

**Yamaga Sokô's Seikyô yôroku:**  
**An English Translation (Part One)**

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**A. Introduction**

Yamaga Sokô's 山鹿素行 (1622-1685) *Seikyô yôroku* 聖教要録 (Essentials of the Sagely Confucian Teachings) was a significant text in Tokugawa (1603-1867) intellectual history for at least two reasons. First of all, it was the first one published by any *kogaku* 古學, or "School of Ancient Confucian Learning," thinker. Second, because the *Seikyô yôroku* offended a powerful *bakufu* official, it was soon banned and Sokô was promptly exiled to Akô 赤穂 domain. Once Sokô's Confucian ideas had been declared taboo by the *bakufu*, it became quite easy for later scholars to attack his teachings publicly for even the most spurious reasons. For example, after the Akô *rônin* vendetta of 1703, which involved a serious breach of *bakufu* law, several Confucian scholars blamed the vendetta on the disruptive influence of Sokô's philosophy. Such allegations, along with the earlier damage done to Sokô's teachings by his exile, doomed whatever chances Sokô's learning had of gaining official Tokugawa patronage, something that Sokô had literally dreamed of most of his adult life.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, however, Sokô's thought, once disgraced in the shogun's capital, gained popularity in the distant domains of several *tozama daimyô* 外様大名. The latter, known as "the outer lords" in English, were the least willing and least loyal participants in the Tokugawa political system. Ironically, by the end of the Tokugawa period Sokô's ideas, far from giving ideological support to the *bakufu*, had become key philosophical forces in the *somô* 尊王 thought of such *shishi* 志士 as Yoshida Shôin 吉田松陰, 1830-59). Also ironic is that the groundless allegations linking Sokô's thought to the Akô *rônin* vendetta, first made to incriminate Sokô's ideas, came to be boastfully repeated by advocates of Sokô's teachings who saw in the connection evidence of the kind of ultimate values which Sokô's learning could inculcate. Finally ironic is that while Sokô's ideas first sought to civilize early-seventeenth-century samurai, in pre-1945 Japan they were used to promote the militarization of a civilian population. Since the notoriety of the *Seikyô yôroku* helped to catalyze these twists of fate in Sokô's life and thought, it is arguably a significant text for understanding modern Japanese history as well as that of Tokugawa Japan.

Before examining the historical circumstances surrounding the appearance of the *Seikyô yôroku*, a few observations regarding *kogaku* are in order. First, Sokô never thought of himself as a *kogakusha* 古學者, or "ancient learning theorist." Nor did he see

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<sup>1</sup> Hori Isao 堀勇雄, *Yamaga Sokô* 山鹿素行 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kôbunkan, 1967), pp. 304-16.

himself as the pioneer of classical or antiquarian tendencies in Confucian philosophical semantics, tendencies that Itô Jinsai 伊藤仁齋 (1627-1705) and Ogyû Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728) subsequently advanced in works such as the *Gomô jigi* 語孟字義 (The Meanings of Terms in the *Analects* and *Mencius*) and the *Benmei* 辯名 (The Meanings of Ancient Philosophical Terms). Nor did most early commentators on Tokugawa Confucianism see Sokô, Jinsai, and Sorai as three of a kind.<sup>2</sup> From the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Japanese and Western historians have characterized them as successive generations of a fundamentalist Confucian reaction against the Neo-Confucian ideas of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), whose Song dynasty (960-1279) philosophical works predominated in East Asia during its late-medieval and early modern eras. These historians follow Inoue Tetsujirô's 井上哲次郎 (1855-1944) early-twentieth-century studies of Tokugawa Confucian philosophy, conceiving of the latter as having largely consisted of three schools: the *Shushi gakuha* 朱子學派 (the School of Master Zhu), the *Yômei gakuha* 陽明學派 (the Wang Yangming School), and the *kogakuha* 古學派.<sup>3</sup> Inoue's scheme is heuristically valuable for beginning students of Japanese history, but the category by which it links Sokô, Jinsai, and Sorai is actually anachronistic.

Despite the artificiality of *kogaku*, good reasons, both philosophical and textual, exist for linking Sokô, Jinsai, and Sorai. Philosophically they all announced their rejection of Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism while asserting their alleged return to a more ancient and supposedly authentic Confucian teaching. Textually, Sokô, Jinsai, and Sorai are linked by their common appropriation of a philosophical methodology, that of systematic analysis of the meanings of philosophical terms, developed in Chen Beixi's 陳北溪 (1159-1223) *Xingli ziyi* 性理字義 (The Meanings of Neo-Confucian Terms, ca. 1226).<sup>4</sup> The

<sup>2</sup> Tawara Tsuguo 田原嗣郎, *Tokugawa shisô shi kenkyû* 徳川思想史研究 (Studies in the History of Tokugawa Thought) (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1967), pp. 7-26. Tawara notes that the *Sentetsu sôdan gohen* 先哲叢談後編 (Collection of Biographical Notes on Wise Men of the Past, Later Edition), published in 1829, suggests that Sokô was known primarily as a martial philosopher. Though it compares Sokô's ideas to those of Jinsai and Sorai, it judges that Sokô did not completely break with Zhu Xi's learning as Jinsai and Sorai did.

<sup>3</sup> Inoue Tetsujirô 井上哲次郎, *Nihon Yômei gakuha no tetsugaku* 日本陽明學派の哲學 (The Philosophy of the Japanese School of Wang Yangming), *Nihon kogakuha no tetsugaku* 日本古學派の哲學 (The Philosophy of the Japanese School of Ancient Learning), and *Nihon Shushi gakuha no tetsugaku* 日本朱子學派の哲學 (The Philosophy of the Japanese School of Zhu Xi Neo-Confucianism) (Tokyo: Fuzanbô, 1900-1903).

<sup>4</sup> Wing-tsit Chan has translated a different edition of this text. His translation is entitled *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained* (hereafter, NCTE) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). All Tokugawa editions except the 1668 one were based on the 1553 Korean edition, which differs considerably from the text that Chan translated. The 1553 Korean edition on which most Tokugawa editions were based is found in the Harvard-Yenching Library. There is a modern reprint of the 1668 edition in vol. 21 of the *Wakoku eiin kinsei kanseki sôkan, shisô hen* 和刻影印近世漢籍叢刊、思想編 (Early Modern Collection of Literary Chinese Texts Printed In Japan, Works on Thought) (Kyoto: Chûbun shuppansha, 1977), Okada Takehiko 岡田武彦, general editor. The 1668 edition is entitled *Hokkei sensei jigi shôkô* 北溪先生字義詳講 (C. *Beixi xiansheng ziyi xiangjiang*). For a detailed discussion of these textual issues, see the Appendix to my dissertation, *Ch'en Pei-hsi's Tzu-yi and Tokugawa Philosophical Lexicography* (Columbia University, 1990). There are no modern reprints of the 1632, 1659, or 1670 editions, though all can be found at Kyoto University. Miura Kunio 三浦国雄, *Shushi* 朱子 (Master

latter, commonly known as Beixi's *Ziyi*, first entered Japan in the form of the 1553 Korean edition, arriving as a result of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 豊臣秀吉 (1536-98) Korean invasions in the 1590's. In seventeenth-century Japan, the *Ziyi* was a widely studied Neo-Confucian text, it being published and republished in 1632, 1659, 1668, and 1670. Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583-1657), the Neo-Confucian scholar and intellectual-ideological vassal to the first four Tokugawa shoguns, was the main promoter of Beixi's *Ziyi* in early Tokugawa Japan.

Razan's *Seiri jigi genkai* 性理字義諺解 (Japanese Explication of Beixi's *Ziyi*), published in 1659, just six years before Sokô's *Seikyô yôroku* appeared, extensively annotated Beixi's lexicographic study of Neo-Confucian terms, making the latter's philosophico-semantic claims more accessible.<sup>5</sup> In many cases Razan included textual material showing how Song Neo-Confucians had used terms which had earlier histories in Daoist and/or Buddhist discourse. But most typically Razan defended the Neo-Confucian appropriation of those terms, insisting that the crucial question was not their remote origins but rather the meaning assigned to them. Razan had thus already explored, but decisively rejected, what became the *kogaku* method of critiquing Neo-Confucianism via appeal to the original meanings of philosophical terms. Unlike Razan, who allowed that words could live and grow lexicographically, *kogaku* scholars beginning with Sokô insisted that the only legitimate meanings words could have were those which the ancient sages had assigned to them. All other semantic accretions, especially those traceable to Buddhism and/or Daoism, required expurgation. Razan's impact on Sokô is not a matter of speculation: Razan was Sokô's earliest Confucian teacher, and numerous discussions of Beixi's *Ziyi* surface in the *Yamaga gorui* 山鹿語類 (Classified Conversations of Yamaga [Sokô]).<sup>6</sup> Because the latter offers a fuller version of the conceptual discussions found in the *Seikyô yôroku*, one can reasonably conclude that Beixi's *Ziyi* was a major source of the ideas and methodology of the *Seikyô yôroku*.

There is also evidence establishing the impact of Beixi's *Ziyi* on Itô Jinsai's *Gomô jigi*. Jinsai's diary, for example, records that between the twelfth lunar month of 1682 and the ninth month of 1683, when Jinsai was composing the first draft of his *Gomô jigi*, he was also lecturing his students on Beixi's *Ziyi*.<sup>7</sup> The *Gomô jigi* even alludes to the *Ziyi* in its title, *jigi* being the Japanese reading of the Chinese *ziyi* 字義. There are additionally several passages in the *Gomô jigi* which explicitly refer to Beixi's *Ziyi*, and many more which allude to the *Ziyi* without overtly identifying the *Ziyi* as its source. Koyasu Nobukuni has also recently noted the indirect impact of Beixi's *Ziyi* on Ogyû Sorai's *Benmei*.<sup>8</sup> Though Sokô, Jinsai, and Sorai were not linked in teacher-disciple relations,

Zhu) (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1979), p. 218, notes that the *Ziyi* was "China's first philosophical lexicon" (*Chûgoku saisho no tetsugaku jiten* 中国最初の哲学辞典). Presumably it has the same status in Japan.

<sup>5</sup> Razan's manuscript is in the Naikaku bunko 内閣文庫 at the Kokuritsu kôbun shokan 国立公文書館 in Tokyo. A copy of the 1659 woodblock edition is at Kyoto University.

<sup>6</sup> Yamaga Sokô, *Yamaga gorui* 山鹿語類 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankôkai, 1912), pp. 170, 178, 187, 197-98, 201, 222, 330, 332, 335, 339-40, 359, 362-63, 383, 397, 406, 410, 415.

<sup>7</sup> *Jinsai nikki* 仁齋日記 (Diary of Itô Jinsai) (Tokyo: Yagi shoten, 1985), p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Koyasu Nobukuni 子安宣邦, *Jiken to shite no Sorai-gaku* 事件としての徂徠学 (Events in the History of the Sorai School) (Tokyo: Aoni sha, 1990), pp. 258-71.

their major texts bear a striking resemblance to one another. So similar are they that if one did not posit some other text by which their relations could be explained, one would likely assume that Jinsai and Sorai studied Sokô's *Seikyô yôroku* before formulating their own *kogaku* philosophies. There is no evidence supporting the latter possibility, leaving the resemblances between the three texts either (a) a mystery, (b) a coincidence, or (c) the result of their shared relationship with yet another text, possibly Beixi's *Ziyi*. Given the presence of textual evidence and scholarly opinion tying the *Seikyô yôroku*, the *Gomô jigi*, and the *Benmei* to Beixi's *Ziyi*, the latter text becomes a key link among these texts and a good reason for salvaging the notion of *kogaku*.

The *Seikyô yôroku* is also important because it landed Sokô in serious trouble with the *bakufu*. Unfortunately for Sokô, by the time that his *Seikyô yôroku* was published in late 1665,<sup>9</sup> Hoshina Masayuki 保科正之 (1611-72), then the most powerful man in the *bakufu*, had become a devout student of Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇齋 (1618-82), a purist advocate of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian teachings. Masayuki was not the shogun, but he was a close relative and trusted advisor of the ruling Tokugawa family. After all, Hidetada 秀忠 (r. 1605-23), the second shogun, was his father; Iemitsu 家光 (r. 1623-51), the third shogun, was his half-brother; and Ietsuna 家綱 (r. 1651-1680), the fourth shogun, was Masayuki's ward. These ties made Masayuki an exceptionally authoritative figure. Ansai's teachings were renowned for their strict fidelity to Zhu Xi's philosophy; they were also influenced by the ideas of Korean purists such as Yi T'oegye 李退溪 (1501-70). Like T'oegye, Ansai sharply criticized Beixi and others who attempted to recapitulate Zhu Xi's thought. Ansai believed that Neo-Confucian students should focus exclusively on Zhu Xi's writings, such as his *Sishu jizhu* 四書集注 (Commentaries on the Four Books) and *Jinsilu* 近思錄 (Reflections on Things at Hand). Ansai's dedication to Zhu Xi was so intense that it occasionally bordered on fanaticism in its intolerance of other thinkers, even Confucian theorists. Sokô's *Seikyô yôroku* surely offended him because it explicitly criticized Song and Ming Neo-Confucian developments, even charging that they criminally misled the world via their distortions of ancient Confucian teachings. Thus, in the tenth month of 1666, about one year after the *Seikyô yôroku* was published, Sokô was banished from Edo indefinitely, Masayuki having had the *bakufu* declare his writings intolerably outrageous (*futodoki naru shomotsu* 不屈なる書物).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Because neither of the two versions of the woodblock edition of the *Seikyô yôroku* includes the date of publication, it is not clear when the text first appeared. The "Small Preface," however, bears the date of the tenth lunar month of 1665. Presumably, it was published shortly after, either in late 1665 or early 1666.

<sup>10</sup> Virtually all Japanese historians have attributed Sokô's exile to the machinations of Hoshina Masayuki and his teacher Yamazaki Ansai. Hori's biography, *Yamaga Sokô*, pp. 206-230, thoroughly examines the evidence indicating Masayuki's role in the *bakufu* decision to exile Sokô. The same verdict is found in Bitô Masahide 尾藤正英, "Yamaga Sokô," *Kokushi daijiten* 国史大辞典 (Encyclopedia of Japanese History), vol. 14 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kôbunkan, 1993), pp. 116-17; and Tawara Tsuguo, "Yamaga Sokô," *Nihonshi daijiten* 日本史大辞典 (Encyclopedia of Japanese History), vol. 6 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1994), pp. 836-37. For Sokô's own account see, Yamaga Sokô, *Haisho zanpitsu* 配所殘筆 (Last Testament Written in Exile), in *Yamaga Sokô*, Tawara Tsuguo and Morimoto Junichirô 守本順一郎, eds., *Nihon shisô taikai* 日本思想体系 (hereafter, NST), vol. 32 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten,

*Bakufu* guards escorted Sokô to Akô, a small fief located in Harima 播磨 province along the inland sea. Akô was the designated place of exile because Sokô had earlier, between 1652 and 1660, served its *daimyô*, Asano Naganao 淺野長直, a *tozama* lord, as a *hinshi* 賓師, or guest instructor, of martial philosophy. Serving the Akô *daimyô* does not seem to have been Sokô's first choice; rather his doing so resulted from the post-1651 Tokugawa policy encouraging *rônin*, or masterless samurai, to take up service to some lord in one capacity or another.<sup>11</sup> Sokô had hoped to become a Tokugawa retainer, but when that did not materialize he accepted Asano Naganao's request that he become his *hinshi*. During his second year of service, Sokô helped to oversee the construction of Akô castle, a project that Naganao had worked for since 1645 when he was transferred to Akô, a domain without a castle, from Kasama 笠間, a domain with one. For his instruction, Sokô received an annual rice stipend of 1,000 *koku* 石. With the exception of a seven-month period during which Sokô was in Akô, supervising the construction of the new castle, he spent his entire tenure as an Asano vassal in Edo 江戸, lecturing the Akô *daimyô* whenever he resided in the *bakufu* capital. During those years Sokô authored his *Bukyô shôgaku* 武教小學 (Elementary Learning for Samurai), *Bukyô honron* 武教本論 (Basic Learning for Samurai), *Bukyô yôroku* 武教要録 (Essential Learning for Samurai), and *Bukyô zensho* 武教全書 (Anthology of Samurai Learning). In these works, Sokô reinterpreted Neo-Confucian doctrines, making them exclusively applicable to the samurai estate. As such, Sokô's teachings which he then referred to as *shidô* 士道, or "the way of the samurai," were one of the earliest and most systematic attempts at defining a civil ethic for samurai in an age of peace.

In 1660, however, Sokô resigned his stipend and simultaneously announced his willingness to serve other *daimyô*, though for a higher stipend than the Asano family had been prepared to pay him.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps Sokô was hoping to rise in the world of samurai. But between 1660 and 1663, he received no acceptable offers. During that time, he explored Daoist and Zen Buddhist literature, but found no real satisfaction in it. In 1663, he proclaimed his direct reliance on the teachings of ancient Confucianism. Over the next three years he formulated his own brand of Confucianism, which he called *seikyô* 聖教 or *seigaku* 聖學, or "the sagely Confucian teachings." The latter purportedly sought to revive the original teachings of ancient Confucianism while rejecting Neo-Confucian interpretations of them. His disciples recorded these teachings in two key works, the brief *Seikyô yôroku* and the lengthier *Yamaga gorui*.

Sokô's doctrines seem harmless enough today. At a glance they resemble Zhu Xi's teachings. One Sokô scholar, Bitô Masahide, has even claimed that Sokô's ideas did not have much of an impact on later *kogaku* thought because they relied too heavily on Zhu Xi's understanding of ancient Confucianism even while ostensibly rejecting the same.<sup>13</sup> What doomed Sokô's *Seikyô yôroku*, however, was not so much its philosophical doctrines as its offensive rhetorical claims. For example, Sokô brashly charged that Neo-Confucians were guilty of the world's greatest crime because they misled the world while

1970), p. 329. See Shuzo Uenaka, "Last Testament in Exile: Yamaga Sokô's *Haisho Zampitsu*," *Monumenta Nipponica* XXXII.2 (Summer 1977): 125-52, for a translation of the *Haisho zanpitsu*.

<sup>11</sup> Tawara Tsuguo, "Yamaga Sokô," *Nihonshi daijiten*, vol. 6, pp. 836-37.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hori, *Yamaga Sokô*, pp. 176-78.

<sup>13</sup> Bitô Masahide, "Yamaga Sokô," *Kokushi daijiten*, vol. 14, p. 117.

pretending to explain the Confucian way. Sokô's students were likewise imprudent, suggesting that their master's teachings might bring about changes in the government. These two claims alone seem to have suggested that Sokô was a revolutionary of sorts, charging the authorities with crimes and hoping to take charge of the polity as a philosopher-reformer. Though that was probably not Sokô's intention, his rhetoric could easily have been interpreted as being too self-righteous, accusatory, and politically threatening.

After deciding to exile Sokô, the *bakufu* generously decreed that the Akô *daimyô* would supervise him, thus assigning Sokô to a place where he was welcome. The exile was a time of intense study, philosophical ferment, and literary productivity for Sokô. His most seminal work from this period, the *Chûchô jijitsu* 中朝事實 (The True Reality of the Central Kingdom), glorified the unbroken continuity of the imperial house as the defining feature of Japan's history which made it rather than China the true "Central Kingdom," i.e., the place where Confucian teachings were fully realized.<sup>14</sup> It may be tempting to see in this work a shift in Sokô's allegiances towards the imperial court and away from the *bakufu*, but that seems unjustified since the *Chûchô jijitsu* accepts the legitimacy of the *bakufu* within the imperial system. In other regards, Sokô's exile passed relatively uneventfully: he never attempted to escape nor did he dream of seeking any kind of revenge, ideological or otherwise, against the *bakufu*.

Masayuki's demise in 1672 signalled the beginning of the end of Sokô's banishment. Three years--the traditional Confucian mourning period--after Masayuki's death, Sokô was pardoned. He was also permitted to return to Edo and reopen his school, which he relocated in Asakusa 浅草 and called the Sekitokudô 積徳堂 (The Hall of Increasing Virtue), but it never regained its former vigor. Sokô was allowed, in the final decade of his life, to resume lecturing to a small group of *daimyô* and samurai, including his two most devoted and generous followers, the *tozama daimyô*, Matsuura Shigenobu 松浦鎮信 (1622-1703), lord of Hirado 平戸 domain on Kyûshû 九州, and Tsugaru Nobumasa 津軽信政 (1646-1710), lord of Hirosaki 弘前 domain in northwestern Honshû 本州. Yet Sokô was not permitted to offer public lectures to large groups of *rônin* as he had done before 1666. Furthermore, the *Seikyô yôroku* remained a proscribed text, one never again published in the Tokugawa period. The decade of exile had apparently diminished popular samurai interest in the *Seikyô yôroku*. Ambitious and obliging Tokugawa vassals distanced themselves from Sokô and his tainted ideas. Even Sokô himself, in his final years, developed a new line of thought with his *Gengen hakki* 原源發機 (Explication of the Cosmic Origins), a rather esoteric metaphysical treatise attempting to explain the workings of the universe via reference to numbers and symbols. By the time of his death from malaria in 1685, both Sokô's earlier fame and notoriety seem to have become things of the past. Yet in the decades that followed, scholars belonging to both Ogyû Sorai's and Yamazaki Ansai's schools lost no opportunities in denouncing Sokô's writings, knowing that it would be safe to do so since the *bakufu* itself had earlier branded him a troublemaker.

<sup>14</sup> A modern edition of this text, with an explication of Sokô's thoughts on Japan's national identity, is found in Nôtomî Yoshitake 納富誠武, *Yamaga Sokô no kokutai kan* 山鹿素行の國體觀 (Yamaga Sokô's View of the National Polity) (Tokyo: Kaku shobô, 1943).



The 1703 Akô *rônin* incident further doomed Sokô's teachings, in Edo at least. In 1701 (Genroku 元禄 14), Asano Naganori 浅野長矩 (1665-1701), *daimyô* of Akô domain, drew his sword and wounded Kira Yoshinaka 吉良義中 (1644-1703), the master of *bakufu* ceremonies, while participating in a *bakufu* ritual welcoming imperial messengers conveying New Year's greetings to the shogun. Traditional accounts explain that Yoshinaka had humiliated Naganori because Naganori refused to provide him with the requisite "gifts." Whatever the cause of the attack, the *bakufu* decided that Naganori was solely at fault. It thus ordered him, the same day, to commit suicide as punishment for his violation of the *bakufu* law regarding altercations within the shogun's castle. Later, Akô domain was confiscated, leaving the Asano family fiefless and its retainers *rônin*. Forty-six of the latter subsequently plotted revenge against their deceased lord's supposed enemy, Kira Yoshinaka. Led by Ôishi Yoshio 大石良雄 (1659-1703), the Akô *rônin* launched a surprise attack on Yoshinaka's Edo mansion and decapitated him on 12/14 of Genroku 15 (early 1703). After presenting Yoshinaka's severed head at Naganori's grave, the *rônin* reported their actions to the *bakufu*. Following lengthy deliberations, the *bakufu* decided that all forty-six men would commit suicide as punishment for their illegal behavior.<sup>15</sup>

After the appearance of the *Kanadehon Chûshingura* 假名手本忠臣蔵 in 1748, the *rônin* became heroic figures for many Japanese, representing the ultimate loyalty that devoted samurai were willing to render unto their lord. Following their suicides, there was already some evidence of public fascination with them. For example, in the month of their death, the *rônin* were posthumously represented on stage in the play, *Akebono Soga no yôchi* 曙曾我夜討 (The Soga Brothers' Nocturnal Revenge), at the Nakamura-za in Edo. The *bakufu*, however, closed this production just days after it opened. Some essays, such as Muro Kyûsô's 室鳩巢 *Akô gishi roku* 赤穂義士録 (Discussion of the Righteous Samurai of Akô Domain; 1703) also appeared praising the *rônin* as *gishi* 義士 or "righteous samurai."<sup>16</sup>

The *bakufu*, however, had declared the *rônin* criminals, suggesting that solidarity with them was not the politically correct stance for prudent residents of Edo. Astoundingly, Sokô and his teachings were soon assigned ideological blame for the *rônin* vendetta.<sup>17</sup> In 1705, one of Yamazaki Ansai's disciples, Satô Naokata 佐藤直方 (1650-1719), in his *Shijûroku nin no hikki* 四十六人之筆記 (Notes on the Forty-Six Samurai) suggested that the Akô *rônin* were influenced by the Yamaga teachings.<sup>18</sup> A notable

<sup>15</sup> For a lengthier discussion of these topics, see Tawara Tsuguo, "Yamaga Sokô to shidô" 山鹿素行と士道 (Yamaga Sokô and the Way of the Samurai), in *Yamaga Sokô, Nihon no meicho*, vol. 12 (Tokyo: Chûô kôron, 1971).

<sup>16</sup> See Tawara Tsuguo, *Akô shijûroku shi ron* 赤穂四十六士論 (On the Forty-Six Samurai of Akô) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kôbunkan, 1978), for a discussion of the essays written about the *rônin* vendetta.

<sup>17</sup> See Hori Isao, *Yamaga Sokô*, pp. 267-78, for a critical analysis of claims linking Sokô to the Akô *rônin* incident; Hori shows that there is no evidence proving that Sokô or Sokô's thought directly influenced the Akô *rônin* in executing their vendetta. Though many prewar Sokô enthusiasts, following Inoue Tetsujirô's studies, praised Sokô's impact on the *rônin*, the first suggestions associating Sokô with the Akô *rônin* came from critics of Sokô's thought.

<sup>18</sup> Satô Naokata, *Shijûroku nin no hikki*, in *Kinsei buke shisô* 近世武家思想 (Early Modern Military Thought) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1974), Ishii Shirô 石井紫郎, ed., NST, vol. 27, p. 379. However,

follower of Ogyû Sorai (1666-1728) continued these allegations. Sorai's *Shijûshichi shi no koto o ronzu* 四十七士の事を論ず (Discussion of the Forty-Seven Samurai Incident) does not mention Sokô's teachings as a factor influencing the vendetta. However his disciple, Dazai Shundai 太宰春台 (1680-1747), did assert that Sorai connected the Akô plot to the teachings of Yamaga Sokô. Shundai's *Akô shijûroku shi ron* 赤穂四十六士論 (Discussion of the Forty-Six Akô Samurai), written around 1732, several years after Sorai's death (1728), claims, "My teacher Sorai observed, 'The Akô samurai did not understand righteousness. In murdering Lord Kira they illustrated the military teachings of Mr. Yamaga.'" Shundai further related:

Initially Mr. Yamaga served the Lord of Akô by discoursing on military methodology. It was at this time that Ôishi Yoshio studied Yamaga's teachings. In conspiring to assassinate Lord Kira, Ôishi Yoshio utilized Mr. Yamaga's teachings.... But in not understanding how to vent his rage and resentment over the death of his lord, Ôishi Yoshio revealed that he lacked great righteousness and justice. Mr. Yamaga's teachings are all like that.<sup>19</sup>

With the writings of Naokata and Shundai, the posthumous villification of Sokô's teachings began. Yet, ironically, as Sokô's teachings became, merely on the basis of circumstantial evidence, a pariah form of learning from the perspective of the Tokugawa *bakufu*, a powerful legend was created, one which appealed to later opponents of the Tokugawa regime. If Sokô's philosophy had the ability to instill in samurai the kind of loyalty that the *rônin* exhibited, a loyalty that was oblivious to *bakufu* laws, then some *tozama* daimyô at least came to think that Sokô's teachings were worthy of promotion in their own domains. After all, the latter were often only reluctantly loyal to Tokugawa authority. Sokô had failed to sell his samurai philosophy to the *bakufu*, but his learning became, after being castigated for its alleged anti-*bakufu* tendencies, something of a success in distant *tozama* domains such as Chôshû 長州 where animosities towards the Tokugawa continued to simmer. This is especially evident in the life and thought of Yoshida Shôin (1830-59), a late-Tokugawa teacher of Sokô's ideas who accepted as fact the earlier allegations linking Sokô's thought and the Akô *rônin*; indeed, Shôin regarded the *rônin* as personal heroes and extolled them as perfect exemplars of the essence of Sokô's teachings. (To be continued).

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another of Ansai's disciples, Asami Keisai 浅見綱斎 (1652-1711), argued against Naokata's essay in his *Shijûroku shi ron* 四十六士論 (On the Forty-Six Samurai). Keisai claimed that it was laughable to blame Yamaga Sokô's teachings for the *rônin* vendetta simply because they advocated the use of planning and strategic attack. The same emphases, Keisai claimed, could be found in virtually any military philosophy. See *Kinsei buke shisô*, p. 396.

<sup>19</sup> Dazai Shundai, *Akô shijûroku shi ron*, in *Kinsei buke shisô*, pp. 404-08 (409-11).



## B. Translation of the *Seikyô yôroku* (Small Preface and Chapter One)<sup>20</sup>

### Small Preface

As they were transmitted down from antiquity, the subtle meanings of the sagely Confucian teachings gradually became hidden. Scholars of the Han (B.C. 206-220 A.D.), Tang (618-907), Song (960-1279), and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties successively misled their ages about the significance of the ancient sages' teachings. Misgivings about those sagely teachings thus mounted. If this was true in China, how much more so was it surely the case in Japan? Yet two millennia after Confucius (551-479 B.C.), our teacher Yamaga Sokô (1622-85) appeared, revering what remained of the moral way of the Duke of Zhou (fl. 1111 B.C.) and Confucius. Our teacher has since become the first to revive the essentials of the sagely and moral learning of Confucianism. Through instruction in this learning, one's understanding becomes all-penetrating. With practice of it, one's actions become all-effective, regardless of whether they relate to oneself, one's family, the state, the world, or matters of civil or martial arts. Might not our teacher's ideas therefore bring about changes in the government of our age? This text records his achievement. If the benefits of his learning are not realized in the world, that is due to Heaven.<sup>21</sup>

We, our teacher's disciples, have edited his remarks. Presenting them to him, we suggested, "Your sayings should be revered, but they must be kept secret. Your teachings should not be propagated because they contradict the ideas of Han, Tang, Song, and Ming Confucians. Contemporary thinkers whose doctrines differ from yours will surely condemn them."

Our teacher replied, "Ah! Those small-minded pedants are unworthy of consideration! The Confucian way is the way of the entire world. One must not hide it in one's embrace. Rather it must be proclaimed broadly so that it will be practiced eternally. If my ideas influence just one person, they will still benefit the entire world! If morally advanced individuals (J. *kunshi* 君子, C. *junzi*) are willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of realizing humaneness (J. *nin* 仁, C. *ren*),<sup>22</sup> why should my teachings be kept secret? The world's greatest crime is misleading others while purporting to explain the moral way. Confucians of the Han and Tang, and those philosophers of the Song and Ming dynasties belonging to the School of Principle (J. *rigaku* 理學, C. *lixue*), eloquently sought to resolve perplexities about the moral way. Yet the more they endeavored, the

<sup>20</sup> This translation is based on the text found in Tawara Tsuguo and Morimoto Junichirô, eds., *Yamaga Sokô*, NST, vol. 32 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), pp. 8-28 (340-47).

<sup>21</sup> Belief in the providential agency of Heaven goes back to the Chinese *Shujing* 書經 (Book of History) and *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Poetry) where the notion of "the mandate of Heaven" was first adumbrated. Also, cf., *Analects*, 12/5; *Lunyu yinde* 論語引得 (Concordance to the Analects) (hereafter, *LYYD*), Nie Chongqi 聶崇岐, et. al., eds. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), p. 22: "Life and death are matters of fate; wealth and honor depend on Heaven."

<sup>22</sup> *Analects*, 15/9; *LYYD*, p. 31; 4/8, p. 6; 8/13, p. 15; 14/17, p. 28. "The resolute scholar and humane man would never seek life by violating humaneness. Self-sacrifice might even be required in some circumstances for the sake of realizing humaneness." Confucius further claimed that if one realized the Way in the morning, death that evening would come with peace. He even advised disciples to "defend until death the moral Way."

more deeply did people doubt the Confucian teachings. Those pedants thus left the ancient sagely teachings in a miserable state. But the Confucian classics are brilliantly clear! One need not belabor them with prolix, burdensome commentaries. Admittedly I lack broad knowledge and am unskilled in rhetoric. How dare I explicate the words of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius or even debate interpretations of them? Yet if I refrain, the misguided claims of pseudo-scholars may never be cleared away.

Confucius advised that “posterity be respected.”<sup>23</sup> Dare I then venture a view that might be mistaken? Yet if I circulate my thoughts, others may proclaim, criticize, or debate them. If my mistakes are corrected through such open criticisms, then the Confucian way will benefit from such dialogue. The embarrassment of the Liaodong 遼東 people over white-headed swine and donkeys<sup>24</sup> exemplifies the ignorance resulting from (1) knowing oneself but not others, and (2) failing to examine matters completely.

I see the Duke of Zhou and Confucius as my teachers, not the Han, Tang, Song, and Ming academics! In learning I strive to embody the sagely teachings of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, not heterodoxies. In behavior I concern myself with matters of daily practicality, not feeling “unconstrained.”<sup>25</sup> Perfection in knowledge is attained when one’s understanding penetrates everything. Diligence in action is action pursued energetically! What distresses me is an eloquent Confucian lecturer who is morally deficient in practice. The sages’ way is not something for which individuals should selfishly hope. If practiced by one person but not everyone, it is not the truly moral Confucian way.<sup>26</sup> My purpose in life is to proclaim the sagely Confucian teachings in the hope that I might serve someone who can bring them to fruition in the world.

Yielding to Master Yamaga’s wishes, we present the *Seikyô yôroku* for public consideration. Our teacher’s *Yamaga gorui* treats in greater depth similar questions pertaining to moral relations between rulers and ministers, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, elder and younger brothers, and friends.

<sup>23</sup> *Analects*, 9/23: *LYYD*, p. 17. “The Master (Confucius) said, ‘Posterity must be respected.’”

<sup>24</sup> Supposedly, the people of the Liaodong peninsula thought that a white-headed swine born there was so marvelous that they decided to present it to their ruler. Upon learning that white-headed pigs were common in the ruler’s region, they were embarrassed. This parable reveals the folly resulting from ignorance of matters outside one’s own region. According to legends, Liaodong originally had no donkeys. Thus when their tigers first encountered donkeys, they were frightened by their size.

<sup>25</sup> Li Yanping 李延平 (1088-1163), in the *Yanping dawen* 延平答問 (Dialogues with Li Yanping), mentions “feeling unconstrained” (*saluo* 洒落) in referring to the enlightenment experience attained in quiet-sitting. *Yanping dawen*, in *Shushi no senku* 朱子の先駆 (Master Zhu’s Predecessors), *Shushigaku taikai* 朱子学大系 (Compendium on the Zhu Xi School) (hereafter ST), vol. 3, Okada Takehiko, ed. (Tokyo: Meitoku shuppansha, 1976), pp. 185-89 (429-30). Fujiwara Seika’s 藤原愰窩 “Letter to Hayashi Dôshun” 林道春 (*Fujiwara Seika shû* 藤原愰窩集 [The Writings of Fujiwara Seika], vol. 1, pp. 147-48) also mentions “unconstrained.” Kanaya Osamu 金谷治 discusses this topic relative to Seika’s Confucianism in *Fujiwara Seika/Hayashi Razan*, NST, vol. 28, pp. 465-68.

<sup>26</sup> Beixi, “The Way,” *XLZY*, pp. 51a-53a. Cf. Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *NCTE*, pp. 105-06. “*Dao* (J. *michi*; the way) denotes a road. Originally *michi* signified people on a road. Since roads refer to the ground that many people follow, one would not call something a road if only one person used it. Essentially *dao* signifies those principles that people should follow in daily affairs and human relations.... Yet in reality, the word *dao* derives its meaning by extension from places people walk along.”

## Chapter One

### (1) Sagacity (*seijin* 聖人)

A sage is one whose knowledge is perfect and whose mind is correct<sup>27</sup> so that he understands everything. A sage's behavior is earnest, yet in harmony with the order of things.<sup>28</sup> In dealings with others, a sage is natural and easy<sup>29</sup> but also centered in ritual propriety. In governing the state and bringing peace to the world<sup>30</sup> a sage insures that everything attains its proper order. In explaining sagacity, one need not speak of physical appearance, envisioning the sage's way, or understanding the functions of a sage. One need only recognize that a sage is one who, in the world of daily practicality, perfectly understands and fully follows Confucian rituals without excess or deficiency.<sup>31</sup> In antiquity rulers taught their people the mean and governed them by it. In later ages, however, rulers did not teach the mean. Rather they abdicated their moral authority, merely establishing teachers to instruct the people in their stead. Such was the government of a degenerate age.<sup>32</sup>

The standard that people should assiduously follow is the sagely Confucian way, even though it is true, as Confucius said, that perceptive persons will surpass it while duller sorts may never quite attain it.<sup>33</sup> Those who are praised for a single practice or a sole virtue are actually one-sided. People capable of declining generous stipends or relinquishing mountains of gold as high as the north star are not that rare. Nor is there a shortage of persons so loyal and filial that they would never perpetrate an injustice. Reclusive hermit-scholars and Daoists of renowned integrity who "comprehend

<sup>27</sup> *Daxue* 大学 (Great Learning), ch. 1, Shimada Kenji 島田虔次, ed., *Daigaku/Chûyô* 大学中庸 (Great Learning/The Doctrine of the Mean), Chûgoku kotensen 中国古典選 series (Selections from the Chinese Classics), vol. 4 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1978), pt. 1, p. 62. "As knowledge is extended the will becomes sincere; thereupon, one's mind becomes correct."

<sup>28</sup> Cf., *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean) (hereafter, *The Mean*), ch. 20; Shimada, *Daigaku/Chûyô*, pt. 2, p. 145. "Confucius said, 'Practice the way of sincerity earnestly.'" *Mencius*, 5B/1; *Mengzi yinde* 孟子引得 (Concordance to the Mencius) (hereafter, *MZYD*); Hong Ye 洪業 et al., eds. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), p. 39. "Initiating harmony with the order of things requires wisdom. Completing that harmony requires sageliness."

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *The Mean*, ch. 20; Shimada, *Daigaku/Chûyô*, pt. 2, p. 143. "A person who is naturally and easily centered in the way is a sage."

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Great Learning*, ch. 1; Shimada, *Daigaku/Chûyô*, pt. 1, p. 73. "If the state is ordered, peace will reign in the world."

<sup>31</sup> Zhu Xi, *Zhongyong zhangju* 中庸章句 (Commentary on the Words and Phrases of the Doctrine of the Mean), in ST, vol. 8, Suzuki Yoshijirô 鈴木由次郎, et al., eds. (Tokyo: Meitoku shuppansha, 1974), p. 14 (450). Zhu states, "The mean refers to what is neither partial nor biased, to what is without excess nor deficiency."

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Mencius*, 3B/9; *MZYD*, p. 25. "The age was degenerate and the way was remote."

<sup>33</sup> *The Mean*, ch. 4; Shimada, *Daigaku/Chûyô*, pt. 2, p. 46. "The Master said, 'I know why the way is not practiced. Perceptive persons surpass it, while the duller sorts never quite attain it.'"

masculinity”<sup>34</sup> but forsake the vulgar world, are not few either. Excelling at one task or being famous for just one deed hardly amounts to a fraction of the sagely Confucian way. A true sage is one who totally dwells in the mean.<sup>35</sup> The praise that sages receive is not the result of a single virtue.<sup>36</sup>

## (2) Perfecting Knowledge (*chishi* 知至)

Human beings are the most intelligent of all the myriad creatures. Indeed of the various species formed from vital fluids and material energies, none is more brilliant than mankind. And of all humanity, sages and worthies embody perfect knowledge. Duller sorts and unworthy individuals must learn what sages like the Duke of Zhou and Confucius naturally knew. Perfecting knowledge hinges on investigating things.<sup>37</sup> The *Book of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經) observes, “Since humanity was created, where there have been things so have there been principles.”<sup>38</sup> By completely investigating things one perfects knowledge, making it all-penetrating. Sages fully investigate all things, enabling their understanding to extend everywhere. The *Book of History* (*Shujing* 書經) relates how “thinking produces intelligence.”<sup>39</sup> That, in turn, makes sages.

But the more that people know about the world, the more they desire. As a result, human desires seem insatiable. In trying to fulfill their desires, morally advanced individuals therefore deem rightness to be profitable, while common people appreciate profit, but do not understand rightness.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, morally sophisticated people can enjoy profits, while commoners are never satisfied in pursuing them. Rightness and profit

<sup>34</sup> Laozi 老子 (The Laozi), ch. 28; Fukunaga Mitsuji 福永光司, ed., *Rōshi* 老子 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1978), Chūgoku kotensen, vol. 10, p. 207. “Comprehending masculinity but preserving femininity, one becomes the ravine of the world.”

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, “Teachers,” ch. 7, *Tongshu* 通書 (Penetrating the Book of Changes); Fumoto Yasutaka 麓保孝, et al., eds., in *Shushi no senku*, in ST, vol. 2, p. 143. “The mean is ... that in which the sage abides.”

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Analects*, 8/1; LYD, p. 14. “The Master said, ‘Tai Bo embodied the highest virtue! . yet there was no single thing for which the commoners praised him.’”

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Great Learning*, ch. 1; Shimada, *Daigaku/Chūyō*, pt. 1, p. 62. “The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things.” Zhu Xi, following Cheng Yi 程頤, emended the *Great Learning* to include the comments: “The meaning of the expression ‘The perfection of knowledge depends on the investigation of things’ is this: If we wish to extend our knowledge to the utmost, we should investigate the principles of everything we encounter. The human mind is formed to understand things; indeed, there is nothing in which its principles do not inhere. Human knowledge is incomplete only because all principles are not fully investigated.... With prolonged striving, one will achieve a wide and far-reaching penetration. Then the qualities of all things will be apprehended, and one’s mind in its total substance and great functioning will become perfectly intelligent. This is called the investigation of things. This is called the perfection of knowledge.”

<sup>38</sup> *Book of Poetry*, Mao, no. 260; James Legge, *Chinese Classics* (hereafter, CC) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University, 1970 reprint of the Oxford University Press edition), vol. 4, p. 541. Neo-Confucians considered this poem classical support for their notion of principle.

<sup>39</sup> *Book of History*, “The Great Plan”; Legge, CC, vol. 3, p. 327.

<sup>40</sup> *Analects*, 4/16; LYD, p. 7. “The Master said, ‘Gentlemen respond to rightness while commoners respond to profit.’” *Book of History*, “The Great Plan”; Legge, CC, vol. 3, p. 327.

are not completely different matters. The *Book of Changes (Yijing)* therefore states, "profit is the harmony produced from rightness."<sup>41</sup> Where rightness exists, profit follows.

Everyone dreams of becoming a sage. Yet since human knowledge is imperfect, many succumbing to heterodoxies which claim to rectify and regulate human passions, turning people instantly into sages. But that is the base way of barbarians! Distinguishing sagely Confucian teachings from vulgar ones hinges on understanding the real significance of rightness and profit. Unless vigorously practiced, the sagely Confucian knowledge remains imperfect. If not accompanied by critical reflection, it amounts to little more than forced reasoning<sup>42</sup> and its practice becomes self-indulgent, despite the energy one might put into it. That is surely not perfection! Only vigorous action, buttressed by critical reflection, perfects the sagely knowledge of Confucianism.

### (3) The Sagely Learning (*seigaku* 聖學)

Why should anyone bother with the sagely Confucian learning? One should study it to learn the moral way of humanity! Why heed the sagely teachings of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius? Heed them for instruction in the moral way of humanity. Without study, people do not understand the Confucian way. Although excellently endowed in physical disposition and mental faculties, without studying the Confucian way a person will often end up beclouded. Learning consists of studying the ancient Confucian instructions, extending one's knowledge about them, and applying that knowledge to daily matters. When knowledge is perfected, one's material endowment will be positively transformed.<sup>43</sup>

Establishing a moral purpose for one's life is integral to Confucian learning. Unless ethical learning is one's purpose,<sup>44</sup> one's actions will simply be "for the sake of impressing others."<sup>45</sup> There is a structure to the sagely Confucian learning: elementary learning precedes the greater learning,<sup>46</sup> lower-level studies precede upper-level studies,<sup>47</sup> and there is learning for above average and for below average students.<sup>48</sup> At each level,

<sup>41</sup> *Book of Changes*, "Explanation of Words and Sentences;" Legge, *I Ching*, p. 408; *Zhouyi yinde* 周易引得 (*Concordance to the Book of Changes*), Hong Ye, ed., (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Mencius*, 4B/26; *MZYD*, p. 32. "What I detest in wise men is their forced reasoning."

<sup>43</sup> This was a widely held tenet within Zhu Xi's school of Neo-Confucians. E.g., Chen Beixi, "The Decree," *XLZY*, p. 3b; Chan, trans., *NCTE*, p. 41. "By studying, one can transform one's material disposition, changing darkness into light."

<sup>44</sup> *Analects*, 2/4; *LYYD*, p. 2. "The Master said, 'At fifteen I made learning my purpose in life.'"

<sup>45</sup> *Analects*, 14/24; *LYYD*, p. 29. "The Master said, 'The ancients learned to improve themselves, but today people learn simply to impress others.'"

<sup>46</sup> *Book of Rites*, "Royal Regulations;" Legge, *Li Chi*, vol. 1, p. 219. "When the Son of Heaven ordered that education be propagated, the princes established elementary schools...and founded academies to teach a greater learning."

<sup>47</sup> *Analects*, 14/35; *LYYD*, p. 29. "The Master said, 'My studies begin at the lower levels, working towards the upper levels.'"

<sup>48</sup> *Analects*, 6/21; *LYYD*, p. 21. "The Master said, 'You may teach above average students about the best, but not those who are below average.'"

certain methods characterize Confucian instruction. For example, the sagely learning requires questioning, and questioning demands scrutiny.<sup>49</sup> One learns nothing without questioning. Practical proficiency is also integral to the sagely learning; thus, as Confucius said, one “studies and in time becomes proficient.”<sup>50</sup> The sagely learning requires thought;<sup>51</sup> unless one thinks, knowledge will never be perfected and attempts at learning will remain muddled. The Song and Ming “School of Mind” (J. *shingaku* 心學, C. *xinxue*) and “School of Principle” were infatuated with the mind and captivated by human nature. Such excesses beclouded their learning. They also became mired in trivial details when reading, which signifies that they devoted insufficient effort to the practice of the sagely teachings. The learning of such people is equally beclouded. Excesses and deficiencies like these obfuscate learning.

Confucian learning requires ethical standards. If your purpose in life is morally misguided, then despite daily book reading you will remain unenlightened. While searching for the moral way, perplexities about its principles will continue. Though energetically engaged, you will remain cramped in action. Although praised as a gentleman, you will not understand things clearly. The sage Confucius said, “One might insist that his words are trustworthy and his actions are effective, but he might still be an obstinate commoner!”<sup>52</sup>

#### (4) The Teacher’s Way (*shidō* 師道)

Because people are not born with perfect knowledge,<sup>53</sup> teachers instruct them. In Confucian learning the sages are our teachers. For ages none fully understood the sagely Confucian teachings. Those who presumed to teach them were mere assistants instructing others in memorizing words and phrases.<sup>54</sup> The Confucian way penetrates all between heaven and earth. Humanity and the world naturally possess its principles. Persons of worthy words and deeds should be its teachers. Why seek out a single constant teacher?<sup>55</sup> Heaven, earth, and all things can be our teachers!

Cultivating the self<sup>56</sup> requires respectfully choosing, esteeming, and serving a teacher. Unless one esteems the teacher’s way, one’s learning will not be solid.<sup>57</sup> There is

<sup>49</sup> *The Mean*, ch. 20; Shimada, *Daigaku/Chūyō*, pt. 2, p. 145. “Confucius said, ‘Question the way of sincerity with scrutiny.’”

<sup>50</sup> *Analects*, 1/1; *LYYD*, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Analects*, 2/15; *LYYD*, p. 3. “The Master said, ‘Learning from others without critical thought, one will become bewildered.’”

<sup>52</sup> *Analects*, 13/20; *LYYD*, p. 26.

<sup>53</sup> Han Yu 韓愈, *Shishuo* 師說 (Essay on Teachers), in *Kan Gi Rikuchō Tô Sō sanbunsen* 漢魏六朝唐宋散文選 (Prose Selections from the Han, Wei, Six Dynasties, Tang, and Song), Itō Masafumi 伊藤正文, ed. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1970), p. 260. “Since people are not born with perfect knowledge, can anyone be free from doubts?”

<sup>54</sup> *Book of Rites*, “Records of Learning”; Legge, *Li Chi*, vol. 2, pp. 89-90. “One who teaches only matters which have been memorized is not fit to be deemed a teacher.”

<sup>55</sup> Han Yu, “Essay on Teachers,” p. 261. “Sages do not have constant teachers.”

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Great Learning*; Shimada, ed., *Daigaku/Chūyō*, pt. 1, p. 62. “Wishing to cultivate themselves, the ancients corrected their minds.”



a hierarchy among teachers for, after all, there are many technical instructors of diverse, particular skills. However, when teaching the sagely Confucian learning, the depth of one's seriousness must equal that of rulers and fathers, for the ancients viewed teachers with the same respect that they otherwise reserved for their rulers and fathers. Teachers reveal the beginnings of things, while friends give help concerning personal matters. These are the benefits of teachers and friends.<sup>58</sup>

#### (5) Establishing Teachings (*rikkyō* 立教)

Unless taught, people do not understand the Confucian way. Misunderstanding the way, humans can wreak more havoc than birds and beasts. If not ethically transformed via instruction, people fall prey to heterodoxies, credulously believe perverse theories, worship phantoms, and ultimately even murder their rulers and parents.<sup>59</sup> In founding their states and establishing themselves as rulers, ancient kings thus instituted school systems as one of their first tasks. If rulers govern by morally educating their people, then both their ministers and people will be sincerely transformed. With sustained instruction, people will see moral teachings as their customs. Thereupon all will live in natural peace and security. Families, states, and the world have teachings which are specific to them. Nevertheless when morality is unified, the customs of mankind become the same for everyone.

#### (6) Reading Books (*sho o yomu* 書を読む)

Books convey the surviving wisdom of ancient and modern times. One thus should read them with all one's strength. Indeed, one must read as energetically as one pursues daily, practical affairs because Confucian education depends largely on book reading. Education conflicts with daily practicality if one obsessively reads books, neglecting to practice the moral Confucian way as well. If one reads books after having made moral learning one's purpose in life one will gain immense benefits. But if one reads books thinking that learning consists in nothing else, one ends up like a commoner who, amusing himself with useless playthings, loses his purpose in life.

The books one should read relate the sages' moral teachings. Confucian teachings are very plain and simple. Whenever one savors them or practices their principles this is fully verified. Other books may be clever, informative, and reliable. And some of their passages should be learned. But when scrutinized from beginning to end, they are seen to be incomplete. They are only aids for broadening one's capabilities and knowledge. It is unnecessary to explain these points again.

Common fellows emphasize memorization and extensive factual knowledge in their approach to reading books. But devoted readers must refrain from darting about and

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<sup>57</sup> *Analects*, 1/8; *LYYD*, p. 1. "The Master said, 'If a gentleman lacks self-esteem, others will not respect him either. If such a person studies, his learning will not be reliable.'"

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Zhou Dunyi, "Teachers and Friends," pt. 2, *Tongshu*, in *ST*, vol. 2, p. 158. "At birth people are ignorant. Without teachers or friends, people remain stupid even after maturity. However, mankind realizes moral principles through the assistance of teachers and friends."

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Mencius*, 3B/9; *MZYD*, p. 25. "Ministers murdered their rulers and children killed their parents."

scanning rather than reading. It is best to savor the minutiae of commentaries while taking the sagely pronouncements of Confucian learning as one's foundations. Thus should one directly comprehend Confucian teachings. By doing so, one realizes that the views of Song and Ming Confucians are lacking.

#### (7) The Transmission of the Way (*dōtō* 道統)

The ten ancient sages, Fu Xi 伏羲, Shen Nong 神農, the Yellow Emperor 黃帝, Yao 堯, Shun 舜, Yu 禹, Kings Tang 湯, Wen 文, and Wu 武, and the Duke of Zhou 周公,<sup>60</sup> extended their virtue and knowledge to the world, supplying myriad generations with their blessings. As the Zhou dynasty (1111-249 B.C.) declined, Heaven blessed humanity with the birth of Confucius. As Mencius 孟子 remarked, "Since the creation of humanity, there has never been another as great as Confucius."<sup>61</sup> With his demise, however, the transmission of the sagely teachings nearly expired. Though they tried, Zengzi 曾子, Zisi 子思, and Mencius could not peer beyond the vision Confucius offered. Some Han and Tang scholars sought to revive the transmission of the Confucian way, but they could not even match Mencius, Zengzi, and Zisi. Following the rise of Song thinkers such as Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-73), the two Cheng brothers, Cheng Mingdao 程明道 (1032-85) and Cheng Yichuan 程伊川 (1033-1107), Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-77), and Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-77), Confucian teachings underwent egregious transformations. Those Song academics believed that Confucianism was *yang* and heterodoxies *yin*, as though the two were complementary halves of some greater whole. In the Song, the transmission of the moral Confucian way was thus obliterated! The situation became even worse with the rise of Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139-93) and Wang Yangming's 王陽明 (1472-1529) many disciples. Only Zhu Xi made major contributions to studies of the Confucian classics, but even he could not transcend his predecessors' excesses. Alas! Heaven decides when to entrust individuals with responsibility for seeing that the Confucian way prevails in the world! Whose efforts can match those of Heaven?

From Mencius's demise to the Song, Confucianism underwent three degenerations. The first, during the Warring States' period (403-222 B.C.), witnessed the rise of the amoral schools of the Legalists and the writers on political subjects of the Qin era.<sup>62</sup> The second, evident in Han and Tang literature, involved the sterile work of

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<sup>60</sup> Fu Xi, a mythological ruler of ancient China, supposedly created the Chinese system of writing, and parts of the *Book of Changes*. Shen Nong, another mythic ruler, allegedly invented agricultural techniques. The Yellow Emperor, another mythic figure, devised methods of statecraft. Yao, Shun, and Yu are the three sage-kings described in the opening chapters of the *Book of History*. King Tang supposedly conquered the Xia dynasty, and founded the Shang. Kings Wen and Wu and the Duke of Zhou overthrew the Shang and established the Zhou dynasty.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *Mencius*, 2A/2; *MZYD*, p. 12.

<sup>62</sup> Legalists argued that Confucian morality undermined effective rule. They advocated the universal use of impersonal, absolute laws, enforced without exception by means of a system of extremely harsh penalties and alluring rewards. The writers on political subjects advocated alliances between states contiguous either on an east-west, or north-south, axis. These *Realpolitik* alliances responded to the many diplomatic and military exigencies of the Warring states' period. They were unconcerned with matters of Confucian morality.

commentators, specialists, and logicians. The third transformation involved the abstractions of the Song Schools of Principle and the Mind. From Confucius's demise to the present, over two thousand years have passed. With these degenerations, the way of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius lapsed into mere subjective ruminations, deceiving and confusing people. Though identifying their ideas with the Confucian sages, the pseudo-Confucians perpetrating these subjective teachings aimed at little more than Yanzi's 顏子 pleasures or Zeng Dian's 曾点 disposition.<sup>63</sup> Such debased customs have long prevailed. Alas! It must be the decree of Heaven!

#### (8) Poetry and Prose (*shibun* 詩文)

"Poetry expresses one's aspirations." When one harbors aspirations, language spontaneously emerges communicating them.<sup>64</sup> Ancient verses have an elegance that is natural and appropriate to them. Some odes express aspirations through remonstrance and satire, some through critical discussions of justice. Others speak of beautiful landscapes. Some poems admonish, while others extoll contemporary government or the virtues of rulers and ministers. The six kinds of ancient poetry<sup>65</sup> overflowed with such themes. Poetry students of later ages, however, have strained to express their unique, subjective thoughts with fine, eloquent words. Yet their verses ended as vacuous lies. Thus latter-day poets have become the world's worst idlers and hedonists.

Poets often make the mistake of thinking that they must use the philosophical language of the Confucian classics, discuss the moral way and its virtues, humaneness and rightness, and encompass all ethical teachings. But does the moral learning of Confucianism need to rely on the emotive techniques of poetry? Numerous Song and Ming Confucians were beclouded over the relationship between poetry and moral learning because they misunderstood the sagely Confucian way.

Prose refers to the discursive language used in writing books. The Confucian sages and worthies could not help but articulate their thoughts in prose. Later writers had only eloquence and insinuating faces.<sup>66</sup> In unsubstantial matters, they searched for curiosities from which to create fictions. Han Tuizhi 韓退之 (768-824), Liu Zongyuan

<sup>63</sup> *Analects*, 6/11; *LYYD*, p. 10. Confucius praised Yanzi for being pleased, despite poverty, with a life of learning. The Song Confucian, Cheng Yi, in his essay, "What Yanzi Loved to Learn," extolled Yanzi for finding pleasure in the sagely learning. See *Yichuan wenji* 伊川文集 (The Writings of Cheng Yi) sect. 4, *Er Cheng quanshu* 二程全書 (The Collected Works of the Cheng Brothers), ch. 61 (Kyoto: Chûbun shuppansha, 1979), pp. 2161-65. Given the chance to do things his own way, Zeng Dian said that he would prefer to bathe in late spring with a half dozen companions, enjoy the breeze on the rain altar, and return home chanting poetry. *Analects*, 11/24; *LYYD*, p. 22.

<sup>64</sup> *Book of Poetry*, "Great Preface," Legge, *CC*, vol. 4, p. 34.

<sup>65</sup> According to the *Book of Poetry*'s "Great Preface," the six types of poetry are: (1) popular poems, (2) descriptive poems, (3) metaphorical poems, (4) allusive poems, (5) imperial verses, and (6) religious hymns. See Legge, *CC*, vol. 4, p. 34.

<sup>66</sup> *Analects*, 1/3; *LYYD*, p. 1. "The Master said, 'Eloquence and an insinuating face are rarely associated with humaneness.'"

柳宗元 (773-819), Ou Yangxiu 歐陽修 (1007-72), and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101)<sup>67</sup> were premier prose stylists, but their learning was perverse. Their prose was too refined and unsubstantial.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> A poet and essayist, Han Tuizhi (Han Yu 韓愈) advocated Confucianism in an age still dominated by Buddhism and Daoism. Some view him as a forerunner of the Song Neo-Confucians. Liu Zongyuan was a friend of Han Yu's and one of the premier poets and essayists of the Tang. Ouyang Xiu was an official, literary master, and historian who lived in the early Song dynasty. He advocated a return to the ancient style of writing as Han Yu had done in the Tang. Su Shi was one of the outstanding scholar-poet-statesmen of his day. His writings reveal an interest in Buddhism and Daoism, as well as Confucianism.

<sup>68</sup> *Analects*, 6/18; *LYYD*, p. 10. "The Master said, 'With country people, substance greatly exceeds refinement. With clerks refinement exceeds substance. But with gentlemen, substance and refinement are evenly balanced.'"