even seemed to glare at Dupetit Thouars. In a moment, the kaishaku-nin brought down his sword on Minoura's neck, and his head rolled down. After giving one shake to his sword, the kaishaku-nin wiped it with a sheet of white paper, then made a bow gravely to the body and retired from the place.



Appalling seppuku executions were performed successively. After Du Petit Thouars ascertained that the number of seppuku had reached eleven, he requested Godai to stop the executions, and then returned to the corvette with his men. The bodies were put into big earthenware pots, carried to the Hōjuin Temple across the street, and buried there. In response to Thouars plea that the remaining nine samurais' lives should be spared, they were later condemned to exile in Tosa by imperial command.

Afterward, Yamashinomiya Akira Shin'nō and Date Munenori went again to the *Vénus* to make an official apology to Léon Loche on 24th, while the lord of Tosa Yamanouchi Toyonori went on 25th. Thus, the Sakai Incident was finally settled. As for the compensation, the Tosa clan paid 50,000 dollars in installments in May and September respectively, but it is said there was no record that the third installment had been paid.

An imperial audience with the ministers of the various nations was held on 30th. Léon Loche had ended the audience with Bergasse Du Petit Thouars, and was waiting for the arrival of the Harry Smith Parkes party, when he received word that Parkes had suffered an assault. Apparently, when he went out of the Chion'in temple in Kyoto with seventy guards to have an audience, two assassins, Saegusa Shigeru and Suzaku Misao, attacked him with their swords. About ten mounted soldiers got wounded, but fortunately, Parkes, the attending official interpreter Ernest Mason Satow and a diplomat, Algernon Bertram Freeman Mitford escaped unharmed. Suzaku was killed with a sword then and there. Saegusa was arrested. Immediate measures were taken that time: Suzaku was forfeited the samurai status, was beheaded, then his head, together with Saegusa's head, were on public display on the gallows for three days. Léon Loche's wrath was considerable, but Parkes viewed Suzaku's killing by the Japanese samurai and Saegusa's being punished as a common criminal as a sign of good faith on the part of the new Government. Those two had taken part in the *Tenchūgumi Incident*<sup>⑨</sup>, and had just been commissioned to the Imperial Guard, which meant that there still remained exclusivist factions.



Later, Yamanouchi Yōdō, the retired Tosa lord, in sign of mourning, raised eleven graves at the Hōjuin Temple, inscribing their posthumous Buddhist names, secular names, their age at death, and farewell poems.



<sup>⑨</sup>a group of armed samurai advocating a particular doctrine of ideology, "Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians".

In 1916, the prime minister of France, Georges Benjamin Clemenceau assented to the erection of a monument at the Myōkokuji Temple in honor of the eleven patriots under the condition that a monument should be also built by its side for the French soldiers who had met a glorious death. The eleven samurais who had died to defend the honour of their country are collectively enshrined at the Yasukuni Shrine, as well.



The summary of Mori Ōgai's novel *The Sakai Incident*, which describes the events which took place after the landing of the French vessel, is appended for reference. An electronic version of the novel is available on the Internet, at <http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000129/card2547.html>

French sailors wandered around the city, entering shrines and temples or private houses rudely, chaffing women and children. The guards who had been notified by townspeople, rushed to the scene and tried to persuade them to return by gesturing, but both parties had difficulties in making themselves understood. As Sakai was not an open port then, the commander of the Japanese garrison inevitably ordered the arrest of the French intruders. When the Tosa clansmen tried to bind a French soldier close to them with a rope, the French started running for the boat, and during their retreat one of them pulled down a flag of the Tosa clan which was leaning against the frontage of a house. The flag was essential for Tosa clansmen. A fleet-footed flag-bearer flew into a rage over the French seaman's insolent behavior, ran up to him from behind, brought a fire hook down on his head, then retrieved the flag. The French seaman fell flat on his back. When the rest of the soldiers on the boat saw that, they fired in salvo and the Tosa clansmen responded with seventy-odd guns. Six or so sailors were shot to death and some drowned. The rest of the French soldiers beat a hasty retreat to the corvette. On the day following the incident, some French sailors came to recover the bodies, and finally the battle resulted in an eleven death toll, including the drowned soldiers on the side of France.

Furthermore, in the seppuku scene at the Myōkokuji Temple, Ōgai contrasted the samurai's resolution and integrity with the cowardice of the French soldiers who had quailed with fear and fled from the scene. But, according to *Le vice-amiral Bergasse Du Petit-Thouars d'après ses notes et sa correspondance 1832-1890* written much later by Bergasse Du Petit Thouars (translator Morimoto Hideo), the discontinuation of the execution when the number of the Tosa clansmen who committed seppuku reached the same number as the fallen French soldiers, had been decided beforehand. Petit Thouars had also thought that, besides producing satisfactory results in the coming diplomatic negotiations, it would be sensible for them to return to their corvette because dusk was thickening into night. Furthermore, he stated that he had sensed that the condemned samurais had actually redeemed themselves, dying as martyrs rather than felons and becoming the object of respect.

Ōoka Shōhei commented the following using freely the abundant data at his disposal. Over the opening the Hyōgo Port, there had been a revival of the former movement of repelling Westerners from the Ansei and Bunkiyū periods⑩,

⑩both are one of the names of imperial ages, Ansei 1854-1859, Bunkiyū 1861-1863.

among certain parties. Minoura, aware of the Kobe Incident, regarded the French battleship with hostility, and had waited in an ambush at Asahi-jaya aiming at the launch. It is no wonder that he ordered his men to fire believing that it was a disgrace to the samurai code to let the enemy escape while they were being interrogated. Also, he may have thought all the blame would fall upon himself. The capture of the flag of the Tosa clan couldn't have happened, nor the violent behavior towards women and children. In the five articles of claim for damages that Loche pushed forward, Higashikuze Michitomi or Date Munenari mistook the phrase, "those who had killed" for "those who had fired". Moreover, since the two diplomats neglected to negotiate the number of executions with the French side, they gave to the Tosa clan a rough number, twenty, which resulted in the unjust exile of nine samurais. Ōoka presented the aforementioned facts, clarified the distinction between history and fiction, while describing the background of the incident, and the life in exile of the nine samurais who had been left alive.

This series of events, the Kobe Incident, the Sakai Incident and the attack on Harry Parkes, are bloody events which happened during the Meiji Restoration, when the tide had changed from the policy of isolation to that of opening the country. The assailants, who had adhered to **The Order to Expel Barbarians** issued by Emperor Kōmei as national policy, were buffeted by the complicated diplomat policy after all. They were deserted by their lords under the pretext of protecting their domain. By an irony of fate, they were actually the victims sacrificed under the imperial order. The eleven Tosa clansmen depicted in the novel were glorified nationalistically, so it became an early raise-morale novel. Ōoka may have had misgivings that the contents of certain historical novels had embellished the historical truth and that the readers had accepted it on faith, history being thus distorted, and he may have tried to emphasize the need to view history objectively.

May 2009 Shogo Kanayama

## 堺事件

時代の潮流が鎖国から開国へと激変した明治維新初頭に生きた尊皇の武士達、忠義を尽くした故に揺れ動く政策に翻弄され、妙國寺で悲壮な最期を遂げた。

堺事件に関しては大正三年（1914）に森鷗外が発表した小説『堺事件』が有名で、史実に即していると評価されてきた。これに対して大岡昇平は史実と歴史小説についての自説を昭和四十年代から文芸誌に発表し、国文学者と論争を始めた。晩年には、多伎にわたる資料を駆使して、鷗外が『堺事件』の典拠とした資料には事実の歪曲があり、結果として史実の捏造があったことを指摘して論じた『堺港攘夷始末』を昭和五十九年（1984）から「中央公論文芸特集」に連載した。しかし大岡昇平は志半ばで昭和六十三年（1988）に逝去し、翌年その作品は未完のまま中央公論社から刊行された。

今の妙國寺縁起に目を通せば、堺事件の項が森鷗外の小説の影響を受けていることは否めない。百年以上も前の史実が実際にどうであったかは、残された資料から時代を遡って検証されるべきで、この小冊子では遺作となった『堺港攘夷始末』を基にし、その他の資料を引用しながら妙國寺を訪れる人々に、堺事件の概略を当時の時代背景を交えて説明した。

約二百年続いた徳川幕府の鎖国政策下にあった日本に、十九世紀初頭以来ロシアや大英帝国を始めとして西洋の捕鯨船や軍艦が、飲料水や燃料を求めて度々日本の沿岸地域に停泊し、中には通商を要求する国もあった。当時の状況を憂慮した幕府は、対

抗措置として文政八年(1825)に「異国船打ち払い令」を發布して蘭国・中国・韓国を除く外国船を追放した。ところが天保十三年(1842)に中国の清王朝が第一次阿片戦争で英国に敗北した情報が直ちに幕府に伝わると、幕府は日本を取り巻く状況が一変したことへの危惧から規制を緩和した「薪水給与令」を発せざるを得なくなった。幕府高官の意見は開国と攘夷に分かれ、従って西洋の列強に対する外交政策も、穏健策と強硬策の間で揺れ動き、幕府はのしかかる列強の武力の脅威に直面して、日本が進むべき道の決断を迫られていた。

その後十年を経て、太平の眠りを覚まし鎖国の終焉を迎える要因となった出来事が起こった。嘉永六年(1853)のペリー来航である。それ以前からも英国や仏国から内政への干渉があり、開国を強く迫られていたが、結局米国との間に二つの条約を結ぶことになった。一つは、嘉永七年(1854)にペリーと調印して下田と函館を開港した「日米和親条約」、もう一つは、第二次阿片戦争で清が英仏の連合軍に敗退した翌年の安政五年(1858)、開国派の大老井伊直弼が孝明天皇の承諾のないままハリスとの調印を断行して江戸・横浜・神戸・新潟・函館を開港した「日米修好通商条約」である。その後一年ほどの間で、同様の条約が蘭露英仏との間で結ばれたが、これらの条約はいわゆる不平等条約で、例えば外国人は港での居住と貿易の権限を持ち、更に治外法権も是認された。無断調印と日本主権が制限されたことは攘夷論者の反感を呼び、井伊は安政五年(1858)から翌年に暗殺されるまで百人以上の反対派を弾圧したが、結果として幕府の権威を失墜させてしまった。幕府の宥和政策に対抗して外国嫌いの孝明天皇は文久二年(1862)「攘夷実行の勅命」を発したが、このあからさまな排他主義(攘夷)が幕末に頻発した西洋人に対するの極度の暴力を引き起こす要因となった。この勅命を受けて、長州藩が直ちに下関で英仏蘭米の連合艦隊と交戦し、薩摩藩は生麦事件の賠償問題を発端として薩英戦争を起こしたが、いずれも完膚なきまでに敗戦し、これを契機として薩長は主義を一転させて開国派に転じた。日本を取り巻く列強の圧力と軍事力の脅威が日々増大する中、朝廷と幕府の相克や諸藩の動向が錯綜しながら新しい時代を迎えることになる。

明治維新当初、戊辰戦争の緒戦とも言われる鳥羽伏見の戦いが尊皇派と佐幕派の間で慶応四年一月三日に勃発し、四日間続いた戦も幕府軍の決定的な敗北で終わり、将軍徳川慶喜が海洋丸で江戸に撤退した後、大阪とその近郊は大混乱に陥った。そこで新政府は薩摩藩を大阪に、同様に長門藩を兵庫に、土佐藩を堺に配属してそれぞれ治安にあたらせた。また朝廷では孝明天皇の崩御を受けて明治天皇が即位し、数ヶ月前までの攘夷から外交方針を一転して開国の詔を布告した。行政分野では新たな職制が定められ、対外交渉は主に東久世通禧と伊達宗城があたった。

新政府が慶応三年十二月七日(1868. 1. 1)に諸外国と結んだ大阪開市に伴う協定で、堺は外国人の遊歩地区となっていたが、この規定が堺を警備していた土佐藩士全てに周知された訳では無かった。さらに堺事件が起こる約一ヶ月前の慶応四年(1868)一月十一日に起こった神戸事件(注1)は、阿片戦争で辣腕を振るった英国公使パークスを始

(注1) 仏兵二名と米兵一名が、備前池田藩の家老日置帯刀の隊列の間を横切った為に、備前兵から手槍の攻撃を受け、居留地へ退却した。その時に仏兵が短銃を手にしているのを見た砲兵隊長の滝が「鉄砲」と叫び、これを「発砲」と聞き誤った藩兵が威嚇の為に居留地に向けて発砲したらしい。一報を聞いたパークスは直ちに反撃した。英仏米の陸戦隊数百名が揚陸して備前藩と銃撃戦を交えて神戸中心部を占拠し、兵庫港内停泊中の諸藩所有船六隻を拿捕して神戸沖に曳航した。幸い双方とも死者は出なかった。列強が事件関係者の処刑を要求したのに対して、備前藩は「江戸時代からの慣例」と反論したが、パークス等の恫喝的な交渉に苦慮した新政府は天皇の権威を守る為に『万国公法』を論拠として説得し、日置は発砲を指示したとされる家老の滝に切腹を命じた。切腹は余りにも酷であるとして伊達宗城は切腹間際まで助命を嘆願し、英蘭が賛意を示したが、仏米伊露が今後の外交交渉を恫喝的に進めるのに効果的であるとして反対し処刑はそのまま行われた。

め各国公使立会いの下、二月九日に永福寺で行われた備前藩士砲兵隊長滝善三郎一人の切腹で決着がついた。また備前藩への答は、最高責任者である備前藩家老日置帯刀の謹慎で済んだ。しかし、この事件は仏兵二人の傷害事件であり、外国人死者が一人も出なかったのにも拘わらず、諸外国の要求に屈して、発砲を命じたとされる滝一人に責任を迫らせた新政府の軟弱外交に対して不満を煽らせている攘夷論者もいたようだ。

切腹そのものは、罪人の打ち首ではなく、武士が何らかの責任を負った自発的または懲罰的な自殺行為で、それ故に儀式化され、武士道の高揚と共に美化されてきた。さらに元禄赤穂事件の頃までに切腹は形式化されていたようで、短刀を腹に突き立てた瞬間に介錯人が斬首するようになっていた。しかし神戸事件の場合は、それまでの事例とは違って侍の勇氣と怨念を外国人への見せしめとする為に本来の手順をふみ、滝は自らの腹を十文字に裂いてから斬首された。遺骸は永福寺に葬られ、嗣子は五百石が加増されたと云う。処刑に立ち会ったパークスは外国人襲撃の犯人がかかる名誉ある処遇を受けるのは殺傷事件防止に役に立たないとの意見であった。

慶応四年当時、神戸と大阪は開港地で、英戦艦オーシャン号や仏戦艦デュプレックス号とヴェニユス号が測量のために天保山沖で停泊していた。また近々諸国公使の謁見があるとの報に接して、堺では一月十一日から杉紀平太が大監察となって箕浦猪之吉と西村佐平次率いる約七十名の守備隊を総攬し、堺港や他の境界に配備されて警備に当たっていた。慶応四年二月十五日、ヴェニユス号艦長ロアと仏人領事ヴィヨーが大阪から堺を経由して陸路で帰艦しようとして、三名の宇和島藩士と通訳者に伴われて紀州街道を下り大和川の橋まで来た時に土佐藩士の尋問に遭った。堺は外国人遊歩自由地域外だと思い込んでいた杉大監察は公式通達なしで堺に入ることを拒否し帰るように命じた。仏人達は抗議をしたものの、やむを得ず引き返した。一方、デュプレックス号は艦長等を迎えるために既に堺港沖に停泊しており、護衛兵十五名を載せたランチが乗員八名の測量船に誘導されて着岸し、その内の二人が砲台偵察のため防波堤の上を散歩し始めた。しかしそこには帯刀した数十名の土佐藩士がいて彼等を尋問し、捉えようとした為に二人はランチに向かって走り出した。その時、近くの旭茶屋から二、三十名の武士が出てきて、彼等とランチをめがけて一斉射撃を始めた。結局、数分の銃撃で仏側の死者は溺死者を含めて合計で十一名、負傷者五名となったが、日本側の死傷者は皆無であった。

二月十六日、仏公使レオン・ロッシュは新政府に対して現場に残された仏兵七名の死体の即日引渡しを求め、十七日に遺体は丁重に納棺した上で艦に運ばれて神戸の外人墓地に葬られた。同日、山階宮晃親王がヴェニユス号に赴き謝罪したが、十九日にロッシュは更に強く抗議して五箇条の賠償請求をした。隊を指揮した士官兩名と殺害に加わった者全員の事件現場での斬罪、遺族への賠償金十五万ドル、政府代表並びに土佐藩主の正式謝罪、土佐藩士の開港地での逗留と通行の厳禁であった。神戸事件の直後を受けて政府はイギリス公使パークスや諸外国の駐在外交団の勧告に従って要求を呑み、万国公法の名の下に、発砲した者の特定を土佐藩に命じた。土佐藩は堺の任務を解任されて大阪の藩邸に引き揚げ、名乗り出た二十九名(杉と箕浦を含む)は近くの土佐稲荷で籤を引き、士分扱いを以て切腹する者二十名が決まった。

二月二十三日、土佐藩士二十名の処刑が両国の立会いの下、事件現場の近くにある妙國寺境内で行われた。仏側の要求では事件現場で行われる筈であったが、藩邸又は寺院において非公開で行う日本の慣例から急遽ここで行われることになった。妙國寺の本堂前は白い幕が張り巡らされ、全権大使デュプレックス号艦長ベルガス・デュ・プチ・トアールとその護衛兵二十名、並びに日本政府代表外国事務掛五代友厚、土佐藩家老と安芸・肥後藩の重役が所定の位置に着いた。



切腹は神戸事件に準じて正式に行われることになり、午後四時頃から始まった。藩主から拝領の白衣を着た二十人の侍達は名前と呼ばれるのを待っていた。最初の藩士箕面猪之吉が介錯人と共に現れ、白布で覆われた畳の上に座って上半身を開け、前にある白木の三方に置かれた短刀を取り、左脇腹に深く刺して右側に引いた。次に短刀を抜いて鳩尾に突き立てて引き下げた。内臓がはみ出し呻き声を上げて、姿勢を崩さず、デュ・プチ・トアールを睨み付けているようにさえ見えた。その瞬間、介錯人が首をめがけて太刀を振り下ろして首が落ちた。介錯人は太刀を一振りしてから懐紙で血を拭き、死体に重々しく礼をしてから退いた。



凄惨な切腹は順次行われたが、十一人の切腹を見届けたデュ・プチ・トアールは五代に処刑の中止を申し入れ、部下と共に艦に引き返した。遺体は大きな瓶に入れられ、裏通りを隔てた宝珠院に運ばれて埋葬された。残る九人はデュ・プチ・トアールからの助命嘆願を受けて、後日、朝命により土佐で流罪となった。

その後、二十四日には山階宮晃親王と伊達宗城が、二十五日には土佐藩主山内豊範がそれぞれヴェニウス号に赴きロッシュに公式謝罪して片がついた。なお賠償金は分割払いとなり、同年五月と九月にそれぞれ五万ドルずつ支払われたが、残りについての記録はないと云う。

各国公使との謁見は三十日に行われた。仏国公使ロッシュはプティ・トアールを随行して既に拝謁を済ませ、御所で英国公使パークス一行の到着を待っていた時に、英国公使パークスが襲撃されたという知らせが入った。パークスは拝謁する為に七十名の護衛と共に、逗留していた京都知恩院を出たところで刺客の三枝翁（さえぐさしげる）と朱雀操（すざくみさお）に襲われたという。英国騎馬兵約十名が負傷したが、幸いパークスも随行のミットフォードやアーネスト・サトウにも怪我はなく、朱雀は護衛の武士にその場で斬殺され、三枝は逮捕された。今回の処置は直ちに行われ、朱雀は武士の資格（土籍）を剥奪されて斬首の上、三枝の首と一緒に三日間梟首（さらし首）にされた。ロッシュは怒りを露にしたが、パークスは日本の武士が朱雀を斬殺していることや、三枝が犯罪者として処罰されていることで新政府の誠意が感ぜられるとして、三月三日改めて謁見を済ませた。この刺客両名は天誅組の変に加わった経緯があり、天皇親兵に任じられたところであったが、新政府内にも攘夷分子が依然として存在していたことになる。



後日、土佐藩隠居の山内容堂が宝珠院に十一基の墓を建て、法名・実名・行年・辞世の句を刻して追悼した。大正五年（1916）に仏首相クレマンソーは、戦死仏兵の碑を並び建てることを条件に、十一士の顕彰碑を妙國寺に建てることを承諾した。十一士は靖国神社にも合祀されている。



参考までに、この攘夷事件に関して大正3年（1914）に森鷗外が書いた小説『堺事件』に描かれた上陸後の概要を付記しておく。またこの小説は現在インターネットの青空文庫で閲覧できる。<http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000129/card2547.html>

仏水兵達は二十艘の端艇（はしけ）に水兵を載せて上陸し、際立った暴行はないものの、無遠慮に神社や寺に入り、婦女子をからかいながら町中を歩き回った。町人

から通報を受けた歩兵隊は直ちに現場に急行した。当時堺は開港地ではなく、手真似で船に戻るよう諭したが通じない為に、隊長が仕方なく陣所へ引き立てるように命じた。兵卒が手近にいた水兵に縄を掛けようとした時に水兵達は波止場へと逃げ出し、中の一人が町家の戸口に立てかけてあった隊旗を奪って駆けて行った。隊旗は藩士にとって命とも云えるもので、無礼な行為に激怒した俊足の旗持ちが追い縋り、鷹口を兵士の頭に打ち下ろしたために水兵は仰向けに倒れ、旗を取り戻した。これを見た仏兵達が端艇から一斉射撃を初めたので、土佐藩は七十挺の銃で端艇めがけて発砲した。六人ほどがたばたと倒れ、負傷して海に落ちたものもいた。端艇が去った後、仏水兵の死者は十一人であった。

さらに妙國寺での切腹の場面では、武士の潔さと、凄惨な光景に怖気づき慌てて逃げ出すフランス兵達の不甲斐なさを対比させているが、『フランス艦長の見た堺事件』（訳者森本英夫、新人物往来社）によれば、プチ・トアールは、切腹する土佐藩士の人数が仏兵死者と同数になった時点で処刑を取りやめたのは当初から考えていたことであり、寛容の証拠として今後の交渉に効果をあげるであろうこと、夕闇が迫り艇に戻るほうが賢明であると考えたこと、更に切腹の光景からは重罪人であったと言うより殉教者として名誉を回復し尊崇される対象となってしまうことに気付いたと述べている。

大岡昇平は資料を駆使して次のように指摘する。兵庫開港を巡っては、一部に安政文久年間の攘夷熱の復活があり、神戸事件を受けて箕浦は仏艦を敵視し、旭茶屋で予めランチに照準を合わせて待ち伏せていたこと、また尋問中に逃去した者をそのまま逃がしては武門の恥との信念で発砲を命じ、自分一人が責任を取れば済むと考えていたとしても不思議ではないこと。隊旗奪還の話や婦女子に乱暴などあり得ないこと。堺の住民は概して友好的であり、この事件とは無関係であること。襲撃の報を受けたデュプレックス艦長が直ちに報復攻撃をしなかった理由は、その時点でロア艦長等が拘束されている可能性があったこと、ロッシュが送りつけた五箇条の賠償請求の中で、東久世通禧や伊達宗城が「殺害せし者」を「発砲せし者」と取り違え、更に仏側と処刑人数の交渉をせず大まかな二十名という数字を土佐藩に提示した為に九名の哀れな流罪者が出たこと等を列挙し、史実と小説の相違点や事件の裏側を後日談と共に述べている。

神戸事件・堺事件・パークス襲撃という一連の事件は、それまでの鎖国から開国に向けて時代の潮流が変化した明治維新に起こった流血の惨事である。幕末の孝明天皇が掲げた攘夷の勅命を国是と信奉してきた加害者達は、錯綜する幕府や朝廷の外交政策に翻弄された挙句、列強の恫喝的な要求で窮地に立たされた国を救う為と、藩を存続させる美名の下に主君にも見放され、皮肉にも最後は朝命によって生贄となった犠牲者ではないだろうか。

明治維新という未曾有の変革の時代に、開国・攘夷という相反する渦に巻き込まれた十数人の侍達が列強と対峙し、犠牲となった歴史は語り継がれるべきものである。一方で、歴史上の事件記録は、それぞれの側に焼失を免れた貴重なものが残っているが、中には誇張されたものがあることも否めない。小説『堺事件』では描写された土佐十一藩士が国粋的に美化され、結果として、戦意高揚小説の濫觴となった。世界的な文豪であるが故に、多くの読者がその小説の内容を鵜呑みにして歴史を変容させてしまったことへの危惧と、後世の人が客観的に歴史を眺め、悲壮な史実を経て今があることを学び、国や民族を越えて、次の世代へ伝えることの大切さを大岡昇平は論じたのかもしれない。

平成二十一年五月 月蔵寺住職 金山章悟